

Native Italians' comprehension of press information in Spanish

A phraseodidactic approximation from a cognitive linguistics approach

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Als qui m'heu donat la vida i cregut en cada part de mi.

Als qui m'heu acompanyat i ensenyat al llarg del camí.

A tu, que et porto a dins, i ets el nostre futur.

Y muy especialmente, a ti, que lo eres todo.

Abstract

This thesis analyses the interlanguage effect in the learning process of Spanish phraseology by native Italians. It is intended to investigate the interactions between native languages and the learning process of a foreign language in the light of previous investigation on the area of phraseology and its didactics.

Phraseology plays a vital role in the acquisition of a foreign language, accomplishing the goal set in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which depicts what knowledge and skills are to be developed in language acquisition, taking into account the cultural context in which this process is set. Phraseology is a challenging aspect of language learning, precisely because it brings along multiple cultural aspects that are rarely translated literally and that usually do not follow static grammar rules.

Phraseology, therefore, is presented as a basic feature of communication to be integrated in foreign language teaching by means of phraseodidactics. This PhD research is intended to confront the students with functional aspects of the language by means of real material.

Resum

Aquesta tesi analitza l'efecte de l'interllenguatge en el procés d'aprenentatge de la fraseologia espanyola per part d'italians nadius. Es pretén investigar les interaccions entre les llengües natives i el procés d'aprenentatge de la llengua estrangera a la llum de la investigació prèvia en l'àrea de la fraseologia i la seva didàctica.

La fraseologia juga un rol vital en l'adquisició d'una llengua estrangera, acomplint l'objectiu marcat pel Marc Europeu Comú de Referència per a les Llengües, que descriu quins coneixements i habilitats han de ser desenvolupats en l'adquisició del llenguatge, tenint en compte el context cultural en el qual s'emmarca aquest procés. La fraseologia és un aspecte desafiant en l'aprenentatge d'una llengua, precisament perquè porta múltiples aspectes culturals que rarament poden ser traduïts literalment i que habitualment no segueixen normes gramaticals estàtiques.

La fraseologia, així, es presenta com una característica bàsica de la comunicació, que ha de ser integrada en l'ensenyament d'una llengua estrangera mitjançant la fraseodidàctica. Aquesta tesi pretén afrontar els estudiants amb aspectes funcionals de la llengua mitjançant material real.

Resumen

Esta tesis analiza el efecto del interlengua en el proceso de aprendizaje de la fraseología española por parte de italianos nativos. Se pretende investigar las interacciones entre las lenguas nativas y el proceso de aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera a la luz de la investigación previa en el área de la fraseología y su didáctica.

La fraseología juega un rol vital en la adquisición de una lengua extranjera, cumpliendo el objetivo marcado por el Marco Europeo Común de Referencia para las Lenguas, que describe qué conocimientos y habilidades deben ser desarrolladas en la adquisición del lenguaje, teniendo en cuenta el contexto cultural en el cual se encuadra este proceso. La fraseología es un aspecto desafiante en el aprendizaje de una lengua, precisamente porque lleva consigo múltiples aspectos culturales que raramente pueden ser traducidos literalmente y que habitualmente no siguen normas gramaticales estáticas.

La fraseología, así, se presenta como una característica básica de la comunicación, que debe ser integrada en la enseñanza de una lengua extranjera mediante la fraseodidáctica. Esta investigación de doctorado pretende confrontar a los estudiantes con aspectos funcionales de la lengua mediante material real.

Sommario

Questa tesi analizza l'effetto dell'interlingua sul processo di apprendimento della fraseologia spagnola da parte degli italiani nativi. L'obiettivo è quello di indagare le interazioni tra le lingue native e il processo di apprendimento di una lingua straniera alla luce delle ricerche precedenti nel campo della fraseologia e della sua didattica.

La fraseologia svolge un ruolo fondamentale nell'acquisizione di una lingua straniera, soddisfacendo l'obiettivo fissato dal Quadro comune europeo di riferimento per la conoscenza delle lingue, che descrive quali conoscenze e competenze dovrebbero essere sviluppate nell'acquisizione della lingua, tenendo conto del contesto culturale in cui questo processo è inquadrato. La fraseologia è un aspetto stimolante nell'apprendimento di una lingua, proprio perché porta con sé molteplici aspetti culturali che raramente possono essere tradotti letteralmente e che di solito non seguono le regole grammaticali statiche.

La fraseologia, quindi, viene presentata come una caratteristica fondamentale della comunicazione, che deve essere integrata nell'insegnamento di una lingua straniera attraverso la fraseodidattica. Questa ricerca di dottorato ha lo scopo di confrontare gli aspetti funzionali della lingua con materiali reali.

Preface

The research has been developed in the *Università degli Studi di Modena and Reggio Emilia* (or *Unimore*). This university, founded in 1175, has traditional strengths in economics, medicine and law and is the second oldest athenaeum in Italy.

The college is distributed in two separate headquarters, one located in Reggio Emilia and the other in Modena. Both belong to the Emilia-Romagna region of northern Italy. With around 200.000 inhabitants, the city centre accommodates the *Università degli Studi di Modena*, belonging to the larger one stated before.

The investigation has been applied in the Department of Studies on Language and Culture, concretely in the degree of *Lingue e Culture Europee*. This degree is coursed by a majority of native Italians from the area of Modena and surroundings. Among the objectives of the degree are that of acquiring solid cultural and linguistic basis in at least two foreign languages; secure oral and written technical skills supported by appropriate metalinguistic abilities; specific knowledge related to the structure of natural language; an adequate basic training in linguistic analysis methods and basic knowledge in historical, literary, economic, legal or social fields.

The course provides solid language training in at least two European languages (French, English, Spanish or German), with special reference to translation and linguistic mediation skills, and

the possibility of choosing a third language (Arabic, Chinese, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish or German).

The Spanish language department is where this project has been applied, under the supervision of Professor Daniela Capra, during the course of the subject “Linguistics, Translation and Spanish Mediation”, held during the second semester of the third course of the degree.

The subjects of the investigation are the students of the degree mentioned. All of them show good knowledge of both Spanish language and its historical context, as social aspects are highly taken into account in the degree. With the contribution of this investigation, it is intended that students attain connection with cultural contents conveyed through real Spanish material, by concentrating on its phraseological aspects. The plurilingual profile that Italian inhabitants naturally have provides a fruitful field of study to search for the strategies used in their awareness process of this specific linguistic aspect in Spanish.

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*Bacon was right when he said that the conquest of knowledge passed
through the knowledge of languages (Eco, 1980: 177)*

1. Introduction: the context

Cada lengua constituye un cierto modelo del universo, un sistema semiótico de comprensión del mundo, y si tenemos 4000 modos distintos de describir el mundo, esto nos hace más ricos. Deberíamos preocuparnos de la conservación de las lenguas del mismo modo que nos preocupamos de la ecología¹ (Ivanov, 1992: 4).

1.1. The language

1.1.1. Languages and their varieties

Language is variable. A detailed investigation of the speech of each individual would reveal incompatible differences in particularities. In terms of practicality, labels have been created, in order to group under the same name some common particularities –such as dialects, varieties or languages.

Individual linguistic variations are negotiated or absorbed by certain major agreements that stand out strongly when the language of the group as a whole is compared to that of the other group. This is the way dialects, for instance, are born.

¹ *Each language constitutes a certain model of the universe, a semiotic system of understanding the world, and if we have 4000 different ways of describing the world, this makes us richer. We should worry about the conservation of languages in the same way that we care about ecology (Ivanov, 1992: 4, author's translation).*

There are parts of the earth in which almost every town has its own dialect. It is very doubtful that a language can be spoken in a large area without multiplying dialectically. As soon as the old dialects are eliminated by commitments or expelled by the extension and influence of the dialect that is culturally predominant, there appears a new harvest of dialects that undermines the levelling work of the past (Sapir, 1921).

In this context, Italy becomes a relevant frame of study, as it is a country with very particular linguistic conditions. The variety of languages and dialects spread along the country and living together contemporarily, as well as the significant formal differences existing between them, make it an interesting environment of research.

L'adozione dell'italiano coinvolge ormai oltre il 95% della popolazione, che, tuttavia, al 60% conserva l'uso di uno dei molti dialetti caratteristici del Paese o di una delle 14 lingue di minoranza² (De Mauro, 2005: 133).

Likewise, it would be difficult to find a language or dialect totally isolated, due to the phenomenon of linguistic interinfluence. Languages have frames; but breeds are mixed. Languages can be extended and invade the territory of other races and other cultural spheres (Sapir, 1921). In Italy, this interinfluence is clearly

² *The adoption of Italian now involves more than 95% of the population, but 60% retain the use of one of the many dialects of the country or of one of the 14 minority languages (De Mauro, 2005: 133, author's translation).*

manifested. Establishing a division line between the different dialects is quite unrealistic, even if they are distributed according to their regions.

*Anzitutto viene, per ragioni storiche e, ormai, demografiche, la lingua che dal Cinquecento si dice italiana e che oggi, dopo secoli di vita minoritaria, è nota e in uso per il 95% della popolazione. Poi vengono i numerosi idiomi dialettali italaromanzi, articolati in almeno una quindicina di grandi raggruppamenti dialettali: piemontese, lombardo, veneto-giuliano, ligure, emiliano-romagnolo, marchigiano, toscano, umbro-aretino-chianaiolo, abruzzese-molisano, romanesco, napoletano, pugliese, salentino, lucano, calabrese, siciliano*³ (De Mauro, 2005: 137).

Furthermore, the rules to determine what falls in the category of dialect or language are often uncertain.

Il est difficile de dire en quoi consiste la différence entre une langue et un dialecte. Souvent un dialecte porte le nom de

³ *In Italy, first of all, and for historical and, now, demographic reasons, there is language known as Italian from the sixteenth century and that today, after centuries of minority life, is known and used by 95% of the population. Then the numerous dialectal languages comes in Italy, which are articulated in at least fifteen large dialectal groups: piemontese, lombardo, veneto-giuliano, ligure, emiliano-romagnolo, marchigiano, toscano, umbro-aretino-chianaiolo, abruzzese-molisano, romanesco, napoletano, pugliese, salentino, lucano, calabrese, siciliano* (De Mauro, 2005: 137, author's translation).

*langue parce qu'il a produit une littérature; c'est le cas du portugais et du hollandais*⁴ (Saussure, 1916: 277).

1.1.2. Italian situation

a) Historical facts

Roman conquest

Italian dialects are an inheritance from Latin. When Roman troops conquered the Italian peninsula and then marched to the ends of the known world, classical Latin became the official language of government, commerce, and learning. Its imprint remains on everything from coins to monuments, temples, and tombs (Wright, 2004: 60-61). Consequently, Roman conquest meant the adoption of the Latin language by the different peoples who lived in the territory of the peninsula.

Specifically, this extended population was formed by Etruscans, Ligurians, Picenians, Sardinians, Sicilians, Indo-Europeans, Latins (Venetians), Celts or Gauls, in addition to the Greeks living in the colonies of southern Italy. Every one of these peoples transferred to the Latin language habits of pronunciation and words, giving rise to different ways of speaking Latin (Romani, 2012: 80).

⁴ *It is difficult to say what the difference between a language and a dialect is. Often a dialect is called a language because it has produced a literature; this is the case of Portuguese and Dutch* (Saussure, 1916, author's translation).

This way, Latin, both formal and informal, evolved from the dialect of the tribes of the Lazio, the region around Rome. In other parts of the peninsula locals spoke various languages – Etruscan in Etruria (the area in central Italy that includes Tuscany), more Greek-influenced tongues to the south, and distinctively different dialects to the north, east and west (Wright, 2004: 60-61).

Latin evolution

With the gradual erosion of Roman domination, classical Latin began to lose its status. In further territories, the Latin *volgare* evolved into local vernaculars. Eventually the dialect of the most powerful cities, also in other countries, such as Paris in France, Madrid in Spain or Lisbon in Portugal, elbowed aside other regional variations to become the national language. In Italy's, the gap between the ways people wrote and spoke was extremely wide. Classical Latin calcified into the lifeless language of church rituals and government documents (Wright, 2004: 60-61). Vernaculars, on the other hand, became gradually more used in oral communication.

Eventually, to these substrate differences those of the superstratum were added. Neither words nor religion could protect Rome from the waves of barbarians who, beginning in the fifth century, swept over the peninsula (Wright, 2004: 60-61). Consequently, superstratum was a strong phenomenon during the definite fall of the Roman Empire. During this period, the contact with other peoples (Longobards, Ostrogoths, Normans and such) gave birth to significant changes in the ways of speaking. Besides, the lack of a

strong political-cultural centre increased this tendency. This way, the evolution of the varieties spoken in the Italian peninsula followed different paths, sometimes divergent, which resulted in the great dialectal differentiation still existing in the national territory (Romani, 2012: 80).

Between the fall of the Roman Empire and the end of the High Middle Ages, Europe did not exist yet. New languages were slowly developing, and towards the end of the fifth century people no longer spoke Latin, but Gallo-Roman, Italian-Roman, or Roman-Roman (Eco, 1993: 26). The step of these languages to written expansion was near to come.

Towards Italian

The first official document to include the *lingua volgare*, did not appear until 960 – the Italian's designated birth year. It derived from a court judgment about a property dispute between the monks of the Benedictine monastery at Monte Cassino in central Italy and a neighbour who had filed a claim for a plot of adjacent land. After the official Latin summary of the case, the judges repeated the verdict in a language that was no longer Latin but not yet Italian.

The *Placito di Capua* (the court's name), marked a turning point in Italian language history. For the first time, the people from the peninsula clearly realized they were speaking a language different from Latin. This vernacular came to be known as *lingua materna*, the mother tongue, while Latin, which students had to go to school

to learn, was called *la grammatica*. Although Latin retained its monopoly on scholarship, law, medicine, and religious studies, higher education itself inspired Italian words, such as *università*, *facoltà*, and *lettura*. The number of recognized words in the mother tongue tripled between the years 950 to 1300, from a mere 5000 to an estimated 10000 to 15000 (Wright, 2004: 60-61)⁵.

A major step to the supremacy of this vernacular was done during the reign of Federico II (1194-1250), head of the Roman Empire and the kingdom of Sicily. During this period, the centre of power was moved to the north, in Florence – the Latin name of which means “flourish” –, which by that time had become the richest city in Europe. The dialect of the city, called *italiano*, *toscano*, or *fiorentino*, was to become the dominant language.

Literary expansion

Yet even as it replaced Latin in public and private documents, Italian still lacked the prestige that only a major power could give: the printing press. The movement into printed Italian occurred when the printing press appeared in the country, around 1460. The machine was a present by a glorious knight, Lorenzo de’ Medici. A notable scholar and one of the most remarkable public figures of his time, he contributed to the great expansion of the Medici library (Wright, 2004: 60-61).

⁵ The linguistic status of this mother tongue or vernacular was also enhanced thanks to the inspiration of the Provençal troubadours’ romantic songs. The troubadours of Provence inspired the earliest composition in Italian that can be called literary – the *ritmo laurenziano* (Wright, 2004).

The first text in which the medieval Christian world organically approached a perfect language project was Dante Alighieri's *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, probably written between 1303 and 1305 (Eco, 1993: 40)⁶.

Italian language, as it is now understood, was created, rather than born. With the same geniality that would transform the art in the Renaissance, writers of the fourteenth-century Florence – Dante first and foremost – crafted the effervescent Tuscan vernacular into a rich and powerful language (Wright, 2004: 60-61). Dante's work contributed to the fissure that had already opened up in Italy between the literary language, based on the archaic Florentine dialect of Tuscany, and the great variety of dialects used in the Northern and South-Central Italy.

Eventually, Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio's writings gave prestige to the Tuscan vernacular. On the one hand, the *Accademia della Crusca* accepted *le tre corone* as a model. On the other hand, the Italian printing industry adopted Tuscan as the norm – even though the most important printers were actually located in Venice. Furthermore, at the time of Italy's unification, the national writer

⁶ In this work of art, the manifestation of the linguistic situation was made clear. The existing plurality of vulgar languages was described as a natural process, while Latin was declared a model of universal but artificial grammar. Dante showed how different languages were born from the division between the different areas of the world. At a smaller scale, this division was also reproduced in what now is known as Romance languages. The latter was, in turn, fragmented into a plurality of dialects. These dialects would also vary according to the areas of a city – a notorious example that Dante poses takes place in the city of Bologna (Eco, 1993: 40).

Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873), supported the choice of Tuscan as the basis of the written language (Wright, 2004: 60-61).

Unification

Italy's unification took place in 1860, when General Giuseppe Garibaldi led a band of one thousand red-shirted soldiers into the region he called *Mezzogiorno* – which corresponds to Sicily. It meant the culmination of the process. From those times, a renowned declaration is the sentence pronounced by one of the country founding fathers: “We have created Italy. Now we must create Italians” (Massimo d’Azeglio, 1861).

It seemed an impossible challenge. People from the different territories often could not understand each other's dialects. Even the word *Italia* meant an obstacle for the crowds, who cheered “*La Talia*” as a mispronunciation of the unfamiliar word *l'Italia*. No one could imagine how Italy's people could ever unite to salute the same flag in a national language all could understand. “It will be spaghetti, I swear to you,” Garibaldi predicted, “that will unite Italy” (Wright, 2004: 60-61).

Nevertheless, the new nation was overwhelmed by poverty. More than ten million Italians emigrated between 1870 and 1920. On the other hand, the physiognomy of the country was changing. After World War I, some provinces were joined to the state, such as Trentino-Alto Adige and Friuli-Venezian Giulia, which until that moment had remained under Austrian rule.

However, it was the *Società Dante Alighieri* the determining factor in the unification process. *La Dante* was founded in 1890 by the poet Giosuè Carducci (1835-1907), the first Italian to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. At the time of *La Dante*'s formation, Italy itself was barely clinging together. *La Dante*'s first objective was to use language to maintain their ties to their homeland. Currently, the *Società Dante Alighieri* still teaches Italian to more than 200000 students in more than seventy-five countries around the globe (Wright, 2004: 60-61).

Finally, modern Italy was born and Italian was officially the country's language. But dialects had still an important role in people's life. It was Fascism⁷ which tried to exterminate *la malerba dialettale* (the dialect weeds), seen by the movement as a threat to the purity of the national language. During the dictatorship, the restrictions on dialect use silenced generations of Italians of all social and educational levels. Beyond that, in 1923 Mussolini's government imposed a tax on foreign words used in shop signs. At the beginning of the Second World War, a law banned them altogether (Wright, 2004: 60-61). Those times added more factors that contributed to the hegemony of Italian language in the country.

⁷ The Fascists took their name from the bundles of sticks, called *fasces*, which symbolized power in ancient Rome. This symbolism clarifies the kind of government established in the country during those years.

· The path to present times

Currently, the linguistic situation in Italy is characterized by a great complexity, due to the number of varieties spoken in the national territory. Because of its diffusion after the unification of Italy in 1861, the Italian language has interwoven complex relationships with the native dialects and the linguistic contact of the speakers (Romani, 2012: 79).

These linguistic varieties are arranged along a continuum that goes from the standard language to the dialect. Dialects are still very alive and vital, and all languages in Italy have influenced one another. The intense exchange between the different linguistic systems originates significant modifications. Dialects are strongly “italianised”, and the standard language is also influenced by the dialectal features. Consequently, intermediate varieties arise, which are not always possible to separate discreetly.

One does not go from standard Italian to dialect with a leap, but through dialectised Italian and an italianised dialect, without it being possible to establish where one ends and where the other begins (Romani, 2012: 80).

The situation of the Italian dialects has been the most studied issue in the field of Italian linguistics and the main one in the history of the language. From Dante’s times until today, classifications are still being developed and the geographic areas of the peculiar and

particular linguistic phenomena of the infinite local languages are being continuously analysed (Tomaselli, 2008: 10).

Bilingualism and diglossia

As a result of this sociolinguistic situation, Italian speakers are commonly characterized by a personal linguistic condition of bilingualism, as Italians use the dialect with the same frequency as Italian.

*Le statistiche informano che oggi circa 50% della popolazione alternano Italian e dialetto, mentre si aggira intorno al 6-7% la percentuale degli italiani che usano solo il dialetto, circa il 40% esclusivamente l'italiano*⁸ (Marcato, 2002: 85).

From these facts Italy is rather considered to be featured by the linguistic phenomena of diglossia. According to the Ferguson's (1959) original definition of diglossia, this term defines a language situation in which two very different varieties of a language are functionally complementary. In Ferguson's diglossia, one of these varieties is considered to belong to a high status. Consequently, it is mainly used for written and formal spoken purposes, whilst the low variety is reduced to ordinary conversation.

⁸ *Statistics report that today about 50% of the population alternate Italian and dialect, while around 6-7% is the percentage of Italians who use only dialect, about 40% exclusively Italian* (Marcato, 2002: 85, author's translation).

*Il speaker dialettofono and italofono non usa entrambi i codici indifferentemente, ma li seleziona a seconda dell'ambito comunicativo [...] tale situazione è comunemente chiamata diglossia*⁹ (Marcato, 2002: 87-88).

Ferguson's definition of diglossia has been often reconsidered, especially since the emergence of an important number of research in the field of bilingualism. In effect, nowadays these linguistic terms have become quite controversial. Actually, diglossia is considered a type of bilingualism and the line between one and another is sometimes diffuse. Specifically, bilingualism is more related to the individual ability to speak two languages with equal ease, while diglossia is linked to a social or contextual attribute.

*Llamaremos bilingüismo individual a la capacidad de utilizar dos lenguas con la misma o parecida facilidad y llamaremos bilingüismo colectivo a la abundancia de bilingües en una sociedad o en un grupo humano determinado. Por otra parte, llamaremos diglosia al hecho de que en el interior de una sociedad dos lenguas cumplan funciones distintas y sean por tanto utilizadas en situaciones distintas*¹⁰ (Siguán, 1976: 29-30).

⁹ *The dialect and language speaker does not use both codes indifferently, but selects them according to the communicative context [...]. This situation is commonly called diglossia* (Marcato, 2002: 87-88, author's translation).

¹⁰ *We name individual bilingualism the ability to use two languages with the same or similar ease, and name collective bilingualism to the abundance of bilinguals in a society or in a specific human group. On the other hand, we will call diglossia the fact that within a society two languages fulfil different functions and*

Following Ferguson's theory, diglossia would be limited to the situation in which certain varieties of a language are copresent. However, linguistic landscapes and their corresponding social contexts are inherently complex. In order to describe a society as diglossial, diglossia should be recognized not only when considering the use of language varieties. It should also include those situations where two different languages are employed under different conditions within a community and often by the same speakers. The same way, to establish the lines between languages, varieties and dialects is problematical. Consequently, diglossia should be extrapolated to all the grades in the broad continuum of linguistic categories.

In order to account for the situation in Italy, either Italy must be classified under a different category or Ferguson's definition of diglossia must be revised (Romanello, 2010: 13-14).

The reformulation of Ferguson's concept would allow linguistic situations as complex as that in Italy to fall in the category of diglossia. Indeed, in Italy the linguistic situation is so dense that it is hard to achieve an appropriate descriptive frame. The employment of dialectal varieties and standard language is varied and not so

are therefore used in different situations (Siguán, 1976: 29-30, author's translation).

clearly systematized. Even though, the individual ability which characterizes an important part of its inhabitants, developing into a functional bilingualism, would validate diglossia as the descriptive outline for the linguistic situation of the country.

A significant modification of Ferguson's vision of diglossia is the description proposed by Fishman's (1967), which represents an expansive curve for the term. With Fishman redefinition of diglossia, he surpasses its original restrictive terms. Contrarily to Ferguson's, Fishman describes a diglossic speech community as that which is characterized by the use of more than two language varieties. Besides, in Fishman's view of diglossia, he amplifies it to a greater number of sociolinguistic situations.

Fishman completes the theory by providing a classification that systematizes these different linguistic circumstances, which, according to him, would embrace all social possibilities. He combines the terms of bilingualism and diglossia to describe the linguistic contexts which the multiple combinations of language use originated.

Partiendo de esta distinción, Fishman ha intentado diferenciar y describir cuatro modalidades de coexistencia lingüística: bilingüismo con diglosia, bilingüismo sin

*diglosia, diglosia sin bilingüismo y finalmente lengua única sin bilingüismo ni diglosia*¹¹ (Siguán, 1976: 29-30).

Considering Fishman's categorization, Italy is characterized by a situation of bilingualism with diglossia. Diglossia develops when the members of the same society use two varieties of the same language to fulfil different functions. If we are talking about two different languages, we can say that we are facing a situation of diglossia and bilingualism at the same time.

It is by focusing on the connection between the social status and prestige of a language and its speakers rather than on the language's function allows Italy to be defined with reference to diglossia (Berruto, 1989: 17-18).

In Italy, the same level of prestige is not shared between its varied languages, varieties and dialects. Language use varies depending on the social status of its speakers. This situation is also considered in Fishman's standards.

Un caso sensiblemente diferente ocurre cuando en una sociedad coinciden dos grupos lingüísticos pero teniendo las dos lenguas un status social distinto. También en estos casos podemos hablar de bilingüismo y de diglosia pero con una

¹¹ *Based on this distinction, Fishman has tried to differentiate and describe four modalities of linguistic coexistence: bilingualism with diglossia, bilingualism without diglossia, diglossia without bilingualism and finally a unique language without bilingualism or diglossia* (Siguán, 1976: 29-30, author's translation).

*particularidad: que la mayoría de los individuos bilingües se encuentran entre los que poseen originariamente la lengua en situación de inferioridad; más importante todavía es que la diglosia sólo se da en la perspectiva de la lengua en situación de inferioridad. Los que hablan la lengua B sólo la utilizan cuando se refieren a ciertos temas mientras que para otros temas han de utilizar la lengua A. En cambio los que hablan en primer lugar la lengua A la usan en todos los casos*¹² (Siguán, 1976: 29-30)

These controversial particularities have not been ignored by notorious linguists, and numerous attempts to provide alternative definitions for this situation have been done. To overcome the difficulties, there have been some efforts to adopt new terminology.

This has led, for example, into the arising of new concepts such as that of “dilalia”. This term was coined by Gaetano Berruto in order to move further from Ferguson’s concept of diglossia. Berruto has intended to embrace under a feasible classification those societies in which two or more languages coexist.

¹² *A sensibly different case occurs when in a society two linguistic groups coincide but the two languages have a different social status. Also in these cases we can speak of bilingualism and diglossia but with a particularity: that the majority of bilingual individuals are among those who originally possess the language in a situation of inferiority; even more important is that diglossia only occurs in the perspective of the language in a situation of inferiority. Those who speak B language only use it when they refer to certain topics while for other subjects they have to use A language. On the other hand, those who speak language A at the first place use it in all cases* (Siguán, 1976: 29-30, author’s translation).

This way, communities such as Italy has been labelled under the classification of “dilalia”. Berruto states that both diglossia and dilalia share the characteristics of considering the coexistence of dominant and non-dominant codes in a community. Likewise, both concepts share the contemplation of a large distance between the dialects and the standard language. Finally, both models theorize about the condition according to which these codes are used for different functions.

However, unlike Ferguson’s diglossia, in dilalia both the high and the low variety are used in regular conversation, the domains in which each one is used may overlap, the low variety is “socially stratified” but not standardized, and subvarieties exist “between high and low varieties” (Berruto, 1989: 14-15).

The nuances provided by the concept of dilalia would be near to describe Italian’s situation. Nonetheless, Fishman’s categorization of Italy as a bilingual and diglossic land, would give solid ground to this research. His adaptation of diglossia and bilingualism characteristics allows describing the country in terms of diglossia with presence of bilingualism for speakers.

Certainly, Fishman’s definition overcomes the limiting labelling norms, such as reducing the concept of bilingualism to the encounter between two languages, and the concept of diglossia to the action between a language and a dialect or between two dialects.

Consequently, the subjects considered in this research will be regarded as factual bilinguals on a diglossic land, regardless of the political and geographical limits between a dialect, a language or a variety.

By using Fishman's model of diglossia versus bilingualism and revising it to focus on prestige, it is possible to account for the linguistic situation in Italy with respect to all social classes and areas of varying urbanization and wealth. As a result, Italy may be considered a nation of diglossia as well as a nation of bilingualism because of the close connection between socio-economic status of speakers and their language (Berruto, 1989: 17-18).

· Current languages in Italy

Linguistic landscapes must be necessarily explored under the lens of history and other multiple social configurator factors. Italy's history of political and geographic fragmentation has led to the development of varieties with different levels of prestige.

Que en el interior de un mismo territorio se utilicen como medio de comunicación dos lenguas distintas es, por tanto, un hecho singular, sorprendente incluso, cuya explicación

*hay que buscar en la historia del territorio, en su pasado sociopolítico*¹³ (Siguán, 1976: 29-30).

Siguán designates three main causes for the historical origin of bilingualist societies: bilingualism as a consequence of processes of expansion and political unification, as an effect from migratory movements, and as a result of international contacts (Siguán, 1976: 39).

*Existe un fenómeno que caracteriza a casi la totalidad de los dialectos italianos: el bilingüismo. En Italia, la mayor parte de los hablantes poseen la capacidad de pasar de la lengua (estándar) al dialecto (habla local) y viceversa con total normalidad, según el interlocutor y la región, o según el contexto y el argumento tratado. Hoy el papel jugado por los dialectos no es más el del código lingüístico antagonista a la lengua, sino más bien una “alternativa” (socialmente aceptada) al servicio de los hablantes. En Italia, además, el dialecto se ha convertido en un mediador importante en el proceso de “adecuación” hacia una sociedad más global*¹⁴ (Caprara, 2010: 1).

¹³ *The fact that two different languages are used as a means of communication within the same territory is, therefore, a singular fact, even surprising, whose explanation must be sought in the history of the territory, in its socio-political past* (Siguán, 1976: 29-30, author’s translation).

¹⁴ *There is a phenomenon that characterizes almost all Italian dialects: bilingualism. In Italy, most speakers have the ability to pass from the language (standard) to the dialect (local speech) and vice versa with total normality, according to the interlocutor and the region, or according to the context and the argument treated. Today the role played by dialects is no longer that of the*

At this point, we have come to the conclusion that Italian people are in most cases bilingual or diglottal. Beyond that, the concept of polyglotism is not far from the linguistic landscape we are describing, as all languages are a system of systems or, in other words, a suprasystem. In the case of Italy, however, we are dealing with the probable coexistence in a sole individual of a local dialect, a more or less regional dialect, a regional Italian and the Italian diasystem, and maybe the possibilities have not been exhausted. This is the reason why it can be strongly affirmed that Italian situation is too complex to establish clear linguistic boundaries.

Weinreich, already in 1953, developed an exhaustive description of situations where languages were in contact. His description supported the vision of these linguistic contexts posed in a continuum. This continuum would respond to the impossibility to establish clear lines between dialects, variants and languages¹⁵.

linguistic code antagonistic to the language, but rather an “alternative” (socially accepted) at the service of the speakers. In Italy, moreover, the dialect has become an important mediator in the process of “adaptation” towards a more global society (Caprara, 2010: 1, author’s translation).

¹⁵ The appearance of Uriel Weinreich's *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems* (1953) marked a milestone in the study of multilingualism and language contact. Yet until now, few linguists have been aware that its main themes were first laid out in Weinreich's Columbia University doctoral dissertation of 1951, *Research Problems in Bilingualism with Special Reference to Switzerland*. Based on the author's fieldwork, it contains a detailed report on language contact in Switzerland in the first half of the 20th century, especially along the French-German linguistic border and between German and Romansh in the canton of Grisons (Graubünden) (Kim, R. I., Labov, W., 2011: XIX).

In fact, Weinreich was the one who, in 1945, made famous the quote *A language is a dialect with an army and navy*, apparently pronounced by a spectator in his conference (Weinreich, 1945). His citation would make reference to the principal differentiation factor between a language and a dialect. This difference was related to a political distinction, which is actually not related to the linguistic field.

Weinreich did succeed in laying the foundations not only for contemporary sociolinguistics, but also for the study of languages in contact. Weinreich's research in the 1950s made a major contribution to the study of language contact, one which deserves to be better known and appreciated by a new generation of researchers (Kim, 2010: 101).

This is the frame on which this research is based. Its perspective, thus, will be that of considering Italian speakers as bilingual or plurilingual individuals, depending on the number of languages used in each individual case. This terminology will be applied to describe a complex linguistic context where bilingualism is seen as the phenomenon that may occur between different languages, between different dialects, between a language and its dialects and other possible cases. This way, the use of these terms intends to simplify the vast range of possibilities presented.

Linguistic diatopic variation

Any kind of classification that establishes linguistic boundaries is not loyal to the real dynamic situation which characterizes Italian regions. Its linguistic varieties, which are arranged along a continuum from standard languages to dialects, gives ground to a great number of languages varieties, neither considered language nor dialect.

Isoglosses do not match political boundaries. Isoglosses often do not even correspond with each other, that is, individual features may not diffuse at the same time or in the same way (Ervin-Tripp, 1971: 68).

Nonetheless, an attempt to establish some arrangement to this complex linguistic situation has determined a subclassification of Italian languages. This way, the linguistic multiplicity is distributed into four diatopic varieties simultaneously available to speakers. This subclassification distinguishes between local dialects, regional dialects, standard Italian and regional Italian.

- Local dialect: it is the language spoken in a quite narrow territory.

