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# *Un hambre que da calambre.*

## Creativity and extravagance in the context of a family of consecutive constructional idioms

Pedro Ivorra Ordines

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### 1. Introduction

- The perpetual interaction between the “new” and the “old” is a defining characteristic of human culture, shaping and mutually influencing each other throughout this ongoing process. In the realm of creative endeavours, conventions play a dual role (they are both flouted and respected), giving birth to innovative expressions that are not only creative but also comprehensible. From a socio-cultural standpoint, the knowledge and conventions constituting “traditions” (linguistic norms) are not static; instead, they are intricately linked to creativity and innovation (Glăveanu 2010a: 57). Creativity is, consequently, a dynamic process that draws upon accumulated artifacts while simultaneously enriching culture through the creation of new ones. Within this conceptual framework, a new artifact is perceived as emerging within the relationship between the self (as the creator) and others, broadly understood as a community. In this sense, creativity takes shape in the “tensions” among these elements, with the resulting “new artifact” becoming an integral part of the “existing culture” for both the self and/or community, perpetually nourishing the creative cycle (Glăveanu 2010b).
- In the present paper, I explore the interaction of creativity and extravagance in the context of a family of consecutive constructional idioms expressing physiological needs in its highest degree, i.e. *hambre* ‘hunger’, *sed* ‘thirst’ and *sueño* ‘sleep’. In Section 2, I describe the family of consecutive constructions in Spanish paying special attention to their syntactic composition and pragmatics effects. The patterns under study are put in relation with other consecutive constructional idioms, conforming a family of

constructions based on resemblance relationships, in which subpart links are posited to relate constructions exhibiting partial similarity at the same level of abstraction (Goldberg 1995: 78-79). Then, creativity is examined within the framework of a constructionist perspective and correlated with the concept of extravagance, aligning with the dimension of originality within the context of psychological creativity (cf. Weiss & Wilhelm 2020), thus revealing overlapping concepts. Against this background, in Section 4, I detail the corpus-based methodology (esTenTen18 in Sketch Engine) in the manual extraction of the instances licensed by the consecutive constructional idioms under study and I delve into parameters of different nature –i.e., metalinguistic comments and cognitive devices–, which allow to gain a better understanding of their extravagant potential. In Section 5, I adopt the 5C model of constructional creativity as proposed by Hoffmann (2024) to account for an outside perspective (or contextualized approach) to the study of linguistic creativity, by highlighting its sociocultural nature and putting it in relation with the socio-cognitive factor of extravagance. Finally, the main points are summarized in Section 6.

## 2. The family of consecutive constructions in Spanish

- 3 Consecutive constructions are one type of argument structure constructions used to express the consequence of an action, a circumstance or a quality indicated by the verb of the main clause. The term consecutive construction, however, serves as an umbrella that comprises a varied range of structures, both from a syntactic and semantic-pragmatic point of view (Álvarez 1995: 3471). Some of the constructions are represented in the following examples:

(1) Al día siguiente todos los que formaban el acuartelamiento despertaron con **tal sed que bebieron toda el agua que había en los cántaros**, dejando vacíos todos los recipientes.

‘The next day everyone in the barracks woke up **so thirsty that they drank all the water in the jugs**, leaving all the containers empty.’

(SkE 11031427536)

(2) Marcos tenía **tanto sueño que solo le apetecía dormir**.

‘Marcos was **so sleepy that he just wanted to sleep**.’

(SkE 771831301)

(3) ¡Estábamos **tan hambrientos que algunos hasta hemos repetido merluza!**

‘We were **so hungry that some of us even repeated the hake**.’

(SkE 5567187057)

- 4 Consecutive constructions in Spanish, made up of a quantifying group headed by a determinant of quantifying nature such as *tanto/tanta/tantos/tantas* ‘so much/so many’ or *tal/tales* ‘so’ and a subordinate sentence headed by the conjunction *que* ‘that’, express the fact that a certain number, amount or degree attain an extreme level or range (NGLE 2009: 3440). According to their content, it can be argued that consecutive constructions are one way of expressing the logical cause-effect relationship, but in this order: where the first clause is the cause, and the second one is the effect, linked by the nexus *que* ‘that’, which has a central role in the sentence (cf. Fuentes Rodríguez 1985). To put it differently, the examples in bold comprise a first member of a clause with an underlying value of equality, to which a superlative value is added, and a second member with a consecutive value from which a weighted quality is manifested (Albelda

Marco 2007: 36, González Calvo 1986: 139). To exemplify this, we observe that in (1) *tal sed* ‘so thirsty’ (cause) so that *bebieron toda el agua que había en los cántaros* ‘drank all the water in the jugs’ (effect), in (2) *tanto sueño* ‘so sleepy’ (cause) so that *solo le apetecía dormir* ‘he just wanted to sleep’ (effect), or in (3) *tan hambrientos* ‘so hungry’ (cause) so that *algunos hasta repetimos de merluza* ‘some of us even repeated the hake’ (effect). Additionally, the Spanish grammar highlights the closeness between the intensifying quantifying markers of the consecutive construction and other lexical items such as the indefinite determiner *un* ‘a’, which is widely used in spoken language (NGLE 2009: 3443), as can be attested in example (4).

(4) Yo tengo **un sueño que creo que me voy a dormir**.

‘I am **so sleepy that I think I’ll go to sleep**.’

