

Casi palmo de la risa. A corpus-based study of a Spanish constructional idiom with the causal preposition *de*.

Carmen Mellado Blanco¹ & Pedro Ivorra Ordines²

¹ Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (Spain) ² Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (Germany)

Abstract

This study¹ deals with the analysis of the Spanish subschema [V_{bodily_reaction} *de* DET N_{emotion/feeling}], whose constructional meaning can be paraphrased as ‘experience N_{emotion/feeling} in its highest degree’. The intensifying semi-schematic construction forms a continuum with the causal construction [V *de* NP], to which it is related by a metonymic or metaphorical extension (Goldberg 1995). To carry out this corpus-based study (*esTenTen18*, Sketch Engine), the nominal slot fillers *emoción* ‘emotion’, *risa* ‘laugh’ and *susto* ‘scare’ were chosen, corresponding to N_{emotion/feeling}. With a corpus consisting of 536 occurrences with the slot filler *emoción*, 649 with *risa* and 700 with *susto*, the aim is twofold. First, to show that in the continuum between the causal construction and the intensifying construction, the instances licensed by the latter can have both projectors and/or triggers of the intensifying meaning, such as the focalizing adverb *casi* ‘almost’. These are contextual elements that can be found in the most immediate syntagmatic profile of the construction and whose pragmatic function is in harmony with the intensifying meaning of the instances in which they appear. In addition to these formal elements, there are also logical-semantic features that point to the intensifying meaning, such as unlikely or impossible human actions or reactions (e.g., *se despezona de la risa* ‘break off laughing’). Second, to show that each of the three constructional idioms licensed by the [V_{bodily_reaction} *de* DET N_{emotion/feeling}] subschema tends to license very few types with high token frequency and a high degree of idiomaticity. However, the rest of the types with a lower token frequency, are intrinsically related to the meaning of the prototypical type, forming a “cognitive core” that is specific to each emotion/feeling analyzed (*emoción*, *risa*, *susto*).

1. Introduction

The analysis of idiomatic expressions with a semi-schematic structure was already in the focus of attention in the pioneering work of constructionist approaches to the study of language. This type of structure was studied under the notion of “formal or lexically open idioms” in Fillmore, Kay and O’Connor (1988) – as opposed to “substantive or lexically filled idioms” – on the *let alone* construction or of “idiomatic constructions” in Kay and Fillmore (1999) on the *What’s X Doing Y?* construction. These incipient construction-based contributions made it clear that opaque expressions (idioms) can share certain features of the regular syntactic structure with fully productive expressions, and that syntactic transparent structures can have all sorts of restrictions that cannot be derived from syntax

¹ This research was carried out within the framework of the research project CONSTRIDIOMS (PID2019-108783RB-100): “Construction Grammar and Phraseology. German and Spanish Constructional Idioms through Corpora”. This project, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, is developed by the research group FRASESPAL.

Corresponding authors: Carmen Mellado Blanco, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, c.mellado@usc.es & Pedro Ivorra Ordines, Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (Alexander von Humboldt Fellow), Pedro.IvorraOrdines@ku.de.

alone. Other functionally equivalent terms that have been adopted in the study of these patterns include “constructional idioms” (Booij 2002), “schematic idioms” (Croft and Cruse 2004), “partially lexically filled phrasal patterns” (Goldberg 2006), “phrasal patterns” (Michaelis 2019), among others². According to Booij, these can be understood as “syntactic constructions with a (partially or fully) non-compositional meaning contributed by the construction, in which -unlike idioms in the traditional sense- only a subset (possibly empty) of the terminal elements is fixed” (Booij 2002: 301-302).

In the Spanish phraseological tradition, semi-schematic patterns have, until very recently, been analyzed under the notion of *esquemas sintácticos fraseológicos* ‘phraseological syntactic schemata’ (Zuluaga 1980), *esquemas sintácticos de formación de locuciones adverbiales* ‘syntactic schemata of formation of adverbial idioms’ (García-Page Sánchez 2007), or *locución con casillas vacías* ‘idioms with empty slots’ (Montoro del Arco 2008). These phraseological phenomena received little attention due to two main reasons: (i) their lack of fixedness, which contradicts the properties of phraseological units and their schematic nature, and (ii) the fact that they are productive and recurrent in the renewal of the discourse places them in the periphery of the system (Mellado Blanco 2020a). Phraseological units with empty slots have indeed been marginalized in the taxonomies of phraseological units: while according to Corpas Pastor (1996) they do not belong to any of the phraseological spheres, to Ruiz Gurillo (1997) they are marginal phenomena. For his part, García-Page Sánchez (2007, 2008) is the author who has studied such phraseological schemata most extensively. The rapprochement between the Spanish phraseological tradition and Construction Grammar is represented by Mellado Blanco (2020a), influenced by phraseologists of the German language (cf. Dobrovol’skij 2011), who advocates for the notion of “construcción fraseológica” ‘phraseological construction’ to overcome the center-periphery dichotomy, as well as the distinction between non-productive and productive structures.

Against this background, in recent years there has been an increasing interest in the intersection of Phraseology and Construction Grammar in many different European languages such as Spanish, German, Italian, Russian, among others (cf. Mellado Blanco 2020c; Dobrovol’skij & Mellado Blanco 2021; Mellado Blanco 2022b; Mellado Blanco, Mollica & Schafroth 2022a, 2022b). In particular, in the frame of the research project *CONSTRIDIOMS* (cf. Mellado Blanco 2021, <https://constridioms.es/>), there has been an important impetus in the analysis of partly schematic phraseological phenomena in Spanish adopting a usage-based constructionist perspective, the aim of which is to analyze: (i) the productivity of semi-schematic patterns by virtue of token and type frequency of the slots, (ii) the lexical renewal of the slots and their lexical preferences and constraints, and (iii) the semantic prosody of the collocates and the syntagmatic profile. Some examples of constructional idioms in Spanish are:

- [DET_[det] ADJ *de* NP]: *el inútil de su hijo* ‘he is a useless of a son’ (lit. ‘the useless one of his son’), *el listo de mi esposo* ‘he is a stupid of a husband’ (lit. ‘the clever one of my husband’), etc. (Esteban-Fonollosa in press);
- [*por* PRON *como si* X]: *por mí como si te operas* ‘I don’t care about you’ (lit. ‘I don’t care as if you get surgery’), *por él como si se muere* ‘I don’t care about you’ (lit. ‘he doesn’t care as if he dies’), etc. (Ivorra Ordines in press);

² Cf. Ivorra Ordines (2021: 186) and Mellado Blanco (2022: 6-9) for other equivalent concepts from a construction-based approach.

- [*a todo* N_{sg}]: *a todo gas* ‘go all out’ (lit. ‘at full gas’), *a todo tren* ‘at full steam’ (lit. ‘at full train’), *a toda pastilla* ‘full speed’ (lit. ‘at full tablet’), etc. (López Meirama and Iglesias Iglesias 2023);
- [PREP POSS N_{arbitrariedad}]: *a su antojo* ‘at his please’ (lit. ‘at his whim’), *a su gusto* ‘to his liking’ (lit. ‘at his taste’), *a su voluntad* ‘at will’ (lit. ‘at his will’), etc. (Mansilla Pérez in press);
- [*a un* X_{unit_of_measurement}]: *a un paso* ‘just a step away from’ (lit. ‘at one step’), *a un pelo* ‘just a hair away from’ (lit. ‘at one hair’), etc. (Mellado Blanco 2023);
- [*qué* X *ni qué* Y] or [*qué* X *ni qué* X]: *qué leer ni qué leer* ‘reading my ass’ (lit. ‘what read not what read’), *qué hombres ni qué ocho cuartos* ‘men, my foot!’ (lit. ‘what men not what eight quarters’), etc. (Fuentes Rodríguez 2023);
- [*más feo que* X]: *más feo que pegarle a un padre con un calcetín sudado* ‘ugly as sin’ (lit. ‘uglier than hitting a father with a sweaty sock’), *más feo que Picio* ‘ugly as sin’ (lit. ‘uglier than Picio’), etc. (Ivorra Ordines 2022);
- [*más tonto que* X]: *más tonto que Abundio* ‘thick as two short planks’ (lit. ‘dumber than Abundio’), *más tonto que el novio de la Chelo* ‘thick as two short planks’ (lit. ‘dumber than Chelo’s boyfriend’), etc. (Ivorra Ordines & Mellado Blanco 2021);
- [*loco como* X]: *loco como una cabra* ‘mad as a hatter’ (lit. ‘crazy as a goat’), *loco como una regadera* ‘mad as a hatter’ (lit. ‘crazy as a watering can’), etc. (Corpas Pastor 2021);
- [(no) PERSPRON *importar* [NP_{[DETNUMERAL + S_{taboo or low value object}]}]: *Me importa un pimiento* ‘I don’t give a damn’ (lit. ‘I don’t care a pepper’), *Me importa una alpargata* ‘I don’t give a damn’ (lit. ‘I don’t care a espadrille’), etc. (Mellado Blanco 2020c).}

It is precisely from a constructionist perspective that these structures come to the fore, since it is the fact that they are placed in the intersection between Phraseology and syntax that is of particular interest. Such structures, endowed with great flexibility in the renewal of the slots in the discourse and characterized by a productive structure, are placed in a privileged position between free lexical phrases (syntax) and lexical (idiomatic) units (lexicon). In other words, the constructionist approach is relevant to those structures in which the syntactic pattern has a global pragmatic meaning, and some of its constituents are lexically filled, while others have to be renewed in the discourse according to semantic constraints (Dobrovol’skiĭ 2016: 81).

Among the constructional idioms that have been of interest to the research project *CONSTRIDIOMS*, we have opted for the subschema [V_{bodily_reaction} *de* DET N_{emotion/feeling}]³ and its corresponding constructional idioms [V_{bodily_reaction} *de la emoción*], [V_{bodily_reaction} *de la risa*] as well as [V_{bodily_reaction} *del susto*] for closer analysis in the present paper, as they are particularly interesting and relevant for a variety of reasons:

1. Considering that we are dealing with a construction related to the grammatical causal construction [V *de* (DET) N] by means of a metaphorical extension link, the lexicon-grammar continuum can offer a fruitful account.
2. In its syntagmatic profile there are projectors and/or triggers that reinforce the idiomatic interpretation, which shows that its intensifying interpretation takes

³ The terms *emotion* and *feeling* are to be understood in a broad sense, as nouns that do not only directly denote an emotion, but also the motor response to that emotion. The slot fillers correspond to the following OED definitions: “an agitation of mind; an excited mental state. Subsequently: any strong mental or instinctive feeling, as pleasure, grief, hope, fear, etc., deriving esp. from one’s circumstances, mood, or relationship with others”, and “[a] physical sensation or perception (as of touch, heat, cold, pain, motion, etc.) experienced through this capacity”, respectively.

place in parallel with lexical items in the most immediate context. The most representative of these is the approximative focalizing adverb *casi* ‘almost’.

3. Each of the described emotions or bodily reactions, *emoción* ‘emotion’, *risa* ‘laugh’ and *susto* ‘scare’ attract prototypical semantic realizations of the verbal slot (constraints), many of these in turn constituting idioms.

The article is structured as follows. In Section 2, we explore the intricacies of the continuum between the causal construction and the idiomatic construction, the latter being related to the former by means of a metonymic/metaphorical extension of a horizontal nature, in that the literal causal construction and the idiomatic construction show partial similarity but non-inheritance. In this context, two mechanisms are analyzed: projectors – ostensive markers – of the intensifying meaning whose presence is incompatible with the causal interpretation, and triggers that contribute to the intensification of the meaning of the constructional idioms. In Section 3 we start from the assumption that idioms can be seen as form-meaning pairings with blurred syntactic profiles. Following a corpus-based analysis (*esTenTen18*, Sketch Engine), we observe that the creative potential of the studied constructional idioms can be captured by means of cognitive cores, which can be more or less productive depending on the degree of entrenchment of each type. Section 4 discusses the role of high token frequency as a model for the positing of analogical extensions, and as a detriment to the productivity of a construction. In this line of argument, we claim that intermediate levels of productivity must be recognized, which can be more or less productive depending on the semantic dispersion, a clear indicator of which is the number of tokens that cannot be clustered into a cognitive core. Section 5 provides a brief conclusion.

2. The idiomatic construction [V_{bodily_reaction} *de* DET N_{emotion/feeling}]

2.1. A case of continuum

As indicated above, the intensifying constructional idioms under study are related to the grammatical causal construction [V *de* (DET) N_{emotion/feeling}] through a metaphorical/metonymic extension link, in which the verb expresses the consequence of the situation denoted by the prepositional clause (cause).

In particular, the causal construction consists, formally speaking, of a verbal slot, followed by the lexically specified preposition *de*, which expresses the direct cause or reason of the situation uttered, and a nominal slot preceded by a definite article: the verbal slot would represent the effect (S2) and the nominal slot, the cause of this effect (S1), in that one situation triggers another situation, whether this situation is a state, a process or an activity. This means that the “relation between S1 and S2 is such that S2 is the result of S1; to put it in another way, S2 would not have come about had it not been for S1” (Dirven 1995: 95; cf. also Dirven 1997: 55). Some examples illustrating the construal of this causal construction are (1-4):

- (1) En el atrio de la iglesia, llaman a los muertos (“los que murieron por accidente”, “los niños que **murieron del sarampión o de la tos ferina**”, etc.) y echan alcohol por el suelo para compartir con ellos.

‘In the atrium of church, they call out to the dead (“those who died by accident”, “children who died of measles or whooping cough”, etc.) and pour alcohol on the floor to share it with them.’

(esTenTen18, 10537434276)

- (2) En esta ocasión no han querido lanzar unos requisitos óptimos para que no **lloremos de la impotencia**.

‘On this occasion, they did not want to introduce optimal requirements, lest we cry with impotence.’

(esTenTen18, 878541787)

- (3) El día que aprendió a volar fue maravilloso. A mí **me saltaban las lágrimas de la emoción**, mi prima Lucy se reía...

‘The day he learned to fly was wonderful. I was in tears with emotion, my cousin Lucy was laughing...’

