The Introduction of English-Induced Neologisms in Spanish Tweets: A Case-Study on *covidiota*

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This paper intends to trace the introduction of an English-induced, COVID-related neologism, *covidiota*, into the Spanish language. The study is based on a corpus of tweets, starting in March 2020. It examines several specific features which mark the word as a new, unfamiliar item, such as different ways of graphical highlighting, for example. On the other hand, the paper aims to detect possible indicators of an integration of *covidiota* into the Spanish language use in the tweet corpus compiled for this case study.

Keywords: language contact, lexical innovation, semantic change, social media, verbal humor

INTRODUCTION

The 2020 pandemic caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 has had an impact on a great many aspects of life. Amongst other things, it has brought about the creation of a number of neologisms (cf., e.g., McPherson et al., 2020). The Spanish word *covidiota* is a particularly noteworthy example of such a COVID-related innovation: it is an anglicism, and a blend. Blending is typically considered a marginal phenomenon amongst word-formation processes, in Spanish as well as in other languages (cf., e.g., Pharies, 1987, p. 271). Among frequently named characteristics of blends, there is a humorous, jocular note these words convey (e.g., Lang, 1990, p. 199; Varela Ortega, 2005, p. 95).

This paper intends to trace the development of Span. *covidiota* as an example of a neologism induced by language contact, which creates its own dynamism within the receiving language. The situation of language contact in this specific case arises in online communication on social media platforms. Language use on the Internet is often said to increase the linguistic influence of English on languages worldwide (e.g., Balteiro, 2012, p. 9). As Twitter represents a particularly useful source for the linguistic analysis of online language use (Friginal et al., 2018, p. 342–345), the case study on Span. *covidiota* is based on the analysis of tweets, starting in March 2020.

During the first week of its existence on Twitter, the word *covidiota*, when used in Spanish tweets, frequently appears together with an English definition of the term *covidiot*, sometimes commented on in Spanish or accompanied by a translation or additional definition in Spanish. But while the early instances of *covidiota* in Spanish tweets are frequently limited to citing and defining the new word, tweets from later periods show the term in use.

A certain collective negotiation of the semantic content remains a prominent feature in the tweets, which frequently revolve around the question of when or why a person or an action qualifies as a *covidiota*. The basic meaning could be given as 'someone who behaves foolishly with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic' (or, since Span. *covidiota* can also be used as an adjective, 'behaving in a foolish way regarding the COVID-19 pandemic'). Beyond that, there seems to be a continuum of uses that stretches from 'jocular term used playfully to refer to oneself or someone else' to 'swearword, used to insult and ridicule.' A very noticeable finding is that the term is used by both supporters and opponents of antivirus measures, designating members of the other group, respectively.

The main focus of the paper is on the introduction of the term into the Spanish language and several sub-processes involved in it. In order to describe these processes, several research parameters are established. The phenomena under investigation can be described and grouped together as markers of newness or otherness, on the one hand, and indicators of integration into the receiving language, on the other. This does not mean that there are two kinds of processes at work which operate in opposite directions. The study rather aims at describing two sides of one process: a decreasing presence of markers of newness is assumed to go hand in hand with a growing presence of indicators of integration.

THEORETICAL AND TERMINOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Blending in English and Spanish

The English term 'blending' refers to a specific word formation process by which two (or, in very few cases, more than two) words are merged together to form a new word, a blend. Blends can thus be defined as "two-constituent compounds in which at least one constituent has lost some phonological material" (Arndt-Lappe and Plag, 2013, p. 5). Although in cases such as *covidiota* both constituents *covid* and *idiota* are contained in the blend, the overlapping phonological material (the syllable *id* in this case) is not repeated in both constituents (*covididiota*), but shared between them (*covidiota*). This differentiates blends from compounds, which also constitute a combination of two (or more) lexical units. However, the constituents usually maintain their form and are largely unchanged in the process of compounding. The amount of material that gets lost in blending can differ and depends on whether the constituent words share a sound or sequence of sounds. If they do, the merging usually takes place within that sequence (Ulašin, 2016, p. 164). As a consequence, when morphologically analyzing a blend, it becomes obvious that the constituents do not usually coincide with morpheme boundaries. In blending, matters of prosody, syllabic structure and accent, are of a higher priority than morphological accuracy.

Blending is frequently considered a marginal word formation type not only because of its disregard for morpheme boundaries, but because it is not a very frequent phenomenon (Pharies, 1987, p. 271). To be more precise, a relatively small number of blends only ever become widely known within a speech community, meaning that most words that are formed by means of this particular process never become lexicalized. In spite of its alleged marginality, blending is a relevant mechanism of lexical innovation (Ulašin, 2016, p. 181), mainly because of another very distinctive quality: Blending is a very resourceful mechanism for forming particularly creative neologisms. Apart from meeting the need for linguistic economy (since it enables speakers to express a complex meaning in a condensed form), blending is generally perceived as conveying a certain nuance of playfulness, and is therefore very often and very characteristically linked to a humorous intention (Pharies, 1987, p. 281; Lang, 1990, p. 199; Varela Ortega, 2005, p. 95; Ulašin, 2016, p. 179).

Several authors, albeit without referring to any quantitative, comparative studies of the matter, point out that in English, blending has been much more common than in other languages (e.g., Lang, 1990, p. 199–200; Ulašin, 2016, p. 181) and that an increasing number of blends in several other languages can be traced back to the influence of English on these languages (Roig-Marín, 2017, p. 52). Balteiro (2018, p. 2) points out that "due to English influence blending is evolving from a minor device in Spanish into an important one, not only to cover lexical needs but also for creative and stylistic reasons (to produce humor, irony, punning, etc.)". When it comes to describing the introduction of *covidiota* into Spanish, this aspect is relevant because it helps to explain the conspicuousness of the neologism with regard to the Spanish language system: *covidiota* is a blend, i.e., created by means of a word formation process which stands out in its own right, for the reasons described above. Moreover, *covidiota* is a blend which was first coined in English and only then introduced into Spanish.

Language Contact in Social Media Communication

Language on the internet, and thus also language in social media-communication, is in many regards subject to a strong influence from English (e.g., Balteiro, 2012, p. 9; Balteiro, 2018, p. 2), even though the internet has definitely stopped being an all-English medium and has become a multilingual one (Crystal, 2011, p. 78). Following Kachru's categorization, the Spanish speaking Twitter users whose language usage is studied in the present case study can be said to belong to the "Expanding circle," which is defined by people who learn and use English as a foreign language (Kachru, 1994, p. 136). It is, however, also perfectly possible for at least a part of them to belong to the "Outer Circle," or even to the "Inner Circle" (Kachru, 1994, p. 136), depending on whether they use English as a second or as their first language. The tweet corpus compiled for the present study comprises tweets from all over the Spanish speaking world, and it is likely that it includes several texts composed by bilingual speakers of English and Spanish, for example in the USA.

Apart from bilingualism as an influencing factor originating from the speakers (Twitter users), the language used in digital communication can generally be said to possess certain characteristics in its own right, which, again, include a strong influence of English. Balteiro depicts this kind of language as basically a "new and rapidly-changing and developing language as a result of a rapid evolution or adaptation to Internet requirements of almost all world languages, for whom English is a trendsetter" (2012, p. 9). She adapts David Crystal's term *Netspeak* (Crystal, 2004, p. 78; Crystal, 2006, p. 19–25) and thus refers to the variety of Spanish used in digital communication as *Spanish Netspeak* (Balteiro, 2012, p. 10).

It can be assumed that both aspects, i.e., the bi- or multilingualism of Twitter users and the role of English as a trendsetter in language use in digital communication, contribute to developments such as the creation and rapid spreading of neologisms all over the Spanish speaking Twitter community, as in *covidiota*. The prominent role of English in this context

does not, however, keep English-induced items from being perceived as a conspicuous, unfamiliar, potentially marked, and, in any case, generally new item. Speakers typically have several strategies at their disposal for dealing with such linguistic items. The following section provides a short overview and possible classification of such strategies.

Dealing With New Borrowings: Alterity Markers

In the initial phase of the introduction of a borrowing into a receiving language, the new item is generally perceived as foreign and unfamiliar by speakers of that language. The fact that it does not (yet) belong to the vocabulary inventory of the receiving language often becomes manifest in the form of certain strategies which speakers apply to deal with the newness and foreignness of the newly borrowed item.

Following the works of Rey-Debove (1978, 1998) and Authier-Revuz (1995), Pflanz (2014) establishes a typology of "marqueurs d'altérité" ('alterity markers', Winter-Froemel, 2021). These alterity markers are used in the context of different linguistic strategies applied by speakers to mark borrowings which are still considered to be new and unfamiliar, and therefore not taken to be self-explanatory (Pflanz, 2014, p. 164–165). Pflanz introduces four types of alterity markers. The first type (*X montré*, Pflanz, 2014, p. 164) comprises visual markers which make the item stand out in a text. For example, this can be achieved by the use of quotation marks. The second type (*X commenté*, Pflanz, 2014, p. 165–168) refers to metalinguistic comments which are made by the speaker and can either be of an evaluative nature (*commentaire axiologique*) or rather of an explanatory kind (*commentaire didactique*). The third type of alterity-marking strategy consists in paraphrasing, or translating, the new item to clarify its meaning (*X traduit*, Pflanz, 2014, p. 168–173). The fourth type, on the other hand, comprises the explanation of the neologism (*X expliqué*, Pflanz, 2014, p. 173–175). The fourth type differs from the third mainly in the predominant function associated with it, which is the referential one, while for *X traduit* the metalinguistic function is predominant (Pflanz, 2014, p. 173).

These categories or types, established by Pflanz, are taken into account at different points throughout the present study and are reflected in several of the research questions outlined in the following section. Since these features are explicitly established as markers of alterity, i.e., otherness, one very interesting question is whether the time span of the observation periods in the case study is long enough for their manifestations to change, as speakers become more familiar with the term at hand.

