

## Genericization of brand names in Spanish

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### Abstract

This paper offers a corpus-based analysis of the different aspects in the genericization process of brand names in Spanish. The study is based upon a set of 1041 instances of 15 different brand names and their lexicalized variants gathered in the Spanish CREA-corpus and will discuss the orthographic and morphological adaptations into the Spanish language system and the consequences of the generic uses of the brand names on a semantic level.

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### 1. Introduction

Brand names appear frequently in everyday discourse and are not always used as uniquely identifying trade names, as their registered status would require. The present study gathers 1041 examples of 15 different brand names in Spanish and their lexicalized variants. More precisely, it collects these brand names in the Spanish online corpus CREA of the Real Academia Española<sup>1</sup>. The brand names in the data base are still legally considered as trademarks but are frequently used by consumers in a generic way indicating the whole product category. This phenomenon is called genericization<sup>2</sup> and can be defined as a kind of semantic broadening by which proper names are used as generic descriptors and hence become more inclusive. The main goal of this research is to describe the different kinds of syntactic structures in which genericized brand names appear, to detail their orthographic and morphological features and to discuss the semantic changes the genericization process involves.

### 2. Definition of brand name

#### 2.1. Brand name as a proper name

Theoretically, brand names are defined as proper names, in other words as uniquely identifying expressions with a fixed reference. This relationship is initiated by a kind of “baptism act” (cf. Kleiber 1981 and 1984) in which the entity receives its name. According to the traditional referential theory established by Kripke (1972), proper names are defined as rigid designators. This implies that they do not require descriptive features in order to identify their referent, neither are they associated to a concept. There is a direct link between the name and its referent. So, proper names just denote an individual entity without joining at the denotation a connotative part. They are able to identify the referent without intermediate descriptive properties. In that sense a proper name cannot predicate anything.<sup>3</sup>

A common noun, on the other hand, indicates a class of referents and implies a set of descriptive features. It has a connotative meaning and its reference is based upon the idea of

<sup>1</sup> RAE: Corpus de referencia del español actual (CREA) [<http://www.rae.es>]

<sup>2</sup> The term *genericization* is taken from Clankie (2000 and 2002). Further explanations will be offered in section 3 of this article.

<sup>3</sup> More details on proper names can be found in Van Langendonck (2007), Gary-Prieur (1994), Jonasson (1994), Kleiber (1981) and for their peculiarities in Spanish we refer to Bajo Pérez (2002) and Fernández Leborans (1999).

resemblance of the different items belonging to the same class of entities sharing the common noun (*cf.* Issacharoff and Madrid 1994).

As a conclusion, a common noun conceptualizes, while a proper name singularizes.

## 2.2. Peculiarities of brand names

After defining the linguistic status of a brand name, we now look at some economic and legal characteristics of brand names. A brand name is the name used to identify a specific product and serves to distinguish this product from those of its competitors. Brand names find their origin in a commercial necessity to name a new product or service. In that sense they can be defined as neologisms. The creation of a brand name implies a legal registration process, which officially states the ownership. Only when a brand name has been registered as a trademark does it receive legal protection. These neologisms could be called “neologism by law”. Their objective is not to describe properties, but to distinguish entities by their name (*cf.* Petit 2006). As a consequence, they represent an important economic interest for companies.

Ingram (2004: 154) associates four different functions to trademarks: they serve as product identifiers and distinguish those products from others, they indicate the specific source of the product, they guarantee the same quality level of all products sharing that brand name and they contribute to the advertisement and selling of those products.

Furthermore, a brand implies more than just a name, highlights the International Trademark Association. It is not only the name *Mercedes*, *Adidas*, *Nickelodeon*, etc. It includes the logo, the product design, the slogan, etc. Butters (2010: 352) illustrates the different aspects referring to the trademark *Apple* as follows:

“MARKS may be words or phrases (e.g. BRAND NAMES such as *Apple*, *Mac*, *Appicare Protection Plan*); symbols, logos, and designs (e.g. the profile of an apple with a bite taken out of it); slogans or taglines (e.g. “Think different,” “It Does What a PC Does, Only Better”); and, in the past decade, internet domain names (*apple.com*, *imac.com*, *imacapple.com*, *imac-apple.com*, *podmart.com*).”

In brief, brand names imply more than just a name and constitute an important aspect in the so-called “capital” of a company (*cf.* Kapferer 1995 and 2007).

