# Superlative *ever*:
## A cross-linguistic lexically anchored structural borrowing

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Superlative-*ever*, (1), is borrowed into many languages, including Dutch, French, German, and Spanish. These languages only borrow *ever* as an emphatic superlative marker, not in other functions, (2).

(1)      Ik was waarschijnlijk de meest rare     patiënt  *ever.*
      *I  was  probably     the most   strange patient ever*
      'I was probably the strangest patient ever.' [nl, nlTenTen20]

(2)      *Würdest du  *ever* ...?* (Androutsopoulos 1998:542)
      *Would    you ever ...?* [de, constructed]

I consider data from internet corpora, adding introspective judgments where needed. The corpora of the considered languages contain complete English noun phrases with superlative-*ever*, as well as fully native noun phrases with an analogous native superlative domain widener. We also find mixed noun phrases, (3).

(3)      *worst* pesadilla  *ever*
      *worst nightmare ever* [Spanish, esTenTen18]

As emphatic particle that can also be intonationally separated, superlative-*ever* is a plausible candidate for borrowing (Matras 2011). However, I will argue that *ever* is not borrowed as a single lexical item but within a construction that partially overlaps between English and the target language. This provides an explanation for the commonalities and differences in *ever*-borrowing in the considered languages. I will model this in an HPSG-adaptation of the frameworks in Hoeder (2012) and Wiese (2021).

**References:** • Androutsopoulos, J. (1998). *Deutsche Jugendsprach*e. Frankfurt a.M.: Lang. • Hoeder, S. (2012). Multilingual constructions: A diasystematic approach to common structures. In K. Braunmüller & C. Gabriel (eds): *Multilingual individuals and multilingual societies*. Amsterdam: Benjamins. 241-257. • Matras, Y. (2011). Universals of structural borrowing. In S. Peter (ed): *Linguistic universals and language variation*. Berlin: De Gruyter. 204-233. • Wiese, H. (2021). Communicative situations as a basis for linguistic systems. WPULL 287.