THE INTRODUCTION OF *COVIDIOTA* INTO SPANISH: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND AIM
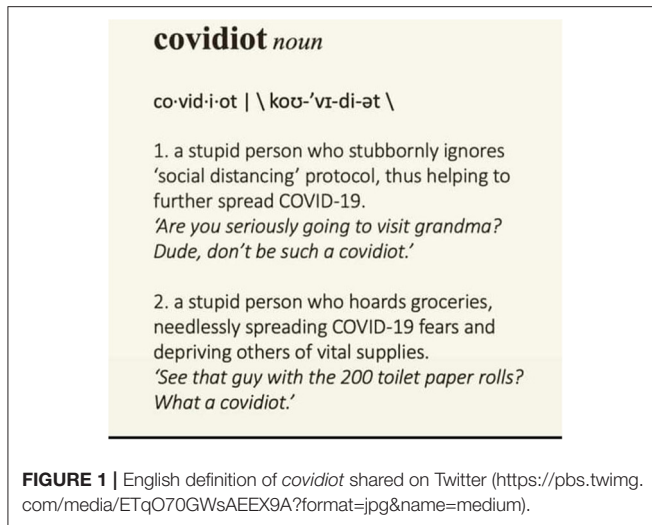
The subject of the present case study is the word *covidiota*, which was first created as *covidiot* < *COVID* + *idiot* in English during the early weeks of the coronavirus-crisis in the late winter of 2020. Its meaning can very broadly be described as 'someone who behaves in an inappropriate way with regard to the situation caused by the outbreak of the virus,' and, more specifically, was

initially used to refer to people who refused to adhere to the new rules and instructions pronounced by the authorities to curb the spreading of the virus. The new term spread quickly on several social media platforms, became widely known and was adopted by a lot of other languages, too (e.g., Italian and Portuguese: *covidiota*, German: *Covidiot*), with minor changes in form and/or grammatical properties (as for example the possibility to be used as a noun or an adjective in Spanish, while the English term was coined as a noun).

The creation of neologisms during, and in the context of, the COVID-19 pandemic has become a subject of interest, and the first publications dealing with COVID-induced creation of new words appeared not long after the beginning of lockdowns and the proclamation of a state of emergency in many countries all over the world. For example, several collections of corona-neologisms (those that emerged in the Spanish language, but also items from other languages) appeared in online newspaper articles. Apart from Engl. *covidiot* and Span. *covidiota*, there are other examples of potentially humorous blends which appear in these collections. Among them are other English-induced corona-neologisms, such as, for example, *covidivorcio* (e.g., Clarín, 2020a), which, just as *covidiota*, can be considered a borrowing (< Engl. *COVID-19* + Engl. *divorce*) with an adaptation to Spanish noun morphology (*divorce* > *divorcio*), or a creation from Engl. *COVID-19* + Span. *divorcio* (a *loanblend*, cf. Roig-Marín, 2020, p. 1; see below), constructed in Spanish following the English model *covidivorce*. The blend *zoompleaños* < *Zoom* + Span. *cumpleaños* (e.g., Clarín, 2020b) also constitutes a case of an English-induced blend, albeit a slightly different one. In this case, the first constituent, *Zoom*, is a proper noun (i.e., the name of a US-company and software nowadays widely known and used to carry out video conferences) and the second constituent is a Spanish element. Moreover, there are creations built from constituents which originate from other languages but have become lexicalized in Spanish, e.g., *balconazi* < *balcón* (< Ital. *balcone*, according to *DLE*, 2021, s.v. *balcón*) + *nazi* (< Ger. *Nazi*): 'those who fancy themselves balcony-policemen in order to insult those who are out and about in the streets' ("[l]os que ejercen de policías de balcones para insultar a quienes circulan por la calle," Pons Rodríguez, 2020). And there are COVID-related blends which do not *per se* display any foreign influence, as is the case with *cuarenpena* < Span. *cuarentena* + Span. *pena* (Pons Rodríguez, 2020).

Apart from newspaper articles, corona-neologisms appear, for example, in different collections of neologisms (which do not focus exclusively on COVID-related innovations but include them in their inventories), such as *Antenario*, provided by Antenas Neológicas—Red de neología del español (Adelstein and Freixa, 2021). The *Antenario* does not list *covidiota*, but includes, among others, *covidivorcio* and *zoompleaños*.

COVID-induced lexical innovation has also become subject to a considerable number of studies discussing the matter from a linguistic point of view. The neologism Span. *covidiota* can be found in some of them. Rivas Carmona and Calero Vaquera investigate memes which spread in WhatsApp chats in Spain between March 14 and June 21, i.e., during the state of alert (2020, p. 111). The files containing definitions of the neologism *covidiot(a)*, either in English (see also Section From Defining

FIGURE 1 | English definition of *covidiot* shared on Twitter (https://pbs.twimg.com/media/ETqO70GWsAEEX9A?format=jpg&name=medium).

FIGURE 2 | Spanish definition of *covidiota* shared on Twitter (https://pbs.twimg.com/media/ETuYeEdXQAEId52?format=jpg&name=900x900).

to Referencing—Examples and Criteria, **Figure 1**) or in Spanish (Rivas Carmona and Calero Vaquera's example shows a version similar to, but not identical with **Figure 2**)[1] are categorized as a meme of textual content, and subsumed under the group of memes categorized as "[m]emes que entrañan comportamientos lúdicos" ('memes that convey a ludic conduct', Rivas Carmona and Calero Vaquera, 2020, p. 126). The authors emphasize the creative and playful character of the lexical innovation and the humorous effect it aims at, as well as the fact that the definitions use expressions clearly identifiable as negative, or derogatory, to describe the meanings of *covidiot(a)* (Rivas Carmona and Calero Vaquera, 2020, p. 126).

Rodríguez Abella also mentions *covidiota* among the newly created words she examines (2021, p. 81). Roig-Marín points out two predominant initiating centers of creation of new words in the COVID-19 pandemic: journalism and the social media platform Twitter (2020, p. 1). She refers to Span. *covidiota*, (or, rather, the plural form *covidiotas*) as a *loanblend*, with the second part of the blend appearing "in its Spanish rendering" (Roig-Marín, 2020, p. 1).

Ladilova, in her survey of word formation in Spanish in relation to the coronavirus-crisis, underlines the specific relevance of word formation mechanisms otherwise often considered to be rather marginal phenomena: "[…] 'minor' word formation processes such as abbreviations and acronyms are particularly productive in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic" (2020, p. 44). As she subsumes blending (Ger. *Kontamination* or *Amalgamierung*) under the general process of abbreviation (in English also referred to as clipping), this also includes the formation of *covidiota*, even though Ladilova points out the alternative possibility to classify *covidiota* as a compound, the merging of the syllable *-id-* then being caused
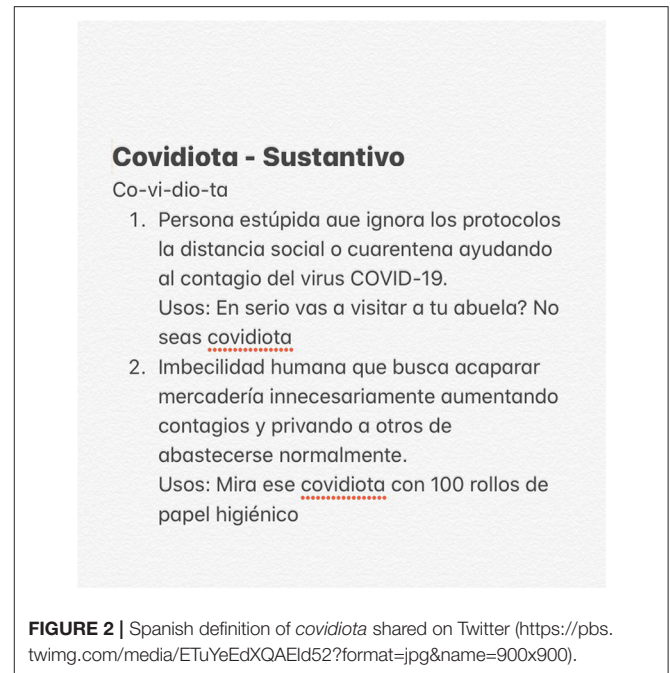
by morphophonemic reasons (Ladilova, 2020, p. 55). Rodríguez-Ponga documents and presents 127 items of Spanish COVID-related vocabulary, which, apart from *covidiota*, comprise the term *covidiccionario* "la recopilación del léxico covídico" (2020, p. 221). As for *covidiota*, the author describes its word formation as a case of composition from *covid* + *idiota*, involving a process of haplology which accounts for the loss of the syllable *-id-* in the middle of the compound (Rodríguez-Ponga, 2020, p. 221).

COVID-related neologisms have of course also been coined in and adopted by many other languages than English and Spanish. For German, for instance, the IDS (Leibniz-Institut für Deutsche Sprache) provide documentation of new, corona-induced vocabulary in the form of an online dictionary (*OWID – Neuer Wortschatz rund um die Coronapandemie*, Klosa-Kückelhaus et al., 2020b[2]). An early collection of COVID-related lexical items was published in a print version in May 2020 (Klosa-Kückelhaus et al., 2020a) and contains, among others, Ger. *Covidiot*. Apart from the online-dictionary, a series of *Stellungnahmen zur Sprache der Coronakrise* ('comments on language in the coronavirus pandemic'), i.e., articles dealing with the influence of the pandemic on the German language, have been published by the IDS (Klosa-Kückelhaus, 2020a,b; Möhrs, 2020; to give but a few examples).

The Spanish language academy, Real Academia Española (RAE), included the term *covidiota* in its historical dictionary *Diccionario histórico de la lengua española (DHLE)* in March 2021. There, it is depicted as being both a noun and an adjective, and categorized as "[c]alco estructural del inglés *covidiot*" (*DHLE*, 2013, s.v. *covidiota*), i.e., a 'structural calque from Engl. *covidiot*.' The *DHLE*-entry lists three meanings for *covidiota*:

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[1]The main difference between the meme cited by Rivas Carmona and Calero Vaquera (2020) and **Figure 2** is that the former includes a fictitious explanatory note about the etymology of the term, saying "Del lat. covidiōta, y este del griego […] covidiōtēs" (2020, p. 126), "From Latin covidiōta, and that from Greek covidiōtēs".