(SkE 1151084536)

- 5 In constructionist terms, examples in bold constitute constructs licensed by the semi-schematic constructions [*tal X que Y*] ⇔ ‘Y is the consequence of X in its highest degree’, [*tanto X que Y*] ⇔ ‘Y is the consequence of X in its highest degree’, [*tan X que Y*] ⇔ ‘Y is the consequence of X in its highest degree’ and [*un X que Y*] ⇔ ‘Y is the consequence of X in its highest degree’, respectively. Based on the partial similarity between these semi-schematic patterns in terms of form and meaning, these constructions can be related by means of subpart links, in the sense that they do not instantiate each other, but are recognizably similar and “constitute constructions at the same level of abstractness” (Diessel 2015: 414; cf. Penadés Martínez 2020). Following researchers such as Cappelle (2006: 18), horizontal links between constructions can be equated with relations between “allostructions”, that is, constructions that share the same meaning but display differences in form. These, in turn, can be linked to a higher-order schema (vertically/taxonomically speaking), known as “superconstruction” or “constructeme” (cf. Smirnova & Sommerer 2020).
- 6 The meanings of the constructs in (1) – (4) are in stark contrast with those presented in (5) – (7), where a continuum of idiomaticity ranging from idiomatic consecutive constructions to literal consecutive constructions can be posited. To put it differently, “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). Following the reasoning of previous studies (cf. Ivorra Ordines 2022; Mellado Blanco & Ivorra Ordines 2023), the constructions presented in examples (5) – (7) are related to those in examples (1) – (4) by means of a metaphorical extension link, i.e. the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy and the INTENSIFICATION IS CORPORAL DAMAGE metaphor. The idiomatic construction, therefore, constitutes a linguistic device with which speakers can measure the degree or quantity of what is conveyed, and the semantic value of the nucleus can be intensified. In these cases, contrary to the previous examples, the consequence is not what is of interest but the superlative interpretation before a fact is prevailing, so that the second part can be replaced by an appropriate intonation, by a catchphrase or fixed pattern that corroborates the superlative weighting (González Calvo 1986: 40).
- (5) Según la tradición basada en el Libro de Daniel, este dragón murió a manos de un chico que le ofreció de comer una piel de oveja llena de azufre y alquitrán, después de devorar dicha piel, el dragón empezó a sentirse **tan sediento que finalmente explotó después de beber demasiada agua**.

‘According to the tradition based on El Libro de Daniel, this dragon dies at the hands of a boy who offered him a sheepskin full of sulphur and tar to eat, and after devouring the skin, the dragon became **so thirsty that it finally exploded after drinking so much water.**’

(SkE 7677705135)

(6) El hambre no desaparece tomando agua, comiendo jícamas o gelatinas, al contrario en vez de desaparecer se suma y ya para el viernes por la noche tienes **tanta hambre que te comerías un caballo**, literal<sup>1</sup>.

‘Hunger does not disappear by drinking water, eating jicamas or jellies; on the contrary, instead of disappearing it adds up and by Friday night you are **so hungry that you would literally eat a horse.**’

(SkE 983166834)

(7) Luego de un tiempo, despertó aún en el mismo lugar, pero a diferencia de antes con **una sed que quemaba su garganta** poco a poco, la confundía.

‘After a while, she awoke still in the same place, but unlike before with **a thirst that burnt her throat** little by little, which confused her.’

(SkE 11007994177)

- 7 Contrary to examples (1) – (4), there is a decisive factor which helps us reach a correct interpretation of examples (5) – (7), i.e. the Intensity Correlation Principle by Sawada, in that “[t]he degree of abnormality correlated with the degree of intensity” (Sawada 2000: 377). This implies two things: first, that the constructional entailment is contrary to our understanding of the pragmatic knowledge of the world, and second, that the construal is understood as an end-point state beyond which an activity cannot proceed any further. The mechanism lying behind is that of counter-factuality, considering that the assertion is unreal, since in (5) someone is not going to explode for having drunk so much water, in (6) someone is not going to eat a horse because of being very hungry, or in (7) someone’s throat is not going to burn because of intense thirst. These three facts, consequently, will not take place. To put it differently, when a mismatch is perceived, our interpretative mechanisms try to solve this mismatch through a reconciliatory process to accommodate the incongruent sense into its semantic composition. From a constructionist perspective, it is argued that the idiomatic meaning prevails over the meaning of its lexical components, which mainly affects the slot fillers saturating the slot X. The meaning of the lexical items hence conforms to the meaning of the structure in which it is embedded (i.e., coercion; cf. Michaelis 2003, González-García 2020). This is in harmony with the idea that “communication is primarily intentional, and that interpreting an utterance precisely involves taking into account the speaker’s intentions” (Leclercq 2024: 109).

- 8 In a similar vein, Mellado Blanco (2022a) explores the elliptic consecutive construction, in which the quantifying group is omitted, and the subordinate clause is placed right after the verb as an attachment or attribute. The peculiarity of this construction is that the cause can be either omitted as in (8), explicit in the subordinate clause as in (9) or dislocated as in (10).

(8) **Estoy que me corto las venas con galletas rancias.**

‘I’m about to cut my veins with stale biscuits.’

(SkE 6125136214)

(9) **Estoy que no quepo de orgullo.**

‘I’m bursting with pride.’

(SkE 461342899)

(10) **Dios mío, ¡qué calor!, estoy que me derrito.**

'My God, it's so hot, I'm melting.'

(SkE 3756965059)

- 9 As indicated by Sawada (2000), the incongruence relationship can also be of pragmatic nature, in that the values are organized according to our knowledge of the world. Our interpretative mechanism, therefore, helps us to avoid an interpretation which goes against the knowledge of physiological needs, so that another way of interpretation is sought, if available. From this perspective, the interpretation process is considered to be an inferential process, pragmatically motivated for the hearer to reach the correct interpretation, in which the information focus is the inferred information. To put it in Leclercq's (2019: 283-284) words,

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.

- 10 The entailment can also be accounted for by applying the Scalar Principle by Fauconnier (1975), in that the lexical items filling the slot X are elements that culturally or subjectively, from the speaker's point of view, represent extreme situations that are placed at the highest level in the scale. In this regard, everything alluding to this X slot is perceived as the most extreme situations –e.g., burn one's throat because of being extremely thirsty in example (7)– and the consequence of a superlative physiological need –e.g., eat a horse because of being extremely hungry in example (6) (cf. Ivorra Ordines & Mellado Blanco 2021 on comparative idioms or Ivorra Ordines 2023 on constructional idioms of vehement rejection). In constructionist terms, the notion of *coverage* captures the idea that new slot fillers should align with or be able to fit into the limitations imposed by the constructions they are used in; i.e., extreme situations (cf. Goldberg 2019: 51-73). This entails that speakers consider previous usage when deciding how extensively they can expand an existing construction.
- 11 The idiomatic interpretation can be in many cases reinforced by lexical items in the syntagmatic context of the construction. Phraseological unit markers (Mellado Blanco 2009, Olza Moreno 2013) are indeed important deictic contextual items that act as triggers of the idiomatic reading, which is evident not only by the intonation that they receive when used in the spoken discourse given its familiarity but also by its autonomous character at a textual level. This means that they are not the result of speakers' creative use of language but serve to distance the sender from what is said –relying on the authority and general truth of popular knowledge– as well as to introduce phraseological units in the discourse (cf. Ivorra Ordines in press). Sentences highlighted in examples (11) and (12) are phraseological markers that explicitly put emphasis on the collective authority quotation and intensify the illocutionary and argumentative force that the construct already has, respectively.