(esTenTen18, 673130944)

- (4) Casi⁴ **se me parte el pecho de la risa**.

‘I almost burst out laughing.’

(esTenTen18, 6055055371)

In example (1) the meaning is literal-causal. However, in the meaning of the different constructs licensed by the subschema⁵ [$V_{\text{bodily_reaction}}$ *de* $N_{\text{emotion_feeling}}$], there is a gradation ranging from a metonymy (cause-effect) (examples 2–3) to a metaphor (example 4), passing through ambiguous occurrences (example 3) which can be interpreted indistinctly depending on the context. In these examples of metonymy (examples 2–3), there is an intrinsic cause-effect relationship between the emotion/feeling described by the noun slot of the prepositional phrase and the bodily reaction designated by the verbal slot. To understand the motivation between these two constructions (the causal one and the idiomatic one), a metonymic/metaphorical extension link is posited (Goldberg 1995), in that the metonymy/metaphor – in this case, the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy and the INTENSIFICATION IS CORPORAL DAMAGE metaphor – accounts for the relationship between the semantics of the both the causal and idiomatic constructions, while the syntactic specifications of the metonymic/metaphorical extension are related to the causal construction. In other words, the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy takes place in examples (2–3), where there is a bodily reaction that is compatible with our knowledge of the world. If I say *me saltaban las lágrimas de la emoción*, this means that in order to express *emoción* in its highest degree, I choose the effect *me saltaban las lágrimas*. On the contrary, the INTENSIFICATION IS CORPORAL DAMAGE metaphor is used in those cases (example 4) in which the constructs allude to hyperbolic bodily reactions which are not compatible with our knowledge on the world.

⁴ In idiomatic cases, like this one, it is frequent that the approximative focalizing adverb *casi* ‘almost’ reinforces the intensifying idiomatic interpretation of the instance (see Section 2.1.).

⁵ Following Traugott & Trousdale’s (2013) terminology, we use the term of *subschemata* to refer to sets of similarly-behaving specific constructions, in that the constructional idioms [$V_{\text{bodily_reaction}}$ *de la emoción*], [$V_{\text{bodily_reaction}}$ *de la risa*] and [$V_{\text{bodily_reaction}}$ *del susto*] under study can be found at a lower level of specificity – the N slot is lexically filled and intensification is the pragmatic function. These hence inherit the formal and semantic properties of the more schematic subschema (see Mellado Blanco in press).

Following this reasoning, in these examples of metonymy and metaphor, the meaning is not compositional and must be interpreted holistically from the components of the construction. The intensifying construction is therefore the result of a metonymic or metaphorical link based on the corresponding causal construction. This idea is consistent with the fact that constructions are not isolated entities but are organized on the basis of taxonomic links between constructions at different levels of abstraction and horizontal links between constructions at the same level of abstraction. In this case, Smirnova & Sommerer (2020: 25) reinterpret Goldberg’s metaphorical link as a kind of (paradigmatic) horizontal link, in that the literal causal construction and the idiomatic construction show partial similarity but no inheritance (cf. Diessel 2019; Ungerer & Hartmann 2023).

The relationship between the causal construction and the idiomatic intensifying construction can also be explained through the gestalt theory of GROUND and FIGURE (cf. Talmy 1975). According to this theory, the bodily reaction (verbal slot) would be the FIGURE in the causal construction, whereas the emotion would be the FIGURE in the idiomatic one, as can be seen in Figure 1.

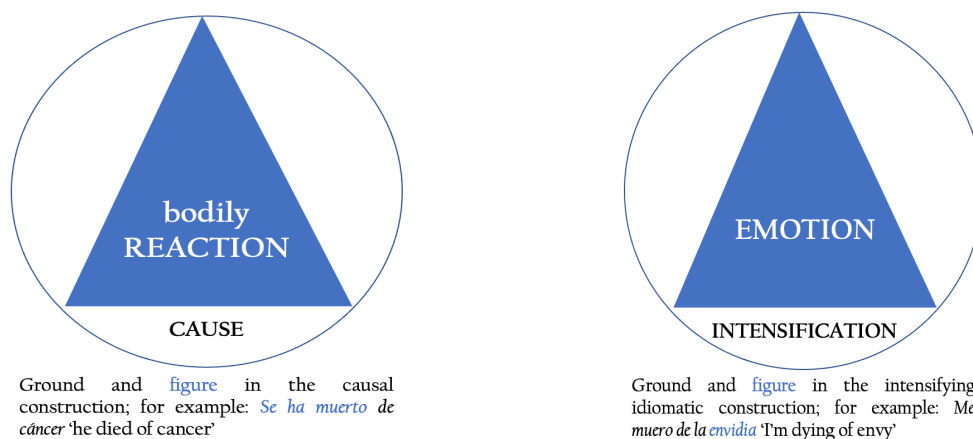


Figure 1. The gestalt theory of GROUND and FIGURE in the relation between the causal construction and the idiomatic construction.

The categories of FIGURE (F) and GROUND (G), originally applied in the framework of Cognitive Linguistics to spatial objects in sentences such as *The chair (F) is under the light (G)*, have also been used to explain the relations of salience or informative prominence of temporal events in complex sentences (Talmy 1975). Following this reasoning, in the sentence *He exploded after he touched the button*, the FIGURE event (the explosion event) is considered a variable whose particular value is characterized with respect to a GROUND event (the button-touching-event), understood as a known reference-point set in a temporal reference-frame. Moreover, “the GROUND is considered an ‘independent’ variable, [...] and is there grouped together with all operators and modifiers” (Talmy 1975: 422). In other words, FIGURE and GROUND stand for ‘asserted’ and ‘presupposed’ respectively, with the former category being the informative focus of the sentence.

This correlation between FIGURE and GROUND can be applied not only to spatial or temporal events, but also to those based on a cause-effect relationship, both in the literal and idiomatic sense. Thus, in causal literal constructions, with constructs such as *Murieron de pulmonía* ‘they died of pneumonia’, the FIGURE event is the ‘dying event’, while the GROUND event is the ‘pneumonia event’. In the metonymic and metaphorical

extensions of the constructions, as is the case of constructs such as *Me muero de envidia* ‘I die of envy’, the FIGURE event is shifted from the verb to the prepositional phrase of the cause (envy event), while the GROUND event is represented by the verb (*morir*). The latter functions as an intensifying modifier of the main event by virtue of the cognitive metaphor INTENSITY IS CORPORAL DAMAGE.

In the idiomatic construction, effects are verbal clauses that are triggered by the physical or psychological situation as their cause, so that in example (3) someone is so excited (cause) that tears are streaming off their cheeks (effect), or in example (4) I laugh so much (cause) that I break my chest (effect) (cf. Radden & Dirven 2008: 327). Since the emotions are conceived as the cause of the construction, according to Dirven (1997: 57-58), the inner force applies, and the emotion is strongly linked to the physiological response. Two important questions arise at this point:

- (i) what kind of relationship is established between the verb and the prepositional phrase with an emotion noun?, and
- (ii) (ii) is it the fact that there is a conceptual relationship between the two that allows the intensifying function to be established?

It is obvious that the intensifying/idiomatic reading cannot be attributed to the verb or to the prepositional phrase separately, but to the construction which specifies that the nominal group must be renewed by an emotion, i.e. [$V_{\{\text{bodily_reaction}\}} \text{ de DET } N_{\{\text{emotion/feeling}\}}]$: ‘experience $N_{\{\text{emotion/feeling}\}}$ in its highest degree’. This means that any change in the formal configuration or semantic restriction of the constructions leads to the loss of the intensifying/idiomatic meaning, or, as Piunno (2018: 143) puts it, “if the conventionalized pattern of such units is violated (e.g. including lexemes which are semantically incoherent with the whole construction), the unit loses its constructional meaning” (compare examples 5 and 6).

- (5) La infección de la piel se produce por contacto con tejidos de animales (bovinos, ovejas, cabras, caballos, cerdos y otros más) que **han muerto de la enfermedad**. ‘Skin infection is caused by contact with tissues from animals (cattle, sheep, goats, horses, pigs and others) that have died of the disease.’

(esTenTen18, 169731739)

- (6) Mi amiga Marta estuvo en uno y creo que el parqué de mi casa está rayado desde entonces de lo larguísimos que me puso los dientes aquellos días. Me cayó un poquito mal porque **morí de envidia**. Y es que no sólo hay cosas para niños y no sólo ellos disfrutaban.

‘My friend Marta went to one and I think the parquet floor in my house has been scratched ever since because of how long she made my teeth last so long. I felt a bit bad because I was dying of envy. And there are not only things for children and not only they enjoy it.’

(esTenTen18, 6813342567)

Example (5) is a clear demonstration of the non-fulfilment of the semantic constraint imposed by the idiomatic construction, given that *enfermedad* ‘illness’ does not fulfil the semantic requirements imposed by the nominal slot, i.e. the emotion constraint. This means that in such a case we are dealing with an instance of the causal-compositional construction, a fact that highlights the interaction between lexicon and grammar, between intensification and causality (cf. De Knop 2015; De Knop & Mollica 2018). Of particular

interest is the continuum of idiomaticity (Michaelis 2012, 2019) that can be assumed between the intensifying construction and the causal construction⁶, that is, “from structures that are completely idiosyncratic and lexically specific to structures that share most of their semantic and syntactic properties with other grammatical patterns” (Diessel 2019: 56). As we have already noted, in example (5) the prepositional phrase indicates the cause of the state or action referred to by the verb. On a second level, there are those instances that can be interpreted both causally or idiomatically, depending on the context, such as *morir de hambre* ‘die of hunger’, *morir de sed* ‘die of thirst’. Generally speaking, the more tokens a type covers (e.g. *saltar* ‘jump’ in the construction with *alegría* ‘happiness’ as in example 7, or *caerse* ‘fall’ in the construction with *susto* ‘scare’ as in example 8), the more likely it is that the meaning of the instance is not to be interpreted literally (as the physical effect produced by an emotion, feeling or physiological need), but rather intensified.⁷

- (7) El Palau Sant Jordi ha temblado con el tercer tema de la noche, Poker Face, porque, si el público ha empezado el concierto **saltando de alegría** al ver a su reina en tan buena forma, celebrarlo con uno de sus temas más famosos ha disparado las endorfinas del personal.

‘The Palau Sant Jordi shook with the third song of the night, Poker Face, because, if the audience started the concert jumping for joy to see their queen in such good shape, celebrating with one of her most famous songs has triggered the endorphins of the people.’

(esTenTen18, 122147942)

- (8) **Me caí del susto** y no pude ver quién era. Me pareció ver unos grandes ojos que me miraban con una mezcla de risa de bruja buena.

‘I fell back in shock and couldn’t see who it was. I thought I saw big eyes looking at me with a mixture of good witch laughter.’

(esTenTen18, 5181940221)

On the contrary, such creative types are more likely to require the listener to rely on the context for a correct interpretation. In general, the more creative and less frequent the constructs are, the more the listener has to rely on the context to correctly interpret the instances of a construction (Ivorra Ordines in pres; Mellado Blanco 2023, in press). Nonce instances are, quite intuitively, associated with extravagance, as it is clear that one can hardly attract attention by simply using run-of-the-mill phrases (Kempf & Hartmann 2022) (see examples 9–10). This is in line with the mechanism of salience by novelty, in that there is “violation of expectations based on lack of stored knowledge” (Schmid & Günther 2016).

⁶ The continuum of idiomaticity has also been examined in the analysis of other linguistic phenomena, such as the continuum of comparative grammatical construction – comparative constructional idiom. In this case, Ivorra Ordines (2023: 164) states that “the grammatical comparison is the basis on which the intensifying comparison develops when the standard of comparison no longer has a referential meaning because it is used as a prototype of a quality or an action”.

⁷ This is intrinsically related to many psycholinguistic experiments according to which speakers, in those cases of idioms with both an idiomatic and a literal interpretation, tend to the idiomatic interpretation (cf. Burger et al. 1982: 214-215).

- (9) Nos encontrábamos cenando con otra pareja cuando le eché un poco de mi tinta mágica en su vestido. Cuando se dio cuenta pensó que había sido el camarero. Sólo con recordarla detrás suyo corriéndole a gorrazos **me deshidrato de la risa**.
 ‘We were having dinner with another couple when I spilled some of my magic ink on her dress. When she realized, she thought it was the waiter. The memory of her running after him and punching him in the face made me laugh so hard I nearly died.’
 (esTenTen18, 6460491930)
- (10) Tras ello continuamos la marcha y Puri **hiperventila del susto** que lleva encima: le parece que vamos muy pegados al barranco y muy deprisa. La falta de costumbre...
 ‘After that, we continue our walk and Puri hyperventilates from the fear she is in: it seems to her that we are walking very close to the ravine and very fast. The lack of habit...’
 (esTenTen18, 1929871922)

Finally, there are predicates that are hardly imaginable in our real world, or as Sawada (2000: 361) puts it, “its proper interpretation is partly determined by our way of understanding the real world”, as is the case with *se despezona de la risa* ‘peel off with laughter’ (example 11). In this case, therefore, we would be dealing with hyperbolic metaphors licensed by the intensifying construction⁸, which, according to our knowledge of the world, cannot be interpreted in a literal sense. In fact, according to the principle of correlative intensity, the greater the incongruity⁹, the greater the intensification: “the more abnormal the situation is referred to, the higher intensity is implied” (Sawada 2000: 377). Indeed, incongruence is intrinsically linked to the notion of extravagance, since it involves semantic complexity, taking into account that it requires a greater mental effort to decode the meaning of the construction.

- (11) Guardo una fotografía en la que usted, compadre, se agarra a una rama con el menor arte del mundo, mientras una mulatilla caribeña **se despezona de la risa**, viendo el espectáculo.
 ‘I have a photograph of you, compadre, holding on to a branch with the least skill in the world, while a Caribbean mule breaks down laughing at the spectacle.’
 (esTenTen18, 7231537244)

Indeed, it could be argued that the listener, by virtue of the Principle of Relevance (Sperber & Wilson 2004: 607), resolves the meaning conflict between the utterance and the real world by interpreting it not as the exaggerated effect of an emotion (causal meaning), but as the intensity of the emotion itself, be it joy, embarrassment, or fear (see example 12). In this way, by means of the Principle of Relevance, the listener avoids an interpretation of the utterance that is contrary to the knowledge of the world; that is, the “emergence of such an intensifier reading is attributed to the interaction of the constructional property with our world knowledge” (Sawada 2000: 384). In Leclercq’s (2019: 283-284) words:

⁸ Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez (2022) argues that the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy can be conceived as a motivating factor of figurative meaning.