[2]The resource can be accessed here: https://www.owid.de/docs/neo/listen/corona.jsp (accessed October 20, 2021).

1. *adj.* [Persona] Que se niega a cumplir las normas sanitarias dictadas para evitar el contagio de la covid.
2. *s. m. y f.* Persona que se niega a cumplir las normas sanitarias dictadas para evitar el contagio de la covid.
3. *adj.* Típico o característico de un covidiota.
   (*DHLE*, 2013, s.v. *covidiota*)

'1. *adj.* [Person] Who refuses to comply with the sanitary norms issued in order to avoid the proliferation of covid.
2. *noun*, *masc.* and *fem.* A person who refuses to comply with the sanitary norms issued in order to avoid the proliferation of covid.
3. *adj.* Typical or characteristic of a covidiot.'

Apart from these definitions, the entry comprises examples of usage for the different meanings, which originate from (online) newspaper articles from different countries. The *DHLE*-entry, moreover, offers the possibility to display related words (*familia de palabras*). In the case of *covidiota*, two derivatives are shown: *covidiotismo* and *covidiotez*; moreover, the etymology of the term is illustrated by linking Span. *covidiota* to Engl. *covidiot*, and the latter to Engl. *idiot* as well as Engl. *covid*, which, in turn, is linked to Engl. *covidivorce* (*DHLE,* 2013, s.v. *covidiota*—Familia de palabras).

The present paper focuses on the question of how *covidiot(a)* is introduced into Spanish. The study is conducted on the basis of a corpus of tweets in Spanish, which are analyzed in order to gain insight into the various relevant aspects of its way into the receiving language. The central questions can thus be formulated as follows: Is the newness, or otherness, of the term *covidiota* signaled or reflected in the tweets, and what indicators of foreignness can be found? What can be said about processes involving an increasing integration of the item into the Spanish language: do signs of alienness become less frequent over time? In order to approach the central aim of the study, several subordinate research questions are developed to investigate relevant aspects or sub-processes of the introduction of the term *covidiota* into Spanish.

Signs of Newness

The first relevant aspect to be outlined is concerned with form rather than with the content of the tweets: Speakers (and, of course, writers) often feel the urge to highlight items in their texts which are considered unusual as they are not part of the general vocabulary of their language because they are of foreign origin, for example. In the graphic medium (which includes, among others, the communication on social media platforms), such strategies comprise capitalization or the use of quotation marks, among others. The highlighting of foreign items corresponds to the first type of alterity markers as established by Pflanz (2014, p. 164–165): visual markers of alterity. The working hypothesis for the case study is that the use of these markers becomes less frequent over time, as the term becomes more widely known and continually loses part of its alienness.

At the same time, graphical highlighting is not only relevant when it comes to flagging recent borrowings, but it is also considered to be one of many different possible humor- or irony-markers available to speakers/writers who (consciously or unconsciously) wish to underline an ironic or humoristic intention of their utterances ("typographic markers," Burgers and van Mulken, 2017, p. 388). As has been outlined above, blends are typically associated with playful language use and humoristic intention. *Covidiota* can therefore be considered at least a potentially humorous lexical item. So, if graphical highlighting should prove to be a prominent feature during all three observation periods, this feature would not (only) be used as a marker of newness but as a means to emphasize the speaker's humoristic intention.

A particular kind of graphical highlighting has to be discussed in more detail, since it is a highly characteristic feature of language in social media: the use of hashtags. Apart from highlighting in itself, the appearance of a term in the form of a hashtag often goes hand in hand with that term not being integrated into the syntactic structure of the rest of the tweet. Therefore, the appearance of *covidiota* or *covidiot* as a hashtag constitutes one of the categories of analysis.

When it comes to examining the way in which English, or, more precisely, the presence of an English-induced neologism such as *covidiot(a)* influences Spanish twitter discourse, it seems appropriate to look for other English (and English-induced) elements (words, phrases, indications of code-switching) in these texts. The underlying research question connected with this category of analysis is whether the presence of Engl. *covidiot* or Span. *covidiota* might trigger the use of more English-induced linguistic items.

Integration of *covidiota* Into Spanish Language Usage on Twitter

After establishing parameters that reflect the newness of the term *covidiot(a)* to the Spanish language, I will now propose a number of features that can be considered indicators of integration. These can be found on different levels of language and can be said to reflect a growing tendency of the term to behave as a Spanish word.

Although the neologism Span. *covidiota* is of English origin, its formation is completely transparent to Spanish speakers and it does not appear absolutely clear whether it is more appropriate to say that Spanish speakers (i.e., Spanish speaking Twitter users) borrow the entire new-built term *covidot* from English and then adopt it, or that they rather form the Spanish equivalent of the term, following the English example. The latter would be just as plausible as the first possibility, since both constituents *COVID* and *idiot(a)* can be considered internationalisms, albeit of very different kinds. While *COVID* is a very recent creation and was coined in English, Span. *idiota* (as well as Engl. *idiot*) is of ancient Greek origin and constitutes a long-established element of the Spanish lexicon.

Both the English and the Spanish versions of the neologism can be described as *cruces subordinativos* 'subordinating blends,' which means that one of the two components constitutes the nucleus of the word (Ulašin, 2016, p. 165). In this case, it is the second constituent: a *covidiot(a)* is a particular kind of *idiot(a)*.

The nucleus is also decisive when it comes to determining the grammatical properties of the blend, for example its belonging

to a certain word-class. The English term *idiot*, according to the *OED*, can be used as a noun or an adjective (*OED* online, 2021, s.v. *idiot*), although the adjective *idiotic* appears to be the more frequently used alternative. The definitions of Engl. *covidiot* which are received, adopted and disseminated by Spanish speaking Twitter users during the initial phase of its existence, characterize it as a noun. As for the Spanish term *idiota*, the Spanish language academy, (RAE), in its *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* (DLE), classifies it as an adjective, but points out the fact that it is also used as a noun, by adding the annotation "U[sado] t[ambién] c[omo] s[ustantivo]" (*DLE*, 2014: s.v. *idiota*). Other dictionaries register *idiota* as both an adjective and a noun (e.g., Moliner, 2008: s.v. *idiota*).

The actual behavior of Span. *covidiota* with regard to word-class will therefore be one of the aspects under investigation, the actual question being: If the English etymon *covidiot* has been coined as a noun, and Span. *idiota* can be an adjective as well as a noun, how does this influence the use of *covidiota* over time? Is it introduced into Spanish as a noun and continually used (mostly) as such, or is there an increase in usage as an adjective?

When dealing with a foreign, unknown lexical item, it can be expected that users feel a need to define it and comment on the new term before they start actually using it. This point relates to the second, third and fourth types of alterity markers as established by Pflanz (2014) and, with regard to the study at hand, leads to the following crucial questions: Is the term *covidiota* talked about, cited and/or explained, or is it actually used? Does the main function seem to be referential or rather metalinguistic? How does the use of *covidiota* change over time, with regard to these aspects? The differentiation between metalinguistic commenting, defining, negotiation of semantic content and referencing is thus considered a crucial parameter for the analysis of the tweets. With regard to the above-mentioned typology, a possible hypothesis could be that commenting (second type), translating (third type) and explaining (fourth type) become less frequent functions over time, since all three are considered as alterity markers and thus descend in frequency as the item in question becomes better-known.

Another indicator which is considered highly revealing in terms of integration of a new item into its receiving language is the formation of new phrases, compounds, etc. which include the neologism in question. Therefore, one important point of investigation in the present case study consists in the search for recurring expressions in Spanish tweets which contain the term *covidiota*, the hypothesis being that such phrases should become more frequent as the term becomes more widely known and more frequently used.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

As the case study is intended to focus on a qualitative examination of the outlined questions, the number of tweets to be analyzed had to be limited. Therefore, the material subjected to analysis in the study consists of tweets from three separate weeks in 2020, starting with the week in which *covidiota* could be found for the first time in a tweet in Spanish. The second and third weeks under investigation follow with a distance of 14 weeks from the previous one.

The tweets were retrieved manually, with the help of Twitter's advanced search function, applying the following search parameters:
"All of these words"   *covidiota*
"Language"   Spanish
"Dates: from … to …"   e.g., from 29 June 2020 to 30 June 2020
The tweets were then anonymized, deleting any names and references to private Twitter users (including names of cities, etc., which might reveal information concerning a user's identity)[3], with the exception of public figures such as widely known politicians (heads of states, ministers of governments, etc.), well-known celebrities and institutions. The anonymized tweets were subsequently subjected to analysis along several different aspects. The following properties were established as parameters for the analysis:

1) graphic representation (focus on means of graphical highlighting)
2) presence of #: use as a hashtag or without it
3) language: English form (*covidiot*) vs. Spanish form (*covidiota*)
4) other English items (words, phrases, etc.)
5) parts of speech: *covidiota* as adjective or noun
6) *covidiota* in the Spanish sentence: integration vs. unconnected use
7) metalinguistic use vs. definition vs. referencing
8) recurring constructions, patterns of combined occurrence
9) major shifts in meaning

These parameters are considered relevant indicators with regard to the central research aim as stated above. Although the study is of a qualitative nature, the results regarding the individual research parameters are presented in numbers (usually both absolute and relative), so as to make it possible to spot tendencies and developments over time. It has to be underlined, however, that the numbers do not claim any statistical significance. The small sample size and selective nature of the observation periods do not allow for such claims.

The examples cited below are quoted exactly as they appear in the corpus. Spelling mistakes, ungrammatical expressions, etc. are neither pointed out as such, nor are they corrected or changed. The translation of emoticons into their corresponding verbal description is maintained. A typographic distinction is made between the actual tweet text (in italics) and replacements (anonymizations) as well as paraphrased emojis (in regular letters).