Nell'uso del sistema linguistico italiano possono distinguersi alcune varietà a carattere regionale. Quattro, per prestigio e per numero di individui che si uniformano ad esse, devono considerarsi le maggiori: la varietà settentrionale, la varietà

*toscana, la varietà romana e la varietà meridionale. Ci sono, accanto a queste, alcune varietà minori, come la sarda e l'umbro-marchigiana. All'interno di ciascuna varietà, possono individuarsi sottovarietà dotate di caratteri aggiuntivi. Così, nell'ambito della varietà settentrionale, può individuarsi una sottovarietà emiliano-romagnola caratterizzata da un fenomeno come la spirantizzazione della semivocale /w/, ad esempio in uomo. I fenomeni che individuano più nettamente ciascuna varietà sono soprattutto d'ordine fonologico*¹⁶ (De Mauro, 1970: 159).

- Regional dialect: it is a variety spread in a wider territory with respect to the local dialect.

The Venetian would be an example of it. It was the dialectal variety of the city of Venice, though in the fifteenth century it extended into the Veneto. Because of the contact with the other dialects of the region, the dialect was progressively adapted to the most prestigious model. Thus, the features perceived as too local were eliminated.

¹⁶ *In the use of the Italian language system, some regional varieties may be distinguished. Four, by prestige and by the number of individuals that align themselves with them, must be considered the major ones: the northern varieties, the Tuscan variety, the Roman variety and the southern variety. There are, besides these, some minor varieties, such as the Sardinian and the Umbrian-Marche. Within each variety, there may be subtle features with additional characteristics. Thus, within the northern variety, one can find an Emilian-Romagna subvariety characterized by a phenomenon such as the semivocalization of /w/, for example in uomo. The phenomena that identify each variety more clearly are phonological ones (De Mauro, 1970: 159, author's translation).*

Regional dialects are also called dialectal “koiné”. A koiné is a common language diffused in a relatively large area and considered of greater prestige with respect to local varieties (Marcato, 2002).

Other regional dialects are those which have developed in Lombardy, based on the Milanese; in Piedmont, from the Torinese, and the Neapolitan, that has spread enough between the dialectal varieties bordering them (Marcato, 2002).

- Standard Italian: on the opposite side of the dialects we find the national and official language of Italy.

As it is known, the Italian language derives, in its fundamental structures, from the Florentine dialect developed around 1300, just as it was elaborated in the literary production of Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio. There are good reasons to say that Italian has its origins in the local variety of Florence. In fact, the main features of the dialect of this city, absent in the other Tuscan dialects, are present in the standard language (Romani, 2012: 84).

- Regional Italian: the birth of regional Italian is a fairly recent phenomenon that has taken place after the union of Italy.

The differences of the regional Italian with respect to the standard traditional Italian are mainly due to the influence of the dialects, although it is not always possible to establish a direct relationship

between the regional Italian variety and the local dialect (Romani, 2012: 85).

*El italiano regional nace del encuentro de la lengua nacional con el dialecto. Tiene fuerte influencia en el habla, sobre todo en los jóvenes. No tiene nada que ver con el nivel cultural o social, siendo extendido, aunque de manera distinta, entre todos los estratos de la población*¹⁷ (Tomaselli, 2008: 9).

*Gli italiani regionali si possono considerare la vera realtà parlata dell'italiano [...] si può anzi dire che l'italiano parlato è sempre regionale (o locale) [...]. Piuttosto, in quanto perda gli elementi dialettali (ma non certo nella pronuncia) ascende all'italiano dell'uso medio. In quanto invece sia maneggiato con minore competenza della lingua scivola verso l'italiano popolare*¹⁸ (Mengaldo, 1994: 96-97).

¹⁷ *The regional Italian language was born from the encounter of the national language with the dialect. It has a strong influence on speech, especially in young people. It has nothing to do with the cultural or social level, being extended, although in a different way, among all the strata of the national population* (Tomaselli, 2008: 9, author's translation).

¹⁸ *Regional Italians can be considered the true reality spoken of Italian [...] It can be said that spoken Italian is always regional (or local) [...] Rather, as the dialect elements are lost (but not in the pronunciation), they ascend to the category of Standard Italian. Instead, as language is handled with less competence, it slips towards regional or popular Italian* (Mengaldo, 1994: 96-97, author's translation).

Dialects

The dialects born from the fragmentation of the Latin union, currently spoken within the confines of the Italian State, are divided into two large groups. These groups are separated by a set of isoglosses representing the most important Italian interdialectal border, known as the *La Spezia-Rimini* line. *La Spezia-Rimini* goes from the Tyrrhenian Sea to the Adriatic Sea, along the Appennino Tosco-Emiliano (Moliterno, 2000: 250).

To the north of the *La Spezia-Rimini* line the northern dialects are spoken, which are subdivided into:

- Gallo-Italic dialects: spoken in the regions of Piedmont, Liguria, Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna.
- Venetian dialects: spoken in Veneto, Trentino and Venezia Giulia.

To the south of the *La Spezia-Rimini* line the south-central dialects are spoken, subdivided into:

- Tuscan dialects: spoken in Tuscany.
- Central dialects: spoken in central parts, such as Umbria, northern Latium and Abruzzo.
- High-southern dialects: spoken in southern regions, such as southern Latium, Campania, Basilicata, Northern Puglia and Northern Calabria.

- Extreme southern dialects: spoken in Salento, central-southern Calabria and Sicily (Romani, 2012: 80)¹⁹.



Fig. 1. La Spezia-Rimini line²⁰

A linguistic complexity

It is not just in Italy that the linguistic situation is a controversial issue. Around the globe, plenty of factors make linguistic categorizations a utopic mission. Millions of varieties of languages can be found on earth, and languages and dialectal attributes have been widely studied issues. The attributes which cause them to fall into one or another category are often difficult to isolate.

¹⁹ Maiden's *The Dialects of Italy* (1997) presents an interesting summary of the dialectal situation in the country.

²⁰ Istituto Giovanni [<http://www.treccani.it/istituto/chi-siamo/>]

The following scheme could reflect a quite simple way of determining the various dialectal attributes based on social and historical factors.

| STANDARDI-ZATION | AUTONOMY | HISTORICITY | VITALITY | VARIETY TYPE | SYMBOL |
|------------------|----------|-------------|----------|--------------|--------|
| + | + | + | + | Standard | S |
| - | + | + | + | Vernacular | V |
| - | - | + | + | Dialect | D |
| - | - | - | + | Creole | K |
| - | - | - | - | Pidgin | P |
| + | + | + | - | Classical | C |
| + | + | - | - | Artificial | A |

Table 1. Dialectal attributes (Fishman, 1979: 231).

Nonetheless, even with the resource of this categorization, Italian situation is complex to describe and the fusion of its languages does not often match this classification.

They are distinguished only by descriptive needs; in reality they do not constitute discrete entities, but are arranged along a continuum formed by an indefinite number of intermediate varieties, in which it is impossible to establish where one ends and where another begins (Romani, 2012: 87).

Today, according to Italy's National Statistics Office, fifty-five percent of Italians still use dialects some or most of the time when they are with family and friends. A quarter of Italians use dialects even when speaking to strangers. And almost all Italians, including those whose parents forbade them to speak dialect when growing up, know at least a few words.

This way, a rich intricacy of linguistic repertoire is spread across the country. By way of example, a *ragazzo* may be the proper Italian word for child, but it remains a *bimbo* in Florence, a *citano* in Siena, a *puteo* in Venice, a *figgeu* in Savona, a *burdel* or *burdlin* in Romagna, a *frut* in Friuli, and a *quatraro* in some southern dialects (Hales, 2009).

*Y, efectivamente, por cuanto se ha dicho hasta aquí, aunque rápidamente, debería resultar evidente que hablar de L1 con respecto a los italianos es bastante complicado por la ambigüedad de los límites entre los distintos códigos*²¹
(Tomaselli, 2008: 11).

This investigation regards how this singular situation affects the added languages learning. This is the intention of this research, which aims at investigating the competences developed by

²¹ *And, indeed, because what it has been said so far, although quickly, it should be evident that talking about L1 with respect to Italians is quite complicated because of the ambiguity of the limits between the different codes* (Tomaselli, 2008: 11, author's translation).

languages learners with a very particular departure point, due to their unique geolinguistic conditions.

· Language in Modena

The Modenese

The subjects considered in this research are students of the degree *Lingue e Culture Europee*. They are above all from Modena or near cities; they mainly speak Italian, showing little presence of the region’s dialect, the *Modenese*.

Modenese is a dialect which is a variety of the Emilia-Romagnian language, from neo-Latin origin, belonging to the group known as Gallic-Italic. The dialect was formed from the blend of the Vulgar Latin brought by the Romans, and the language spoken by the previous inhabitants of the region, the Gauls.

| Dialecto modenese Mudnès | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Parlato in |  Italia |
| Regioni | Provincia di Modena |
| Locutori | |
| Totale | ~330 mila |
| Tassonomia | |
| Fitogenesi | Indoeuropee Italiche Romanze Italo-occidentali Occidentali Galloiberiche Galloromanze Galloitaliche Emiliano-romagnolo Emiliano <i>Dialecto modenese</i> |

Fig. 2. Origin of the *Modenese* dialect²²

²² Wikipedia: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialecto_modenese

During the period of the Italian's language expansion, the Modenese suffered an impoverishment and some of its words were italianised. As a consequence, nowadays the dialect usage is mainly reduced to familiar and colloquial situations.

The Modenese dialect shows notorious differences with the national language. Apart from phonological and grammatical particularities, some words and expressions are completely different, showing unique lexical structures²³.

Some publications have been successful in the compilation of pareomological and lexical elements in Modenese dialect. This was the case of the work by Neri in 1981; and by Pratzoli and Bellei, in 2009 and 2012 respectively. A particular space must be given to the work by Maraneso and Papini, *Vocabolario modenese-italiano*, back from 1893 and which has been reedited. It conforms an interesting compilation of words, phrases, modisms and proverbs from Modenese dialect.

Idiolect and dialect in young speakers

Even though its use is minor, if compared to other Italian regions, the presence of the Modenese dialect in Modena cannot be disregarded. Even though the use of the dialect is mainly found in older generations, young people form a particular section in society,

²³ An example of these particularities can be found in the list of expressions exclusively from the *Modenese* dialect and non-existing in Italian. See some examples here (personal blog): <http://www.fraintesa.it/2016/01/lista-parole-modenese/>

in which the language acquires a different dimension. Indeed, the dialect itself is reused and renewed, with the born of new vocabulary and expressions. Another sign that language is in constant evolution²⁴.

La componente principale del linguaggio giovanile è stata individuata nell'italiano colloquiale e informale, che ne costituisce la base. Su queste si innestano uno strato dialettale che si nutre di elementi tratti non solo dal dialetto parlato in famiglia ma anche da altri (Cortelazzo, 1994: 293), debido al fenomeno de la contaminación²⁵ (Tomaselli, 2008: 11-12).

It is because of this constant evolution that the language used by young Italians constitutes a fruitful area in which to develop the current research. Young people in some cities such as Modena use what is considered to be an idiolect, which has replaced the use of dialects in some areas.

Estos rasgos típicos del habla de los jóvenes italianos se añaden a aquellos comunes de los demás países: jerga,

²⁴ In this piece of news, we can find an example of how new expressions are incorporated into everyday language:

Digital newspaper *Modena Today*:

<http://www.modenatoday.it/cronaca/vivere-modenese-vocabolario-giovani-modenesi-bona-cisti-scabottare.html>

²⁵ *The main component of juvenile language has been identified in the colloquial and informal Italian, which forms the basis. These include a dialectal layer that feeds on elements drawn not only from the dialect spoken in the family but also from others (Cortelazzo, 1994: 293, author's translation), due to the contamination phenomenon (Tomaselli, 2008: 11-12, author's translation).*

*lengua de la publicidad o de los medios de comunicación masivos, extranjerismos, términos de los lenguajes sectoriales con valores metafóricos. La diferencia entre registro formal e informal en italiano con respecto al español es mucho más marcada y este idiolecto de los hablantes italianos está constituido por muchos elementos lingüísticos que escapan de los ámbitos gramaticales, normativos, académicos*²⁶ (Tomaselli, 2008: 11-12).

This phenomenon would be explained by the concept of idiolect. Idiolect is a term coined by the linguist Bernard Bloch to define a distinctive speech of an individual, a linguistic pattern regarded as unique among speakers. Almost all speakers make use of several idiolects, depending on the circumstances of communication (Salzmann, 2003). The evolution of this so-called idiolect is difficult to be collected and categorized.

Conclusions

Nevertheless, this phenomenon renders the aim of this investigation more interesting, as the subjects of study present particular characteristics. Certainly, these students, who are in the process of

²⁶ *These typical features of the speech of young Italians are added to those common from other countries: the jargon, the language of advertising or the mass media, foreign words, terms of sectoral languages with metaphorical values. The difference between formal and informal register in Italian with respect to Spanish is much more marked and this idiolect of Italian speakers is constituted by many linguistic elements that escape from the grammatical, normative and academic fields* (Tomaselli, 2008: 11-12, author's translation).

acquisition of a foreign language, display a particular linguistic profile, with a background which fosters a richer lexicon structure than that of a monolingual individual. The nature of the students of this research, who are familiarized with a second language – or dialect – that differs from the dominant one, might provide unusual cognitive and cultural resources when confronted with an additional language.

If to their particular knowledge, we add the nature of speech that these speakers are characterized by, as can be defined by “idiolect”, the terrain of study renders the subject especially attractive.

Discovering the metaphorical and figurative competences of these learners, who present such a particular linguistic profile, will help develop teaching techniques which evolve at the same pace as language does.

Every now and then, research like this one should be implemented in order to acquire newer perspectives to the necessary revision of learning methodologies, which must adapt to social realities.

2. Research question

If I had to reduce all of educational psychology to just one principle, I would say this: The most important single factor in influencing learning is what the learner already knows (Ausubel, 1968).

The main phenomenon to be investigated in the thesis is the impact of the linguistic profile to the comprehension of the phraseology in Spanish as a foreign language. Italy is chosen as the context since it offers a particular linguistic situation to its inhabitants, who naturally have a second native language or at least certain knowledge of it.

L'Italia d'oggi, guardata di lontano, con uno sguardo che l'abbraccia nell'insieme e a confronto con gli altri paesi del mondo, è uno dei tanti paesi segnati da un alto grado di plurilinguismo²⁷ (De Mauro, 2005: 134).

This ensures the presence of rich linguistic backgrounds, providing an ideal situation to analyse at which stage of the foreign language-learning students are (interlanguage level) and what linguistic

²⁷ *Today's Italy, looked from away, with a glimpse of it as a whole and in comparison with other countries in the world, is one of many countries marked by a high degree of plurilingualism (De Mauro, 2005: 134, author's translation).*

strategies they use to comprehend Spanish. Students will be explored to define their plurilingual profile so that the strategies used when understanding phraseology can be examined.

This will allow discerning the differences between diverse kinds of linguistic profiles. This vision will provide more understanding in the discipline of foreign language teaching. The acknowledgement gained by this research will be a helpful inspiration to the implementation of appropriate methodologies in language teaching.

Learners' strategies will be framed in the didactics of a specific feature of language. The centre of analysis will be phraseology, which deals particularly with cultural contents, accomplishing one of the objectives set by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is intended to overcome the barriers to communication among professionals working in the field of modern languages arising from the different educational systems in Europe. It provides the means for educational administrators, course designers, teachers, teacher trainers, examining bodies, etc., to reflect on their current practice, with a view for situating and coordinating their efforts and ensuring

that they meet the real needs of the learners for whom they are responsible²⁸.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages describes what skills are to be acquired in language learning, taking into account the cultural context in which language is set. In this cultural context, phraseology becomes essential for learners to develop into efficient language users that know and understand the social faces of a language.

Phraseology is a challenging aspect of language learning, precisely because it brings along multiple cultural aspects that in most cases cannot be translated literally to other languages. So a functional and effective way to approach contrastive phraseology is needed to make it naturally integrated in the foreign language acquisition.

It is quite an illusion to think, as even literate people sometimes do, that meaning are the same in all languages, that languages differ only in the forms used for those meanings (Lado, 1957: 77).

This PhD is inspired on the theoretical framework based on some principles of cognitive grammar, developed by Langacker, whose

²⁸ For further information:
Council of Europe: <https://www.coe.int/>

assumptions represented some of the emerging points for cognitive linguistics. This approach is suitable for tackling contrastive phraseology with a more realistic and contextual perspective.

The interest of this research is particularly relevant because of the pair of languages it is focalized on. In fact, Italian phraseology is a quite unexplored field of study. In Italy, phraseology has historically been more centred in diachronical linguistics. Consequently, phraseology has been left in the margins of research, regarded as an area only meritorious to be considered from a dialectal and oral perspective. This lack of regulation has as a consequence a low consideration of phraseology as a praiseworthy subject by itself.

Studies such as this PhD research, which is applied in Italy and considers Spanish as a contrast language to be compared to Italian, will help to the construction of a solid base for phraseology studies. This will foster good visions on the issue and motivate the implementation of further research in this field.

On the contrary, the growth of phraseology has been significant in Spain, where the study of what are considered complex lexical structures of idiomatic nature (idioms, routine formulas, etc.) and paremiology (dedicated to the study of proverbs) has increased during the last decades. Scholars' work and research teams have laid the theoretical-practical foundations for the critical analysis of

both paremiological and idiomatic expressions. This dedication has unified these expressions and raised them to the rank of a discipline²⁹. Contrarily, the phraseological and paremiological research in Italy has travelled different paths (Durante, 2014: 8).

Este marcado afán crítico por parte de los investigadores españoles, o bien hispanistas, en la labor de tipificación y descripción de los mecanismos de funcionamiento de la fraseología, no se corresponde, ni por asomo, con las muy escasas contribuciones que los investigadores italianos han aportado al estudio de su propia fraseología. Por contra, un muy nutrido elenco de repertorios de refranes, testimonios de una dedicación a medio camino entre lo tradicional folclórico y la tradición culta románica, rebajada a popular, ha ido acrecentando el conocimiento de la «filosofía vulgar» en territorio italiano. A eso mismo se debe el que la anunciada creación de corpus textuales, basados en datos comparables a nivel interlingüístico, esté aún en mantillas y no solo en lo que a fraseología español-italiana se refiere, sino que se trata de un

²⁹ To be especially considered: PAREFRAS from Complutense University of Madrid, PHRASEONET and FRASESPAL from the University of Santiago de Compostela, FRASYTRAM from the University of Alicante and FRASEMIA from the University of Murcia.

*fenómeno mucho más generalizado que atañe a un número mayor de lenguas*³⁰ (Durante, 2014: 7).

This PhD provides elements of knowledge that will ensure the consideration of phraseology in the foreign language didactics. The solid presence of phraseology in language syllabuses should be encouraged so that, eventually, ulterior improvements that involve phraseology in foreign language teaching will ascertain an elevation of this discipline to a higher level.

The fact of contrasting Spanish and Italian phraseology in a context of classroom learning is presented as a starting point for future teaching strategies.

It is also indispensable to understand what kind of difficulties foreign learners face. This knowledge will lead to a major comprehension of phraseodidactics procedures and will bring better teaching methodologies, based on solid empirical research. This

³⁰ *This marked critical eagerness on the part of Spanish researchers, or Hispanists, in the work of typifying and describing the mechanisms of phraseology mechanisms, does not correspond, not even remotely, with the very few contributions that Italian researchers have provided with to the study of their own phraseology. On the other hand, a very large list of repertoires of sayings, testimonies of a dedication halfway between the traditional folkloric and the cultured Romanesque tradition, downgraded to popular, has been increasing the knowledge of the “vulgar philosophy” in Italian territory. That is why the announced creation of textual corpus, based on comparable data at an interlinguistic level, is still in its infancy and not only in terms of Spanish-Italian phraseology, but it is a much more widespread phenomenon that concerns a greater number of languages* (Durante, 2014: 7, author’s translation).

research should be focused on the acquisition process of these elements (Weinert, 1995, cited by Wray, 2000; Ellis, 1997; Lennon, 1998); the strategies involved in their learning (Nattinger, DeCarrico, 1992: 65) or the influence by L1 on L2 (Swan, 1997).

Recognizing the difficulties students are encountered with will offer a support from which to build an effective methodology in phraseodidactics.

There is a need of research about the processes of acquisition of phraseology by foreign learners. It is necessary to know when and how phraseological units intervene in the linguistic competence (Howarth, 1998: 29).

Detecting how learners deal with interference elements such as interlanguage homonymies, for instance, will provide a base from which a clearer methodology may be implemented.

We will also be focused on considering *the ways in which the mother tongue can support, fail to support or actively hinder someone who is learning or using the vocabulary of a second language* (Swan, 1997: 156).

In summary, the phenomenon to be researched in this project is the interaction of native languages and foreign language learning in the process of phraseology comprehension. A research developed in the

light of previous investigation in the area of phraseology comprehension in foreign language didactics.

Heredia and Cieslicka's (2015) studies conform a substantial base from which this PhD is inspired. In their work, the issue of interaction between languages is confronted. Specifically, they address the way bilinguals acquire, store, and process figurative language, such as idiomatic expressions, metaphors and irony, and how these tropes might interact in real time across the bilingual's languages.

In the same line of research, according to other results, it is concluded that L1 has a powerful influence in learners' metaphorical competence.

The results suggest that the L1 influences L2 learners' comprehension even at higher proficiency levels. Specifically, the analysis reveals that L1 conceptual and linguistic knowledge and L1 frequency influence L2 figurative language comprehension, and their influence varies depending on the amount of context provided (Türker, 2016: 41).

Agreeing with these mentioned earlier studies, this PhD intends to add more knowledge to this issue.

Although the results of this study provide some insight into L2 processing of metaphorical expressions and suggest directions for future research, they do not imply that L2 figurative language comprehension depends solely on the three L1 factors investigated. How learners make sense of metaphorical expressions partly relies on their cognitive ability to infer metaphorical meaning: their general conceptualizing capacity or relevant embodied experiences. Other factors such as linguistic realizations (compositionality, saliency, familiarity, etc.) may also affect learners' processing. It is likely that L2 metaphor acquisition is affected by various cofactors on a continuum that includes L1 conceptual mapping and context. More research on hybrid approaches is required to better understand L2 learning of figurative language (Türker, 2016: 42).

Following this line of research, thus, this PhD proposes a hybrid approach which helps understand better how L2 learners understand and interpret figurative language, taking into account several factors such as linguistic and cultural background, compositionality and familiarity.

The research has been framed within the fundamental basics of linguistic investigation, upon which the development towards current perspectives has been tackled. Consequently, the foundations of the theoretical framework are based on an evolutive

procedure. Through it, the researcher pursues the aim of moving from the earliest findings to the recent results achieved by scholars and investigative work in the field of study.

3. Theoretical framework

*Conoscere una seconda lingua è come possedere una seconda anima*³¹ (Carlo Magno).

Phraseology is a relatively new branch of study in the field of linguistics, which emerges not only by developing its own theoretical framework, but also applies the results from this description into lexicography, contrastive linguistics and didactics. Consequently, phraseology is a rather recent face of didactic research given that, up to a certain moment, it had not been seriously considered by linguistic studies. That is the reason why it remains a considerably undiscovered topic, or at least, a territory in which much attention can still be drawn.

It is known that phraseology plays a vital role in the process of L2 acquisition as it includes aspects related to the cultural context. This aspect sometimes does not derive into the corresponding attention that its learning requires. Therefore, this project intends to improve the knowledge in this area and to arise it to international studies, in order to eventually help to achieve the goal that linguists and language teachers both have to commit to.

³¹ *Knowing a second language is like having a second soul* (Carlo Magno, author's translation).

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages establishes the proficiency level of language acquisition regarding the level of comprehension and production of the speakers across different spheres, among them the cultural one. Without phraseology this becomes unattainable.

This lately awakening has brought some research in foreign language learning regarding the field of phraseology. Investigation has proved very interesting when applied to the sphere of links between similar languages, establishing a procedure of comparison and contrast and in order to reveal both resemblances and divergences.

The didactic approach to be employed in the foreign language learning process is the basic root from which a functional methodology is developed. Here is when linguistics and didactics come together to reach a more renovated theoretical framework. Applied linguistics has integrated the principles or theories of linguistics principles to certain more or less practical matters. Second language teaching is one of the areas of practical application³².

³² As seen in the collection: Brown, H. D. (1987): *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

The principles set by cognitive linguistics become alternatives to the formalist theories that has ruled linguistic premises during the last half century. Cognitive linguistics proves an ideal position when researching an appropriate methodology to teach phraseology, since it is based on human experience and mental cognitive capacities, more than on static grammatical rules. Their theorists believe in mental constructions structured in different degrees of complexity. Cognitive linguistics regards language as both cognitive and sociocultural, lying in models of communicative activity. This makes it a suitable perspective from which to consider social aspects such as phraseology.

3.1. Cognitive linguistics

Each language learned makes the next one easier, because you are more detached from your native language, you have more knowledge about structure, about metalanguage (Naiman, 1996: 25).

Language pervades our brains and our lives like no other skill, since it is almost impossible to do or think about anything without using language – whether this entails an internal talk-through by your inner voice or following a set of written instructions (Vince, 2016, online resource).

The line of research of cognitive linguistics explores the relation of language structure to things outside language, cognitive principles and mechanisms not specific to language, including notions of human categorization. The common belief of cognitive linguistics is that meaning is so inherent to language that it must be the centre of attention. Linguistic models provide the possibility of conveying meanings and so the mappings between connotation and form are a major issue of linguistic analysis. Therefore, semantic structures of all meaningful linguistic units can and should be investigated.

Es necesario definir qué se entiende por cognición. Según Wilss (1992:6), se trata de un concepto genérico para todas las formas de pensamiento y formulación, como las siguientes: percepción, construcción de significados o esquemas, resolución de problemas, aprendizaje, reconocimiento de modelos y actualización de conocimientos. La lingüística cognitiva se relaciona con el análisis de lo que podríamos definir como la caja negra del pensamiento humano³³ (Zybatow, 1998:150) (Fernández Álvarez, 2011: 47).

³³ *It is necessary to define what is meant by cognition. According to Wilss (1992: 6), it is a generic concept for all forms of thought and formulation, such as the following ones: perception, construction of meanings or schemes, problem solving, learning, recognition of models and updating of knowledge. Cognitive linguistics is related to the analysis of what we could define as the black box of human thought (Zybatow, 1998:150) (Fernández Álvarez, 2011: 47, author's translation).*

Cognitive linguistics is a pragmatically oriented type of linguistics, both theoretically and methodologically. Methodologically, it is a pragmatic approach because it is a usage-based model. Theoretically, it is a pragmatic theory because of the importance it attaches to functional considerations in linguistic analysis. Specifically, it relates linguistic phenomena to the categorizing function of language in a systematic way (Geeraerts, 1995: 115).

According to this branch of linguistics, language is a reflection of human cognition and conceptualization. Based on the premise that human perceptions of the world are always filtered through their particular physical and neurological architecture, cognitive linguistics argue that individuals do not have direct access to an objective, external reality (Verspoor, Tyler, 2009: 160).

This perspective also provides a more comprehensive, coherent account of how grammatical constructions, lexical items, and discourse patterns work. Although all languages are naturally constrained by human cognitive abilities and human experiences with the world, languages may differ rather radically in the culturally or environmentally determined conceptualizations they express.

The cognitive linguistics view also entails that language is learned, not acquired. Language learning is an interactive process involving bottom-up processing, driven by linguistic experience and specific

interactions with the world, as well as top-down procedure, selecting general learning and cognitive mechanisms (Verspoor, Tyker, 2009: 161). As a result, learners will usually understand and remember items that are thematically or meaningfully related more easily than arbitrary items.

3.1.1. Story of cognitive linguistics

The field dedicated to cognitive linguistics grew out of the investigation of a number of researchers working in the 1970s who concentrated their attention to the connection of language and mind. They did so by avoiding the existing inclination to describe linguistic models through structural properties exclusive of language.

The discipline of cognitive linguistics was officially born in California in 1987 when Lakoff and Langacker published *Women, fire and dangerous things, what categories reveal about the mind* and *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*, respectively. The two linguists had followed the line of generativist semantics, under Chomskian's postulates. However, they instituted a differentiated linguistic model (Fernández, 2012: 36).

In Chomskyan linguistics, syntax, not meaning, was the main interest in language. Chomsky considered language acquisition as innate, and approached it as a logical problem rather than empirical.

On the contrary, the cognitive approach started considering language acquisition as one more type of learning, which took place within an environment.

In 1989, the first International Cognitive Linguistics Conference was organized in Duisburg, Germany. From it, the International Cognitive Linguistics Association evolved, and gave way to a new book series titled *Cognitive Linguistics Research*. The first publication of this series was Langacker's *Concept, Image and Symbol* (1990).

The International Cognitive Linguistics Association still has strong connections with disciplines as psychology, anthropology and sociology. This relationship is born on the base of the cognitive linguistics object of study, which unites language and the mind to the study of the brain.

By the 1990s cognitive linguistics had already become broadly renowned as a significant subject within linguistics. Research by Lakoff, Langacker and Talmy³⁴, among others, were the main branches of the model. Other main linguists were Chafe and Fillmore, which had their own view of language and linguistic theory³⁵.

³⁴ Lakoff was known for his work on metaphor and metonym. Talmy published significant research on linguistic imaging systems.

³⁵ For further information on the origin of cognitive linguistics:

Langacker's ideas developed into a theory known first as space grammar and then cognitive grammar. The two-volume *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar* collected his main postulates. He claimed that linguistic structures are motivated by general cognitive processes. So, a comparison between linguistic structure and visual perception was established, basing his ideas on Gestalt psychology.

Therefore, cognitive grammar was presented as a strong change of direction from the logical standpoints that objectivist semantics defended. In summary, according to the premises of cognitive grammar, human experience is at the base of conceptual semantics, including human ability to imagine and create situations not thoroughly based on strict reality.

As a result, in conceptual semantics, reality is interpreted by the numerous ways of seeing it, rather than in a single and singular one. This human inclusion in the formulae allows an alternative approach in which language usage is at the core. This way, the

International Cognitive Linguistics Association:
<http://www.cognitivelinguistics.org/en/about-cognitive-linguistics>

centre of study becomes the common traits across multiple instances of language use in interactive contexts.

This builds the base of cognitive linguistics, according to which language is both cognitive and sociocultural, and formed by patterns of communicative activity. Consequently, linguistic elements are reorganized in complex intersecting networks. It is in this process of interactive activation that units categorize particular facets of an expression (Taylor, 2002).

The book *Introducción a la lingüística cognitiva* (Cuenca, Hilferthy, 1999) is a masterpiece in terms of summarizing the concepts developed within the discipline of cognitive linguistics. The specific theories that shape it – such as the theories of prototypes, metaphors and cognitive semantics – are presented in detail in the book. The bases of cognitive grammar and construction grammar are also clearly described, becoming a useful manual on the principles of cognitive linguistics.

3.1.2. Cognitive semantics

One of the crucial aspects to be able to understand the cognitive semantics principles is by approaching the concept of meaning.

Cognitive Linguistics addresses a basic concern of generative semantics, namely, the centrality of meaning. The primary

function of language is to convey meaning. A grammar should therefore show as directly as possible how parameters of form are linked to parameters of meaning (Lakoff, 1987: 583).

The theory around meaning is based on the distinction between linguistic knowledge and encyclopaedic knowledge, which give origin respectively to the linguistic meaning and the encyclopaedic meaning.

The focus of Cognitive Linguistics is to give substance to semantic representations, and to show how these are directly linked to formal aspects (Taylor, 2002: 35).

Every expression has a part that speakers store in its “mental lexicon”. In this lexicon, each word has a certain definition associated with it, which is enough to characterize it and to distinguish it from the rest of the lexical options. The rest of the additional information about that particular word or concept is not part of that definition of a more linguistic type and therefore belongs to what can be called “extra-linguistic knowledge” or “knowledge of the world”.

Traditionally, semantics must deal with this core knowledge from each word. While other types of additional knowledge that can be evoked by the concrete and contextual use of a word belongs to the

field of pragmatics. The linguistic meaning of a word is thus different from other types of meanings potentially associated with it, such as contextual, cultural or social connotations.

Contrarily, this view is rejected categorically in cognitive semantics, which believes that it is not possible to establish an adequate distinction between semantics and pragmatics.

*Cada vez que utilizamos una palabra o expresión lingüística es necesario invocar conocimiento del mundo de manera amplia y flexible, y muchas veces no necesitamos conocer todo el significado lingüístico de un concepto para poder utilizarlo*³⁶ (Valenzuela, Ibarretxe-Antuñano, Hilferty, 2012: 41).

3.1.3. Theory of prototypes

Cognitive semantics is based on the linguistic meanings established in the theory of categorization known as the theory of prototypes. The theory of prototypes was originally elaborated in the 70s by the psychologist Eleanor Rosch (1973, 1975 and 1978).

³⁶ *Whenever we use a word or linguistic expression it is necessary to invoke knowledge of the world in a broad and flexible way, and often we do not need to know all the linguistic meaning of a concept in order to use it* (Valenzuela, Ibarretxe-Antuñano, Hilferty, 2012: 41, author's translation).

However, it had been previously conceived. Specifically, the Prague Linguistic Circle's, with its concern with the vagueness and the issue of centre-and-periphery of linguistic categories, seems to be at the origin of the discipline.

Rosch's research certainly had a catalytic impact, since it helped establish the theory as an important interdisciplinary enterprise. However, it is self-evident that it did not feed from a single source but actually emerged as a unique case of convergence of a number of rather heterogeneous theoretical sources (Brdar, Szabó, 1993: 4-5).

