

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LINGUISTIC MULTICULTURALITY WITHIN HISPANIC REGIONAL FESTIVALS

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Abstract: Linguistic multiculturalism is a field of study exploring the coexistence of diverse languages and cultures within a society. In Spain, this phenomenon can be examined from various perspectives due to the linguistic diversity present. While Castilian serves as the official language of the country, there are also other regional languages such as Catalan, Basque, and Galician, specific to certain regions. These regional languages provide opportunities for research into their status, linguistic policies, language instruction, bilingualism, and more. This presentation focuses on examining linguistic multiculturalism through the lens of expressions used during regional festivals. These festive occasions, which bring joy and promote communication while temporarily setting aside other concerns, naturally facilitate language learning.

Keywords: anthropology, folklorist, language learning, regional festivals

Linguistic multiculturalism is often regarded as a crucial element of an inclusive society, promoting understanding, tolerance, and mutual respect for diverse cultures and identities (Savidan, 2022). It plays a significant role in preserving a society's cultural and linguistic diversity while fostering opportunities for intercultural exchanges and dialogue among linguistic communities. Numerous authors have examined this topic from philosophical, political, sociological, and economic perspectives (Meer, Modood & Zapata-Barrero, 2016).

Spain emerged as a nation amid a complex web of political issues, marked by fervent debates over regional autonomy, cultural identity, and linguistic diversity (Velasco Arroyo, 1999). It is made up of 17 autonomous communities or regions, along with two independent cities, Ceuta and Melilla.

While constitutionally representing a unified nation, each of these regions has historically nurtured its own distinct traditions, encompassing unique cultures, original dialects with atypical expressions, and sometimes even idiosyncratic customs.

The country provides fertile ground for an anthropological melting pot, where individuals enjoy the freedom to preserve and embrace their cultural identities while engaging with other cultures. This rich tapestry is reflected in a wide range of areas, including education, religion, art, music, gastronomy, traditional attire, and social customs.

Linguistic multiculturalism in Spain finds vivid expression in the country's festivals, where social interaction thrives in various forms. This vibrant cultural mosaic unfolds through regional festivals, carnival celebrations, religious events, cultural gatherings, and even in the tales and legends shared and sometimes humorously reenacted during evenings dedicated to savoring "tapas", "sangria", or "tinto de Verano" (García Rodero, 1994).

Throughout the year, the provinces of Spain showcase a rich diversity of regional festivals that draw in multitudes of people. Events like the San Fermín festivities in Pamplona or the Feria d'Avril in Seville not only celebrate local traditions but also spotlight regional languages, such as Basque and Andalusian. These festivals serve as a window into the cultural exchanges among locals and the curiosity of foreigners, who often embark on something akin to an anthropological quest to unravel the origins of these traditions and explore the linguistic diversity of Spain.

The San Fermín fiestas in Pamplona, Navarre, are renowned for their bullfights held each morning on the city streets. Participants, clad in white attire with a red belt and scarf, engage in an adrenaline-pumping experience as they run ahead of the charging bulls. During this thrilling event, you will often hear expressions like:

- "¡Viva San Fermín!" - Long live San Fermín! (A traditional cheer to celebrate San Fermín)
- "¡Gora San Fermín!" - Hail San Fermín! (Another expression of support for the festival)
- "¡Hasta la explosión!" - Until the explosion! (Used to encourage the festivities)
- "¡A por la pañuelada!" - Let's go for the scarf! (An exclamation to spur participants to seize the scarf during the encierro, the bull run).

In the southern region of Spain, the Feria de Abril stands out as one of the country's most renowned festivals. Held annually in Seville, Andalusia, this celebration is famous for its vibrant mix of flamenco music, traditional dances, elaborate costumes, equestrian processions, and lively "casetas" (party tents) that exude the spirit of "alegría" or joy.

During the Feria, you'll often hear spirited expressions that add to the festive atmosphere:

- "¡Olé!" - Well done! (Used to express enthusiasm)
- "¡Que viva el rebujito!" - Long live the rebujito! (A typical drink of the Feria de Abril)
- "¡Baila sevillanas!" - Dance the sevillanas! (Inviting people to dance the traditional dance of Seville)
- "¡Vámonos de tapeo!" - Let's go for tapas! (Encouraging everyone to savor culinary specialties)
- "¡Venga, a bailar se ha dicho!" - Come on, let's dance! (An invitation to dance)

These expressions are an integral part of the festive culture at the Feria and are often used to inspire participants to revel in the dances, songs, gastronomy, and joyful atmosphere of this famous Spanish festival. Additionally, this linguistic particularism is frequently accompanied by expressive gestures that encourage movement and action, enriching the celebrations that showcase the diversity of Spain's various autonomous communities.