## 3. Genericization of brand names in Spanish

Brand names appear frequently in everyday discourse and it can be easily observed that they are not always used as proper brand names. They often occur with a generic meaning. This process is called genericization and indicates the conversion of a brand name into a descriptive common noun, in other words, into an ordinary general term. The term *genericization* is taken from Clankie (2000 & 2002) and was chosen by him in order to avoid “the negative bias attached to the term *genericide*” (Clankie 2000: 1). Deonymization is a broader concept, since it indicates the “loss of the onymic function and/or character of a proper name” (ICOS: 2010) and can also imply derivations, such as common nouns originated from proper names: for instance a *saxophone* named after its inventor *Adolph Sax*.

Moreover, when a brand name becomes genericized, it acquires the linguistic status of a lexeme and can enter in a dictionary.

### 3.1. Generic use

A generic term is a word that indicates a class of items. *Generic* refers to ‘having a wide or general application’, to ‘not being specific’, to ‘not being related to one particular item’. When referring to a commercial product, a brand name used generically indicates a brand

name that is used to designate the class of items the product belongs to. Now, when a brand name turns into a generic noun, it becomes widespread and adopts the linguistic status of a common class noun representing an entire product class. It undergoes a semantic shift. By adopting a descriptive meaning, its scope is broadened and as a consequence, it loses its referential uniqueness, its singularizing function. Instead of denoting one specific product of a company, it stands for a whole product class.

Shokhenmayer (2010: 10) distinguishes four steps in the conceptualization of a new lexeme originated by a proper noun:

- “a) au depart, l’allusion initiale entre dans le domaine public grâce aux effets extralinguistiques (le public est limité) ;*
- b) ensuite, le concept du Npr utilisé métaphoriquement se fixe dans le discours (le sens est compréhensible) ;*
- c) puis la signification du nouveau lexème Npr devient l’apanage de tout le monde et entre dans la langue (le mot est utilisable) ;*
- d) enfin, le lexème est enregistré dans les ouvrages lexicographiques.”*

First there is a limited acceptance in the public domain. Then, the proper name used with a metaphorical meaning is fixed in a discourse. After that, the meaning of the new lexeme is known by everyone. Finally, there is a lexicographical necessity to enhance the word’s entry in the dictionary.

### 3.2. *Genericide*

The success of a trademark is strongly related to its potential for genericization. Fanciful brands are more likely to be used in a generic way. Actually, a brand does not seek its generalization (*cf.* Kapferer 1995 and 2007). On the contrary, the main goal of a brand is to diversify from other products or services belonging to the same class and this is opposed to the idea of genericization, which stands for banalization and a loss of distinctiveness. Dick (2004: 509) reports on this paradox:

*“Of course, all trademark owners want their brands to become the talk of the town and to have their names on every consumer’s lips. Indeed, is it not the highest compliment to be paid to a brand that it has become so successful as to become the leading, generic name for any similar product in its class?”*

According to Clankie (2000 and 2002), four major hypotheses can be adduced to enhance the generic use of a brand name: novelty, length and predominance, genericization as a regular process and a single association.

When entirely new products enter the marketplace and a previous lexeme does not exist for them, the brand name is likely to be used to stand for the whole product category. Clankie (2000: 3) demonstrated the parameter of novelty with the brand name *Rollerblades*, for which there was no existing word and as a consequence the brand name *Rollerblades* was used as a class noun.

The second parameter refers to the length and predominance of a brand name. When a brand name is predominating in a semantic category and when it is shorter than the corresponding class noun, the brand name is likely to be used with a generic meaning; for instance, “*walkman*” instead of “*portable radio*”.

In third place, Clankie (2000: 5) considers genericization as a regular process. Regular patterns can be observed in the semantic change implied by the process of genericization. First the brand name appears alone without the generic common noun indicating the product

class. Then, a difference is observed depending on whether the brand name is used in written or oral discourse. In written text the initial capital letter disappears, in oral discourse the context determines its generic meaning.

The fourth aspect refers to the uniqueness of the brand name. If there is only one kind of association made between the brand name and the product class, if this concerns one single kind of product, the genericization process will be enhanced.

