Por mí como si te operas. **Constructional idioms of rejection from a constructionist approach**

Abstract

The present study explores partially filled idioms that go beyond the limits of the Spanish phraseological tradition, in that it focuses on semi-schematic patterns that had been relegated to the periphery and does not restrict itself to the pairing phraseological expression and lexicalized form. With a corpus comprising 592 instances extracted from the esTenTen18 corpus (Sketch Engine), the objective in the study of the constructional idioms [*a* PRON *como si* X] and [*por* PRON *como si* X] is twofold. First, to shed light on the "pragmatic point" (Kay and Fillmore 1999) of these discontinuous patterns by describing their rejection illocutionary force, their colloquial dialogic context, and their intensifying speech act; and second, to delve into the lexical variability of the constructions under study in the intersection of creativity and extravagance.

Keywords: constructional idioms, rejection, pragmatics, creativity, extravagance

1. Beyond the phraseological limits[1]

Going beyond the limits in the context of the present study can be understood in two different but interrelated ways. On the one hand, the notion of phraseological unit in the Spanish phraseological tradition has been mainly approached from a phraseological perspective; that is, in its lexicalized viewpoint, as a "prefabricated" linguistic resource. In this respect, stretching out the boundaries would entail tackling the notion of phraseological unit from a wider point of view, in that phraseological units are not necessarily related to conventionalization and lexicalization. Constructionist corpus-based approaches to the study of phraseological phenomena have indeed shown that creative forms can outnumber lexicalized forms by a considerable amount. Compare examples (1) and (2), where the former responds to a lexicalized/conventionalized utterance whereas the latter alludes to a creative instance (cf. Ivorra Ordines and Mellado Blanco 2021; Ivorra Ordines 2022).

> (1) En cuanto aspecto, se sigue comentando que será el de unas gafas deportivas, pero también aseguran que no estarán pensadas para ser usadas continuamente, por lo que eso quiere decir que muy probablemente serán **más feas que pegarle a un padre** o tan incómodas como unas gafas de alambre de espino.

> 'As far as appearance is concerned, they keep saying that it will be that of a pair of sports glasses, but they also assure that they will not be designed to be used continuously, so that means they will most likely be **uglier than hitting a father** or as uncomfortable as a pair of barbed wire glasses.'

> (esTenTen18, 1336124451)

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(2) ¿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?'

(esTenTen18, 11341184194)

Non-lexicalized instances as in (2), however, fulfil the requirements for being conceived of as instances of a more abstract, semi-schematic construction from a constructionist perspective (i.e., [*más tonto que* X] 'dumber than X': 'very dumb'), insomuch as creative constructs inherit the properties of – and, hence, are licensed by – the more abstract and schematic construction (cf. Goldberg 1995: 72–81). On the other hand, phenomena under the name 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, 2008), and "locuciones con casillas vacías" 'idioms with empty slots' (Montoro del Arco 2008) have had a marginal status in the main taxonomies of phraseological units in Spanish[2]. Following Mellado Blanco (2020a: 15–21), these types of phraseological units have received little attention for two main reasons: (i) their lack of fixedness contradicts the main traits of phraseological units and (ii) their schematic nature places them at the periphery of the phraseological world because the most idiomatic phenomena are the least productive and, consequently, the most irregular from a structural point of view (cf. Hennecke and Wiesinger 2023: 8; Ivorra Ordines 2022: 31–33).

From a constructionist perspective, partially filled idioms have been mainly studied under the notion of constructional idiom[3], which is conceived of as one type of form-meaning pairing with empty slots that must be renewed in the discourse. Following Booij (2002: 301–302), constructional idioms can be defined 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". These constitute central phenomena in Construction Grammar and were already in the spotlight in its seminal works by Fillmore et al. (1988) on the *let alone* construction and Kay and Fillmore (1999) on the *What's X doing Y?* construction. These contributions, consequently, present idioms with a "pragmatic point", which, apart from their idiomatic meaning, can only be used in particular contexts or are otherwise inappropriate, highlighting that "if we come closer to explaining how more marginal or exceptional phenomena of language work, we might also get closer to understanding the more mundane, daily phenomena" (Bergs 2020; De Smet 2020).

The patterns that are the object of the present study, namely [*a* PRON *como si* X] and [*por* PRON *como si* X], cannot be related by treating one as derived from the other but by conceiving them as "allostructions", that is, "variant structural realizations of a

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[2] In this respect, Zamora Muñoz (2014: 214, 218) rightly indicates that the peripheral area has been accumulating a wide range of phraseological phenomena whose traits contravened, to some extent, the characteristics of those so-called central phraseological phenomena – that is, phraseological units (cf. García-Page Sánchez 2008: 136).

[3] Cf. Ivorra Ordines (2021: 187-188) for an overview of approximately equivalent concepts from a constructionist perspective.

construction that is left partially underspecified" (Cappelle 2006: 18), in that speakers can store generalizations of a common constructional meaning over formally distinct constructional idioms[4]. These discontinuous patterns are of special interest against this beyond-the-limit background, in that they license utterances that have specialized in pragmatic-discursive functions constituting metalinguistic phraseological units[5], since they specialized in particular in the illocutionary function of rejection toward what is said by the interlocutor (Olza Moreno 2011: 181). Another interesting idea is that these phraseological units are not tackled from a lexicalized viewpoint; instead, the creative potential constitutes a major characteristic, in which a tendency toward lexicalization can be attested (see Section 3). As semi-schematic patterns lacking formal fixedness, they are relegated to the periphery[6] of the phraseological world, given that they contravene some of the main traits of phraseological units. Against this background, I argue that the patterns [*a* PRON *como si* X] and [*por* PRON *como si* X] can be fruitfully studied under the notion of constructional idiom in accordance with the principles of a usage-based Construction Grammar approach considering the following traits (cf. Fuentes Rodríguez 2023: 3): (i) they make up schematic patterns, endowed with a global pragmatic meaning (procedural content related to modality: rejection and intensification); (ii) some constituents are lexically specified, while others are free slots that must be renewed in the discourse; (iii) they have gradation in their productivity; (iv) the semantic, pragmatic, and syntactic traits are not entirely deducible from the grammatical and lexical principles of the Spanish language; and (v) the lexical renewal of the free slots is more or less free, with some semantic restrictions (Mellado Blanco 2020a).

> (3) Le comenté que en El Corte Inglés te lo cambian sin rechistar, y me dijo que ellos no podían hacerse cargo. Pues cierra el chiringo, chaval. Y, en fin, que iban a tratar de que Apple se hiciera cargo. **Por mí como si aprendes a tocar las maracas**.

> 'I told him that in El Corte Inglés they change it without complaint, and he told me that they couldn't do anything about it. So, close the shop, kid. And anyway, they would try to get Apple to take care of it. **I don't care if you learn to play the maracas**.'

> (esTenTen18, 6880547304)

> (4) ¿Y a mí que más me da que usted sea ministro? **A mí como si es sultán de Marruecos**. Le diré lo que crea conveniente con el mismo respeto recíproco con el que usted me lo diga. Sea ministro, Harandi o el Dalai Lama.