(11) En español decimos “**tenemos tanta hambre que me comería a un elefante**”.

In Spanish we say “**I am so hungry that I would eat an elephant**”.

(SkE 1607272336)

(12) Aquí la expresión de “**tengo tanta hambre que me comería hasta las piedras**” cobra sentido.

'Here the expression of "**I am so hungry that I would even eat stones**" makes sense.'  
(SkE 4841358248)

- 12 Phraseological markers function as genuine metalinguistic markers because they validate the knowledge of both speaker and hearer regarding the idiomatic expression. Notably, the examples (11) and (12) are worth highlighting because they do not only involve an idiomatic expression introduced by contextual marker but are also enclosed within quotation marks. This draws attention to their phraseological nature and their relatively fixed structure (cf. Flinz & Mollica 2021; Ivorra Ordines in press; Ivorra Ordines & López Meirama 2024).

### 3. On the interplay of creativity and extravagance

- 13 Following Simonton (2012), it is argued that for something to be conceived as creative it must possess at least two interacting features: novelty/originality and appropriateness. This means that a product cannot be creative without being appropriate and original at the same time, so that something can be original without being considered creative due to a lack of appropriateness (cf. Bergs 2019; Hoffmann 2020, 2022). To put it differently, some ideas might be completely original but seen as inappropriate, while others seem perfectly acceptable but not very original. It may be highly appropriate to say *Good morning!* when meeting your colleague in the office early in the morning but not original and hence uncreative and, at the same time, singing the latest Rosalia's song backwards may be highly original but not very appropriate because the result will be incomprehensible (cf. Kaufman 2016). In a similar vein, when speaking of linguistic creativity, Trousdale (2020) alludes to the generation of novel work that is appropriate in the initial context of use, or Uhrig (2020) advocates for the interaction of originality and appropriateness, in that the latter results in linguistic creativity inasmuch as there is violation of the norm. In this line of reasoning, Stenberg *et al.* (2002) noted that creative ideas are commonly regarded as having a high standard, which entails making an aesthetic assessment that is clearly significant in contexts such as artistic creations.
- 14 In the framework of Construction Grammar, linguistic creativity alludes to the fact that speakers have the freedom to creatively combine constructions as long as there are no conflicts (Goldberg 2006: 22), which explains why language is not merely a fixed collection of "prefabricated" sentences. In other words, language can be used in ways that we have not encountered before or in ways we may not remember to have encountered before<sup>2</sup>, in the sense of making use of the established possibilities of language (Leech 1969) or of licensing novel utterances based on abstract schemas of a language (Hoffmann 2019); that is, making our linguistic repertoire cater for our specific communicative needs in a communicative exchange. This idea of linguistic creativity is mainly restricted to the productivity of a construction, or lexical variation (cf. Herbst 2018; Bergs & Kompa 2020), in that speakers use particular lexical units in constructions that one would not expect, so that these are perceived as activities that "produce examples drawn from a fixed and known (even if infinitely large) range [which is known as] "F-creativity"" (Sampson 2016: 19).
- 15 Similarly, from a psychological point of view, Weiss & Wilhelm (2020) relate the dimensions of fluency (quantity of responses) and flexibility (variety of responses) to F-creativity, inasmuch as high performance requires the controlled retrieval in a fixed category, as well as switches between categories (fixed and known possibility space).

While elaboration (number and quality of details provided) can be perceived both as one type of F-creativity and E-creativity, originality (quality of responses) requires the expansion of the system to provide a truly and valuable solution and seems to be connected to E-creativity<sup>3</sup>. Against this background, I argue that the notion of originality can be related to the idea of going against the expectations, in that there is some deviation of a norm going consequently against the hearer's expectations of what constitutes normal language use (Uhrig 2018: 298), in the sense of language user's choice of using "a new way of saying old things" (Leech 1969: 24). Or, to put it in Goldberg's terms, as "intentional flouting of norms for the sake of playfulness or memorability" (Goldberg 2019: 86). It is precisely in this line of reasoning that the notion of extravagance comes into play, which is understood in this paper as a deliberate deviation from established norms that attracts attention or surprise, since the speaker intentionally indicates that there is something non-canonical about the situation he/she are reporting. It can be seen, indeed, as a way of expanding or extending creativity and extra-grammaticality, given that extravagant forms are more expressive than less extravagant alternatives (cf. Ivorra Ordines & López Meirama 2024; Eitelmann & Haumann 2022; Lensch 2022).

- 16 The notion of extravagance harks back to the Maxim of Extravagance as posited by Haspelmath (1999: 1005) when discussing the unidirectionality of grammaticalization processes, as a side effect of speakers' use of an unusually and innovative formulation to attract attention, by deviating from established linguistic norms. The maxim of extravagance is one of the five communicative maxims, which interact with each other:
1. Hypermaxim: talk in such a way that you are socially successful, at the lowest possible cost.
  2. Clarity: talk in such a way that you are understood.
  3. Economy: talk in such a way that you do not expend superfluous energy.
  4. Conformity: talk like the others talk.
  5. Extravagance: talk in such a way that you are noticed.
- 17 The first maxim summarizes what the other four maxims describe in more detail, namely the difficulty of communicating when speakers are continually weighing the pros and cons of their actions. The Maxim of Clarity, the Maxim of Conformity and the Maxim of Economy interact with each other, in that they allude to the process of usualization, which "is not concerned with what speakers know, but instead with how they conform to the regularities of behaviour that allow them to communicate with each other" (Schmid 2020: 125). From this perspective, speakers contribute to the recurrence of entrenched associations and conventionalized utterance types, and the communicative process between two or more speakers, therefore, constitutes an activity of co-semiosis, in which participants mutually understand each other, considering that how "linguistic communication works ultimately lies in the tacit situated mutual reassurance that some degree of mutual understanding has been achieved in a given situation" (Schmid 2020: 20). According to the Theory of Relevance, participants willing to understand each other engage in a co-semiotic activity in which their mutual understanding relies on the satisfaction with their mutual beliefs, or to put it in other words, "every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance" (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 260). Consequently, utterance types that are conventionalized in a given speech community function as norms (Goldberg 2019: 9). The essence of the Maxim of Clarity, the Maxim of

