

***Vete a freír cristales*. The interplay of convention and innovation in a constructional idiom of rejection in Spanish**

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The constructional idiom [*IRSE/ANDAR(SE)*]_[imperative] *a* *CLAUSE*_[infinitive] (e.g., *Vete a freír espárragos*, lit. ‘go to fry asparagus’; *Iros a tomar viento*, lit. ‘go to get wind’) is commonly used in Spanish to convey the speaker’s strong rejection, and is a hallmark of colloquial language. This makes it an excellent candidate for exploring the phenomenon of extravagance, both because of these characteristics and its structure, which includes an empty slot filled with a clause headed by an infinitive. This structural aspect contributes to variability, as its high token frequency also results in high type frequency. The corpus analysis (Sketch Engine) presented in this paper allows us to illustrate the relationship between creativity and intensification, as well as between innovation and convention. Besides, it underscores the gradual nature of creativity, culminating in extravagance, which speakers employ to gain salience and, in turn, amplify the expressiveness and emotional impact of their statements.

Keywords: constructional idiom, extravagance, creativity, salience, rejection, pragmatics

1. Introduction

The fact that language is continually changing and that there is a constant flow of linguistic innovations is blatantly obvious. Some examples¹ of the constructional idiom under investigation are presented in (1) to (4).

- (1) Hoy estás muy desagradable, así que mejor **vete a coquetearle a un ninja o alguien**².
(SkE 4637564698)

‘Today you’re very unpleasant, so **go to flirt with a ninja or someone.**’

- (2) **Vete a peinar calvos**, Karpa, anda... (SkE 635445596)

‘**Go to comb bald heads**, Karpa, come on...’

¹ All the examples in this paper are taken from the esTenTen18 corpus (Sketch Engine) and are identified by their document number. For easier reading, we reproduce them with standardized spelling and punctuation.

² These four examples and examples from (8) onwards are translated literally, but those segments in bold are interpreted as ‘go to hell’, ‘fuck off and die’ or ‘eat shit’, depending on the degree of rejection.

(3) Has muerto para mí. En la vida analógica, mañana tendrías puesta una querella. **Vete a tomar viento fresco.** (SkE 3449973588)

‘You’re dead to me. In the analog life, you’d have a lawsuit on your hands tomorrow. **Go to take fresh air.**’

(4) No tienes ninguna vara de medir para saber lo que está bien o mal, más allá de tus memeces intersubjetivas convertidas en “pacto social”. ¿Qué pacto has suscrito tú, iluso? Enséñame tu copia o **vete a hacer gárgaras.** (SkE 155618655)

‘You don’t have any yardstick to determine what’s right or wrong, beyond your intersubjective nonsense turned into a ‘social contract’. What pact have you subscribed to, naïve one? Show me your copy or **go to gargle.**’

In examples (1) to (4) we see some examples of lexical innovations and conventionalized patterns. To gain a better understanding of these constructs and their relationship, it is important to recall one of the main tenets of constructionist approaches, that is, linguistic knowledge is stored in the form of ‘constructions’, which are part of a structured inventory conceived of as multiple inheritance networks (as described by Croft & Cruse, 2005, p. 262). Many scholars depict two-dimensional networks where interconnected constructions are horizontally linked when they share the same level of complexity and exhibit formal and semantic similarities (referred to as ‘sister constructions’). At the same time, lower-level (more specific) constructions are described as ‘inheriting’ characteristics from higher-level (more abstract) constructions through vertical connections. This leads to the formation of what are known as “constructional families”, consisting of closely interconnected constructions that share similarities both in form and function (cf. Diessel, 2019). Translated into this first sample of examples, we observe that all these constructs share a ‘mother construction’ represented by the form $[IRSE/ANDAR(SE)]_{[imperative]} a \text{ CLAUSE}_{[infinitive]}$ and the meaning ‘vehement rejection’. This would constitute a more semi-schematic construction (or meso-construction, cf. Traugott, 2008) under which we can distinguish the micro-construction *vete a hacer gárgaras* (example 4). This would, in turn, represent a micro-construction, as an individual construction-type that is an idiom with a high token frequency and is, consequently, stored as a chunk in speakers’ memory. Lexically filled idioms, or micro-constructions, can posit analogical extensions considering that highly frequent types can function as model of productivity, that is, the idiom *vete a tomar viento* is the model from which the analogized extension *vete a tomar viento fresco* is posited. Finally, examples (1) and (2) are constructs licensed by the ‘mother construction’, which have not gained status enough to be seen as micro-constructions.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, we will provide a summary of the theoretical notion of extravagance and its relation to salience and creativity. Section 3 examines the pattern $[IRSE/ANDAR(SE)]_{[imperative]} a \text{ CLAUSE}_{[infinitive]}$ as a constructional idiom, outlines the process of data extraction from the esTenTen18 corpus (Sketch Engine) and the sample composition, describes the sample, and explores the extravagant potential of the constructional idiom under study. Our discussion is presented in Section 4. Concluding remarks are summarized in Section 5.

2. Extravagance and its relation to salience and creativity

As per Keller's insights (1994, pp. 91–103), linguistic communication hinges on a collection of interactive principles, known as maxims. These maxims establish a sense of uniformity in communication, wherein speakers employ language in a manner that mimics how they believe others would speak in specific circumstances. This includes mirroring each other's speech when attempting to emulate it or striving to achieve social success with the least expenditure of effort (referred to as static maxims). When we speak, therefore, we adhere to collective habits that are required for successful communication³, which can ultimately result in a convention, this being described as “a commonly recognized pattern of behaviour that individuals of a community adhere to because they anticipate others in the community to do the same” (Schmid, 2020, p. 88). These maxims direct the speaker to stick to the entrenched conventions that initially come to their minds in response to the specific situation (Goldberg, 2019, p. 60), or, to put it differently, in the ongoing interaction between language system and usage, the frequencies at which specific usage patterns occur have a significant role. When a particular usage pattern is repeated frequently, therefore, it strengthens the likelihood of its future activation, thus ensuring its continued occurrence (Langacker, 1987, p. 100; cf. also Schmid, 2020, pp. 171–172 on the notion of *persistence*).

While the maxims of Clarity, Economy and Conformity (as proposed by Haspelmath, 1999) contribute to the repetition of entrenched associations and conventionalized utterance types, extravagance and expressivity (Maxim of Extravagance) have the opposite effect, as long as they facilitate the activation of less entrenched patterns, and the result is the production of innovative or unconventional patterns. These maxims can be conceived as dynamic maxims, since such patterns are the motor of change, i.e., they modify “conventional utterance types and reorganize their conformity profiles in such a way that the sources of conventionality shift” (Schmid, 2020, p. 150; cf. also Kemmer & Barlow, 2000, p. ix). In this context, the notion of “extravagance” gains importance, which harks back to the Maxim of Extravagance, as posited by Haspelmath, who claimed that all the maxims interacted with each other. Before delving into the notion of extravagance, it is important to note that extravagance and expressivity are often used in interrelated and overlapping ways. Following Schmid, the notion of extravagance “highlights a more or less conscious and deliberate attitude on the part of the speaker during language production” (2020, p. 78), while expressivity “brings the linguistic forms themselves into focus [and] can be the result of usage activities driven by extravagance” (2020, p. 78) (cf. d'Avis & Finkbeiner, 2019; Legallois, 2012; Schmid, 2020 on the relation of expressivity and extravagance).

The Maxim of Extravagance recognizes that communication goes beyond the simple goal of being understood, which can be achieved merely through the static maxims (cf. Keller, 1994, pp. 91–103). To attract attention, language users go beyond the usual boundaries and find new and fresh ways to express familiar ideas. This behaviour is akin to being “little ‘extravagant poets’ in order to be noticed, at least occasionally” (Haspelmath, 1999, p. 1057). Speakers aim to achieve social success with their speech by not only being expressive but also by noticeably

³ From this viewpoint, the process of communication between two or more speakers can be seen as a co-semiotic activity, where participants mutually comprehend each other. It is based on the reasoning that linguistic communication relies on an implicit, mutual assurance of achieving some level of mutual understanding in a given situation (Schmid, 2020, p. 20). According to the Theory of Relevance, participants seeking to understand each other engage in a co-semiotic activity, and their mutual comprehension is influenced by the satisfaction of their shared beliefs. In simpler terms, “every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance” (Sperber and Wilson, 1995, p. 260).

deviating from established language norms⁴. They accomplish this by using expressions innovatively, imaginatively, vividly, or in other attention-grabbing ways. When an individual speaker's extravagant innovation is embraced by the larger language community, diffusion comes into play, which promotes the spread of innovations (Schmid, 2020, p. 179). This presents a fresh option that introduces unpredictability and diversity in a situation that used to be predictable and homogeneous. After the introduction of this innovation, different versions, both old and new, compete for widespread adoption until one emerges as the dominant choice or they differentiate in terms of conformity and stability, and balance is reinstated (feedback loop). To put it in Schmid's words:

I will argue that if language is understood as consisting of the dynamic interaction between usage, conventionalization, and entrenchment, two fundamental properties of language are predicted as a by-product: first, that language is a structured and yet highly dynamic and constantly changing system; and second, that this system is not uniform but subject to variation. (Schmid, 2020, p. 3)

The phenomenon of "extravagance" has been approached from different angles in the literature (cf. Ungerer & Hartmann, 2020), so many definitions exhibit considerable overlap, whereas others differ in key characteristics that are attributed to the extravagant nature of language. While Haspelmath (1999) highlights that speakers desire more than just clarity or expressivity, in that they also seek to make their statements imaginative and vivid (i.e., extravagant), Petré (2017) focuses on speakers' emotional involvement⁵ to the information they are conveying, so that they want the statement to be distinguished from others by making it more emphatic in some way. Kempf & Hartmann (2022), for their part, conceive extravagance as a deliberate deviation from established norms that evokes surprise or attracts attention, and De Wit et al. (2020) define extravagant language use as a means of signaling, in that speakers exploit the unexpected constructions within a particular context to convey that the situation being reported is somehow unconventional or unusual. Based on these overlapping and distinct approaches, Ungerer & Hartmann (2020) summarize five prototypical characteristics of extravagant expressions: (i) they not only convey clarity and expressiveness but are also imaginative and vivid in order to stand out, (ii) they express the speaker's emotional involvement in the contents of their message, which makes them more emphatic compared to other statements, (iii) they depict deliberate deviations from established norms, (iv) they refer to non-canonical situations in the real world (incongruence), and (v) they are usually redundant, i.e. contain more information than required.