> 'What do I care if you are a minister? **I don't care if you're the Sultan of Morocco**. I will tell you what I think is appropriate with the same mutual respect that you tell me. Whether you are a minister, Harandi or the Dalai Lama.'

> (esTenTen18, 6123400376)

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[4] Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

[5] In the framework of Construction Grammar, this notion is intrinsically related to "formal idioms" by Fillmore et al. (1988) because they constitute semi-schematic structures which appear to exist in the service of specific pragmatic purposes.

[6] In the Spanish pragmatic tradition, peripherical elements belonging to *thetical grammar* have recently attracted linguists' attention from a constructionist perspective (cf. Gras Manzano 2010, 2016; Fuentes Rodríguez 2020, 2021, 2023; and Albelda Marco 2022, among others).

The objective of the present article is twofold. The first is to provide a formal and pragmatic description[7] of the constructional idioms of REJECTION [*a* PRON *como si* X] and [*por* PRON *como si* X] (Section 2). As independent structures, they constitute modally marked instances of speech acts of rejection, in that in example (3) the speaker is explaining the problem that he had encountered when changing a product that does not work properly, so he expresses rejection of the fact that no enterprise seems to be responsible for it by claiming that he does not care even if they learn to play the maracas; or in example (4), where two speakers are arguing about addressing informally, and one of them disregards it considering the high status of one of them, to which one speaker responds that he does not care even if the other is the Sultan of Morocco. Based on counter-factuality, the speaker expresses rejection of what has been said by the interlocutor in dialogual contexts or by the speaker himself in monologic contexts. Likewise, these constructions are mainly found in colloquial dialogic contexts with a high degree of emotional involvement, which is expressed by means of conversational appellative formulae with a phatic function, interjections, and insults. Another important illocutionary act is that of intensification, which is found in semantic mechanisms such as irony or hyperbole and reinforced with the use of idioms or sentences expressing rejection.

The second objective is to delve into the lexical variability of these idioms, having as background the intersection of creativity and extravagance in the framework of Construction Grammar (Section 3). In this context, I argue that there is a continuum from more normal-situation slot fillers to more abnormal-situation slot fillers, in which such ideas allow one to gain a better understanding of how the creative potential of these constructions operate: from more literal constructions, and hence more context-dependent, to more hyperbolic constructions based instead on the notion of extravagance (of E-creativity nature). Considering that some types may acquire the status of a micro-construction[8] (e.g., *por mí como si te operas* 'I don't care if you get surgery'), these can also constitute models of creative language use through analogical extensions (E-creativity according to Bergs 2018 or Hoffmann 2022). In Section 4, the main conclusions drawn from the analysis on the creative potential of the constructions under study are presented.

2. Constructional idioms of REJECTION

To carry out the analysis of the instances licensed by the constructional idioms under study, the large corpus esTenTen18 (Sketch Engine) was used. Such a corpus is mostly made up of newspaper texts, blogs, forums, and chats, which makes it a suitable corpus to obtain eminently colloquial data about the Spanish language (cf. Ivorra Ordines and Mellado Blanco 2021). This corpus 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 makes it a large corpus. In the process of data extraction, we used the CQL (Corpus Query Language) search mode, since it allows us to detect discontinuous patterns with some lexically specified items, while others are filled in the discourse (cf. Fonollosa Esteban and Ivorra Ordines 2023). Thus, we searched for the pattern [lemma="a" | lemma="por"] [lemma="mí" |

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[7] For an overview of the recent work into the role of pragmatics in the description of constructions, cf. Finkbeiner (2021).

[8] Based on the taxonomy by Traugott (2008), by micro-construction I refer to individual construction-types.

lemma="ti" | word="él" | word="ella" | lemma="nosotros" | lemma="vosotros" | lemma="ellos"] [word="como"] [word="si"], and after the manual filtering there were 592 instances expressing rejection to what is said by the interlocutor, which are consequently licensed by the constructional idioms [*a* PRON *como si* X] and [*por* PRON *como si* X].

2.1. Formal traits

Formally speaking, the constructional idioms are lexically saturated with verbs in the indicative mood, which indicates that a comparison with a real hypothesis is established. The most predominant verbal tense is the present (96.62%), followed at a great distance by the imperfect (3.04%), and the preterit (1.35%). This responds to the fact that expressive instances are mostly uttered in situations that refer to the present, since they rarely say anything about past actions, attitudes, feelings, or potential actions (d'Avis and Finkbeiner 2019: 9). The verbal tenses in the past in the construction adhere to the communicative situation in which they appear, in that the constructions are conceived of as patterns of thematic continuity, since the chosen arguments are intrinsically related to the communicative situation (cf. Albelda Marco 2022). In example (5) the speaker expresses indifference toward what happened, using the imperfect of indicative. More specifically, the speaker shows indifference to the orc and the human's imprisonment while claiming that there must have been a reason for such a thing to have taken place, so the speaker rejects the preceding argument while claiming that he did not care about them even if they rotted in prison.

> (5) Las palabras de Lord Null me hicieron volver a la realidad tras haber observado distraídamente al orco y al humano allí encarcelados. Ni me preocupé por ellos. Algo habrían hecho, así que **por mí como si se pudrían allí**.

> 'Lord Null's words brought me back to reality after I had absentmindedly watched the orc and the human imprisoned there. I didn't even care about them. They must have done something, so **I don't care if they rotted there**.'

> (esTenTen18, 4763602682)

Even if the expressive function is intrinsically related to the first person singular (578 instances with the first-person singular pronoun *mí* 'me', i.e. 97.63%), there are a few instances in which the previous sentence guides toward someone else's indifference in the communicative situation: whether the second person singular (example 6, only 4 occurrences) or the third person singular or plural (example 7, 11 instances): 'you do your thing', 'she does not care at all'…

> (6) Y al cabo de no sé cuántos retrasos, otra llamada en plan "Señor Guisande" en la que te dicen que, pasando por Yakarta, en Indonesia, y bajando por Namibia, en África, a lo mejor es posible con suerte llegar a España. […] Vamos, **a ti como si se queda a vivir contigo**. Hasta haces vudú para que ni se mueva.

> 'And after I don't know how many delays, another call like "Mr. Guisande" in which they tell you that, passing through Jakarta, in Indonesia, and going down through Namibia, in Africa, maybe it's possible with luck to get to Spain. [...] Come on, **you don't care if he stays with you**. You even do voodoo so that he doesn't even move.'

> (esTenTen18, 4664455724)

(7) Porque no era como si a ella le importase que fuese asmático y se estuviese metiendo mierda en los pulmones que necesitaba tener limpios ni nada por el estilo. **Por ella como si se despeñaba puente abajo y no encontraban ni los restos**. ¡Dios! Hacía tantísimo tiempo que no sentía tantísima rabia que de haber estado más calmada le habría dado miedo.

'Because it wasn't like she cared that he was asthmatic and was putting shit in his lungs that he needed to keep clear or anything. **She doesn't care if he went over the bridge, and they couldn't even find the wreckage**. God! It had been so long since she had felt so much rage that if she had been calmer, she would have been scared.'