It was Lakoff (1987) who detailed the relevance of these studies for cognitive semantics. The idea is that linguistic categories are really another type of cognitive group. That is why it is necessary to know how categorization works globally, in order to know how linguistic categorization works. In fact, the adoption of this point of view makes it possible to transfer some of the discoveries about the functioning of the general categories to our vision of semantic or linguistic categorization.

Para empezar, la categorización es una de las habilidades cognitivas básicas y completamente imprescindibles para la supervivencia de cualquier sistema biológico. Consiste en agrupar los distintos objetos del mundo según sus parecidos o diferencias, de manera que podamos utilizar la información

*aprehendida sobre uno de los miembros de la categoría al resto de miembros de la misma*³⁷ (Valenzuela et al., 2012: 44).

3.1.4. Neurodidactics

Psycholinguistics is sometimes defined as the study of language and the mind. As the name suggests, it is a subject which links psychology and linguistics. Its aim is to find out about the structures and processes which underlie a human's ability to speak and understand language (Aitchison, 1992: 1).

The dissertation *Neurodidattica, Lingua e Apprendimenti: riflessione teorica e proposte operative* (Compagno, Di Gesù, 2003) undertakes the challenging but necessary mission of uniting linguistics (more speculative-oriented) to didactics (more practical-oriented). All in the frame of an interuniversity collaboration project within a master project called NEFODO (*Master di II livello in Neuroscienze ed Alta Formazione del Docente di Lingua Straniera*), which has brought forth a transversal discipline known as neurolinguistic didactics.

³⁷ *To begin with, categorization is one of the basic cognitive skills and absolutely essential for the survival of any biological system. It consists of grouping the different objects of the world according to their similarities or differences, so that we can use the information apprehended about one of the members in the category for the rest of its members* (Valenzuela et al., 2012: 44, author's translation).

The first chapter (Di Gesù) is dedicated to the learning of a foreign language, which is focused on interlanguage and interference between languages typologically similar such as Spanish and Italian. The chapter approaches the concept of individual *interlingua* (Vedovelli, 2001), and mental lexicon (Luque Durán, 2004).

Lexical access is the process of entering the mental lexicon to retrieve information about words. The mental lexicon is the database containing all words in the mind for language use. Lexical information can be, for instance, ortographic (spelling), phonological (sound), or semantic (meaning). Word recognition can then be defined as the process of retrieving these word characteristics on the basis of the input (Dijkstra, 2009: 180).

Di Gesù (2003) defends a didactic approach which takes into consideration the conventions once set by perceptive linguistics.

The principles of perceptive linguistics were developed by López García³⁸ and inherited by a considerable group of scholars, especially from the School of Valencia. From their perspective, when relating language to linguistic conscience, they were taking into account neuropsychological aspects such as the relationship

³⁸ A good reference to these principles can be found in: López García, Á. (1989): *Fundamentos de lingüística perceptiva*. Madrid: Gredos.

between the two hemispheres of the brain in order to reach a holistic and complete learning process.

This is the line of theory followed by Luque Durán, when affirming that speakers can occasionally perceive discrepancies between language and reality. This is the product, in words of Luque Durán, of an ontological, philosophical and also metalinguistic reflection³⁹. An example of it would be the mechanisms inherent in jokes and puns, where speakers inevitably deepen in the inner organization of their mental lexicon. Mental lexicon is understood as the sum of pieces of information, either linguistic or encyclopaedic, shared by the speakers of a particular language (Luque Durán, 2007: 93).

En la competencia metalingüística reside el conocimiento explícito de las reglas y del funcionamiento de la lengua. Este módulo contiene toda aquella clase de nociones enciclopédicas sobre la lengua, aprendidas de manera consciente, que excitan los almacenes semánticos de la memoria explícita, activada para la memorización y la reelaboración de conceptos y nociones⁴⁰ (Di Gesù, Seminara, 2012: 19).

³⁹ There is even some reflection around the existence of three worlds: the real world, the mental system which attempts to model the real world, and the projected world (Lamb, 1999: 104).

⁴⁰ *In the metalinguistic competence there is the explicit knowledge of the rules and the functioning of the language. This module contains all sorts of encyclopaedic notions about the language, learned in a conscious way, that excite the semantic stores of explicit memory, activated for the memorization and*

In terms of neuropsychology, perceptive linguistics considers this mechanism as a coordinated effort of the whole human brain. Concretely, Gómez-Ruiz (2010) summarizes the different but complementary functions associated to language that each hemisphere of the brain performs. Thus, left hemisphere plays the roles of processing phonology, morphology and syntax, and determines the literal meaning; while right hemisphere is responsible for the prosodic elements of the discourse, the elaborations of the connotative and expressive aspects of language and the emotional aspects.

Further recent investigation conducted in the field of neurological sciences confirms this relationship between the two sides of the brain, overcoming the past belief which located our ability to use language in the left hemisphere. Furthermore, recent research in the neurology field has shown that language is not constrained to one area of the brain and the brain itself develops due to the process of leaning new languages⁴¹. Latest discoveries prove that words are linked to diverse parts of the brain in line with their subject or meaning. In effect, experiments performed by neurologists who

re-elaboration of concepts and notions (Di Gesù, Seminara, 2012: 19, author's translation).

⁴¹ For more information about neurology investigation: Vince, G. (2016): "Where is language in the brain?" In *Mosaic, the science of life*. Digital Magazine published by Wellcome Trust. [<http://mosaicscience.com/extra/where-language-brain>]

attempted to create an atlas of words in the brain gave evidence that words are grouped by meaning⁴².

Other investigators have concluded the conception that we learn by meaning, such as João Correia at Maastricht University in the Netherlands (Correia, 2015).

*Words that mean the same thing in different languages activate the same set of neurons encoding that concept, regardless of the fact that the two words look and sound completely different*⁴³.

This represents a step forward in the path of discoveries regarding the intimate relationship between cognition and language.

Therefore, according to neurological research, the approach by cognitive linguistics is reasserted, since language functionality proves to be key in human cognition. Specifically, scientific investigation has demonstrated that bilingual speakers show the

⁴² For more information about neurology investigation: Huth, A.G; de Heer, W. A; Griffiths, T. L.; Theunissen, F. E.; Gallant, J. L. (2016): “Natural speech reveals the semantic maps that tile human cerebral cortex” in *Nature*, 532 453-458.

For a didactical approach to the investigation: “Braindictionary”. In *Nature Video*. [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k61nJkx5aDQ>]

⁴³ Declaration by Zoe Woodhead, from University College London, as stated in the article: Heaven, D. (2012): “Mind-reading scan locates site of meaning in the brain”. In *New Scientist*. [<https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21628914-500-mind-reading-scan-locates-site-of-meaning-in-the-brain/>]

same brain patterns in the experiments when a word is said in one language or another (Correia, 2015).

Consequently, when applying an appropriate methodology to language learning the core should be focused on meaning, since the stimulated area in the brain is the one dedicated to it. This is directly linked to the fact that the input given when learning a foreign language should point precisely to its significance.

This approach had already been taken in previous publications, which shared the perspective of applying neuroscience knowledge to language learning, such as in Di Gesù (2012), Nieto Gil (2011) and Rivoltella (2012). In the same frame, the studies by López García (2005, 2007 and 2012) form an important reference to the research.

All these studies derive from the science of neurodidactics, which has been considered to be very useful for educators. Neurodidactics has its base in neurobiology, which is applied to the learning process.

I am convinced that empowering teachers with the appropriate knowledge of the principles of human neuroplasticity and learning will lead to better classroom practices (Dehaene, 2010).

In summary, the term of neurodidactics is referred to as the interdisciplinary field which attempts to apply the knowledge of neuroscience to the teaching and learning process. It was originally introduced by professor Gerhard Preiss at the University of Fribourg in 1988.

This discipline marries the principles of sciences of education, which focuses on creating more efficient didactic strategies, to a holistic consideration of the learner. Therefore, it allows the contemplation of not only the cognitive dimension, but also of perception. This way, it motivates a system of learning which takes into account both linguistic and cultural components. This new perspective concurs with the principles of perceptive linguistics according to which the two parts of the brain are linked.

Conclusions

Learning a foreign language is a holistic process involving all the areas of cognition in a human mind. Applying a methodology which regards this premise is a requirement which the discipline of neurodidactics is ready to face. By the union of linguistics to didactics, specific situations such as interlanguage influences can be tackled in a precise way.

3.2. Cognitive linguistics in language learning

*Muchos estudiantes de una L2 consideran el proceso de aprendizaje como una mera memorización de una lista de vocabulario, cuando, en cambio, las lenguas permiten no sólo la interpretación de la realidad, sino también la creación de una nueva realidad mental a causa de ellas*⁴⁴ (López, 2005: 33).

*Linguaggio è un vocabolo dotato d'una pluralità di significati non sempre ben distinti: accanto a un significato estensivo e metaforico, che è in evidenza allorché parliamo di "linguaggio delle cose" o di "linguaggio delle armi", esso ha un significato estensivo, emergente allorché del vocabolo ci serviamo per denotare ogni sorta di esprimersi, ogni tipo di comunicazione, come meccanica, mimica, vivisa, non verbale, ed ha un significato più ristretto, presente allorché con linguaggio denotiamo esclusivamente il parlare dell'uomo*⁴⁵ (De Mauro, 1971: 31).

⁴⁴ *A lot of students of a L2 consider the learning process as a mere memorization of a list of vocabulary, when, instead, languages allow not only the interpretation of the reality, but also the creation of a new mental reality on account of them* (López, 2005: 33, author's translation).

⁴⁵ *Language is a word with a plurality of meanings not always well distinguished: in addition to an extensive and metaphorical meaning, which is evident when speaking of "language of things" or "language of weapons", it has an extensive meaning, emerging when the word is used to denote every kind of expression, every kind of communication, such as mechanics, mimicry, vivise, nonverbal, and has a more restrictive meaning, present when we speak exclusively about the language of men* (De Mauro, 1971: 31, author's translation).

Language is a set of signs and notions through which an external image is related with its imagined projection in the brain (Luque Durán, 2004:103). Therefore, categorizing is the mental operation through which the external image connection and its internal projection are connected (Compagno, Di Gesù, 2003: 52).

The relationship between these different modes of categorizing – that would correspond to different languages – and their function in human brain form a significant field of exploration. In reference to this, most attention has been focused on the different roles played by native and foreign languages, especially in the sphere of foreign language learning. Related to that, the debate is notable when we refer to translation strategies applied to learning processes.

The strategy of translating from L1⁴⁶ is a source of debate when learning a foreign language. Whether L1 can become a useful resource or not is the main issue. Indeed, when speakers display good command in their native languages, these can actually become effective sources. According to neurological studies, the area in the brain activated when processing linguistic information is actually that of the signified. Consequently, the signifier itself could be considered less influential in the process.

⁴⁶ From now on, L1 is to address the native language or mother tongue, – that is to say the first language a person learns –, and L2 is to address the foreign language – any other language added to the first one, and learned later.

The signifier and the signified are two concepts that date back to the Saussure's linguistic theory. In the Saussurian division, they refer to the concept and to the expression of a word, respectively.

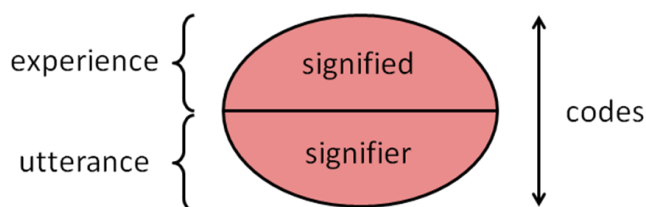


Fig. 3. Saussurian division (Irvine, 2004, online resource).

Actually, neurological research has proved that the effective way to learn a new linguistic element would be to develop a link between it and the corresponding meaning in the brain. Only then the learner will be able to identify that new concept. When that connection is created, learning takes place. Ultimately, this process consists in the creation of a route between the new signifier and its meaning, a meaning probably already established by L1.

As a consequence, L1 can actually become a handful resource, especially when facing abstract concepts, of difficult definition, or far from the known reality and context. Obviously, the fact of relating concrete and near concepts to the image is easier and unequivocal, because meaning can simply be visualized, without any need to create connections – or translating – to the equivalent signifier in L1. However, translation can become a useful vehicle to entail the meaning to an unknown linguistic form. It will then

become a mechanism to acquire a new link requiring a similar neuronal connection.

La traduzione permette dunque di verificare le ipotesi degli apprendenti sulla L2. Se dal terreno sperimentale passiamo alla didattica, i dati raccolti permettono di concludere che l'esercizio traduttivo può essere efficacemente utilizzato per evitare che, nella lettura di un testo in LS, il discente stabilisca false equivalenze tra la LI e la L2, nate dal raffronto spontaneo (Lavault, 1985:34); è quindi particolarmente consigliato nel caso di lingue affini, dato che la trasparenza lessicale può indurre a sopravvalutare la facilità di comprensione. La traduzione, comunque, richiede sempre un'adeguata preparazione⁴⁷ (Calvi, 2001: 332).

This mechanism has been explored by theorists such as Kroll, who elaborated a scheme summarizing the complex translation circuit which takes place in the brain. Thus, the revised hierarchical model was designed (Kroll, Stewart, 1994), which represented the bilingual structure in the brain and integrated the connection

⁴⁷ *The translation therefore allows testing the hypothesis of the learners on L2. If we pass on the experimental field to didactics, the collected data allow us to conclude that the translational exercise can be effectively used to prevent the learner from reading a text in L2 to establish false equivalences between L1 and L2, born from the spontaneous comparison (Lavault, 1985: 34); is therefore particularly recommended in the case of similar languages, since lexical transparency can lead to overestimating the ease of understanding. Translation, however, always requires an adequate preparation (Calvi, 2001: 332, author's translation).*

illustrated in the precedent word association and concept mediation models (for a good outline of these concepts see Kroll, Tokowicz, 2005).

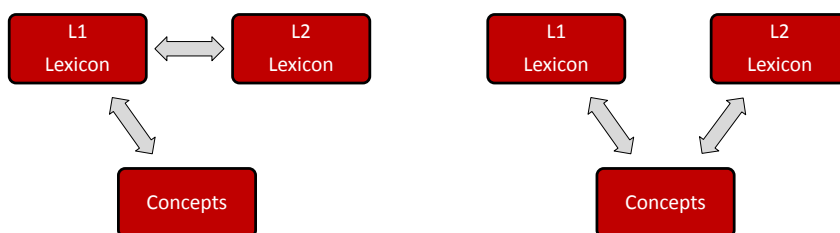


Fig. 4. Word association model and Concept mediation model (Potter, So, Von Eckardt, Feldman, 1984).

The revised hierarchical model combines and improves the previous models with two main arguments, both referring to the strength of association between words and concepts in bilingual memory.

On the one hand, L1 connections between signifier and concept are thought to be more solid than in L2. On the other hand, L2 expressions translated to their equivalences in L1 are also stronger than in the opposite direction. In conclusion, in the revised hierarchical model there is an expected unbalance in translation execution⁴⁸.

⁴⁸ This is the hypothesis that Kroll and Stewart have tested in a study involving three separate experiments. In the study, as predicted, translating from the L1 and into the L2 was found not to occur at equal speed. More specifically, it was found that translating from the L1 into the L2 is much faster than translating from the L2 into the L1. On the basis of these results, the authors argued that the

These conditions determine the acquisition process of L2, especially for late learners with a full mental lexicon of L1. These learners tend to use the active links in L1 to approach meaning for new expressions in L2. As a consequence, L1 and L2 will be deeply connected, especially at the early stages of learning. Besides, the higher will be the level in L2, the more developed the direct relationship between L2 signifiers and meanings (Sánchez-Casas, García-Albea, 2005: 545-546).

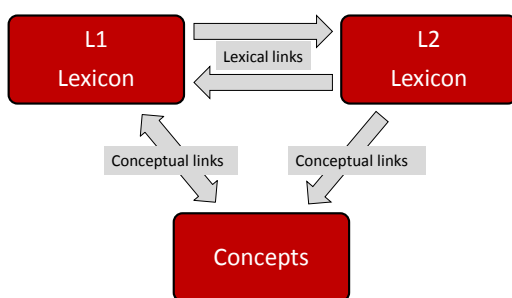


Fig. 5. Revised hierarchical model (Sánchez-Casas, García-Albea, 2005: 545-546).

Past research supports the claim that L2 learners follow a course in which they initially associate the L2 to the L1 at a lexical level and only later acquire the ability to conceptually mediate L2 words. Talamas, Kroll, and Dufour (1999)

interconnections between the two languages do not seem to be equally strong, and also that translating from the L1 into the L2 is conceptually mediated while from the L2 to the L1 is lexically mediated (De Angelis, 2007: 91).

showed that less proficient bilinguals made more errors of lexical form (such as confusing the Spanish word hombre with hambre), whereas more proficient bilinguals made more errors of meaning (such as confusing hombre with mujer). These data suggest that with increasing proficiency, L2 words activate semantics more directly (Michael, Gollan, 2009: 391).

This model clearly shows the need to develop conceptual links between L2 and concepts, but it does not reject the inclusion of linguistic connections to L1. In this frame, the methodology based on the comparison between languages during language learning is not utterly incoherent, while in linguistic studies like contrastive phraseology it becomes important.

La búsqueda de unidades fraseológicas equivalentes en la lengua materna del alumno también ayuda al establecimiento de las redes. De esta manera, las unidades se comprenden mejor “al comprobar que existen UF transculturales, y que en lenguas distintas existe correspondencia entre expresiones de la misma idea. La L1 desempeña un papel muy importante en la adquisición, porque se recuperan nociones significadas

comunes a diversas culturas”⁴⁹ (Bacco, Vasconcelo, Compagnoni, 2009), (Mendoza, 2011: 84).

3.2.1. Bilingualism

The position presented beforehand is linked to the results from the investigation in the field of bilingualism, where different kinds of bilinguals are described (Brown, 1987: 64). The results point to the evidence that, when two languages are acquired at the same time, strategies are alike. These two languages can be considered both as first languages, as people using them have two meaning systems for each of the languages they manage and know how to apply them in separate situations. This situation is known as coordinated bilingualism.

On the contrary, compound bilinguals are speakers who share the same meaning system for both languages. Consequently, they can present more interference from the one that is considered to be their native language. Usually this situation takes place when a language is learned during adulthood, when, given the cognitive maturity of

⁴⁹ *The search for equivalent phraseological units in the student's mother tongue also helps establish networks. In this way, the units are better understood “when verifying that there are transcultural phraseological units, and that in different languages correspondence exists between expressions of the same idea. L1 plays a very important role in the acquisition, because they recover common meanings to diverse cultures”* (Bacco, Vasconcelo, Compagnoni, 2009), (Mendoza, 2011: 84, author’s translation).

the brain and the firm knowledge of a first language, mother-tongue can act either as a resource or interference.

It was Weinreich who gave a definition to the term “interference”, describing those cases with a simultaneous overlapping of two norms where bilinguals would not keep the two language codes apart.

Consequently, interference can be defined as a deviation to the norm of both languages which occurs in the speech or utterance of a bilingual speaker. Besides, interference might appear on all language levels: phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and lexical levels⁵⁰ (Muhvić-Dimanovski, 2005).

Already back in 1953, Weinreich described these differences according to the relationship bilinguals’ languages present, depending on how word meaning and word expressions are linked to each other.

Bilingual speakers can establish a coordinate, compound or subordinate bilingualism. In coordinate bilingualism,

⁵⁰ Numerous examples can be quoted to show how interference works. It is always present when bilingual speakers include elements of another language into the one they are speaking, mostly not being aware of it. The two language systems interfere with one another. On the part of the listener this is perceived as either a foreign intonation or accent, a wrong inflection, an unusual word order or an unfamiliar metaphor (Muhvić-Dimanovski, 2005).

signified and signifier are kept separate so two expressions are linked to two separate concepts. In compound bilingualism, two expressions are merged and linked to a single concept. In subordinate bilingualism one language is subordinate to the other, which results in one language being dominant over the other. The expression of the less dominant language is linked to its corresponding concept via the most dominant language, which is usually the bilinguals' first language (De Angelis, 2007: 88).

The studies about the different kinds of bilingualism were particularly interesting as they pointed to the relationship between native and second languages. Besides, this research generally judged the link between L1 and L2 as a positive interference.

These bilingualism theories were not incoherent with scientific findings that established, already in the 90s, that second languages were processed in different areas of the brain. Research regarding the spatial relationship between native and second languages in the human cortex confirmed this theory when languages were acquired during adulthood. On the contrary, when acquired during early years, native and second languages tended to be represented in common frontal cortical areas (Kim, Relkin, Lee, 1997).

Second languages are processed in a different section of language than the section of the mother tongue. That is why

those who suffer a localized injury due to a stroke, sometimes lose the ability to speak a native language, while retaining the ability to speak others learned in adulthood (Kim et al., 1997: 156)⁵¹.

There is other interesting research pointing to the particular mechanism of bilingualism and how translation processes can be modified, which has survived until present days, and which are not incoherent with Weinreich's model.

For instance, there was a neurological theory that situated the mechanism for linguistic change in a specific area of the brain. This theory was backed by the cases in real life where some people were unable to translate from one language to another, even being bilinguals (Christophersen, 1948; Weinreich, 1953; Rosetti, 1945)⁵².

⁵¹ This research can be contrasted with contemporary conclusions, which can be found in Costa, A. (2017): *El cerebro bilingüe*. This interesting book is the result of the research from the CBC (*Centre de Cervell i Cognició*) in Universitat Pompeu Fabra.

⁵² In Rosetti's, an example is described: the case of a woman who had learned Romanian and Hungarian during her childhood, but she was unable to translate a sentence from one language to another. In their mind, the two languages were two systems separated by an impenetrable wall.

Further research on this area is focused on the way bilingualism affects not only language acquisition processes, but also the brain structure and consequently, various cognitive processes⁵³.

3.2.2. Bilingual storage structures

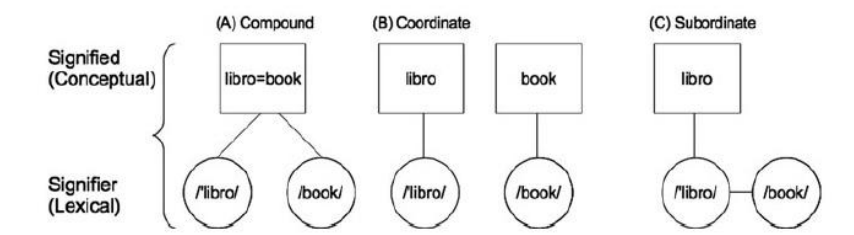


Fig. 6. Three bilingual storage representation. Adapted from Woutersen et al. 1994. Copyright 1994 by Cambridge University Press. (Heredia, Cie'slicka, 2014: 12-13).

Weinreich's proposed bilingual storage system distinguished between three levels of representation and types of memory organization.

At the representational level, information is organized in terms of:

- Meaning: conceptual or signified level, represented by squares in Fig. 6.
- Word-form: lexical or signifier level, represented by circles in Fig. 6.

⁵³ See, for instance: Costa, A., and Sebastián-Gallés, N. (2014): "How does the bilingual experience sculpt the brain?" In *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 15. 336-345.

The three types of bilingualism present three possible organizational systems: compound, coordinate or subordinate systems.

- In compound bilingualism, the information at the conceptual level is shared, whilst the information at the lexical level is independent. To see an example, for a Spanish-English compound bilingual, whose first language is Spanish and second language is English, two different lexical items or verbal labels represent the concept of *libro* and *book*, but the underlying meaning would be the same across the two languages.
- On the other hand, coordinate bilingualism is considered pure bilingualism. Here, bilinguals' two languages are separate and independent, both at the conceptual and lexical levels. Following with the previous example, the definitions of *libro* and *book* represent unique meanings to each language. Thus, the meaning of the Spanish word *libro* and its translation are different, and both meanings are associated with information that is language-specific.
- Last, in subordinate bilingualism, there is one meaning-based representational system, in which L2 is simply a translation of the L1 word. During early stages of L2 learning, bilinguals associate every L2 word with the L1 translation equivalent. Consequently, access to the meaning-

based representational system must necessarily go through the L1 (Potter et al., 1984).

It is important to note that the human cognitive system is dynamic, being continuously reorganizing, and restructuring (McLaughlin, 1990), in order to process the information more efficiently. Similarly, bilingual memory representation is dynamic. A subordinate bilingual memory structure, through practice (McLaughlin, 1990), may develop into a compound bilingual structure (Weinreich, 1953). Moreover, bilingual concepts may have instances of compound or coordinate representations at the same time (Heredia, Cie'slicka, 2014: 12-13).

3.2.3. Acquisition (learning), context and language organization

Weinreich's memory representation is directly linked to the acquisition context. *The more different the acquisitional context, the more likely it is for the bilingual's two languages to be stored independently* (Heredia, Cie'slicka, 2014: 13-14). This factor becomes a crucial determinant of bilingual language organization⁵⁴.

⁵⁴ *In this case, acquisitional context refers to the environmental (e.g., home vs. school), and cultural (how different the two cultures are) settings. For instance, whether the L1 was learned in one country and the L2 in a different country can influence significantly the speakers' structure of the memory representation system (Heredia, Cie'slicka, 2014: 13-14).*

Moreover, bilingual nature is not the sum of two monolingual structures, but the birth of a new competence with a specific linguistic configuration. The coexistence and constant interaction of both languages in the bilingual language has produced a different but complete entity.

An analogy can be done with the discipline of athletics. The runner in the tank race mixes two types of competitions: that of the high jump specialist and that of the runner in the race of speed. If we compare it individually with the jumper or the sprinter, it does not reach the level of competition of both, and yet, if we take it as a whole, it is an athlete in their own right (Grosjean, 1989).

The characteristics of bilinguals are that they possess a variety of linguistic knowledge of one or more languages. Besides, in every one of them, bilinguals show different competences, depending on their learning experiences and functions. In summary, these languages can be used in a functional way depending on the situation, and they are also able to develop interlinguistic skills (such as interpreting and translating) as well as intralinguistic skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing).

Thus, a competence in a bilingual or multilingual person is a complex and dynamic one. It has an asymmetric configuration and it is affected by the subsequent introduction of new languages,

which can modify the previous competence in L2 and even in L1 (Herdina, Jessner, 2002).

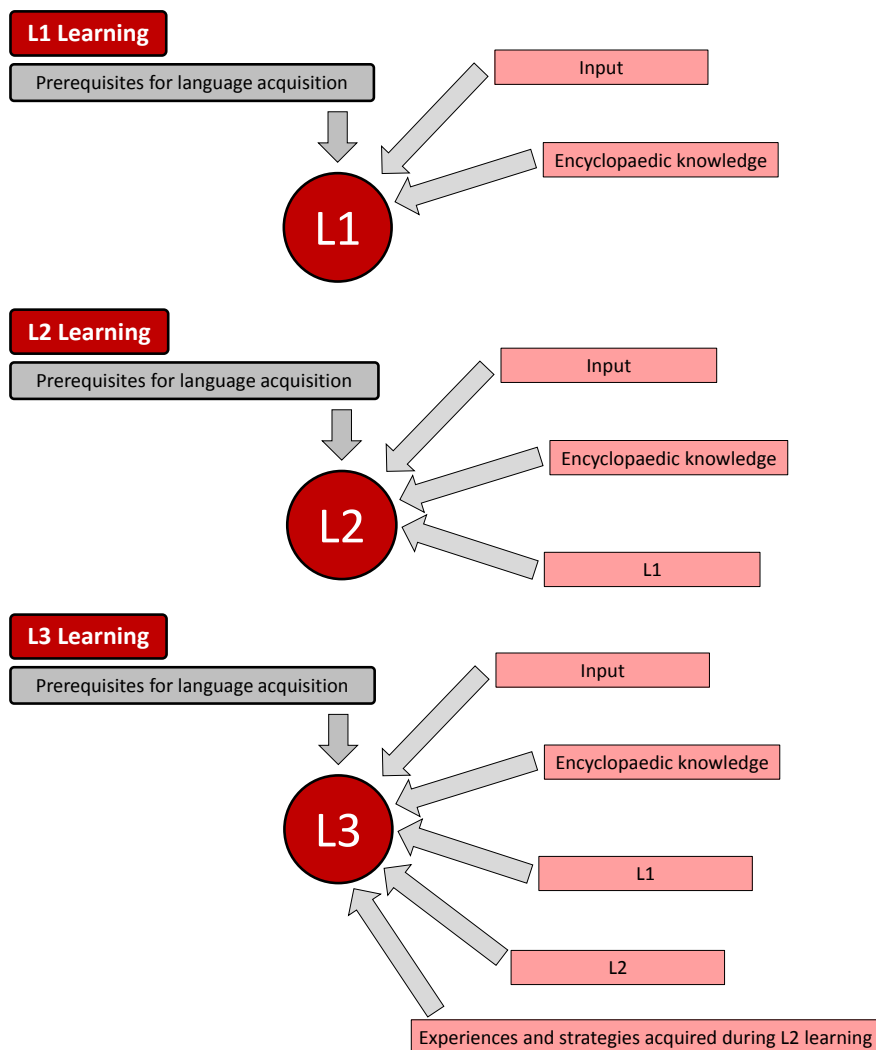


Fig. 7. The L2 status factor and the declarative/procedural distinction (Bardel, Falk, 2012: 69).

This coordinate skills and competences that bilingual or multilingual individuals show is related to the memory source they use. Paradis (1994) was the first to suggest the fundamental difference between procedural and declarative memory in relation to implicit linguistic competence and explicit metalinguistic knowledge, respectively (see Paradis 2009, Chapter 1).

According to Paradis, our capacity for verbal communication includes linguistic competence on the one hand, and metalinguistic knowledge on the other hand. Linguistic competence is related to phonology, morphology and syntax. Metalinguistic knowledge is the conscious knowledge of facts about languages, including vocabulary and the relationship between form and meaning. Implicit linguistic competence and explicit metalinguistic knowledge are neurolinguistically distinct and have different memory sources. Implicit linguistic competence is sustained by procedural memory and explicit metalinguistic knowledge by declarative memory⁵⁵ (Bardel, Falk, 2012: 70).

⁵⁵ *They involve different types of cerebral representation: implicit linguistic competence involves procedural, non-conscious representations that rely on the right cerebellum, the left neostriatum, other basal ganglia and circumscribed perisylvian cortex; while explicit metalinguistic knowledge involves declarative, conscious representations that rely on the hippocampal system: the mesial temporal lobe, parahippocampal gyri and anterior cingulate cortex* (Paradis, 2009: 139-140).

According to Paradis' perspective, while L1 grammar is implicitly acquired and sustained by procedural memory, L2 grammar is based on explicit knowledge, and sustained by declarative memory, which also takes care of vocabulary knowledge in both L1 and L2. This means that while vocabulary is sustained by declarative memory in L2 as well as in L1, there is a more obvious difference between L1 and L2 when it comes to phonology, morphology, syntax and the morphosyntactic properties of the lexicon. These latter components are acquired implicitly in L1, but learned explicitly in L2 (Bardel, Falk, 2012: 71).

An increasing amount of experience (i.e. practice) with a language should lead to better learning of grammatical rules in procedural memory, which in turn should result in higher proficiency in the language (Ullman 2001: 118; mentioned in Bardel, Falk, 2012: 73).

Experience, thus, is the key in language learning successful acquisition processes. Experimenting language by methods of practicing involves using it in its human environment. This human frame is what gives sense to language and what is at the core of all linguistic activities. It will bring nearer L2 circumstances to those of L1, developing the bilinguals' or multilinguals' coordinate skills.

Weinreich successfully demonstrated that the linguistic outcomes of contact between two or more languages could

not be deduced from a comparison of their structures alone, but could be understood only within the full context of their speakers' lives, social behaviour and interaction –in other words, that one must always take into account “the social life of language” (Sankoff, 1980).

3.2.4. Language acquisition and cultural context

Considering that all language is intimately linked to the culture and history of its people, these aspects should be regarded in language learning. Plenty of cultural divergences exist not only between different languages but even among the varieties of the same language. This has as a result the presence of linguistic signals which display cultural diversity. Phraseology would belong to this category.

Each and every language conforms a particular linguistic landscape that sometimes can only be understood with the help of the perceptive part of the brain. Indeed, investigation indicates that *many bilinguals say they feel like a different person when they speak their other language* (Vince, 2016b, online resource). Learning strategies should be adapted to this idiosyncrasy. That is the sense of learning a language holistically, and not only following the guidelines set by formalist linguistics. Perceptive linguistics and cognitive linguistics include psychological aspects to ensure a complete linguistic conscience in the learning process.

Information does not exist independently of the human perceiver, or more exactly, of the information processing system of the human subject. Where there is no form recognized by the processing subject, there is no information (Dakowska, 2013: 12).

Besides, language is an innate human ability that, as any biological process, develops through time – and space. This evolution is influenced by cultural factors.

Language evolution can be compared to biological evolution, but whereas genetic change is driven by environmental pressures, languages change and develop through social pressures. Over time, different groups of early humans would have found themselves speaking different languages. Then, in order to communicate with other groups – for trade, travel and so on – it would have been necessary for some members of a family or band to speak other tongues (Vince, 2016b, online resource).

This root founds the base for language learning. In early times, humans did not learn languages by means of formalist rules, but by means of real practices of communication, following the same perceptive rules that made them discover the keys for survival.

Nowadays, this legacy is still present in brain structures, as some scientific experiments prove⁵⁶.

This cognitive legacy has always interacted with cultural factors, and languages have grown in the frame of human adaptation to the environment. Not only political characteristics collaborate in the construction of a language but also geographical and natural grounds. For instance, physical divergences between cultures established in different territories force the configuration of differentiated lexicon.