The concept of extravagance is closely related to the psycholinguistic notion of salience (Neels et al., 2023). Through the mechanism of capturing attention, there exists a strong association between extravagance and expressivity with the concepts of foregrounding and salience (cf. Günther et al., 2016). In an attempt to offer "a unified socio-cognitive framework of salience", Schmid & Günther (2016) postulate four different scenarios, based on the idea that utterances

⁴ In the context of creative morphology, the notion of extravagance is closely linked to the notion of expressivity, in that "speakers willingly create rule-bending forms in a strive to be creative, the desire to be noticed can be a driving force propelling the formation of ever more extravagant structures" (Lensch, 2022, p. 80). In the context of grammaticalization, however, the notion of expressiveness can be understood in two ways, leading to ambiguity. It can either pertain to language's ability to convey a wide range of meanings (Smith et al., 2013) or encompass more pragmatic aspects, like a speaker expressing a specific attitude or stance towards a situation (Hopper & Traugott, 2003).

⁵ Haspelmath disagrees in this regard, since "not the speaker's emotions are at issue, but the hearer's reactions" (Haspelmath, 1999, p. 1065).

can be salient either because of familiarity or also because of non-familiarity, the two latter in harmony with the notion of extravagance as explained above:

- i. Salience by context-free entrenchment: confirmation of expectations based on knowledge stored in long-term memory.
- ii. Salience by contextual entrenchment: confirmation of expectations derived from the probability of occurrences in the current context.
- iii. Salience by surprisal: violation of expectations derived from the probability of occurrences in the current context.
- iv. Salience by novelty: violation of expectations based on lack of stored knowledge.

The two first scenarios allude to the cognitive dimension: certain utterances can be salient because they are easily accessible in the speakers' mind considering that they are highly entrenched. When faced with novel communicative challenges, speakers tend to use newly related words to existing ones for solving them. Similarly, listeners encountering a new word find it simpler to comprehend it when they can connect its component to familiar words they already know (Goldberg, 2019, p. 60; Schmid, 2020, p. 136). This type of salience is less closely related, and sometimes can indeed, be opposed to the notion of extravagance (Neels et al., 2023, p. 50; cf. Section 4). On the contrary, utterances can be also salient because they deviate in one way or another from what is expected in the context and cotext (salient by surprisal), and utterances can be salient because they are highly unconventional and therefore not entrenched in speakers' mind (salient by novelty). In this case, utterances are salient because they have an inherent attention-getting potential, which indicates that extravagance, as a pragmatic characteristic can be attributed either to a specific construction itself or can arise from the interactions and combinations of constructions within a particular context (cf. De Wit et al., 2020; Kempf & Hartmann, 2022; Neels et al., 2023; Schneider, 2022). From this perspective, salience, in any of its scenarios, can manifest independently of extravagance (the two first scenarios above); on the contrary, extravagance is likely to require the use of a salient expression and cannot occur in the absence of such salience (the two last scenarios above).

The notion of extravagance, at the same time, is closely linked to the phenomenon of creativity (cf. Bergs, 2018, p. 289, 2019, p. 175; Eitelmann & Haumann, 2022, pp. 4–5; Ivorra Ordines, 2023, pp. 105–111, in press). In the framework of Construction Grammar, the notion of creativity has been largely limited to the productivity of a construction, in the sense of how established abstract schemas can be used to license novel utterances as long as there are no conflicts (Goldberg, 2006; Hoffmann, 2019). This idea of creativity is reminiscent of Leech's description of linguistic creativity, which involves employing the established linguistic possibilities in an original way (Leech, 1969, p. 24). Or, to put it differently, this can be seen as a way of making our linguistic repertoire cater for our specific situations since the speaker uses language in a way that has never been encountered; that is, as a type of F(ixed) creativity, according to Sampson, given that these cases allude to “examples drawn from a fixed and known (even if infinitely large) range” (Sampson, 2016, p. 19; cf. also “productivity as regularity” in Barðdal, 2008; “constructions proper” in Fillmore, 2002; or “generative function” in Jackendoff & Audring, 2020).

To gain a better understanding of the relationship of creativity and extravagance, we refer to the research conducted on creativity in psychology. In this regard, Wiess & Wilhelm (2020) argue that the ability to think creatively includes four dimensions: fluency (quantity of responses), flexibility (variety of responses), elaboration (number and quality of details provided), and originality (quality of responses). The dimensions of fluency and flexibility are,

consequently, theoretically related to the “generative function” in the sense of Jackendoff & Audring (2020) as long as the pattern allows the productive instantiation of its variable(s). According to Stenberg & Lubarg, creativity, in this sense, is understood as “the ability to produce work that is both novel [...] and appropriate (i.e., useful, adaptative concerning tasks constraints)” (Stenberg & Lubarg, 1999, p. 3)⁶. While the notion of elaboration (number and quality of details provided) seems to be related to both creativity and extravagance –a fixed space and in an extended system–, the notion of originality⁷ (quality of responses) appears to be associated with E-creativity, in that the result surpasses the mere retrieval from existing categories in unpredictable and innovative ways (Bergs, 2018, p. 278; Uhrig, 2018, p. 297). The speaker can indeed make creative linguistic decisions by purposefully breaching the established rules and norms within the language, in the sense of extending or enlarging creativity and extra-grammaticality –or going against the expectations. According to Goldberg (2019), intentionally deviating from conventional language can be as a means to create a memorable or playful effect, or to draw attention to specific aspects of our expressions, given that using ordinary or conventional phrases would not draw much attention. Consequently, in their quest for attention, language users might consciously choose to defy certain limitations (cf. Cappelle, 2020, p. 4; Eitelmann & Haumann, 2022, p. 11; Uhrig, 2020, p. 2; Zeschel, 2012, p. 138), otherwise, deviant language use would be seen either as unintentional slips of the tongue or as outright grammatical errors. To put it differently, extravagant use of language is not the result of an accident, but “the result of a willful flouting of constraints or rules which leads to the creation of a deviant or at least unusual form” (Lensch, 2022, p. 97). In this line of reasoning, something can be creative and, at the same time, extravagant, in the same way that if something is extravagant will surely be creative, but not necessarily. However, something creative (in the sense of F-creativity) does not entail effects of extravagance.⁸

3. Case study

The formal pattern [*IRSE/ANDAR(SE)*_[imperative] *a* CLAUSE_[infinitive]] is widely employed in Spanish and finds application in diverse contexts. In certain instances, it is linked to a literal interpretation involving ‘movement to carry out an activity’ (examples 5–7), while in others, it assumes a pragmatic role involving rejection and intensification (examples 8–11). As a result, we encounter a scenario of homonymy between a syntactic construction in the former case and an idiomatic construction –or constructional idiom– in the latter one. The aim of this section is to describe the constructional idiom using data extracted from esTenTen18. This will involve, firstly, distinguishing it from its literal counterpart, and secondly, providing an in-depth analysis

⁶ Veale conceives creativity in this same line of reasoning: “[a] truly creative variation is a delicate balance of the novel and the familiar, of the appropriate and the inappropriate. [...] A creative variation is not just any novel combination of familiar elements, but a deliberate departure from a convention that is given a distinctive and knowing twist” (Veale, 2012, p. 28). Herbst, indeed, coincides with this idea by claiming that “linguistic creativity has a lot to do with lexical variation, in particular with using particular lexical units in constructions in which one would not expect” (Herbst, 2018, p. 319).

⁷ Originality in the sense of breaching the norms is often associated with a ludic quality (cf. Munat, 2016, p. 101–102). Snowclones, indeed, illustrate the interplay between conventionalization and innovation, and are conceived of as markers of linguistic creativity (Bergs, 2018, 2019; cf. Hartmann & Ungerer, 2023).

⁸ In this sense, “an inherent difference between creativity and extravagance, though, is that extravagance is conceptualized as a trigger of language variation and change” (Eitelmann & Haumann, 2022, p. 5; cf. Hoffmann, 2022).

of the CLAUSE_[infinitive] slot, with the intention of showcasing its potential for creativity and extravagance.

3.1. [IRSE/ANDAR(SE)]_[imperative] *a* CLAUSE_[infinitive] as a constructional idiom

The combination of an imperative form of a verb of movement followed by an infinitive clause introduced by the preposition *a* ‘to’ is highly productive in Spanish, especially with the two most prototypical verbs of movement in different Spanish dialectal regions: *ir* ‘to go’ and *andar* ‘to walk’. Consulting the esTenTen18 corpus (Sketch Engine) yields examples such as the following:

- (5) Qué te quedas haciendo aquí, hijo, te vas a aburrir de tanto estar sentado, **anda a jugar**, que para eso son los chiquillos. (SkE 28624453)
‘What are you staying here for, son? You’re going to get bored sitting around so much. **Go to play**, that’s what kids are for.’
- (6) Si lo que te apetece es un plan romántico con tu pareja, prepara un picnic e **iros a ver el atardecer a un rincón mágico**. (SkE 12896965)
‘If you’re in the mood for a romantic plan with your partner, prepare a picnic and **go to watch the sunset in a magical spot**.’
- (7) Hazme un favor, **vete a buscar al cura** y tráelo aquí, pero no digas nada a nadie. (SkE 11205967)
‘Do me a favor, **go to fetch the priest** and bring him here, but don’t tell anyone anything.’