Genericization can finally lead to genericide. This is the final step in the process of lexicalization of a trademark. According to the International Trademark Association (2011),<sup>4</sup> genericide indicates the loss of distinctiveness of the brand name. The brand name loses its legal protection. It occurs when a brand name has been used as a generic term for a long period of time and ends up indicating the whole product category. The loss of uniqueness or the ability to identify one single referent leads to the conversion of the name into a descriptive noun. Finally, the loss of trademark rights occurs for instance when a brand name becomes so common as to take on a generic quality. The brand name ends up “murdered” by its change into a common class noun. Some companies take proactive measures to prevent this genericide. For instance, Lego decided to call its plastic building blocks “*LEGO blocks*” and not “LEGOs”. Actually, there is an increased interest in stating the ownership of a brand name, because of an increasing use of genericized brand names. Discussions on trademark rights and ownership often lead to jurisdictional disputes.<sup>5</sup>

Schechter (1927) already related product uniqueness to an increasing risk of dilution and stated that brand names which are characterized as more unique or distinctive have a deeper impress upon consumers and represent a higher need for protection against trademark dilution.

Zeisel and Kaye (1997: 149) indicate in this respect that “*trade name owners try to protect the name by constantly reminding consumers of the generic group of which the trade name is a part*”. So, trademark owners are very reluctant with respect to the incorporation of the brand name in the dictionary, Landau also confirms (2001). They cannot be blamed for resisting this kind of language evolution, argues Heymann (2010: 1328), since it may harm their economic interests. On a discourse level, the law remains rather strict with respect to the use of a trademark. When there is clear trademark ownership, only the owner can legally use the name (*cf.* Petit 2006: 700).

Despite the increasing uses of generic brand names and the increasing need felt by companies to state the ownership of their brand names, Butters and Westerhaus (2004) contend that genericide, or the final loss of legal trademark rights, has become less frequent.

### 3.3. Guidelines to avoid inappropriate use of brand names

The International Trademark Association (2011) listed some guidelines in order to enhance proper use of trademarks. A trademark must pass the “*ACID-test*”, an acronym which stands for “*Adjective, Consistent, Identification or status and Distinctive*”.

The first aspect, adjective, refers to the linguistic status of trademarks. They are not proper names, but proper adjectives, states the organization. More correct is to say that they are proper modifiers. And because of the modifying role they assume, they should always be placed alongside a common noun referring to the product class. However, we observe that the common class noun is often deleted and the brand name is left alone to stand for the entire noun phrase.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.inta.org>

<sup>5</sup> Butters (2007 and 2010) illustrates the use of forensic linguistics in some cases on trademarks.

The second parameter of consistency refers to the style the company uses to represent their trademark. So each time the brand name is mentioned, it should be represented in exactly the same way. This emphasizes that the term is clearly a trademark.

The third element refers to the trademark status, which should be clearly indicated. The identification as a trademark has to be established in an unambiguous way, for instance by using the symbol ® or TM.

Distinctiveness, finally, is an aspect related to the previous characteristic. In a text, trademarks should stand out. This can be achieved by using italics or capital letters or by making it appear in a different font or manner. In this way the brand name can be clearly distinguished from surrounding text.

Now, for this study 15 different brand names have been registered in the Spanish online CREA-corpus of the Real Academia. The “*ACID-test*” has been applied to all the instances we registered in the CREA-corpus and led us to the following results. In our database which compiles 1041 examples of 15 different brand names in the CREA, 44 of the 1041 examined names illustrate the recommended use of the trademark, i.e. the use of the trademark as a proper adjective modifying a common/class noun. Here are some examples:

- (1) En 3M, el mayor fabricante mundial de adhesivos y otros miles de productos industriales y de limpieza para el hogar, han tenido varios casos de inventos con gran éxito que surgieron porque alguien descubrió que no servían para lo que inicialmente habían sido concebidos (**los papelitos Post-it** fueron el resultado de un pegamento que no pegaba suficientemente; y algunos de sus protectores fueron también el resultado de productos diseñados para otro fin). (Santesmases Mestre, Miguel, 2002)
- (2) Por último, Laforest Bic, fabricante de **los bolígrafos y encendedores Bic**, obtuvo 117 millones de beneficio consolidado tras perder casi 600 millones en 1993. [...] La mayoría del capital pertenece a la casa francesa Bic. (La Vanguardia, 02/10/1995)
- (3) [...] acogen **unos neumáticos Michelin** con medidas P265/40 R24. (El Mundo, Motor, 03/01/2003)

Our database also offers an “odd” example: “*un jeep Toyota*”. In this noun phrase the genericized brand name *jeep* is placed alongside another brand. So, whereas *Toyota* illustrates the proper use, *jeep* demonstrates the lexicalized variant, indicating any off-road vehicle.