Conformity and the Maxim of Economy can be captured by the phrase ‘this is how we speak’, with an emphasis on the usualization process (‘THIS is how we SPEAK’), and an emphasis on the diffusion perspective (‘this is how WE speak’) (Schmid 2020: 97). The Maxim of Conformity and the Maxim of Extravagance, for their part, are intrinsically related to each other, in that diffusion is a process that promotes the spread of innovations, whose meaning and understanding mostly relies on cotext and context (Traugott & Dasher 2002). In case of diffusion of an extravagant type, this contributes to “symbolization, paradigmaticalization, syntagmaticalization, and contextualization, thus allowing the utterance type to emancipate itself from the support of cotext and context” (Schmid 2020: 129).

- 18 Extravagant patterns are by definition low-frequency patterns as they go against the recipient’s expectations, in the same way that utterances conforming to a low-frequency pattern are perceived as more creative compared to those conforming to a high-frequency pattern. This is because type frequency is a fundamental factor influencing productivity. When a pattern has high type frequency, the hearer expects novel utterances based on that pattern, as they align with typical language use, or to put in Goldberg’s terms, “new expressions are licensed to the extent that they comfortably fit within an existing cluster” (Goldberg 2019: 51). This correlates perfectly with the notion of *coverage* proposed by Goldberg, who relates the number of attested slot fillers in a given construction, the semantic variability of the types, and the similarity of the coinage to attested types. As can be attested in the example (13), *no podía apagar ni todo el vino de la Mancha* ‘not even all the wine of La Mancha could quench’ adheres to the coverage of the construction, in that it alludes to an extreme action involving a great amount of liquid that would quench speaker’s intense thirst. On the contrary, in (14) the speaker goes beyond the coverage of the construction, in that “he creates new communicative possibilities that are not already in the language” (Leech 1969: 24), since the coverage mostly comprises lexical items that semantically speaking allude to extremes actions based on eating great amounts of food.

(13) Regresó, por tanto, a los pocos días más exhausto de lo que se fue; sin apenas poder masticar con las seis piezas dentales que le quedaban, el cuerpo arqueado por su columna combada y **una sed que no podía apagar ni todo el vino de La Mancha**.

‘So he returned a few days later, more exhausted than when he had left, barely able to chew with the six teeth he had left, his body hunched over from a bent spine and **a thirst that not even all the wine of La Mancha could quench.**’

(SkE 6317995266)

(14) Cuando sirves la comida hay que hacerlo con medida poner la ración justa y repetir si tienes **un hambre que asusta**.

‘When you serve the food, you have to measure it, give the right amount and repeat if you have **a hunger that scares.**’

(SkE 5516601084)

- 19 To gain a better understanding of the nature of the examples above, I allude to the notion of *salience* based on the violation of expectations (Schmid & Günther 2016), since in these cases the phenomenon of salience is activated as a consequence of unfamiliarity, that is, salience by novelty. These examples are consequently perceived as salient patterns because they are highly unconventional and are not entrenched in the mind of the hearer. What departs example (13) from (14) is the fact that the latter deviates from what would be expected in the present cotext and context and, therefore,

they are salient by surprisal and deviate from “predictive models formed on the basis of information from current cotext and context” (Schmid 2020: 78)

## 4. Case study

20 In this section, we present the case study of the family of consecutive constructional idioms in Spanish [*tal X que Y*] ⇔ ‘Y is the consequence of X in its highest degree’, [*tanto X que Y*] ⇔ ‘Y is the consequence of X in its highest degree’, [*tan X que Y*] ⇔ ‘Y is the consequence of X in its highest degree’ and [*un X que Y*] ⇔ ‘Y is the consequence of X in its highest degree’, being the slot X filled with the physiological needs *hambre* ‘hunger’, *sed* ‘thirst’ and *sueño* ‘sleep’. In the case of the third constructional idiom, their corresponding adjectives were used: *hambriento* ‘hungry’, *sediento* ‘thirsty’ and *somnoliento* ‘sleepy’. These constructions were chosen for two reasons. First, they are constructional idioms with a pragmatic point aimed at intensifying the feeling of hunger, thirst or sleep that someone experiences, which makes them suitable candidates for innovation to achieve distinct stylistic effects (cf. Ivorra Ordines 2022, 2023; Lensch 2022). Second, as confirmed by our corpus analysis (see below), the types attested in the corpus are mostly nonce instances, and it is precisely in hapax legomena where most extravagant and/or creative characteristics are encountered. This is also in harmony with the idea that in those patterns with low type frequency, it is very likely to find utterances not based on that pattern, so if this is the case, they stand out as more innovative (Uhrig 2018: 299).

### 4.1. Data and methodology

- 21 The present study is based on the analysis of a family of consecutive constructional idioms extracted from the Spanish Web 2018 (esTenTen18) corpus, which comprises the *European Spanish Web* and the *American Web* subcorpora. While European Spanish represents almost half of the corpus (49.32%), American Spanish represents 46.46%, and 4.21% is from an undefined origin. The corpus consists of 16,953,735,742 words, which make it a large corpus, available in Sketch Engine.
- 22 The use of large corpora has, indeed, become a growing tendency in the study of phraseological units in the context of a constructionist theoretical framework (cf. Ivorra Ordines 2021; Mellado Blanco 2022b; Mellado Blanco, Mollica & Schafroth 2022; among others). With a holistic vision on the study of phraseological units where both form and meaning are taken into consideration as a whole, this new approach has allowed to shed light on phraseological phenomena which had been relegated to the periphery because of its semi-schematic structure and to delve into the notion of productivity that characterizes phraseological units with empty slots. This is in harmony with two constructionist cornerstones: (i) the notion of grammatical construction as a form-meaning pairing with a global pragmatic function (Goldberg 2006) and (ii) the assumption that grammar is intrinsically related to speaker’s experience, which allows not to exclude information from the object of study because the limits between centre and periphery are rather blurred (Diessel 2019).
- 23 This approach, however, presents a methodological challenge highlighted by Schmid (2020: 217), indicating that corpora primarily reflect collective conventionalization rather individual entrenchment. In simpler terms, using corpus like esTenTen18 from a