Likewise, this adjustment to the environment is the reason for the birth of a rich diversity of languages and the subsequent formation of language identities. It is even believed that languages reflect people's personality⁵⁷. Indeed, subtle nuances in language can bring considerable connotations. This is particularly remarkable in tone

⁵⁶ A study conducted by Panos Athanopoulos, professor of psycholinguistics and bilingual cognition at Lancaster University, proved that people who perform best on tasks of deducing the meaning from a completely unknown language are the ones who do not care at all about the task and just want to get it over as soon as possible.

Students and teaching staff who try to work it out and find a pattern always do worst. The results are explained by the impossibility of deciphering the rules of a language and making sense of what's being said in little time. But your brain is primed to work it out subconsciously. That's why, if you don't think about it, you'll do okay in the test – children do the best (Vince, 2016b).

⁵⁷ At the risk of falling in stereotyping, we can find examples of studies which analyse this relation between culture and language, determining that personality is manifested even in the syntax of a language. For instance, it is said that the recurrent use of the present continuous form in English, as compared to another language such as German, is a sign of the more action-focused character of English people, while Germans are said to be more goal-focused (Vince, 2006b).

languages, for example, where slight variations in intonation belong to diverse patterns which can convey completely different meanings.

Studies investigating the effects of language context and personality traits find that depending on the sociolinguistic environment, bilingual speakers are able to access the perceived cultural norms of the group more often associated with that particular language. For example, Chen and Bond (2010) found that in a series of interviews, Chinese-English bilinguals were perceived as more extraverted, open, and assertive when speaking English than Chinese, in conversations with Chinese interviewers (Heredia, Cie'slicka, 2014: 16).

Concluding, learning a language means a process of adaptation to the universe shaped by that language. A real and good acquisition of a language must be considered in the bounds of the culture where it is spoken. Consequently, a more complex circuit in the system of a language learning process is needed, beyond that of establishing direct brain connections.

This conclusion can also be drawn from the failed experiments regarding the attempts of creating a unique universal language. This challenge, which lies on the benignant aim of trying to achieve benefits in reference to the communication around the planet,

proved to be unsuccessful at the point of formalizing that language. That is to say, once regularization is imposed, that language starts to fade.

This was the case of Esperanto and Volapük. Both were languages created in an artificial way. Their evolution was not parallel to a social evolution and not identifiable to any society. As a result to their formalizing, there was an attempt of reproduction of a non-correspondent scene.

This is further evidence showing how languages grow in the frame of human culture and evolution. A language should grow on the frame of its real use, also in dialogical terms. The contrary, they die⁵⁸.

The opposite face is also a reality. *As language die, culture die* (Hemming, 2015b). The concept of *culturesphere* is widely exploited by this language scientist (Hemming, 2015b), to assimilate language to natural phenomena such as the atmosphere or the biosphere.

⁵⁸ For further information about the numerous artificial languages – or projects of them – created along the years, see Harlow, D. J. (2000): *How to Build a Language*. [<http://literaturo.org/HARLOW-Don/Esperanto/EBook/chap03.html>]. The author provides a pro-Esperantist report, claiming its success in front of the other artificial languages. We have to consider that he was the former president of Esperanto-USA. Nonetheless, the summary offers an interesting glimpse to the subject of artificial languages.

3.2.5. Contrasting languages

De hecho, es frecuente leer en los estudios que se ocupan de la relación entre español e italiano que es muy difícil lograr un alejamiento significativo por parte de los aprendices de su lengua materna a favor de la lengua meta, y además está científica y estadísticamente comprobado que sus progresos son más lentos, su interlengua más estática, los errores de fosilización más numerosos⁵⁹ (Tomaselli, 2008: 13).

Paradoxically, sometimes the similarity between languages can act as interference to the learning process of L2.

La supuesta facilidad se convierte en paradoja: así, el lingüista Carlo Tagliavini afirmaba, hace medio siglo, que el español es para un italiano uno de los idiomas más difíciles de aprender bien; según sus observaciones, quien empezara a estudiar español y alemán al mismo tiempo, al cabo de un año tendría un conocimiento del español diez veces superior, pero la distancia se iría anulando, hasta el extremo de que a

⁵⁹ *In fact, it is frequent to read in studies that deal with the relationship between Spanish and Italian that it is very difficult for the apprentices to achieve a significant distancing from their mother tongue in favour of the target language, and it is also scientifically and statistically proven that their progress is slower, their interlanguage more static, the errors of fossilization more numerous (Tomaselli, 2008: 13, author's translation).*

*los cinco años el aprendiz dominaría el alemán mejor que el español*⁶⁰ (Tagliavini 1947: 261).

*No tenemos evidencias científicas que sufraguen la paradoja de Tagliavini en sus términos cuantitativos; [...], pero sí es verdad que la experiencia docente nos lleva a conclusiones similares*⁶¹ (Calvi, 2004: 2).

Between similar languages, it becomes more challenging for the learner to take a distance from their L1.

Si se pierde la visión de conjunto se repetirán errores que parecían ya superados. El engaño de los “falsos amigos” está siempre al acecho, aunque el recorrido realizado por el estudiante haya dado prueba de la insidia que se puede esconder detrás del parentesco etimológico, pero esto no impide la reiteración de un hábito, de una actitud equivocada que lleva siempre a buscar en lo conocido (la L1 en este caso) la solución, jugando con un porcentaje de

⁶⁰ *The supposed easiness becomes paradox: thus, the linguist Carlo Tagliavini affirmed, half a century ago, that Spanish is for an Italian one of the most difficult languages to learn well; according to his observations, who began to study Spanish and German at the same time, after a year would have a knowledge of Spanish ten times higher, but the distance would be nullified, to the extent that after five years the apprentice would dominate German better than Spanish (Tagliavini 1947: 261, author’s translation).*

⁶¹ *We have no scientific evidence to support Tagliavini’s paradox in its quantitative terms; [...], but it is true that the teaching experience leads us to similar conclusions (Calvi, 2004, author’s translation).*

*probabilidades que se cree mucho más alto de lo que es en realidad. Y aunque conscientes del riesgo, avanzando de niveles, los discentes italófonos (como cualquier otro) no abandonan nunca su LM como punto de referencia delante de cualquier dificultad*⁶²(Tomaselli, 2008: 14).

That is why a pragmatic didactic approach which takes contextual knowledge and applies it into the learning process is fundamental.

*Tal vez para lograr mejores resultados didácticos entre lenguas afines, el secreto esté en insistir en un enfoque que mantenga constantes referencias a los aspectos pragmáticos fundamentalmente, ya que son éstos los que con más claridad evidencian la profunda diversidad entre las lenguas; sean éstas afines o no. Que sean los propios discentes los que descubran las afinidades como una agradable sorpresa*⁶³(Tomaselli, 2008: 14).

⁶² *If the overall vision is lost, errors that seemed already overcome will be repeated. The deceit of the “false friends” is always on the lookout, although the path taken by the student has given proof of the insidiousness that can be hidden behind the etymological kinship, but this does not prevent the repetition of a habit, of a wrong attitude that always leads to look at the known (the L1 in this case) for the solution, playing with a percentage of probabilities that is believed much higher than it really is. And although of the awareness of the risk, in advancing levels, Italian-speaking students (like any other) never leave their L1 as a point of reference in front of any difficulty* (Tomaselli, 2008: 14, author’s translation).

⁶³ *Perhaps to achieve better didactic results among related languages, the secret lies in insisting on an approach that maintains constant references to pragmatic aspects fundamentally, since these are the ones that more clearly show the deep diversity among languages; whether these are related or not. It is the students*

Establishing links between signifiers and signified is far more complex than linking two concepts. Translating or learning rules are not a warranty to efficient acquisition. Sometimes, when the meaning of the signifier itself is new and so not present in the mind, additional efforts are needed in order to create both this inexistent lexicon and its corresponding reference. Other times, the structures formed in the mind can become obsolete when confronting particular hues and changes of significance which are untranslatable. Another case is when, as it usually happens, new concepts must be addressed and old elements are not appropriate to define them. In conclusion, in many occasions, the process of learning through our precedent language becomes ineffective.

To overcome these handicaps, other mechanisms should be integrated. According to the old theory of lateralization, the left hemisphere of the brain was related to language skills. In contrast, contemporary research in neurolinguistics offers interesting data towards the complementary functions of the two hemispheres of the brain.

Meanwhile, some research pointed to a quite compact distribution in the brain of languages which are alike, such as Italian and

themselves who discover the affinities as a pleasant surprise (Tomaselli, 2008: 14, author's translation).

Spanish, for instance (Barone, 1993). These neurological theories would give ground to the optimist view of interference by present linguists. Certainly, proximity between L1 and L2 set possibilities of designing alternative learning strategies that balance the lack of affectivity of straightforward translation strategies. Instead of using the same circuit channels, learning can be accomplished in a system where concepts are intertwined with one another in a meaningful sense.

In order to regard interference between near languages such as Italian and Spanish as a beneficial factor, nuances between languages should be valued as constructive and proximity be seen as an advantage. By approaching them with alternative integrative strategies, cultural development is enhanced and negative inferences controlled. This integrative methodology reinforces the interlinguistic exploration, by applying techniques of linguistic comparison and contrast (Dabène, 1996: 399).

It is necessary to work the language in a way that is not fragmentary. Isolated words and structures will only have negative repercussions. It is essential to create strategies that develop the ability of deducing the meaning through the context or by paraphrasing expressions.

Conclusions

That is the reason why phraseology is a fundamental aspect to take care for in all levels of foreign language learning contexts. This research is aimed at enhancing the objective set by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, where the skills established for the learners are clearly linked to the cultural context in which language is set. This research points to interlinguistic examination techniques, based on comparison and contrast procedures in order to contribute to a meaningful structure in the learners' lexicon.

3.3. Interlanguage, intercomprehension and plurilingualism

Languages are windows to other cultures and traditions, which in turn help us to look at our own cultures with a more critical eye (Capucho, 2010: 295)

3.3.1. From contrastive linguistics to interlinguistic influence

Contrastive linguistics was born as a subdiscipline of applied linguistics. It arose in the middle 40s as a form of the behaviourist approach in the theory of structuralism. Its main objective was to deal with the language problems which were generated inside a linguistic community, especially in the field of teaching-learning disciplines. The main focus of attention was the comparison between the structures of two languages and how their differences may affect the learning process (Calvi, 2003: 17).

This approach took the name of contrastive analysis. One of its main methods would be error analysis, whose origins go back to Corder's *The Significance of Learners' Errors* (1967). According to Corder, errors were revalorized as a necessary product in the learning process. In his approach, not only the influence of L1 was considered as a source of errors; but he also considered essential the

influence of the innate mechanisms which are characteristic in all language acquisition processes⁶⁴.

It was the evolution of the contrastive analysis approach, during the 80s, which gave ground to the interlinguistic influence theory (Kellerman, Sharwood, 1986). The model considered that the transference of L1 to L2 was a diversified phenomenon.

3.3.2. Towards interlanguage

Interlanguage would appear during this period as a system that studies the learner's non-native system as an autonomous process. The approach valued positively the role of L1, considered then as a source of hypothesis for L2. The new vision was based on the common assumption that *el aprendizaje de lo nuevo se basa en lo conocido*⁶⁵ (Calvi, 2003: 18).

The theory supposed a revolution in terms of pedagogical implications in the classroom. L1 was not longer seen as an enemy whose interferences had to be eradicated, but a source of inspiration to favour an appropriate development of interlinguistic awareness (Calvi, 2003: 19).

⁶⁴ Theoretical models based on universal learning sequences typified this approach, based on the proposals by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982).

⁶⁵ *The learning of the new is based on the known* (Calvi, 2003: 18, author's translation).

Individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture – both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture, and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and the culture as practiced by natives (Lado, 1957: 2).

In summary, interlanguage theory, coined by Selinker in 1969, postulated that the second language learner's system was in an intermediate and detached position between the native and the target language.

Later on, further definitions for interlanguage emerge. Nemser (1971) defined it as an *approximate linguistic system*, while Porquier (1975) denominated it an *intermediate system* (Bailini, 2016: 17). Corder, on the other hand, named it *idiosyncratic dialect* (Hammarberg, 2001: 37).

Desde el principio queda claro, por lo tanto, que se trata de un sistema distinto tanto de la lengua materna (L1) como de la lengua objeto de estudio (L2)⁶⁶ (Bailini, 2016: 17).

⁶⁶ *From the beginning it is clear, therefore, that it is a different system both from the mother tongue (L1) and the target language (L2) (Bailini, 2016: 17, author's translation).*

Selinker's definition identified interlanguage as *a separate linguistic system on whose existence we can hypothesize the output of a student when trying to produce the target language standard* (Selinker, 1972: 214).

All definitions agree on the postulate that the learner's language is a correct system in its own idiosyncrasy. *This is the theoretical framework in which it is justified the positive and necessary character of error as a sign that learning is taking place* (Hammarberg, 2001: 37).

This halfway stage is part of a dynamic and variable process, since learning a new language is a continuous activity of mental restructuration. Thus, according to the interlanguage theory, learners are consciously testing hypotheses about the target language from a number of possible sources of information, including language and its communicative function, as well as knowledge about life, human beings and the universe.

In this sense, this theory connects with the cognitive linguistics principles. According to the interlanguage theory, students build an alternative system that for the time being provides order to the linguistic chaos in front of them. It is by advancing through the different phases of the interlanguage development (Corder, 1973) that students move towards proficiency (Brown, 1987).

3.3.3. Pedagogical implications: integrative didactic approach

Interlanguage represented a philosophy that would expand in the second language acquisition methodologies. To shape an integrative didactic approach, it became crucial to take into consideration the learner's interlanguage level. New approaches born with the interlanguage perspective were *the source of hundreds of empirical studies in contrastive analysis in language contact situations* (Selinker, 1969: 67).

Several research dissertations have moved forward in the path of explaining the factors involved in interlinguistic influence processes. Such is the case of a study by Mourssi (2015), which tries to give an answer to the cross-linguistic influence between Arab (L1) and English (L2) in L2 learning. The study analysed cross-linguistic influences, concluding that during the interlanguage process interferences are received from both the origin and the target language. The research is interesting as Mourssi defends the hypothesis of a parallel linguistic system independent from both of them. Therefore, the line of interlanguage theory is strengthened in this research.

Regarding the interference of other languages, the nature of these languages should also be considered when analysing the learners' evolution within the interlanguage level. According to Cook (2001:

416), *elements in the first language help learners with the second language if both share common elements but hinder them when they differ.*

This variability is intrinsic in phraseology, which is an aspect in language which shows various faces that can refer either to shared or divergent elements between languages. One of the main goals in this thesis is discerning the different learners' strategies in each case.

Moving towards our field of interest, in learning situations where dominant and target languages are akin, the influence of the native language proves to be significant and interference occurs more frequently. An example of it would be the book by Bailini (2016), exploring the Italian-Spanish territory.

Este libro ofrece un análisis sistemático y paralelo de las interlenguas del español y del italiano entendidas como sistemas en cuya configuración el papel de la L1 es determinante, ya que es el punto de partida de ese proceso de reestructuración continuo que es la interlengua. Si esto es así, la interlengua puede convertirse, para el profesor, en una herramienta didáctica más para encaminar el aprendiz hacia una mayor conciencia lingüística acerca de las

*ventajas y los riesgos que aprender una lengua afín conlleva*⁶⁷ (Bailini, 2016: 14).

Various linguistic theories of acquisition have tackled the phenomenon of interference and its incidence in the learning strategies, by considering various factors. These include psychological aspects such as age and learning styles; and linguistic features, such as native language transference and variability, among others. Consequently, investigations claim that drawing the learner's linguistic and psychological picture is useful to define the best learning techniques.

In this project, attention will be set on linguistic factors that can affect the learning of a hybrid aspect of language, such as it is the case in phraseology. The goal of this doctoral thesis is to reveal learners' linguistic identities, in order to discern what learning strategies learners use and how these are related to the influential factor of linguistic identity.

⁶⁷ *This book offers a systematic and parallel analysis of the interlanguage of Spanish and Italian understood as systems in whose configuration the role of the L1 is determinant, since it is the starting point of that process of continuous restructuring that is the interlanguage. If this is so, the interlanguage can become, for the teacher, a more didactic tool to guide the learner towards a greater linguistic awareness about the advantages and risks that learning a related language entails* (Bailini, 2016: 14, author's translation).

3.3.4. Crosslinguistic influence

It has been stated that a definition of the learner's linguistic profile is effective to determine which learning strategies work best. However, this linguistic portrait is not only conformed by one native language and a second learned language, but also by other languages that learners may know, and which could come influential.

The learning of a third language provides an interesting context for research. It depends upon a number of factors including the linguistic and cultural relatedness of the languages, the relationship between first and second language to the third language – especially if second and third languages are closely related or the learner is attempting a third language short after beginning a second language (Brown, 1987: 213).

In academic research, usually second language influence is solely mentioned, with third or additional language learning taking less consideration. Some studies have faced the challenge of telling the role that previous languages play in the target language learning⁶⁸, still resulting hard to discern the factors which take place in the influence of additional languages (Freitas, Borges, 2014).

⁶⁸ Cenoz, Hufesien, Jessner, 2001; De Angelis, 2007; Odlin, 1989; Ringbom, 1987; Selinker, 1969; Sharwood-Smith, Kellerman, 1986.

However, additional or third language learning is considered to be in its beginning yet (Amaro, Flynn, Rothman, 2012; mentioned in Dietrich, 2015: 1), being traditionally melted in the past with second language learning (Cenoz et al., 2001, 2003; mentioned in Dietrich, 2015: 1), or a mere extension of it (De Angelis, 2007; Jessner, 2006; mentioned in Dietrich, 2015: 1).

In reviewing the SLA literature it is clear that most researchers have been concerned with how second languages are acquired, and have not taken the time to place their findings and observations into the broader context of non-native language acquisition as a whole. Some may argue that this situation has arisen because a distinction between an L2 learner and an L3 or an L6 learner is in fact redundant, as the processes underlying the acquisition of all non-native languages is essentially the same. Others, on the other hand, may argue that prior knowledge and learning experience significantly affect the acquisition process and therefore that a distinction between types of acquisition is essential (De Angelis, 2007: 4).

As the majority of the world's population is multilingual, research on linguistics should be centred on the multilingual speaker as the norm, not on the monolingual individual. Basing psycholinguistics on the ideal monolingual speaker in fact constitutes a misunderstanding of the majority of native speakers.

Multilingualism therefore must not only be accepted as the linguistic norm, it must also be taken into consideration that it is closely linked to the concepts of personal identity, ethnicity and multiculturalism (Herdina, 2002: 1).

As contacts between nations increase due to economic, political and technological developments, so does the importance of being able to speak and understand a different language from one's own. Although precise numbers are lacking, in the world at large there may be more multilinguals than monolinguals when we define "multilingualism" as the regular use of two or more languages (Dijkstra, 2007: 251).

Nowadays it has been proved that learners of second languages are different from learners of third languages (Bardel, Falk, 2007; Cenoz et al., 2001; Hufeisen, 1993; Jessner, 2006; Ringbom, 2007; Sánchez 2011a, b, 2015; mentioned in Dietrich, 2015:1). The latter have more experience in the learning of a foreign language and, as a consequence, have greater metalinguistic knowledge and language learning strategies (Hufeisen 1998; Jessner, 2006; mentioned in Dietrich, 2015:1).

Todos partimos con el potencial de hablar cualquier idioma. Pero si somos expuestos a una sola lengua, nuestras opciones pronto se reducen, porque las conexiones neurales

*necesarias para distinguir sonidos se atrofian si no se estimulan a temprana edad. Por eso los adultos que aprenden idiomas extranjeros rara vez los pueden hablar sin acento. Los adultos japoneses, por ejemplo, no pueden reproducir la l o la r inglesa porque estos sonidos no figuran en el japonés. A la inversa, los angloparlantes no consiguen manejar ciertos fonemas japoneses*⁶⁹ (Sacks, 1989: 97-98).

Contrary to second language learners, third – or additional – language learners have at least two linguistic systems to which relate their new knowledge. This has as a result more than one source of influence and interaction (Bono, 2011; Cenoz et al., 2001; Herwig, 2001; Sánchez, 2011a, b, 2015; mentioned in Dietrich, 2015: 1).

This process is known as crosslinguistic influence, which can be defined as *the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously – and perhaps imperfectly – acquired* (Odlin, 1989: 27). Crosslinguistic influence is bidirectional, that is to say,

⁶⁹ *We all come with the potential to speak any language. But if we are exposed to a single language, our options are soon reduced, because the neural connections necessary to distinguish sounds are atrophied if they are not stimulated at an early age. Consequently, adults who learn foreign languages can rarely speak them without accent. Japanese adults, for example, cannot reproduce English l or r because these sounds do not exist in Japanese. Conversely, English speakers are unable to handle certain Japanese phonemes* (Sacks, 1989: 97-98, author's translation).

characterized by the mutual influence from L1 to L2 – or L3 – and vice versa. Interesting studies have considered this relationship⁷⁰.

A significant study on L3 learning and how it is affected by previous learned languages was described by Gibbs (Gibbs, 1997: 26). On the whole, this study confirmed findings from other L3 research: knowledge of prior L2 can exert considerable influence on the L3 learning process.

This case sheds light on some aspects of the speaking process that are not visible in a monolingual or purely bilingual speaker with achieved stable language competence, or in an L2 learner with L1 as the only background language.

In the results, it was proved that external influence on word construction and morphology arouse in the attempts to produce formulations in L3 or an additional language. The central process here was located in the lexicon. The learner set out with preconceived lemma content, and tried to construct a corresponding lexeme. The model for them was usually taken from L1 or L2, which was revealed by the language switch or word construction by

⁷⁰ In Dietrich's (2015) study, the author investigates the role that L1 Portuguese and L2 English has in the L3 Spanish learning. Similar to this is Bouvy's (2000) investigation on L2 German/Italian influence on L3 English. In other studies, the centre of attention is the modification by L3 on previous competence in L2, and even in L1, such as in Kecskes, Tunde (2000).

which the learner attempted to elicit the target word (Gibbs, 1997: 26).

3.3.5. Multilingualism and plurilingualism

This reconsideration of the crosslinguistic influence of additional languages in the learning process justifies new positions that contemplate it with a renewed view based on a plurilingual approach.

There are several dissertations that echo properly the consensus of this outlook. One of the main references for language teaching and learning disciplines is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, where the definition of the plurilingual profile defines perfectly well a recurrent characteristic of contemporary people, and from which any foreign language learning process must be developed.

According to the Council of Europe's standard distinction, the concept of plurilingual competence is differentiated from the situation of multilingualism itself.

Plurilingualism is the ability to use more than one language –and accordingly sees languages from the standpoint of speakers and learners. Multilingualism, on the other hand, refers to the presence of several languages in a given

*geographical area, regardless of those who speak them. In other words, the presence of two or more languages in an area does not necessarily imply that people in that area can use more than one of them; some use only one*⁷¹.

In summary, multilingualism is understood at social level and plurilingualism at individual level (Cavalli, Coste, Crişan, van de Ven, 2013).

Indeed, every society is multilingual. There is a multilingualism of the territory, which derives from its linguistic varieties, including official, dialectical or minority languages, and its cultural patrimony. Apart from this patrimonial multilingualism, current societies are open to a greater diversity, as a consequence of the openness of borders. In addition, every language is plural, due to various factors, such as variation of time and space, channel, social groups, register and context (Cavalli et al., 2013).

Multilingualism is humankind's norm. With perhaps 6000 languages of the world, far more than the 200 or so countries, an equally rough-and-ready calculation suggests that human beings are more likely than not to be able to speak more than one language (Ellis, 2009: 3).

⁷¹ Council of Europe: www.coe.int/lang

In a minor scale, plurilingualism and multilingualism are related to the concepts of bilingualism (on the part of psychologists and psycholinguists) and diglossia (on the part of sociologist and sociolinguists). Bilingualism is essentially a characterization of individual linguistic versatility whereas diglossia is a characterization of the social allocation of functions to different languages or varieties (Fishman, 1979: 286, 295).

This social phenomenon forms the framework for this project. It is intended the contextualization of the Spanish language learning in an environment of multilingualism, given the fact that Italy draws an interesting map of linguistic diversity, with presence of dialects and regional variants, but with a powerful national unifying language.

On this scenery, the individual profile of each person in the country differs from one another, and depends on multiple variables, such as geographical and familiar background. On the one hand, the presence of other languages, for example the firm manifestation of a global dominant language such as English, provides every learner with previous rich linguistic knowledge. On the other hand, academical and vital paths provide differing characteristics to the plurilinguistic profile. In addition, the subjects of this study will be university students with a plurilinguistic profile due to their academic formation, where they acquire more than one foreign language. This conjunction of circumstances creates unique

plurilinguistic profiles on the background of a multilingualism landscape.

The multilingualism landscape of reference in this thesis is contextualized in Europe. It is not a coincidence that this is the frame where the plurilingual objectives set by the Council of Europe have taken root, as the common origins and traits of their languages or groups of languages favour the success of the approach.

Una Europa di poliglotti non è una Europa di persone che parlano correntemente molte lingue, ma nel migliore dei casi di persone che possono incontrarsi parlando ciascuno la propria lingua e intendendo quella dell'altro, che pure non saprebbero parlare in modo fluente, intendessero il "genio", l'universo culturale che ciascuno esprime parlando la lingua dei propri avi e della propria tradizione⁷² (Eco, 1993: 355).

⁷² *An Europe of polyglots is not an Europe of people who speak fluently many languages, but, at best, of people who can meet each other speaking their own language and understanding the one they may not speak fluently, and imagining the "genius", the cultural universe that everyone expresses by speaking the language of their ancestors and their own tradition (Eco, 1993: 355, author's translation).*

3.3.6. Intercomprehension

From this renewed consideration in language learning philosophy, based on plurilingual approaches, branches such as intercomprehension arise.

*Intercomprehension is a discipline which, with the support of the European institutions, has undergone a remarkable development in recent years*⁷³ (Clua, 2007: 156).

Intercomprehension is a line of work which has developed strings from which to pull in order to reach a learning stage where a more completed competence in languages is achieved.

The main principle of this perspective is that it is possible to understand another language without having full knowledge of it.

In other words, for people who speak different languages to be able to communicate it is not indispensable for them to have a mutual active competence in all of them; it is enough for them to master their receptive competences in the languages of their interlocutors. This differentiation between active (speaking and writing) and receptive (understanding

⁷³ Among the most important European intercomprehension projects it can be mentioned: EuroCom, Eurom4, Galatea-Galanet, and IGLO (Intercomprehension in the Germanic Languages Online) (Clua, 2007: 156).

and reading) competences is fundamental for fostering multilingual intercommunication, since receptive multilingualism, or intercomprehension, is far more realistic because it requires less effort and less learning time, especially when it comes to learning languages genetically related to the learner's (Clua, 2007: 154).

In summary, in intercomprehension the difference between input and output is highlighted. Thus, it is considered essential to consider a separate assessment for *comprehension*, on the one hand; and *speech*, on the other. This approach is based on the old premise stating that *if system A is understood or perhaps translated into B by the listener, there is no implication that the listener necessarily can speak language A* (Ervin-Tripp, 1971: 66).

The principle of intercomprehension according to which is impossible to teach a language without the presence of the others comes reasonable in the current social conditions of multilingualism. Consequently, intercomprehension becomes a sensitive point of view under these conditions.

One could say that these circumstances are inherent to humanity, and not new. What is new, however, is the approach from which to tackle this phenomenon. In the field of foreign language teaching, this perspective brings to the favourable consideration of including some aspects of other languages in class. That is the point of the

intercomprehension movement, which deals with the presence of multilingualism at school with a renewed vision. It is considered that educative systems that promote the knowledge of two or more languages develop in its students' remarkable metalinguistic abilities (Araújo, Melo-Pfeifer, 2010).

Besides, crosslinguistic phenomena such as instability in linguistic use are manifested both in interlanguage and intralanguage occurrences (Marbà, 2006).

*Si ensenyem una llengua, no podem ensenyar-la prescindint de l'existència de moltes altres llengües. El fenomen d'interllengua té lloc també en la pròpia llengua, no només quan n'aprenem una nova. La inestabilitat és un tret indestruïble de l'ús lingüístic: sempre estem afegint o deixant d'usar recursos, matisant significats, adequant expressions, afinant registres*⁷⁴ (Marbà, 2006: 1).

It is in this sense that Marbà differentiates between intralinguistic and interlinguistic phenomena. Stability is neither present in our native language, as we are always adding knowledge to it.

⁷⁴ *If we teach a language, we cannot teach it without regard to the existence of many other languages. The phenomenon of interlanguage also takes place in the own language, not only when we learn a new one. Instability is an indestructible feature of language use: we are always adding or leaving the use of resources, sharpening meanings, matching expressions, refining registers* (Marbà, 2006:1, author's translation).

Consequently, according to this author, intralanguage process does also take place along a person's life, in their own language.

The principles of intercomprehension are consistent with the cognitive grammar approach. Both take into account areas from sociology and psychology to consider language learning from a global approach and both are reinforced by major scientific findings. This was the case of the Nobel Prize in Medicine 1981 to Roger W. Sperry, for his neurological ascertainment of the complementary functions of the cerebral hemispheres, which gave sense to perceptive linguistics theories.

Some singular scientific disciplines have even evolved from this line of work, such as endolinguistics, for instance. Endolinguistics claimed that it is possible to achieve intercomprehension between languages without having previous knowledge of them, whenever good ear training is accomplished. Its innovative approach presented multilingual programs which considered a wide spectrum of disciplines such as music, anthropology and neurology when regarding linguistics and language learning.

Neurological discoveries were essential to the expansion of endolinguistics and other innovative learning methodologies. In brain studies, attention is drawn to the distribution of human linguistic cognitive functions. Broca's and Wernike's areas, on the left hemisphere, would correspond to the analytic and systematic

production of language. Meulemans's point –named after the endolinguistics main scientist–, on the right hemisphere, would correspond to a global function. This would be responsible for intercomprehension processes, which are based on lateral and unconscious brain procedures⁷⁵.

This approach turned into specific contemporary practices intended at producing new language learning methods. An example would be the method Eurom4 (1977), a project which experimented with the simultaneous reading comprehension process of texts from four Latin languages in order to acquire a full competence of them⁷⁶. Historically, other examples can be found in methods such as the Silent Way (Gattegno, 1963), Community Language Learning (Curran, 1970), Lateral Thinking (De Bono, 1970) or Suggestopedia (Luzanov, 1970).

⁷⁵ For more information on the concept of endolinguistics see: Meulemans, C., Elias, J. (1993): *Introducción a la Endolingüística*. Decaglotia I. Barcelona, Límite.

⁷⁶ The project was devised by Claire Blanche-Benveniste, in collaboration with four universities and its scholars: Uzcanga from University of Salamanca, Valli from University Aix-en-Provence, Mota from University of Lisboa, Simone and Bonvino from University of Roma Tre; all in the frame of the Lingua project from the European Community. For more information, see <http://www.eurom5.com/p/chisiamo-es/lastoria>

3.3.7. Plurilingual and pluricultural competences

Intercomprehension is based on the assumption that we have unconscious skills and mechanisms that we use to move from one language to another (Uzcanga, 2015).

However, it is important not to detach language and culture, as language is the vehicle of the society where it belongs. Uzcanga's research demonstrated that some cultural – and so often opaque – aspects from a language are more hardly memorized by students, because they were not primarily understood. This conclusion points to the need of achieving a more comprehensive learning methodology.

This methodology should include strategies that consider culture and which contemplate language from a holistic approach. This approach establishes that language occurs for the formulation, comprehension and transmission of meaning. Without this function there would not be any need for language, and humans would not acquire it (Holdaway, 1979).

Language learning always takes place in a context, which becomes crucial in the creation of meaning. Indeed, as more repetitive and predictable is a context, learning becomes easier.

This approach applying to language learning disciplines shares a common background with historic social sciences tendencies.

During the first half of the 20th century, conductism was the reigning social theory. When applied to linguistics, conductist linguists, such as Bloomfield, considered language as a separate system of elements –phonology, morphology, syntax. Thus, the human abilities when learning a language could be clearly divided into competences. As a result, little attention was paid to aspects of interaction between meaning and structure.

After the 60s, other more integrative approaches bloomed. Linguists such as Bruner, Vygotsky or Weir contributed to highlight the principles of the natural learning of language. This would give ground to the term of holistic learning. This theory considers language as an integrated system, whose components were complexly organized and interinfluential (Cummings, 1983).

Vygotsky adoptó como una de sus metáforas centrales el concepto de dos corrientes de desarrollo que fluían juntas: una corriente de pensamiento y una corriente de lenguaje. El lenguaje interior era para él un proceso regulador que, según las palabras famosas de Dewey, proporcionaba un medio para clasificar nuestros pensamientos acerca del mundo. Vygotsky también vio al lenguaje como la encarnación de la historia cultural. No era de sorprender

*entonces que el lenguaje pudiese brindar el acceso a un “estrato superior”*⁷⁷ (Bruner, 2003: 146).

Under this holistic language point of view, learning became considered as an active-constructive process, where each individual created knowledge through interactions with the physical and social media. This interaction with the world responded to the need of including the pluricultural and intercultural dimension to the formula.

Currently, it is widely agreed that a proper education on terms of plurilingual and pluricultural competences should consider the nature of multilingual human interactions. In effect, linguistic interchanges take place even between speakers who use different languages. This is a daily phenomenon in areas of Scandinavia, Canada or the Czech and Slovakian region.