These examples, however, contrast with the ones provided below:

- (8) Pero ¿quién se cree que es este pelotudito de Recalde? Pero **anda a freír churros**, infeliz. (SkE 37333064)
‘But who does this little jerk Recalde think he is? Just **go to fry churros**, you miserable person.’
- (9) Nos tenés podridos. ¿Para qué entras al foro si no lees los comentarios de los otros foristas? **Andate a rebuznar a otro lado**, sos un desprestigio. (SkE 49019895)
‘We’ve had enough of you. Why do you enter the forum if you don’t read the comments of other users? Just **go to bray somewhere else**, you’re a disgrace.’
- (10) ¿Para qué iba a manipular una información si estoy proporcionando una fuente? Venga, hombre, **vete a dar una vuelta**. El que no ha leído la noticia completa eres tú. (SkE 324372)
‘Why would I manipulate information if I’m providing a source? Come on, man, **go to take a walk**. You’re the one who hasn’t read the full news.’
- (11) Visionarios del mundo... **Iros a cagar** ¿Qué hago con mi vida? He de hacer algo, he de hacerlo rapidito. (SkE 896393086)
‘Visionaries of the world. **Go to poo**. What do I do with my life? I need to do something, and I need to do it quickly.’

The examples (8) to (11) clearly differ from examples (5) to (7):

1. Firstly, in terms of denotation, the first set of examples has a compositional meaning, in the sense that the speaker is requesting or inviting the interlocutor to move and perform a specific action designated by the infinitive verb. In contrast, the meaning in the second set is diluted to

express the speaker's strong emotion of rejection. The speaker does not actually expect the interlocutor to fry anything, bray, take a walk or poo. In this case, there is a shift in the lexical nucleus of the two verbs involved: from infinitives in examples (5) to (7) to verbs of movement (*ir* 'to go' and *andar* 'to walk') in examples (8) to (11). The speaker invites the interlocutor to disappear from their sight, expressing strong rejection and a feeling of anger or irritation towards something the interlocutor has done or said (cf. Fuentes Rodríguez, 2023; Ivorra Ordines, 2023)⁹. This is a characteristic feature of constructional idioms, where the meanings of the components are diluted in favour of the constructional meaning, which in this case is primarily pragmatic (vehement rejection and anger). Context plays a crucial role in interpreting the construction. As Leclercq (2019, p. 282) puts it, "hearers try not simply to match the constructional semantics onto the lexeme, but also contextually work out the speaker's intended interpretation".

Some instances, indeed, such as the one exemplified in (8), have been included by scholars as pragmatic rejection formulas in Spanish. For example, Larreta Zulategui (2014, p. 146), Amigot Castillo (2014, pp. 305-306), and Aznárez-Mauleón (2019, p. 425) include the following examples in their works *vete/váyase/váyanse/idos a freír churros* (lit. 'go to fry churros') / *espárragos* (lit. 'go to fry asparagus') / *monas* (lit. 'go to fry Easter cakes') 'go to hell', *hacer gárgaras* (lit. 'go to go gargle') 'go to hell', *a tomar por (el) culo* (lit. 'go to get fucked in your ass') 'go fuck yourself' / *por (el) saco* (lit. 'go to take the sack') 'go to hell' / *viento (fresco)* (lit. 'go to get (fresh) wind') 'go to hell'; others, such as *vete a cagar* (lit. 'go to poo') 'eat shit' or *vete a cascarla* (lit. 'go to crack it') 'fuck off and die' appear only in some of the three works. Amigot Castillo (2014, p. 305) considers them as formulas of refusal in which the reprimand of reproach is expressed as a true attack on the listener/reader when they include taboo words or sexual and scatological allusions.

2. Secondly, building on what we just mentioned, examples (8) to (11) allow us to observe that these segments are used in highly marked pragmatic contexts. They are clearly situated at a very colloquial level and often co-occur with insults (examples 8 and 11), rhetorical questions (8–10), vocative particles like *venga* 'come on', *anda* 'come on' and *hombre* 'man/bro' (example 10), negative descriptions of the interlocutor (example 9: *sos un desprestigio* 'you're a disrepute'), and so on. Apart from these four examples, we also find pragmatic expressions of anger (*joder* 'fuck', *hay que joderse* 'like it or lump it') or rejection (*que te den* 'up yours', *que te jodan* 'go fuck yourself'), and other segments that convey the same meaning, such as *que ya cansas* 'I'm fed up with you' or *deja de incomodarme* 'stop bothering me'. All of these projectors allow to associate [IRSE/ANDAR(SE)]_[imperative] a CLAUSE_[infinitive] with the pragmatic value of intensification, which is evident both in the context and in the construction itself (cf. López Meirama, 2023; Mellado Blanco & Ivorra Ordines 2023).

Regarding the context, it is worth noting the co-occurrence of insults, often with highly hurtful and derogatory language. These insults can be vulgar or even coarse, usually in colloquial or even vulgar forms: *capullo* 'idiot', *escoria* 'scum', *mamagüevo* (lit. 'egg sucker') 'cocksucker', *mugriento* 'grubby', *piojoso* 'lousy', *pringao* 'sucker', *tarado* 'fool', *tontolaba* 'dumbass', *sacomierda* (lit. 'sack of shit') 'shithead'. It is very common for the insults themselves to be intensified through various procedures, such as modification (*puto analfabeto de mierda* (lit.

⁹In the context of Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), requesting the interlocutor to leave and, consequently, creating social distance, may serve to attenuate the communicative act of rejection, deemed a Face Threatening Act.

‘fucking ignorant of shit’)), coordination (*mierda, inútil, inservible* ‘shithead, duffer, clot’), repetition (*imbécil, imbécil, que eres una imbécil* ‘fool, fool, you are a fool’) and the use of quantifying reinforcement with intensifying particles, usually derogatory (*peazo cerda* (lit. ‘piece of pig’), *so mamarracho* ‘fucking jerk’) or with prefixes (*requeteignorante* ‘right ignorant’, *supermamón* ‘superdumbass’). On some occasions, the speaker mitigates the aggression by using the diminutive with a derogatory value (*chatín* (lit. ‘little love’), *envidiosilla* (lit. ‘little greedy person’), *listillo* ‘smarty-pants’, *pendejito* (lit. ‘little idiot’) *pringaíllo* (lit. ‘little loser’)), or irony (*majo* ‘darling’, *guapa* ‘pretty’, *bonita* ‘beautiful’, *monada* ‘cutie’).

In relation to the construction itself, the choice of infinitives also reveals this value. As we will see later, there is abundance of verbs that denote scatological or sexual activities, including colloquial, and even vulgar, terms: *cagar* ‘shit’, *chingar* ‘fuck’, *coger* ‘screw’, *follar* ‘fuck’, *mamar* ‘suck’, etc. In some cases, there is morphological reinforcement, such as *recagar* (lit. ‘shit again’). Additionally, there are segments that denote exaggerated activities, such as *vete a dar cabezazos contra la pared* ‘go bang your head against a wall’. Hyperbole can lead to impossible activities, like *limpiar las esquinas de un castillo redondo* ‘clean the corners of a round castle’.

3. Thirdly, some of the examples provide evidence of the speaker’s awareness of the pragmatic value of the construction, which is often equated with an insult. Example (12) also demonstrates that the speaker is aware of its colloquial nature.

- (12) No entres en el insulto fácil como lo de **iros a mamarla**. (SkE 8558437)
 ‘Don’t resort to easy insult like **go suck it**.’

- (13) En diversas ocasiones, el acusado, con intención de humillar a su esposa, se dirigía a ella en los siguientes términos: “no sirves para nada”, “eres una piltrafa”, “eres una mierda”, “tonta”, “inútil”, “anda tonta, **vete a fregar**”, y otros parecidos. (SkE 8660879)
 ‘On various occasions, the accused, intending to humiliate his wife, addressed her with the following terms: “you’re good for nothing”, “you’re trash”, “you’re shit”, “stupid”, “useless”, “come on, stupid, **go do some cleaning**”, and similar ones.

- (14) Cuando se trata de rechazar a una persona el lenguaje de la calle utiliza vete a paseo, **vete a tomar el aire, vete a tomar viento**, vete al quinto infierno, **vete a freír espárragos, a hacer gárgaras, a hacer puñetas**. (SkE 26560867)
 ‘When it comes to rejecting someone, the street language uses phrases like go take a walk, **go get some fresh air, go get some air**, go to hell, **go fry asparagus, go gargle, go jerk off**.’

This pragmatic value allows us to identify segments like the ones exemplified in (8–14) as instances or realizations of a constructional idiom –in contrast to those exemplified in (5–7)–, as they cannot be explained using the general principles of the Spanish grammar (cf. Taylor, 2016, p. 464). Following Mellado Blanco (2020a, p. 27), we also observe that certain constituents of its syntactic structure are already lexically saturated, while others appear as empty slots that need to be filled in the discourse; in this case, the empty slot is constituted by the infinitive clause, while the imperative verb and the preposition *a* ‘to’ are lexically filled items.