RESULTS

The number of results, after the removal of false positives, i.e., tweets in other languages than Spanish (Italian, Portuguese, and Catalan), for the three periods of time (T1–T3) indicated in

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[3]The names of people were therefore replaced by <NAME> in the corpus, the names of cities by <CITY>, etc.

TABLE 1 | Number of results for *covidiota* in Spanish tweets, for the indicated time periods.

Time period	Dates	Number of tweets	Tokens for Span. *covidiota(s)*	Tokens for Engl. *covidiot(s)*
T1	16–22 March 2020	136 tweets	138 tokens	20 tokens
T2	29 June–5 July 2020	650 tweets	649 tokens	18 tokens
T3	12–18 October 2020	705 tweets	731 tokens	2 tokens

section The Introduction of *covidiota* Into Spanish: Research Questions and Aim, is represented in **Table 1**.

The word form entered as a search term in Twitter's search mask was *covidiota*. Nonetheless, in several cases the search returned tweets which contained not this exact form, but the English form *covidiot*. These results were not removed but included in the analysis, provided the tweet-text surrounding the target term was basically in Spanish (allowing, of course, for other contact-induced elements appearing alongside the target term). In T2, for example, 650 tweets comprise 649 tokens for the Spanish form plus 18 tokens for the English form, which means that at least one tweet does not actually contain the Spanish term, but uses the English term while the surrounding text is composed in Spanish.

As can be seen in **Table 1**, the number of tweets which contain the item in question is rising over time, the difference between the first and second period being considerably larger than that between T2 and T3. At the same time, the number of tokens for the "original" English term, *covidiot* (including both the use as a hashtag and without one) descends considerably from T1 to T3. The following sections are going to provide more detailed information about the results regarding the individual research parameters set up in the previous chapter.

Signs of Newness: Results
Graphical Highlighting
Graphical highlighting is considered a relevant means to convey a notion of newness of a linguistic item, as laid out above. Differences can be made out with regard to the scope as well as to the particular kinds of highlighting. It can include an entire phrase or sentence, or just the word itself, or even only parts of the word. As for the different ways of highlighting, two basic types can be distinguished: capitalization, on the one hand, and the use of quotation marks on the other. **Table 2** shows the results according to units and means of graphical highlighting.

As **Table 2** shows, the proportion of tokens including any type of graphical highlighting descends by a large degree from T1 to T2. The difference between T2 and T3, however, is rather small. It can thus be said that the material analyzed for this study shows a marked decline in the frequency of visual alterity markers, but only with regard to the first two periods under investigation. The further development from T2 to T3 suggests a certain continuity with regard to this particular parameter, at least for the second half of the time span under investigation.

English Variant and the Use of Hashtags
Although the search parameters chosen for the retrieval of samples for the corpus explicitly included the Spanish form *covidiota*, the search returned several results which contained the English etymon, *covidiot*, while the overall language of the tweet was Spanish. These tweets were not sorted out but included in the corpus, since the mere fact of their existence seems significant for the research aim at hand. When investigating the introduction of a new anglicism into the Spanish language, this can be considered an essential stage of the process.

As **Table 3** shows, the appearance of Engl. *covidiot* is considerably more frequent when it functions as a hashtag than without one. Moreover, both *#covidiot* and *#covidiota* can be found in all three observation periods, albeit with decreasing frequency. Decreasing frequency can also be observed for the use of the English term *covidiot* in the Spanish tweets examined in the course of this study, in both forms [i.e., *covidiot* and *#covidiot(s)*].

The use of hashtags, as has been pointed out before, constitutes a special type of highlighting in its own right. In terms of integration into the sentence structure, however, both hashtags, the English and the Spanish form, can appear as part of the sentence as well as in a peripheral, more or less unconnected position.

(1) *El presidente de* COUNTRY *recomienda protegernos del coronavirus con estampitas y amuletos #covidiota* [98]
   'The president of COUNTRY recommends that we protect ourselves from the coronavirus with pictures of saints and amulets *#covidiota*'
(2) *Sera muy #covidiota de mi parte entrar a clases de natación con* NAME? *Necesitamos distraernos*
   Weary face [578]
   'Would it be very *#covidiota* of me to attend swimming classes with NAME? We need to take our minds off things'
   Weary face
(3) *Sigue mucho #Covidiot en las calles de* CITY [583]
   'There are still many *#Covidiot* in the streets of CITY'

In (1), the hashtag is placed at the end of the tweet and not integrated into the sentence structure. There are, however, also cases where they function as fully integrated parts of the sentence, as can be seen in (2) and (3).

Other English or English-Induced Elements in the Tweets
As **Table 4** shows, 3.68% of all the tweets in T1, 8.92% of those in T2 and 10.35% in T3 contain English or English-induced items. Not included are proper nouns, for example names of cities or locations. The terms *Facebook*, *Twitter,* and *Instagram* were excluded from the count as long as they were used as names (to refer to the respective social media platforms), but were included as soon as they appeared as a constituent of a different word class (i.e., not a name), such as *twittear* or *tuitear*, for example.

For T3, a separate line shows the number of tweets which contain the word *Halloween* (including several spelling variants). These tweets were counted as a separate group, since their appearance is clearly linked to the season in which the samples

TABLE 2 | Results for graphical highlighting.

Time period		T1	T2	T3
Total number of tokens (*covidiota* + *covidiot*)		**158**	**667**	**733**
Capital letters: phrase/sentence	e.g., *NO SEAS COVIDIOTA*	2	5	4
Capital letters: (Spanish) word only	*COVIDIOTA*	25	19	15
Capital letters: English word	*COVODIOT*	12	9	2
Capital letters: part of the word	e.g., *covIDIOT, covIdiot, COVIDiot,* etc.	7	10	19
Capitalization of the first letter[a]	*Covidiot*	24	41	55
Quotation marks[b]: phrase/sentence	e.g., *"no seas covidiota"*	7	5	1
Quotation marks: word only	*"covidiota"*	8	10	4
Others	e.g., **no seas covidiota*, <covidiota>,* etc.	1	2	2
TOTAL (absolute)		86	101	102
TOTAL (relative)		54.43%	15.14%	13.92%

[a]This feature is not registered as a means of highlighting if it appeared at the beginning of a tweet or sentence, or after punctuation characters generally used to mark the end of a sentence.

[b]This category includes all common variants of quotation marks, i.e. "_" as well as '_' and ≪_≫. It is possible that the function of single quotation marks, even in their use in social media, differs slightly from that of the others. However, this possible difference is not taken into account in the present study.

TABLE 3 | *Covidiot*, #*covidiot(s)*, and #*covidiota(s)*: numbers per observation period.

	in T1 (abs.)	in T1 (rel.)	in T2 (abs.)	in T2 (rel.)	in T3 (abs.)	in T3 (rel.)
covidiot	4	2.94%	2	0.31%	0	0%
#*covidiot(s)*	15	11.03%	17	2.62%	2	0.28%
#*covidiota(s)*	40	29.41%	10	1.54%	31	4.40%

TABLE 4 | English and English-induced elements in the tweets.

	in T1 (abs.)	in T1 (rel.)	in T2 (abs.)	in T2 (rel.)	in T3 (abs.)	in T3 (rel.)
English items	5	3.68%	58	8.92%	73	10.35%
Special case: *Halloween*, incl. variants (*Jalogüin, jalowin,* etc.)					39	5.53%

were retrieved. Moreover, although the term is also English-induced, it has to be regarded as a name rather than a common noun and therefore should not be included in the same category as the others.

The presence of English or English-induced items in the tweets, apart from *covidiot(a)*, is a recurring feature within the analyzed tweets, the highest proportion being shown for T3 with 10.35%, and the tendency in this case appearing to be rather an increasing, not a declining one. As the results suggest that, at most, about every 10th of the examined tweets contain other linguistic items in English, they do not appear to confirm the hypothesis that the presence of *covidiota* might trigger an intensified use of anglicisms. Neither do they clearly reject it. In order to provide any definite conclusions of the results in this respect, a comparative study would have to be carried out to provide information on the proportion of anglicisms in tweets produced by a similar sample of twitter users, so as to see whether that proportion is similar or not.

The English or English-induced items considered in the analysis are, for the purposes of the present study, considered as one single group, even though there are actually different kinds of items contained within that group. In the first place, they are not very numerous in the tweet-corpus at hand. Secondly, what matters with regard to the research aim is the presence or absence of other English-induced items. Distinguishing different types of anglicisms, on the other hand, does not constitute a matter of high priority in this respect. Nonetheless, some examples shall be given to illustrate some individual cases:

(4) *Todos diciendome cosas de que mi roomie es covidiota en vez de decirle algo directamente a ella*
    Face vomiting [687]
    'Everyone telling me things about my *roomie* being *covidiota* instead of saying something directly to her'
    Face vomiting

(5) *Estoy a nada de ser covidiota, ya no awanto el encierro jelp* [757]
    'I'm on the verge of being *covidiota*, I can no longer stand being locked up *jelp*'

(6)   *estoy a nada de ser una covidiota e ir a estudiar a un starbucks, i cant stay in my room no more* [987]
    'I'm on the verge of being a *covidiota* and going to a Starbucks to study, *i can't stay in my room no more*'

TABLE 5 | Parts of speech – *covidiota* as adjective or noun in the corpus.

Observation period		Tokens (total)	*covidiota* as adjective (tokens)	*covidiota* as noun (tokens)	*covidiota* as adj. or noun: indeterminable (tokens)
T1	abs.	138	10	58	70
	rel.	100%	7.25%	42.03%	50.72%
T2	abs.	649	218	321	110
	rel.	100%	33.59%	49.46%	16.95%
T3	abs.	731	386	270	75
	rel.	100%	52.80%	36.94%	10.26%

TABLE 6 | Isolation of *covidiota* in the Spanish sentence.