⁹ For a detailed study on the notion of “incongruence” in the family of comparative constructional idioms, cf. Mellado Blanco (2023).

Relevance Theory helps to understand how the hearer will solve this mismatch by working out the speaker's intended interpretation on the basis of his knowledge of the different constructions [...], extra-linguistic information, and most importantly his expectation of relevance (i.e., enough effects to justify his processing effort). And depending on the semantic incompatibility between the lexeme and the construction, this process will therefore take more or less effort.

- (12) Pero viendo los precios por ahí, **se me ha puesto el pelo negro del susto** y algo que parece interesante, es la Gibson Songwriter.
 'But looking at the prices out there, I've got my hair black from fear and something that looks interesting is the Gibson Songwriter.'
 (esTenTen18, 5472101128)

Among the “extravagant” constructs whose meaning is incongruent with the real world, it is necessary to distinguish between those that are idioms and those that are not. Even if these structures are motivated to the extent that their meaning seems transparent to speakers, since they can recognize the semantic relation between the literal meaning and the idiomatic meaning; however, due to a process of lexicalization these instances cannot be interpreted compositionally but figuratively. Thus, the constructs *morirse de risa*, *partirse de risa*, *descojonarse de risa* ‘to laugh one’s head off’ are idioms (examples 13-14), unlike, for example, *morirse de la emoción* ‘dying of emotion’ (example 15).

- (13) **Me muero**¹⁰ **de la risa** con cada post de “comida viejuna”. Pero no deja de generarme cierta inquietud el hecho de que, de momento, todos los entrevistados están en la carta del restaurante de mi madre.
 ‘I laugh my head off at every “old food” post. But the fact that all the interviewees are currently on the menu at my mother’s restaurant still makes me a little uncomfortable.’
 (esTenTen18, 255289884)
- (14) Insisto, solo si el anuncio de Ausonia se hubiera rodado antes, pero mucho antes, que el de Fanta, cosa que es bastante dudosa. Sea como fuere, **me parto de la risa** cuando veo ambos anuncios.
 ‘I insist, only if the Ausonia commercial had been shot earlier, much earlier, than the Fanta commercial, which is rather doubtful. Be that as it may, I laugh my head off when I see both ads.’
 (esTenTen18, 9999869)

To delineate the object of study, we focus on instances of the $[V_{\{\text{bodily_reactions}\}} \text{ de } \text{DET } N_{\{\text{emotion/feeling}\}}]$ construction in which the open slot is filled with the nouns *emoción* ‘emotion’, *risa* ‘laugh’ and *susto* ‘fear’¹¹. *Emoción* ‘emotion’ is conceived of as “alteración del ánimo intensa y pasajera, agradable o penosa, que va acompañada de cierta

¹⁰ The concept of “dying” is used metaphorically to express an extreme feeling. In this regard, Dirven (1995: 107) points out that “psychological states may also count as internal and immediate causes of death”.

¹¹ For the present study, we do not consider other emotions or bodily reactions such as *alegría* ‘happiness’, *cabreo* ‘anger’, *vergüenza* ‘shame’, *rabia* ‘fury’, among others. This selection of the slot fillers *emoción* ‘emotion’, *risa* ‘laugh’ and *susto* ‘fear’ corresponds to their higher token frequency compared to the other slot fillers.

conmoción somática”¹² (DRAE), *risa* ‘laugh’ as a visible bodily reaction of joy and humour and *susto* ‘scare’ as the impression caused by fear or dread. That is, slot fillers designating emotions or bodily impressions or reactions that produce these emotions in humans. It is worth noting that the noun *emoción* ‘emotion’ can refer to different bodily reactions such as the happiness that students feel when they reach their favorite Erasmus destination (example 15), the excitement/laughter that someone feels when playing a very funny game (example 16), the moving feeling that someone who loves reading feels when reading a very detailed edition of a book (example 17).

(15) De Roma también estoy enamorada, pero es otro rollo. ¡Cuando me dieron la plaza **me moría de la emoción!**

‘I’m also in love with Rome, but that’s a different story, and when I got my place, I was dying of emotion.’

(esTenTen18, 3505619980)

(16) Es un juego muy divertido, hacía mucho que no deseábamos que llegará el sábado para repetir juego con los amigos. Desarrolla la atención, la risa continua y hasta te puedes **caer de la silla de la emoción.**

‘It’s a really fun game and we haven’t looked forward to Saturday to play it again with friends in a long time. It develops attention, constant laughter, and you can even fall off your chair with emotion.’

(esTenTen18, 1835962)

(17) Una edición cuidada la que nos proporciona Edelvives, en una verdadera joya que, junto con las ilustraciones, nos transporta con la música que se nos regala a otra época, a la música del jazz con la voz de una mujer que rasga las palabras, que nos hace conmovernos, que nos hace **temblar de la emoción.**

‘Edelvives offers us a meticulous edition, in a true jewel that, together with the illustrations, transports us to another era with the music that we are given to the music of jazz with the voice of a woman who tears the words, who moves us, who makes us tremble with emotion.’

(esTenTen18, 14120401)

The intensifying interpretation of the construction is in many cases reinforced by lexical items in the cotext. In this sense, the focalizing adverb *casi* ‘almost’ is ubiquitous in the examples studied from *esTenTen18*, which can be seen as the trigger (cf. below 2.2.) par excellence of the idiomatic meaning of the constructions. In the present study, given the high number of occurrences that the search query yielded (cf. Section 3.1.), we have limited ourselves to extracting only those occurrences that are accompanied by the approximative modifier *casi* ‘almost’ (e.g., Casi me caigo del susto, (esTenTen18, 2883811571)). There are two reasons for this choice:

- i. By restricting the dataset to sequences with *casi* ‘almost’, the corpus analysis is significantly reduced and becomes more operational.
- ii. The polar component of the approximative adverb *casi* ‘almost’ appears mostly in constructs of the intensifying interpretation, i.e., it acts as a trigger for idiomatic reading, which makes the manual filtering easier.

¹² ‘Intense and transient mood disturbance, pleasant or painful, accompanied by a certain somatic shock’ (translated by the authors).

In the following section, we will see that, in addition to the focalizing adverb *casi* ‘almost’, there are other types of indicators of the intensifying construction in the examples that we have studied.

2.2. Projectors and triggers of the intensifying meaning of the construction

In the syntagmatic profile of the constructional idioms under scrutiny certain peculiarities can be identified¹³. These elements can be of a different nature (prosodic, morphological, lexical or pragmatic elements¹⁴) and can be divided into two main groups: (1) projectors¹⁵ and (2) triggers of the intensifying meaning of the construction. Projectors are ostensive markers of the intensifying meaning, i.e. their presence is incompatible with the causal interpretation. Triggers, on the other hand, contribute to the intensification of the meaning of the constructional idioms, which are in fact mechanisms of intensification.

In what follows, we show a classification of these elements in relation to the intensifying construction in question: **(i)** Indicators or ostensive projectors of the construction. In this group, we highlight as a projector, from a morphological point of view, the so-called “present of conatus” (cf. López Serrano 2012). Among the lexical projectors the metalinguistic ostensive projector *figurativamente* ‘figuratively’ predominates. In the example (18) we can see both projectors together, i.e. *figurativamente* ‘figuratively’ and the present of conatus with the verbal form in the first person *lloro* ‘I cry’.

- (18) [...] hoy en la mañana estaba imaginando una batalla en tiempo real y casi **lloro** (figurativamente) **de la emoción**, jajaja. Haré lo posible por explicar las sensaciones que me ha dejado “Los demonios de la noche”, [...] ‘this morning I imagined a battle in real time and I almost cried (figuratively) with emotion, hahaha. I will do my best to explain the feelings that “The Demons of the Night” left me with,’ (esTenTen18, 2827161092)

The present of conatus, which occurs obligatorily with approximative focalizing adverbs, such as *casi* ‘almost’ (see below) or *por poco* ‘nearly’ (López Serrano 2012), is characterised by its past value, as can be seen in (18). In this example, the verbal form *lloro* ‘I cry’ alludes to an action that took place in the past, despite the present tense. López Serrano (2012: 41) defines this phenomenon as follows:

Podemos afirmar que este recurso narrativo de la lengua española, estrechamente emparentado con el presente histórico, tiene habitualmente como finalidad presentar las consecuencias de una acción pasada mediante la alusión a algo que estuvo a punto de pasar, pero que no llegó a suceder; y cuyos efectos se sienten todavía presentes o válidos para el emisor del mensaje en el momento de la

¹³ For a study of relevant cotextual elements in German semi-schematic constructions, cf. Mellado Blanco & Steyer (2018).

¹⁴ Given the nature of the corpus, which is written rather than oral, we cannot carry out an analysis of the prosodic features of the construction in this paper. For reasons of space, we cannot study the characteristic syntactic projectors of the intensifying construction, which distinguish this construction considerably from the consecutive construction [*de* DET_{emotion}, *casi* V_{reaction}] (see the difference between “Casi me caigo del susto” with the meaning ‘I felt a big scare’ vs “Del susto, casi me caigo”, with the meaning ‘I felt such a big scare that I was on the verge of falling’).

¹⁵ For a study of *about* as a projector of ironic comparative constructional idioms in English, cf. Lehmann (2021).

enunciación. Por ello recurre al tiempo presente. Con el uso del presente se consigue así al mismo tiempo acercar la acción –tanto en el espacio como en el tiempo– al receptor del mensaje, que puede visualizar así mejor los sucesos narrados.

‘We can affirm that this narrative resource of the Spanish language, closely related to the historical present, usually has the purpose of presenting the consequences of a past action by alluding to something that was about to happen, but did not happen, and whose effects are still present or valid for the sender of the message at the moment of enunciation. For this reason, the present tense is used. The use of the present tense brings the action – both in space and in time – closer to the receiver of the message, who can thus better visualise the events narrated.’ (our translation)

The fact that the narrated facts are in the present tense for the speaker is consistent with the intensifying nature of the construction. It is a resource that endows sentences with expressiveness (see d’Avis & Finkbeiner 2019) and, at the same time, acts as a projector of the intensifying interpretation, since the causal meaning is incompatible with the present of conatus. According to López Serrano, verbs that can be used with the present of conatus function as telic verbs, that is, they point in their meaning to a culmination of an objective. In the author’s words, “[d]a la sensación de que para que el presente de conato pueda existir es necesario que la acción o estado verbal por él expresados contengan un final en sí mismos [...]” ‘it seems that in order for the present tense to exist, it is necessary that the action or verbal state expressed by it contains an end in itself’ (López Serrano 2012: 24). In the present study, we confirmed this point, given that the verbs licensed by the verbal slot are either changes of state, such as *caer* ‘fall’, *morirse* ‘die’, *desmayarse* ‘faint’, *partirse* ‘break’, *ahogarse* ‘choke’, or causal, like *matar* ‘kill’, or indicate the perfective realization of a punctual, such as *saltar* ‘jump’, *llorar* ‘cry’ or *gritar* ‘scream’.¹⁶

(ii) Triggers or enhancers of the intensifying meaning. We distinguish here several types: (a) Image-remotivating elements, that is, their presence enhances the literal image in the contexts in which they appear. These triggers can be divided into two groups: approximative focalizing adverbs and metalinguistic ostensive operators.

- Approximative focalizing adverbs, such as *casi* ‘almost’ and *por poco* ‘almost’ (cf. *Nueva Gramática de la Lengua Española* 2009: 940). In this group we could also include the chunk *un poco más y...* ‘a little more and’ and the focalizing verbal expression *estar a punto de* ‘to be on the verge of’ (example 19):

(19) Pregunté con algo de ironía y casi a punto de **estallar de la risa** aunque con su siguiente comentario hice una mueca.

‘I asked with some irony and almost on the verge of bursting out laughing, but with his next comment made me grimace.’

(esTenTen18, 13428448101)

The focalizing adverb *casi* ‘almost’ is characterized by a double component, i.e. a scalar-approximative on the one hand and polarity on the other (see Pons & Schwenter 2011: 160). The second one is of a counterfactual nature and activates a negation by inference. Pardo Llibrer (2017: 75), in this regard, shows that the proximate component denotes a process of culmination to the realization of the predicate over which an approximate has scope, while the polar component can or cannot reverse the truth values of the proposition in which the approximate is found.

¹⁶ These cases can indeed have a durative or perfective reading, depending on the context. In this construction, they always exhibit a perfective aspect.

With regard to example (19), the value of *casi* ‘almost’ is ascending approximative because, on an imaginary scale, the inchoative action of bursting into laughter would not be far away (cf. Pardo Llibrer 2017: 75). What is perhaps more interesting is the pragmatic aspect and the argumentative function that *casi* ‘almost’ plays when it has a canonical approximative and polar use¹⁷, as is the case in the examples given. With *casi* ‘almost’ the speaker wants to emphasize the fact that he has been very close to reaching something that he considers to be the top of a scale and that, precisely because he has been so close to this event, what is predicated in the preposition is considered to be very much, in excess. At the same time, it is taken for granted that the event did not happen, and yet it was extremely close to happening. This gives what is predicated an extraordinary subjective value that can be used argumentatively to justify something, even if this is indirectly. This pragmatic function of *casi* ‘almost’ can be related to that of “argumentative sufficiency”, developed by Portolés Lázaro (1998) (*apud* Pardo Llibrer 2021: 134), according to which an utterance orientates the interlocutor argumentatively towards a sufficient conclusion¹⁸. Likewise, in the construction [V_{bodily_reaction} de N_{emotion/feeling}], the approximative *casi* ‘almost’ puts the focus on the remotivation of the image in the case of idioms. The more hyperbolic the image is, i.e. the more incongruent it is with the real world, the greater the intensifying function of the focalizing element *casi* ‘almost’.