corpus-as-output perspective only provides insight into the language community's usage, not that of individual speakers. Instances perceived as innovative in a collective corpus may simply be language users imitating linguistic structures encountered elsewhere. Additionally, observed innovations in a corpus represent deviations in the linguist system of the community, not in the construction of individual language users (cf. Bergs forth.; Hoffmann 2018, 2019; Ivorra Ordines 2021). Nonetheless, data from collective corpora can serve as an initial approximation and valuable material from a corpus-as-input perspective. In short, first occurrences in a corpus indicate early phases of innovation, at least within the community, while periods of rapid development and growth suggest widespread patterns and frequent input for language users.

- 24 Although phraseological units are not commonly used in discourse, the corpus consisting mainly of forums and chats is appropriate for studying constructional idioms with a pragmatic point because they often appear in conversational contexts, particularly informal, colloquial, or slang registers (fictional orality), independent of the fact that they appear in a written channel (cf. Koch & Oesterreicher 1985). Such registers are characterized by a strong inclination towards productivity and creativity, as attested in the varied range of examples. This peculiarity has also been observed in other constructions, such as the comparative constructional idiom [*más tonto que X*] = 'dumb in its highest degree' in Spanish, where more than 70% of the instances are extracted from forums and chats and more than 80% of the instances represent creative examples, and not prefabricated micro-constructions (compare examples (15) and (16); cf. Ivorra Ordines & Mellado Blanco 2021). On top of that, even the remaining 20% of the lexicalized instances is not free of modifications, since approximately 18% of them can be conceived as some kind of analogical extension, inasmuch as intensifying constructions tend to wear off due to overuse (cf. Ivorra Ordines 2022, 2023; Neels, Hartmann & Ungerer 2023).

(15) El padre era un mal bicho, pero tenía un aquel. El hijo era **más tonto que Abundio** y no tenía nada de nada.

'The father was a bad guy, but he had something special. The son was **dumber than Abundio** and had nothing at all.'

(SkE 608210122)

(16) ¿No puedes opinar por ti mismo? Si a ti te ha gustado la película, ¿cómo puede dejarte de gustar por lo que opinen unos señores/as, a los que no conoces de nada y que posiblemente sean **más tontos que el novio de la Chelo**? Y vamos a ver: los señores/as antiamericanos, ¿por qué van a ver películas americanas?

'Can't you have your own opinion? If you liked the film, how can you stop liking it because of the opinions of some people you don't even know and who are probably **dumber than Chelo's boyfriend**? And let's see: why do anti-American mean and women go to see American films?'

(SkE 11341184194)

- 25 A search of the patterns headed a quantifying group –a determinant of balanced nature or an indefinite determiner, depending on the construction– followed by the physiological needs slot fillers *hambre* 'hunger', *sed* 'thirst' and *sueño* 'sleep' and the conjunction *que* 'that' yields a total of 426 occurrences. These are unequally shared among the three physiological needs slot fillers. That is, *hambre* with 296 occurrences (69.48%), *sueño* with 52 occurrences (18.30%), and *sed* with 52 occurrences (12.02%). The

fact that these constructional idioms are not frequently attested in corpora may respond to the existence of potential alternative formulations that convey the intended message and are more accessible at the moment of speaking. This may be the case of the competing consecutive construction [*estar que V*]: ‘experience V in its highest degree’ (cf. examples 17-19) considering its high token frequency with 14,827 occurrences extracted from the same corpus (Mellado Blanco 2022), since “creativity is curtailed if a familiar formulation has already been witnessed expressing that same type of message” (Goldberg 2019: 79). Some constructs expressing the physiological needs of hunger, thirst and sleep correspondingly in its highest degree can be attested in the following examples:

(17) Y ahora viene el problema. He empezado hoy, pero **estoy que me subo por las paredes del hambre** que tengo. Llevo todo el día comiendo manzanas, peras, fresas... Para la comida una ensalada.

‘And now comes the problem. I started today, but **I’m so hungry that I’m climbing the walls**. All day I’ve been eating apples, pears, strawberries.... For lunch a salad.’

(SkE 4387572559)

(18) Ya son las 12:35 am y **estoy que me muero del sueño**. Okey, vamos dijo resignada.

‘It’s already 12:35 am and **I’m dying of sleep**. Okey, come on, she said resignedly.’

(SkE 12780432007)

(19) **Estoy que me rajo de sed**, ando con los fierros calientes, dijo una vez el Presidente Arturo Alessandri Palma cuando pasaba por fuera de la Confitería Torres.

‘**I’m burning up with thirst**, I’m walking around with hot irons, President Arturo Alessandri Palma once said as he passed outside the Confitería Torres.’

(SkE 13002642138)

- 26 According to the definition of *construction* proposed by Goldberg (1995: 4), the consecutive constructional idioms under discussion can be conceived of as one type of construction, in that the denotative and pragmatic meaning are not deductible from its component parts, since the X component has a metaphorical interpretation. The syntactic structure and the pragmatic meaning of intensification, however, as stated above, are inherited from the more schematic construction, or “metaconstruction”, [ $X_{[main\_clause]} que Y_{[consecutive\_subordinate\_clause]}$ ]  $\Leftrightarrow$  ‘Y is the consequence of X’. Since the metaphorical component is not inherited from a more schematic construction, we would be dealing with a network of partial inheritance, in which constructions are related through family resemblance relationships. This can be related to our case study, in that “a group of related constructions is related through various subsets of shared features but where a true hierarchy of increasingly more constrained variants, or an empirically attested root, cannot be established” (Fried 2015: 985; cf. Ungerer 2023).