Observation period	*Covidiota* as only text (one-word-tweets)	Isolation/segmentation			Non-integrated use of *covidiota*: Total
		Covidiota in initial position	*Covidiota* in final position	Others	
T1 abs.	11	31	31	2	75
T1 rel. (136 tweets)	8.09%	22.79%	22.79%	1.47%	55.15%
T2 abs.	36	6	16	1	59
T2 rel. (650 tweets)	5.54%	0.92%	2.46%	0.15%	9.08%
T3 abs.	9	1	9	1	20
T3 rel. (705 tweets)	1.28%	0.14%	1.28%	0.14%	2.84%

(7) *Hoy traigo mucho mucho hate para los vale verga #covidiota #COVID19* [1305]

'Today, I'm carrying a lot of *hate* for those who just don't care *#covidiota #COVID19*'

While in (4) and (7) individual lexical items (*roomie* and *hate*, respectively) are inserted into the Spanish text without showing any visible alteration in form, in (5) English *help* has changed into *jelp*, probably representing a pronunciation variant which replaces the sound [h], which is not part of the phoneme inventory of Spanish, by [x]. Apart from that, (5) is another example of a single lexical item being included in a Spanish tweet text. In (6), however, the English item is not one individual word, but an entire sentence: *i* [sic] *can't stay in my room no more.*

Integration of *covidiota* Into Spanish Language Usage on Twitter

Parts of Speech: *covidiota* as an Adjective and/or a Noun

In the definitions circulating within social media platforms during the period of origin of the term, Engl. *covidiot* is usually classified as a noun. The same applies for most of the first definitions in Spanish which make an explicit reference to word-class. However, this does not necessarily mean that the Spanish term is really used as a noun, or, at least, it is not only a noun but also an adjective.

The representation in **Table 5** considers only the tokens for Span. *covidiota*, leaving out those for Engl. *covidiot*. The distinction between *covidiota* as a noun and *covidiota* as an adjective is not always very clear and, in some cases, cannot be made at all. This is mostly the case if *covidiota* appears without a clarifying co-text from which to gather this information [e.g., in one-word-tweets, but also in examples like (8)].

(8) *Ya acuñaron una nueva palabra, "covidiota".* [3]

'They've just coined a new word, "*covidiota*"'.

It can be seen in the last column of **Table 5** that the proportion of such unclear cases decreases over time. This development can be attributed to the fact that the term is increasingly used and integrated into a Spanish sentence structure, rather than being cited, defined, or talked about, as is often the case in the first phase of its existence.

Covidiota in the Spanish Sentence: Integration vs. Isolation

Table 6 shows the number of cases (tweets) in which *covidiota* is not integrated into the Spanish sentence structure but stands apart, occupying, in one way or another, a marginal position within the tweet. In these cases, *covidiota* most frequently appears either in an initial position [often followed by a definition, as in (9)], or in a final position [often as a hashtag, as in (10)].

TABLE 7 | Metalinguistic use, defining, referencing and combination of functions.

Observation period: abs./rel. (total of 1.491 tweets)	T1 abs. (136)	T1 rel.	T2 abs. (650)	T2 rel.	T3 abs. (705)	T3 rel.
Metalinguistic commenting only	9	6.62%	14	2.15%	2	0.28%
Definition only	23	16.91%	3	0.46%	1	0.14%
Metalinguistic commenting + definition	33	24.26%	2	0.31%	1	0.14%
Unconnected mentioning of the term	7	5.15%	10	1.54%	5	0.71%
Referencing + definition (separated)	13	9.56%	0	0%	0	0%
Referencing only	37	27.21%	444	68.31%	381	54.04%
Referencing and negotiating semantic content	8	5.88%	153	23.54%	307	43.55%
Containing a metalinguistic comment (and, possibly, other functions)	45	33.09%	19	2.92%	8	1.13%
Containing a definition (and, possibly, other functions)	74	54.41%	6	0.92%	1	0.14%
Containing referencing	63	46.32%	602	92.62%	693	98.30%
Containing use of *covidiota* as/in a name	0	0%	21	3.23%	3	0.43%

(9) *Covidiota*
Dicese de la persona que no respeta la cuarentena [41]
'Covidiota
It is said about the person who doesn't adhere to quarantine'

(10) (=1) *El presidente de* COUNTRY *recomienda protegernos del coronavirus con estampitas y amuletos #covidiota* [98]
'The president of COUNTRY recommends that we protect ourselves from the coronavirus with pictures of saints and amulets *#covidiota*'

One-word-tweets, where the word *covidiota* actually constitutes the only written text present, represent a special case of isolated use and are therefore also included. It has to be noted, however, that a one-word-tweet can be part of a thread or series of reciprocal communication between two or more Twitter users, so that it does not necessarily have to be entirely isolated when taking into account the expanded co-text.

The numbers in **Table 6** show an overall tendency toward a growing integration of the term into the Spanish sentence structure. While in T1 more than half of all the tweets containing the word *covidiota* do not include it in their syntactic structures, in T3 this proportion has dropped to <3%. This development can be closely linked to another one: the changes of proportion with regard to metalinguistic use vs. use for referencing, which will be presented in the following section.

Metalinguistic Use and Defining vs. Referencing (Integration in Terms of Content)
In the first observation period, a majority of tweets contains a definition of the term Engl. *covidiot* and/or of Span. *covidiota*. As for the allocation of the tweets to the categories indicated in **Table 7**, it has to be noted that there are numerable cases which apply to several categories (for examples and further aspects of distinction between and combination of categories, see section Discussion).

When *covidiota* is used as an isolated item (i.e., the tweet consists of just that one word), one possibility is that it represents a direct response to a preceding tweet, e.g., a picture which shows a group of people who do not wear their masks as recommended. In these cases, *covidiota* in the following tweet is interpreted as used by the author to refer to the people in the picture (to condemn the behavior shown in the preceding tweet). In other cases, a tweet containing only the one word, *covidiota*, can be accompanied by an image file, showing a definition (either in English or in Spanish) of the term. These cases then belong to the category "definition." There are, however, tweets for which neither of the two options applies, i.e., they do not, in any ascertainable way, respond to a preceding tweet, and neither do they introduce or accompany a definition of the term *covidiot(a)*. These cases therefore constitute their own category of "unconnected mentioning," since no context can be identified.

Recurring Constructions, Patterns of Combined Occurrence
In the course of the analysis of the 1,491 tweets, some combinations of *covidiota* with other linguistic items could be made out as recurring patterns. One such combination is the combination of the copula *ser* 'to be' + *covidiota*. (11) is a further example for this type.

(11) *yo quiero ser covidiota*
Happy man raising one hand [454]
'I want to be *covidiota*'
Happy man raising one hand

Another recurring expression is *andar de covidiota*, Engl. (roughly) 'to be out and about as a covidiot,' which appears 60 times within the corpus (T2: 17 times, T3: 43 times). With regard to similarly constructed expressions, the following expanded pattern can be made out: verb + *de* + *covidiota*. The

corpus provides evidence of this pattern for the verbs *seguir* 'to continue' (two cases), *salir* 'to go out' (three cases), *ir(se)* [a algún lugar] 'to go [somewhere]' (12 cases), and *estar* 'to be' (five cases). Examples (12), (13), and (14) illustrate this type of expression.

(12) *Que pinches ganas de andar de covidiota* [1141]
'How damn much I want to be out and about as a *covidiota*'
(13) *hoy me fui de covidiota a la playa, que les digo* [866]
'today I went to the beach as a *covidiota*, what do I tell you'
(14) *¿O sea que aunque me encierre toda la vida si mi hermana sigue de covidiota igual me voy a morir?* [671]
'That is to say that, even though I lock myself up forever, if my sister continues to be a *covidiota*, I'm still going to die?'
(15) *creo que es un buen momento para decir que soy covidiota de closet, no me odien pls* [326]
'I think this is a good moment to say that I'm a covert *covidiota*, don't hate me *pls*'

Apart from these expressions, which, altogether, provide ways to include Span. *covidiota* into a verb phrase, there is another recurring expression: the noun phrase *covidiota de closet*, Engl. (roughly) 'covert covidiot'. It is less frequent than the aforementioned verb phrases but, nonetheless, worth mentioning. It can be found 17 times in the corpus and is exemplified in (15).

Major Differences in Meaning

With regard to major shifts in meaning, one development can be reported. The vast majority of Twitter users employ the term *covidiota* in a playful way, which could be interpreted as an attempt of humorous and self-ironic reflection of the unpleasant, alarming, and stressful situation brought about by the outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 and the measures imposed to curb its spreading among the population. When used in this sense, *covidiota* seems to adopt rather a broad meaning, including roughly any activity which takes place outside one's home. It appears to apply to any activity that includes meeting friends, but also to going to the beach, traveling, or going to the hairdresser's [see examples (16), (17), and (18)].

(16) *Si este fin voy a la playa, pero voy a la playa secreta que no va nadie, me catalogo un covidiota?* [420]
'If I go to the beach this weekend, but I go to the secret beach where nobody goes, do I classify as a *covidiota*?'
(17) *Me urge un viaje aunque suene como un covidiota* [1087]
Pleading face
'I urgently need to travel, even though I might sound like a *covidiota*'
Pleading face
(18) *me súper urge cortarme el cabello pero no quiero ser una covidiota* [355]
'I super urgently need to have my hair cut, but I don't want to be a *covidiota*'

As the examples show, it is a noteworthy feature of the term *covidiota* in this sense that it is very frequently used to refer to oneself. This fact supports the hypothesis that, at least in some cases, a noticeable proportion of self-irony is included in these statements.

There is a very different reading of the term *covidiota*, which does not at all show any traces of self-irony. Instead, it conveys a strong sense of irony, even sarcasm (understood as a particularly strong way to express a negative attitude through irony; cf. Colston, 2017, p. 241), but its aim is not the speaker (tweet-author) him/herself, but another person or group (on the role of aggression in verbal humor and opposing groups as targets of humor, cf., e.g., the overview in Attardo, 2020, p. 64–67). This particular reading of covidiota represents an extremely noteworthy semantic change, since the initial meaning (*covidiota* 'someone who does not respect/follow the antivirus-measures') has been turned into its opposite, with the term now referring to 'someone who (unjustifiably, in the eyes of the speaker) considers the coronavirus a serious threat and supports, follows, implements, or even creates measures for its containment'. This meaning of *covidiota* is much less frequent in the corpus at hand than the other one, and in several cases, the particular meaning only becomes clear after consulting the context (threads and exchange of tweets before and after the tweet in question). (19) and (20) provide two examples.