The singularity of having talkers speaking two languages in the same conversation is referred to as non-convergent discourse. The concept was coined by Reitze Jonhman, a Dutch sociologist and

⁷⁷ *Vygotsky adopted as one of his central metaphors the concept of two currents of development that flowed together: a current of thought and a current of language. The inner language was for him a regulatory process that, according to Dewey's famous words, provided means to classify our thoughts about the world. Vygotsky also saw language as the embodiment of cultural history. It was not surprising then that language could provide access to a “higher stratum”* (Bruner, 2003: 146, author's translation).

linguist who studied this situation in depth. This is a reality showing another face of the intercomprehension theory.

Pluriculturalism is the desire and ability to identify with several cultures, and participate in them. Interculturalism is the ability to experience another culture and analyse that experience. The intercultural competence acquired from doing this helps individuals to understand cultural difference better, establish cognitive and affective links between past and future experiences of that difference, mediate between members of two (or more) social groups and their cultures, and question the assumptions of their own cultural group (Beacco, Byram, Cavalli, Coste, Egli Cuenat, Goullier, Panthier, 2010)⁷⁸.

This competence is included in the guidelines of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which classifies communicative language competence in three dimensions: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences. This classification presents an innovative perspective, as it situates in the same hierarchical level the sociolinguistic competences to the strictly linguistic ones.

⁷⁸ For more information see: Directorate of Education and Languages, DGIV. Council of Europe, Strasbourg. www.coe.int/lang. More information can be found in: Byram (2009).

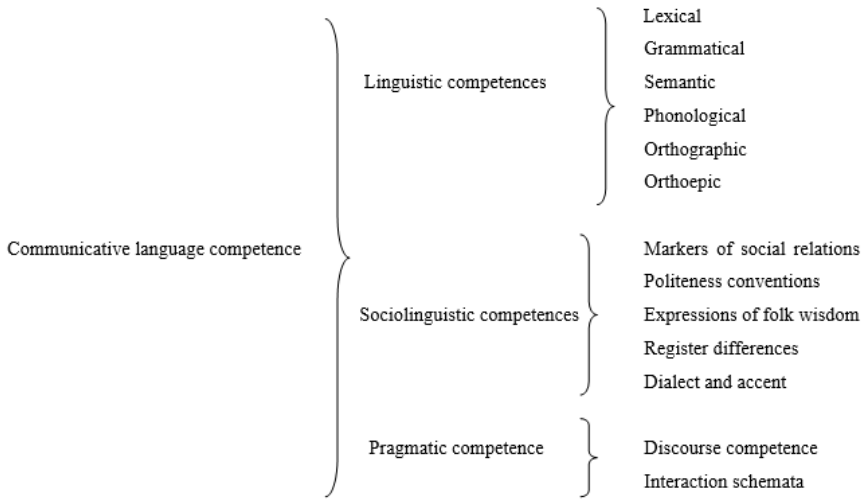


Fig. 8. Communicative language competence (Candelier, Camilleri, Castellotti, de Pietro, Lörincz, Meissner, Schröder-Sura, Noguero, Molinié, 2007).

This consideration of the communicative competence becomes more evident with the birth of blended disciplines such as sociolinguistics, growing from linguistics and sociology. For instance, subdisciplines such as ethnography of communication is a fundamental part of sociolinguistics and has taken an important role in the study of communication premises⁷⁹.

Mucho más complicado se presenta el uso de la noción de “competencia comunicativa”. Este concepto incluye el conocimiento, por parte de un hablante, no sólo de un código

⁷⁹ *The discipline of ethnography of communication which Dell Hymes began in 1962 continues to be an important part of sociolinguistics. These interdisciplinary studies are centred in social behaviour, explaining how it structures cultural systems and context (Moreno Fernández, 1994: 112-113).*

lingüístico, sino también de qué decir, a quién y cómo decirlo en una situación apropiada. Conviene dejar sentado que el estudio de la competencia comunicativa se inició en la etnografía de la comunicación con unas ideas muy claras, fundamentadas en los trabajos de Dell Hymes⁸⁰ (Moreno Fernández, 1994: 115).

Therefore, according to the premises set by ethnography of communication, the communicative competence intrinsically includes these sociolinguistic and pragmatic subcompetences.

3.3.8. Language diversity and common richness

One of the features that best explains the world today is diversity, not only in the environment but also in languages. In theory, and from the point of view of nature, diversity is generally seen as enriching. In the human sphere, however, it is not so clear, and still less when dealing with the language issue. Although it is usually taken for granted that the cultural and linguistic diversity of the world is a priceless historical heritage that deserves to be conserved, the

⁸⁰ *Much more complicated is the use of the notion of "communicative competence". This concept includes the knowledge, on the part of a speaker, not only of a linguistic code, but also of what to say, to whom and how to say it in an appropriate situation. It should be noted that the study of communicative competence began in the ethnography of communication with very clear ideas, based on the work by Dell Hymes (Moreno Fernández, 1994: 115, author's translation).*

difficulties diversity causes in intercommunication between the different groups that make up the human race tend to tip the balance towards a negative assessment of the phenomenon (Clua, 2007: 151).

How can we explain the fact that human beings speak entirely different languages? Peter Mühlhäusler, a linguistic scholar who has attempted an answer. Mühlhäusler maintains that different languages cause different perceptions of the world and reflect *thousands of years of human accommodation to complex environmental conditions* (Wright, 2004: 6). However, we should not forget that we all have a common origin, also in our linguistic competences.

The Indo-European language, for instance, was discovered during the 19th century by comparatists whose linguistic studies brought forward a significant discovery for humanity: that some languages have, as assumed, a common origin. It was by a work of contrast and observation of a plurilingual reality that this postulation could be verified.

La llengua no és una cosa fixa i estable, però això no vol dir que sigui caòtica. Els comparatistes del segle XIX van “trobar” l’indoeuropeu, i investigadors més recents, com Sapir o Swadesh, han trobat altres regularitats estudiant llengües ameríndies. La tasca de descriure i comparar

*formes lingüístiques diverses permet valorar les analogies i diferències entre llengües, famílies, sistemes i macrosistemes*⁸¹ (Marbà, 2006: 21).

Certainly, during the 19th century, German scholars such as Friedrich, von Schlegel and Bopp studied the relations between Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Persian and German languages. Correspondences were discovered between the paradigms of the verb “to be” in several languages, and they arrived at the hypothesis that each family of languages derived from a *protolingua* that no longer exists, but which could be ideally reconstructed (Eco, 1993: 94).

In a similar way, the genetic research carried out by Cavalli-Sforza tends to show that there is a close homology between genetic affinities and linguistic resemblances. In the end, this position tends to the hypothesis affirming that there is a common origin of languages, which depends on the common evolutionary origin of human groups.

⁸¹ *Language is not a fixed and stable thing, but that does not mean that it is chaotic. Comparators of the nineteenth century “found” Indo-European, and more recent researchers, such as Sapir or Swadesh, found other regularities studying amerindies languages. The task of describing and comparing different linguistic forms allows to assess the analogies and differences between languages, families, systems and macrosystems* (Marbà, 2006: 21, author’s translation)

Just as the human being appeared once on the face of the earth and then spread all over the globe, so would the language: biological monogenesis and linguistic monogenesis would go in unison and could be reconstructed by inference from comparable data (Eco, 1993: 104).

From this evolution the arising of a great diversity of languages would begin to spread, always in a process of common contribution. Certainly, evolution in languages is born due to their reciprocal influence and interaction.

However, Eco's consideration of the monogenetic origin of languages has been widely contradicted by some positions nearer to the polygenetic approach. From this perspective, it is considered unrealistic to point to a unique source for the different languages. Contrarily, it is considered that a big number of independent sources, in different places at different times, gave birth to languages⁸².

Languages influence one another, in two ways: loans or common roots. That's why languages change and we have different languages. We loan words and change their meaning to fit them in our context. It's a fascinating thing but

⁸² See Hassler's considerations on this issue.

that's why we don't understand one another (Hemming, 2015: 37).

In conclusion, this diversification has given ground to multiplied richness and to a common wealth. A consciousness of this social face in all language processes should be transferred to the learning context.

*El punto de partida, por ser sociolingüístico, antepone los factores socio-contextuales a los criterios biológicos o innatistas. Importa conocer cómo se aprende la lengua en su contexto social y cultural inmediato, para que se aprenden determinadas estrategias comunicativas, cómo reflejan estas estrategias las relaciones entre las funciones sociales de los individuos y en qué medida influyen, en el proceso de adquisición, la familia, los compañeros, la organización del sistema educativo y las creencias de la comunidad. La adquisición de la competencia comunicativa se realiza principalmente a través de la interacción comunicativa, que a su vez contribuye a la construcción progresiva de la identidad social de los hablantes y del significado social de los usos lingüísticos*⁸³ (Moreno Fernández, 1994: 118).

⁸³ *The starting point, because it is sociolinguistic, prefers socio-contextual factors to biological or innatist criteria. It is important to know how the language is learned in its immediate social and cultural context so that certain communicative strategies are learned, how these strategies reflect the relationships between the social functions of individuals and to what extent they*

In this context, research as the present one is relevant as it offers a positive reinforcement to language diversity, in this way fostering the sociolinguistic competence included in the formulae.

3.3.9. Towards a reflexive approach

Language is another point of contact between subjects, and it is important not only to learn languages, but to understand how they work.

The book by Candelier et al. (2007) states a framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures. This asserts that reflexive competences in language learning must be enhanced.

Between the objectives set in the framework there is that of establishing a comparative approach that is not only restricted to formal aspects.

For example, the need of *knowing that there is not a word-to-word equivalence between languages [...]* or of *being familiar with some*

influence the acquisition process in the family, peers, the organization of the educational system and the beliefs of the community. The acquisition of communicative competence is mainly through communicative interaction, which in turn contributes to the progressive construction of the social identity of the speakers and the social meaning of linguistic uses (Moreno Fernández, 1994: 118, author's translation).

correspondences/absence of correspondence between the mother tongue/language of education and their languages (Candelier et al., 2007: 52).

To achieve these competences the plurilingual approach is basic. Nowadays it is known that languages are not learned one after the other or are differently stored. Contrarily, what is known from one language is a springboard to know more of another one, so that the greater knowledge of language, the better chances of new language learning (Candelier, Camilleri, Fitzpatrick, Halink, Muresan, Newb, Heyworth, 2003).

This view marries the consideration according to which there is one common multilingual competence that is expressed through different languages. Following this line of work, research has supported the existence of an underlying common competence. This competence would explain the simultaneous use of diverse languages that subjects with plurilingual competences display (Cummins, 2000; Vila, Siqués, Roig, 2006), showing remarkable metacognitive abilities (Herdina, Jessner, 2002).

It is in the light of these investigations that the Council of Europe proposes a linguistic objective that considers these plurilingual and pluricultural notions, where speakers do not provide a collection of competences to communicate different and separate languages, but

one plurilingual and pluricultural competence that includes the whole of their linguistic repertoires.

A proper education in terms of plurilingual and pluricultural competences should regard language as a universal human trait and make students aware of the common background that languages share. In this way, issues like phraseology can be considered from a further and more developed perspective.

3.3.10. Metaphorical competence

Symbolic thought is at the cradle of humanity.

Before writing was invented, people represented thoughts and ideas with images.



Fig. 9. Pictogram with evidence of symbolic thought.

This pictogram with evidence of symbolic thought was developed by people with no written language. Far older images have been discovered dating back more than 30000 years. Their makers probably had the ability to use language,

since both language and art reflect a capacity for symbolic thought.

Samples of early writing, such as these cuneiform tablets, provide hard evidence of language use for at least the past 5000 years. But written artefacts do not indicate when language itself began, since articulate speech arose long before writing. Indeed, all cultures have speech, but some never developed writing⁸⁴.

This historical contextualization makes reference to the common background of each and every language on earth. Symbolic competence is indeed much more aged than most of competences developed throughout the history of human evolution. It formed a shackle in the human evolutive chain from which the fork between animals and humans began to widen.

This symbolic competence, thus, is at the basis of human thought, and gives sense to numerous interpretations of the world. Language was the tool – or one of them – which evolved from it. However, this symbolic competence provides, still now, a rich background which plays a significant role in all kinds of communication acts.

⁸⁴ Picture and information from *Natural History Museum New York City*. 9th October 2017.

The need of interpreting the world in economic and effective ways was the base for the use of symbols. Symbols, ultimately, are metaphors.

Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language, but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature (Lakoff, Jonhson, 1980: 3).

Consequently, metaphor is present in every aspect of our lives, and language is the responsible for carrying its lexical form. However, human nature and language evolution has caused a development in the constructions of metaphors that have diversified them in a massive way. This way, culture has also been highly enriched.

Richness and diversity are at the base of the phenomena of plurilingualism and multilingualism. Every language – and every variation of them – has formed its own metaphorical collection. This forms a catalogue of expressions which carry with them cultural and encyclopaedic knowledge. Metaphorical meanings are usually the inheritance of a particular culture.

Danesi (1992) claims that lack of metaphorical competence is a major reason why foreign language learners fail to attain native-like fluency and that competence at using figurative language is inadequate in typical classroom language

learners even after three or four years of foreign language learning (Cieślicka, 2015: 209).

It is essential to open this border and allow a translingual competence which gives significance to these cultural contents for foreign learners. Here is where phraseology forms a vital role, and becomes a necessary part in language learning.

A través de los fraseologismos se pueden trabajar contenidos culturales, y se desarrolla la competencia sociocultural del aprendiz. El objetivo del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de unidades fraseológicas en el aula de español ha de ser un fin en sí mismo, y se ha de contemplar como un aspecto más en el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa del alumno⁸⁵ (Aguilar, 2013: 3).

A functional and pragmatical learning context should be implemented in order to help the learner acquire this metalinguistic ability.

La finalidad última de dicho proceso ha de ser que el alumno emplee los fraseologismos aprendidos de la misma manera

⁸⁵ *Through phraseologisms, cultural contents can be worked on, and the sociocultural competence of the apprentice is developed. The objective of the teaching-learning process of phraseological units in the Spanish classroom must be an end in itself, and it must be considered as one more aspect in the development of the student's communicative competence (Aguilar, 2013: 3, author's translation).*

*que lo haría un hablante nativo que está aprendiendo a usarlas por primera vez, es decir, experimentando cómo funcionan y deducir las reglas por las que se rigen*⁸⁶ (Gómez, 2000: 112, 120)

3.3.11. Translanguage

Translanguage represents a step further in the sociolinguistic phenomena of multilingualism. The definition of translingual can be applied to all type of situations where linguistic codes are referred to more than one language. The occurrence makes reference to multiple circumstances, as its interpretation is especially wide. Thus, the concept is usually related to the fact of existing in multiple languages or having the same meaning in many languages; and sometimes the occurrence by which an element contains words of multiple languages or operates between different languages.

Etimologically, “translingualism” comes from *–trans–*, meaning “across”, and *lingual*, meaning “having to do with languages”. Consequently, the term means “across languages”. An example of this would be found in internationalisms, which provide many of the examples of translingual vocabulary⁸⁷.

⁸⁶ *The ultimate purpose of this process must be that the student employs phraselogsims learned in the same way as a native speaker who is learning to use them for the first time, that is, experiencing how they work and deducing the rules by which they are governed* (Gómez, 2000: 112, 120, author’s translation).

⁸⁷ Italian language is, in fact, rich in internationalist terms, especially from English.

In the pedagogical field, translanguaging is focused on the teaching process of a second language.

It was Cen Williams who coined the term “translanguaging” in the 1980s to refer to the planned and systematic use of two languages in the same lesson. As an early example of this structure, one of the languages was used during the introduction phase and the other during the production phase (Lasagabaster, García, 2014: 2).

In a more recent and updated definition, García (2009) defines translanguaging as multiple discursive practices that bilingual speakers use to understand the bilingual world in which they live (Lasagabaster, García, 2014: 2).

*El translenguaje se atribuye al conocimiento de dos o más lenguas que permite la comunicación con otros hablantes plurilingües usando indistintamente (a menudo de forma inconsciente) las lenguas que se conocen*⁸⁸ (García, 2009: 125).

This is the prevalent concept in the translanguaging model applied to current pedagogical practices.

⁸⁸ *Translanguage is the knowledge of two or more languages that allows communication with other plurilingual speakers using interchangeably (often unconsciously) the languages that they know* (García, 2009, author’s translation).

*El translenguaje entiende que el hablante bilingüe dispone de un repertorio lingüístico único del cual seleccionan aquellos elementos que faciliten una comunicación efectiva*⁸⁹ (Lasagabaster, García, 2014: 120).

*Translenguaje es el término general para cubrir diferentes prácticas pedagógicas basadas en las prácticas naturales del hablante plurilingüe*⁹⁰ (Esteve, González Davies, 2016).

Developing a translangual competence will help to give meaning to the cultural contents for foreign learners. This competence becomes evidenced in the practice of language used by dynamic bilinguals to strategically optimize communication and comprehension. The strategies involve using of their entire linguistic and semiotic repertoire. The innovative part of the story is the acceptance of this technique by teachers as a legitimate pedagogical practice.

The successful expansion of translanguaging is not only the consequence of pedagogical innovations, but also of a general changement in the social perception of bilingualism. Here, translanguaging has become differentiated from the simple fact known as code-switching.

⁸⁹ *Translanguage understands that the bilingual speaker has a unique linguistic repertoire from which they select those elements that facilitate an effective communication* (Lasagabaster, García, 2014, author's translation).

⁹⁰ *Translanguage is the general term to cover different pedagogical practices based on the natural practices of the multilingual speaker* (Esteve, González Davies, 2016, author's translation).

While code-switching states that the bilingual speaker uses two languages as two separate monolingual codes, translanguaging believes that bilingual speakers have a unique linguistic repertoire which they strategically use to choose elements that enable effective communication. Translanguaging, therefore, is the process by which bilingual students make use of the many resources their bilingual status offers (Lasagabaster, García, 2014: 2-3).

This legitimization brings the implementation of a dynamic model of bilingualism⁹¹, which would become considered a resource rather than a problem (Lasagabaster, García, 2014: 3).

In order to achieve this the education system must discard the traditional view of bilingualism where the two languages in contact become clearly defined, independent and separate entities; it must embrace a more open and flexible view that fosters the synergies of the languages in contact, rather than

⁹¹ *The process by which a student develops their bilingualism is dynamic due to the different proficiency levels the learner has of their two languages; thus translanguaging is applicable at any stage of bilingualism — it does not only serve for students who attain balanced bilingualism. Translanguaging can occur from a majority language — English — moving to a minority language — Welsh — as is the case in the Welsh context (Lewis, Jones, Baker, 2012), or from the minority language — Spanish — to the majority language — English — as occurs at schools in New York, where the objective is that the language spoken at home serves as scaffolding to develop proficiency in English (Lasagabaster, García, 2014: 3).*

penalize their simultaneous use (Lasagabaster, García, 2014: 3).

A possible situation where translingualism is implemented effectively in class is by ensuring that some content which has been previously presented in the foreign language is afterwards assured by an explanation in the students' native language.

By using Spanish to scaffold the learning process, academic language in English is strengthened; in this process both languages nourish each other and are mutually reinforcing (Lasagabaster, García, 2014: 6).

The benefits of translanguaging appear to be numerous, such as those manifested in the following statements:

- Greater value to weaker languages.

Translanguaging not only facilitates a greater understanding of the content taught in class, but can also help to develop the weaker language by using the stronger one, as is being demonstrated in the Welsh context at schools that encourage the fostering of bilingualism (Lewis, Jones, Baker, 2012: 12).

- Improvement of bilingualism status.

Translanguaging presents a vision of bilingualism in which both languages simultaneously interact in the brain,

classroom or street — a change in the traditional conception of bilingualism and bilingual education (Lasagabaster, García, 2014: 7).

- Educational linguistic issues.

Translanguaging presents a holistic approach to education where no language prevails over the others (Lasagabaster, García, 2014: 7).

- Academic improvement.

Translanguaging helps foster bilingual students' reflective thinking, their understanding of the contents studied in class and develops linguistic and literacy practices that support their performance in academic tasks (Lasagabaster, García, 2014: 7).

Interesting studies around the subject have been implemented recently. The research conducted by Spinelli (2017), for instance, is focused on the way the plurilingual system could affect the development of language learners' abilities such as reading and writing.

The results showed that plurilingual pedagogy facilitated positive interlingual transfers, and consequently the development of both language abilities, particularly writing. The development of these language abilities also seemed to

be affected by other variables such as the proficiency level of languages present in learners' plurilingual repertoire (Spinelli, 2017: 1).

Conclusions

The research in this doctoral thesis is focused on analysing the language abilities linked to phraseology, and how learners' competence is influenced by various factors. Among these, the level of the different languages proficiency is considered. Other factors, such as learners' linguistic profiles, will contribute to establish a frame from which to draw conclusions in reference to the acquisition methodology which works more effectively for learners.

Ultimately, this investigation intends to enhance the learners' metalinguistic competence. This is accomplished by developing a more reflexive approach to some language aspects which are daily present.

That is the case of phraseology. If this linguistic aspect is appropriately contextualized, it can achieve a more comprehensive dimension. This will raise the linguistic competence of foreign learners. This way, language learners will be closer to the objective of reaching native proficiency. Another shackle in the chain is intended to be covered with this investigation, by trying to reveal the weaves through which the metaphorical competence is built.

3.4. Phraseology

What holds together the diverse forms of cognitive linguistics is the belief that linguistic knowledge involves not just knowledge of the language, but knowledge of the world as mediated by the language (Geeraerts, Cuyckens, 2007: 7).

In the frame of conventional knowledge, when referring to phraseology, it is commonly related to the culture of a language contained in its expressions. Actually, *phraseology is a domain of linguistic study which to a high degree illustrates the correlation between language and culture* (Teliya, Bragina, Oparina, Sandomirskaya, 1998: 55). More specifically, in the field of linguistic studies, phraseology is the area of language that studies lexical phrases.

Lexical phrases are sequences of words that appear frequently together and that tend to be lexicalized over time with their use in specific areas. Moreover, lexical phrases are characterized by the fact that they have meaning by themselves, which is usually hardly deduced by their components. On the other hand, these elements are usually difficult to translate from one language to another.

As it has been stated, the final objective of this research is to increase the efficiency of foreign language teaching-learning strategies leading to the construction of a solid linguistic

competence. We have seen how metaphorical competence plays an important role in this scope. It is in this ambit that phraseology becomes a fruitful area in learning contexts. Phraseology contains, and at the same time connects, the culture of a language. This is the reason why including it within stable didactic frames is essential.

3.4.1. Present European regulation of phraseology in language learning

What is the present role of phraseology in language learning? To ensure a good development of the competences stated by the Council of Europe, several objectives have to do with phraseology, especially at proficiency levels of language acquisition.

These are some objectives from C1 and C2 levels (Council of Europe, 2001a):

-Lexical competence: to have knowledge of, and ability to use, the vocabulary of a language, consisting in lexical elements and grammatical elements. Lexical elements include fixed expressions such as phrasal idioms, fixed frames, collocations and other phrases (Council of Europe, 2001a: 110).

-Vocabulary range: to have a good command of a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; to

show awareness of connotative levels of meaning (Council of Europe, 2001a: 112).

-Sociolinguistic appropriateness: to have a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms with awareness of connotative levels of meaning (Council of Europe, 2001a: 122).

According to the parameters established by the Council of Europe, it is considered appropriate to work on phraseology at C1 and C2 levels, corresponding to the proficiency domain of a foreign language. However, in the teaching-learning practices, the shift into applying it at more basic levels of language acquisition is a growing tendency, starting to consider it a beneficial and preferable situation.

Actually, this research is to be applied at the B2 level of Spanish language. This fact, far from being a drawback for the objectives established, conforms a more effective and realistic approach in the context of foreign language teaching methodology. In this way, this research shares the approach which upholds the need of reducing the application of phraseology in language learning contexts to lower levels than those established by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001a).

Phraseology is an inherent part of language, so avoiding it at certain levels of the learning process would be an impracticable process.

The area involves every linguistic situation, both in and out of learning contexts. Consequently, dealing with it, even when the proficient structure of language is yet to be accomplished, will act as a benefit factor.

*De la aplicación de las teorías cognitivas a la enseñanza de las UFS [...] apoyamos un método transversal en el que las expresiones idiomáticas estén presentes desde estadios iniciales de aprendizaje de una lengua (A1) hasta el final de la misma (C2), [...] y proponemos también que se traten en relación a las cuatro destrezas lingüísticas de forma paulatina y progresiva*⁹² (Julià, Ortiz, 2013: 499).

It is under this approach that Julià and Ortiz present a methodological proposal based on the cognitive postulates (Julià, Ortiz, 2013), point of view already defended by previous specialists such as Navarro (2003).

At this point, a definite conclusion is that phraseology plays a main role in the acquisition of a foreign language. Language teaching and learning, however, is a very specific field which applies the concepts of the more global area of linguistics.

⁹² *From the application of cognitive theories to the teaching of phraseological expressions we support a transversal method in which the idiomatic expressions are present from the initial stages of learning a language (A1) to the end of it (C2) [...] and we also propose that the four language skills be treated in a gradual and progressive way* (Julià, Ortiz, 2013: 499, author's translation).

Applied linguistics has been interpreted to mean the applications of linguistics principles or theories to certain more or less practical matters. Second language teaching is a typical area of practical application (Brown, 1987: 11).

It is in this context that phraseology has been examined under different approaches, due to its transversal and combined nature. Indeed, phraseology can be observed under multiple lenses. This converts it into a double edged sword. Due to its characteristics, phraseology becomes an attractive subject, but at the same time, it can be an obstacle to the scientific linguistic purposes of categorization and regularization.

3.4.2. Language acquisition: nativist and constructivist theories

In order to establish the base upon which phraseology is settled, in the context of foreign language learning, it is necessary to implement an appropriate interpretation of the linguistic approach. In the language acquisition field, the main opposite perspectives, both playing essential roles, are known as nativist and constructivist theories.

The general idea of nativist theories is based on a linguistic nativism, where many important aspects of language are considered to be innate, instead of learned. Nativist theories of language

acquisition are also known as formalist, generativist, or universal grammar theories. The best-known proponent of linguistic nativism is the linguist Chomsky (Ambridge, 2016).

On the contrary, constructivist theories hold that every aspect of language is learned or constructed according to the input received. These constructivist models are also known as functionalist, usage-based, or social-pragmatic theories.

The constructivist approach derives from a broader notion known as psychological empiricism, according to which knowledge can only be acquired through observation, experience, and evidence. These psychological perspectives correspond to Piaget's and Vygotsky's line of thought, which would be at the core of constructivist theories (Ambridge, 2016).

Consequently, cognitive constructivist theories assume that knowledge is made by the mind rather than received from a source. This vision is deeply rooted in the cognitive developmental theory of Piaget and in the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky, where the metaphor of construction already appears.

In foreign language learning, the constructivist approach has won ground to the nativist theories, which are now considered to have a too restrictive vision of language acquisition.

3.4.3. Approaches on the relationship between language and thought

Many positions about the relation between language and thought have been formulated. These include the vision according to which cognition is dependent on language (Whorf). Contrarily, under the behaviourist position, cognition simply is language, in the form of subvocal speech (Bloomfield), or language and cognition are considered parallel. In another point of view, language is dependent on prior cognitive development (Piaget). On the contrary, language and thought can be considered initially separate in children's linguistic and cognitive development, to be later converged (Vygotsky) (Brown, 1987).

3.4.3.1. Structuralism

Bloomfield, alongside Sapir, was one of the founders of American structuralism. In Europe, structuralism was not a uniform linguistic group. In the 1940s and 1950s the structural or descriptive school of linguistics, with its advocates –Bloomfield, Sapir, Hockett, Fries–, applied a rigorous principle of observation of human languages. In summary, the linguist's task, according to structuralism, was to describe human languages and to identify the structural characteristics of those languages (Brown, 1987: 9-10).

Structuralist theories were actually founded on Saussure's ideas. Saussure's main contribution was the distinction between *parole* –

linguistic utterances–, and *langue* –linguistic system–, which form the speech act. *Parole* would involve the specific utterances of the use of *langue*, which is referred to the rules on which the language is built. According to Saussure’s theory, it is by studying *parole*, that we can understand the structure of *langue*. In other words, *parole* would be the manifestation of *langue* (Saussure, 1916).

Saussure’s approach established a firm ground for structuralist studies, which were focused on the task of investigating *parole*, giving less attention to *langue*. Consequently, the main mission of structuralism was to describe language. That is the reason why this branch is also known as descriptive linguistics.

3.4.3.2. The Sapir-Whorf theory

In reference to the Whorfian position some arguments and counter-arguments have been widely developed. Such arguments slide between strong versions and weak versions. Does language determine and mold thought, or merely facilitate and support it? (Stubbs, 1997: 359).

The Whorfian position was derived from Sapir’s school of thought, which traditionally saw language as a cultural construct.

Sapir described it as a *purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols* (Sapir, 1921: 7).

Under his approach, the language of the group simply expresses its social and cultural reality. This was the central idea in the work of Sapir and his pupil, Whorf, and has been termed as linguistic determinism (Brown, 1987).

The second feature of Sapir-Whorf's theory was linguistic relativity. According to it, a language is seen as a group of distinctive traits not to be found in another language. This theory marks a significant distance between Bloomfield's structuralism, in which all languages were considered equal in their capacity to express the thought of its speakers (Brown, 1987).

In its strong form, the belief stated by linguistic determinism, conveys the idea that we are imprisoned in our language, as it poses a condition on human thought. This position has been widely discredited. In fact, processes such as the learning of foreign languages, the elaboration of new terms and the translation methods all contradict the idea that our thought is processed and bounded by our mother tongue (Stubbs, 1997). In fact, Sapir's consideration of translation processes was also quite radical.

Sapir es un relativista y como tal acepta que cada lengua es un sistema diferente de captar la realidad, de tal manera que las lenguas entre sí resultan inconmensurables. Si las categorías lingüísticas son clasificaciones de las experiencias y estas clasificaciones son particulares a cada lengua, ninguna lengua corresponde exactamente a otra, y como tal son inconmensurables. Por lo cual, una traducción de una lengua a otra significa solamente el realizar una equivalencia aproximada de la captación de la realidad que posee una comunidad. Sapir (1949: 162) afirma que la experiencia del mundo está mediatizada social y culturalmente y, en gran medida, construida inconscientemente sobre los hábitos lingüísticos del grupo. Pasar de una lengua a otra, por tanto, requeriría un cambio de coordenadas de la experiencia⁹³ (Luque Durán, 2000: 294).

The linguistic determinism and linguistic relativity theories by Sapir and Whorf's have reduced them to a position of incredulity or to be

⁹³ *Sapir is a relativist and as such he accepts that each language is a different system of capturing reality, in such a way that languages among themselves are incommensurable. If the linguistic categories are classifications of the experiences and these classifications are particular to each language, no language corresponds exactly to another, and as such they are incommensurable. Therefore, translation from one language to another only means making an approximate equivalence of the capture of reality that a community possesses. Sapir (1949: 162) states that world experience is socially and culturally mediated and, to a large extent, built unconsciously on the linguistic habits of the group. Moving from one language to another, therefore, would require a change of coordinates of the experience (Luque Durán, 2000: 294, author's translation).*

considered in controversial discussions. However, in its weak form, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is more widely accepted. In fact, it seems reasonable to consider that we are more likely to perceive, process, discriminate and remember in the ways that our language makes readily available (Stubbs, 1997).

The constructivist view about language acquisition poses an opposition to the linguistic determinism proposed by the Whorfian approach. Rather than believing that the natural world shapes language, constructivists contend that the way human beings use language frames the way they experience the natural world. Their constructivist definition takes into account that language is inevitably dynamic. New facts, ideas and events need new language. Besides, meanings are constantly renegotiated. Consequently, the language of the group is constantly both creating cultural reality and simply expressing it. In summary, under the constructivist point of view, humans are both formed by and form their language. *Interestingly, the constructivist position actually shares some ground with the weak form of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis* (Wright, 2004: 3-4).

Although in the course of the last decades some of the Sapir's and Whorf's postulates have been questioned, the idea of a crucial role of language in the conceptualization of the world still has a considerable impact on the development of the philosophy of language, as well as on certain approaches in

linguistics and cognitive sciences (Dobrovolskij, Piirainen, 2005: 209).

3.4.3.3. Functionalism

A further evolved branch of structuralism was The Prague School, which grew out of the Prague Linguistic Circle. This line of work was distinguished from structuralism because of the focus of its interest, which was language change.

The members of this school held language to be a system of functionally related units, not a reduced composition of a dichotomy structure like in Saussure's *langue* and *parole*. The Prague School showed the will of clarifying the function of the different elements in a statement, analysing more deeply elements such as phonology. This way, the scholars from this group combined structuralist methods with functionalism, establishing a range of different linguistic functions, which could be extrapolated to multiple languages (Dinneen, 1967).

3.4.3.4. Generative-transformational linguistics

In the 1960s the generative-transformational school of linguistics emerged through Chomsky's influence. What Chomsky was trying to show is that language would not be simply scrutinized in terms of observation stimuli. Thus, the generative linguist is interested not

only in describing language but also in arriving at an explanatory level of adequacy in the study of language.

Saussure's had differentiated in 1916 between the concepts of *parole* and *langue*. Contrarily, under Chomskian's reformulation of Saussure's concepts, he redefined these concepts into performance –for *parole*– and competence –for *langue*–. Besides, the revolution brought about by generative linguistics broke with the descriptivists' inclination for studying performance and exploited the important distinction *between the observable surface level of language and the deep structure of it* (Brown, 1987: 9-10).