## 4.2. The extravagant nature of consecutive constructional idioms

- 27 The concept of extravagance involves the breach of norms in an attempt of attracting attention for semantic and pragmatic purposes, but a methodological difficulty arises from the lack of a straightforward means to evaluate the flamboyance of an expression through corpus analysis. We will thus try to identify some indicators of extravagance. In a similar vein, Petré (2017: 229) argues that “[t]he degree of noticeability by the audience cannot be measured on the basis of corpus data” as the feedback between

audience and speaker/writer remains concealed. At best, “reflexes of such feedback can be found in corpus data – in the shape of metalinguistic comments”.

28 As discussed in Section 3, extravagant expressions are used to attract attention from the audience or the participants in a conversation. In oral conversations, the success of this endeavor can be observed through linguistic means, such as interjections (Petré 2017), or non-verbal cues like raised eyebrows, head movements, smiles, or laughter (cf. Hoffmann 2017 on multimodal constructions). When analyzing corpus data, it becomes necessary to look for explicit meta-linguistic remarks to determine the reactions of the recipients. In our corpus data, we found few metalinguistic comments which inform about the fact that the speaker’s phrasing may be out of ordinary in an attempt to convey emotions, that is, orthotypographic markers and cognitive devices.

29 Regarding orthotypographic markers, the repetition of vowels, the use of capital letters, the excessive use of exclamatory markers or quotation marks seem to be intrinsically governed by stylistic and orthotypographic considerations, clearly aimed at conveying emotions by making the statement somehow more emphatic. These are conceived as strongly marked forms of communication, given that “emphasis and attitude can result in exaggerated or random use of punctuation” (Crystal 2006: 95). In the same vein, Miller (2014: 124) argues that “emphatic language is one typical variety of expressivity”, so the repetitive use of graphemes (example 20) and exclamation marks (example 21), and the use of capital letters (example 22) to signal emphasis are resources of expressivity (cf. Lensch 2022).

(20) No tengo muchas ganas ahora de poner nada de mis queridos doramas, ni de sus cantantes, ni actores... Nada... Porque tengo **un sueño que me muuuuuuuuuuuuuuuueroo.**

‘I don’t really want to write anything about my beloved doramas, nor about their singers, nor about their actors... Nothing... Because I am **so sleepy that I’m dying.**’

(SkE 5854699624)

(21) Madre mía, ¡¡¡me ha entrado **un hambre que da calambre!!!**

‘Oh my God, **I’m so hungry that it gives me cramps!!!!**’

(SkE 3378020509)

(22) Dos horas y pico de viaje más tarde llegué a la casa donde me alojaría una semana, muy contento con el calor pero con **una SED QUE ME IBA A DAR ALGO [...]** y ahí que van y me sacan un vaso de agua hirviendo.

‘Two and a half hours later I arrived at the house where I was to stay for a week, very happy with the heat, but **so thirsty that I was going to have a heart attack [...]** and they went and brought me a glass of boiling water.’

(SkE 4897070595)

30 Another indicator pointing to extravagance is the use of word plays as in the example (23), in which the speaker witfully plays with the numbers *un* ‘one’ and *dos* ‘two’ to express that the speaker is very hungry by claiming that he had one hunger that seemed like two hungers. The relation that is here established is antithetical and entails pragmatic incongruence with our world knowledge. As long as there is an incongruence that goes against our world knowledge and violates our expectations, we may laugh (Latta 1990: 130). In this regard, employing a pattern in extravagant ways is not the same as repeating the same joke incessantly (which would inevitably lead to abrasion), but rather resembles diverse jokes that exploit similar principles of generating humor, i.e. going against our world’s expectations.

(23) Y él me decía: “Usted es de buen cocinar, pero de poco apetito”, y yo tenía **un hambre que parecían dos**, pero me iba tan tranquilo dejándolo disfrutar. Esa penuria compartida es a lo que él llamaba la pobreza irradiante.

And he would say to me: “You’re a good cook, but you have little appetite”, and I was **so hungry that they seemed like two**, but I would leave so calmly and let him enjoy himself. This shared hardship is what he called radiating poverty.

(SkE 8698818452)

- 31 It is precisely emphatic, intensifying expressions which are likely to wear off due to overuse, which accounts for the use of linguistic devices to counteract such expressive loss (cf. Ivorra Ordines 2022, 2023). In this respect, the extravagant nature of language is intrinsically related to different linguistic and cognitive devices, such as the use of very long slot fillers. Redundancy effects flout the Maxim of Quantity by Grice (1975), given that there is more information than required to express the same message-in-context. To put in Petré’s (2016: 116) words, there is a “replacement of short expressions by longer ones”. This type of rhetorical strategy, which involves a semantic difference between what is said and what is meant, is intentionally employed by speakers to provide more information than required. (24) represents a clear occurrence that flouts the conventions of our language, since “our purpose in doing so is to say something memorable, playful, or to draw attention to some aspect of the constructions we choose to use” (Goldberg 2019: 142).

(24) He dormido como una marmota y me he levantado con un sueño que no hay Dios, ni virgen ni puta que lo entienda.

‘I slept like a marmot and woke up with a dream that no God, no virgin and no whore can understand.’

(SkE 3917102724)

- 32 Redundance is intrinsically related to the rhetorical device of hyperbole, inasmuch as both devices pay special attention to give as much detail as possible. In the case of hyperbole, for its part, it involves a clash with reality based on “incommensurate exaggeration” (Peña-Cervel and Ruiz de Mendoza 2017: 42). The sentence (25) in bold ‘I am so hungry that I will eat the keyboard and the mouse for dessert’ and the sentence (26) in bold ‘I am so thirsty that I look like a dehydrated camel’ have a significant impact on the listener/reader, conveying the idea of being extremely hungry and thirsty, respectively. In this sense, hyperbole involves the creation and interpretation of impossible worlds, which relies on our ability to construct imaginary situations (cf. Sawada 2000). This connection with counterfactual thinking places hyperbole within the scope of hypothetical conditionals and related phenomena.

(25) [...] y soy capaz de comerme una vaca rellena de pajarillos por que la ansiedad lo que me produce es **un hambre que me voy a comer el teclado y el ratón de postre**.

‘and I am capable of eating a cow stuffed with birds because anxiety makes me **so hungry that I will eat the keyboard and the mouse for dessert**.’