- (4) En el operativo se incautó 190 litros de sustancias químicas controladas, 5.210 dólares, un **jeep** Toyota con placa CJB-430 y un automóvil Toyota con placa CTC-265. (Los Tiempos, 04/12/1996)

Stvan (2006: 218) already stated that in everyday language the common noun is usually left behind and only the brand name appears and stands for the entire noun phrase. This phenomenon could be seen as an illustration of the economy of language principle, which implies minimal effort without impairing comprehension. Here are some examples from our corpus:

- (5) En noviembre de 1953, **Bic** sale al mercado. Un artículo a bajo precio y con poco coste para usar y tirar. (La Vanguardia, 01/06/1994)
- (6) Rafael Ángel Rivera Álvarez, su verdadero nombre, recibió de parte de Fernando Cabrera, director de comercialización de la empresa Panamco Tica, distribuidora de la famosa marca de refrescos, una dotación de dos botellas de **Coca Cola** diarias por espacio de un año, además de algunos regalos como una camiseta con su nombre escrito en ella, lo mismo que un buzo y un maletín. (La Nación, 17/12/1996)

#### 4. Lexicographic study

The incorporation of new lexical items in a dictionary depends on observations of objective data in everyday speech and written discourse. Butters (2008) confirms that widespread use of certain brand names can lead to their inclusion in a dictionary.

The table below shows how the 15 brand names examined in this study appear in three Spanish dictionaries: Moliner (2007<sup>3</sup>), RAE (2001<sup>22</sup>) and Seco *et al.* (2008<sup>4</sup>). A brief definition of the generic meaning is also provided.

Brand name	RAE (2001 <sup>22</sup> )	Moliner (2007 <sup>3</sup> )	Seco <i>et al.</i> (2008 <sup>4</sup> )	Definition in Spanish
Barbie	/	/	/	muñeca prototipo de la mujer ideal
Bic	/	/	/	bolígrafo desechable con punto fino
Coca-Cola	/	/	cola	refresco carbonatado
Cola Cao	/	/	/	cacao soluble
Gillette	gillette gillete	gillette	/	hoja de afeitar desechable
Jeep	jeep	jeep jeepeta yip	jeep	vehículo todo terreno
Kleenex	/	kleenex clínex	kleenex clínex	pañuelo de papel
Meccano	meccano	meccano	mecano meccano	juguete con piezas ajustables
Michelin	michelín	michelín	michelín	pliegue de gordura en el cuerpo
Post-it	pósit	post-it	/	hoja pequeña de papel, autoadhesiva, empleada para escribir notas
Rimmel	rímel	rímel	rímel	cosmético para oscurecer y endurecer las pestañas
Tiritas	tirita	tirita	tirita	tira de esparadrapo para proteger heridas
Velcro	velcro	velcro	/	sistema de cierre con dos tejidas diferentes que se enganchan
Vespa	vespa	/	vespa	motocicleta
Walkman	/	walkman	walkman	reproductor portátil de casetes con auriculares

The lexicographic study shows large differences in the incorporation of the brand name in the dictionaries. Only *Meccano*, *Michelin*, *Rimmel* and *Tiritas* appear in all three dictionaries. For the other brand names, entry in the dictionary is limited. In some cases vacillation in the orthography can be noted (*gillette/gillete* in RAE (2001<sup>22</sup>), *jeep/yip* in Moliner (2007<sup>3</sup>), *kleenex/clínex* in both Moliner (2007<sup>3</sup>) and Seco *et al.* (2008<sup>4</sup>), *meccano/mecano* in Seco *et al.* (2008<sup>4</sup>) and finally *post-it* in Moliner while *pósit* in RAE (2001<sup>22</sup>).<sup>6</sup>

In order to avoid legal claims several dictionaries include disclaimers to contend that the incorporation of a trademark in the dictionary does not automatically imply that their status as a registered trademark has changed into a generic word with a generalized meaning. Moreover, some of them address themselves to trademark owners in order to invite them to

<sup>6</sup> More details on these orthographic variants in paragraph 5.2.

give comments. For instance, in the introduction of the *Diccionario de la lengua española* of the RAE (2001<sup>22</sup>) the reader finds the following statement:

*“Las marcas registradas cuyo empleo como sustantivos comunes así lo recomienda se recogen en el Diccionario haciendo constar su condición de tales, de acuerdo con la legislación vigente, en el paréntesis etimológico. Si alguna entrada correspondiente a una marca registrada no presentara esta información, la empresa que la comercializa podrá dirigirse a la Real Academia Española para solicitar el cambio oportuno en la próxima edición del Diccionario.”*

As a conclusion, it is clear that the incorporation of a brand name in the dictionaries does not lead to the same results for each brand name. This conclusion reveals the difficulties in defining the status of brand names versus their lexicalized variants.

## 5. Empirical study on the genericization of brand names

The major purpose of this paper is to clarify the different steps in the genericization process of brand names in the Spanish language. The empirical part of this article is based upon the analysis of 1041 instances of brand names in the Spanish online corpus CREA. In the following paragraphs we will provide a brief overview of the different features of the lexicalization process and we also provide several examples as an illustration.

### 5.1. Dropping the initial capital letter

One of the major characteristics of genericization is the dropping of the initial capital letter.

- (7) El primero en dejar su *post-it* literario fue Josep Cots, propietario del local junto con Ramón Planes, que escogió una cita de Pedroló. (El País, 21/03/2010)

A close look at the results of the analysis of the data retrieved in the CREA-corpus shows that the dropping of the capital letter does not appear with the same frequency for every word. Here is an overview:<sup>7</sup>

	upper case	lower case	total
Barbie	43	9	52
Bic	16	4	20
Coca-Cola	53	97	150
Cola Cao	12	17	29
Gillette	19	73	92
Jeep	10	147	157
Kleenex	22	77	99
Meccano	0	43	43
Michelin	86	39	125
Post-it	5	2	7
Rimmel	0	91	91
Tiritas	1	33	34
Velcro	2	14	16
Vespa	8	29	37
Walkman	9	80	89
	286	755	1041

Capitalization is a formal means to distinguish proper from common use. The important differences in the results clearly indicate that the (lexicalization) status of the different brand

<sup>7</sup> Variant forms such as plural forms or orthographic adaptation are also included.

names in our database is not the same. Words such as *rimel*, *mecano*, *walkman*, *velcro*, *tirita* have clearly acquired the status of a lexeme and could be considered as common entries in the dictionary. Other words show more vacillation, such as *coca cola*, *jeep*, *kleenex* and *micHELín*, which are still frequently used as brand names but also often appear with a generic meaning.

## 5.2. Adaptations into the Spanish orthographic system

In this section the changes into the Spanish orthographic system are highlighted. These changes are usually the same as those noted in studies on the adaptations of loanwords (Anglicisms, Gallicisms, etc.) (cf. Lorenzo 1996, Medina López (2004) and Pratt 1980). The Spanish language is characterized by a high phoneme-grapheme correspondence. This entails changes in letters which do not appear in Spanish or are pronounced in a different way. For instance, the letter “c” will be used instead of the unusual letter “k” (*kleenex* > *cleenex*). Because of its pronunciation the “i” appears instead of “ee” (*clínex*), “j” is converted into “y” (*jeep* > *yip*). Another important feature is the simplification of consonant clusters, for instance “c” instead of “cc” (*meccano* > *mecano*). The following examples demonstrate these phenomena:

- (8) La generación progre abandonó a Raimon (y a la nova cançó) en una esquina cualquiera, como abandonó a tantos iconos, ideas y proyectos que, usados como un **clínex**, ya no le eran útiles. (La Vanguardia, 20/02/2010)
- (9) Cuando regresábamos, un **yip** se nos interpuso, era don Pendón que traía a Luis Loyola. (Che Guevara Ernesto y Granado Alberto, Viaje por Sudamérica, 1994)
- (10) Hay quien construye maquetas de barcos, quien monta **mecanos**, quien se atreve con puzzles de piezas infinitas. (El Mundo, 21/03/2008)

Another adaptation into Spanish is the integration into the Spanish accentual pattern. The word keeps its original pronunciation and in order to maintain the word stress in the same position an accent is added, according to the Spanish pronunciation rules, as in *rimmel* > *rímel*.