(19) *¿Obligar a los niños a usar bozal? El secretario de "educación" es un covidiota* [1120]
'Make children use a muzzle? The secretary of "education" is a *covidiota*'
(20) *El covidiota no pregunta, solo asiente a la tv.* [883]
'The *covidiota* doesn't ask questions, but just agrees with TV.'

In contrast to the initial meaning discussed above, this newer (its first appearance within the corpus is in T2) and opposite meaning does not seem to come with one central, common definition which is then shared between users and subsequently translated into Spanish. The tweets which can be attributed to this reading of *covidiota* only belong to two of the above-established categories: "referencing and negotiating semantic content" or "referencing only." However, due to the very small number of tweets representing this particular meaning of *covidiota*, it is hard to reach any reliable conclusions about its use, beyond what has already been said.

DISCUSSION

Covidiota and Word-Class

The question of what part of speech *covidiota* actually constitutes in a specific case of language usage cannot always be answered in a definite way. There are cases which do not allow for a clear allocation to either one of the possible word classes (i.e., noun or adjective) at all. Other instances provide certain indications which can support the analysis. In the following, some examples shall be outlined in more detail. The *Nueva gramática de la lengua Española* (*NGLE*), published by the Real Academia Española, is used as a reference in cases of doubt and to provide further information.

Covidiota is very frequently used together with the verb *ser* 'to be,' which can generally be followed by an adjective as well as by a noun. Examples (21) and (22) illustrate a significant difference

between two different possible constructions with *ser*: in (21), *covidiota* is accompanied by the indefinite article *un*, and thus clearly used as a noun. In (22), however, there is no determiner, nor are there any other indicators which would encourage an interpretation of *covidiota* as a noun.

(21)　'No seas un CovIdiota.' [5]
　　　'Don't be a CovIdiota'
(22)　No seas "covidiota" [63]
　　　'Don't be "covidiota" ['covidiotic']'

Following the descriptions in the *NGLE*, in the present study, in uses like (22), i.e., constructions of the type *ser* + *covidiota* (without insertion of determiners), *covidiota* is taken to be an adjective. The same applies for the construction *por* + *covidiota*, as for example in (23), since these phrases can be interpreted as being essentially a shortened form of *por ser covidiota* (cf. *NGLE*, 2009, p. 3466), 'for being *covidiota* ['covidiotic']'.

(23)　si sales positivo es por covidiota [208]
　　　'if you turn out to be positive, it's because of being *covidiota*'

The identification of word-class in constructions of the type verb + *de* + *covidiota* (*andar/ir/estar/seguir de covidiota*, see Section Recurring Constructions, Patterns of Combined Occurrence) brings about certain difficulties. Here, *covidiota* is preceded by neither a determiner nor any other element which would allow for its identification as a noun at first glance. Neither is there any clear evidence supporting an interpretation of *covidiota* as an adjective. Consultation of the *NGLE*, however, suggests an interpretation of *covidiota*, in the instances indicated above, as *complementos predicativos nominales*.

> 38.10d No forman parte de complementos de régimen, pero se construyen con *de* [...] los complementos predicativos nominales que designan alguna actividad u ocupación en la que se ingresa ([...] *Me voy a París de becario* [...]), se permanece ([...] *Está de jefa de sección* [...]) o se termina [...] (*NGLE*, 2009, p. 2891).

The *complementos de régimen*, mentioned in the first part of the extract, are those whose preposition is determined by the verb, as would be the case for *de* in *quiero salir de aquí* 'I want to get out of here,' for example. This does not apply to the examples at hand, as in *andas de covidiota*, *sigue de covidiota*, etc. Moreover, the interpretation of the syntactic functions within the examples under investigation as copula constructions with predicative complements is highly plausible, even mandatory in the case of *estar de covidiota* (*estar* being one of the two central, prototypical copula verbs in Spanish, next to *ser*). This fact alone does not imply that the item following the preposition *de* necessarily has to be a noun, since there are also constructions of the type verb + *de* + adjective, as in *acusar de incompetente* (*NGLE*, 2009: 2891) 'to accuse of being incompetent,' also containing a predicative complement, albeit one that relates to the *complemento directo*. However, as is pointed out in § 38.10c, adjectival elements frequently appear in this kind of construction together with verbs that express judgement (*NGLE*, 2009: 2890–2891), in this case *acusar*. The verb semantics and the overall meaning of

the phrases from the *covidiota*-corpus (*andar de covidiota*, *ir de covidiota*, etc.) are of a different nature, and actually match the description in the extract cited above very closely: *designan alguna actividad u ocupación en la que se ingresa* [...], *se permanece* [...] *o se termina* [...] – the activity or occupation in our case being that of 'acting as a covidiot,' 'going somewhere as/being a covidiot,' 'continuing to be a covidiot,' etc. Some of the examples from the extract also closely resemble some of the constructions in the corpus:

(24)　Creo que me voy a ir una semana de covidiota a CITY porque aún no quiero subirme a un avión. [...] [1214] ('I think I'll go to CITY as a *covidiota* for a week because I don't want to board a plane yet') compared to *Me voy a París de becario* ('I go to Paris as a scholarship holder'), and
(25)　que ganas de estar de covidiota en la playa [959] 'How I would like to be at the beach as a *covidiota*' compared to *Está de jefa de sección* ('She works as head of department').

Thus, with reference to the RAE's assessment as quoted in the extract above, in expressions of the type *andar/ir/estar/seguir* + *de* + *covidiota*, for the part of speech-analysis at hand, *covidiota* is considered to be a noun. This decision suggests an interpretation following the RAE's description of the elements in question as *complementos predicativos nominales*, nominal predicative complements.

As a further example, I would briefly like to discuss the elements *muy* and *mucho* as accompanying items of *covidiota*. At first glance, both items seem to be rather unproblematic in terms of part of speech analysis and therefore can be of much help when it comes to determining the word-class of the element to be modified by them: *muy*, as an adverb, modifies the adjective *covidiota*, whereas *mucho* relates to *covidiota* as a noun (or rather, as *covidiota* has to be considered a countable noun, the correct form in standard Spanish should be the plural, as in *muchos* or *muchas covidiotas*). This holds true for *muy* in most cases, as is illustrated by the example (26).

(26)　Es que sí hay que ser muy covidiota para hacer una boda en estos tiempos
　　　Man facepalming [355]
　　　'One really has to be very *covidiota* to have a wedding in times like these'
　　　Man facepalming
(27)　Mi hermana no tiene trabajo por culpa de covid, y la muy covidiota anda en el centro de compras jaja
　　　Sneezing face Person facepalming [276]
　　　'My sister doesn't have a job due to covid, and the very *covidiota* goes out shopping in the mall'
　　　Sneezing face Person facepalming
(28)　Mucho covidiota el día de hoy
　　　Thinking face [225]
　　　'A lot of *covidiota* today'
　　　Thinking face

Example (27), however, is much more ambiguous. On the one hand, the presence of the adverb *muy* would usually suggest a classification of *covidiota* as an adjective. On the other hand, *muy* is preceded by the definite article *la*, which provides a

strong clue for the interpretation of *covidiota* as a noun. In the *NGLE*, expressions similar to the one in question are mentioned in connection with a certain type of emphatic apposition, as in *la muy loca de tu prima* […] (*NGLE*, 2009, p. 887). For that the authors refer to processes of neutralization of noun and adjective (*NGLE*, 2009, p. 887). Although they generally opt for the analysis as a nominalized adjective (cf. also § 13.7c, *NGLE*, 2009, p. 944), they explicitly point out the possibility of a reverse interpretation, i.e., analyzing the element in question as an adjective, or rather, an adjectival use of a noun, "ya que los nombres que se admiten en esta estructura suelen aceptar el adverbio *muy*, característico de los adjetivos graduables" (*NGLE*, 2009, p. 887). For the purposes of the present study, and following the *NGLE*, *covidiota* in expressions of this type (*la muy covidiota*) was analyzed as a noun, bearing in mind the fact that this is not the only possible way of interpretation.

The tweet-corpus does not contain the forms *muchos* or *muchas* in the plural. Instead, there are 10 instances of *mucho* in the singular, followed by *covidiota* (also in the singular), as illustrated in (28).

The use of the singular instead of the plural form does not alter the fact that *mucho* as a *cuantificador* helps identifying *covidiota* as a noun in these cases. The meaning, on a denotative level, is the same as that of *muchos covidiotas*. For the connotative level, however, the authors of the *NGLE* point out that, firstly, these constructions are more common in colloquial than in formal conversations, and secondly, that they often tend to convey a derogatory note (*NGLE*, 2009, p. 1479).

As these examples show, the analysis of Span. *covidiota* as a noun or as an adjective involves some particular challenges and cases of doubt. Bearing in mind the fact that uses are not always unambiguous and that decisions were made as outlined above, the numbers obtained in the present study and presented in **Table 5** suggest an increase in the proportions of the use of *covidiota* as an adjective over time.

When it comes to interpreting these results, the question is whether this growing tendency of *covidiota* to function as an adjective can be considered as a manifestation of increased integration into the Spanish language. This would be the case if the proportions of Span. *covidiota* as noun/as adjective could be shown to become more similar to those of Span. *idiota* as noun/as adjective, over time. Online corpora of Spanish were consulted in order to provide the necessary data to make this comparison.

The research in several online corpora of Spanish reveals a varied picture with regard to the use of Span. *idiota* as a noun or as an adjective. **Table 8** shows the results for three corpora of the *Corpus del español*, *Historical/Genre* (Davies, 2002), *Web/Dialects* (Davies, 2016) and *NOW* (*News on the web*, Davies, 2012), as well as for the RAE's *Corpus del Español del Siglo XXI* (Real Academia Española, 2021) and *Spanish Web 2018* (*esTenTen18*) in Sketch Engine (2021)[4].