(SkE 4340736468)

(26) Tengo el Ca+Mg+Zn+D de esa misma marca y me da **una sed que parezco un camello deshidratado**.

‘I have the Ca+Mg+Zn+D of the same brand and it makes me **so thirsty that I look like a dehydrated camel**.’

(SkE 564242089)

33 As the reasoning in this section has shown, metalinguistic comments and cognitive devices are important indicators of the extravagant nature of consecutive constructional idioms under study. Metalinguistic comments, on the one hand, draw audience's attention to the witty use of an expression by means of orthotypographic markers such as repetitive use of graphemes as in (20) or exclamation marks as in (21) and of capital letters as in (22). Word plays as in (23) also constitute an indicator of extravagance, given that this example, together with the previous three examples, indicates that the phrasing in question is deviant. Cognitive devices, on the other hand, are prompted by the assumption that, when speakers/writers want their utterance to be noticed –examples (24) to (26)–, there is a likelihood that they pose a challenge to processing due to semantic complexity.

## 5. Discussion

- 34 In the context of a family of consecutive constructional idioms aimed at intensifying effects, the influence of innovation driven by necessity is extensively widespread. This creates a significant tension between convention and innovation, aligning with the perspective that language functions as an “endless, creative process, which enables us to deal with the infinite and boundless with a finite set of means” (Bergs 2018: 277). As expressed by De Smet (2016), the usage of expressions can continually push the boundaries of what is grammatically conceivable. When the conceivable becomes fully accepted and conventional, the limits of conceivability, in turn, expand outward by introducing, altering, enhancing, or simply adding aesthetic value to the world.
- 35 To gain a better understanding of the interaction between “the new” and “the old”, we depart from the assumption that “creativity doesn't happen ‘within the head’ of individuals but rather in the interaction between people, places, objects and institutions” (Lubart *et al.* 2021: 129). This approach to the study of creativity focuses on its social dimension, highlighting its collaborative and interactive nature. Innovations are seen as emerging from joint thinking, passionate conversations, and shared struggles among individuals. It is a perspective deeply rooted in cultural psychology, which shifts from individual-based paradigms to emphasize social, interaction, communication, and collaboration. To put it differently, creativity is seen as a social process that “requires as a minimum of some dialogue and social exchange” (Gruber 1998: 143).
- 36 According to Glăveanu (2015, 2020), the creative action is viewed as dialogical –i.e., involving intersubjectivity and interactive dialogue–, in the sense that our thinking and communication are always oriented to the other. Its importance does not lie so much in recognizing the distinction between one's own perspective and others', but in integrating and coordinating them to generate a novel understanding or object that holds significance for both oneself and others. The outside perspective is crucial for creativity as it endows the creative act and its outcome with significance and worth, i.e. “arising from activities that take place in a context in which interaction with other people and the artifacts that embody collective knowledge are essential contributors” (Fischer *et al.* 2005: 482). Such an outside perspective –or contextualization– is essential for creative language use, since it infuses the creative process and its outcome with fresh significance and value, as can be illustrated with example (27).

(27) Máximo era alegre y risueño y conocía aquellos parajes como su propia alma. – ¿Tienen hambre? –preguntó Máximo. Yo, lo que tengo es **una sed que me bebería el entero lago** –respondió Miguel mientras miraba el enorme lago de Maracaibo que surgía a su derecha y balanceaba la cabeza para ver si le pasaba la resaca –Vamos a tomarnos unas cervezas que tu hijo está enratonado y esta noche les llevaré a una fiesta. [SkE 12924323736]

‘Máximo was cheerful and smiling, and he knew those places like his own soul. –¿Are you hungry? –Maximo asked. “I, what I have is **a thirst that could drink the entire lake,**” Miguel replied as he looked at the enormous Lake Maracaibo that emerged to his right and shook his head to see if his hangover would pass. “Let’s have some beers because your son is in the mood, and tonight I’ll take you to a party.’

- 37 Adopting the terminology proposed by Hoffmann (2024), the creative construct is created in the working memory by the constructor (Miguel) as a result of a process of constructional blending by putting into work his constructional network (comprising all of the constructions and the relations entrenched in the long-term memory). Considering the creative potential value of the construct (both novel/original and appropriate in the context of use), Miguel may, as constructor, surely possess certain personality traits such as openness and general intelligence, which can be seen as general prerequisites for the production of creative language (cf. Bergs forth.). The constructor, indeed, has shown his ability to make inventive linguistic choices by deliberately challenging the existing rules and norms of the language. This is in harmony with the idea that extravagance captures the fact that the constructor wants to be creative, but this does not necessarily ensure that he/she can be creative<sup>4</sup>. This explains why the constructor (Miguel) needs to possess certain psychological-cognitive traits to be creative. The construct, for its part, states “more than is factually true and is implausible literally speaking” (Peña-Cervel & Ruiz de Mendoza 2022: 181), in that there is an exaggeration underlying that significantly relies on constructor’s capacity to envision fictional scenarios and simulate actions, thereby linking this rhetorical device with hypothetical conditionals and similar concepts within the realm of counterfactual thinking. In this sense, the construal of the event runs counter our pragmatic knowledge of the reality, since Miguel does not intend on drinking the whole lake because of his extreme thirst but amplifies the magnitude of his unquenchable thirst in a disproportionate manner, and the co-constructor (the hearer, i.e. Máximo) will need to adjust it to align with real-world proportions through the opposite operation of mitigation. Finally, there is the co-constructor (Máximo), who is partly responsible for the externalization process, the socialization of creative output, and the internalization of innovative ideas. In case the co-constructor adopts the construct and uses it (usualization), he would be contributing to its diffusion, affecting “the spread of conventions across members of a speech community or parts of it, across genres and text types, and across activity types and types of situations” (Schmid 2020: 94).

## 6. Conclusions

- 38 In this paper I have examined a family of consecutive constructional idioms in Spanish as one type of formulaic potentially extravagant pattern. I have adopted a definition of the notion of extravagance which relies on speaker’s willingness to draw attention or cause surprise by purposefully deviating from established norms, so that the speaker

highlights the non-conventional nature of the situation they are describing (Petré 2017; De Wit et al. 2020; Eitelmann & Haumann 2022; Lensch 2022).

