

The Department of Linguistics Presents:

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Cross-linguistic differences in disagreements arising from descriptive and evaluative propositions

Semanticists, pragmaticists, philosophers, and others have recently been interested in disagreements arising from evaluative propositions (especially those containing so-called 'predicates of personal taste'), as in (1), and their theoretical implications.

- (1) A: This soup is tasty. B: No it isn't.
- (2) A: Rochester is in Quebec. B: No it isn't.
- (3) A: This soup is tasty, in my opinion. B: # No it isn't

The idea is that, as compared to a descriptive proposition like (2A), evaluative propositions express the opinion of the speaker, but refuting them doesn't seem to deny that the speaker holds such an opinion (Kölbel 2003, Lasnik 2005, etc.). This would, in principle, make them similar to sentences like (3), but here, direct disagreement is not felicitous (Stevenson 2007). Stevenson argued that the same can be said of epistemic modals such as 'might': you can say 'no' to the fact that Elizabeth might visit if you know otherwise, but if someone says that they don't know whether Elizabeth will visit, saying 'no' cannot indicate that she won't.

In this talk I will present offline felicity judgment data from English and Spanish two-turn oral dialogues showing that there are differences with respect to these judgments, which creates a further puzzle. I will compare various explanations for these new data, drawing on ideas present in Stojanovic 2007 and Umbach 2012. I will further discuss the interplay of various factors in these data, including cultural politeness differences (introducing data from another dialect of Spanish with known differences in cultural norms). As time permits, I will also present data from Catalan and French.