

Linguistic Architecture of Humor: a case study of a regional variety of Spanish in Colombia

The project investigates the full range of structural resources through which humor is expressed in the Spanish variety spoken in Cali, Colombia. To this end, the project combines a broad theoretical discussion of humor—inspired by Salvatore Attardo’s work on verbal irony (2007)—with a twofold empirical analysis. This consists of the creation of a humor-oriented corpus of the variety and an experiment that collects data on the perception of humor among both insiders and outsiders of the linguistic area.

For the theoretical discussion, major theories such as Aggression, Incongruity, and Release Theory (as compiled by Attardo, 2024) will be reviewed, alongside previous research on humor from linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural perspectives. The project then proposes a distinct method of analysis for humorous linguistic resources, based on Attardo’s theory of relevant inappropriateness and Albert Katz’s observations regarding experimentation with pragmatic phenomena such as irony.

The methodology for collecting data on the variety, specifically within humorous contexts, will sample content from regional social media creators as well as interviews with diverse speakers in this cultural context. Following the collection, transcription, and quantitative mapping of the data, both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results will reveal the linguistic resources used for the expression of humor in this variety.

The second part of the project consists of an experiment regarding the perception of humor. Once specific humorous expressions have been identified, they will be tested with insiders and outsiders to analyze the reach of the intended humorous effect. Ultimately, the project seeks to expand knowledge of the linguistic mechanisms used to express humor in this variety and to explore a new theoretical approach for linguistic humor studies.

References:

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