In the Valencia region, the Fallas festival stands as an emblematic tradition, celebrating the vibrant arrival of spring with colorful and spectacular displays. The streets come alive with grand wooden and papier-mâché sculptures known as "fallas," which are later set ablaze during the famous "cremà." Throughout this festival, specific expressions add to the festive atmosphere and announce key moments:

- "¡La Crida!" - The Call! (Symbolizing the official opening speech of the Fallas)
- "¡Mascleta!" - Mascleta! (Referring to a loud pyrotechnic show)
- "¡A quemar la Falla!" - To burn the Falla! (Marking the end of the Fallas and the burning of the statues)
- "Que vengan los castillos!" - Let the castles come! (Inviting people to admire the fireworks shows)

Near Valencia, the unique Tomatina festival takes place in Buñol, where thousands gather for an exhilarating tomato-throwing street fight. It's a festive and fun event that attracts visitors from around the world. Expressions like:

- "¡A por ellos!" - Let's go!
- "¡A lanzar tomates!" - Throw the tomatoes!
- "¡Tomate por todas partes!" - Tomatoes everywhere!

...resonate during this playful tomato war, creating moments of collective joy and fun.

Numerous popular festivals draw thousands of participants, showcasing the rich cultural tapestry of Spain. One such event is "Les Moros y Cristianos," which commemorates the historic battles between Moors and Christians during the Middle Ages. These festivities hold particular significance in the Alicante region, where they feature mock battles, grand parades, and captivating historical re-enactments.

In Andalusia, the annual "Romería del Rocío" represents a remarkable pilgrimage, with thousands of pilgrims journeying on foot, horseback, or by cart to the sanctuary of the Virgen del Rocío. This pilgrimage is marked by participants donning traditional costumes, singing religious songs, and engaging in joyful celebrations.

Spain boasts a plethora of other regional festivals, each with its own unique traditions, customs, and allure. These events often draw visitors from all corners of the globe and provide an exceptional opportunity for multicultural sociolinguistic interactions.

It is also worth mentioning the diverse carnivals celebrated in many Spanish cities, each with its own unique traditions. Cities like Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Cádiz, Sitges, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Águilas, Cáceres, and Santiago de Compostela host these vibrant celebrations. During these events, oral expressions draw from the linguistic richness of Spain's various regions, which is evident in parades, songs, and shows that breathe new life into history.

The multicultural linguistic diversity present throughout the country shines through in the communal spirit of these festivities. The act of concealing one's identity behind masks and traditional attire breaks down potential social barriers related to identity and status. This fosters a sense of ease among individuals and a freedom that encourages intercultural exchange. Even foreigners, despite their distinct accents, find themselves included in this curious communion with others.

These festive activities seamlessly blend traditional and religious elements with colorful parades, dazzling fireworks displays, and lively street celebrations. The regional carnivals vary in terms of dates and duration, each offering a unique and joyful experience cherished by both locals and visitors alike.

In a completely different context, Spain is deeply influenced by religious festivals, particularly Holy Week (Semana Santa) and Corpus Christi. These occasions offer a unique opportunity to explore the diverse languages used in processions, prayers, and religious songs. Depending on the region, you'll encounter various vocabularies, specific expressions, and tones that harmoniously coexist with Catalan, Basque, and Galician alongside standard Spanish.

Spanish linguistic multiculturalism, as expressed through festivals, has the potential to foster the resolution of linguistic conflicts, emphasizing respect, appreciation, and the valorization of the diverse languages and ancient cultures found within the country (Flores Arroyuelo, 2001). Life, in this context, becomes a tapestry of folklore, encounters, and cultural discoveries that ignite curiosity—a quality that encourages exchange, communication, and the activation of our senses.

Embarking on a journey to Spain in pursuit of cultural and linguistic enrichment through the exploration of its various festivals, which joyously punctuate the Spanish calendar, can be immensely rewarding. It offers a delightful way to learn Spanish while having fun, with each stage of the journey bringing a "hasta la vista," a reminder of a return to the essentials of life.

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