Both structural linguistics and behavioural psychology were interested in description, in answering *what* questions about human behaviour. On the contrary, generative linguistics and cognitive psychology were far more interested in a more ultimate question: *why* (Brown, 1987: 10).

3.4.3.5. The future: cognitive linguistics

From 1980, cognitive grammar spreads around United States and Europe. Cognitive grammar aims at describing and explaining mental linguistic structures and processes. According to this stream, linguistic production ability is determined in a neurobiological way by means of functional rules of the human brain (Lakoff, 1991b).

Some of the postulates by Chomsky in his generative-transformational grammar could be related to the cognitive grammar approach, such as the mentalism or innatism. In fact, Chomsky's considerations constitute the major predecessor which lay the foundations for cognitivism (Lakoff, 1991b).

However, cognitivism is significantly distant from generativism. For cognitivists, such as Lakoff, the signs of native languages are not constituted by minimum elements according to certain compositional rules. They are rather conceived as complex interrelated entities related among themselves, by means of associative chains, within the "mental dictionary" (Mellado, 2005: 73-74).

The evolution in linguistics history is a succession of advances on a gradual continuum. Consequently, cognitivist innovative points are born with the influence of various preceding theories. This way, cognitivism represents the prolongation of a research line prevailing in Germany between the 30s and the 50s, known as content grammar.

Content grammar was conceived by Weisgerber, who had as a reference Humboldt and his conception of language. According to their ideas, language is the mental platform that acts as an intermediary between the disordered human perceptions and the

external world. Through the language we interpret and feel the surrounding reality (Mellado, 2005: 73-74).

A central objective of both cognitive linguistics and content grammar is to establish, either onomasiologically or ideographically, the cognitive fields in which the mental dictionary of speakers of a language is supposed to be divided (Mellado, 2005: 73-74).

However, moving away from their ancestors of content grammar, cognitivists no longer seek the national and native specificity of each language, but insist on cross-linguistic regularities based on the universality of the biological-mental cognitive processes by which it is governed the creation of language (Mellado, 2005: 73-74).

Another determining aspect of the cognitivist stream is the relevance assigned to the metaphor. Therefore, metaphors cease to be conceived peripherally as mere stylistic resources, to become the central axis of language: we perceive and decode the world in the form of metaphors that serve as a bridge to human understanding (Mellado, 2005: 73-74).

3.4.4. Implications for phraseology

3.4.4.1. Metaphorical processes

*El lenguaje de toda comunidad se desarrolla paralelamente a su crecimiento social y cultural*⁹⁴ (Luque Durán, 2000: 288).

Phraseology has its origin in the metaphorical processes inherent to the human mind. Already Locke affirmed that all words expressing concepts do so by metaphorical processes deriving from other words which designed more direct and sensitive ideas (Luque Durán, 2000).

*Así, todas las palabras, incluso las más abstractas y sublimes, se derivan de otras más elementales. Todos los estudios realizados sobre diversas lenguas, incluidas lenguas indoeuropeas como el latín, el griego, el sánscrito y el antiguo eslavo, demuestran que un sentido abstracto siempre se construye sobre un sentido concreto y primario. El latín es una buena prueba de ello, todas sus palabras más técnicas y especializadas delatan un humilde origen*⁹⁵ (Luque Durán, 2000: 288).

⁹⁴ *The language of every community develops in a parallel way to its social and cultural growth* (Luque Durán, 2000: 288, author's translation).

⁹⁵ *Thus, all words, even the most abstract and sublime ones, are derived from more elementary words. All the studies carried out on diverse languages, including Indo-European languages such as Latin, Greek, Sanskrit and Old Slavic, show that an abstract sense is always constructed on a concrete and*

Etymological processes demonstrate how semantic change moves from the concrete to the abstract level. Studies investigating this phenomenon can be seen in Jäkel (1995), for instance. This author summarizes the process through which action verbs such as “comprehend”, “resist” and “translate”, among others, have simpler origins.

Thus, “comprehend” derives from the Latin word *comprehendere*, which was formed by the union of the element *cum*, meaning “with”, and *prehendere*, meaning “seize” or “grab”.

On the other hand, the word “resist” comes from the Latin *resistere*, which was composed by *re*, meaning “against”, and *sistere*, meaning “standing”. Consequently, “resist” transmits the idea of someone leaning or pushing against something or someone else.

Finally, the word “translate” has its origin in the Latin word *transferre-tuli-latum*, which meant “move to another place”.

Other action verbs which suppose a good example of this metaphorical process of semantic elaboration are those of *legere* –

primary sense. Latin is a good evidence of this, with all its technical and specialized words showing a humble origin (Luque Durán, 2000: 288, author’s translation).

Latin equivalent for “to read” – and *scribere* –Latin word for “to write” –, which were adapted from their previous existent meanings: “to meet” and “to scratch”. For extension, these words became applied to these new connotations (Luque Durán, 2000: 289).

This phenomenon would constantly occur in the process of creating new language to design new significances.

La palabra pecus significaba “ganado”, y dado que este era en principio la única riqueza conocida, pecunia significó “riqueza” y “dinero”. Otra palabra relacionada con el dinero fue el salarium, derivado de “sal” ya que este se pagaba en especie⁹⁶ (Luque Durán, 2000: 294).

All this language studies would counter-argument the Whorfian linguistic approach according to which language determines thought. Observing the way language has been transformed in line with the speakers’ needs makes it clear that the Sapir-Whorf’s theory, at least in its strong form, is in fact far to give a solid explanation to the relationship between language and culture.

⁹⁶ *The word pecus meant “cattle”, and since this was, at the beginning, the only known wealth, pecunia meant “wealth” and “money”. Another word related to money was salarium, derived from “salt”, since it was paid with spices (Luque Durán, 2000: 294, author’s translation).*

Constructivist adaptations of linguistic theories provide a more rational approach to the language evolution phenomenon. Constructivism defends a view in which it was human thought which was in charge of framing language according to its contextual reality. This linguistic position approaches the vision of language as a sum of dynamic renegotiation and creative procedures. Moreover, this perspective balances the weigh between language and thought. Under the constructivist point of view, there is a bidirectional communication process between people and language. On the one hand, humans are formed by language. On the other hand, however, they are simultaneously forming their language. Etymological studies would provide a solid clue into this direction.

La metáfora, la metonimia y la comparación responden a una necesidad del pensamiento humano. La lengua no podría prescindir de estos recursos ya que no dispone de términos propios para expresar conceptos abstractos. Podemos afirmar que la creación de expresiones a través de la metáfora y la capacidad de trasladar un término abstracto a otro más familiar es un fenómeno que se da en todas las lenguas naturales y es un procedimiento lingüístico general⁹⁷ (Santos, 1993: 127).

⁹⁷ *The metaphor, metonymy and comparison respond to a need of human thought. Language could not do without these resources because it does not have its own terms to express abstract concepts. We can affirm that the creation of expressions through the metaphor and the ability to transfer an abstract term to a more*

3.4.4.2. Linguistic approach to phraseology: pragmatics

Within linguistics studies, phraseology would be highly connected to the field of pragmatics, which considers how the use of language influences the meaning of words and in which way it modifies the internal relationship between the denotative and the cognitive levels.

Natural language is not only based on syntax and semantics. It is also based on pragmatics, that is, on rules of use, which deal with analysing the circumstances and the contexts of emission, and these same rules of use establish the possibility of rhetorical uses of the language, thanks to which words and syntactic constructions can acquire multiple meanings (Eco, 1993: 31).

Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics which focuses on the connections between language and its use to describe reality, and takes into consideration the analysis of the context and how it affects the interpretation of meanings (Di Gesú, 2012: 109).

familiar one is a phenomenon that occurs in all natural languages and it is a general linguistic procedure (Santos, 1993: 127, author's translation).

Semantics – the meaning of a sentence derived from the lexical meaning of its words and its grammatical structure – needs to be distinguished from pragmatics – the meaning of an utterance taking various contexts into account, including general knowledge (Paradis, 2009b: 413).

These contexts, which together form the pragmatics sphere of language, are formed by different elements, including the cultural environment.

That is why the study of linguoculturology is relevant, because it investigates the extralinguistic knowledge which is necessary in any kind of human communication. It pays attention to the spoken manifestations on the language of cultural codes and archetypal beliefs of a nation, that is to say, a system of coordinates that helps structure the world (Mychko-Megrin, 2010: 66).

3.4.4.3. Reconsidering linguistic relativism: linguo-cultural competence

Several linguists assume that almost everything fixed in the lexicon is “culture” in the widest sense. Every language reflects and structures reality in its own way, and therefore creates its own world-view. It has been noted, in relation to the science and praxis of translation, that certain words have no full equivalents in another

language. Numerous semantic researches have also observed this feature of the lexicon and pointed to the untranslatability of unrenderability of many lexical units (Dobrovolskij, Piirainen, 2005: 210).

Culture is the sum of all ideas about the world (including fictional, mythological, etc. ideas) that are characteristic of a given community (Dobrovolskij, Piirainen, 2005: 213).

This perspective follows Sapir-Whorf's theory about linguistic relativity. According to it, language influences the way in which reality is conceptualized. However, Sapir's linguistic relativity theory has been rethought and readapted under certain circumstances. An important reconceptualization is the lexical relativity theory, as described by Fodor (Fodor, 1975).

Fodor hypothesizes the existence of a mental language, denominated *mentales*, considered to be universal, prior and independent to the public language. It would be this *mentales* – the representation our brain does of the context – which would influence our attitudes, not the public language itself. In this way, Fodor modifies the consideration of relativity (Martínez, Vicente, 2003).

It is in this sense that Fodor's ideology reinforces the premise according to which a plurilingual competence favours foreign

language learning. According to Fodor, learning a language is nothing less than a process of translation, where the meaning of words is deduced by the formulation and confirming of hypotheses. The same procedure is involved in native language learning, which responds to a process of formulating hypothesis in order to address concepts to their expressions. For this process to occur, a prior language must exist, a language which would express every one of the elements to be learned.

However, even when every language can have its own correspondent form in each human mentales, this does not imply that every language has its correspondent translation in another language. The repertoire that every person will develop, influenced by the circumstances, is the one that will have activated some parts of that mentales. It is in this sense that relativity and diversity are at the base of Fodor's theory as well (Martínez, Vicente, 2003).

Furthermore, the anthropocentric approach in linguistics assumes that every language, especially with regard to their figurative meanings, is a reflection and extension of what Humboldt and Weisgerber called the "world-view". These linguists were strongly influenced by the structuralist Saussure's theories. However, they developed the relativist theories about language, pleading that each language community had its own way to see reality. Therefore, the world-view shared by all members of all a linguo-cultural community would make possible the generation and

comprehension, in a subconscious process of insight, of metaphorical linguistic meanings (Mellado, 2005).

In the anthropocentric paradigm, the notion of linguistic relativity developed by Sapir and Whorf can be reformulated as a linguistic-cultural relativity, according to which language would be the means of representing and reproducing culture. In other words, culture is assumed to be implemented, one way or another, on the content plane of linguistic expressions, reproduced in an act of denomination and transmitted from generation to generation through linguistic and cultural norms of usage.

Thus, language can be looked upon as a crucial mechanism contributing to the formation of a collective cultural identity. Consequently, culture is thus implemented through language. Cultural norms are not only reproduced in language but are included for speakers by means of the linguistic structures they use.

Such instances seem to confirm the view according to which native speakers' capacity for linguistic introspection and cultural reflection derives from their knowledge of cultural-linguistic codes which are related to their linguo-cultural competence. Therefore, linguo-cultural competence is assumed to be acquired in the process of internalizing collective cultural experience (Teliya et al., 1998: 56).

3.4.5. History of phraseology as a discipline

As recently as the early 1980s it was still possible to dismiss phraseology as a linguistic activity of only minority interest and with poor prospects of recognition at the level of language or of linguistic description. At the time, the subject was literally peripheral. The chief focus of theoretical and descriptive work was Eastern Europe. The one activity with a known professional commitment to phraseology was dictionary-making, especially in Britain (Cowie, 1998: 18).

Phraseology is a relatively new discipline. Its first precursor was Charles Bally, originally Swiss, who settled the base for phraseological investigation in 1909 with his *Traité de stylistique française*⁹⁸. It was Bally who coined the term “phraseology” and highlighted the semantic traits of these elements, mainly known as idiomatic nature. Furthermore, classification was established in order to recognize these units.

Posteriorly, his research evolved into different specialized studies, especially in the URSS. Thus, Soviet Linguistics was especially

⁹⁸ For an extense review of the history of the Soviet Phraseology, see Baranov, Dobrovol'skij (2009). It is a valid source to review the main characteristics of phraseology, the topic of motivation, its categories, and the relationship between semantic and syntactic aspects. It also displays how phraseology is presented in dictionaries and in the discourse, and it includes a reference to contrastive phraseology.

prolific between the 40s and the 60s. It was Vinogradov's work which marked a starting point (Ruiz Gurillo, 1997: 19).

*Si la mayoría de los estudiosos está de acuerdo en proponer a Bally como el fundador, también suele estarlo en declarar en Vinogradov el principal impulsor de la fraseología, hasta el punto de ser quien le dé naturaleza como nueva disciplina*⁹⁹ (Garcia-Page, 2008: 40).

Charles Bally (1919) is often considered the precursor of modern research on phraseology. However, also the further development of this tradition by Vinogradov (1946, 1947, and 1953) must be considered (Dobrovol'skij, Piirainen, 2005: 30).

Vinogradov meant a powerful impulse for the discipline. From his research, several studies spread around the region. Consequently, a school of phraseology has been traditionally attributed to be originally founded in the URSS (Ruiz Gurillo, 1997: 19)¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁹ *If the majority of scholars agree to propose Bally as the founder, they also usually agree in declaring Vinogradov the main figure in phraseology, to the point of being the one who gives it the nature of a new discipline* (Garcia-Page, 2008: 40, author's translation).

¹⁰⁰ The tradition of phraseology in Soviet Linguistics has its origin in authors like Potebnia, Sreznev'skij, Fortunatov, Amosova, Kopylenko, Popova, Archangel'skij, Babkin, Molotkov, Ozegov, San'skij, Cernyseva, Zukov or Telija.

Subsequently, the beginning of the scientific research on phraseology in the framework of a consistent linguistic theory, the Meaning-Text-Theory, can be ascribed to Mel'čuk (1960) (Dobrovol'skij, Piirainen, 2005: 30).

In the 70s, the investigation switched towards synchronic studies, focused above all on the study of the components of these expressions. By the 80s, the analysis had become deeper, with the publication by Dobrovol'skij (1988) becoming an interesting review about phraseological universals (Ruiz Gurillo, 1997: 20).

Actually, the culmination of the trajectory begun in the 80s is represented by the work by Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2009). Indeed, Dobrovol'skij's relevant work constitutes a paradigm in phraseological studies¹⁰¹. Piirainen was also prolific on linguistic theory, and both authors worked together in phraseological aspects since 1992.

3.4.5.1. Spanish history of phraseology

In Spain, idioms began to be considered linguistically around 1950, when Casares published *Introducción a la lexicografía moderna*. This book constituted a manual around idioms, proverbs and other

¹⁰¹ Some important work by Dobrovol'skij's includes his books in 1988, 1995 and 1997. Later on, he does important collaborations with Piirainen in 1997, 1998, 2005, 2009 and 2010; and with Baranov, such as in 2008. See bibliography.

structures, and was promptly translated to Russian (Ruiz Gurillo, 1997: 19).

During the following years, the thesis by Zuluaga represented a highlight. In it, fixed expressions were considered according to the methodology already introduced by Casares. Other authors such as Coseriu, Isacenko or Bally adapted it to create still unique manual at the present time (Ruiz Gurillo, 1997: 22).

Indeed, during the 90s, the rising of the discipline in Spain was significant, with the appearance of some prolific publications such as the ones by Ignacio Bosque, Martín Mingorance or Mendívil Giró¹⁰². At that moment, the complexity of phraseological units was evident, resulting in numerous attempts to classify them. A significant contribution to this challenge was the production by Corpas Pastor, who in 1996 presented the *Manual de fraseología española*.

In the 2000s, other publications became referential. For instance, García-Page published a range of articles about Spanish phraseological units in relation to their playful character, semantic treats and variants. More recent work by this author is *Introducción a la fraseología española* (2008). Other authors such as Luque Durán and Pamies Bertrán have produced interesting studies around

¹⁰² See bibliography.

phraseology and paremiology, as in their collective book in 2005. As a result, nowadays phraseology is a consolidated discipline throughout Spain and Europe¹⁰³.

Phraseological classification in Spain

1950-1980

The publication of Casares's work meant a starting point in the attempt of classifying phraseological units. His methodology was based on the establishment of categories, dividing the phraseological units by considering the tipology of words to which those elements were equivalent. Therefore, in this period the development of phraseology was produced from lexicography. This approach was extended until 1980, when Zuluaga published his work.

Casares defined three categories of phraseological units:

- The first one corresponded to idioms, which were connections of words that, even having the characteristics of

¹⁰³ A general perspective of the investigation conducted between 1990 and 2000 is offered in the book by Corpas Pastor (2003): *Diez años de investigación en fraseología: análisis sintáctico-semánticos, contrastivos y traductológicos*. It is a compilation of articles about Spanish phraseology published during the whole decade, including aspects such as the translation discipline.

stability and idiomatic nature, had to be completed by other specific words to form a grammatical sentence. For example, *de uvas a peras* or *todo dios*.

- The second category corresponded to physical complexes with empty boxes, which even having a stable idiomatic structure, could be completed with words of the same grammatical or semantic category. For example, *a tiro limpio*, where *tiro* could be changed with *golpazo*, *puñetazo*, *tiro*...or the expression *verb + que (te/le) + verb*, where the verb could be interchangeable, like in *por habla que te habla, dale que dale*, etc.

- The third category corresponded to expressions which were uncompleted grammatical sentences but that on their own served as elements of social interaction, and only in this context their stability and idiomatic nature was understood. An example would be *¡tu suegra!*, an expression that within a sentence had a completely different function (Casares, 1950).
 - Examples of these expressions were those in which the speaker organized his thinking, as in *dicho sea de paso, y listo, es decir* or *o sea*.

- Others served to emphasize what said, like *donde lo haya* or *lo que oyes*; o made it affective, as in *¡pero si...!*, or *¡a mí plin!*
- Finally, they could also make reference to the listener, as for instance when giving advice, *yo que tú*; opinions, *vamos, digo yo*; or confidences, *de mí para ti*.
- Greetings and other formulas would also fall in this category, as *¡hasta más ver!* or *que en paz descanse* (Varela, Kubarth, 1994: 11).

| | | | |
|------------|----------------|---|---|
| Locuciones | Significativas | Nominales | denominativas geminadas: <i>tren botijo</i> compuestas: <i>tocino del[sic] cielo</i> singulares: <i>la carabina de Ambrosio</i> Infinitivas: <i>coser y cantar</i> |
| | | Adjetivas: <i>de brocha gorda</i> Verbales: <i>tomar el olivo</i> Participiales: <i>hecho un brazo de mar</i> Adverbiales: <i>en un santiamén</i> Pronominales: <i>cada quisque (nota 34)</i> Exclamativas: <i>¡Ancha es Castilla!</i> | |
| | | Conexivas (nota 35) | Conjuntivas: <i>con tal que</i> Prepositivas: <i>en pos de</i> |

Fig. 10. Casares's classification (Martínez Montoro, 2002: 24).

1980-1996

Zuluaga's thesis opened a new stage in the context of phraseological studies in Spain. He proposed a functional classification that considered the syntactic role accomplished by phraseological units in the discourse. He pointed at stability as the main characteristic of phraseological units.

1996-Present days

Corpas Pastor continued the exploration taking into consideration the pragmatic character of phraseological units. Thus, the author developed a classification which distinguished between collocations, idioms and phraseological phrases. The classification was based on grammatical functions and established the characteristics of each category:

- Collocations: free phrases with a certain grade of combinatory restriction derived of its use, as in *rebanada de pan*.
- Idioms: units formed by two or more elements that work as statements but which are not independent, such as *mosquita muerta*, *sano y salvo* or *dormir como un tronco*. Idioms are usually the product of a conceptual system motivated by

cognitive mechanisms of comparison, based mostly on cultural grounds (Molina, 2008).

- Paremiological phrases and routine formulae (González Rey, 2008; Kovecses, Szabo, 1996): phraseological units constituted by a brief statement, which corresponds to a simple or compound sentence, and that has been fixed in speech, thus forming part of the socio-cultural heritage of a speaking community (Sevilla, Crida, 2013: 2).

During this period, other work considered Corpas Pastor's classification but derives it by taking into account the semantic aspect of phraseological expressions. This was the case of Larreta Zulategui's classification (2001), which was focused on meaning. As a result, the elements were divided in diverse knowledge spheres: time, space, movement and senses; life and death; human characterization; human knowledge and thought; human action; human being and environment; power and possession and critic situations (Larreta, 2001: 81).

Corpas Pastor's work marked the third stage which is still present in our days. She united the progression developed by lexicography, pragmatics and German linguistics, becoming a reference in the studies of Spanish phraseology (Ruiz Gurillo, 1997: 19).

3.4.5.2. Italian history of phraseology

In Italy, phraseology has been historically disregarded in the research in the field of linguistics, considered only from a dialectal and oral outlook. This fact has derived into a lack of regulation, which in turn has resulted into a considerable ambiguity in the categorization and denomination of these elements.

En la tradición lingüística italiana el concepto de fraseología no coincide totalmente con el que suele utilizar en la actualidad la lingüística hispánica, alemana o anglosajona. Con todo, actualmente en el extenso caudal terminológico italiano, las denominaciones más frecuentes son unità polirematica, preferentemente en el ámbito lexicográfico y espressione idiomática, unità lessicale superiore y lessema complesso, en morfología. Pero también se utilizan otros términos como collocazione, idiom, verbi sintagmatici, espressione fissa, composto fisso, composto idiomático y otras más como proverbii, detti, frase fatta, etc. La dificultad radica en que estos términos no son equivalentes entre sí, pero, a veces, las definiciones de cada uno de ellos se sobreponen o se solapan parcialmente. Los diferentes autores que utilizan esta denominación ofrecen su propia definición¹⁰⁴ (Quiroga, 2007: 219-220).

¹⁰⁴ *In the Italian linguistic tradition, the concept of phraseology does not coincide totally with the one currently used by Hispanic, German or Anglo-Saxon*

In fact, the study of Italian phraseology has been approached from four different perspectives: morphological, lexicographical, lexical-syntactic and cognitive semantics. Finally, a multidisciplinary study is proposed, considered to be more integrated (Quiroga, 2007: 222-223).

*En la lingüística italiana, la fraseología no ocupa ningún espacio determinado ni como disciplina autónoma ni como subdisciplina de la lexicología. Su estudio se desarrolla desde la morfología*¹⁰⁵ (Quiroga, 2007: 222-223).

The morphological approach begins with Dardano (1978), while the lexicographical approach stands out because of the works by De Mauro. On the other hand, the lexical-syntactic approach is mainly centred on the project *Lessico Grammatica della Lingua Italiana*.

linguistics. However, currently in the extensive Italian terminology flow, the most frequent denominations are unità polirematica, preferably in the lexicographical field and espressione idiomática, unità lessicale superiore and lessema complesso, in morphology. But other terms such as collocazione, idiom, verbi sintagmatici, espressione fissa, composto fisso, composto idiomático and others such as proverbi, detti, frase fatta, etc. are also used. The difficulty is that these terms are not equivalent to each other, but sometimes the definitions of each of them overlap or partially overlap. The different authors that use this denomination offer their own definition (Quiroga, 2007: 219-220, author's translation).

¹⁰⁵ *In Italian linguistics, phraseology does not occupy any specific space either as an autonomous discipline or as a subdiscipline of lexicology. Its study is developed from the area of morphology (Quiroga, 2007: 222-223, author's translation).*

However, also Vietri's work is the major representative of the study of idiomatic elements from the lexical-syntactic perspective.

Finally, the cognitive semantic approach is based on Casadei's publication (1996) (Quiroga, 2007: 223-225). It is Casadei, who following the theory of the metaphor by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), carries out a semantic analysis of Italian idiomatic expressions. It is, therefore, demonstrated that regularities and motivations can be recognized in the idiomatic expressions in such a way that this phenomenon of language does not transform them into a totally unsystematic or unanalysable group due to their anomalies.

Tras un amplio estudio concluye que en la mayor parte de los casos se puede establecer una relación entre el significado literal y el idiomático y, por tanto, es posible explicar los motivos del significado idiomático de numerosas expresiones. Por supuesto, Casadei reconoce que pese a distinguir cierta regularidad en la semántica de las UUFF, no es posible describir todas ellas mediante metáforas conceptuales generales y, a menudo, una explicación total, de origen histórico, mitológico o literario es la única solución posible¹⁰⁶ (Casadei, 1994: 77-78).

¹⁰⁶ *After an extensive study concludes that in most cases you can establish a relationship between the literal and idiomatic meaning and, therefore, it is possible to explain the reasons for the idiomatic meaning of many expressions. Of course, Casadei recognizes that despite distinguishing a certain regularity in the semantics of the UUFF, it is not possible to describe all of them by means of*

This way, in Casadei (1995) the terminological chaos on idiomatic nature is approached. Consequently, the attention is devoted in order to differentiate the so-called *espressioni idiomatiche* from the other types of units, also conventional, fixed and with a non-compositional meaning (Quiroga, 2007: 221).

The integrated approach, finally, is based on Voghera's postulates, which deal with both the semantic and morphological aspects (Quiroga, 2007: 226).

3.4.6. Connections between phraseology and cognitive linguistics

3.4.6.1. Metaphors and cognitive models

The mind is inherently embodied. Thought is mostly unconscious. Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical. These are the three major findings of cognitive science (Lakoff and Johnson, 1998: 3).

The principles set by the cognitive science approach determine that *the mind is not merely embodied, but embodied in such a way that*

general conceptual metaphors and, often, a total explanation of historical, mythological or literary origin is the only possible solution (Casadei, 1994: 77-78, author's translation).

our conceptual systems influence largely upon the commonalities of our bodies and of the environments we live in (Lakoff, Johnson, 1998: 6).

According to the cognitivist model, there is no individual human being whose mind does not participate in meaning. This meaning is not merely independent and solely defined by the environment. It is not realistic to think that language can match the outside world with no substantial part performed by the mind.

Because our conceptual systems grow out of our bodies, because a vast range of our concepts are metaphorical, meaning is not entirely literal (Lakoff, Johnson, 1998: 6).

This is the significant specificity of cognitivism: the relevance given to metaphors. According to cognitivism, metaphors are not simply considered as peripheral stylistic resources, but become the core of language. The world is perceived and decodified by means of metaphors, which serve as a bridge to human understanding (Schwarz-Friesel, 2004).

Many of our activities – such as arguing, solving problems and budgeting time – are metaphorical in nature. The metaphorical concepts that characterize these activities structure our present reality. Accordingly, new metaphors have the power to create a new reality.

*Dice Aristóteles en su Retórica que las palabras corrientes comunican sólo lo que ya sabemos. Solamente por medio de las metáforas podemos obtener algo nuevo. En este sentido, la metáfora es un instrumento mediante el cual las personas consiguen comunicar, aunque sea imperfectamente, ideas, sensaciones o imágenes para las que no tienen palabras específicas*¹⁰⁷ (Luque Durán, Manjón, 1997: 43).

The idea that metaphors can create realities goes against most traditional views of the metaphor. The reason is that metaphor has traditionally been viewed as a matter of mere language rather than primarily as a way of structuring our conceptual system and the kind of everyday activities we perform. It is reasonable enough to assume that words alone don't change reality (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980).

Las conexiones entre fraseología y semántica cognitiva son evidentes por el papel que desempeña la metáfora para ambas. Por tratarse fundamentalmente de metáforas fosilizadas, el material fraseológico constituye una fuente inagotable para el estudio de los modelos cognitivos de una lengua. Desde una perspectiva contrastiva interlingüística,

¹⁰⁷ Aristotle says in his Rhetoric that ordinary words communicate only what we already know. It is only through metaphors that we can obtain something new. In this sense, the metaphor is an instrument through which people manage to communicate, even imperfectly, ideas, sensations or images for which they do not have specific words (Luque Durán, Manjón, 1997: 43, author's translation).

*nos permite, además, adentrarnos en el espacio resbaladizo de lo “universal” o “específicamente nacional”, cuya diferenciación constituye un reto de difícil solución*¹⁰⁸ (Mellado, 2005: 74).

Here is where the links between cognitive semantics and phraseology become clear. Phraseological material is a strong source to study the cognitive models of a language. For example, it handles the interlinguistic contrastive perception, which tries to discern the subtle line between “universal” or “national”. This constitutes, in fact, a differentiation of difficult solution (Dobrovol’skij, Piirainen 1997: 449). What is clear, however, is that metaphorical resources are widely exploited in every language and linguistic community.

En una lengua puede existir una designación monoléxica para designar una realidad determinada y, sin embargo, el hablante preferirá usar designaciones fraseológicas. La razón es que lo fraseológico resulta siempre más motivado, expresivo, aunque tampoco hay que olvidar que lo fraseológico suele tener ventajas en el proceso de

¹⁰⁸ *The connections between phraseology and cognitive semantics are evident for the role played for both by the metaphor. Being fundamentally fossilized metaphors, phraseological material constitutes an inexhaustible source for the study of the cognitive models of a language. From a contrasting interlinguistic perspective, it also allows us to enter the slippery space of the “universal” or “specifically national”, whose differentiation is a difficult challenge (Mellado, 2005: 74, author’s translation).*

*recuperación onomasiológica o, lo que es lo mismo, al hablante le resulta más cómodo crear o utilizar expresiones idiomáticas, que son siempre más icónicas, que repasar su memoria en busca de un término exacto*¹⁰⁹ (Luque Durán, Manjón, 1997: 43).

*Toda cultura es un universo de metáforas. Por una necesidad elemental, ya que en la actividad lingüística los medios de designación son siempre mucho más pobres que las necesidades de designación, las realidades nuevas se nombran con otras realidades afines que tienen designaciones bien establecidas*¹¹⁰ (Luque Durán, Manjón, 1997: 46).

3.4.6.2. Phraseology categorization

Phraseology has traditionally been excluded by reductionist grammars whose theoretical basis is to describe language as a group

¹⁰⁹ *In a language there may be a monolexic designation to designate a certain reality and, nevertheless, the speaker will prefer to use phraseological designations. The reason is that the phraseological is always more motivated and expressive, although we must not forget that the phraseological usually has advantages in the process of onomasiological recovery or, what is the same, the speaker finds it more comfortable to create or use idiomatic expressions, which are always more iconic, than to review their memory in search of an exact term* (Luque Durán, Manjón, 1997: 43, author's translation).

¹¹⁰ *Every culture is a universe of metaphors. Because of an elementary need, since in the linguistic activity the means of designation are always much poorer than the needs of designation, the new realities are named with other related realities that have well-established designations* (Luque Durán, Manjón, 1997: 46, author's translation).

of independent rules. By contrast, cognitivist streams converge on the idea of language as a continuum between lexicon and grammar (Benigni, Cotta Ramusino, Mollica, Schafroth: 2015).

Cognitive linguistics arises as an alternative proposal in the categorization of phraseological expressions. In cognitive linguistics, lexicon, morphology and syntax are conceived as a continuum of interrelated aspects and not as separate components. It studies the real language, considering idiomatic expressions a significant part of this, even when they do not follow the main principles of grammar. In summary, the focus of attention is the function, meaning and use, considering the form as the vehicle by which that meaning is manifested (Fernández, 2012: 36).

The general contribution of Russian phraseologists to phraseological categorization has been relevant. It is linguists such as Mokienko, Baranov and Dobrovol'skij who seek the regularities of the phraseological system within the apparent "anomaly" inherent in phraseology. Actually, they show that phraseological expressions do not arise randomly but are mostly governed by repetitive patterns, which can be systematized by means of rules (Mellado, 2010: 348).

In summary, the main postulate of cognitive linguistics is that language cannot be understood as a complete whole of mathematic rules (as in generativism), with a regular structure. Actually,

languages are a convergent system where syntax, semantics and pragmatics work simultaneously to form the idealized cognitive models that shape our thought. So, there is not a clear separation between the linguistic and the encyclopaedic or cultural knowledge. Besides, cognitivists assume that language is by definition imaginative and creative, and its development has to be integrated in pragmatic use (Fernández, 2012: 37). In fact, the cognitive linguistics approach considers phraseology a complex and transversal field.

Phraseology is situated somewhere in the middle between grammar and lexicon, but neither within one or the other. We translate ideas, not words. That is why phraseology is difficult to be found in dictionaries (Dobrovol'skij, 2016).

3.4.6.3. Theory of prototypes

Cognitivists develop the theory of prototypes to offer a model of systematization that respects the variable nature of phraseological expressions. The model avoids the traditional establishment of closed entities as categories, introducing the system of prototypes to define some elements which are more representative than others. These archetypes would be situated in the core of cognitive structures, while the periphery would be constituted by less paradigmatic elements.

*Que la fraseología está relacionada con otras disciplinas es algo evidente. Las unidades de la fraseología no son entes raros; no están confeccionadas con medios extraños y genuinos o endémicos de un determinado sector, con estructuras distintas de aquellas con las que se construyen las combinaciones libres, aunque, a veces, presentan anomalías gramaticales y semánticas y piezas léxicas insólitas, y, sobre todo, se resisten a las variaciones y transformaciones que en aquéllas se aplican con regularidad*¹¹¹ (Garcia-Page, 2008: 20).