(esTenTen18, 4355003035)

Sentences (6) and (7) in bold, as independent structures, function as the so-called insubordinate sentences: "the conventionalized main clause use of what, on prima facie grounds, appear to be formally subordinate clauses" (Evans 2007: 367). Such structures undergo an evolutive process from the original subordinate, an ellipsis in the main clause, a conventionalization of such ellipsis, and finally a reanalysis of the main clause structure: the originally subordinate sentence becomes the main sentence. This would be the case of the following example –*Ah, ¡mira qué chaqueta tan chula! –Si es horrible* 'Hey, look what a great jacket! But it's horrible!', where, as cited in Evans (2007: 381), Schwenter (1999: 8) suggests that the link from conditionality to disagreement is via an ellipted main clause. To put it in constructionist terms, the constructions undergo an increase in productivity (more slots fillers saturating the X slot), an increase in schematicity (the schema expands and more members may come, and even categories serving as models of productivity as in example 29), and a decrease in compositionality (decrease in transparency with regard to the match between the meaning of the parts and the form) (cf. Traugott and Trousdale 2013).

Another formal aspect to be taken into consideration is the presence or absence of a comma between the animate entity headed by the prepositional phrase and the subordinate clause headed by the adverb *como* 'as'. The corpus data indicates a clear tendency toward the elision of the comma in 89.86% of the attested utterances, while in 10.14% of the cases there is a comma. This fact is an indicator of the decrease in compositionality of the constructional idioms under study, which can be explained in terms of sequential relations as proposed by Diessel (2019: 15) since, when linguistic elements are frequently used together, they become associated and conform to automated processing units referred to as "chunks" (Bybee 2010) as a consequence of a process of automatization.

2.2. A pragmatic approach

In communicative interaction, the speaker can use a wide range of forms to express rejection[9]. Among them, there are operators occupying reactive intervention (*y a mí qué* 'I don't care', *y qué más me da* 'I don't care', among others), but also full utterances which give shape to this speech act. This is the case for the constructional idioms of rejection [*por* PRON *como si* X] and [*a* PRON *como si* X], which are frequently uttered

in exclamatory melodic contours. The context in which they usually appear can be dialogual (8) or monologic (9), but always in dialogic contexts to the extent that there is more than one voice, although they coincide in the same speaker (Fuentes Rodríguez 2021: 25).

(8) –Lo que ocurre, señor, es que aquí, en esta casa, tenemos la manía de cobrar los libros, y nos importa un huevo de Pascua lo que diga Jesús Bonilla. –Juan, Juan Bonilla –la corregí. –Jesús es el de Los Serrano. –**Por mí como si es de los Charlines** –zanjó la Juani.

'"What happens, sir, is that here, in this house, we have a mania for charging for books, and we don't give a damn what Jesús Bonilla says". "Juan, Juan Bonilla", I corrected her. "Jesús is the one from Los Serrano". "**It doesn't matter to me if he's from Los Charlines**", said Juani.'

(esTenTen18, 30053343)

(9) Me inscribí en Facebook sin saber muy bien qué es eso y cual sería mi sorpresa cuando me apareció un enorme listado de gente "que quizá conozca", pero a la que no conozco de nada. Lo siguiente fue la gran cantidad de cosas que la gente ponía en mi página, sobre todo publicidad, así que me borré, pero no terminan ahí las sorpresas: la última fue descubrir que no me borran, aunque yo sí lo haga. Así que, Facebook, **por mí como si te mueres**.

'I signed up on Facebook without knowing very well what that was and what a surprise it was when a huge list of people "that I might know" appeared, but whom I didn't know at all. The next thing I noticed was the huge amount of stuff that people put on my page, especially advertising, so I deleted myself, but that's not the end of the surprises: the last one was to discover that they don't delete me, even though I do. So, Facebook, **I don't care if you die**.'

(esTenTen18, 7983246075)

The examples in bold above do not constitute statements but modally marked instances of speech acts of rejection, in that the opposite of what is meant by the speaker is affirmed[10]. They constitute an anti-orientated act and appear in colloquial interactions and in situations of orality and closeness with the speaker (Briz 1998). In this respect, Porroche Ballesteros (1996) argues that practically all sentences headed by *como si* 'as if' seem to go in the opposite argumentative direction with regard to the one that precedes them since, in most cases, it attenuates or cancels out the conclusion or inference that could have been drawn from the previous sentence. In other words, the speaker downplays the importance of a certain piece of information, while maximizing the downplayed importance by indicating indifference to what is said by the speaker (cf. Borrego Nieto et al. 1985; Montolío 1999). Consequently, the opposition of the speaker (enunciative aspect) together with the interactive structure (two interventions, whether in a dialogual or a monologic context) with the reply value of the second one orients the content toward opposition or disagreement[11]. The second fact is indeed irrelevant, as it is

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[10] The comparative pattern is very rich in terms of the multiple overlapping notions: on the one hand, the value of condition, always hypothetical imposed by the conjunction *si* 'if', and on the other, the added value of greater scope, dominant over the condition, the comparative meaning that introduces *como* 'as'. The resulting meaning from the combination *como si* 'as if' is modally marked (Montolío 1999: 3697; cf. Brinton 2014: 101–102).

[11] Disagreement is, indeed, generally a prior condition to a preceding speech act and constitutes the second utterance of an adjacent pair formed by an assertion. Henning (2015: 104) defines disagreement as the non-

an action that does not take place: (8) I do not care whether the person that he/she is referring to belongs to one of the most important drug trafficking clans in Galicia (Spain) or (9) I do not care whether Facebook dies/disappears considering all the surprises I have encountered ever since I signed up. The meaning is 'it does not matter, I do not care, it is irrelevant'. In this respect, Mura (2019) adds another interesting aspect when referring to rejection tinged with outrage or criticism, which is applicable to example (10), since this construct indicates disagreement of the speaker toward an argument and, at the same time, expresses criticism against the telephone company *Telefónica*.

> (10) Ya he dicho antes lo que pensaba de Telefónica... **Por mí como si se hunden en la p*ta miseria**, es más, lo estoy deseando.

> 'I have said before what I thought of Telefónica.... **I don't care if they sink into fucking misery**, in fact, I'm looking forward to it.'

> (esTenTen18, 1671164522)

The mechanism used to express counter-argumentation against what has just been uttered is counter-factuality ('do X as it if Y were true'). This entails the rejection of the preceding argument by means of an utterance that can be formulated through an outraged negation, despite not having any indicator of negative modality (Cascón Martín 2000: 102). The only reason to support this view would be that the assertion is unreal since in example (8) he is not a member of the drug trafficking clan Charlines and in example (9) Facebook is not going to die. These two facts, consequently, will not take place. They are unreal and do not justify the preceding argument, a meaning which is the result of the combination of the preposition *por* 'for' or *a* 'to', together with the pronoun[12] and the comparative pattern *como si* 'as if'. Toward such a hypothetical fact, which does not take place (unreal), the speaker shows no sign of worry in case the interlocutor may suffer the consequences[13].

