

## Researchers in Malaga formulate the first algorithm that calculates lexical richness

**LOCATION:** Malaga

**LENGTH:** 1'44"

**SUMMARY:** Researchers at the University of Malaga have, for the first time, measured lexical richness and vocabulary in oral expression in Spanish. This has been possible thanks to the design of an algorithm guaranteeing very reliable results. One of the conclusions they have reached is that, when we speak, we don't use more than 2,500 words.

### VTR:

When we speak, we don't use more than 2,500 words. This is one of the findings of a study carried out by researchers at the University of Malaga who, for the first time, have measured lexical richness in Spanish outside of written texts, through more than 80 hours of recording and sociological questionnaires.

**Antonio Manuel Ávila**  
Professor at the University of  
Malaga

*"We can measure people's lexical diversity and density when they speak."*

This has been possible thanks to an algorithm, a mathematical way of obtaining results, developed by this professor.

**José María Sánchez**  
Research partner

*"We combined it with social and educational variables, and from there we obtained this result."*

**Antonio Manuel Ávila**  
Professor at the University of  
Malaga

*"There was nobody, regardless of their social characteristics, who exceeded 2,500 different words, nobody. If we bear in mind that the Spanish Academy Dictionary contains, more or less, almost 100,000 words, the fact that we seem to be able to communicate with only 2,500 words stands out."*

There are sociocultural factors that affect this lexical richness when we speak. One of those is education. The results showed that the people with higher or university education had the greatest lexical richness, 40% more than those with little or no formal education.

**Antonio Manuel Ávila**  
Professor at the University of  
Malaga

*"The most determining factor in lexical richness is education, formal education. People who read the most, whether or not they have had a formal education, tend to have the highest levels of lexical richness."*

The 53% of people with greatest lexical richness were businessmen and women with technical professions, those with roles in media, and civil servants – those professions in which more training is required.