- (11) Después, según la descripción de un testigo, “Janis apareció con el **rímel** corrido y arreglándose el pelo. Se volvieron a encerrar (con Ballero) en la pieza y el espacio seguía su curso”. (La Tercera, 23/04/2003)

In order to illustrate the high variety in orthography, all the different forms retrieved in our database are mentioned below:

<b>Barbie</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>Gillette</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>Michelin</b>	<b>125</b>
barbie	3	gillette	14	micHELín	12
Barbie	34	Gillette	73	Michelin	86
barbies	6	yilé	2	micHELINES	27
Barbies	9	yilés	1	<b>Post-it</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Bic</b>	<b>20</b>	gillette	1	post-it	2
bic	4	gilletes	1	Post-it	5
Bic	16	<b>Jeep</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>Rimmel</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Coca-Cola</b>	<b>150</b>	jeep	76	rimel	30
coca cola	9	Jeep	8	rímel	37
Coca Cola	5	jeeps	61	rímeles	3
Coca cola	1	Jeeps	2	rimmel	17



coca colas	2	jip	1	rímmel	3
Coca Colas	2	yip	8	rimmels	1
cocacola	26	yips	1	<b>Tiritas</b>	<b>34</b>
coca-cola	33	<b>Kleenex</b>	<b>99</b>	tirita	14
Coca-Cola	29	cleenex	1	tiritas	19
Coca-cola	8	clínex	2	Tiritas	1
cocacolas	5	clínex	7	<b>Velcro</b>	<b>16</b>
coca-colas	22	Clinex	1	velcro	12
Coca-Colas	7	kleenex	59	Velcro	2
Coca-colas	1	Kleenex	17	velcros	2
<b>Cola Cao</b>	<b>29</b>	klinex	2	<b>Vespa</b>	<b>37</b>
Cola Cao	4	klínex	6	vespa	8
colacao	15	Klínex	4	Vespa	28
cola-cao	2	<b>Meccano</b>	<b>43</b>	Vespas	1
Colacao	3	mecano	34	<b>Walkman</b>	<b>89</b>
Cola-Cao	5	mecanos	8	walkman	75
		meccano	1	Walkman	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1041</b>			walkmans	5

This table only includes the forms registered in the CREA corpus. Other spelling forms remain possible, such as *pósit* (< *Post-it*), as mentioned in the dictionary of the Real Academia Española.

### 5.3. Morphosyntactic aspects

With respect to the morphosyntactic properties of genericized brand names, the use of determiners and the possibility of pluralization will be described.

Proper names usually appear without a determiner when they assume a referential function, whereas common nouns require determiners to enable the actualization process.

In our corpus 497 of the instances are not introduced by determiners. Lots of them are used as proper names, referring to the product or the company, as exemplified by (12) and (13):

(12) Use siempre **Tiritas** (Díaz, Lorenzo, 1993)

(13) Hace cinco años **Gillette** facturaba 56 millones anuales. (Clarín, 07/04/1997)

These examples illustrate clearly the proper use of the brand name. However, the group of noun phrases without a determiner also includes bare plurals and mass nouns, as in (14) and (15):

(14) Expresan que, debido a los huecos, baches, derrumbes, deslizamientos de tierra, precipicios sin protección y erosión del terreno, es imposible utilizar unidades nuevas, mientras que los viejos autobuses, microbuses y **jeeps** no se dan abasto para cubrir la ruta de Catia a Plan de Manzano. (El Universal, 23/09/1996)

(15) [...] tomemos ron puro sin **cocacola** [...]” (Rossi, Ana Cristina, 1985)

It is obvious that this last set of examples also include lexicalized names.

The remaining 544 expressions with a determiner were introduced by a definite article (259 examples), a possessive (40), a demonstrative (10), the indefinite article (203), a numeral (14) or another indefinite quantifier (18 instances). Here are some examples:

(16) Mientras cruzaba San Lázaro percibí con el rabo del ojo que **el yip** donde estaba emplazada la cámara había empezado a moverse, pero yo no debía darme por enterada y

miré hacia el hotel Deauville, que como todos los enclaves dedicados al turismo estaba reluciente. (Díaz Jesús, *La piel y la máscara*, 1996)

- (17) Cuando a las 2.30 de la madrugada del miércoles el gobernador militar de la plaza dio la orden a **sus jeeps** para que salieran a la antigua explanada del Soldado Desconocido, empezaron a arrojarles piedras, las piedras de la "intifada". (*La Vanguardia*, 19/05/1994)
- (18) Un día me pasaron agua y jabón y **una gillette** para afeitarme. (*Revista Hoy*, 1985)

The phenomenon of pluralization is another typical characteristic of common nouns. In 196 cases a plural form is registered. Generally the morpheme *-s* or *-es* indicating the plural form is added.