Mellado Blanco (2020a, p. 27) also points out other characteristics, such as: (i) the graduality in the productivity of the pattern, in the sense that some constructions are more productive than

others, and (ii) the fact that although the lexical filling the slots is generally free it may have certain semantic restrictions. In the following sections, where we will provide data extracted from a reference corpus, we will be able to confirm that this construction is highly productive (Section 3.2), and although the renewal of the slot allows for a high degree of freedom, there are marked preferences in the selection of infinitive forms (Section 3.3).

3.2. Data extraction from the corpus and sample composition

To carry out the analysis of this construction, we used the Spanish web corpus esTenTen18, created from texts collected from the Internet in 2018 and accessible through the textual analysis tool Sketch Engine. It encompasses all linguistic varieties of Spanish, gathered from web domains in both continents, although the presence of European Spanish is a little bit higher than that of American Spanish (both account for approximately 50%), which explain the data we will see later in Table 1.

The corpus is mainly composed of press texts, blogs, forums, and chats. This makes it very suitable for obtaining data from colloquial language, to which this construction is prominently associated. In this regard, we note that the majority of the instances correspond precisely to chats and forums, sources of fictional orality (cf. Ivorra Ordines & Mellado Blanco, 2021).

The linguistic annotation of Sketch Engine allows for selective searches; however, the data extraction process has its limitations. In the case of the construction at hand, the combined search of forms (the preposition *a* ‘to’) and categories (the verbs) yields an uncontrollably high number of records, making the filtering task impossible. This has forced us to carry out the searches using the forms (not lemmas) to identify the first element. Subsequently, we manually filtered all the concordances related to each form as documented in esTenTen18¹⁰. The results are presented in the following table¹¹:

Verbal form	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency	Freq. / Number
<i>vete</i>	2386	61.16%	Singular 88.28%
<i>anda</i>	919	23.56%	
<i>ándate/andate</i>	64	1.64%	
<i>váyase/vayase</i>	75	1.92%	
<i>idos/ios/ios</i>	24	0.62%	Plural 11.72%
<i>iros</i>	253	6.49%	
<i>andaos/andaros</i>	2	0.05%	
<i>váyanse/vayanse</i>	178	4.56%	
TOTAL	3901	100%	

Table 1. Sample distribution in terms of verbal forms of imperative

¹⁰ Forms that are not represented in the corpus, such as *ándese* or *ande*, for example, are not included in the table. Similarly, potential forms with spelling mistakes, such as **vállanse* or **báyanse*, are not accounted for.

¹¹ It is necessary to indicate that we have excluded cases with the verb *largarse* ‘to leave’ and the verb *ir* ‘to go’ conjugated without a pronoun, due to their low representativeness. Additionally, the large number of instances of [ve a V] ‘go to V’, mostly with compositional meaning, makes it difficult to extract specific cases. Therefore, examples like the following have been excluded: “Aplica alerta 5 y el 155 ya o dimite y **lárgate a tomar por el culo**. Inútil.” ‘Apply alert 5 and Article 155 already or resign and **fuck off**. Useless.’ (SkE 16456288); “**Ve a tomar por culo**, bonito” ‘**go to fuck yourself**, cutie’ (SkE 18449048).

As can be seen from Table 1, it is evident that the verb *ir* ‘to go’ is predominantly used compared to *andar* ‘to walk’, the former accounting for over 70% of the samples. This finding aligns with the general usage trend of both verbs in Spanish. According to a query conducted on CORPES (12/12/2022), the following data was obtained: the normalized frequency of *ir* ‘to go’ is 4.534,78 cases per million, while *andar* ‘to walk’ only reaches 136,68. The choice between these verbs is primarily explained in terms of dialectal variations, and although we have mentioned that the European Spanish is a little bit better represented in both CORPES and esTenTen18, we believe that, albeit somewhat broadly, the corpus fairly reflects the actual usage of both forms.

Similarly, the difference in the usage between singular and plural forms does not deviate from the general use of both forms in the imperative mood, as observed in CORPES (12/12/2022)¹². This is likely because, as a general rule, the interlocutor is usually an individual, not a group. Additionally, the corpus data reveals that, despite the recommendation of the Royal Spanish Academy (see DPD, *sv. ir* ‘to go’), the use of the form *iros* ‘go you’ is predominantly employed as the plural imperative form, to the detriment of the normative form *idos* ‘go you’: 253 occurrences compared to 22, in a ratio exceeding 10:1. However, it is important to note that this construction is characteristic of colloquial language.

The number of tokens in the sample (around 4,000) is quite considerable, since it is a rejection formula characteristic of spoken language, and the corpus consists of written texts in which fictional orality is paramount. Furthermore, the fact that the slot is filled with a clause contributes to a high type frequency (for example, 18 tokens of the sequence *vete a jugar* ‘go to play’ correspond to 14 distinct types: *vete a jugar al Minecraft* ‘go to play Minecraft’ / *a jugar a las muñecas* ‘to play with the dolls’ / *a jugar al pin pon* ‘to play ping-pong’. Additionally, it also leads to a high number of hapaxes in our sample. Both type and hapax frequencies are indicators of high productivity, as noted by Van Wetteere (2021, p. 397). The author argues that the fact that a type stands out from the rest in terms of frequency also contributes to productivity (Van Wetteere, 2021, p. 424), and this is a characteristic observed in the analyzed construction, as the type *vete a tomar por (el) culo* (lit. ‘go get fucked in your ass’) ‘go to fuck yourself’ accounts for 18% of the cases of [*vete a* CLAUSE_[infinitive]]. We will further address this issue later, but for now, it is important to highlight that the corpus data clearly show the high productivity of the construction under study.

3.3. Description of the sample

We will dedicate this section primarily to analyzing the semantic restrictions of the slot. Since the basic meaning of [*IRSE/ANDAR(SE)*_[imperative] *a* CLAUSE_[infinitive]] is ‘vehement rejection’, it is important to establish what types of activities are predominantly represented in the slot, if any trends can be observed. For this purpose, we have focused on the form *vete* ‘go’, clearly the most representative one in the corpus, accounting for over 60% of the instances (2,386

¹² The search of the lemma = *ir* ‘go’, word case = verb, mood= imperative, number= singular yields 4,044 occurrences, while in the plural form, it gives 600 occurrences. On the other hand, the search for the lemma *andar* ‘to walk’ yields 3,274 occurrences in singular and 18 in plural. However, it should be noted that in the case of *andar* ‘to walk’, the corpus categorizes many uses of *anda/ándale* ‘walk’ with an expressive particle value as forms of the verb *andar* ‘to walk’.

occurrences; see Table 1). The search in the esTenTen18 corpus was conducted with the following restrictions:

form (word) = *vete* + form (word) = *a* + category (tag) = V → 10,041 instances – *vete a saber* (5,175) → 4,866 instances, subjected to manual filtering → 2,386 instances

Through a careful reading of the examples, we have observed that the infinitive clauses designate the following types of activities:

1. Reprehensible activities. For example: *drogarse* ‘to use drugs’, *estafar* ‘to scam’, *pelear* ‘to fight’, *raptar* ‘to kidnap’, *robar* ‘to steal’, *timar* ‘to swindle’.
2. Degrading activities. For example: *flagelarse* ‘to self-flagellate’, *fustigarse* ‘to self-slog’, *vender el cuerpo* ‘to sell one’s body’. There are many instances where a woman is urged to engage in activities traditionally associated with her gender, such as *lavar* ‘to wash’, *fregar* ‘to clean’.
3. Scatological activities. For example: *cagar* ‘to poo’, *defecar* ‘to defecate’, *mear* ‘to urinate’, *orinar* ‘to urinate’, *olisquear el culo* ‘to sniff the ass’.
4. Sexual activities, usually aimed at offensive effects. For example: *cascár(se)la* ‘to masturbate oneself’, *chingar* ‘to fuck’, *chupár(se)la* ‘to suck it’, *follar* ‘to have sex’. Notably, the phrase *tomar por (el) culo* ‘to go fuck yourself’ is highly frequent.

All of these activities are demeaning, and they enhance the sense of vehement rejection that characterizes the construction, as seen in the examples below.

- (15) Anda, payasa, **vete a fregar platos** y deja esto para los hombres. (SkE 54010)
‘Go, clown, **go to wash dishes** and leave this room for the men.’
- (16) Esta tía es buenísima, qué buenas ideas tiene, la verdad, anda y **vete a cagar** ya, subnormal total... (SkE 5048055)
‘This girl is amazing, she has great ideas, really, now go and **go to poo**, total idiot...’
- (17) ¿Tú qué te has fumado? ¿Ahora eres historiador? Anda y **vete a tomar por culo**. (SkE 6311309)
What the hell have you smoked? Now you’re a historian. Come on and **go to fuck yourself**.’
5. Irrelevant activities. For example: *comer pipas al parque* ‘to eat sunflower seeds in the park’, *cuidar arbolitos* ‘to take care of little trees’, *echar pan a las palomas* ‘to feed pigeons’, *pescar gambas* ‘to catch shrimps’, *ver la tele* ‘to watch TV’, *vender patatas* ‘to sell potatoes’.
6. Childish activities: *comprar chucherías* ‘to buy candies’, *jugar a las maquinitas / al Pokémon / a las canicas* ‘to play video games / Pokémon / marbles’, *tomar el biberón* ‘to drink from a baby bottle’, *ver Heidi / los Lunnis / Bob Esponja* ‘to watch Heidi / The Lunnis / Spongebob’.
7. Extravagant activities, sometimes impossible according to our knowledge of the world: *chupar la cruz del Valle de los Caídos* ‘to lick the cross at the Valley of the Fallen’, *comprar / morder piedras* ‘to buy / to bite stones’, *leer el papel del water* ‘to read the toilet paper’, *matricularse en Marte* ‘to enroll in Mars’, *mover el viento con las orejas* ‘to move the wind with one’s ears’, *sacarle brillo a las babuchas* ‘to polish slippers’, *vender crecepelo a los calvos* ‘to sell hair growth tonic to bald people’.