Considering the modal content of rejection, the constructional idioms under study trigger expressive speech acts in that they constitute mechanisms of intensification. They are conceived of as complex acts appearing in colloquial dialogic contexts with a high degree of emotional involvement[14], where the non-acceptability of what is said by the interlocutor (rejection), and in its highest degree (intensification), places it in a position closer to impoliteness (Fuentes Rodríguez 2023: 5; cf. d'Avis and Finkbeiner 2019). The aspect of the speaker's involvement in the message content is reminiscent of subjectification (cf. Traugott 1995), that is, a change toward meanings signaling speakers' modal stances toward the propositions they make (Neels et al. 2023). In this sense, the speaker makes it clear to the listener that he does not care about anything by means of a limit or absurd situation. According to the Scalar Principle by Fauconnier (1975), if I do not care about or express indifference toward an absurd situation in relation to the

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preferred response, while agreement would be the preferred one. The non-preferred responses are usually called "expressions of dissent", which constitute representative or directive acts (Herrero Moreno 2002).

[12] The combination of the preposition and the pronoun constitutes a respectual complement which indicates the affected agent by what follows (Borrego et al. 1985). These constructions allow the suppression of the prepositional phrase *por/a* + pronoun and, despite this, present themselves in a reactive intervention contradicting what has been said by the interlocutor. In other words, the anti-orientation and the polyphonic value of the disagreement or contradiction are maintained (Fuentes Rodríguez 2021: 54).

[13] In a similar vein, Mura (2019) focuses on the study of phraseological units of disagreement and argues that in most cases the focus of disagreement is on the interlocutor's discourse, that is, on what he says, how he says it, and what is meant with his words.

[14] It is precisely in these contexts in which speakers want to be noticed. They are consequently personally and emotionally involved since it matters for them (Petré 2016: 125).

interlocutor (11), I will also not care in another real situation related to the interlocutor (12). The absurd situation represents the lowest level in the scale, so if the speaker does not care about the most absurd situation in the pragmatic scale, the speaker will show indifference to the rest of the elements of the scale. And the lowest element is of course normally identified by means of a superlative, in this case the most absurd situation (cf. Ivorra Ordines and Mellado Blanco 2021 on comparative constructional idioms or Fuentes Rodríguez 2021 on the constructional idiom [*ni que* CLAUSE$_{\{\text{subjunctive}\}}$]).

> (11) Pues no, Emiliano y Johan; al menos personalmente lo que defiendo es la desvinculación del matrimonio canónico del administrativo. Este último todo para vosotros; si finalmente se desvinculan, yo no tendría nada que objetar a que esos "matrimonios" civiles fueran de todo tipo; **por mí como si se quieren casar con Pluto o con la mona Chita**…

> 'Well, no, Emiliano and Johan; at least personally, what I personally advocate is the uncoupling of canonical marriage from administrative marriage. The latter is all for you; if they are finally uncoupled, I would have no objection to these civil "marriages" being of any kind; **I don't care if they want to marry Pluto or Cheetah**.'

> (esTenTen18, 140651492)

> (12) Pero he dicho, digo y diré que la caza de brujas que se ha montado en torno al Yunque es tan sectaria o más que el propio Yunque. De hecho, sus tácticas difamatorias y calumniadoras son infames. Por pensar así y decirlo, me desprecian unos y otros. Pues **por mí como si se van de excursión a Alaska unos y otros**.

> 'But I have said, I say, and I will say that the witch-hunt that has been mounted around the Yunque is as sectarian or more so than the Yunque himself. In fact, their defamatory and slanderous tactics are infamous. For thinking so and saying so, I am despised by both sides. Well, **I don't care if they go on a trip to Alaska**.'

> (esTenTen18, 1562768798)

The expressive dimension is easily attestable in the communicative situations where the constructional idioms appear, in which "a high degree of intersubjective alignment between speaker and hearer can be presupposed" (Evans 2009: 11). The speaker's emotional involvement in the situation gives free rein to his or her subjectivity, which can be constrained, in some cases, by the coherence and adequacy of the arguments to the communicative situation. Therefore, in example (13) Judge Murillo chooses the argument of not caring about him drinking wine in relation to the accused part drinking water, considering the hunger strike.

> (13) En otra sesión del juicio la abogada de Otegi le preguntó a la juez si su representado, que estaba en huelga de hambre, podía beber agua. Y la magistrada Murillo, con ironía, le autorizó a ello: "**Por mí como si bebe vino**".

> 'In another session of the trial, Otegi's lawyer asked the judge if his client, who was on hunger strike, could drink water. And Judge Murillo, with irony, authorised him to do so: "**I don't care if he drinks wine**".'

> (esTenTen18, 1618848257)

In (13) the speaker reacts to the communicative situation by means of an instance of a constructional idiom – with lexically filled and partly filled items – expressing thetical content, that is, the constructional idiom acts as lexical formulae that allows inferences to

be drawn. To put it differently, thetical contents are not directly expressed in the message (instructions to be decodified). They are thus markers that guide the decoding process (Portolés Lázaro 2001). As there is no verb to depend on, the receiver ultimately seeks to adjust to the context and "contextually work out the speaker's intended interpretation" (Leclercq 2019: 282). In this line of reasoning, Kay (2004) discusses how to reach a successful interpretation of the *let alone* construction in examples such as *Fred won't order shrimp, let alone Louise, squid*. This occurs when the addressee "can find in, or construct from, the conversational common ground a set of assumptions according to which Louise's willingness to order squid unilaterally entails Fred's willingness to order shrimp" (Kay 2004: 676). This is what Fillmore et al. (1988) conceive of as idioms with a pragmatic point, inasmuch as substantive idioms such as *Good morning*, *How do you do?* have associated pragmatic purposes or formal idioms such as the Incredulity Response Construction (*Him be a doctor?*) appear to exist in the service of specific pragmatic purposes. This idea could be extrapolated to the constructional idioms under study, considering that these semi-schematic patterns serve to express the illocutionary function of rejection of what has been said in the discourse.

2.3. The syntagmatic context

Context plays a crucial role in Construction Grammar, so that it is not enough to describe a construction as a form-meaning pairing. Context indeed also needs to be taken into consideration: "constructions or combinations of constructions tend to become conventionally used to describe certain types of messages-in-context" (Goldberg 2019: 94; cf. Östman 2015: 20, Uhrig 2020: 16). The analysis of context may be of great help to fine-tune the definition of the constructional idioms under study, given that, as Bybee (2010: 14) indicates, the context and the properties of the social, physical, and linguistic context can become entrenched as part of the constructional knowledge (cf. Hoffmann 2018: 269).

From a contextual point of view, the constructional idioms under discussion frequently appear in highly colloquial contexts[15], which is manifested in the use of conversational appellative formulae with a phatic function, such as *oye* 'listen' or *mira* 'look' (example 14). Another linguistic feature is the use of interjections, such as *bah* 'huh', *acho* 'lad', *buah* 'huh', *vamos* 'come on' and *bueno* 'well', which possess propositional content and express the speaker's attitude (example 15). These highlight the dialogic nature of the context and are mainly used so as not to lose contact with the addressee (Fuentes Rodríguez and Alcaide Lara 1996).