- (19) Permite una manipulación de los bolsillos fácil tanto para la colocación como para la extracción, que se realiza estirando hacia el exterior, ya que la disposición de los **velcros** está pensada para que no se pueda perder el lastre incluso en posición "boca abajo" y habiéndose olvidado de cerrar los bolsillos. (Aquanet. *Revista virtual de buceo*, 2002)
- (20) Y mientras mi madre, que es una gorda asquerosa y romántica, que no atiende a ningún control, se empeña en que me alimente, en que estoy guapa con **michelines**, y que hay algunos hombres a los que les gustan rellenitas. (Beccaria, Lola, 2001)

*Walkman* is the only brand name in our database which admits two forms with a plural reference: *walkmans* in 5 cases and 10 times *walkman*.

- (21) Los curiosos esperaban afuera, cruzando apuestas y escuchando **sus walkmans** en silencio, consumiendo coca-colas y bolsas de palomitas de maíz. (CREA, DONOSO, José (1995) *Donde van a morir los elefantes*, Madrid, Alfaguara)
- (22) Nosotros ganamos 115 minutos de un drama oscuro y estridente donde la música disco, la atmósfera vacía de **los walkman** en las orejas, la manera de cometer un crimen como si uno mismo fuera parte de la televisión, la necesidad del dinero y la fama sin escrúpulos y la prehistórica carga de misoginia fueran sólo un botón de muestra de una realidad alucinante que se multiplica por millones en todas las calles del mundo. (Proceso, 10/11/1996)

The noun *kleenex* does not formally distinguish between singular and plural, but the context determined its plural reference, as in (23):

- (23) Los hombres son como **los kleenex**. Usar y tirar. (Miralles, Alberto 1994)

#### 5.4. *Semantic considerations*

As pointed out before, when a brand name adopts a generic meaning, it becomes a lexicalized concept. Here are some examples:

- (24) Se sonó la nariz con **un kleenex** y se secó las lágrimas. (Donoso José, 1995)
- (25) [...] y el marinero llegó nadando al jardín de su casa para pedir **una coca cola**. (*El Mundo*, 03/03/1996)

*Kleenex* refers to any paper handkerchief and *coca cola* to a carbonated soft drink.

In the atypical example, mentioned earlier, it is obvious that "*jeep*" does not refer to a vehicle from the brand *Jeep*, but receives the generic meaning of an off-road vehicle, as it is placed alongside the brand name *Toyota*.

- (26) En el operativo se incautó 190 litros de sustancias químicas controladas, 5.210 dólares, un **jeep** Toyota con placa CJB-430 y un automóvil Toyota con placa CTC-265. (*Los Tiempos*, 04/12/1996)

In the vast majority of the examples the generic meaning is not explicitly stated, but in some cases the word is accompanied by an explanation. This phenomenon is particularly frequent with *Kleenex*. In 10 cases we found the explicit mention that *Kleenex* should be understood in the sense of "*to be used and thrown away*".

- (27) Se ha legalizado la utilización de “**agentes clínex**”, en el sentido de “usar y tirar”. Significa que, tras una sola operación “se quema” la fuente operativa y el método empleado. (La Razón, 01/12/2004)

Two examples illustrate the opposite scheme: the genericized brand name appears as the explanation, as if the brand name expresses the idea more clearly.

- (28) Pujol utiliza las “señales” de los ciudadanos, sus quejas, para enviar notas (**post-it**) a los responsables. (La Vanguardia, 02/11/1995)
- (29) Sólo aceptan juguetes con los que puedan ejercitar su ingenio y sus dotes intelectuales como rompecabezas y juegos de construcción (**mecanos**). (Expreso, 01/10/1991)

Another peculiarity concerns the use of the brand name in a comparison. Here are a few examples. They also underline the descriptive value of the expression in which the brand name appears.