As can be seen in the table, the proportions of *idiota* tagged as an adjective in the corpora range from 11.43% (*NOW*) to 51.02% (*CORPES XXI*), those for *idiot* as a noun from 48.96% (*CORPES*

XXI) to 88.57% (*NOW*). The reasons for these considerable differences cannot be examined in detail in this study. However, it seems reasonable to assume that the classification is based on different criteria in the different corpora. In order to check, for instance, how *ser + idiota* is handled in the corpora, a search for the exact phrase *es idiota* was conducted, in order to test the results for this one specific form of *ser idiota*. In the *Genre/Historical*-corpus (Davies, 2002), there are nine cases of *es idiota* when looking for *idiota* as a noun, and none at all for *idiota* as an adjective. The *Web/Dialects*-corpus shows 520 hits for *es idiota* with *idiota* tagged as a noun, and 20 for *idiota* as an adjective, and the *NOW*-corpus contains 487 cases of *es idiota* with *idiota* as noun, but none with the adjective. In the *CORPES XXI*, on the other hand, all 17 instances containing the phrase *es idiota* are delivered when searching for *idiota* as an adjective, while non is returned when searching for the noun. Thus, there might be a general difference between the *Corpus del español* and the *CORPES XXI* regarding the handling of *ser idiota* in terms of word-class, which could constitute one of the reasons for the strongly varying numbers represented in **Table 8**.

A short examination of some selected samples reveals that sometimes, cases which appear to show the same structure appear in both groups, as a noun and an adjective. For example, the expression *el/la muy idiota* (similar to the above discussed *la muy covidiota*), is shown to appear 26 times in the *NOW*-corpus. In 24 of these cases, *idiota* is tagged as an adjective. In two instances, however, *idiota* is tagged as a noun. It does not become clear from the examples what causes these differences with regard to word-class. There are other expressions which show variation in this respect within several corpora (e.g., *por idiota* and *qué idiota* tend to appear in both groups), which cannot be examined in detail here. On the whole, this seems to concern rather a small number of examples, and might just be due to errors in the Pos-tagging. It is therefore rather unlikely to be the reason for the big differences in the numbers shown in **Table 8**.

In addition to the corpus research for Spanish *idiota*, a quick consultation of some corpora of English was carried out in order to gain some information about the use of Engl. *idiot* with regard to word-class. The search in the *COCA* (Davies, 2008), *GloWbE* (Davies, 2013) and *BNC* (Davies, 2004)[5] all lead to the same result in that none of them delivered any findings of *idiot* being used as an adjective. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that it actually is not used as an adjective, as other corpora might show evidence for its adjectival use. However, this use can probably be said to be less common than in Spanish, since in three different corpora, no evidence can be found.

The question underlying the parts-of-speech analysis was whether the introduction of *covidiota* into Spanish brings about an increase of usage of the term as an adjective. The data provides evidence for that. Moreover, the examination of corpus data was carried out in order to find out whether the usage of *covidiota* becomes more similar to that of *idiota* over time. A comparison of the numbers gained from the *covidiota*-data (**Table 5**) with the numbers in **Table 8** shows that the result for *covidiota* as an adjective in T1 (7.25%) is lower even than that

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[4]The search in the latter one of the named corpora was executed via the function "Wordlist", filtering for adjectives and nouns, respectively, containing *idiota*.

[5]All accessed *via* https://www.english-corpora.org/ (accessed October 28, 2021).

TABLE 8 | Consultation of Spanish online corpora—*idiota* as noun vs. adjective.

Corpus	Corpus size	Span. *idiota* as a noun		Span. *idiota* as an adjective		Span. *idiota* total	
		abs.	rel.	abs.	rel.	abs.	rel.
Corpus del español – *Genre/Historical*	100 million words[a]	233	66.57%	117	33.43%	350	100%
Corpus del español – *Web/Dialects*	Two billion words[b]	12,185 + 426 = 12,611[c]	73.94%	4,445	26.06%	17,056	100%
Corpus del español – NOW	Six billion words[d]	12,869 + 403 = 13,272	88.57 %	1,712	11.43 %	14,984[e]	100%
CORPES XXI	350 millones de formas ortográficas[f]	2,386	48.96%	2,486	51.02%	4,873[g]	100%
Spanish Web 2018 *(esTenTen18)*	16.9 billion words[h]	87,170	64.34%	48,304	35.66%	135,474	100%

[a]*Clitics are not counted separately: "infinitives + clitic (e.g. decirlo), -ndo forms + clitic (e.g. diciéndolo), and the word del are all one word each" (https://www.corpusdelespanol.org/ hist-gen/, accessed October 20, 2021).*

[b]*Clitics are counted separately: "infinitives + clitic (e.g. decir lo), -ndo forms + clitic (e.g. diciéndo lo), and the word del (de el) are all two words each" (https://www.corpusdelespanol. org/web-dial/, accessed October 20, 2021).*

[c]*The numbers refer to 12,185 occurrences of idiota as a noun, plus 426 cases in which idiota was categorized as a "noun.PROP", a proper noun.*

[d]*Clitics are counted seperately: "infinitives + clitic (e.g. decir lo), -ndo forms + clitic (e.g. diciéndo lo), and the word del (de el) are all two words each" (https://www.corpusdelespanol. org/now/, accessed October 20, 2021).*

[e]*The actual number returned by the search for idiota in the NOW-Corpus without specification of PoS amounts to 14,985, a single occurrence being categorized as a pronoun. However, no corresponding context is returned, the page where the corresponding reference should appear remains blank. Therefore, for the purposes at hand, this single instance was removed from the total amount, since there is no way of examining it any closer in order to find out how idiota might be classified as a pronoun.*

[f]*Number given for the version 0.94 (https://www.rae.es/banco-de-datos/corpes-xxi, accessed October 20, 2021).*

[g]*One instance of idiota in the CORPES XXI is depicted as an extranjerismo, a category established in the CORPES alongside the known categories for word class, such as adjetivo, sustantivo, verbo, etc.*

[h]*Source of information: https://www.sketchengine.eu/estenten-spanish-corpus/ (accessed October 20, 2021).*

for *idiota* in the *NOW*-corpus (11.43%). Apart from being the earliest of the investigation periods, and therefore probably most strongly influenced by English, T1 is the least reliable with regard to information about word-class, since about half of all items contained in it could not be assigned to any word-class at all. The results for T2, i.e., use as an adjective in 33.59%, resemble the numbers from the *Genre/Historical*-corpus and the *Spanish Web 2018 (esTenTen18)*. T3 comes closest to the result for *idiota* in the *CORPES XXI*. This latter finding is certainly influenced by the fact that, in the analysis of the *covidiota*-data, reference was made to the definitions and classifications published by the RAE (in the *NGLE*). The *CORPES XXI* being one of the corpora provided by the RAE, it can be assumed that Pos-tagging is based on the RAE's criteria as well, while the other corpora were created to match different criteria. Also, although the numbers for T2 and T3 with regard to the adjective come close to the numbers of some of the corpora, the numbers for the usage as a noun do less so. In general, comparability has to be considered somewhat limited by the fact that the *covidiota*-data contains not only the noun- and adjective-group, but also the third category of indeterminable cases which remain without classification.

To sum up, as exemplified above, the part of speech analysis for *covidiota* is, in some respects, controversial and, in some cases, it is not at all possible to assign a token to one of the two word-classes (see section Parts of Speech: *covidiota* as an Adjective and/or a Noun). Nonetheless, an increase over time in the use of *covidiota* as an adjective can be attested (even though the exact proportion might not be entirely uncontested, given the challenges of the analysis mentioned above). While the

etymon was coined as a noun in English, it is increasingly used as an adjective in Spanish, which therefore can be considered one aspect of its integration into the target language.

From Defining to Referencing—Examples and Criteria

As **Table 7** shows, more than half of the tweets in T1 contain a definition of the term *covidiot* or *covidiota*. The most commonly found definition in English is shown in **Figure 1**.

Since this definition is usually attached to the tweet as an image file, the tweet itself offers space for either an accompanying comment, often of a metalinguistic kind, as in (29), or a comment in which the author uses the term for referencing, as in (30) or (31), either to express a statement, demand, etc. of their own, or merely to offer a sample sentence for how to use the term in Spanish.

(29) *Me gustó! Covidiota, tb funciona en castellano*
    3x clapping hands sign
    3x green heart [35]
    'I liked it! *Covidiota*, also works in Spanish'
    3x clapping hands sign
    3x green heart

(30) *Covidiota. De estos hay muchos en mi barrio.* [84]
    '*Covidiota*. Of those, there are a lot in my neighborhood.'

(31) *No seas COVIDiota.*
    #QuedateencasaPelotudo [136]
    Don't be *COVIDiota*.
    #QuedateencasaPelotudo ('stay at home, jerk')

In other instances, the tweet text only comprises the word *covidiota*, and is then followed by the English definition depicted above, thus offering the Spanish version of the term together with its proposed meaning and sample sentences in English. There are, however, also cases in which the tweet itself presents a Spanish definition of the term *covidiota*, which can either be a very close translation, as in (32) (for the first part of the definition), or, otherwise, show considerable deviations from the original, e.g., by adding new aspects and possible meanings, as in (33).

(32) *Covidiota:*
      1. Persona estúpida que ignora el protocolo de "distancia social," ayudando a esparcir el COVID-19.
      "De verdad vas a visitar a la abuela? No seas un covidiota" [36]
      'Covidiota:
      1. Stupid person who ignores the protocol of "social distance," helping to spread COVID-19. "Are you really going to visit grandma? Don't be a *covidiota*"'
(33) *Covidiot, covidiota. Aún se pueden agregar definiciones, como:*
      3. aquel gobernante estúpido que no tome las medidas restrictivas necesarias para evitar la propagación del virus. [40]
      'Covidiot, covidiota. One can still add definitions, such as: 3. that stupid governing politician who doesn't impose the necessary restrictive measures to avoid the spreading of the virus.'