> (14) Ya te pondremos tele, y películas americanas; hasta en japonés si hace falta te las pondremos. Y tus jefes, <u>oye</u>, **por mí como si se hacen el harakiri**, allá ellos, pero que nos dejen en paz a los demás…

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[15] In this respect, Ivorra Ordines and Mellado Blanco (2023) and Ivorra Ordines (under review) observe that the semi-schematic construction arising from the proverb *Dime con quién andas y te diré quién eres* in Spanish and its functionally equivalents *Sag(e) mir, mit wem du umgehst, und ich sage dir, wer du bist* and *Zeig(e) mir deine Freunde, und ich sage dir, wer du bist* 'A man is known by the company he keeps' in German specialize in terms of textual genre, specifically in titles of books and newspaper headlines. This is in harmony with "the need to recognize discourse constructions, that is, conventional associations of form with a particular discourse or text type" (Nikiforidou 2010: 177; cf. Goldberg 2019: 94).

'We'll show you TV and American films; we'll even show them in Japanese if we have to. And your bosses, <u>hey</u>, **I don't care if they commit harakiri**, that's up to them, but leave the rest of us alone...'

(esTenTen18, 1245550071)

(15) <u>Buah</u>, **por mí como si no llueve en meses**... Bueno, en invierno no me importa, pero que no caiga ni gota de primavera a otoño (excepto tormentas, que molan).

'<u>Buah</u>, **I don't care if it doesn't rain for months**... Well, I don't mind in winter, but I don't mind if it doesn't rain at all from spring to autumn (except for storms, which are cool).'

(esTenTen18, 3583888990)

Another feature that influences the colloquial nature of the syntagmatic profile of the constructional idioms is the use of insults, whose main goal is to attack the hearer's face, which explains why they are conceived of as a typically discourteous act, and the use of verbal hostility (cf. Mellado Blanco 2020b). Regarding the communicative situation, insults are mainly encountered in the oral modality, which are particularly used to intensify rejection toward what has been said in the discourse (Amigot Castillo 2015: 305). Some of the insults attested in the syntagmatic context of the constructions are *rata* 'rat', *hijo de ***** 'son of a *****', *facha pasiva* 'passive fascist', *capullo* 'twit', *guarra* 'slob', *idiota* 'idiot', *pringao* 'loser'… (example 16).

(16) Yo lo retorcí, y de su boca salió sangre, negruzca y asquerosa. Escuché los gritos de los compañeros de este <u>subnormal</u> que quedaban vivos, pero me dio tanto igual... **Por mí como si me destrozaban con sus manos en ese momento**, porque ese <u>capullo</u> no saldría vivo de allí si yo podía impedirlo…

'I twisted him, and blood came out of his mouth, blackish and disgusting. I heard the screams of this <u>blockhead</u>'s companions who were still alive, but I didn't care so much.... **I didn't care as if they tore me apart with their hands right then and there**, because that <u>asshole</u> wouldn't get out of there alive if I could stop him.'

(esTenTen18, 13023040248)

In relation to the predominantly rejection value, this can be intensified by means of different features such as the recurring use of idioms (cf. Albelda Marco 2007: 57–62), as well as the coordination of sentences. These are mainly used to scale up upwards the attitude of the speaker toward the propositional content of the utterance, reinforcing or downplaying "the truth value of the clause or part of the clause they apply to" (Nevalainen and Rissanen 2002: 361). In this sense, idioms such as *qué pijo me importa* 'I don't give a damn' and *tonto el haba* 'a complete fool' in example (17) or the recurring use of sentences expressing indifference in example (18) aim at intensifying the speaker's commitment toward the truth value of the assertion.

(17) Y a mí <u>qué pijo me importa</u> que <u>el tonto el haba</u> este de Damoso diga que es bisexual **por mí como si le gusta hacer sexo con un perro**, y no sé cómo hay gente que les pueda gustar semejante mierda televisiva.

'And <u>I don't give a damn</u> if the <u>dumb bean</u> of Damoso says he's bisexual; I don't care as if he likes having sex with a dog, and I don't know how there are people who can like such television bullshit.'

(esTenTen18, 4557402684)

(18) No hombre si te lo decía de broma, **a mí como si ponen una mierda por bandera**, es que me la pela, estoy harto y cansado de este mundo todo son pijotadas de la gente que si la independencia que si de derechas que si de izquierdas, por mí le pueden dar morcilla al mundo entero, solo me preocupa mi parcela, no me gusta ninguna bandera, pero ninguna.

'No man if I was joking, **I don't care if they put a shit flag**, I don't care, I'm sick and tired of this world, it's all bullshit from the people, independence, right wing, left wing, for me they can give the whole world a hard-on, I only care about my plot, I don't like any flag, but none.'

(esTenTen18, 1067583001)

Likewise, semantic resources such as irony or hyperbole are frequently encountered as mechanisms of propositional intensification. The former does not allude to the deviation of a norm but to a different interpretation of what is said. Wilson and Sperber (2012) argue that ironic sentences are one type of echoic sentence and implicitly express an attitude, which is generally rejection or disapproval. In example (19), intonation may contribute to the understanding of *campeón* 'champion' as an intensifying element. The latter, for its part, is intrinsically related to the speaker's emotional involvement toward what is said, in that the use of a hyperbolically marked idiom in example (20) contributes to a greater intensity of the speaker's emotional reaction (cf. Peña and Ruiz de Mendoza 2017). Irony, for its part, can also be found tinged with humorous effects as in example (21), which is based on the playful modification of the idiom *tomar el pelo* 'pull someone's leg' (lit. 'take the hair') and the fact of opening a hairdresser's salon.

(19) Javier, campeón, llévate toda la basura y **a mí como si te pagan el doble**. Te voy a recordar que no todos tenemos precio.

'Javier, champion, take all the rubbish and I don't care if they pay you double. I'll remind you that we don't all have a price.'

(esTenTen18, 7759219876)

(20) El relato me ha gustado, aunque viendo atrás el trabajo tan bestial a tus espaldas (en calidad y cantidad de la misma), **por mí como si escribes basura**.

'I liked the story, although looking back at the beastly work behind you (in quality and quantity), I don't care if you write rubbish.'

(esTenTen18, 6300256409)

(21) **Por mí como si te la machacas**. Por mi parte no volveré a buscar nada de lo que me pidas. Si quieres tomar el pelo pon una peluquería.

'**I don't care if you wank yourself**. As for me, I won't go back for anything you ask for. If you want to make a fool of yourself, set up a hairdresser's.'

(esTenTen18, 6482957316).