An interesting aspect that Ziegeler (2016: 20) focuses on *almost* in English, and that can be extrapolated to *casi* ‘almost’ in Spanish, is the fact that this adverb specializes in negative hyperbolic predicates that did not occur in the past, that is, the value of this approximative adverb increases when the objective or culmination that the predicate describes is something undesirable or negative. In the examples analyzed we confirm this extreme: the predicates of the constructs allude to states or reactions that are generally negative in their literal meaning. With *casi* ‘almost’, the speaker implies that the subject-experiencer was spared from something negative which, however, was about to happen to him/her. The *casi* ‘almost’ realization of the predicate event implies, metaphorically, that the intensity of the experienced emotion was very high.

- Metalinguistic ostensive operators, such as *literalmente* ‘literally’, *literal* ‘literal’, *en sentido literal* ‘in a literal sense’... (cf. Fuentes Rodríguez 2007). These elements, by virtue of their procedural metalinguistic meaning, emphasize the authenticity of the meaning of the predicate they modify. This leads to an intensifying effect (example 20). They are attested in those constructs where the bodily reaction is compatible with our knowledge of the world.

(20) *Casi que*¹⁹ literalmente **te caes de la emoción** –comentó entretenido, desconociendo que tal vez hubiese sido mejor fingir que no había visto lo sucedido.

¹⁷ We use the term “canonical” to refer to non-illocutive (or non-expletive) use (cf. Pons & Schwenter 2011). An example with an expletive function would be “Casi (que) me voy”, to indicate that ‘I have decided that, after weighing it up, that I will go’. In this attenuating function, *casi* ‘almost’ is not counterfactual.

¹⁸ Cf. Portolés Lázaro (1998) for the theory of argumentative sufficiency. When there is argumentative sufficiency, the statement constitutes an argument with enough illocutive force to guide the discourse towards a conclusion (cf. also Pardo Llibrer 2021).

¹⁹ Contrary to what González Rodríguez (2020) argues, *casi que* ‘almost that’ is not limited to, in the peninsular Spanish, the attenuating or expletive illocutionary value, but also appears in the canonical use of negative polarity, as example (33).

–Aunque lo entiendo, debes ser muy perseverante para no haberte dado por vencido a los quince minutos...

‘You almost literally fell over with excitement, he remarked amusedly, not realizing that it might have been better to pretend he hadn't seen what had happened. – Though I understand, you must be very persistent not to have given up after fifteen minutes....’

(esTenTen18, 191470510)

Thus, among the prominent values of the ostensive operator *literalmente* ‘literally’, the metalinguistic stands out, as Martínez Sánchez (2015: 107-110) observes. This operator indicates that the sentence must be taken in its literal and real meaning²⁰, that “el uso de un vocablo o expresión se ejecuta conscientemente. [...], en su sentido pleno y original” ‘the use of a word or an expression executed consciously, in its full and original sense’ (Martínez Sánchez 2015: 107). *Literalmente* ‘literally’ is also an emphazier and an “operador metalingüístico puntualizador” ‘punctuating metalinguistic operator’ (Martínez Sánchez 2015: 201), a function linked to a value of commitment and truthfulness with respect to the predicate. This metalinguistic use is only possible with propositions whose meaning is compatible with the real world (example 20).

(b) Epistemic operators, such as *literalmente* ‘literally’, *literal* ‘literal’, *sinceramente* ‘sincerely’, *te juro que*²¹ ‘I swear that’, *de verdad* ‘for real’, *la verdad es que* ‘the truth is that’, *creedme (que)* ‘believe me (that)’, *y todo*²² ‘and all’ (example 21-26). They serve to strengthen the truth value of the proposition, to emphasize it. With this type of operator, the speaker commits himself to the truth of what is said, no matter how improbable it may be, as is the case in those instances where there is an idiom within the construction. In these cases, they reactivate the literal meaning and deactivate the idiomatic meaning of the idioms and idiomatic expressions of the construction (“coidioms”, see Section 4). In this way, the epistemic operator acts as a mere intensifier of the constructional meaning. In the case of *literalmente* ‘literally’ and *literal* ‘literal’, the metalinguistics is pushed into the background and the image of the idioms and idiomatic constructs with which they co-occur is focused.

The fact that the predicate cannot be understood in its literal sense creates a contradiction between, on the one hand, the pragmatic instruction given by *literalmente/literal* ‘literally/literal’ to interpret the meaning in an authentic and original way and, on the other hand, the unlikelihood that the action can actually take place. Such a contradiction leads to an intensification of the constructional meaning (example 19). In general, it is the context that clarifies whether *literalmente* ‘literally’ functions in the construct as a metalinguistic operator or, on the contrary, as an epistemic operator, and there are many borderline cases (example 20).

There is certainly a continuum, given that most of the messages we emit are not actually true. As Portolés Lázaro (2003: 49-50) observes, when we speak, we do not think of literally reproducing a reality, but of making our interlocutor achieve the appropriate pragmatic enrichment. For this reason, everyday exaggerations are somehow perceived

²⁰ *Literalmente* ‘literally’ is also defined as “adverbio de intensidad enfatizador performativo” ‘performative adverb of emphasizing intensity’ (Martínez Sánchez 2015: 127).

²¹ According to Seco et al. (2017: 434), *te juro que* ‘I swear that’ is considered a sentence formula that is “se usa para afirmar o negar algo haciendo énfasis en la propia veracidad” ‘used to affirm or deny something by emphasizing one’s own truthfulness’.

²² According to Seco et al. (2017: 843), *y todo* ‘and all’ is defined as a formula that concludes a sentence, “poniendo énfasis en lo que se acaba de anunciar” ‘placing emphasis on what has just been uttered’.

as “false” because the common speaker, in a common exchange does not use a criterion of truth to judge them, but looks for the relevant inferences in them. Regarding the use of *literalmente* ‘literally’ with idioms, Martínez Sánchez (2015: 214) argues that the occurrences obtained for his study show that in those examples where there is an idiomatic expression that can potentially have a double interpretation, the presence of *literalmente* ‘literally’ indicates in an ostensive way that the correct interpretation is the non-compositional one.²³

- (21) Continuando el camino han llegado a casa de Dándelo, el vampiro de sentimientos que literalmente casi **los mata de risa** (sí que ha estado gracioso, pero creo que no tanto).
 ‘Continuing on their way, they arrived at Dándelo’s house, the vampire of feelings who literally nearly killed them with laughter (yes, he was funny, but I don’t think he was that funny).’
 (esTenTen18, 1260935)
- (22) El susto que nos provocó la emboscada de Gusi, Alfredo y Matute, casi **nos matan literalmente del susto**. Se habían escondido en una galería secundaria y al saltar sobre nosotros, [...] nos relajó y divirtió haciéndome olvidar mi evidente claustrofobia.
 ‘We were literally scared to death by the ambush of Gusi, Alfredo and Matute. They had hidden in a side gallery and when they jumped on us, it relaxed and amused us, and made me forget my obvious claustrophobia.’
 (esTenTen18, 2516627055)
- (23) Te juro que casi **lloro de la emoción**. He esperado toda mi vida para este momento, y aquí está. Ya me puedo morir tranquila (Ja, hasta que no nazca el polluelo [...]).
 ‘I swear I almost cried with emotion. I’ve been waiting for this moment all my life, and here it is. Now I can die in peace (ha, until the chick is born).’
 (esTenTen18, 5704562417)
- (24) [...] es normal que te hayas tirado de los pelos con tanto código. Ja, ja! Sinceramente, casi **me meo de la risa** al leer tu expresión...). Gracias de nuevo, intentaré ver cómo lo hago, pero si me pudieras ubicar, mejor, que mejor.
 ‘it’s normal to pull your hair out with so much code. Ha ha! Honestly, I almost pissed myself laughing when I read your expression...). Thanks again, I’ll see to see what I can do, but if you can find me, all the better.’
 (esTenTen18, 9261777387)
- (25) Fue una comida familiar y nos decantamos por el menú de chuletón!! Y creedme que casi **lloro de la emoción** al ver “la chuleta”, nos explicaron que era de un vacuno especial, madurada en 21 días.

²³ This emerging use of *literalmente* ‘literally’ in the sense of ‘really’, ‘indeed’ is not exclusive to Spanish, but is also found in other languages such as English (see actually; [*the house literally burned to the ground*] now often used as an intensive to modify a word or phrase that itself is being used figuratively [*she literally flew into the room*]: this latter usage is objected to by some) (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/literally>)).

‘It was a family meal and we chose the T-bone steak menu! And believe me, I almost cried with emotion when I saw “the T-bone steak”, they explained to us that it was a special beef aged for 21 days.’
(esTenTen18, 4621335230)

(26) Casi **lloro y todo de la emoción**.

‘I almost cried with emotion.’
(esTenTen18, 3968611270)

(c) Typographical resources, such as the use of parentheses, quotation marks, and capital letters, which also serve to emphasize the literal meaning of the image underlying the predicate (examples 27-28). These meta-linguistic resources explicitly comment on the authors’ own linguistic behaviour, indicating that the phrase is perceived as extravagant by drawing the audience’s attention to the deviant form (cf. Kempf & Hartmann 2022).

(27) Partiendo de “tu base” no tengo mucho que decir, tu lista es correcta, aunque debo reconocer que casi **“la palmo” del susto** al encontrarme a Machado en tal listado.
‘Starting from “your basis” I don’t have much to say, your list is correct, although I must admit that I was almost “shocked” to find Machado in such a list.’
(esTenTen18, 13596425601)

(28) “Por suerte nadie se encontraba en casa”, indicó Derrick en las redes sociales, donde reconoció que casi **“se muere” del susto**.
‘Luckily no one was at home, Derrick said on social media, where he admitted that he almost “died” from the scare.’
(esTenTen18, 17903394381)

(d) Iconic elements, such as *haha*, *jeje* (Manero Richard 2022), which are also remotivators and allude to the emotion designated by the substantive slot filler. They are mostly iconic signs that reproduce laughter (29) and (30).

(29) Me mataste con eso hahahahaha. Casi **me hago pipi de la risa**.
‘You killed me with that hahahahaha. I almost peed myself laughing.’
(esTenTen18, 5993067811)

(30) XD²⁴ Casi **me orino de la risa** cuando lo repetí para escuchar lo que decía.
‘XD I almost wet myself laughing when I repeated it to hear what it said.’
(esTenTen18, 11837063434)

After this holistic description of the construction [$V_{\{\text{bodily_reaction}\}} \text{ de } N_{\{\text{emotion/feeling}\}}$], in Section 3 we focus on the corpus analysis of each emotion according to the data extracted from *esTenTen18* (Sketch Engine) with the aim of examining the creative potential of the three constructional idioms.

²⁴ XD stands for “laugh out loud”. When turned 90° to the right, it resembles the representation of a face with its mouth wide open and its eyes squeezed tightly shut as a sign of a loud guffaw (<https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emoticono#XD>).

3. Corpus-based study of the [V_{bodily_reaction} de N_{emotion/feeling}] construction

3.1. Data extraction

The corpus that we used to extract the data belongs to the macrocorpus Spanish Web 2018 (*esTenTen18*), which consists of almost 20 billion tokens. Given the construction [V_{bodily_reactions} de DET N_{emotion/feeling}], the search query is as follows: [tag="V.*"] [word="de"] ([word="la"]) [word="emoción"], where the nominal slot is the variable slot in the query depending of the emotion or feeling that we are looking for: *emoción* ‘emotion’, *risa* ‘laugh’ and *susto* ‘fear’. We also ran the query with and without the definite article to see if the results would allow us to better understand the morphosyntactic properties of the construction. A first query without the lemma constraint *casi* ‘almost’, before manually pruning the data, yields the following results:

1. a) V *de la emoción*: 5 937 instances,
b) V *de emoción*: 15 066 instances.
2. a) V *de la risa*: 13 505 instances,
b) V *de risa*: 31 027 instances.
3. a) V *del susto*: 4 153 instances,
b) V *de susto*: 750 instances.

At this point we observe that highly frequent types (lexicalized) could be extracted easily (see example 24) by ordering the types based on the frequency of the verbal slot; however, reaching hapax legomena in the corpus could be a highly demanding task, given that it is necessary, in such cases, to read the full sentence in order to determine whether an occurrence is licensed by the constructions under study or not. Some examples of non-compatible constructs are:

- (31) El dinero **carece de emoción**, es simplemente un concepto, y tu forma de relacionarte con él te acercará o alejará sin duda del mismo.
‘Money has no emotion, it is simply a concept, and the way you relate to it will undoubtedly move you closer to it or further away from it.’
(esTenTen18, 111773358)
- (32) [...] una sucesión de imágenes escalofriantes que producen estados emocionales diversos en todo el espectro que **va de la risa al llanto**, o incluso ambos a la vez.
‘a succession of chilling images that produce a variety of emotional states across the spectrum from laughing to crying, or even both at the same time.’
(esTenTen18, 107721989)
- (33) Para **recuperarse del susto** volvimos a Fantasyland y subimos a todo lo que él quería. A Pau lo que más le gustó fueron las tacitas (si esas que dan vueltas hasta marearse).
‘To recover from the scare, we went back to Fantasyland and went on everything he wanted. What Pau liked the most were the little cups (yes, the ones that go round and round until you get dizzy).’
(esTenTen18, 25409000)

The search query, consequently, also consists in adding the lexical constraint of the lemma *casi* at a distance -7...-1 of the KWIC, which offers the results shown in Figure 1 (only idiomatic-intensifying constructs).