- 39 In the intersection of creativity and extravagance, I have related the notion of originality as understood in the context of creativity from a psychological viewpoint (cf. Weiss & Wilhelm 2020) to the expansion of the system to provide a truly and valuable solution, in that the speaker breaches the norms for pragmatic/rhetorical purposes. Against this background, the Entrenchment-and-Conventionalization model by Schmid (2020) is brought into consideration to account for the interaction of the five communicative maxims (Haspelmath 1999). From this perspective language is perceived as a dynamic system resulting from the interaction of usage, conventionalization and entrenchment.
- 40 With a corpus-driven approach, 426 instances were scrutinized to explore the extravagant potential of the consecutive constructional idioms under discussion. Despite the difficulties in assessing the phenomenon of extravagance with corpora (cf. Petré 2017), different parameters were used to determine speaker's willingness to attract attention: while the use of repeated vowels, the use of capital letters, and the excessive use of exclamatory markers or quotation are speaker-oriented strategies that signal speaker's emotional involvement in an attempt to make the statement more emphatic, the use of word plays arguably leads to humorous or artistic effects, leading to an increase of expressiveness. On top of that, the use of longer expressions instead of shorter ones and hyperbolic instances can also be perceived as sources of extravagance based on semantic aspects, since in the former more information than required is used –flouting the Maxim of Quantity– to reach certain semantic effects, and in the latter, there is semantic incongruity, based on the incompatibility with the reality.
- 41 Against this background, a sociocultural perspective to the study of creativity is adopted by not zooming our attention on the intra-psychological dynamic of the creative process (such as personality, cognitive factors, and motivational elements), but on placing the emphasis on understanding how this process is enabled by the five components of constructional creativity (cf. Hoffmann 2024). In this regard, extravagance captures that constructors want to be creative –even if extravagant effects do not always entail a creative outcome (see examples 20-22)– in an attempt to innovate with witty and unexpected new items, which may ultimately derive a creative outcome as long as it is original/novel and appropriate in the context of use (examples 24-27).
- 42 Overall, the present paper has shown that partially filled constructions with a pragmatic point offer an interesting avenue in the study of the intersection of creativity and extravagance. In the same vein as snowclones, these semi-schematic constructions show productivity based on the variability of the slots and exhibit distinct/extravagant features, despite not having a lexically fixed source construction (cf. Hartmann & Ungerer 2023). Likewise, the interaction of creativity and extravagance offers new paths of research in disentangling and characterizing the heterogeneous group of constructions that fall under the umbrella of the notion of constructional idiom.

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## NOTES

1. Triggers of the intensifying illocutionary function can also be identified, which are conceived as image remotivating elements. These receive the name of metalinguistic ostensive operators (Fuentes Rodríguez 2007) and emphasize the authenticity of the meaning of the predicate they modify (cf. Mellado Blanco & Ivorra Ordines 2023 for an overview of indicators or ostensive projectors of the constructional meaning and triggers or enhancers of the intensifying function).
2. It must be born in mind, however, that constructions can be classified as creative or uncreative in relation to the speaker's construction, reflecting his/her linguistic experience. Individual differences with respect to verbal creativity are rarely discussed (Hoffmann 2018; Uhrig 2018).
3. Even if construction grammarians have targeted both F-creativity and E-creativity, the latter has been gaining more attention recently (cf. Bergs 2019, forth.; Bergs & Kompa 2020; Cappelle 2020; Hoffmann 2019, 2022, 2024; Ivorra Ordines 2023; Ivorra Ordines & López Meirama 2024; Mellado Blanco 2023).
4. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

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## ABSTRACTS

The fact that language is continually changing and that there is a constant flow of linguistic innovations is blatantly obvious. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the notion of E(nlarging/extending)-creativity in the context of Construction Grammar (Bergs 2019; Hoffmann 2020, 2022; Ivorra Ordines & López Meirama 2024; Mellado Blanco 2023; among others), in the sense of creating new communicative possibilities that are not already in the language. Against this background, I investigate the extravagant nature of a family of consecutive constructional idioms using data from the esTenTen18 corpus (Sketch Engine), with instances such as *una sed que me bebería el entero lago* ‘a thirst that could drink the entire lake’. After a constructionist description of the patterns under discussion, the aim of this paper is twofold. First, to elucidate the intersection of creativity and extravagance. Second, to explore the extravagant nature of such patterns through different indicators: orthotypographic markers and cognitive devices. Arguably, semi-schematic patterns with a pragmatic point constitute illustrative examples in the interface of syntax and pragmatics, and as such they can be insightful for our understanding of the trade-off between psychological-cognitive factors of creativity and socio-cognitive ones (such as the wish to be extravagant).

Le fait que la langue évolue constamment et qu’il y ait un flux constant d’innovations linguistiques est manifeste. Ces dernières années, on observe un intérêt croissant pour la notion de créativité E(largissante/xtensive) dans le contexte de la Grammaire de la Construction (Bergs 2019; Hoffmann 2020, 2022; Ivorra Ordines & López Meirama 2024; Mellado Blanco 2023; entre d’autres), dans le sens de créer de nouvelles possibilités communicatives qui ne sont pas encore présentes dans la langue. Dans ce contexte, j’étudie la nature extravagante d’une famille de constructions idiomatiques consécutives en utilisant des données du corpus esTenTen18 (Sketch Engine), avec des exemples tels qu’*una sed que me bebería el entero lago* ‘une soif que je pourrais boire le lac entier’. Après une description constructionniste des schémas en question, cet article a un double objectif. Premièrement, élucider l’intersection entre la créativité et l’extravagance. Deuxièmement, explorer la nature extravagante de ces schémas à travers différents indicateurs : des marqueurs orthotypographiques et des dispositifs cognitifs. On peut soutenir que des schémas semi-schématiques avec une orientation pragmatique constituent des exemples illustratifs dans l’interface de la syntaxe et de la pragmatique, et en tant que tels, ils peuvent éclairer notre compréhension du compromis entre les facteurs psychologico-cognitifs de la créativité et les facteurs socio-cognitifs (comme le désir d’être extravagant).

## INDEX

**Keywords:** construction grammar, consecutive constructional idioms, innovation, creativity, extravagance

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