A holistic description of the constructional idioms of rejection under study enables us to gain a better understanding of their formal, semantic, and functional properties. Both the indicative mood and the first-person singular are pervasive in the utterances attested (appearing in roughly 97% of the instances), which is related to the speaker's point of view when expressing rejection of what is said in the discourse. This is in harmony with the fact these semi-schematic patterns constitute expressive speech acts, which appear in dialogual or monologic contexts in colloquial interactions (supported by the syntagmatic

context with the use of conversational appellative formulae with a phatic function, insults, recurring use of idioms, and the coordination of sentences stressing the illocutionary act of rejection). As expressive speech acts, they are mechanisms of intensification based on counter-factuality, in that the preceding argument is rejected and intersubjectivity plays a crucial role in the speaker's emotional involvement. These aspects together thus make the constructional idioms of rejection under discussion great candidates in the study of their creative potential since the Spanish language is at the service of speakers, who can wittily and ingeniously play with it to express the intended message-in-context.

3. The creative potential of constructional idioms of REJECTION

As Goldberg points out, "constructional approaches share with mainstream generative grammar the goal of accounting for the creative potential of language (Chomsky 1957, 1965). That is, it is clear that language is not a set of sentences that can be fixed in advance" (Goldberg 2006: 22). In constructionist approaches, the notion of *creativity* is indeed largely limited to the productivity of a construction, that is, how established abstract schemas can be used to license novel utterances (Hoffmann 2019). This notion of creativity is reminiscent of Leech's characterization of linguistic creativity as the "original use of established possibilities of the language" (Leech 1969: 24) to make our linguistic repertoire cater to our specific situations since the speaker uses language in a way that has never been encountered before (cf. "construction proper" in Fillmore 2002, "F-creativity"[16] in Sampson 2016, or "productivity as regularity" in Barðdal 2008). Nevertheless, this is not the only type of creativity. Sometimes speakers go beyond the existing possibilities by enlarging our understanding of the range of possible products of the activities, since the speaker "creates new communicative possibilities which are not already in the language" (Leech 1969: 24; cf. "productivity as extensibility" in Barðdal 2008, "E-creativity"[17] in Sampson 2016).

From a psychological perspective, Weiss and Wilheim (2020) argue that the ability to think creatively includes four different dimensions: fluency (quantity of responses), originality (quality of responses), flexibility (variety of responses), and elaboration (number and quality of details provided). The authors relate these four dimensions to the F-creativity and E-creativity distinction by Sampson (2016). Fluency and flexibility are theoretically related to F-creativity since high performance requires the controlled retrieval in a fixed category, as well as switches between categories (high type frequency). However, the performance in the varied range of types can lead to an E-creative outcome if the retrieval among the existing categories is exceeded. While elaboration can be seen in both types of creativity, originality seems to be connected to E-creativity. Against this background, I argue that there is a continuum from more normal-situation slot fillers to more abnormal-situation slot fillers; that is, from actions that fully make sense in taking place in accordance with our understanding of the world, to actions that clash with our

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[16] Following Sampson's (2016: 19), F stands for "fixed", while E for "enlarging" or "extending". While the former alludes to "examples drawn from a fixed and known (even if infinitely large) range", the latter refers to "activities which characteristically produce examples that enlarge our understanding of the range of possible products of the activity".

[17] In the context of idiom modification, Ivorra Ordines (in press) argues that the notion of F-creativity is intrinsically related to the notion of "construction proper" in Fillmore (2002), in that the meaning of many constructs can be generalized over only one structure; on the contrary, the notion of E-creativity is related to the notion of "patterns of coining" in Fillmore (2002), considering that idioms may serve as models for generating new units by analogy under certain morphological, lexical, and pragmatic conditions (cf. Hoffmann 2020).

world knowledge (compare examples (22) and (23); cf. Sawada 2000). Along this continuum, therefore, the intersection of creativity and extravagance is crucial to gain a better understanding of the creative potential of the constructional idioms under discussion.

(22) Si al tiempo del horario laboral (9:00 - 19:00 de media) le sumas lo que tardas en prepararte para el trabajo y el transporte, estás usando casi 12h diarias en el curro. Da igual que no veas series, **por mí como si lees a Kafka o a Quevedo**, quiero que me expliques cuándo. ¿Los fines de semana?

'If you add to your working hours (9:00 - 19:00 on average) the time you spend getting ready for work and getting to work, you spend almost 12 hours a day at work. It doesn't matter if you don't watch series, **I don't care if you read Kafka or Quevedo**, I want you to explain when. At weekends?'

(esTenTen18, 6075447686)

(23) Cocteau, **por mí como si comes alimentos que no dan sombra**, que me la suda. Justamente lo que parece que te molesta, porque sigues dando lecciones de moralina barata. Si eres feliz, sigue, pero no intentes llevar razón que no la llevas.

'Cocteau, **I don't care if you eat food that doesn't provide shade**, I don't give a damn. That0s exactly what seems to bother you, because you keep giving cheap moral lessons. If you're happy, go ahead, but don't try to be right, you're not.'

(esTenTen18, 5303164891)

On one side of the continuum, there are those constructs whose slot fillers are in harmony with our interpretation of the world's knowledge. The instances approaching this pole are related to the notions of fluency and flexibility by Weiss and Wilheim (2020), whose quantity and variety of types are relatively high, and they mostly constitute nonce instances with a high degree of context dependency (roughly 60% of the instances). In fact, the judgment of an utterance as creative or not can drastically change depending on the evidence available to the hearer since "speakers adjust their expectations on the fly and […] there is a whole range of factors that seem to play a role in this respect" (Uhrig 2020; cf. Uhrig 2018: 298). From this perspective, in example (24), the speaker is talking about their preference of the Spanish ex-minister Chacón regarding wearing a suit compared to Queen Letizia of Spain, who opts for a short dress. In a predominantly fashion-related context, the speaker expresses rejection by claiming that he/she does not care even if the ex-minister wears jeans while taking part in an official event. The rejection of such an example is reinforced – as well as intensified – by the proverb *para gustos, los colores* 'there is no accounting for tastes' and the idiom *eso es lo de menos* 'that's the least of it'. In example (25) the speaker shows opposition regarding a grandfather's vs a mother's preference for having her granddaughter or daughter, respectively, in the same province where they are currently living. While the mother does not entertain the idea of having her go abroad (even if she is resigned to her daughter doing so), her grandfather shows indifference to her going abroad. It does not matter even if she goes as far away as a country like Australia.

(24) Para terminar debo concluir diciendo que prefiero el traje de la Chacón que el vestidito de la Princesa Letizia. Pero para gustos, los colores. Eso es lo de menos, **a mí como si va en vaqueros**.

'To conclude, I must say that I prefer Chacón's suit to Princess Letizia's little dress. But there are different colours to suit different tastes. That's the least of it, **I don't care if she wears jeans**.'

(esTenTen18, 4098935997)

(25) Yo sí conozco a gente que aún cree que los que se van están locos. Yo no me he ido, pero mi abuelo me anima a que lo haga en cuanto pueda; y **por él, como si me voy a Australia**. A mi madre no es que le guste la idea, pero ya ha visto que no tengo intención de pasar toda la vida en la misma provincia, así que se ha resignado.