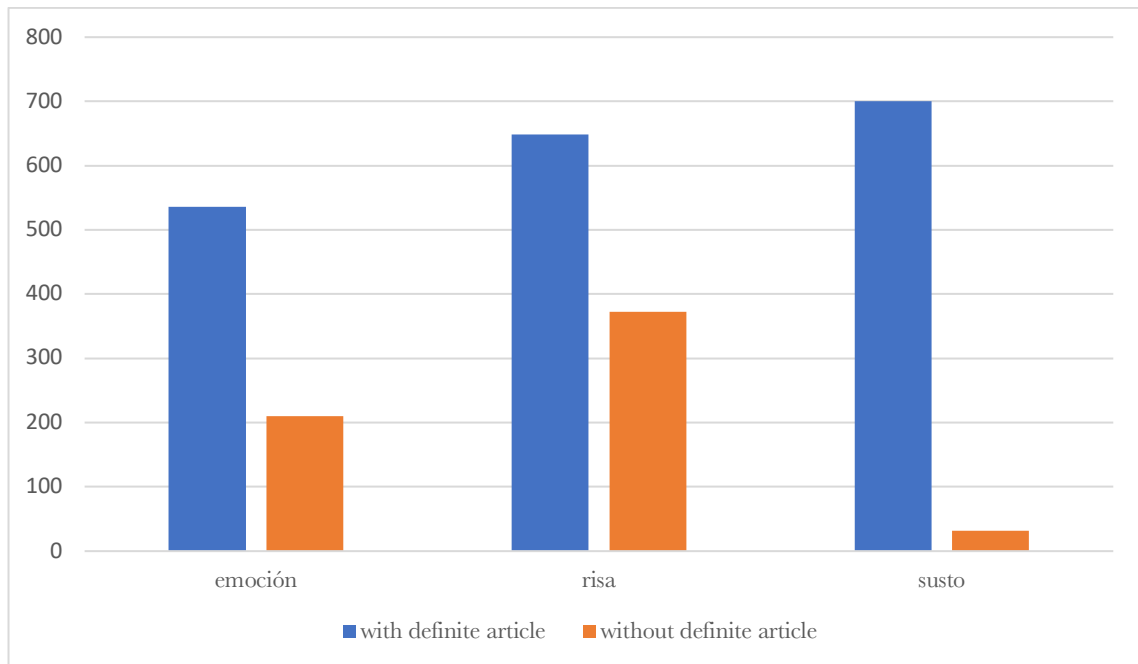


Figure 1. Constructs licensed by the $[V_{\text{bodily_reactions}} \text{ de } \text{DET } N_{\text{emotion/feeling}}]$ construction with and without definite article

The results in Figure 1 show the constructs licensed by the idiomatic construction under study, both with and without the definite article. If we compare the constructs licensed by the intensifying construction with the total number of occurrences obtained after applying the *casi* ‘almost’ constraint, we see that about 90% of the occurrences with definite article are licensed by the intensifying construction, while about 60% of the occurrences without definite article are licensed by the intensifying construction²⁵. Let us take a closer look at these results: *del susto* (92.84%), while *de susto* (59.26%); *de la risa* (91.15%), while *de risa* (58.19%)²⁶; and *de la emoción* (88.59%), while *de emoción* (57.53%). The fact that the definite article frequently appears in the construction is a clear indicator of a higher degree of entrenchment of the construction with the definite article preceding the noun slot filler. This suggests that the definite article also contributes to the idiomatic interpretation and the fact that the construction seems to be an elliptical sentence “de la emoción de algo” ‘of the emotion of something’; on the contrary, the definite article would have no reason to exist since there should be no definite article before an abstract noun.

²⁵ Bear in mind that in these percentages the lemma constraint *casi* ‘almost’ is already applied.

²⁶ It is noteworthy pointing out that both the DFEM and the DFDEA lemmatize the lexically filled idiom *morirse de risa* without the definite article, which goes against the results that we have reached in our corpus-based study, in which the prevailing form, and thus the more entrenched, is that with the definite article.

3.2. Data analysis: productivity measured through the prism of “cognitive core”

The idiomatic-intensifying construction is one type of constructional idiom, in that it has lexically filled items and slots that need to be renewed, more or less productively in discourse. According to the principles of Construction Grammar, semi-schematic constructions are located halfway between substantive constructions such as idioms or morphemes and formal constructions, of grammatical structure (Fillmore, Kay & O’Connor 1988). Like the other constructions, the idiomatic-intensifying construction is a form-meaning pairing: the structure is paired with a specific meaning (see Goldberg 1995, 2019). The construction $[V_{\{\text{bodily_reaction}\}} \text{ de DET } N_{\{\text{emotion/feeling}\}}]$ is paired with the intensifying meaning ‘experience $N_{\{\text{emotion/feeling}\}}$ in its highest degree’. At a lower level of the taxonomy, in this study, we focus on the constructional idioms $[V_{\{\text{bodily_reaction}\}} \text{ de la emoción}]$, $[V_{\{\text{bodily_reaction}\}} \text{ de la risa}]$ and $[V_{\{\text{bodily_reaction}\}} \text{ del susto}]$. If we apply the principle of coercion to these constructions, we observe that the intensifying meaning of the construction overrides the meaning of the constituents. This means that the meaning of the verbal filler renewing the verbal slot is diluted in favour of the holistic constructional meaning (see Michaelis 2003).

At this point, it is worth looking at the productivity of the slot $V_{\{\text{bodily_reaction}\}}$ in each constructional idiom to observe which verbal fillers are more predominantly associated with each $N_{\{\text{emotion/feeling}\}}$. In order to study the productivity of each slot, we test the following hypothesis: idioms, like other constructions, are not static, but are linked with other constructions in an associative way and are formulated through a process of abstraction from the data by means of a process of analogy, presenting discursive occurrences that are more or less prototypical (see Mellado Blanco 2020b). To put it differently, the higher the degree of prototypicality of the occurrences of a construction, the higher the token frequency in discourse: less prototypical instances will have fewer occurrences, but they will also be more creative and more context-dependent (Langlotz 2006: 202-203; compare examples 13-14 with 11-12). From this perspective, idioms can be thought of as cognitive units that are stored in our mental lexicon as pairings of form and function, but with fuzzy lexical profiles. Such pairings are centered around “cognitive cores”²⁷ that are adapted to the different needs in the discourse based on analogical extensions.

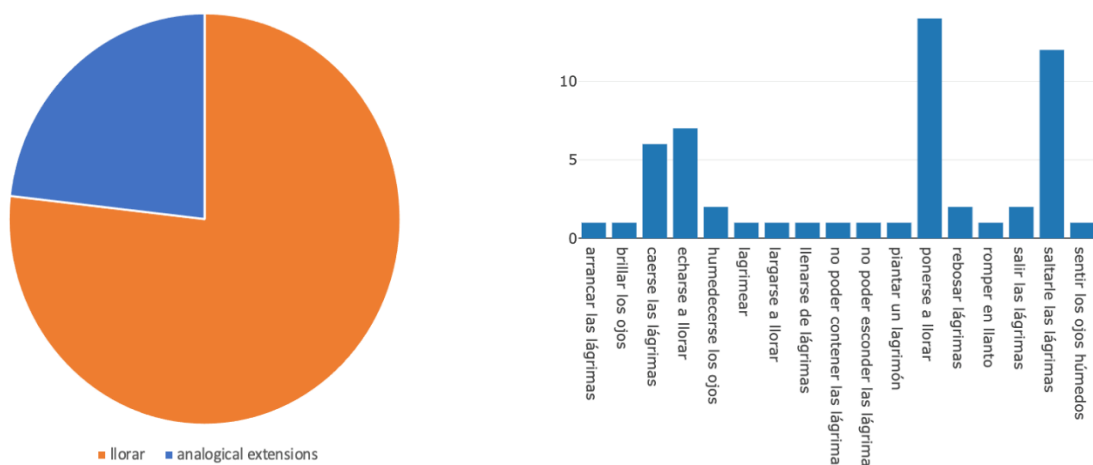
To see which bodily responses are more strongly associated with each emotion or feeling, we proceed by investigating two different aspects: (i) which cognitive cores are more predominant in terms of token frequency, and (ii) whether the five most frequent types belong to such cognitive cores to explore the dispersion of semantic classes.

3.2.1. The constructional idiom $[V_{\{\text{bodily_reaction}\}} \text{ de la emoción}]$

First, with regard to the constructional idiom $[V_{\{\text{bodily_reaction}\}} \text{ de la emoción}]$, we observe that the most frequent cognitive core refers to “crying” (see Graph 1), where the most prototypical slot filler is *llorar* ‘cry’ with 182 occurrences (in orange), being the most

²⁷ The notion of “cognitive core” is the result of the inspiration coming from different but interrelated ideas: “[t]he core components of a phraseological unit constitute its skeleton, which is fleshed out by elements with a less central role in creating and maintaining the structure of a phraseological form” (Philip 2008: 97), or “the intricate interrelations of the linguistic and encyclopedic knowledge involved in the processes of meaning construction and interpretation triggered by idiosyncratic form-meaning-use amalgams” (Rasulic 2010) (the underlined is ours).

frequent type of the construction, with a large distance from the second most frequent type *morir* ‘cry of the emotion’ (50 occurrences). In this respect, the frequent type *llorar de la emoción* ‘cry of the emotion’ is highly entrenched and thus serves as a model for analogical extensions, posing a total of 17 analogical extensions (in blue), of which 10 types are nonce instances (hapax legomena). Among these analogical extensions, the type *saltarle las lágrimas* ‘tears in her eyes’ with 12 occurrences (example 34) deserves special attention, since it is an idiom that can be found in phraseological dictionaries²⁸ (see DFDEA or DFEM). If we count the occurrences of both the highly frequent type *llorar de la emoción* ‘cry of the emotion’ and its analogical extensions, we observe a total of 237 instances, which represents 44.21% of the total of number of constructs licensed by the constructional idiom [V_{bodily_reaction} *de la emoción*], with a notable impact on the entrenchment of the verbal slot-filler.



Graph 1. The highly frequent type *llorar de la emoción* and its analogical extensions

(34) A Vlad casi **se le saltan las lágrimas de la emoción**, porque ha conseguido salirse con la suya, y que un montón de gente ajena al mundo literario escuche, aplauda, ame y dese la poesía.

‘Vlad was almost in tears with emotion, because he has managed to get away with it, and to make a lot of people outside the literary world listen, applaud, love and desire poetry.’

(esTenTen18, 6808806854)

Another very representative cognitive core is that of “fainting”, with a total of 33 occurrences and 5 types, of which *desmayarse* ‘faint’ is the most frequently encountered with 29 instances, followed by four hapax legomena: *caerse redondo* ‘fall round’, *desfallecer* ‘faint’, *dar un yuyu* ‘get dizzy’, and *marearse* ‘get dizzy’, the first of which – alone – is an idiom (example 35).

(35) Llega el jueves por la mañana y te mueres de ganas por contarle a tu compañera las buenas nuevas: ¡casi **se cae redonda de la emoción!**

²⁸ The idiom *saltársele las lágrimas a alg.* is frequently used to intensify the emotion that the subject experiences. Given that both the idiom and the constructional idiom in which the former is embedded are intensifiers, we would be dealing with an example of overintensification (cf. Izert & Pilecka 2021).

‘Thursday morning arrives, and you can’t wait to tell your partner the good news: she almost falls over with excitement!’
(esTenTen18, 3879447285)

The most frequently encountered types of the *de la emoción* constructional idiom, there are *llorar* ‘cry’ (182 occurrences), followed by *morirse* ‘die’ (50), *desmayarse* ‘faint’ (29), *gritar* ‘scream’ (26), and *saltar* ‘jump’ (18). Of these, the type *saltar* ‘jump’ also belongs to a cognitive core, along with other types such as *brincar* ‘jump’ (5 occurrences), *dar saltos* ‘jumping up’ (2), *dar brincos* ‘hopping’ (1), *ponerse a saltar* ‘start jumping’ (1), *saltar del taburete* ‘jumping off the stool’ (1), and *saltar hasta el techo* ‘jump up to the ceiling’ (1) (example 36).

(36) Se parece a Pilar, tiene su misma nariz, su misma boca, es su vivo retrato. Don René casi **saltó hasta el techo de la emoción**. Con lo que le gustaban las niñas. ‘She looks like Pilar, she has the same nose, the same mouth, she is her spitting image. Don René almost jumped through the roof with emotion. He loved little girls so much.’
(esTenTen18, 14014340123)

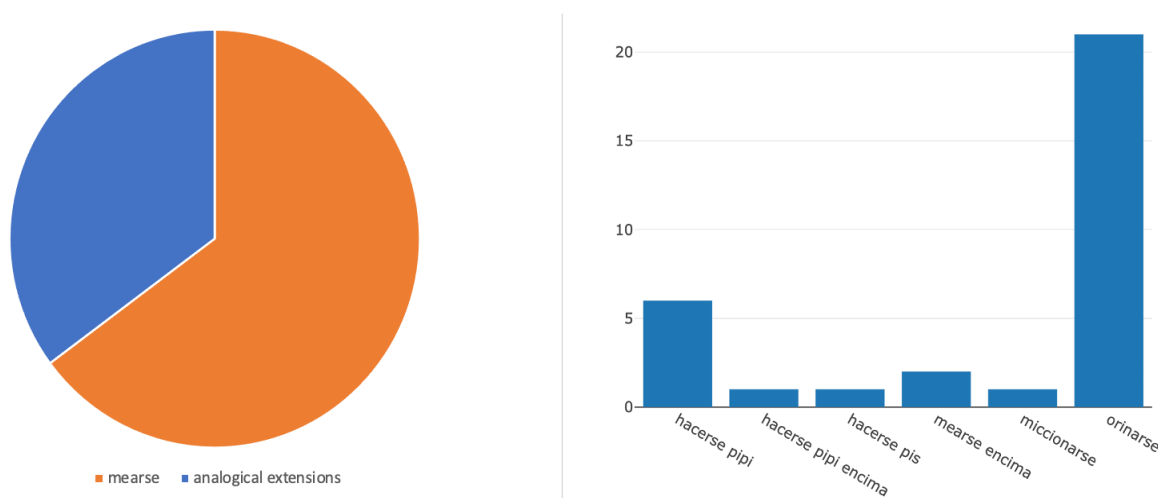
3.2.2. The constructional idiom [V_{bodily_reaction} *de la risa*]

Second, regarding the constructional idiom [V_{bodily_reaction} *de la risa*], we determine that the most frequent cognitive core is that of “dying”, being *morir* ‘die’ the most frequent type with 199 occurrences, which constitutes altogether an idiom, i.e. the verbal filler is part of the idiom. In the case of the *morirse de la risa* ‘die laughing micro-construction, high token frequency detracts from productivity given that only two analogical extensions are centered around such cognitive core, that is, *matar* ‘kill’ with 24 occurrences and *palmar* ‘die’ with 2 occurrences (example 37) (cf. Barðdal 2008: 49). Counting both the instances of the micro-construction and those of the analogical extensions, 34.67% of the total number of the constructs licensed by the *de la risa* constructional idiom are filled with the “dying” cognitive core. This has a notable impact on the hyperbolic nature of its verbal fillers, “involving a clash with reality based on incommensurate exaggeration” (Peña & Ruiz de Mendoza 2017: 42; cf. Schneider 2022: 207).

