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Social stereotypes of Hispanics in Hollywood
A cognitive-linguistic look at popular comedy films

The representation of Hispanics in popular Hollywood movies often relies on established social stereotypes such as *el bandido* or the seductive dark lady (Ramírez Berg 2002). Based on cognitive-linguistic prototype theory in the domain of categorization (Taylor 2003; Stockwell 2020), this paper aims to identify recurring attributes that constitute biased conceptualizations of Latin Americans from the perspective of the US film industry since the turn of the millennium. The focus is on the comedy genre, which, despite its innocuous and inoffensive appearance, may exert a powerful effect on the perception of social groups owing to its popularity and mainstream appeal.

As has been pointed out by the General Theory of Verbal Humor (Attardo 2020), laughter is typically evoked at the expense of a given target, such as an ethnic minority. Among others, films that will be discussed are *Maid in Manhattan* (2002), *Spanglish* (2004), *Nacho Libre* (2006), *Hot Pursuit* (2015), and *Gringo* (2018). These movies feature popular clichés like the sleazy drug dealer or the desperate immigrant housekeeper in a comedic guise. With the help of such conceptualizations, the films meet preconceived expectations of wide target audiences with the commercial intention of box office success.

In a qualitative cognitive-linguistic approach, the paper identifies relevant attributes constructing stereotypical images and illustrates them with representative extracts. The discursive characteristics appear both in the utterances of the characters themselves, which may be marked by a conventionalized Chicano accent (Hodson 2014), and in portrayals by other characters and the narrative voice. While the study concentrates on verbal dialogue, multimodal features of cinematic discourse are also taken into account whenever they play a decisive role in the clichéd depiction.

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