Nowadays, the union of cognitive linguistics and phraseology is evolving towards a new paradigm. The application of the theory of the prototypes from cognitive linguistics constitutes a frame where the different categories would not form closed compartments. Rather, each type would consist of both prototypical elements and progressively more peripheral elements. This way, the step from one class to another is gradual (Quiroga, 2006: 37-38).

Therefore, it is argued that not all members of a category have the same status and cannot be considered perfect examples of it. There

¹¹¹ *That phraseology is related to other disciplines is evident. The units of the phraseology are not rare entities; they are not made with strange and genuine or endemic means of a certain sector, with different structures from those with which free combinations are built, although, sometimes, they present grammatical and semantic anomalies and unusual lexical items, and, above all, they resist the variations and transformations that are regularly applied to them* (Garcia-Page, 2008: 20, author's translation).

is the prototype, that is to say, the one that is better recognized, the most representative and distinctive of a category, since it shares more characteristics with the rest of the members of its category and less with those of others. In this way, categories present the characteristic of being diffuse and the passage from one to the other is gradual. According to this theory, in a certain class or category prototypical elements and peripheral elements would be found (Saracho, 2015: 49).

3.4.6.4. Transversality

According to Ruiz Gurillo (1997: 46), many linguistic phenomena do not admit binary oppositions, but they are composed by central elements that adapt to theoretical paradigms and peripheral elements far from the general patterns of the system between which a continuum is established.

*Las UFS constituyen una categoría que se sitúa entre el lexema y el sintagma, por lo que cabría considerar que se trata de una categoría gradual*¹¹² (Ruiz Gurillo, 1997: 71).

¹¹² *Phraseological units constitute a category that lies between the lexeme and the syntagma, which is why it could be considered as a gradual category* (Ruiz Gurillo, 1997: 71, author's translation).

It is this structure that explains the fact that cognitive linguistics overcomes a historical dichotomy based on the controversial concern: does phraseology belong to lexicon or to grammar?

Cognitivists have given an answer to this question by categorizing phraseological units in a cross-level list. Phraseological units, actually, would fit in different slots. In practice, we need a tag which could be situated between the levels corresponding to grammar, semantics and function.

According to cognitive linguistics, idioms would be listed cross-level between grammar, semantics and function (Corino, Marelllo, 2016).

Phraseological units constitute a category between lexemes and syntagmas, so it should be considered a transversal group (Ruiz Gurillo, 1997: 71).

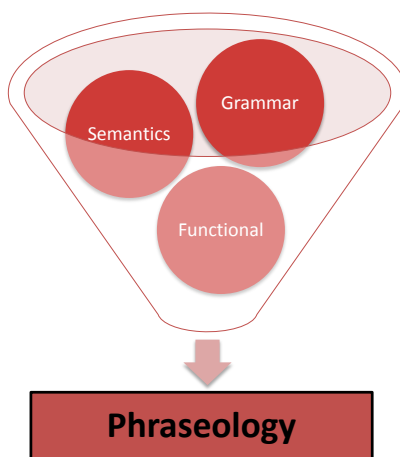


Fig. 11. Phraseology: a transversal discipline.

This challenge gives birth to a renewed dilemma. In linguistic studies, there are two confronted visions of phraseological units. What is known to be the wider point of view is oriented to stylistic functions, and includes under the label of phraseology all the stable combinations of words which have a syntagmatic or orational structure. On the other side, from the perspective considered to have a narrower vision of phraseology, only combinations with syntagmatic equivalence could be regarded as part of the group (Quiroga, 2006: 24-35). As a result, the latter perspective does not include collocations and paremiological phrases in phraseology.

3.4.6.5. The broader vision

The model of centre and periphery of the Prague School has provided the base to determine the inclusion criteria of phraseological units. This theory proposes a cognitive categorization that is very different from the traditional one, which is mainly based on oppositions (Saracho, 2015: 49).

The model has been used to separate fixed and idiomatic phraseologies (the centre), from those that only present fixation (the periphery) (Corpas, 2001: 26).

According to the model of centre and periphery of the Prague School, phraseology in the strict sense would only include the centre, that is, the prototype of the phraseological units. This would

just include idiomatic and fixed expressions or, at the most, only idiomatic expressions but which have sentence function.

On the other hand, phraseology in a broad sense includes both the central and the peripheral elements, based on the criteria of stability and institutionalization of word combinations. It is only from a broad perspective that paremiological phrases and routine formulae would be considered as belonging to phraseology (the periphery); and even to a lesser extent, collocations (which would be situated in the outskirts) (Corpas, 2001: 27).

De este modo, existen dos visiones diferentes de fraseología en cuanto a sus límites que suponen dos maneras de entenderla disciplina: la perspectiva ancha y la estrecha. La visión más restringida sólo acepta las locuciones como unidades plenas del ámbito fraseológico dejando fuera las colocaciones y las paremias¹¹³ (Saracho, 2015: 49).

In conclusion, according to the broad conception of phraseology, the prototypes theory is an effective framework from which to establish effective criteria to deal with the phraseological variety. The prototypes theory starts from the idea that in phraseology there

¹¹³ *In this way, there are two different views of phraseology in terms of its limits that suppose two ways of understanding this discipline: the wide and the narrow perspective. The more restricted view only accepts idioms as full units in the phraseological field, leaving out collocations and paremiological expressions (Saracho, 2015: 49, author's translation).*

are more central units –or more phraseological– than others, because it considers that the degree of fixation and idiomatic nature is variable.

Frente a la concepción ancha de la fraseología que mantienen autores de tan diversa orientación –son abrumadora mayoría– como Burger, Berketova, Thun, Gläser, Fernando y Flavell, Fleischer, Gréciano, Dobrovol'skij, Piirainen, Wotjak, Mel'čuk, Schenk, Kurchátkina, Moon, Mokiendo, Burger et al., Heine, Palma, Vinográdov etc., o en el ámbito español, Zuluaga, Corpas Pastor, Ruiz Gurillo, Sancho Cremades, Álvarez de la Granja, Iñesta Mena y Pamies Bertrán, López Roig, Mena Martínez, Alonso Ramos, Montoro del Arco, etc., el máximo representante de la concepción estrecha española es, sin duda, Casares Sánchez¹¹⁴ (García-Page, 2008: 13)¹¹⁵.

¹¹⁴ *Faced with the broad conception of the phraseology maintained by authors of such diverse orientation –an overwhelming majority– as Burger, Berketova, Thun, Gläser, Fernando and Flavell, Fleischer, Gréciano, Dobrovol'skij, Piirainen, Wotjak, Mel'čuk, Schenk, Kurchátkina, Moon, Mokiendo, Burger et al., Heine, Palma, Vinográdov etc., or in Spain, Zuluaga, Corpas Pastor, Ruiz Gurillo, Sancho Cremades, Álvarez de la Granja, Iñesta Mena and Pamies Bertrán, López Roig, Mena Martínez, Alonso Ramos, Montoro del Arco, etc., the maximum representative of the Spanish narrow conception is, undoubtedly, Casares Sánchez (García-Page, 2008: 13, author's translation).*

¹¹⁵ García-Page himself would be included as another author who considers the narrower vision of phraseology.

Mel'čuk's classification

Mel'čuk's classification provides a model which is coherent with the prototypes paradigm and the broader view of the phraseological classification (Mel'čuk, 1998).

Mel'čuk introduced the concept of phrasemes or set phrases, in opposition to that of free phrases. Intermediate between these two types there are the semi-phrasemes or collocations; that is, partially opaque forms in which one of the components maintains its literal meaning (Benigni et al., 2015: 278).

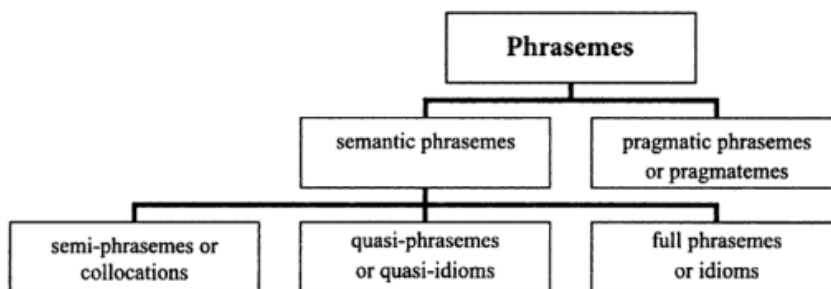


Fig. 12. Mel'čuk's typology (Granger, Meunier, 2008: 37).

To Mel'čuk, a phraseme is a multilexemic expression that cannot be produced from a given situation or a given meaning, according to a dictionary of words or following the standard general rules of grammar (Mel'čuk, 2003: 268).

The phraseme cannot be constructed from words of simpler phrases according to general rules of language, but has to be stored and used as a whole (Mel'čuk, 1998: 25).

According to Mel'čuk, there are four types of phrasemes. The first type corresponds to pragmatic phrasemes or pragmatemes, whose form and meaning are perfectly transparent and well formed, but they are fixed in relation to a given situation.

The other three groups would belong to the group known as semantic phrases. The first subfield would be formed by complete phrasemes or idioms, which are completely fixed expressions, but whose meaning does not include the meaning of any of its constituents. On the contrary, the quasi-phrasemes or quasi-idioms group would be semifixed expressions formed by two constituents where the meaning of the set includes the meaning of one of them but not that of the other. Finally, the significance of semi-phrasemes or collocations would include the meanings of all its constituents, but at the same time, they also have an additional meaning that is unpredictable (Mel'čuk, 2003: 269).

Spanish evolution

In the Spanish context, phraseology in the broad sense includes fixed combinations of words with syntagmatic or sentence structure and its study is preferably oriented towards stylistic functions. Therefore, the broad phraseological conception includes all kinds of

combinations more or less stable from the formal point of view of semantics.

According to this tendency, not only the more complex structures, such as *En abril, aguas mil*, which would be proverbs, proverbial phrases, aphorisms and quotations, but also those simpler fixed combinations, have a place in the field of phraseology, as for example collocations (Quiroga, 2006: 34-35).

Contrarily, phraseology in the narrow sense includes only those fixed combinations of words that, by linguistic-structural characteristics, are equivalent to a syntagma. Thus, phraseology in the narrow sense leaves out proverbs and quotes, for instance (Quiroga, 2006: 34-35).

This vision would be the model followed by authors such as García-Page. He bases his categorization on the delimitation established by Casares (1950), only accepting idioms to be part of the phenomenon, although his classification takes a different form from that of Casares (Saracho, 2015: 54), introducing the differentiation between syntagmas and idioms.

Así pues, en España el término locución aplicado a una estructura fraseológica lo introduce Casares que, desde una perspectiva morfológica, desecha el término sintagma y adopta el de locución, término que tradicionalmente en la

*gramática había significado “conjunto de dos o más palabras”. Así, una locución es un conjunto de dos o más palabras que son inalterables y que presentan una unidad de sentido. El ejemplo presentado por el autor “a cencerros tapados” ilustra el nuevo concepto de locución (Casares 1950: 167-168), ya que la expresión, clasificada de modo adverbial, no permite ningún cambio sin alterar su significado*¹¹⁶ (Saracho, 2015: 54).

From Casares’s publication and during this last half century of Spanish linguistics, three stages of progress around the classifications of the phraseological units can be distinguished (Quiroga, 2006: 37-38).

The first stage covers the years from 1950 to 1980, dates corresponding to period of time between the publication of Casares’s work (1950) and Zuluaga’s (1980). This is a stage in which the development of phraseology occurs from lexicography. The classification proposed by Casares is categorical, in the sense

¹¹⁶ Thus, in Spain the term *idiom* applied to a phraseological structure is introduced by Casares who, from a morphological perspective, dismisses the term *syntagma* and adopts that of *idiom*, a term that traditionally in grammar had meant “a set of two or more words”. Thus, an *idiom* is a set of two or more words that are unalterable and that present a unity of meaning. The example presented by the author “a cencerros tapados” illustrates the new concept of *idiom* (Casares 1950: 167-168), since the expression, classified adverbially, does not allow any change without altering its meaning (Saracho, 2015: 54, author’s translation).

that it divides the phraseological units according to the class of words to which a given element is equal (Quiroga, 2006: 37-38).

The second stage in Spanish phraseology studies lasts until 1996, which corresponds to the period between the publication of Zuluaga's (1980) and that of Corpas (1996). Zuluaga proposes a functional classification of the phraseological units, which considers the syntactic functions performed by phraseological units in the discourse. The author studies the characteristics of these expressions, such as their idiomatic nature and fixation, and points out that fixation is the essential characteristic for an expression to be included in this field (Quiroga, 2006: 37-38).

It is Corpas (1996) who pays special attention to the pragmatic nature of phraseological units. With her work, the third stage begins, still present these days.

Currently, the classification of the phraseological units is based on the application of the theory of the prototypes from the cognitive linguistics. In this framework, the different categories would not constitute closed compartments. Rather, each category would be formed by prototypical elements and other progressively more peripheral elements. In this way, the transition from one category to another is gradual and it is strongly marked by the peripheral members (Quiroga, 2006: 37-38).

Several attempts to describe phraseological units in the line of these premises have been done. Ruiz Gurillo (1997, 1998) establishes a list of characteristics where expressions are situated in a scale according to the number of traits they cover, following the model of the theory of prototypes. The expressions situated in the centre are the ones who present a major grade of fixation and idiomatic nature.

3.4.6.6. Main phraseological characteristics from the cognitive approach

Stability

The treat known as stability is due to a fixation traditionally conceived as the direct result of the repeated use within a determined linguistic community (Saracho, 2015: 54). This use is conditioned by cultural elements. Phraseology is one of the aspects of language where speakers transfer their human experience. It is generally considered that where there is a sequence of words that remain fixed through a period of time, there is stability or fixation (Zuluaga, 1980).

Mellado (2004: 153) sintetiza la fijación fraseológica en los siguientes términos: la estabilidad, fijación o petrificación es uno de los rasgos formales definitorios más concluyentes en fraseología. Ciertamente, los FR¹¹⁷ son cadenas

¹¹⁷ FR= fraseologismos (phraseological units)

*predeterminadas que el hablante aprende y utiliza en bloque y su fijación ha sido tradicionalmente concebida como el resultado directo de su uso repetido dentro de una determinada comunidad lingüística*¹¹⁸ (Saracho, 2015: 54).

This stability can refer both to grammar and lexicon. Grammatically speaking, fixed expressions are hardly ever modified, as in Spanish expressions like *lisa y llanamente* or *común y corriente*.

Stability also means a certain resistance to form derivatives, with expressions in Spanish like **corte de bacalao* o **lluvia sobre mojado* (from *cortar el bacalao* or *llover sobre mojado*) not being possible.

Another aspect of inalterability that characterizes phraseological units is the fact that no element can be added or subtracted to the expression. For example, it is not correct to say **casarse por detrás de la misma iglesia* o **con amores haré lo que me pide*, instead of *casarse por detrás de la iglesia* or *con mil amores*.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Mellado (2004: 153) synthesizes phraseological fixation in the following terms: *stability, fixation or petrification is one of the most conclusive definitive formal features in phraseology. Certainly, phraseological expressions are predetermined chains that the speaker learns and uses in block, and their fixation has been traditionally conceived as the direct result of this repeated use within a given linguistic community* (Saracho, 2015: 54, author's translation).

¹¹⁹ A useful reference of the different variations that phraseological units can show are described in García-Page (1999): "Variantes morfológicas y unidades fraseológicas". In *Paremia*, 8. 225-230.

In contrast, the existence of expressions such as *tomadura de pelo* (*tomar el pelo*) or *metedura de pata* (*meter la pata*) is indicative of an inferior level of fixation in these expressions, consistent with the cognitive postulates which describe phraseological characteristics according to a gradation.

Stability is also significant in the lexicosemantics field, as usually the elements of these expressions cannot be substituted by synonyms. An example of this would be *¡se acabó lo que se daba!* Here the verb cannot be changed to another one without causing a change in the sense of the sentence. On the other hand, in a free sentence like *acabaste el trabajo* we can replace the verb without any alteration to its meaning.

There are a lot of examples which show that it is possible to find cases where this rule is not fully accomplished, like in *desconyuntarse/mondarse/partirse/tirarse/de risa*, where the verbs are interchangeable without losing the sense (Varela, Kubarth, 1994: 8-9). The gradation occurring in the level of stability of certain phraseological units shows, once more, that the concept of fixation cannot be established as an absolute attribute.

Por tanto, aunque la estabilidad sea un ingrediente esencial para el logro de la variabilidad, hay que admitir que el concepto de fijación tal y como fue planteado en las primeras investigaciones queda en entredicho. Si en un principio las

*UFs se definieron como unidades estables y fijas que mostraban rechazo a cualquier alteración léxica, semántica y morfosintáctica, en vista de la existencia de cambios reales y potenciales, no cabe hablar de la fijación como una propiedad absoluta sino como una cualidad relativa y, nunca mejor dicho, variable*¹²⁰ (Corpas; Mena, 2003: 4).

Fraser (1970) proposed the concept of “the hierarchy of fixation” of idioms, or what he denominated the “hierarchy of frozenness”. According to this theory, the capacity of transformation of idioms depends on their position within this hierarchy. Consequently, the closer they are to the extreme which corresponds to fixation, the fewer transformations they admit (Dobrovolskij, 2009: 31).

Idiomatic nature

The second main characteristic that helps to distinguish a phraseological expression from other combination of words is its idiomatic nature. This makes reference to the fact that their meanings are not deductible from the union of their elements.

¹²⁰ *Therefore, although stability is an essential ingredient for the achievement of variability, it must be admitted that the concept of fixation, as it was raised in the first investigations, is questioned. If at the beginning the phraseological expressions were defined as stable and fixed units that showed rejection of any lexical, semantic and morphosyntactic alteration, in view of the existence of real and potential changes, it is not possible to speak of fixation as an absolute property but as a relative and variable quality* (Corpas, Mena, 2003: 4, author’s translation).

In other words, phraseological expressions are *learned pairings of form with semantic and discourse function* (Goldberg, 2006: 215) with *some aspect of their form or function not strictly predictable from their component parts or from other constructions* (Goldberg, 2006: 5).

Examples in Spanish language would be the ones such as *dar la lata* or *meter la pata*, where we cannot deduce the meaning of the whole explained by their parts taken separately. In other cases, the meaning can actually be deduced, but just either partially, as in the example *fumarse las clases*, or indirectly deduced, as in *caer como una bomba* or *ponerse de mil colores* (Varela, Kubarth, 1994: 10).

Nowadays, the concept of idiomatic nature allows a quite broad conception of it (Garcia-Page, 2008: 20), even though terminology has been variable and depending to the author. We also have to consider the fact that expressions might be more or less idiomatic depending on the cultural motivation they charge (Olza, 2009: 36-37).



Fig. 13. Prototypes model applied to idiomatic nature (Pamies, 2007: 179).

The organization designed by Pamies provides a graphical example coherent with the prototypes model. In it, phraseological categories are distributed along a gradual scale according to their idiomatic nature, with blur boundaries between these categories (Pamies, 2007: 6). This model proposes a wider view of phraseology, in which non-idiomatic expressions, such as collocations, are included as peripheral area (Mellado, 2008: 9).

The concept of idiomatic nature is also denominated ‘non-compositional semantics’, which clarifies the reference according to which the meaning is not the result of the sum of its parts. Actually, in many cases, the symbolic unit is the result of an added element different from the original denotative components.

The description of idiomatic nature in its pure state is a controversial issue. Some authors have reported that idiomatic

nature occurs when there is a homophone of the expression (Casares, 1950; García-Page, 2008). The phenomenon of homophony makes reference to the simultaneous existence of two units or syntagmas, at least. One of these units would be a free syntagma with a literal sense, and the other one a fixed syntagma with a non-literal meaning, which is idiomatic.

Una UF puede usarse en su sentido literal (en muchos casos dejaría de ser una UF) o en su sentido no literal, es decir, idiomático. Se habla, así, de ciertos casos de hermanos gemelos u homófonos, como en cortar el bacalao o salir el tiro por la culata¹²¹ (Ruiz Gurillo, 2001: 22).

This consideration in its strict sense is actually not applicable to linguistic reality. Indeed, the phenomenon of homophony does occur just in some cases.

No obstante, todas las UFS no presentan un homófono. Así lo señalaba Zuluaga (1980: 125), cuando decía que las construcciones fijas curarse en salud, a la topa tolondro o

¹²¹ *A phraseological expression can be used in its literal sense (in many cases it would cease to be a phraseological expression), or in its non-literal sense, that is, idiomatic. There are said to be, as well, certain cases of twin brothers or homophones, as in cortar el bacalao or salir el tiro por la culata (Ruiz Gurillo, 2001: 22, author's translation).*

*hacer novillos eran idiomáticas, al margen de que tuvieran o no un sentido literal*¹²² (Saracho, 2015: 97-98).

Other characteristics

The main features of phraseological units have been described. Thus, it has been established that the most important traits that define phraseological units are the fact that they are multiword expressions with a certain grade of stability and idiomatic nature.

However, other characteristics are attributable, such as the institutionalization, the reproducibility, the frequency, as well as the structural and lexical anomaly that these elements present. All phraseological expressions present much of these characteristics, but at different levels.

In fact, gradation itself has also been established as a defining feature of these elements (Corpas, 1996: 30; Schellheimer, 2016).

¹²² *However, all phraseological expressions do not present a homophone. This was pointed out by Zuluaga (1980: 125), when he affirmed that fixed constructions such as curarse en salud, a la topa tolondro or hacer novillos were idiomatic, regardless of whether or not they had a literal meaning* (Saracho, 2015: 97-98, author's translation).

3.4.6.7. Motivation

The idiomatic nature of phraseology is tightly linked to the term of motivation (Burger, 2010).

Motivation is understood as a conceptual bridge between literal and figurative meaning (Dobrovolskij, Piirainen, 2005: 255).

In other words, Dobrovolskij and Piirainen (2009: 17-41) have defined motivation as the relationship between the lexicalized figurative meaning and the concept inside that linguistic form, which the speaker recognizes in an intuitive way.

La motivación nos remite a la causa por la cual unos componentes literales quedaron asociados a un significado figurativo global. Los estudios etimológicos están mucho más atrasados en el campo de la fraseología que para el léxico, las motivaciones originales son a menudo desconocidas, discutibles o incluso fantasiosas¹²³ (Pamies, 2014: 36).

¹²³ *Motivation refers us to the cause by which some literal components were associated with a global figurative meaning. Etymological studies are much more backward in the field of phraseology than in the lexicon, the original motivations are often unknown, debatable or even fanciful (Pamies, 2014: 36, author's translation).*

Realistically, this relationship between the literal and the figurative meaning might only be verified subsequently, when the idiomatic meaning of a certain expression is already known. This means that motivation is not always predictable (Mellado, 2004: 47-56).

However, the fact that motivation is probably characterized by a significant level of unpredictability does not revert into an arbitrary relationship between the literal and the figurative element which conform each phraseological expression. In this sense, motivation could be defined as the non-arbitrary relationship between the internal form (literal sense) and the symbolic meaning (Mellado, 2004: 47-56).

The criterion of motivation has been criticised from different points of view, above all because it is a subjective criterion that can hardly be verified. It has for a long time been excluded from the linguistic description of phraseology (idioms in particular). Seen from the cognitive viewpoint, however, this criterion is a relevant parameter because the motivation of an idiom influences its cognitive processing (Dobrovol'skij, Piirainen, 2005: 78).

Idiomatic nature and motivation

It is important to distinguish between the concepts of opacity and non-compositionality or idiomatic nature. The idiomatic nature of a

phraseological expression is an objective and measurable condition, whilst motivation is a subjective attribute.

*En la investigación fraseológica no se ha distinguido hasta el momento con claridad entre idiomática y opacidad, que han sido considerados como conceptos prácticamente sinónimos, cuando en realidad no lo son*¹²⁴ (Donalies, 2009: 22) (Mellado, 2012: 43).

An example which verifies the differences between these concepts can be found in the Spanish expression *¡A buenas horas, mangas verdes!* This phrase would be highly idiomatic, as the meaning cannot be deduced from the sum of its parts. On the other hand, however, it can become very transparent for a particular speaker and absolutely opaque for another one, as motivation is based on the encyclopaedic knowledge that allows speakers to create this connection between the literal and the idiomatic meaning.

También es necesario mantener una clara distinción: la idiomática resulta de una ecuación entre el todo y las partes. En cambio, la motivación afecta a la existencia, conocida o no, de una conexión entre la imagen literal y el

¹²⁴ *In phraseological research, so far it has not been clearly distinguished between idiomatic nature and opacity, which have been considered as practically synonymous concepts, when in fact they are not* (Donalies, 2009: 22; Mellado, 2012: 43, author's translation).

*sentido figurado, ambos tomados en su totalidad*¹²⁵ (Heine, 1997: 10-11).

Another useful example is the expression *empinar el codo*, which is likely to be clearer, more transparent and understandable for some speakers of the language, but it might be opaque for other speakers. The act of “drinking” is done by raising the elbow, so the listener might be able to understand the idiomatic meaning deriving from the literal meaning. In this case, the expression makes reference to a concrete gesture which is directly related to another action. Consequently, this expression is more transparent.

At the same time, *empinar el codo* would be more compositional and less idiomatic than in the case of the example presented before, *¡A buenas horas, mangas verdes!*, as the act of raising up the recipient to drink is partially deductible from the verb *empinar*. Consequently, one of the elements of the expression has a link with the meaning of the whole idiom.

Once again, the gradation system described by the prototypes model applies perfectly well to the variability of degrees that is found

¹²⁵ *It is also necessary to maintain a clear distinction: idiomaticity results from an equation between the whole and the parts. On the other hand, motivation affects the existence, known or not, of a connection between the literal image and the figurative sense, both taken in its whole* (Heine, 1997: 10-11, author’s translation).

between the levels of transparency and idiomatic nature of each specific case.

From the examples presented, we can already discern that the perception of the motivation of a phraseological unit, being so subjective, can vary considerably from one subject to another. And this variation will respond to different causes and a long list of conditions, such as the level of studies, the historic and encyclopaedic knowledge, the age, the range of interest and the personal experience of those speakers' perceptions.

Un niño que oye por primera vez la expresión ¡A buenas horas, mangas verdes! no la entiende pese a conocer el significado individual de sus componentes, pero sí detecta una incompatibilidad interna entre componentes que desaconseja la interpretación literal. Aunque exista a veces cierta proporcionalidad entre el acceso a la motivación y el acceso al sentido idiomático, son factores independientes entre sí. En principio, el concepto de motivación es diacrónico, y, precisamente por ello, es de difícil acceso¹²⁶ (Heine, 1997: 10-11).

¹²⁶ *A child who first hears the expression a buena hora mangas verdes does not understand it even if he knows the individual meaning of its components, but he does detect an internal incompatibility between components that discourages the literal interpretation. Although sometimes there is certain proportionality between access to motivation and to the idiomatic sense, they are independent factors. At first, the concept of motivation is diachronic, and precisely because of this, it is difficult to access (Heine, 1997: 10-11, author's translation).*

Transparency

Idiomaticity and opacity also correspond to associations of ideas, but of another kind, and should not be confused with motivation (Pamies, 2014: 46).

We understand motivation in phraseology as a term related to that of the transparency that a particular expression represents for a specific person or group of people. On the contrary, when speakers are confronted with an absence of recognition of the motivation existing behind a phraseological unit, that specific expression would present a high level of opacity for them.

In summary, a phraseological unit is transparent for speakers when they can understand the logical relationship established between the literal meaning and the symbolic meaning. Consequently, a phraseological unit is transparent for language users when the motivation underlying is evident for them (Mellado, 2004: 47-56).

As a result, it is the speakers' capacity that will determine the level of evidence of the motivation within the phraseological expression. In line with the gradation aspect which the prototypes model establishes, expressions can be catalogued in different levels of transparency, from expressions whose meaning is perfectly transparent to speakers, to other cases of absolute semantic opacity.

The difference here lies on the fact that the gradation we find in the other more measurable aspects of phraseological units, such as idiomatic nature or stability, is in this case subjective and variable, depending on the speakers' nature, profile and abilities. It is in this sense that, even when transparency is related to the level of motivation of phraseological units, these terms should not be confused.

Identificar la motivación con la transparencia conlleva precisamente confundir la existencia de un nexo con la posibilidad de percibirlo, que es lo que define a esta última. Es necesaria una distinción más rigurosa, pues la dicotomía motivado vs. arbitrario se refiere a una propiedad objetiva (aunque no siempre sea conocida ni accesible), mientras que la dicotomía transparente vs. opaco es un correlato psicolingüístico de la anterior en la competencia de los hablantes¹²⁷ (Pamies, 2014: 35).

From this conclusion it is also deduced that both the user and the context where the expression is applied are highly influential. The speaker might be completely dissociated from the genuine

¹²⁷ *Identifying motivation with transparency creates a confusion between the existence of a link with the possibility of perceiving it, which is what defines the latter. A more rigorous distinction is necessary, because the dichotomy motivated vs. arbitrary refers to an objective property (although it is not always known or accessible), while the dichotomy transparent vs. opaque is a psycholinguistic correlate of the previous one in the speakers' competence (Pamies, 2014: 35, author's translation).*

motivation which gave birth to a particular phraseological expression.

*La transparencia es una magnitud gradual y subjetiva, puesto que depende de los conocimientos y saber extralingüístico de cada hablante*¹²⁸ (Mellado, 2012: 62).

Apart from the nature, profile and abilities that particular speakers present, another important influencing factor is language context. In fact, this is extremely related to the extralinguistic knowledge those speakers possess, thus becoming a factor of great influence on transparency.

In summary, the level of transparency or opacity a phraseological unit represents is also subjective and dependent on the historical and encyclopaedic context where that expression is encountered.

As an example, the Spanish expression *¡A buenas horas, mangas verdes!* has a specific historic motivation, but for a speaker with a reduced historical perspective, it would be much more opaque than for a speaker with a broad knowledge of the context. In conclusion, the level of transparency is equally influenced by both the speaker and the cultural context.

¹²⁸ Transparency is a gradual and subjective magnitude, since it depends on the conscience and extralinguistic knowledge of each speaker (Mellado, 2012: 62, author's translation).

Types of motivation

Phraseological expressions themselves can be grounded on very varied types of motivation. It is not only the semantic elements of each structure themselves that can provide useful information to establish the link between the literal and figurative meaning, that would lead to discern the underlying motivation. There are other factors involved, as we can already perceive from the variety of conditions that affect the levels of transparency or opacity.

Motivation and analysability are not identical because it is not only the meanings of the constituent parts that make up the meaning of the whole. There are also other factors that provide links between the image and the actual meaning. The analysability of the semantic structure of the idiom is just one reason why the idiom in question is perceived as being motivated. There are many idioms which are not semantically analysable in the sense that it is not possible to ascribe autonomous meanings to their constituent parts, and yet they are motivated (Dobrovol'skij, Piirainen, 2005: 82-83).

Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2009: 17-41) have covered this issue by describing four kinds of motivation:

- Metaphorical motivation

In this case, there is semantic resemblance between the referent and the concept.

- Symbolic motivation
The relationship between the elements is based on cultural and extralinguistic knowledge.

- Intertextual motivation
Here, the lexical structure of a phraseological expression makes reference to an existent text.

- Indexical motivation
Finally, the reference to the idiomatic meaning is based either on phonetic analogies or on pragmatic-conceptual similarities.

The most frequent type of motivation in phraseology is the metaphorical one, either in the form of conceptual metaphors or metaphors based on frames. However, it is important to note that in the same phraseological expression several types of motivation can appear together, which means that the majority of the time the phraseological expression cannot be assigned to a single type of motivation (Mellado, 2012: 45-46).

Los tipos de motivación analizados aparecen pocas veces puros, mostrándose en la mayoría de los FR una

*combinación de varios tipos de motivación*¹²⁹ (Mellado, 2012: 62).

The different types of motivation are tightly linked to the cultural factor, which is present in different ways in many of the phraseological units. In summary, it is hard to separate the cognitive aspect from the cultural one (Mellado, 2012: 62).

The lack of a clear borderline between different types of motivation (everyday experience vs. cultural knowledge) does not mean that it is useless to distinguish such types. The existence of different motivational types does not contradict the fact that some of these types are often blended in natural language use (Dobrovol'skij, Piirainen, 2005: 80).

*Resulta difícil dirimir qué hay de ontológico y qué hay de cultural en las asociaciones que distintas culturas dan a las partes del cuerpo, movimientos básicos, etc*¹³⁰ (Luque Durán, Manjón, 2002).

In cognitive semantics, motivation is a key concept, since this discipline aims to decode the regular relationships that exist

¹²⁹ *The types of motivation are rarely pure, with the result of the majority of phraseological units showing a combination of several types of motivation (Mellado, 2012: 62, author's translation).*

¹³⁰ *It is difficult to determine what is ontological and what is cultural in the associations that different cultures give to body parts, basic movements, etc. (Luque Durán, Manjón: 2002).*

between the internal form and the phraseological meaning, relationships that are reflected in cognitive models and macro metaphors common to many languages (Mellado, 2012: 45-46).

Idioms that have a metaphorical component, as well as the ones that are culturally marked, can significantly influence the grade of transparency for language users. In fact, transparency and motivation are closely linked to the metaphorical character of a lot of expressions.