(37) Pero ¿se puede saber de dónde vienes? A mi madre casi le dio un síncope cuando me vio llegar con el ojo morado. Y yo casi **palmo de la risa**.
‘But where did you come from? My mother almost collapsed when she saw me arrive with a black eye. And I almost burst out laughing.’
(esTenTen18, 13404218067)

Two more productive cognitive cores are those represented by “peeing” and “crying”. The former is prototypically represented by the verbal filler *mearse* ‘pee on oneself’ with 59 occurrences (in orange), from which five analogical extensions can be posited (in blue), these being *orinar* ‘urinate’ with 21 occurrences, followed by *hacerse pipi* ‘pee on oneself’ with 6, *mearse encima* ‘piss on oneself’ with 2, *hacerse pipi encima* ‘pee on oneself’ with 1, *hacerse pis* ‘pee on oneself’ with 1, and *miccionar* ‘urinate’ with 1 (see Graph 2). In this case, the slot filler *mearse* ‘pee on oneself’ is part of the idiom *mearse de la risa* ‘piss yourself laughing’. Of particular interest is the shift of registers depending on the slot filler, ranging from formal language with *miccionar* ‘urinate’, towards more standard language with *orinar* ‘urinate’,

and colloquial register with *hacerse pipi* ‘pee on oneself’ (childish), and *mearse* ‘pee on oneself’. These aspects on the shift in register of the constructs of the constructional idiom are to be stated as part of the construction (see Goldberg 2006: 10). In terms of the most frequently encountered types of *de la risa* constructional idiom, *morirse* ‘die’ has 199 occurrences, followed by, with a great distance, *mearse* ‘pee on oneself’ with 59 occurrences, *llorar* ‘cry’ with 48 occurrences, *ahogarse* ‘choke’ with 32 occurrences, and *partirse* ‘break oneself into two pieces’ with 30 occurrences. Of these types, apart from *morirse* ‘die’, *mearse* ‘pee on oneself’ and *llorar* ‘cry’, *partirse* ‘break oneself into two pieces’ also belongs to a cognitive core, along with other unique instantiations (hapax legomena) such as *doblarse* ‘buckle oneself’, *partirse el pecho* ‘split one’s chest’, *partirse en dos* ‘split in two’, *romper la caja* ‘break one’s chest’, and *romperse las costillas* ‘break one’s ribs’.



Graph 2. The highly frequent type *mearse de la risa* and its analogical extensions

In the latter case, i.e. in the “crying” cognitive core, *llorar* ‘cry’ is the most frequent verbal filler with 48 occurrences but it is not as productive as the very frequent type *llorar de la emoción* ‘cry of the emotion’. In this case, four analogical extensions can be posited: *salir las lágrimas* ‘tears come out’ with 2 occurrences, *saltar las lágrimas* ‘tears jump’ with 2 occurrences, *caerse las lágrimas* ‘shed tears’ with 1 occurrence, and *producir un llanto* ‘produce a cry’ with 1 occurrence. In terms of the most frequently encountered types of *de la risa* ‘of the laugh’ constructional idiom, the five most frequent types are *morirse* ‘die’ with 199 occurrences, *mearse* ‘pee’ with 59 occurrences, *llorar* ‘cry’ with 48, *ahogarse* ‘choke’ with 32, and *partirse* ‘bend’ with 30, of which the only type that does not belong to a cognitive core is *ahogarse* ‘choke’ (see example 38).

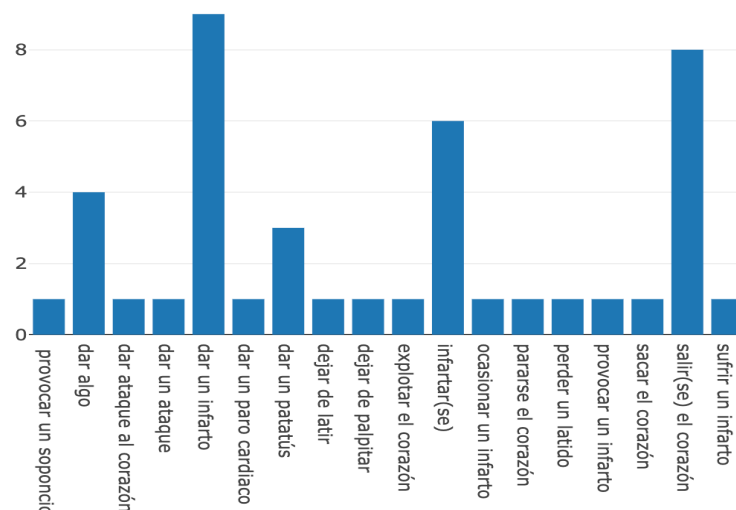
(38) Estaba oyendo los cortes de su programa mientras desayunaba el cortado y casi **me ahogo de la risa** con cosas como que le visitan de montón de países.

‘I was listening to some cuts of his programme while I was having breakfast and I almost choked with laughter at things like the fact that he is visited by people from a lot of countries.’

(esTenTen18, 746038267)

3.2.3. The constructional idiom [V_{bodily_reaction} *del susto*]

Third, regarding the constructional idiom [V_{bodily_reaction} *del susto*], we observe that the most frequent cognitive core is that of “dying”, where *morir* ‘die’ is the most representative type of the verbal slot with 227 occurrences, followed by *matar* ‘kill’ with 192 occurrences, and *palmar* ‘die’ with 1 occurrence. Such a core is the most representative one in this construction, with 60% of the instances saturated with three types belonging to the “dying” cognitive core. This suggests that such a cognitive core, which is also common in the *de la risa* ‘of the laugh’ construction, could also be extrapolated to other emotions, such as *miedo* ‘fear’, *vergüenza* ‘shame’, *alegría* ‘happiness’, *cabreo* ‘bad temper’ and *rabia* ‘anger’, among others.²⁹ In this construction, two productive cores are those represented by “falling” and “having a heart attack”. The former is prototypically represented by the very frequent type *caerse* ‘fall’ with 43 occurrences, from which seven analogical extensions can be posited: *caerse al suelo* ‘fall to the floor’ with 6 occurrences, *caerse para atrás* ‘fall backwards’ with 5 occurrences, *caerse de culo* ‘fall backwards’ with 2 occurrences (idiom³⁰), *caerse de culo al suelo* ‘fall backwards to the floor’ with 1, *caerse de la silla* ‘fall off the chair’ with 1, and *caerse hacia atrás* ‘fall backwards’ with 1 occurrence. The latter has no prototypical type, but productivity is measured in relation to type diversity within the associated cognitive core (see Van Wettere 2021); that is, not-so-high token frequency types can also be associated by means of a shared semantic class. The most frequent one is *dar un infarto* ‘have a heart attack’ –which constitutes an idiom– with 9 occurrences (see Graph 3), followed by *salirse el corazón* ‘the heart comes out’ with 8 occurrences, *infartarse* ‘suffer a heart attack’ with 6 occurrences, *dar algo* ‘have a breakdown’ with 4, *dar un patatús* ‘have a jolt’ with 3 occurrences, and twelve more nonce instances (see example 39).



Graph 3. The “having a heart attack” cognitive core

(39) – Hey, ¿cómo estás? – Le dio una palmada en el muslo, lo que casi le **provoca un infarto del susto**. – B-b-bien.

²⁹ The “dying” cognitive core could be a semantic trait/constraint of the verbal slot of the more schematic construction [V_{corporal damage} *de* DET N_{emotion/feeling}], but in order to test such a hypothesis, more empirical research is needed. Due to reasons of space, we cannot devote more attention to this interesting point.

³⁰ In the same way as *saltársele las lágrimas*, the idiom *caerse de culo* functionally works as an intensification of astonishment or surprise, which overintensifies the constructional meaning (see footnote 28).

‘Hey, how are you?’ She patted him on the thigh, which almost gave him a heart attack. ‘G-g-g-good’.

(esTenTen18, 6173826595)

Regarding the most frequent types of the constructional idiom *del susto* ‘of the scare’, there are two high-frequent types that could be detrimental to productivity, since both *morirse* ‘die’ with 227 occurrences and *matar* ‘kill’ with 192 occurrences are highly entrenched and do not allow for analogical extensions, in line with the Conserving Effect of high token frequency, in that “high-frequency forms are less likely to undergo analogical change than low-frequency items” (Bybee 2010: 75). The less frequent types are *caerse* ‘fall’ with 43 occurrences, *desmayarse* ‘faint’ with 27 occurrences, and *saltar* ‘jump’ with 25 occurrences, all these belonging to different cognitive cores.

4. Results and discussion

The results of our analysis support the view that idioms can be conceived of as pairings of form and function with fuzzy syntactic profiles, as evidenced by the great potential of lexical flexibility in the constructs licensed by the constructional idioms studied (see Mellado Blanco 2020b). According to this view, idioms are formulated by a process of abstraction through the extraction of corpus data, showing more or less prototypical instantiations, that is, more or less close to the abstracted form. Idioms are thus generalizations of instantiations of an idealized prototypical pattern (Bybee 1998: 428).

In the framework of Construction Grammar, the creative potential of language is largely limited to the productivity of a construction, since allowing constructions to combine freely as long as there are no conflicts allows to explain the creative potential of language (Goldberg 2006), or as Hoffmann (2019) puts it, how established abstract schemas can be used to license novel utterances. Considering the cognitive cores of the constructional idioms *de la emoción* ‘of the emotion’, *de la risa* ‘of the laugh’, and *del susto* ‘of the scare’, we have examined that the flexibility of the slot follows certain patterns in the creative processes of new types, that is, the regularity in the irregularity can be captured, which means that creativity follows certain patterns (Ivorra Ordines 2022: 30).

According to Barðdal (2008: 52), high token types make individual types more entrenched as low-level constructions, and consequently more suitable as models for analogical extensions. This is the case of the lexically filled idiom *llorar de la emoción* ‘cry of the emotion’ with 182 occurrences, whose high degree of entrenchment serves as analogical support to increase the likelihood of a pattern being used in an innovative way³¹. In this line of reasoning, the more conventional a pattern becomes (and thus firmly entrenched), the greater the need for a more extravagant alternative, which explains why substitution is a natural outcome under such circumstances. This is particularly the case for intensifiers, such as the idiom *llorar de la emoción* ‘cry of the motion’ in particular and of the constructional idioms under study in general, where “speakers continually recruit new expressions in the same functional domain because the expressiveness of older forms has been compromised by overuse” (De Smet et al. 2018: 202; see also Hopper & Traugott

³¹ Fischer (2010) describes this process as “conceptual slippage”, in that as language is conceived of as a workable and flexible system rather than a rigid one. This process alludes to the notion of “context-dependent tolerance of conceptual mismatch” (cf. Hofstadter 1995: 201). Similarly, Lehmann (1985) compares language to fashion in that languages change because speakers want to change them.

2003: 122, Petré 2016: 118, Diessel 2019: 10, Goldberg 2019: 61, Ivorra Ordines 2022: 46). As already indicated, the speaker chooses to deviate from convention on the basis of two interrelated factors: (i) an unconventional expression is likely as long as the conventional form is easily retrievable, making the deviation (almost) undetectable, and (ii) the more accessible the analogical expressions to the conventional form, the stronger the effect (see De Smet 2016 on the *cascade model*).

The highly entrenched cognitive core of ‘crying’ in the constructional idiom *de la emoción* ‘of the emotion’ can also be explained in terms of Goldberg’s (2019: chapter 4) notion of *coverage*. From this perspective, the acceptability of the productive use of a construction depends on the previously attested examples and the coinage within the conceptual space in which the exemplars are clustered. The abstract semantic cluster of ‘crying’ thus has a high degree of coverage based on the following factors: (i) the variety of different verbal phrases that renew the verbal slot with 1 high-frequent type (model for analogization) and 17 medium-to-low-frequent types (analogical extensions), representing 15.25% of the types of the construction; (ii) the high token frequency of the semantic cluster compared to the total number of instances of the construction, amounting to 44.21% of the total number of occurrences; and (iii) the semantic similarity of the attested types, in that they are different ways of expressing the act of crying.

Another case is that of the cognitive core of ‘peeing’ in the constructional idiom *de la risa* ‘of the laugh’, which shows very little potential for creativity, given that only four analogical extensions are posited. The fact that only 4.17% of the types are saturated by the ‘peeing’ cognitive core means that “a readily available alternative that conveys the intended meaning-in-context already exists” (Goldberg 2019: 74). To put it differently, the speaker has already learned more conventional ways of expressing the intended message in sequence and these constitute a more or less automated mental routine (Langacker 1987: 57-59), which is in harmony with the fact that many lexicalizations are attested in *de la risa* ‘of the laugh’ constructional idiom. This preempts the speaker from searching for new ways of saying old things because the speaker already has many formulations entrenched that represent the “right” way of expressing the intended message in the context of use.

The creative potential of the *del susto* ‘of the scare’ constructional idiom, in turn, depends not so much on the role of high-frequent types as models for analogical extension, but on the ability of medium-to-low-frequency types to be bound together by the same abstract cognitive core. The fact that only two types cover the 60% of the instances is a detrimental factor for the productivity of a construction based on a high token frequency exemplar; rather, the creative potential does not revolve around the cognitive core of ‘dying’ – where the two most frequent types are –, but around the cognitive cores represented by “falling” with 60 occurrences and 8 types, and “having a heart attack” with 42 occurrences and 18 types (of which 13 are hapax legomena).