All of these activities are futile and reveal a less violent way of discrediting the interlocutor, who is nevertheless treated disdainfully. Examples:

- (18) Si no tienes idea de básquet lo aceptas, majete, porque qué raro que todos los que están escribiendo no están de acuerdo contigo, ¿no?... Hala, **vete a comer pipas al parque** porque para esto no vales. (SkE 3002741)
'If you have no idea about basketball, accept it, buddy, because it's strange that everyone who is writing doesn't agree with you, right? Well, **go to eat sunflower seeds** in the park because you're not good for this.'
- (19) Das pena, chavo, ten tu like y **vete a jugar maquinitas** jajaja, Si más bien es para dar risa, wey. (SkE 7662355)
'You're pathetic, dude, take your like and **go to play arcade games**, hahaha. It's more like a joke, dude.'
- (20) Chaval, háztelo mirar o **vete a perseguir a David el gnomo**, anda... ¡qué paciencia, dios mío, qué paciencia! (SkE 6427952)
'Kid, get yourself checked or **go to chase David the gnome**, come on... what patience, my God, what patience!'
8. Useful activities, often aimed at the education or reflection of the interlocutor, in an indirect way of insulting: *leer un poco de historia* 'to read a bit of history', *madurar* 'to grow up', *meditar* 'to meditate', *reflexionar* 'to reflect', *ver la BBC* 'to watch the BBC'. Carrying out this kind of "recommendation" implicitly expresses the speaker's contempt towards the interlocutor, as seen in the example (21):
- (21) [Podrías pensar un poco sobre] la pertinencia de tus falacias continuas... Anda, **vete a meditar**, guapa. (SkE 19422266)
'[You could think a bit about] the relevance of your continuous fallacies. Well, **go to meditate**, beautiful.'
9. The construction is often used to dismissively conclude a discussion, urging the interlocutor to continue their communicative activity (expressing opinions, deceiving, annoying, provoking, complaining, asking, flattering...) out of the speaker's sight. Given the nature of the esTenTen18 corpus, in which chats and forums are a predominant genre, examples of this type are abundant (examples 22-23).
- (22) Tío, que ya te lo he dicho antes, que estás como una p.[uta] cabra, anda y **vete a insultar a los de tu edad**. (SkE 8499216)
'Dude, I've already told you before, you're completely crazy, **go to insult people your own age**.'
- (23) Lávatte la boca para hablar de él, es campeón del mundo de F1, igual que cualquier otro, respeta este deporte y **vete a llorar tus problemas a otro sitio**. (SkE 2421768)
'Clean your mouth before talking about him, he's a Formula 1 world champion, just like any other, respect this sport and **go to cry about your problems somewhere else**.'

The following table summarizes the different types of activities. The last row is reserved for "other activities", to gather records that do not correspond to any other types, like the example below:

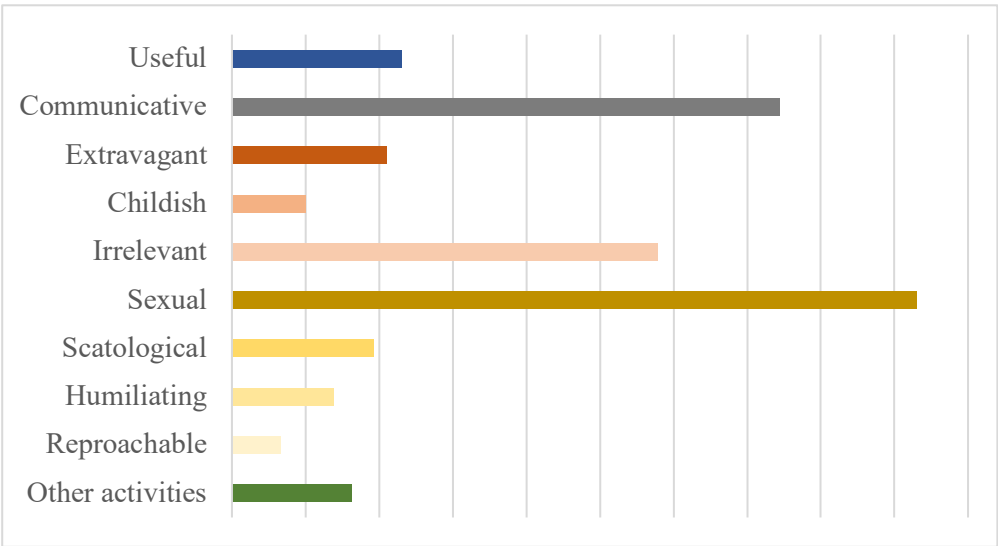
- (24) Hacía mucho tiempo que no intercambiaba argumentos con nadie que fuese más maduro que para decirme "**vete a comer césped**", o cualquier estupidez por el estilo. (SkE 1685616272)

‘It had been a long time since I had exchanged arguments with anyone who was mature enough not to tell me “**go to eat grass**” or any such nonsense.’

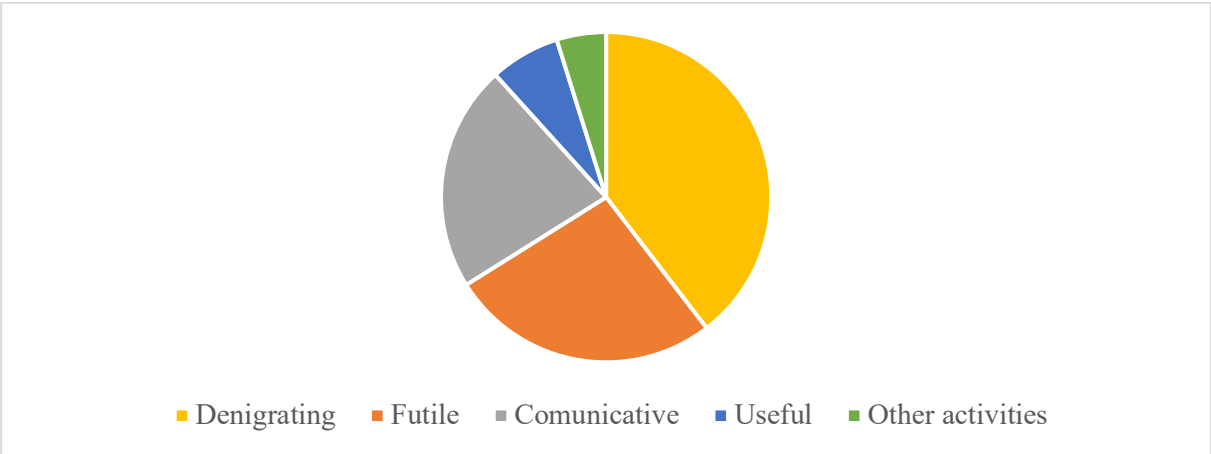
Reproachable	Denigrating
Humiliating	
Scatological	
Sexual	
Irrelevant	Futile
Childish	
Extravagant	
Communicative	Communicative
Useful	Useful
Other activities	Other activities

Table 2. Types of activities denoted by the verb

The following graphics reflect the approximate frequency of use for each of the semantic classes:



Graph 1. Frequency of use for each specific type.



Graph 2. Frequency of use for each general type.

As clearly shown in Graph 2, denigrating activities have the highest presence in the corpus, accounting for approximately 40% of the sample, with sexual activities¹³ being particularly prominent as observed in Graph 1. This is largely due to the extremely high frequency of the pattern *vete a tomar por (el) culo* ‘go fuck yourself’, which comprises 436 occurrences, representing 18% if the cases of [*vete a* CLAUSE_[infinitive]] (2,386 occurrences in total, cf. Table 1). Following this form, *vete a cagar* ‘eat shit’ has 140 occurrences, nearly 6% of the cases. Other forms, although less frequent, are easily recognizable by speakers as more or less familiar patterns, such as *vete a chingar a tu madre* ‘go fuck your mother’ (32 instances), *vete a freír espárragos* ‘go to hell’ (29), *vete a tomar por (el) saco* ‘go to hell’ (22), *vete a tomar viento(s) (fresco)* ‘go get some (fresh) air’ (22), etc. It is also worth noting example (14), which includes patterns used in “street language” according to the speaker: *vete a tomar el aire* ‘go to get some air’, *a tomar viento* ‘to get some air’, *a freír espárragos* ‘to fry asparagus’, *a hacer gárgaras* ‘to go gargle’, *a hacer puñetas* ‘to go jerk off’.

In fact, some of the instances are included in various lexicographic works, which confirms their degree of institutionalization. For example, Aznárez-Mauleón (2019) examines eleven combinations of [*vete a* + infinitive], all taken from dictionaries (as mentioned above). Additionally, some of the prepositional phrases introduced by *a* ‘to’ are categorized in dictionaries as adverbial phrases (for example, the DLE includes *a freír churros / espárragos / monas / monos*, *a tomar por (el) culo*, or *hacer puñetas*, among others), and some terms with the preposition *a* ‘to’ are categorized as verbal phrases, such as those constructed with the verb *dar* ‘give’, all with the meaning of ‘to bother’: *dar la brasa / la chapa / la murga / la tabarra* (lit. ‘give the ember / sheet / nuisance / nuisance’) ‘be a pain in the ass’ (cf. also Mansilla Pérez 2019 for a contrastive approach with German).