'I do know people who still believe that those who leave are crazy. I haven't left, but my grandfather encourages me to do so as soon as I can; **and for him, I don't care if I go to Australia**. My mother doesn't like the idea, but she's seen that I don't intend to spend my whole life in the same province, so she's resigned herself to it.'

(esTenTen18, 1147005351)

On the other side of the continuum, there are those types that rely on speakers' ability to construct imaginary situations based on incommensurate exaggeration, which makes them less context-dependent and more abnormality-based. Originality is pivotal in these examples, which are assessed based on uniqueness. Something is unique if it is unexpected and unusual, which responds to speakers' ability to produce work that is novel (Weiss and Wilheim 2020). Appropriateness is also a key factor in this context, i.e., usefully adaptive concerning task constraints, since something can be completely original without being considered creative due to a lack of appropriateness in the context of use (cf. Hoffmann 2018, 2020; Trousdale 2020). Having in mind the notion of E-creativity, the idea of originality is intrinsically related to the notion of extravagance, in that there is an "exploitation of a construction that is unexpected in a given context as a way for speakers to indicate that the situation they are reporting is somehow non-canonical or that the circumstances surrounding a conventional use of the construction do not pertain" (De Wit et al. 2020: 2). In this context, extravagance is perceived 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 is reporting. Indeed, it can be seen as a way of expanding or extending creativity and extra-grammaticality given that extravagant forms are more expressive than less extravagant alternatives (cf. Lensch 2022).

(26) Los hijos de puta del Game me quisieron cobrar 70 euros por la pre-venta de la edición especial del Splatoon con la excusa de "es que quedan muy pocas unidades disponibles" […], así que **por mí como si les viola una sierra eléctrica en llamas**.

'The motherfuckers at Game wanted to charge me 70 euros for the pre-sale of the Splatoon special edition with the excuse "there are very few units available" [...], so **I don't care if they are raped with a flaming chainsaw**.'

(esTenTen18, 4501855057)

(27) Mientras no sea una molestia para los demás, **por mí como si se meten en una prensadora hidráulica con el coche**. A mí personalmente no me gusta nada el tuning que se ve en la tele, esa de convertir los coches en sucesores de la nave Enterprise.

'As long as it's not a nuisance to others, **I don't care if they get into a hydraulic press with the car**. Personally, I don't like the kind of tuning you see on TV, the kind that turns cars into successors to the Starship Enterprise.'

(esTenTen18, 2437118937)

Examples (26) and (27) clearly stand out and are particularly noticeable, in that salience is manifested by means of novelty (Schmid and Günther 2016) particularly aimed at pragmatic-semantic effects. The extravagance nature of such examples is perceived as a consequence of the fact they emphasize the content of the message and represent it in a lively and imaginative manner in an attempt to describe "situations as in a way non-canonical (real but surprising)" (De Wit et al. 2020: 4). The term "flippancy" in De Wit et al. (2020: 2) seems fitting to what motivates these extravagant examples as artifacts that speakers use to attract attention. As opposed to this type of salience, at the "abnormality" pole of the continuum, there are also instances whose salience is based on knowledge stored in long-term memory (salience by context-free entrenchment). These types have relatively high token frequency compared to the rest of the slot fillers, and thus are more frequently encountered: *como si se opera* 'as if someone gets surgery' (25 occurrences), *como si se muere* 'as if someone dies' (10 occurrences), and *como si se matan* 'as if they kill themselves' (9 occurrences). The cognitive result of these sequential units is the gradual emergence of a chunk of memory conceived of as a driving force for the development of lexical prefabs consisting of strings of lexical expressions, since "the more often a string of words is processed, the stronger its status as a (lexical) unit" (Diessel 2016: 230) (cf. Diessel 2019 on sequential relations).

(28) Justin: ¿Quieres que me vaya en realidad? –dijo acercándose a mí. Yo: **Por mí como si te mueres**, –me cogió de la muñeca fuertemente y me llevó hasta uno de los muebles del salón, lo abrió y había una pistola dentro, me la dejó en la mano y me miró enfadado–. Justin: –¿Quieres eso?

'Justin: Do you want me to actually leave? He said approaching me. Me: **I don't care if you die**, he grabbed my wrist tightly and took me to one of the living room furniture, he opened it and there was a gun inside, he left it in my hand and looked at me angrily. Justin: Do you want that?'

(esTenTen18, 9295413773)

(29) En ningún punto de la partida me ha importado una mierda él, su clan, su relación con el resto de personajes o su final. Nada. Como se dice en mi tierra[18]: "**por mí como si lo operan**". El problema, no obstante, no es que el "prota" sea un pelele, es que el resto de personajes resultan aún peores.

'At no point in the game did I give a shit about him, his clan, his relationship with the other characters or his ending. Nothing. As people say in my country: "**I don't care if they operate on him**". The problem, however, is not that the "lead" is a wimp, it's that the rest of the characters are even worse.'

(esTenTen18, 4170809639)

What we observe from examples (26) to (29) is that there are semantic similarities, which highlight the fact that speakers are not only conditioned by their input but "have a whole

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[18] *Como se dice en mi tierra* 'as people say in my country' is a paremiological connector that indicates that an idiom is following (Mellado Blanco 2009). It introduces the constructional idiom as an indirect quotation and highlights its polyphonic dimension. The paremiological connector, in this context, serves to attenuate the expressive load of the idiom at the modal level (cf. Ivorra Ordines in press).

range or cognitive domain-general principles that allow them to go beyond the input they are exposed to" (Hoffmann 2020). In this respect, analogical thinking allows us to detect similarities based on the corporal damage inflicted on the interlocutor[19] in varying degrees (from less damaging to destructive): *por mí como si te operas* 'I don't care if you get surgery', and *por mí como si les viola una sierra eléctrica en llamas* 'I don't care if they are raped with a flaming chainsaw', *por mí como si se meten en una prensadora hidráulica con el coche* 'I don't care if they get into a hydraulic press with the car' and *por mí como si te mueres* 'I don't care if you die'. These instances, therefore, cluster together based on semantic similarity[20], and coverage would account for the fact that "previously attested exemplars correlate positively with the acceptability of new coinages" (Goldberg 2019: 73).

Since extravagant expressions are almost by definition low-frequency phenomena and violate the recipient's expectations, in those cases where an extravagant expression becomes frequent, its surprise effect diminishes, and they are no longer conceived of as extravagant expressions (Kempf and Hartmann 2022; cf. examples 28 and 29). In this context, token frequency is no less important than type frequency in determining the productivity of a construction, in contrast to the common belief that claims token frequency detracts from productivity (cf. Bybee 2010). According to Barðdal (2008: 98), therefore, token frequency[21] has an important role when positing analogical extensions in low-level constructions given that "highly entrenched tokens are more easily activated than non-entrenched tokens, and are thus more available as model items than infrequently occurring tokens". This is the case for the type *por mí como si te operas* 'I don't care if you get surgery' (example 30; cf. footnote 17), which, with high token frequency, serves as a model to posit analogical extensions to counteract the wear-off due to high token frequency (cf. Ivorra Ordines 2022 on comparative constructional idioms).