Taking together the three constructional idioms, we counted those tokens that do not cluster with other types that conform to a cognitive core, and we consequently observed that in the constructional idiom *de la emoción* ‘of the emotion’ there are 173 occurrences that do not belong to a cognitive core (32.27%), followed by the *de la risa* ‘of the laugh’ constructional idiom with 110 occurrences (16.94%), and the *del susto* ‘of the scare’ constructional idiom with 96 occurrences (13.71%). Semantic diversity can thus be used as an index of the productivity of a construction, since the higher the percentage of occurrences that cannot be clustered into a cognitive core, the higher the semantic divergence and, thus, the more productive the construction can be. This is in harmony

with Barðdal's hypothesis, in which the author claims that "constructions in high type frequency need not show a high degree of semantic coherence in order to be productive, while constructions low in type frequency show a high degree of semantic coherence in order to be productive" (Barðdal 2008: 9). Another measure of productivity that is in line with these results is Baayen's measure of realized productivity, in which token and type frequency interact, in that the productivity of a "category C is estimated by the type count $V(C,N)$ of its members in a corpus with N tokens" (Baayen 2009: 902). This is accordingly confirmed in the constructional idioms studied, where *de la emoción* 'of the emotion' is the most productive with 22.01%, followed by *de la risa* 'of the laugh' with 16.33% and *del susto* 'of the fear' with 15.71%. Against this background, we observe that speakers "are prone to innovate with respect to previous usage, using words in ways not already sanctioned by previous experience, extending the usage range of idioms and constructions" (Taylor 2012: 285), and, ultimately, to go beyond the cognitive cores that we were able to identify in terms of unexpected form-meaning relations³² (see examples 40-42).

- (40) Si entrar en Colombo fue una odisea, salir de la capital fue un vía crucis: coches, camiones, más buses, tuk tuks... 65 kilómetros y 3 horas más tarde nos bajamos en Bentota, donde casi **besamos el suelo de la emoción**.
 'If getting into Colombo was an odyssey, getting out of the capital was an ordeal: cars, lorries, more buses, tuk tuks... 65 kilometres and 3 hours later we got off at Bentota, where we almost kissed the ground with emotion.'
 (esTenTen18, 1341742297)
- (41) Y para ese momento estaba casi arrepentido de haberle mostrado mi anillo de matrimonio falso. "Lo que es peor, una vez un tipo para besarme, me dijo: levanta la cabeza, quiero ver de qué color son tus ojos" Y casi **escupo la cerveza de la risa**.
 'And by that time I was almost regretting having shown him my fake wedding ring. "What's worse, once a guy to kiss me, told me: lift your head up, I want to see what colour your eyes are". And I almost spit out my beer from laughing.'
 (esTenTen18, 17885904426)
- (42) El perro y la dueña dieron un brinco que casi **se suben a un árbol del susto**.
 'The dog and the owner jumped so much that they almost climbed a tree out of fright.'
 (esTenTen18, 13016903818)

Regarding the semantic class and the syntactic behaviour of the verbs, it is important to note that most of them belong to the group of unaccusative intransitive verbs, in which the subject has the semantic role of EXPERIENCER. The most numerous of these are pronominal unaccusative verbs with telic aspect, such as *caerse* 'fall', *ahogarse* 'choke', *subirse* 'get on', *infartarse* 'have a heart attack', *mearse* 'pee on oneself', *orinarse* 'pee on oneself', *hacerse (pipí)* 'pee on oneself', *partirse* 'break', *desmayarse* 'faint'. All these indicate a change of state or position of the EXPERIENCER subject. A smaller group are the intransitive integrative verbs of the atelic aspect, such as *llorar* 'cry', *saltar* 'jump', *dar saltos* 'jump', which denote an action. Finally, there is a small group of unaccusative verbs with a

³² In this regard, Hoffmann (2018: 263) rightly points out that there is a tension between established possibilities and deviations from them.

different actantial schema, since the position of the subject is occupied by the semantic role of PATIENT, while the role of EXPERIENCER is represented by a pronominal verb as indirect object, such as *darle un infarto a alguien* ‘give someone a heart attack’, *salirsele el corazón a alguien* ‘someone’s heart leaping out’ or *saltarsele las lágrimas a alguien* ‘someone’s tears jumping out’. All of these considerations are consistent with the literal meaning of the construction, which refers to the bodily reaction provoked by the stimulus of an emotion, usually uncontrollable (group of unaccusative verbs).

Finally, regarding the formal and semantic nature of the verbal slot fillers, we note that idioms tend to be attracted to the verbal slot of these constructional idioms, whether embedded as can be attested with the idioms *morirse de la risa* ‘laughing his/her head off’ (example 13) and *partirse de la risa* ‘cracking up with laughter’ (example 14), or as slot fillers such as *saltar las lágrimas* ‘tears jumping out’ (example 3, 34) or *caerse redondo* ‘fall round’ (example 35). Based on the idea that lexemes that are attracted to a particular construction are referred to as *collexemes* of this construction (Stefanowitsch & Gries 2003: 215), we propose the notion of *coidiom*, conceived of as semi-schematic constructions whose slots are attractors of idioms. To put in Taylor’s words, “idioms, whatever their nature, are able to feature as parts of larger constructions and can, in turn, accommodate idioms as parts of their own structure” (Taylor 2012: 258). This peculiarity has been also been observed in other constructions, such as in the consecutive intensifying construction [*estar que X*] (e.g., *Estoy que me subo por las paredes* ‘I’m climbing up the walls’, *Está que echa humo por la boca* ‘He’s hopping mad’) or the intensifying construction expressing finality [*Es para INF*] (e.g., *Es para tirarse de los pelos* ‘It is for pulling one’s hair out’, *Es para partirse de risa* ‘it is for cracking up’) (López Meirama & Mellado Blanco 2023). All these intensifying constructions indeed share the peculiarity that their verbal slot is likely to attract idioms of intensifying value, thus producing a double effect of expressivity.

5. Conclusions

In harmony with the title of this special issue, our contribution devoted to the study of those so-called formal idioms by Fillmore, Kay & O’Connor (1988). Despite being these idiosyncratic structures already in one of the starting points in the development of Construction Grammar 35 years ago, they have received little attention in the constructionist literature. It is precisely, however, these structures that have recently received a major impetus in the intersection of Phraseology and Construction Grammar, as can be attested in the numerous publications devoted to the study of partly filled structures with a global “pragmatic point”, especially in German (cf. Mellado Blanco, Mollica and Schafroth 2022a; Mollica and Stumpf in press; Ziem 2018; among others) and, to a lesser extent, in Romance languages (cf. Mellado Blanco 2020d, 2022c; Hennecke and Wiesinger 2023; Mellado Blanco, Ivorra Ordines and Esteban Fonollosa in prep.; among others).

This corpus-based study of the intensifying idiomatic construction [$V_{\{\text{bodily_reactions}\}} de N_{\{\text{emotion/feeling}\}}$]: ‘experience $N_{\{\text{emotion/feeling}\}}$ in its highest degree’ shows that it is on an idiomaticity continuum with respect to the causal construction [$V de NP$], of which it is a metonymic or metaphorical extension. However, the analysis of the syntagmatic profile has shown that there are (1) projectors/markers and (2) triggers of the intensifying constructional meaning, which, consequently, do not appear in the causal constructions. Such identifying elements of the intensifying construction can be of different nature,

highlighting the focalizing adverb *casi* ‘almost’ in the group of the triggers, which always appears when the construction is used with the present of conatus (e.g., *Casi la palmo de risa* ‘I almost die of laugh’, in present despite its relation to the past).

Similarly, corpus research on constructional idioms with the noun fillers *emoción* ‘emotion’, *susto* ‘scare’ and *risa* ‘laugh’ and the focalizing adverb *casi* ‘almost’ has revealed that in each of these constructions there is a “cognitive core” that includes many types and tokens of the construction. As expected, the most frequent types are the most idiomatic, grammaticalized, entrenched, and semantically least transparent ones, as well as those with the greatest number of analogical extensions. On the contrary, those with the lowest token frequency show a higher degree of creativity, especially those constructs not that do not belong to any of the indicated “cognitive cores”. Finally, it should be noted that the methodology used in this paper can be applied to other noun fillers, such as *vergüenza* ‘embarrassment’, *alegría* ‘joy’, not only at the intralinguistic level, but also at the cross-linguistic level.

References

- D’Avis, Franz & Rita Finkbeiner. 2019. Was ist Expressivität? In Franz d’Avis & Rita Finkbeiner (eds.), *Expressivität im Deutschen*, 1-22. Berlin, New York: De Gruyter.
- Baayen, R. Harald. 2009. Corpus linguistics in morphology: Morphological productivity. In Anke Lüdeling & Merja Kytö (eds.), *Corpus Linguistics. An International Handbook. Volume 2*, 899-919. New York: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Barðdal, Jóhanna. 2008. *Productivity: Evidence from Case and Argument Structure in Icelandic*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Booij, Geert. 2002. Constructional Idioms, Morphology and the Dutch Lexicon. *Journal of Germanic Linguistics*, 14. 310-329.
- Burger, Harald, Annelies Buhofer & Ambros Sialm. 1982. *Handbuch der Phraseologie*. Berlin, New York: De Gruyter.
- Bybee, Joan. 1998. The Emergent Lexicon. *Chicago Linguistic Society*, 34. 421-435.
- Bybee, Joan. 2010. *Language, Usage and Cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Corpas Pastor, Gloria. 1996. *Manual de fraseología española*. Madrid: Gredos.
- Corpas Pastor, Gloria. 2021. Constructional idioms of ‘insanity’ in English and Spanish. A corpus-based study. *Lingua*, 254.
- Croft, William and Allan Cruse. 2004. *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- De Smet, Hendrik. 2016. How gradual change progresses: The interaction between convention and innovation. *Language Variation and Change*, 28. 83-102.
- De Smet, Hendrik, D’hoedt, Lauren Frauke & Kristel Van Goethem. 2018. The changing functions of competing forms: Attraction and differentiation. *Cognitive Linguistics* 29(2). 197-234.
- DFDEA: Seco, Andrés, Andrés Olimpia & Gabino Ramos. 2004. *Diccionario fraseológico documentado del español actual: locuciones y modismos*. Madrid: Aguilar.
- DFEM: Varela, Fernando & Hugo Kubarth. 1994. *Diccionario fraseológico del español moderno*. Madrid: Gredos.
- Diessel, Holger. 2019. *The grammar network: How linguistic structure is shaped by language use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Dirven, René. 1997. Emotions as cause and the cause of emotions. In Susanne Niemeier & René Dirven (eds.), *The Language of Emotions: Conceptualization, Expression, and Theoretical Foundation*, 55-83. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Dirven, René. 1995. The construal of cause: The case of cause prepositions. In John R. Taylor & Robert E. MacLaury (eds.), *Language and the Cognitive Construal of the World*, 95-118. Berlin, New York: De Gruyter.
- Dobrovol'skij, Dmitrij. 2011. Phraseologie und Konstruktionsgrammatik. In Alexander Lasch & Alexander Ziem (eds.), *Konstruktionsgrammatik III. Aktuelle Fragen und Lösungsansätze*, 111-130. Tübingen: Stauffenburg.
- Dobrovol'skij, Dmitrij. 2016. Fraseología y Gramática de Construcciones. *Language Design*, 18. 71-106.
- Dobrovol'skij, Dmitrij & Carmen Mellado Blanco. 2021. *Von Jahr zu Jahr*. Das Pattern [von X_{sg} zu X_{sg}] und seine Entsprechungen im Russischen und Spanischen: eine Korpusstudie. *Aussiger Beiträge*, 15. 113-138.
- Esteban-Fonollosa, Maricel. In press. *El inútil de su hijo*: análisis de la construcción intensificadora [DET_[det] ADJ de SN] y sus posibles equivalencias en alemán. *Romanica Olomucensia* 35(1).
- Fillmore, Charles J., Paul Kay & Mary C. O'Connor. 1988. Regularity and Idiomaticity in Grammatical Constructions: The case of *Let Alone*. *Language*, 64(3). 501-538.
- Fischer, Olga. 2010. An analogical approach to grammaticalization. In Katerina Stathi, Elke Gehweiler & Ekkehard König (eds.), *Grammaticalization: Current views and issues*, 181-219. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- García-Page Sánchez, Mario. 2007. Esquemas sintácticos de formación de locuciones adverbiales. *Moenia*, 13. 121-144.
- García-Page Sánchez, Mario. 2008. *Introducción a la fraseología española. Estudio de las locuciones*. Barcelona: Anthropos.
- Goldberg, Adele E. 1995. *A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure*. Chicago, London: The Chicago University Press.
- Goldberg, Adele E. 2006. *Constructions at Work: The Nature of Generalization in Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goldberg, Adele E. 2019. *Explain me this. Creativity, competition, and the partial productivity of constructions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Fuentes Rodríguez, Catalina. 2007. *Lo que se dice*: operador ostensivo metalingüístico. *Lingüística en la Red*, 5. 1-25.
- Fuentes Rodríguez, Catalina. 2023. Construcciones exclamativas de rechazo. *Spanish in Context*.
- González Rodríguez, Raquel. 2020. Sobre el atenuador 'casi que'. *Signos*, 53/104.
- Hennecke, Inga & Evelyn Wiesinger (eds.). 2023. *Constructions in Spanish*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Hoffmann, Thomas. 2018. Creativity and Construction Grammar: Cognitive and Psychological Issues. *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik. Special Issue: Linguistic Creativity*, 66(3). 259-276.
- Hoffmann, Thomas. 2019. Language and Creativity. A Construction Grammar approach to linguistic creativity. *Linguistic Vanguard* 5(1).
- Hofstadter, Douglas R. 1995. *Fluid concepts and creative analogies: Computer models of the fundamental mechanisms of thought*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hopper, Paul & Elizabeth C. Traugott. 2003. *Grammaticalization. Second Edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Ivorra Ordines, Pedro. 2021. *Les construccions comparatives intensificadores de la llejor en català, espanyol, anglés i francés des de les gramàtiques de construccions. Un estudi basat en corpus*. Doctoral thesis, Universitat Pompeu Fabra.
- Ivorra Ordines, Pedro. 2022. Comparative constructional idioms. A corpus-based study of the creativity of the [*más feo que X*] construction. In Carmen Mellado Blanco (ed.), *Productive Patterns in Phraseology and Construction Grammar. A Multilingual Approach (Formelhafte Sprache - Formulaic Language series, Vol. 4)*, 29-52. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Ivorra Ordines, Pedro. 2023. Spanish comparative constructional idioms and their English and French counterparts. A corpus-based study. In Óscar Ferreiro-Vázquez, Ana Teresa Varajão Moutinho Pereira Correia & Sílvia Lima Gonçalves Araújo (eds.), *Technological innovation put to the service of language learning, translation and interpreting: Insights from academic and professional contexts*, 157-179. Berlin: Peter Lang.
- Ivorra Ordines, Pedro. In press. *Por mí como si te operas*. Constructional idioms of rejection from a constructionist approach. *Yearbook of Phraseology*, 14.
- Ivorra Ordines, Pedro & Carmen Mellado Blanco. 2021. *Más tontos que el novio de la Chelo*. La intensificación de la estulticia en foros y chats por medio de comparaciones creativas: una aproximación desde la Gramática de Construcciones. *Estudios Románicos*, 30. 39-58.
- Izert, Małgorzata & Ewa Pileck. 2021. Comment «surintensifier» les expressions d'intensité? L'exemple des collocations *Adj/V comme SN* et *Adj/V à faire V_{inf}*. *Estudios Románicos*, 30. 59-78.
- Kay, Paul & Charles J. Fillmore. 1999. Grammatical constructions and linguistic generalizations: The *What's X Doing Y?* construction. *Language*, 75(1). 1-33.
- Kempf, Luise & Stefan Hartmann. 2022. What's extravagant about *be-sandal-ed feet?* Morphology, semantics and pragmatics of German pseudo-particles. In Matthias Eitelmann & Dagmar Haumann (eds.), *Extravagant Morphology: Studies in rule-blending, pattern-extending and the theory-challenging morphology*, 19-50. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Langacker, Ronald W. 1987. *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar. Volume 1: Theoretical Prerequisites*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Langlotz, Andreas. 2006. *Idiomatic Creativity. A cognitive-linguistic model of idiom-representation and idiom-variation in English*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Leclercq, Benoît. Coercion. A case of saturation. *Constructions and Frames* 11(2). 270-289.
- Lehmann, Christian. 1985. Grammaticalization: Synchronic and diachronic change. *Lingua e Stile* 20. 303-318.
- Lehmann, Claudia. 2021. *About as boring as flossing sharks*: Cognitive accounts of irony and the family of approximate comparison constructions in American English. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 32(1). 133-158.
- López Meirama, Belén & Nely Iglesias Iglesias. 2023. The construction [*a todo Nsg*] in Spanish. In Inga Hennecke & Evelyn Wiesinger (eds.), *Constructions in Spanish*, 129-253. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- López Meirama, Belén & Carmen Mellado Blanco. 2023. Construcciones intensificadoras en español con la secuencia [*para + CLÁUSULA*] y sus correspondencias al alemán. Contribution presented at *EUROPHRAS 2023 New Trends in Phraseology: Languages and Cultures in Comparison*. Università degli Studi di Milano. 29 May – 1 June 2023.
- López Serrano, Fernando. 2012. El presente de conato. Análisis y origen del fenómeno. *Revista Hispanista Escandinava*, 1. 23-43.