In relation to this, it is interesting to note that some of the types found in lexicographic works or phraseology manuals have relatively low frequencies of use in esTenTen18, such as *vete a hacer gárgaras* (14 occurrences), *vete por donde amargan los pepinos* (6). In our opinion, this reveals the vitality of a construction that is constantly being renewed, as will be shown in Section 4. Nevertheless, the most frequent instances exhibit a high degree of lexical fixedness, that is, idiomaticity, as illustrated by the following example, which shows a metalinguistic use of *anda a cagar*, a characteristic form of Rioplatense Spanish (the text appears in the Argentine domain):

- (25) Amadeo concluyó su huida del diálogo con un “**anda a cagar**”, propio del neorepublicanismo macrista. (SkE 57463504)
‘Amadeo concluded his escape from the dialogue with a “**go to poo**”, typical of Macrista neorepublicanism.’

As we know, in Usage-Based Theory, it is acknowledged that the high frequency of certain sequences leads to the conventionalization of categories, or, in other words, categories are formed through the repeated use of certain patterns. In this sense, “constructions can be viewed as processing units or chunks –sequences or words (or morphemes) that have been used often enough to be accessed together” (Bybee, 2013, p. 51). The most frequent instances are usually

¹³ This preference aligns with the general inclination in Romance languages to focus on the sexual domain when it comes to cursing, whereas other languages such as German prefer the scatological domain (cf. Mellado Blanco 2020c).

identified as the best examples of the category (in this case, of the constructional idiom), as prototypical members (for the concept of *prototype*, cf. Croft & Cruse, 2004, pp. 77–92). In this work, we have identified two fundamental characteristics of the construction [IRSE/ANDAR(SE)_[imperative] a CLAUSE_[infinitive]]: the pragmatic value of rejection and a very high degree of intensification. Both characteristics are clearly manifested in instances where the clauses denote derogatory activities, particularly in the two most frequent cases.

Regarding the degree of idiomaticity of the different instances, we consider that the continuum of idiomaticity observed in the set of constructions (Michaelis, 2017) can also be applied within the construction of rejection under study, taking into account the frequency of use (cf. also Ivorra Ordines, 2023). In the case at hand, we observe that two instances stand out above all others: the previously mentioned *vete a tomar por culo* ‘go fuck yourself’ with 436 occurrences, and *vete a cagar* ‘eat shit’, with 140 occurrences. These are the two types where the evanescence of the meaning of the constituent elements in favour of the constructional meaning of rejection is most perceived, and they also show a higher degree of fixedness compared to others. In this regard, cases where the singular form of the imperative is used with a plural interlocutor are noteworthy, which is clearly evident in their co-occurrence with an insult, for example “¡**Vete a tomar por el culo, ladrones!**” ‘**Go fuck yourself, thieves!**’ (SkE 5436711), “**Andar a tomar por culo, pijos**” ‘**Go fuck yourself, snobs!**’ (SkE 11673597). On the other end, there is a significant number of hapaxes legomena, instances that appear once in the corpus. Both circumstances influence the degree of entrenchment of the construction. And in both extremes, as we will see below, there is a great propensity for innovation: in the second case, due to the evidently unique nature of the instances; in the first case, because the frequency of use causes semantic wear-off and loss in its expressiveness, which the speaker recovers through innovation, resulting in various types of variation. For example, in *vete a cagar* ‘eat shit’, the infinitive clause is often expanded with locative elements: *a la vía* ‘on the road’ / *al parque* ‘in the park’ / *al campo* ‘in the countryside’ / *al monte* ‘in the mountain’ / *al monte Toro* ‘at Mount Toro’ / *al pie del Fuji* ‘at the foot of Turi’ / *al charco* ‘in the puddle’ / *al río* ‘in the river’ / *a la playa* ‘in the beach’ / *a otra parte* ‘somewhere else’ / *por ahí* ‘around there’ (cf. Hoffmann, 2022; Ivorra Ordines, 2022, 2023).

3.4. The extravagant potential of a construction of vehement rejection

In the previous section, we offered a detailed description of the slots fillers of the construction of vehement rejection under study, in which we specified the structural, semantic, and pragmatic properties and limitations that constrain the potential lexical items that can fill the slot CLAUSE_[infinitive] of the construction. This allowed to examine the degree of flexibility of the slot fillers; that is, such a detailed description allows for a robust empirical analysis of the properties associated with these patterns (González-García, in press; Ivorra Ordines, 2022, 2023; Stutz and Finkbeiner, 2022). In this section, however, we aim to explore extravagance in the context of a constructional idiom of vehement rejection, a phenomenon here understood as intentionally signaling an unconventional aspect of the situation being reported, a purposeful departure from established norms that attracts attention and causes surprise. At this point, the question that arises is whether the pattern as a whole can be regarded as extravagant or only certain instances of it. Following Kempf & Hartmann (2022), we aim at assessing the potential for extravagance of the constructional idiom of vehement rejection under study.

While the Maxim of Economy alludes to talking in such a way that you do not expend superfluous energy (Harspelmath, 1999, p. 1055), since this leads to the repetition of established associations and common speech patterns, extravagance has the opposite effect. It promotes the activation of less firmly established or new association patterns, resulting in the creation of innovative utterances that are less conventional or unconventional. Following this reasoning, the longer the slot filler, the greater the extravagance and intensification of the construct. This is a clear example of flouting the conversational maxim of quantity, which consequently leads to redundancy effects (examples 26–27), that is, there is a “replacement of short expressions by longer ones” (Petré, 2016, p. 116).

(26) **Vete a tomar mucho por donde Sirius le daba a Remus en las duchas de los vestuarios de quidditch.** Menos risas y más pasarte por aquí a tirar de plancha, que miedito me da ver el cerro de ropa de encima de la silla. (SkE 23676229)

‘Go get a lot [fucked] where Sirius used to give it to Remus in the Quidditch locker room showers. Less laughter and more coming to iron, I get scared seeing that huge pile of clothes on top of the chair.’

(27) Tú, sin embargo, eres un tonto, completamente inútil. No me sirves ni para abanicarme. Anda, **vete a ver si alguien del foro te quiere como felpudo, o para usar tu culo de paragüero.** (SkE 11442126)

‘However, you are a fool, utterly useless. You can’t even serve as a fan for me. Well, go see if someone in the forum wants you as a doormat or to use your backside as an umbrella stand.’

The phenomenon of redundancy is intrinsically related to the use of analogical extensions, consisting in the expansion of a lexically filled idiom that becomes partly schematic through a process of constructionalization (cf. Ivorra Ordines & Mellado Blanco (2021) on the comparative constructional idiom [*más tonto que X*]: ‘very dumb’, or Ivorra Ordines (2023) on the constructional idiom of rejection [*por PRON como si X*]: ‘I don’t care at all’). Analogy has indeed a central role in the mechanism of linguistic creativity, and intensifying constructions, like the one under study, are prone to innovation. Since a once extravagant expression can become the standard by enough frequency of usage, a fresh and new form needs to be used to reach a similar stylistic effect. In other words, when extravagant utterances or variants are repeatedly used in different situations, they become more conventional due to usualization and diffusion, as “it may be imitated and spread through the speech community” (Petré, 2016, p. 118). As a result, the utterance type gradually loses its extravagance and expressiveness, ultimately becoming a particularly expressive yet standard way of expressing ideas. Consequently, speakers can no longer rely on it to achieve extravagant effects and must seek new methods to capture attention, which is referred to as the process of renewal (Hopper & Traugott, 2003, p. 9; cf. Miller, 2014, p. 127; Schmid, 2020, p. 106). This type of extravagance arises from the novelty of a construction, and it is anticipated to diminish as the construction becomes conventionalized (De Wit et al., 2020, p. 12). Examples (28) and (29) represent clear instances of analogized extensions of idioms that had lost its extravagant effect due to overuse (*vete a tomar por culo* and *vete a hacer gárgaras*, respectively).

(28) Felipe, **vete a tomar por culo con un cigüeñal de barco oxidado** y de paso te vas a la mierda, mamón impresentable. Yo me puedo permitir este nivel de lenguaje, capullo, que por cierto es mucho menos dañino que el tuyo, peazo sieso. (SkE 20528805)

‘Felipe, **go to fuck yourself with a rusty ship’s crankshaft** and fuck you, you unpresentable asshole. I can afford that level of language, idiot, which by the way is much less harmful than yours, you little shit.’

- (29) Ya te lo dijo Miguel Sendonia. **vete a hacer gárgaras con el excremento de la supercomo mierda**. Haznos ese favorcito. Porque la verdad que tu aliento apesta hasta llega aquí. (SkE 55597987)

‘Miguel Sendonia already told you. **Go to gargle with the excrement of the super-shitty-eater**. Do us that favour. Because the truth is, your breath stinks, it even reaches us from here.’

In an attempt to convey as much information as possible by paying close attention to detail, the phenomenon of hyperbole can also be conceived as another indicator of the potential for extravagance. In this sense, we are dealing with hyperbolic images that “clash with reality based on incommensurate exaggeration” (Peña Cervel & Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, 2017, p. 42), in which there is an evident overstatement that places emphasis on the speaker’s amplified intention that the hearer must subsequently adjust to real-world proportions (cf. Hartmann & Ungerer, 2023 on the emotionally loaded slot fillers of the snowclone [*the mother of all X*]). The construal of the utterance indeed either runs counter to our world knowledge (examples 30–32) or can be understood as describing the final state of an activity beyond which it cannot progress any further (example 33). In this sense, the greater the incompatibility, the greater the degree of extravagance, and, consequently, the greater the intensification. According to Sawada and his Intensity Correlation Principle, “[t]he degree of abnormality correlates with the degree of intensity. This ensures that the more abnormal situation is referred to, the higher intensity is implied.” (Sawada, 2000, p. 377).