> (30) No mezclemos los churros con las meninas. De todas formas, **por mí como si se opera sin anestesia**, no lo voy a sintonizar y se acabó.

> 'Don't compare apples and oranges. Anyway, I don't care if he gets surgery without anesthesia. I'm not going to tune in and that's that.'

> (6726190534)

Considering its high token frequency, its apparent frozenness, and its idiosyncratic behavior, we can argue that a new micro-construction or schema is added to the network because a new type node has been created (cf. Sommerer 2022). Following the reasoning of Traugott & Trousdale (2013), this would represent a case of lexical constructionalization, insomuch as the repeated association may lead to the agreement of a relationship of the original form and a newly analyzed meaning since a mismatch takes place between the morphosyntax of the original construction and the new constructs (Traugott 2015); that is, constructional change takes place (emergent idioms). This consequently involves a decrease in productivity, schematicity, and compositionality. In this line of reasoning, both conventionalization and entrenchment act as forces affecting

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[19] Constructional intensification can also be codified by means of the metaphor of corporal damage: A LOT IS CORPORAL DAMAGE (cf. Felfe 2012).

[20] In this line of reasoning, Bybee (2013) claims that the more instances a pattern comprises, and the more similar these instances are to each other (in this case, based on semantic similarity: corporal damage), the more likely speakers are to group them together under a construction.

[21] Bergs (2020) alludes to the metaphor of a teenager's wardrobe, in which the more frequently the cool t-shirt is used, the more easily it is reachable at the front, while grandma's Christmas sweater lies 'forgotten' in the very back and hardly ever used.

not only usage of the expression but also usage activities by means of licensing and activation. Citing Schmid:

> [t]he more conventionalized a given utterance type has become, the more likely it is that it will be regarded as being better licensed for solving a given communicative task than competing utterance types and will thus be used more frequently than these. Likewise, the more entrenched a given pattern of association has become in the associative network of a given speaker, the more readily and effortlessly, relative to competing patterns, will it be activated, and the more frequently the corresponding utterance types will be produced by this speaker, given similar communicative aims and cotextual and contextual circumstances. (Schmid 2020: 74)

This process of constructionalization may be followed by further constructional changes, involving an increase in schematicity and semantic abstractness since analogical extensions can be posited from an apparently lexically filled construction; in other words, an emerging semi-schematic construction (Traugott 2015: 55–56). This case would represent a clear example of a constructional idiom coming into being, that is, [*por mí como si te operas* X], which can be conceived of as "an attractor set for the production of new contentful constructions and expansion occurs" (Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 165). Following Hoffmann (2022) on the well-known example *kick the proverbial bucket*, example (30) would illustrate E-creative language use, in that the speaker goes beyond the taxonomic coverage of a schematic construction since there is no slot available for the lexical insertion in the constructional template (cf. Ivorra Ordines 2022 on comparative constructions).

4. Conclusions

The present study has focused on the analysis of semi-schematic constructions. Adopting the notion of constructional idiom, from a Construction Grammar viewpoint, has not only allowed us to obtain a holistic description but also to go beyond the phraseological limits by paying close attention to discontinuous patterns that had been relegated to the periphery in the Spanish phraseological tradition and by not restricting the analysis of phraseological phenomena to the pairing phraseological unit – lexicalization. In this context, I have argued that the discontinuous patterns [*a* PRON *como si* X] and [*por* PRON *como si* X] are better analyzed as constructional idioms; that is, as semi-schematic constructions placed in the middle of the lexicon-grammar continuum since they have lexically filled items and slots that must be filled in the discourse.

Departing from models such as the one developed by Kay and Fillmore (1999), there is the idea that certain pragmatic knowledge belongs to what speakers must learn together with linguistic forms. The constructional idioms under study, therefore, are related to the *let alone* construction since there is a remarkable "pragmatic point" because these appear to exist for a specific purpose, i.e., to express REJECTION. In this respect, such semi-schematic patterns are tackled from a pragmatic viewpoint to take into consideration contextual aspects (Leclercq 2019: 277; Fuentes Rodríguez 2021: 26).

An in-depth examination of the patterns of rejection under study provides a comprehensive understanding of their formal, semantic, and functional characteristics. The use of the indicative mood and the first-person singular pronoun is prevalent in the attested utterances, accounting for approximately 97% of the instances. This tendency is connected to the speaker's perspective when expressing disagreement within the

discourse. It aligns with the fact that these partially pre-established patterns serve as expressive speech acts, commonly occurring in informal conversational exchanges, whether dialogual or monologic situations. The expressions are supported by the context in which conversational formulae with a phatic function, insults, recurrent idioms, and sentence coordination emphasizing the act of rejecting are employed. As expressive speech acts, they serve as mechanisms of intensification by negating the preceding argument, and the shared understanding between the participants plays a crucial role in the speaker's emotional engagement. Considering all these aspects, the constructional idioms of rejection being discussed present a significant potential for creative usage, as speakers of the Spanish language can cleverly and ingeniously manipulate them to convey their intended message within a specific context.

The analysis of the creative potential of the constructional idioms of rejection has highlighted that the intersection of creativity and extravagance offers an insightful approach to gaining a better understanding of how creative speakers are when it comes to expressing rejection in Spanish. Roughly 60% of the instances attested in the corpus have slot fillers belonging to the normal-based-situation pole since they are in harmony with our understanding of the world. These slot fillers tend toward a more literal interpretation, have a higher dependency on the context (examples 24 and 25), and their degree of creativity relies on speakers' contextual expectations (cf. Uhrig 2018), which explains why they are not perceived as highly creative instances. On the "abnormality" pole of the continuum, the instances rely on speakers' ability to create imaginary situations through exaggeration or excessiveness. Originality and uniqueness are pivotal aspects in these expressions, as well as appropriateness since such a combination is conceived of as the source of creativity (cf. Hoffmann 2018, 2020). In this context, the notion of extravagance is introduced to allude to deliberate deviations from established norms to attract attention or surprise, with the aim of accounting for hyperbolic-based instances in which the metaphor A LOT IS CORPORAL DAMAGE predominates. As extravagant expressions become more frequent, their surprise effect diminishes, and they are no longer considered extravagant, which would be the case with the highly frequent construction *por mí como si te operas* 'I don't mind if you get surgery'. At this point, it is suggested that high token frequency has an important role when positing analogical extensions (cf. Barðdal 2008), in that a semi-schematic idiom emerges to counteract the wear-off by creating novel ways of communication that are not still present in the language (E-creativity).

Overall, the present study has highlighted the benefits of adopting a construction-based approach to untangle the complexities of the creative potential of the constructional idioms of rejection under discussion by exploring the constructions' position on different continua (F-creativity vs E-creativity, openness vs frozenness, productivity as regularity vs productivity as extensibility). Having outlined the intersection of creativity and extravagance here, it should be noted that the continua presented in this contribution could be applied to other linguistic phenomena, not only at the intra-linguistic level but also at the cross-linguistic one.

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