

Variability in Spanish relative complementizers and its limits – first results

In this talk, we will present first results of our research project “Limits of variability in Spanish relative complementation” (project C09, CRC1287 – Limits of variability in language).

The project focuses on structural alternations in two particular constructions of relative complementation, which are classified as sub-standard or ungrammatical in reference grammars, but robustly attested, according to our research, in different varieties of Spanish: (1a) prepositional relative complementizers and (1b) complementizers in subject- and object clefts.

- (1) a. *Hay un lugar en Veracruz **que** [en el que] hablan con muchas groserías.*
,There is a place in Veracruz **that** [in which] they speak in a vulgar manner.’
b. *No, es Cantinflas **que** [el que] está fumando un cigarro.*
‘No, it is Cantinflas **that** [who] is smoking a cigar.’

As for the linguistic factors conditioning the alternation between these structures, the literature converges on the observation that the choice of a complementizer (such as e.g. *que* or *en que* or *en el que* in 1a.) is connected to the degree of accessibility of the relative clause’s antecedent, with less accessible antecedents favoring determiner-less constructions (e.g. *que* in (1)), although different notions of accessibility are invoked.

The project seeks to explore the limits of variability of relative complementation in Spanish by means of cross-linguistic comparisons of production data and acceptability judgement tasks with monolingual and bilingual speakers. The main aim of our talk is to discuss (i) the first results of our cross-dialectal comparisons of complementizer preferences in clefts, (ii) the possible effect of language contact on locative relative complementation in the Spanish of Felipe Carrillo Puerto, Mexico, and (iii) a preliminary design for our next field work trips in April 2024.