- (30) Muy orgulloso puede estar una tierra de tener tanta agricultura porque es uno de los motores de España. **Vete a comerte un mueble**, y a coger la sierra de calar. La ignorancia es el peor enemigo del hombre. (SkE 1070)

‘A land can be very proud to have such agriculture because it is one of the engines of Spain. **Go to eat a piece of furniture** and grab the jigsaw. Ignorance is man’s worst enemy.’

- (31) **Vete a mover el viento con las orejas**, intelectual de bodega. (SkE 596568)

‘**Go move the wind with your ears**, pseudo-intellectual of the tavern.’

- (32) Pues un tío que se ha hecho la cuenta hace nada, dice a otro más antiguo “niño rata”, una palabra que se ha puesto de moda en los jóvenes hace prácticamente nada, y me voy a creer que por lo menos mentalmente eres una persona adulta. Venga hombre, **vete a pescar al desierto**. (SkE 19367321)

‘So, a guy who just created his account not long ago calls an older one “child rat”, a word that has recently become popular among young people, and I’m supposed to believe that you are mentally an adult. Come on, man, **go fish in the desert**.’

- (33) Haznos un favor a todos, cómprate una isla, 10 euros de vodka y piérdete...O sino **vete a limpiar las esquinas de un castillo redondo**. A ver si así te mantienes ocupado un poco, prepotente. (SkE 54010)

‘Do us a favour, buy yourself an island, 10 euros of vodka, and disappear. Or else, **go clean the corners of a round castle**. Maybe that way, you’ll keep yourself busy, arrogant one.’

This kind of incongruence is of pragmatic nature, which Díez Arroyo (2002) studies as an advertising strategy that arises by contradicting the knowledge of the state of affairs that the recipient has acquired through experience. Indeed, “[t]he more extreme, artful expressions are mostly acts of deliberation” (Bergs, 2018, p. 289). To put it in Veale’s words, “[t]he most creative examples appear to have the least obvious interpretations and resemble riddle in the way they refuse to serve their meaning on a plate” (Veale, 2012, p. 66). In the context of Relevance Theory, the recipient of an incongruent utterance of vehement rejection must rely on a series of implicatures to resolve the underlying enigma. This process requires a certain interpretative effort on the part of the recipient, who will be rewarded with the satisfaction that comes from correctly interpreting the message. Another indicator of the potential for extravagance relies on speakers’ emotional involvement, a speaker-oriented strategy, which attempts to make the statement more emphatic, leading to an increase of expressivity. The reflexes of the interaction between the speaker/writer and audience can be identified in corpus data, in the shape of metalinguistic comments (Petré, 2016, 2017). Such metalinguistic “reflexes” can be of two types: orthotypographic markers and metalinguistic comments. The former appears to be aimed at stylistic and orthographic considerations to convey emotions. In this respect, Crystal (2006, p. 94) observed that the frequency of vowel repetition or the use of capital letters is influenced by the intensity of the emotion, which explains why that excessive or random use of punctuation can arise from the emphasis and attitude expressed (examples 34–35). According to Miller (2014, p. 124), who assumes that “emphatic language is one typical variety of expressivity”, the use of capital letters and the repetition of exclamation marks or graphemes are mechanisms of emphasis to signal expressivity. The latter, for its part, informs us about writer/speaker’s stance on the fact that the phrasing might be out of the ordinary. In the example (36), the writer/speaker uses a euphemistic expression given that in the context of use there may be minors, which may lead to humorous or artistic effects. This could notably enhance its salience by directing audience’s focus towards the unconventional (salience by surprisal).

- (34) [...] a buen entendedor pocas palabras bastan, y no tiene que venir un gilipollas como tú a opinar de lo que no se está opinando. Como se dice en mi tierra ¡¡¡**ANDA Y VETE A TOMAR POR CULO!!!** (SkE 1605999)

‘to a good listener, few words are enough, and a dumbass like you doesn’t need to come and give an opinion on something that is not being discussed. As we say in my region, come on and **go to fuck yourself!!!**’

- (35) A ti es la que tenemos que colgar de la bandera por corrupta y mafiosa. Antonia, **vete a tomar por culo**!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!. Ya está bien de chupar de los manilveños. (SkE 7814226)

‘It’s you we need to hang from the flagpole for being corrupt and mafioso. Antonio, **go to fuck yourself**. It’s enough of live off of the people of Manilva.’

- (36) **Vete a chupar pies de mono**. Es un comentario estúpido y sin sentido que usaba su padre para decir “Vete a la mierda” adaptada a menores de edad. (SkE 22003980)

‘**Go to suck monkey’s feet**. It’s a stupid and nonsensical comment that their father used to say “Go to hell”, adapted for minors.’

In this section, we have pursued to find indicators for the potential of extravagance in the constructional idiom of vehement rejection [*vete a* CLAUSE_[infinitive]], based on the five prototypical characteristics proposed by Ungerer & Hartmann (2020) (cf. § 2). While

redundancy and analogical extensions are closely linked to traits (i), (ii) and (v), hyperbolic images based on counter-factuality to characteristics (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv). Finally, orthotypographic markers and metalinguistic comments, for their part, are intrinsically related to traits (i), (ii) and (iii). These differences, consequently, highlight not only that the constructs under study have a high potential for extravagance, but also that such a potential is a matter of degree, not an all-or-nothing phenomenon.

4. Discussion

Our analysis findings align with the idea that idioms can be seen as combinations of form and function, characterized by flexible syntactic patterns. This is supported by the significant flexibility observed in the constructional idiom that we examined (cf. Mellado Blanco and Ivorra Ordines, 2023). According to this perspective, idioms are created through abstraction, drawing from corpus data that includes both prototypical and less prototypical instances of the idiomatic form. In essence, idioms represent generalized versions of idealized prototypical patterns (Bybee, 1998, p. 428). To put it differently, “idioms [...] and grammatical constructions are all similar in that they are products of conventionalization” (Himmelmann 2004: 38) Against this background, instead of speaking of formal fixedness according to the traditional approach of phraseology, the notion of cognitive fixedness (entrenchment) better accounts for the formal variability of lexical forms, which are usually related to each other in an associative way and created by virtue of a process of analogy (Mellado Blanco, 2020b, p. 30).

In the context of the constructional idiom of vehement rejection aimed at an intensifying pragmatic effect (and, we might add, at a semantic effect, too), the impact of necessity-driven innovation is highly pervasive, so there is a great tension between convention and innovation, which is in harmony with the perspective that language is an “endless, creative process, which enables us to deal with the infinite and boundless with a finite set of means” (Bergs, 2018, p. 277). To put it in De Smet’s words, “expressions’ usage can continuously expand to the fringes of what is grammatically conceivable. And when the conceivable becomes fully acceptable and conventional, the edges of conceivability, in turn, expand outward” (De Smet, 2016, p. 100). This implies that the system pressure can impact how likely certain structures are used, or even lead to new ones emerging. In this sense, an understanding of the interplay of convention and innovation involves recognizing the circumstances that allow speakers to exhibit innovative language use, a process by which speakers may deviate from established norms because the conventional solution to a language-related challenge does not come to mind in time, or conversely, an unconventional solution comes to mind more readily (cf. De Smet, 2016, p. 85; 2018, pp. 331–332; Miller, 2014, p. 127; Schneider, 2022, p. 229; Zeschel, 2012, p. 2).

This reasoning highlights the fact that language has an important social dimension, so that extravagance, salience and creativity do not “happen ‘within the head’ of isolated individuals but rather in the interaction between people, places, objects and institutions” (Lubart et al., 2021, p. 129). Those responsible for generating imaginative language, indeed, are primarily individuals who speak or write inventive spoken or written statements, whose expressions of creative language are always directed towards a recipient (and frequently involves collaborative

effort). According to Hoffmann (2022, p. 262), “the material and socio-cultural affordances that are recruited in a verbal creative act include the set of constructions that speakers of a speech community share as well as the context and cotext in which the utterance is made”. Against this background, we aimed at exploring linguistic innovation not only by examining how speakers expand existing language patterns, but also by considering the established linguistic conventions against which these extension processes are set (Herbst, 2018, p. 309; Zeschel, 2012, p. 122).

The case of idioms or highly frequently attested types is a very suitable case in the context of the convention-innovation tension. As pattern becomes widely accepted and firmly entrenched, there is an increasing demand for a more elaborate substitute, since the pattern has lost its expressive potential and is thus perceived as salient by context-free entrenchment. This is the case of the idiom *vete a cagar* (lit. ‘go to shit’), which can function as model for positing analogical extensions consisting in the expansion of the verbal clause by means of locative complements and coordinate clauses to counteract the expressive wear-off (cf. Barðdal, 2008). The degree of extravagance, in these cases, depends ultimately on the elaboration of the slot filler of the emerging semi-schematic construction [*vete a cagar* X] –a case of “E-creativity” according to Hoffmann (2022)–, in that the speaker uses more information than required, flouting the conversational maxim of quantity (compare examples 37 and 38). The degree of salience, for its part, depends on the deviation from anticipated outcomes based on the likelihood of events within the present situation, as would be the case of example (39), in which the interlocutor is ordered to go poo at the beach, i.e., an unexpected place to carry out such action. Moreover, the reelaboration of such a rejection statement (underlined) is aimed at playful/creative effects in order to say something memorable, or “to draw special attention to some aspect of the constructions we choose to use” (Goldberg, 2019, p. 142; cf. De Smet, 2016 on the *cascade model*).