- (30) Él, sin embargo, me utilizó como **un kleenex**, tirándome a esta horrible papelera, pero jamás le olvido. (Zúñiga, María del Mar, 2001)
- (31) Sin embargo, el principal atractivo de esta obra es la intrincada y geométrica cubierta hecha como un **mecano** metálico, donde van dispuestas las piezas de vidrio y miles de triángulos de aluminio, a modo de parasoles. (Vivienda y decoración, 17/07/2004)

### 5.5. Further recategorization and derivation

Further steps in the lexicalization process are the derivation of the brand name and or its adjectivization.

Derivation of the brand name was not found with the examined brand names in our corpus, but it is possible, for instance by construing a verb. In (32) an example with “*googlear*” from the newspaper *El País* is cited to illustrate this phenomenon. Another example in Spanish is the verb “*photoshopear*” o “*fotoshopear*” as in (33) and its derived form with a modifying role exemplified in (34):<sup>8</sup>

- (32) Un final coherente para un hombre que intervino sin descanso en la vida pública alemana para defender principios como la reconciliación entre judíos y alemanes, las buenas relaciones con EE UU y el derecho de Israel a existir, para un hombre que, como titulaba su necrológica el periódico *Die Welt*, “aprendió a **googlear** a los 92 años”. (El País, 05/02/2010)
- (33) ‘**Photoshopear**’ la vida (El Diario montañés, 17/08/2010)
- (34) Es así que ayer, mediante un comunicado de prensa, la marca anunciaba que había decidido quitar de su publicidad la imagen ‘**photoshopeada**’ del Papa Benedicto XVI besándose con el imán de la mezquita Al-Azhar. (La Republica, 17/11/2011)

Heymann (2010) argues that the use of verbalized trademarks could be related to the absence of an appropriate lexeme. She refers to a “lexical vacuum” related to new products (for instance *Swiffer* for a dry sweeping cloth) and the corresponding new actions (to use the object with the brand name *Swiffer*). Since the language does not provide a previously existing lexeme to refer to this new product or action, the brand name is likely to fill this lexical gap. This occurs particularly in domains of new technology, adds Heymann (2010: 1347-1348):

*“In areas of new technology, speakers of a language reach for a verb form to convey the action they take when they make use of a new type of product. An innovative product, or*

<sup>8</sup> The examples provided in this paragraph were not retrieved in the CREA corpus, but have been found in articles published on the Internet.

*the first of its kind, fills this gap—hence the verb “to xerox” might have been needed when the technology was fairly new, whereas no such verb “to pepsi” was needed to refer to consuming a cola beverage.”*

Normally, when a lexeme changes into another category, a suffix is added in Spanish as in *googlear*. In the following examples there are no overt morphological adaptations. The original brand name *Kleenex* adopts a modifying function without changing its form, without inflexion. Examples have been found with *kleenex* (9 cases), *jeep* (4), *mecano* (1), *barbie* (1), *michelin* (1). They all appear as modifiers in a noun phrase.

- (35) Para el Gobierno, RTVE es **una empresa kleenex**: la usa y después la tira”, añadió la diputada [...]. (El País, 24/09/1997)
- (36) Además, tenían **una ambulancia jeep** con un parlante, que, tocando música alemana, salía a recorrer los campos buscando pacientes. (Caras, 09/06/1997)
- (37) Eso, ¡son como **esos muebles mecano**, que los vas montando con diferentes formas a tu gusto y los puedes adaptar a cualquier pared o a cualquier hueco! (VV.AA., 1995)

It is a kind of adjectivization by which the brand name, without changing its formal appearance, is used with a modifying role. In this respect, it is useful to refer to Croft's theory (1991) on the relationships of reference, predication and modification, realized prototypically by nouns, verbs and adjectives and which, such as in the cases mentioned above, can also be realized by the means of a marked form: a noun in a modifying role, an adjective in a predicating function, etc.

In brief, these last examples clearly illustrate two kinds of marked uses of brand names: with (e.g. “*googlear*”) or without (e.g. “*una empresa Kleenex*”) overt morphological adaptation.

## 6. Final considerations

With this study a systematic analysis of the orthographic, morpho-syntactic and semantic characteristics of lexicalized brand names has been realized based upon corpus research.

The analysis of 15 different brand names in the Spanish corpus CREA and their lexicalized variants demonstrates that there is an important vacillation in different forms and uses. Because of the possibility of orthographic and morphologic adaptations into the Spanish language system and semantic broadening or generalization, we can conclude that lexicalization or genericization is a fact. Nevertheless these conclusions do not automatically imply that the brand names, even if they are used with a generic meaning, lose their legal trademark rights.

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