In total, 42 out of the 1,491 tweets (42 out of the 136 in T1, to be more precise) analyzed for this study were accompanied by this particular English definition of the original term Engl. *covidiot*. Another two comprised either a slight variant of it, which is, however, very close to the first one in terms of content, or only include the first part of the first definition, leaving out the second half.

Spanish versions of the definition, also circulating as image files, arise soon after the English one, and are also passed on through the social media networks. They are, however, less uniform and less frequent. There are only seven tweets within the corpus which contain such a file. The most frequent one is shown in **Figure 2**. It appears only three times throughout the corpus, but has an almost identical variant (which appears twice). The remaining two have to be considered independent versions. There is only one definition among them which depicts the Spanish word *covidiota* as either a noun or an adjective, while all the others classify it as a noun.

In most cases however, Spanish definitions appear within the actual text of the tweet, i.e., typed in by the individual Twitter user. As the Spanish definitions of the term during the first days of its existence constitute individually composed texts, as opposed to a "standard" definition which is spread in parallel for the English term, they exhibit a certain range of variation. Most of them agree on one basic meaning of the term *covidiota*, which corresponds to the first half of the definitions shown above, i.e., someone who ignores the appeal to keep physical distance from others, avoid social gatherings, etc., and thus is considered to further enable the spreading of COVID-19 [see for example (34), but also (35)]. Some of these definitions also take into account

the second part of the definition, which describes a person who resorts to panic purchases and hoards large amounts of certain goods at home [e.g., example (36)]. A peculiarity of example (36) is the classification of the first sense of the word as an adjective, whereas the second is registered as a noun.

(34) *COVIDIOTA: Dícese de aquella persona idiota que no atiende las norma de higiene, cuarenta y comunidad ante la pandemia de Covid-19.* [82]
      'COVIDIOTA: It is said of the idiotic person who does not comply with the norms of hygiene, quarantine and communality in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic.'
(35) *#COVIDIOTA: /unisex/ entiéndase por persona QUE NO SE QUEDA EN SU CASA!!! #COVID19 #AlertaCOVID19SV* [119]
      '#COVIDIOTA: /unisex/ it shall be understood as a person WHO DOES NOT STAY AT HOME!!! #COVID19 #AlertaCOVID19SV'
(36) *Covidiota: 1(adj.); dicese de la persona que debiendo quedarse en su casa sale a boludear y nos caga a todos.*
      2 (sust.) Persona que acapara bienes, especialmente papel higienico como si el COVID19 diera diarrea eterna.
      Que estas esperando RAE?????
      @RAEinforma [44]
      'Covidiota: 1(adj.); it is said of the person who, although he/she should stay at home, goes out to piss about and messes things up for all of us. 2 (noun) Person who hoards goods, toilet paper in particular, as though COVID19 caused eternal diarrhea. What are you waiting for, RAE?????'
      '@RAEinforma'

As has already been pointed out, in a number of uses, more than one of the categories indicated in **Table 7** are present in the tweet, as in (37). Here, the speaker first makes a comment *about* the term *covidiota* (regarding its origin and form of appearance), which is a metalinguistic comment, and then gives a short definition of the term. Thus, this tweet qualifies for "containing a metalinguistic comment" as well as for "containing a definition."

(37) *En USA están usando el HT #Covidiot para los que no respetan la cuarentena. Ya está su equivalente en español #Covidiota* [85]
      'In the USA they're using the HT #Covidiot for those who don't respect quarantine. Now there's its equivalent in Spanish #Covidiota'
(38) *@RAEinforma #dudaRAE existe Covidiota? Alguien que ignora las advertencias en salud pública o seguridad. Persona que en tiempos de crisis, acumula innecesariamente bienes de primera necesidad sin tener en cuenta el bienestar de los demás.* [19]
      '@RAEinforma #dudaRAE does *Covidiota* exist? Someone who ignores the warnings in public health or security. A person who, in times of crisis, unnecessarily accumulates consumer staples without considering the wellbeing of others.'

(38) is also an example in which metalinguistic use is combined with a definition. This example is particularly

noteworthy because the author mentions the Spanish language academy (RAE) and calls upon their lexicographic authority to ask for verification of the term's existence. References to the RAE can be made out in five other tweets, too [see also (36) above].

While tweets as (39) are categorized as pure definitions, there are other instances which appear to contain a kind of definition, or explanation, too. At the same time, they also represent an actual use of the term, an application of the neologism in context, with the function of referencing. Tweets (40) and (41) represent manifestations of this particular type.

(39) *Covidiota*
1. *Persona estúpida que ignora el protocolo de distanciamiento social, ayudando a propagar COVID-19.*
2. *Persona estúpida que acapara víveres, aumentando el pánico por COVID-19 y dejando a otros sin recursos.* #coronavirus #peru [107]
'Covidiota
1. Stupid person who ignores the social distancing protocol, helping to spread COVID-19.
2. Stupid person who hoards groceries, increasing the panic caused by COVID-19 and leaving others without resources. #coronavirus #peru'

(40) *bro, los covidiotas son los que salen sin tener la necesidad, a fiestas o reuniones, tu saliste por trabajo, eso no te hace covidiota* [216]
'*bro*, the *covidiotas* are those who go out without necessity, to parties or gatherings, you went out to work, this doesn't make you *covidiota*'

(41) *busco covidiota q me invite a una peda d Halloween*
Zany face [883]
'I'm looking for a *covidiota* who invites me to a Halloween booze-up'
Zany face

Both (40) and (41) are individual Spanish texts which contain the term *covidiota* and thus qualify for the category "referencing." On the other hand (40) very explicitly defines the author's interpretation of the term, whereas (41) contains a more implicit clarifying element: the author implies that someone who organizes a Halloween-booze-up is a *covidiota*. This type of tweet, thus, differs from the actual ("pure") definitions in that defining the term is not all, or not even the primordial function of the utterance, but only constitutes a part of it. As it seems, in (40) the author also intends to reassure the addressee, saying that he/she is not a *covidiota*. In (41), the Twitter user expresses a wish to be invited to a Halloween party. In both examples, the definition of *covidiota* is only part of the content conveyed by the texts. Tweets of this kind are therefore grouped together to form the type "referencing and negotiating semantic content." Coming back to the types of alterity markers defined by Pflanz, this function can probably be said to correspond to the fourth type: explaining the neologism (*X expliqué*, Pflanz, 2014, 173–175).

Examples (42) and (43) illustrate the difference between this type and the one depicted as "referencing only." Here, the author (tacitly) assumes a certain meaning of the term *covidiota* and uses the word accordingly, without further defining, explaining or discussing it.

(42) *Ya we ya vimos que andas de covidiota* [1109]
'Alright dude, we've already seen that you're out and about as a *covidiota*'
(43) *Que oso que te de orgullo ser un/una covidiota* [1461]
'What a bummer that being a *covidiota* makes you proud'

The distinction between both categories is made because it provides a certain amount of insight regarding the proportion of tweets which actively and explicitly contribute to the collective negotiation of the meaning of this particular neologism among the Spanish-speaking Twitter community. It is, however, not always an easy distinction to make because it is not always clear where to draw the line between both types. The crucial question is whether a meaning-defining notion can be detected in the tweet or not. If a tweet constitutes a reply to another tweet, for example, it is hard to say whether a statement such as (44) should be assigned to the first or the latter category since we do not know what is meant by *eso* 'that.' But it clearly refers to an action or event known to the addressee, and it does clearly represent a positioning of the tweet's author concerning the meaning of the term *covidiota*. Consequently, it has been assigned to the type "referencing and negotiating semantic content," in line with statements as in (40).

(44) *Eso fue muy covidiota de tu parte.* [578]
'That was very *covidiota* of you.'
(45) *Sería muy cool andar de covidiota en* CITY [995]
'It would be very cool to be out and about as a *covidiota* in CITY'

In (45), it is not absolutely clear whether *being in CITY* is what would qualify as *covidiota*, or whether this would only apply to *being in CITY and behaving in a certain way*. For the latter, (45) could not be said to contain a defining element. Here, the latter option has been chosen.

CONCLUSION

The relatively small size of the corpus (1,491 tweets in total), and the selective choice of observation periods (three isolated weeks) do not allow for far-reaching conclusions or for generalizations on a larger scale. Nevertheless, the study offers insights into appropriation processes of the English term *covidiot* by the Spanish speaking Twitter community, and into developments of the resulting anglicism *covidiota* within the receiving language.

The introduction of the English-induced neologism *covidiota* into Spanish was examined with regard to several different criteria, which were grouped together into signs of newness, on the one, and indicators of integration on the other hand. Graphical highlighting, in the function of an alterity marker, descends significantly from T1 to T2, but seems to remain stable afterwards. The use of metalinguistic comments and the proportion of tweets containing only a definition of the term also

decrease considerably, but the function depicted as "referencing and negotiating semantic content" shows a growing tendency over time. With reference to Pflanz's typology of alterity markers, the results seem to imply that the frequency and variety of alterity markers decreases over the three observation periods, but some markers, such as a certain percentage of graphical highlighting and the function of explaining, remain, or even gain more significance over time.

At the same time, several aspects seem to illustrate the integration into the language use of Spanish speaking Twitter users, and, thus, a growing resemblance to an unmarked item. *Covidiota* is increasingly used as an adjective. The cases of isolated use, which is the use without integration into the structure of the Spanish sentence, become less frequent. The categories "referencing only" and "referencing and negotiating semantic content" become the relevant ones, while definitions and metalinguistic use become much less important. Finally, some recurrent patterns of usage, several kinds of verb phrases and one noun phrase, can be identified.

In order to verify and consolidate the results obtained so far, a subsequent analysis should be carried out. In order to gain statistical significance, it would of course have to be based on a larger corpus, covering a longer observation period, and, preferably, enable the use of automated analyzation tools.

Apart from this, a comparative examination of developments in the English use of the term seems promising as well as comparisons with other languages, especially other Romance languages. This could allow gaining more insight into processes of lexical innovations as they occur on social media platforms and involve the influence of English on other languages in this medium.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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