- (37) Ahora me va a venir a mi este tipo a decirme si puedo o no dar mi opinión sobre los precios... Anda y **vete a cagar al monte, y llévate un trozo de esparto para limpiarte el culo.** (SkE 10898140)

‘Now this guy is going to come to me and tell me if I can or cannot give my opinion about the prices... Come on and **go to shit in the mountains and take a piece of esparto grass to wipe your ass.**’

- (38) Venga tronco, **vete a cagar a la vía.** Lo primero es reconocer que no tienes NI PUTA IDEA (yo tampoco) y entonces ya puedes empezar a aprender. (SkE 16241097)

‘Come on, buddy, **go shit on the tracks.** The first thing is to acknowledge that you have NO FUCKING CLUE (neither do I), and then you can start learning.’

- (39) **Vete a cagar a la playa o, mejor dicho, a comer, pues tú te retroalimentas con la mierda: te nutres de ella, la cagas y te vuelves a nutrir de ella y así en un proceso infinitamente asqueroso de reciclaje.** (SkE 14722120)

‘**Go shit at the beach, or rather, go eat, because you feed yourself with shit: you nourish yourself from it, you poop it out, and then you nourish yourself from it again, in an infinitely disgusting process of recycling.**’

It becomes clear, from the examples above, that the degree of innovation depends on the elaboration of the idiom as well as on how surprising the utterance can be in the context of use. Of particular interest is the pattern *vete a cagar a la vía* ‘go to shit on the tracks’ with 13 occurrences, which can be perceived as a creative instantiation with a higher token frequency,

compared to the other extensions based on the idiom *vete a cagar* ‘go shit’. This type would possibly constitute an entrenched pattern of association that is activated recurrently by similar usage events (cf. *principle of idiom* in Sinclair (1991, p. 110), or *sequential links* in Diessel (2019, p. 65)). Given its high token frequency, this leads to the formation of the necessary linguistic understanding within individuals’ minds for processing language in the first place (as a new node in the constructional network), while also playing a role in the ongoing renewal and restructuring of this understanding. From this perspective, consequently, creativity, salience and extravagance can be perceived of as driving forces of innovation, and thus elements of language change. This translates into the fact that “there is a perpetual innovation of novel extravagant forms” (Lensch, 2022, p. 82) (cf. Martí Sánchez, 2015, p. 117).

Another clear example of the innovation-convention tension is that of provided by the idioms *vete a freír espárragos* (lit. ‘go to fry asparagus’) / *monas* ‘Easter cakes’ / *churros* ‘churros’). As the previous example, these idioms are widely accepted and highly entrenched. In this context, the cognitive ability for analogy plays a crucial role in establishing variable patterns, since analogy fosters the process of usualization considering that individuals are inclined to address novel communicative challenges by introducing new words that are connected to existing ones (Herbst, 2018, p. 297; Schmid, 2020, p. 136). Or, to put it differently, new occurrences are based on existing exemplars, which indicates that memory is highly associative, insomuch as “new knowledge is integrated with prior knowledge [...] and each memory trace is therefore inextricably linked to other, related memory traces” (Goldberg, 2019, p. 52). Against this background, the notion of *coverage* gains importance to account for the degree of acceptability of a productive use of an existing construction (a coinage), that is, a potential construction will be judged acceptable to the extent the attested instances fill the category. What corpus data reveal, in this respect, is that there are two mechanisms of motivation when positing analogical extensions. The first one is of semantic nature, in that the semantic cluster of food is responsible for the types *cebollas* ‘onions’ (example 40), *tusas* ‘maize husks’, *bacalaito* ‘little cod’, *morcilla*¹⁴ ‘blood sausage’, *pepino* ‘cucumber’, *rábano* ‘radish’, and *chuchangas* ‘land snails’. The second one is of phonological nature, since there is phonological similarity between the element selected for modification and the novel element (cf. Rasulic 2010). In this particular case there is a partial overlapping of the phonological form between *monas*¹⁵ ‘Easter cake’ and *monos* ‘monkeys’ (example 41). In this regard, these new coinages are perceived as acceptable “to the extent that the semantic (pragmatic and/or phonological) space is well covered by the smallest convex category that encompasses both the coinage and attested instances that share the same formal pattern: the category is represented by the larger oval” (Goldberg 2016: 374). These examples are perceived as salience by contextual entrenchment, in that the lexical items are those expected, based on the coverage of the construction. Since the distance –in terms of roads taken in the constructional networks– between those lexical items of the semantic cluster making up idioms and those comprising the modified patterns is very short, these constructs cannot be seen as highly creative. In this case, “the utterance is constructed from existing material in the construction following well-established patterns found in the construction”

¹⁴ The case of *morcillas* ‘blood sausages’ and *pepino* ‘cucumber’ can also be accounted in terms of horizontal relations (a case of contamination), in that there are the expressions *que te den morcilla* ‘go to hell’ and *importarle a alguien un pepino* ‘not to give a damn’ which constitute idioms in Spanish, respectively (cf. Ivorra Ordines 2022).

¹⁵ The polysemous nature of the word *monas* ‘Easter cake’ / ‘female monkeys’ can also be seen as a trigger of *monos* ‘male monkeys’.

(Uhrig, 2018, p. 297). Besides, they cannot be perceived as highly extravagant because they are not highly original¹⁶, in the sense of surpassing the retrieval of the coverage in unpredictable and innovative ways.

(40) Naruto, pringado, **vete a freír cebollas**, perdedor de mi...[erda], déjame en paz. (SkE 26488233)

‘Naruto, loser, **go to fry some onions**, you loser of shit leave me alone.’

(41) –Ten un poco de sentido de ubicación social y **vete a freír monos a África**, ¿vale? (SkE 5848389617)

“‘Have a little sense of social awareness and go to fry monkeys in Africa, okay?’” I spoke.

An example of going beyond the coverage of the construction in unpredictable and innovative ways is that of *vete a freír cristales* (lit. ‘go to fry glass’) (example 42), since it extends or enlarges creativity, or simply goes against the expectations. The speaker, in this case, “creates new communicative possibilities which are not already in the language” (Leech, 1969, p. 24). In this example, the expression is salient by surprisal due to its unexpectedness¹⁷, contradicting the information from the immediate context and cotext and, consequently, generating verbal humor. This striking expression is certainly within the boundaries of the established speech pattern [*vete a freír X*], but it diverges from what is usually anticipated in the given immediate cotext or overall context. On top of that, it can be perceived as an extravagant pattern on the basis of the semantic incongruence between the verb of the verbal clause and its direct object, since glass is not usually fried.

(42) Que escorias como él sobraban en este mundo, que si realmente tenía que hacer eso por necesidad, que podía irse a darse con un canto en los dientes. –**Vete a freír cristales**. Le gruñí. –¿Cristales? –¿Por qué dije cristales? –Ah, sí, porque tenía entre manos un arma hecha de cristal. (SkE 23592155)

‘There was scum like him to spare in this world, and if he really had to do that out of necessity, he could go be content with it. ‘**Go to fry glass**,’ I growled at him. ‘Glass? Why did I say glass?’ ‘Ah, yes, because I had a glass-made weapon in my hands.’

In accordance with De Smet (2020), innovation arises not from differences in how individuals perceive conventions, but from their imaginative use of those conventions. The ability to effectively go beyond the boundaries of what is typical is a fundamental aspect of language, and here lies the tension between convention and innovation. Without a doubt, language users are constantly introducing new elements, and “all language use is innovative, to some degree” (Croft, 2000, p. 104). In this sense, if we accept that innovations are momentary ventures into the outskirts of the linguistics norms, moving beyond convention but remaining within the realm of mutual comprehension, then “changes can be thought of as peripheral linguistic behaviour becoming core behaviour” (De Smet, 2020, p. 62).

¹⁶ We can speak of ‘mini-c’, i.e., “creativity that is personally meaningful and new to the creator, even if not to others” (Kaufman and Glăveanu, 2021, p. 10).

¹⁷ This example is a clear proof that the 5A model of creativity proposed by Glăveanu (2013) can be applied to the study of language creativity, highlighting the importance of actor (speaker/writer), audience (addressee) and artifact (construct) (cf. Hoffmann, 2022). Indeed, personality traits such as openness and extroversion correlate with creativity (Kandler et al. 2016). For reasons of space, we will not devote more space to this interesting point.

5. Conclusions

From a corpus-based methodology, Construction Grammar can be conceived of as an ideal theoretical framework for examining the interplay between innovation and convention in language at different levels of complexity and schematicity in the context of a constructional idiom of vehement rejection in Spanish. In this regard, our investigation revealed that extensive corpora facilitate a comprehensive analysis of language in use, emphasizing the significance of context (consider, for example, the projectors of vehement rejection discussed in § 3.1.), and confirming the existence of a continuum of idiomaticity. It is worth noting that a blurred boundary exists between lexicalized and creative language forms (cf. Ivorra Ordines & Mellado Blanco, 2021; Mellado Blanco & Ivorra Ordines, 2023). Specifically, the wear-off of extravagance in a conventionalized pattern can inspire language users to seek fresh lexical items to fill slots or devise novel variations. Consequently, the original construction might evolve into a predominant prototype, potentially supplemented by different new types that might, in turn, become entrenched in the minds of speakers and conventionalized within a linguistic community, activating a feedback loop of convention and innovation (Schmid 2020). As the number of variations increases, there is a greater likelihood that language users can develop a more generalized meso-construction with adaptable slots that can be employed creatively.

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