- Manero Richard, Elvira. 2022. Los memes. (Re)contextualizaciones y reacciones en el discurso corporativo en Twitter. In Leonor Ruiz Gurillo (ed.), *Interactividad en modo humorístico: géneros orales, escritos y tecnológicos*, 37-82. Madrid: Iberoamericana Editorial Vervuert.
- Mansilla Pérez, Ana. In press. Lingüística de corpus y fraseología. El patrón [PREP S_{arbitrariedad}] en las combinaciones usuales *a su antojo, a su gusto, a su voluntad*. *Revista Signos*.
- Martínez Sánchez, Roser. 2015. *'Literalmente': ¿un operador metalingüístico? Propuesta de estudio*. Tesis Doctoral. Universidad de Salamanca.
- Mellado Blanco, Carmen. 2020a. Esquemas fraseológicos y construcciones fraseológicas en el continuum léxico-gramática. In Carsten Sinner, Encarnación Tabares Plasencia & Esteban Montoro del Arco (eds.), *Clases y categorías en la fraseología española*, 13-36. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag.
- Mellado Blanco, Carmen. 2020b. La desautomatización desde el prisma de la Gramática de Construcciones. *Nasledje* 45. 17-34.
- Mellado Blanco, Carmen. 2020c. *(No) me importa un comino* y sus variantes diatópicas. Estudio de corpus desde la Gramática de Construcciones. *ELUA: Fraseología y variaciones (socio)lingüísticas y diatópicas*. Anexo VII. 89-111.
- Mellado Blanco, Carmen. 2020d. *Nuevas aportaciones de la Gramática de Construcciones a los estudios de fraseología en las lenguas románicas*. *Romanica Olomucensia* 2020, Vol. 32/1, Special Issue. https://romanica.upol.cz/current_issue.php.
- Mellado Blanco, Carmen. 2021. Proyecto de investigación *CONSTRIDIOMS*. Las construcciones fraseológicas del alemán y el español en contraste a través de corpus. *LinRed: Lingüística en la Red* 18.
- Mellado Blanco, Carmen. 2022a. *Estoy que trino*. Un acercamiento a la expresión fraseológica de las emociones desde la Gramática de Construcciones. *Congreso Internacional Pasado, presente y futuro del hispanismo en el mundo: avances y retos*. University of Belgrade, Serbia. 23-25 June 2022.
- Mellado Blanco, Carmen. 2022b. Phraseology, patterns and Construction Grammar. In Carmen Mellado Blanco (ed.), *Productive Patterns in Phraseology and Construction Grammar. A Multilingual Approach (Formelhafte Sprache - Formulaic Language series, Vol. 4)*, 1-25. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Mellado Blanco, Carmen (ed.). 2022c. *Productive Patterns in Phraseology and Construction Grammar. A Multilingual Approach (Formelhafte Sprache - Formulaic Language series, Vol. 4)*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Mellado Blanco, Carmen. 2023. *¡Lo que yo de cura!* El «antiprototipo» en las construcciones comparativas intensificadoras desde un punto de vista constructorista. *Revista de Filología*, Vol. 46. 313-333. <https://www.ull.es/revistas/index.php/filologia/article/view/5578/3871>
- Mellado Blanco, Carmen. 2023. From idioms to semi-schematic constructions and vice versa: the case of [a un paso de X]. In Inga Hennecke & Evelyn Wiseinger (eds.), *Constructions in Spanish*, 103-128. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Mellado Blanco, Carmen. In press. *Wie Fisch und Fahrrad*. Inkongruenz als konstitutives Merkmal der verneinenden Vergleichskonstruktionen. In Fabio Mollica & Sören Stumpf (eds.): *Konstruktionsfamilien im Deutschen*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg Linguistik.
- Mellado Blanco, Carmen, Pedro Ivorra Ordines & Maricel Esteban Fonollosa (eds.). In prep. *Quaderns de Filologia. Estudis Lingüístics. Special Issue: New Approaches to Construction Grammar(s)* 29.

- Mellado Blanco, Carmen, Fabio Mollica & Elmar Schafroth (eds.) 2022a. *Konstruktionen zwischen Lexikon und Grammatik: Phrasem-Konstruktionen monolingual, bilingual, multilingual* (Reihe *Linguistik – Impulse & Tendenzen*, Vol. 101). Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Mellado Blanco, Carmen, Fabio Mollica & Elmar Schafroth. 2022b. The expression of negative polarity in German, Italian and Spanish: a constructionist approach. In Françoise Gallez & Manon Hermann (eds.): *Kognition und Kontrast / Cognition and contrast. Festschrift für/for Prof. Dr. Sabine De Knop*, 151-176. Bruxelles: Presses de l'Université Saint-Louis.
- Mellado Blanco, Carmen & Kathrin Steyer. 2018. Auf der Suche nach Äquivalenz. Lexikalisch geprägte Muster kontrastiv Deutsch-Spanisch. In Kathrin Steyer (ed.), *Sprachliche Verfestigung. Chunks, Muster, Phrasem-Konstruktionen*, 265-284. Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag.
- Michaelis, Laura. 2012. Making the Case for Construction Grammar. In Hans Boas & Ivan Sag (eds.), *Sign-based Construction Grammar*, 31-69. Stanford: CSLI Publications.
- Michaelis, Laura. 2019. Constructions are patterns and so are fixed expressions. In: Beatrix Busse & Ruth Möhlig-Falke (eds.), *Patterns in Language and Linguistics*, 193-220. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Mollica, Fabio & Sören Stumpf (eds.). In press. *Konstruktionsfamilien im Deutschen*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg Linguistik.
- Montoro del Arco, Esteban. 2008. El concepto de “locuciones con casillas vacías”. In Carmen Mellado Blanco (ed.), *Colocaciones y fraseología en los diccionarios*, 131-146. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- NGLE. 2009. Real Academia Española, y Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española. *Nueva Gramática de la Lengua Española: manual*. Madrid: Espasa.
- OED. 2001. *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/>
- Pardo Llibrer, Adrià. 2017. Tres niveles de polaridad en ‘casi’ y ‘apenas’. *Revista Española de Lingüística* 47/2. 71-98.
- Pardo Llibrer, Adrià. 2018. Los usos atenuantes del aproximativo *casi*: relación entre contenido proposicional y unidades del discurso. *ELUA* anexo IV. 33-56.
- Pardo Llibrer, Adrià. 2021. *De la investigación sobre aproximativos en español a una teoría de la aproximación en la lengua*. Doctoral thesis. Universitat de València.
- Peña, M. Sandra & Francisco J. Ruiz de Mendoza. 2017. Construing and constructing hyperbole. In Angeliki Athanasiadou (ed.), *Studies in Figurative Thought and Language*, 41-73. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Petré, Peter. 2016. Unidirectionality as a cycle of convention and innovation. Micro-changes in the grammaticalization of [BE going to INF]. In Katrien Beuls & Remi van Trijp (eds.), *Belgian Journal of Linguistics. Computational Construction Grammar and Constructional Change*, 30. 115-146.
- Philip, Gill. 2008. Reassessing the Canon: “fixed” phrases in general reference corpora. In Sylviane Granger & Fanny Meunier (eds.), *Phraseology: An interdisciplinary approach*, 95-108. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Piunno, Valentina. 2018. Negated Multiword Expressions. Types, properties and lexicalization degrees. In Natalia Filatkina & Sören Stumpf (eds.), *Konventionalisierung und Variation. Phraseologische und konstruktionsgrammatische Perspektiven*, 125-147. Berlin: Peter Lang.
- Portolés Lázaro, José. 1998. *Marcadores del discurso*. Barcelona: Ariel.

- Portolés Lázaro, José. 2003. Pragmática y sintaxis. *Círculo de Lingüística Aplicada a la Comunicación*, 16. 35-48.
- Raden, Günter & René Dirven. 2008. *Cognitive English Grammar*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Rasulic, Katarina. 2010. *Long Time, No Buzz*: Fixed expressions as Constructional Frames. *CogniTextes: Revue de l'Association française de linguistique cognitive* 5.
- Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, Francisco J. 2022. The causal frame as a motivating factor of figurative meaning. In: Françoise Gallez & Manon Hermann (eds.), *Cognition and Contrast. Festschrift für Prof. Dr. Sabine De Knop*, 37-46. Bruxelles: Presses de l'Université Saint-Louis.
- Ruiz Gurillo, Leonor. 1997. *Aspectos de la fraseología española*. Valencia: Universitat de València.
- Sawada, Shigeyasu. 2000. The semantics of the 'body part off' construction. *English Linguistics* 17(2). 361-385.
- Schmid, Hans-Jörg & Franziska Günther. 2016. Toward a Unified Socio-Cognitive Framework for Salience in Language. *Frontiers in Psychology* 7.
- Schneider, Ulrike. 2022. *They're proing it up hardcore*. An analysis of the V it up construction. In: Matthias Eitelmann & Dagmar Haumann (eds.), *Extravagant Morphology: Studies in rule-bending, pattern-extending and theory-challenging morphology*, 207-232. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Smirnova, Elena & Lotte Sommerer. 2020. Introduction. The nature of the node and the network - Open questions in Diachronic Construction Grammar. In Lotte Sommerer & Elena Smirnova (eds.), *Nodes and Networks in Diachronic Construction Grammar*, 1-42. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Stefanowitsch, Anatol & Stefan Th. Gries. 2003. Collostructions: Investigating the interaction of words and constructions. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 8(2). 209-243.
- Talmy, Leonard. 1975. Figure and ground in complex sentences. In *Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, 419-430.
- Taylor, John R. 2012. *The Mental Corpus: How language is represented in the mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Traugott, Elizabeth C. & Graeme Trousdale. 2013. *Constructionalization and constructional change*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ungerer, Tobias & Stefan Hartmann. 2023. *Constructionist approaches: Past, present, future*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Van Wettere, Niek. 2021. Productivity of French and Dutch (semi-)copular constructions and the adverse impact of high token frequency. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 26(3). 396-428.
- Wilson, Deirdre & Dan Sperber. 2004. Relevance Theory. In Laurence R. Horn & Gregory Ward, *The Handbook of Pragmatics*. 606-632. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Ziegeler, Debra. 2016. Intersubjectivity and the diachronic development of counterfactual 'almost' *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 17/1. 1-25.
- Ziem, Alexander. 2018. Construction Grammar meets Phraseology: eine Standortbestimmung. *Linguistik Online* 90(3). 3-19.
- Zuluaga, Alberto. 1980. *Introducción al estudio de las expresiones fijas*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.