Therefore, idioms not semantically compositional like *coger el toro por los cuernos* or *pitarle los oídos a alguien* can become fairly transparent under a metaphorical or cultural approximation. Other structures are expressions that establish a process of comparison, so that they respond to stereotyped images, very connected to cultural factors, like *fuerte como un toro* (Uzcanga, 2016).

Once again, the decoding of phraseological expressions will depend on the speakers' ability to interpret them.

La motivación sincrónica, ya sea etimológica, psico-sensorial, experiencial, simbólico-cultural, intertextual o metalingüística, es una mera posibilidad que depende de la capacidad humana de asociar ideas, usar o crear conexiones, más obvias o más elaboradas, y esto es

*particularmente relevante en el campo de la fraseología, pero no exclusivo de ella*¹³¹ (Pamies, 2014: 46).

All these semantic and psycholinguistic associations are a part of a dynamic evolution born from the diversity of worldviews inherent in languages. Inherited through a language, these associations influence the collective thinking of the speakers. On the other hand, these connections develop constantly and equidistantly in each culture, having, as a result, diverse repercussions on languages (Pamies, 2014: 46).

3.4.6.8. Cognitive domains

According to cognitive linguistics, human brain is organized through the frames provided by cognitive domains. Cognitive domains are structures of knowledge in reference to the way in which the world is organized. It includes general and unequivocal information, as well as specific and uncertain notions (Cuenca, Hilferthy, 1999: 68).

In cognitive grammar, the meaning is processed by the activation of one or more spheres of knowledge, identified as

¹³¹ *Synchronic motivation, whether it is etymological, psycho-sensorial, experiential, symbolic-cultural, intertextual or metalinguistic, is a mere chance that depends on the human ability to associate ideas, using or creating connections, more obvious or more elaborate, and this is particularly relevant in the field of phraseology, but not exclusive to it* (Pamies, 2014: 46, author's translation).

cognitive domains in the discipline. Cognitive linguistics is proximal to Saussure's sign and his concept of symbolic unit (Cuenca, Hilferthy, 1999: 182).

The cognitive domain of Langacker (1991) is related to Lakoff's idealized cognitive model (1987), Fillmore's frame (1985) and Fauconnier's mental space (1984). All these concepts are related to the concepts of script or frame in the sciences of psychology and artificial intelligence (Ruiz Gurillo, 2000: 2).

Transferred to the field of phraseology, cognitive domains allow establishing the mental schemes that underlie the phraseological units. Cognitive models are thus abstracted in the analysis of the motivation that exists between the internal form of phraseological units and its idiomatic meaning (Mellado, 2005).

Under cognitive linguistics premises, semantics is closed to encyclopaedic nature, as the denotative aspect of an expression, which is strictly lexical, is intimately linked to its connotative face, which is attributable to the context and more related to pragmatics (Cuenca, Hilferthy, 1999: 68).

According to cognitive linguistics, the division between semantics and pragmatics is not to be drawn in a clear way and cannot be simplified (Haiman, 1980; Langacker, 1987), as knowledge of the world and linguistic information are intimately linked. Language is

modified through use, as it interacts with reality. To say it in other words: *la semántica no cabe en un diccionario: necesita, como mínimo, toda una enciclopedia*¹³² (Cuenca, Hilferthy, 1999: 68).

*Una vez más, encontramos una referencia a la teoría de los prototipos en esta reflexión, que defiende el estudio de la lengua integrando el conocimiento enciclopédico que poseen culturalmente los individuos*¹³³ (Cifuentes, 1992: 153; in Fernández Álvarez, 2011: 49).

In practice, the global meaning of a phraseological unit, which would correspond to the target domain, can be separated from the image that inspires it, the source domain. For instance, the idiom *no abrir boca* makes reference to the target domain of “be silent” and is based on the source domain of “closed recipient”; while the idiom *abrir su corazón* belongs to the target domain of “talk with sincerity”, and refers to the source domain of “open recipient” (Mellado, 2005).

It has to be considered that the concept of cognitive domains is tightly linked to the motivation sphere. Consequently, the subjectivity attributable to the motivation analysis of phraseological

¹³² *Semantics does not fit in a dictionary; it needs, at least, an entire encyclopaedia* (Cuenca, Hilferthy, 1999: 68, author’s translation).

¹³³ *Once again, we find a reference to the theory of prototypes in this reflection, which defends the study of language by integrating the encyclopaedic knowledge that individuals culturally have* (Cifuentes, 1992: 153; in Fernández Álvarez, 2011: 49, author’s translation).

structures affects the notions of source domain and target domains as well. These terms, once again, are strictly dependent on the characteristics of the context and the user.

Soy consciente de las deficiencias que el método cognitivista entraña, sobre todo en lo referente a la arbitrariedad y subjetividad a la hora de determinar dominios fuente y meta y describir las metáforas integrantes de un modelo cognitivo. Asimismo, tampoco comparto el planteamiento reduccionista de querer encajar todas las metáforas fraseológicas dentro del corsé de modelos cognitivos reconocibles y globales¹³⁴ (Mellado, 2005: 77).

However, research shows that common patterns defining the motivational schemes of a big number of expressions can actually be found in many languages. This pattern might reveal a shared structure of cognitive domains in many languages.

Under a psycholinguistic perspective, it is assumed that the same cognitive patterns can be reproduced in different linguistic communities.

¹³⁴ *I am aware of the deficiencies that the cognitivist method entails, especially in relation to the arbitrariness and subjectivity when determining the source and meta domains and describing the integrating metaphors of a cognitive model. Likewise, I do not share the reductionist approach intended at fitting all the phraseological metaphors into the corset of cognizable and global cognitive models (Mellado, 2005: 77, author's translation).*

This phenomenon is one of the main theories developed by cognitive linguists, especially in relation to bodily notions. A great range of human experiences are transmitted to language.

Human beings use knowledge about the world and about themselves to express concepts and thoughts. This assumes that ideas about the world will often be based on bodily notions (Johnson, 1992).

La corporeización del lenguaje es una de las hipótesis más fuertes del cognitivismo. Supone que los usos metafóricos, metonímicos o de otro tipo que encontramos en las lenguas no funcionan aisladamente; al contrario, se deben a procesos psicolingüísticos. Por lo tanto, es probable que estos encuentren reflejo en las diversas lenguas del mundo¹³⁵ (Ruiz Gurillo, 2000: 2).

¹³⁵ *The corporatization of language is one of the strongest hypotheses of cognitivism. It assumes that the metaphorical, metonymic or other uses that we find in languages do not work in isolation; on the contrary, they are due to psycholinguistic processes. Therefore, it is likely that they have a reflection in the various languages of the world (Ruiz Gurillo, 2000: 2, author's translation).*

3.4.6.9. Relations among idiomatic nature, motivation and metaphors

Distinction between the phraseological categories

Phraseology is one of the areas of language where speakers express their appreciations about reality in a more frequent and varied way. Within phraseology, as a result, a wide range of expressions are integrated, and we have seen how they have been historically categorized.

According to Corpas Pastor (1996), paremiological phrases and routine formulae belong to the third category within the phraseological field. Paremiological phrases are easily identifiable because they take the form of sayings, quotes and sentences with a specific value. Some Spanish examples of this category would be *por la boca muere el pez, el hombre es un lobo para el hombre* or *las paredes oyen*.

On the other hand, routine formulae are also clear to distinguish, both in form and function. It is in this sense that Corpas Pastor's classification is related to Casares's description (1950). Casares defines these expressions as those who have uncompleted grammatical meaning but that on their own serve as elements of social interaction. It is only in this context that their stability and idiomatic nature is understood. In summary, routine formulae act as discursive and psycho-social formulae. Examples that can be found

in the Spanish language are *hasta luego, a eso voy, lo siento, Dios se lo pague, no es para tanto, no te digo or le saluda atentamente*.

These expressions are often referred to as pragmatic idiomatic phrases in other languages. It is the function of these elements within the discourse that distinguishes them from the other two categories, more semantically marked.

*Desde el punto de vista semántico la diferencia entre ambas unidades reside en el significado prevalentemente semántico —lexical— de las locuciones frente al prevalentemente pragmático de las frases idiomáticas pragmáticas, cuyo significado está en relación con su empleo en una concreta situación comunicativa*¹³⁶ (Zamora, 1999: 530).

Following Corpas Pastor's categorization, which has been widely shared by the supporters of the broader view of phraseology¹³⁷, two

¹³⁶ *From the semantics point of view, the difference between both units lies in the predominantly semantic -lexical- meaning of idioms, versus the predominantly pragmatic nature of pragmatic idioms, whose meaning is related to their use in a concrete communicative situation* (Zamora, 1999: 530, author's translation).

¹³⁷ According to the narrow consideration, only combinations with syntagmatic equivalence could be regarded as phraseology (Quiroga, 2006: 24-35). As a result, this perspective does not include collocations and paremiological phrases in phraseology. On the contrary, the broad view of phraseology includes non-idiomatic expressions, such as collocations and routine formulae in the peripheral area of phraseology (Mellado, 2008: 9), according to the organization provided by the prototypes model, where phraseological categories are distributed along the gradual scale of idiomatic nature, with blur boundaries between those categories (Pamies, 2007: 6).

more categories are manifested under the label of phraseology: idioms and collocations.

It has been stated that collocations are free phrases with a certain grade of combinatory restriction derived from its use, as in *rebanada de pan*. In linguistics, these units are usually referred to as the combination of two words which, once together, give a new meaning to the sentence, derived from the previous isolated elements.

On the other hand, an *idiom* is a combination of words which *is a product of a conceptual system and motivated by cognitive mechanisms such as metaphor, metonymy, for which cultural models play an important role* (Kövecses, Szabó, 1996; Bílková, 2000).

In idioms, when every component of the expression is taken separately, it does not give a related meaning to the final significance of the combination –at least at simple sight. It is in this sense that idioms are defined as a combination of words whose elements are not independent, such as in *mosquita muerta, sano y salvo* or *dormir como un tronco*.

In summary, the difference between collocations and idioms is that, in the case of collocations, each individual element forming part of

the combination provides an individual meaning to the global resulting significance.

It is in this sense that collocations are referred to as semi-phraseemes by Mel'čuk (2003), who describes them as the elements which include the meanings of all its constituents, but that, at the same time have an additional meaning that is unpredictable.

Another characteristic that differentiates idioms from collocations is that the latter present lesser grade of fixation.

Related to this fact, from a practical perspective, collocations are usually referred to as the co-occurrence of two or more words in a text where the distance between the elements of the collocation does not exceed four or five words maximum. On the contrary, idioms are not normally separated whatsoever.

*Desde el punto de vista formal, uno de los criterios fraseológicos que justifica la frontera entre colocación y locución idiomática es que la colocación tiene menor grado de fijación. En cambio la locución idiomática, no permite inversión, ni sustitución, ni cambios morfológicos, ni conversión a pasiva*¹³⁸ (Pamies, 2005: 470).

¹³⁸ *From the formal point of view, one of the phraseological criteria that justifies the border between collocations and idioms is the fact that collocations have a lower degree of fixation. On the other hand, the idiom does not allow inversion,*

According to the principle of stability, Pamies presents a graded organization of diverse phraseological units according to their grade of fixation. In this scheme, he situates idioms in the extreme of a continuous line. They are then followed by formulae, collocations and stereotyped comparisons, correlatively. Finally, at the other extreme of the continuum, with the least grade of fixation, Pamies locates fixed expressions, which are known as free combinations.

The idiomatic nature of phraseological units would also be categorized according to this continuous system. Therefore, this scheme also follows the structure settled by the theory of prototypes. Both the prototypical model and the practical distribution presented by Pamies are realistic with the conditions of phraseological units, where the barriers between the different categories are actually blurred.

En el plano semántico, la idiomática se muestra menos explícitamente en las comparaciones estereotipadas que en el caso de las colocaciones porque sus dos elementos son literales y sólo el nexa comparativo es figurado, pero son

substitution, morphological changes, neither conversion to passive (Pamies, 2005: 470, author's translation).

*más idiomáticas que la mayoría de palabras compuestas*¹³⁹
(Pamies, 2005: 473).

As a result, idioms are born because of a process with a complex evolution, where deep psycholinguistic procedures are implied. Cognitive linguistics has recently been trying to give answer to this phenomenon by a definition of a series of metaphorical and motivational procedures, which would give more sense to the idiomatic nature of these elements.

Cognitive mechanisms of motivation

How are idioms created? How do their component two elements become linked and attribute a new meaning to the new combination? Is it accidental?

In the prototypes model of cognitive linguistics, idioms, collocations and routine formulae are set on a gradual continuum where the attributes which characterizes them move from more to less intensity.

Consequently, from the cognitivist approach all of them are included in the evolutive analysis. The factors of motivation,

¹³⁹ *In the semantic level, idiomatic nature is less explicitly shown in stereotyped comparisons than in the case of collocations because their two elements are literal and only the comparative nexus is figurative, but they are more idiomatic than most compound words* (Pamies, 2005: 473, author's translation).

metaphorical evolution and idiomatic nature are considered to be influential in the development of these elements.

However, due to their characteristics, idioms are considered to be situated at the core of the prototypes model, while the other groups would be situated in the peripheral area of phraseology. In other words, idioms present the ideal archetype that allows the study of the metaphorical nature and the process involving the mechanisms of motivational evolution.

Most idioms are motivated in some way. The study of idiom motivation is an important linguistic issue because motivation influences the way idioms are used. Motivation is neither a purely psychological nor an etymological phenomenon. The motivational basis of an idiom consists of linguistically relevant traces of the underlying image rather than of the image itself, which differs individually. Some of these traces are part of the conceptual basis of the idiom, which is intuitively addressed by speakers. This kind of image traces make up the so-called image component of idiom semantics, and, in this sense, they are part of the content plane of the idiom (Dobrovolskij, 2014: 23).

Idioms are usually the product of a conceptual system motivated by cognitive mechanisms of comparison, mostly based on cultural grounds (Molina, 2008).

It is equally true that expressions whose meaning presents a greater burden of cultural motivation are more opaque for the current speaker and even more for a non-native speaker (Olza, 2009: 36-37).

However, there is a real possibility of understanding the mechanisms that intervened in the creation of idioms. Even those whose motivation seems more difficult to trace today, will be based on some human experience or on some knowledge scheme that in some way allow access to its meaning (Olza, 2009: 36-37).

According to more traditional perspectives in linguistic studies, idioms consist of two or more words whose overall meaning is unpredictable from the meanings of their singular elements. A major assumption of traditional approaches is that idiomatic meaning is largely arbitrary.

It might be true that the meanings of idioms are not completely predictable. However, under the cognitive linguistics perspective, new nuances are added to this rigid consideration. As a result, cognitive linguistics is based on the idea that a large part of an idiom's meaning is motivated (Kövecses, 2010: 246).

There are at least three cognitive mechanisms at the base of the motivation behind idioms. They correspond to metaphors, metonymies, and conventional knowledge. Indeed, psycholinguistic

experiments show that many idioms are related to a psychological reality, and many idioms are based on these cognitive devices (Kövecses, 2010: 246).

Idiomatic nature: a dead metaphor

The dead metaphor view of idiomatic nature suggests that idioms were once metaphors which have lost their metaphoricity over time and that now are equivalent to simple literal phrases.

Although metaphors are lively, creative, and resistant to literal paraphrase, idioms are dead, hackneyed expressions that are equivalent in meaning to simple literal phrases (Gibbs, 1992: 1).

However, a great deal of research in cognitive linguistics and psycholinguistics questions the dead metaphor view of idiomatic nature.

It is not always easy to classify an idiom as a dead metaphor. Deciding whether an idiom is dead or just unconsciously conventional requires, among other things, a search for its systematic manifestation in the language as a whole and in our everyday reasoning patterns (Gibbs, 1994: 277).

Actually, from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, it is suggested that many idioms are not simple and dead metaphors, but that they actually retain a good deal of their metaphoricity.

Even words that appear to be classic examples of dead metaphors often have vital metaphorical roots (Gibbs, 1994: 276).

Idioms are thought to have once been metaphorical because we can often trace a phrase back to its fully metaphorical use in an earlier stage of the language. People are not necessarily conscious of the earlier metaphorical mapping when understanding an idiom, so they normally interpret idioms as dead metaphors (Gibbs, 1994: 275).

The central property of idiom semantics gives solid evidence to the hypothesis according to which it is not valid to consider idioms as dead metaphors. The idiom semantics of a prototypical idiom illustrates its interpretation in two different conceptual levels.

The primary level is related to the lexicalized or figurative (actual) meaning of the idiom, while the second level makes reference to the meaning that evokes a given source concept. The semantics of the idiom is thus formed by these two elements which are related through a process where the image component intervenes.

In other words, the conceptual structure underlying the semantics of an idiom consists of its actual meaning, which is decoded through a process of lexicalized figurative reading, and the literal interpretation of the underlying lexical structure, which is the mental image standing behind the idiom. Between these two levels of the idiom's conceptual structure there is a semantic bridge. We name this semantic bridge the image component of idiom semantics (Dobrovol'skij, 2014: 24).

It is in this semantic bridge where the human factor plays a key role. The metaphorical competence of each speaker, added to contextual and cultural resources, can strongly determine the level of motivation that an idiom presents for them.

Words that constitute the lexical structure of an idiom are always able to evoke associations. On the other hand, people's understanding of the idiom's actual meaning is always based on their intuition about the source concept, at least to a certain extent (Dobrovol'skij, 2014: 25).

Meanings can be motivated by the conceptual mappings that link the individual words in idioms to their figurative meanings (Gibbs, 1992: 2).

Conceptual metaphors and metaphorical expressions

La metáfora es una manera de ver e imaginar el mundo. El lenguaje permite superponer mentalmente imágenes diferentes. Así, si decimos 'el mar estaba como un plato' o 'el mar es un plato' creamos un vínculo entre una realidad física como el mar y otro familiar como es el plato. El resultado es ver la superficie del mar con la lisura de la superficie de un plato. La semántica cognitiva considera que la fuente común para la producción metafórica está esencialmente basada en la percepción, las facultades psicomotrices y la experiencia corporeizada (embodied experience) del ser humano¹⁴⁰ (Luque Nadal, 2005: 382).

The majority of idioms are semantically motivated, which would include metaphorical and symbol-based motivation. Additionally, these can be affected by not purely semantic types, namely intertextual and indexical motivation.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980), founders of the conceptual metaphor theory, believe that the metaphor is not merely a literary device, but

¹⁴⁰ *The metaphor is also a way of seeing and imagining the world. Language allows you to mentally superimpose different images. Thus, if we say 'the sea was like a dish' or 'the sea is a dish' we create a link between a physical reality like the sea and a familiar one like the dish. The result is to see the surface of the sea similar to the smoothness of the surface of a plate. Cognitive semantics considers that the common source for metaphorical production is essentially based on perception, psychomotor faculties and the embodied experience of the human being (Luque Nadal, 2005: 382, author's translation).*

an integral part of everyday language and thought. Besides, this theory implies that metaphors sometimes are so present in language and so used that speakers do not notice them in the discourse (Cuenca, Hilferthy, 1999).

*En cualquier lengua abundan las expresiones metafóricas. De hecho, hay muchas cosas que no se pueden decir si no es metafóricamente. La espacialidad, la situación de los objetos en un mundo físico orientado por la gravedad, es una importante fuente de metáforas en muchas lenguas*¹⁴¹
(Lakoff: 1991: 24).

In the system of cognitive domains stated by cognitive linguistics, conventionalized metaphors can be described as acknowledged conceptual metaphors which are abstracts schemes that serve to group metaphorical expressions. A metaphorical expression, instead, is an individual case of conceptual metaphor, and can be adapted to any cultural specificity (Cuenca, Hilferthy, 1999).

The metaphor permeates everyday life, not only language, but also thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature (Lakoff, 1991: 39).

¹⁴¹ *In any language, metaphoric expressions abound. In fact, there are many things that cannot be said if it is not metaphorically. Spatiality, the situation of objects in a physical world oriented by gravity, is an important source of metaphors in many languages* (Lakoff, 1991: 24, author's translation).

In this way, cognitive linguistics analyses the internal structure of the most recurrent conceptual metaphors, according to the domain formula.

The domain formula establishes two levels for each metaphor. These correspond to the source domain, on the one hand, and to the target domain, on the other. The source domain makes reference to the concept while the target domain is where other elements are overlapped to add another meaning to the expression.

This construction reminds the figure-background structure. The metaphor, therefore, is the projection of concepts from a conceptual domain (the source domain) to another conceptual domain (target domain).¹⁴²

The essence of metaphor is to understand and experience one kind of thing in terms of another (Lakoff, Johnson, 1995: 41).

To illustrate this process we can take Cuenca and Hilferthy's example. In Spanish, the conceptual metaphor "ideas are food" relates the source domain (food) to the target domain (ideas) to create metaphorical expressions such as *¿y eso cómo se come?*; *no me trago lo que me estás diciendo*; *algo se está cocinando en la Moncloa*; or *me cuesta digerir tanta información*. All these

¹⁴² Another alternative to this formula is the theory of mental spaces (Fauconnier, Tumer, 1994, 1998; Ruiz de Mendoza, 1998).

metaphorical expressions respond to the same conceptual metaphor, the assumption that ideas are food (Cuenca, Hilferthy, 1999).

*De manera general, en el proceso de formación de las metáforas, el hombre se sirve de lo concreto más cercano a él, a menudo de su propio cuerpo, para hacer referencia a otros fenómenos más abstractos, generalmente con un fuerte contenido expresivo, que él asocia con experiencias de su entorno más inmediato*¹⁴³ (Mellado, 2005: 83).

In almost all cases metaphors give expression to abstract realities in terms of more concrete ones, of the universe of human action and experience (Lakoff, 1991: 24).

Types of metaphors

The proposal of a new theory on the concept of metaphors is a challenge to other disciplines, since according to this theory a great deal of the conceptualization of our experience, even the foundation of human consciousness, is based on metaphors (Gibbs, 1993: 252-253).

¹⁴³ *In general, in the process of forming metaphors, one uses the concrete and closest, often their own body, to refer to other more abstract phenomena, usually with a strong expressive content, that one associates with experiences of their immediate surroundings* (Mellado, 2005: 83, author's translation).

Other tropes such as metonymies, synecdoches or ironies also have a strong presence in language. Yet being formally considered to be metaphors, they give a distinctive value to the metaphor. These tropes do not merely provide a way to talk about how we think, reason, and imagine, they are also constitutive of our experience (Gibbs, 1993: 252- 253).

In the cognitive linguistics theory of metaphors, three main groups are distinguished. This classification follows the model designed by Lakoff and Johnson, and distinguishes between ontological, structural and orientational metaphors¹⁴⁴.

- Ontological metaphors

They concern the projection of events, activities, emotions and ideas in terms of objects or substances (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980: 64).

They respond to the fact that talking about quantifiable objects or substances is much easier than talking about abstract concepts. As a consequence, human language creates a simpler way of making reference to complex aspects of reality.

¹⁴⁴ Even though the authors clarified in the very same book (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980) that this division might be artificial and so they suggested a revision: *The division of metaphors into three types—orientational, ontological, and structural—was artificial. All metaphors are structural (in that they map structures to structures); all are ontological (in that they create target-domain entities); and many are orientational (in that they map orientational image-schemas)* (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980: 265).

Furthermore, other processes such as personification and metonymy form figures that belong to the group of ontological metaphors.

Per Gibbs e Lakoff la metafora svolge un ruolo centrale nella lingua che impieghiamo quotidianamente per comunicare. Diventa pertanto necessario che la teoria linguistica riconosca questo fenomeno senza classificarlo come mero fenomeno della pragmatica, quindi poco interessante in una prospettiva teorica. Quando si parla di metafora si intende includere, oltre alla metafora propriamente detta, anche altri fenomeni strettamente connessi alla metafora, come la metonimia e la personificazione¹⁴⁵ (Perbellini, 2009: 87).

○ Metonymy

According to cognitive linguistics, both metaphors and metonymies are omnipresent in natural language. Metonymy is commonly considered to conceptualize an entity according to its relation to another one or a referential function, especially when we intend to emphasize a specific aspect (Perbellini, 2009: 90).

¹⁴⁵ *According to Gibbs and Lakoff metaphors play a central role in the language we use to communicate daily. Therefore, for linguistic theory, it becomes necessary to recognize this phenomenon without classifying it as a mere phenomenon of pragmatics, and therefore uninteresting under a theoretical perspective. When we speak of metaphors we intend to include other phenomena closely related to the metaphor, such as the metonymy and the personification (Perbellini, 2009: 87, author's translation).*

The difference between a metaphor and a metonymy is that the latter is usually seen as something that stands for another thing. This commonly accepted view of metonymy points to the claim that two entities are close to each other in the conceptual space. Thus, they belong to the same domain. In contrast to this, the elements in a metaphor belong to two different domains, which are related by some kind of similarity (Dobrovolskij, Piirainen, 2005: 23).

- Personification

This mechanism assigns an animated trait to abstract and non-animated entities. This allows the projection of expectations, feelings and characteristics typical of human beings on these other elements (Perbellini, 2009: 90).

- Structural metaphors

They give the structure of simpler concepts to be sorted and categorized on unstructured concepts of nature. These metaphors are based on the dimension of experience.

Consider how common it is for us to associate the functioning of the mind with that of the machine, or to represent the structure of a conversation as a war. For instance, we easily relate the facts of attacking someone's positions, hurting someone (with words), arriving at a truce, defending the own statements (Perbellini, 2009: 90).

- Orientational metaphors

Finally, orientational metaphors allow us to organize the systems of concepts in relation to others, in particular when making reference to spatial positions: front-back, overhead, deep-superficial, central-peripheral, inside-out (see Iñesta, Pamies, 2002: 67).

Lakoff and Johnson illustrate how these spatial oppositions are systematically projected by humans to describe the surrounding reality and to structure abstract concepts.

In particular, the perception of time is often ordered according to these oppositions. It is simple to link the action of entering a space and that of starting something, such as opening a dance, closing a relationship, getting in touch, and so on (Perbellini, 2009: 90).

In some cultures these guidelines are even associated with moral judgments. According to Lakoff and Johnson, these orientations, like most of the metaphors that structure our conceptual system, can be considered universal since they do not derive so much from culture but rather from the biological structure of our body (Perbellini, 2009: 90).

Main conceptual systems

Conceptual metaphors are metaphorical mappings based on human thought and experience. There is a strong correlation in everyday

embodied experience that leads to the creation of ‘primitive’ or ‘primary’ metaphors (Gibbs, Lenz, Francozo, 2004: 1197).

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980b), some of the most prominent primary metaphors are:

- INTIMACY IS CLOSENESS.

Example: “We have a close relationship”.

- DIFFICULTIES ARE BURDENS

Example: “She’s weighed down by responsibilities”.

- AFFECTION IS WARMTH

Example: “They greeted me warmly”.

- IMPORTANT IS BIG

Example: “Tomorrow is a big day”.

- MORE IS UP

Example: “Prices are high”.

- SIMILARITY IS CLOSENESS

Example: “Those colours aren’t the same, but they’re close”.

- ORGANIZATION IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE

Example: “How pieces of the theory fit together”.

- HELP IS SUPPORT

Example: “Support your local charities”.

- TIME IS MOTION

Example: “Time flies”.

- STATES ARE LOCATIONS

Example: “I’m close to being in a depression”.

- CHANGE IS MOTION

Example: “My car has gone from bad to worse”.

- PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS

Example: “He’ll be successful, but isn’t there yet”.

- CAUSES ARE PHYSICAL FORCES

Example: “They push the bill through the Congress”.

- KNOWING IS SEEING

Example: “I see what you mean”.

- UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING

Example: “I’ve never been able to grasp transfinite numbers”.

Conceptual system and encyclopaedic knowledge

The notion of a conceptual system must be distinguished from that of encyclopaedic knowledge. The latter is historically contingent, so it changes over time. Whereas the conceptual system, as defined by Lakoff, (1993: 249) is of universal nature.

Encyclopaedic components present a constant evolution while within the conceptual system there are some universals, as for instance the metaphorical organization of the eventual structure (Gibbs, 1993: 252- 253).

Encyclopaedic and conceptual systems would be related to Koller’s (2007) differentiation of cultural and conventionalized expressions.

Koller distinguishes between the elements that refer to culture and reflect the context of a community from the elements that become conventionalized metaphors. These derive from universal rules based on biological aspects of the human existence. This way, conventionalized expressions are different from those that have their origin in cultural idiosyncrasies (Dobrovol'skij, Piirainen, 2009).

However, it is unrealistic to generalize since there is no universal to which all languages are subject. On the other hand, metaphors are basically cultural, and also to a large extent specific to each particular language (Lakoff, 1991: 24).

In summary, it is impracticable to trace a line in order to discern the origin of an idiom or any other phraseological unit. Actually, an expression might present a combination of cultural and conventionalized sources. As a result, the notions of conceptual system and encyclopaedic knowledge might be interrelated.

An evidence of this assumption would be the fact that each language is rich in its catalogue of structural metaphors which describe diverse human experiences. And actually, these structures may differ from one language to another, as they are a reflection of the characteristics of a linguistic community.

*La creación del significado “connotativo” se concibe como un hecho pragmático unido indisociablemente al contexto de uso de la frase en cuestión. Es nuestra experiencia del mundo, nuestro conocimiento enciclopédico, el que hace que de un determinado enunciado infiramos un nuevo sentido, cargado de subjetividad en función de la situación en la que se usa*¹⁴⁶ (Mellado, 2013: 307)

*Un ejemplo sería UNA DISCUSIÓN ES UNA GUERRA, metáfora que estructura lo que hacemos y la manera en que entendemos lo que hacemos cuando discutimos. Tratemos de imaginar una cultura en la que las discusiones no se vieran en términos bélicos. En esta cultura, la gente consideraría las discusiones de una manera diferente, por lo tanto hablaría acerca de ellas de otra manera*¹⁴⁷ (Lakoff, 1991: 41).

Here is where the connections between cognitive semantics and phraseology become evident. Phraseological material is a powerful

¹⁴⁶ *The creation of the "connotative" meaning is conceived as a pragmatic fact indissociably linked to the context of use of the phrase in question. It is our experience of the world, our encyclopaedic knowledge, which gives a new sense to a certain statement, charged with subjectivity depending on the situation in which it is used* (Mellado, 2013: 307, author's translation).

¹⁴⁷ *An example would be AN ARGUMENT IS A WAR, a metaphor that structures what we do and the way we understand what we do when we argue. Let's try to imagine a culture in which discussions were not seen in warlike terms. In this culture, people would consider discussions in a different way, therefore they would talk about them in other terms* (Lakoff, 1991: 41, author's translation).

resource to investigate the cognitive models of a language. For instance, it allows approaching the interlinguistic contrastive perspective, which tries to deepen in the subtle line between “universal” or “national”. This constitutes, in fact, a differentiation of difficult solution (Dobrovol’skijk, Piirainen, 1997: 449).

*El significado que una metáfora tiene para mí está determinado por una parte culturalmente y parcialmente ligada a mis experiencias pasadas. Las diferencias culturales pueden ser enormes porque cada uno de los conceptos en las metáforas pueden variar ampliamente de una cultura a otra*¹⁴⁸ (Lakoff, 1991: 41).

3.4.6.10. The cultural sphere

Phraseology is a linguistic domain that, due to its interrelation with culture, can be better explored and understood in a cultural and historical context than merely from a synchronic perspective. Every idiom has its history or ‘biography’ and can be categorized according to its culture-boundness (Sabban, 2008: 231).

¹⁴⁸ *The meaning that a metaphor has for me is determined by a cultural part and partially linked to my past experiences. Cultural differences can be enormous, as each of the concepts in metaphors can vary widely from one culture to another* (Lakoff, 1991: 41, author’s translation).

According to some authors such as Geck, a proper semantic description of phraseological units should consider them in their context. The author favours a semantic description that reveals the human conceptualization of the world that is reflected in our languages. This should imply a common treatment to all kinds of linguistic signs, as they do not exist in isolation in the mind (Geck, 2004).

Not only does culture integrally include much that is linguistic, but we, as individuals, are also significantly enculturated through language and cannot easily thereafter separate process from product (Lee, 2007: 488).

To achieve the goal of describing language semantics, it is necessary to deepen into the history of phraseological units. This is one of the concerns of the discipline known as phraseopragmatics, aimed at investigating the discourse functions of these elements (Olza, 2013).¹⁴⁹

In the course of history, an idiom may undergo various influences. The impact of cultural and historical features is evident in the evolution of an idiom. It is unpredictable how

¹⁴⁹ Among these studies, we can find interesting examples such as the research conducted by Manero Richard, where the function of paremiological structures in journalistic texts is analysed; or the one by Olza, which is focused on phraseological units (Olza, 2013).

its outward structure and figurative meanings will develop
(Dobrovol'skij, Piirainen, 2010: 8).

It is in this context that the contrast between languages becomes an interesting field of study. As language is better understood within the frame of the culture in which it develops, and diversity should be considered as a cultural reality. It is this diversity which gives ground to the richness provided by the existence of multiple languages. However, languages, as well as human beings, have been developed from mutual origins. The conceptual system described by cognitive linguistics gives solid evidence to this. Therefore, it is also necessary to cultivate the curiosity towards the mutual human nature, as well as to the comprehension of the common resources that have been developing in different cultures.

In the area of linguistics, this curiosity takes the form of studies of comparison and contrast between languages. Particularly, in the field of phraseology, contrasting studies will also allow the examination of common cultural roots.

That is the main issue that Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen tackle when they highlight the difficult solution to the differentiation between what is universal and what is regional. Interesting contrasting research has been focused on symbol-based metaphors, as defined by the authors, as these metaphors present strong elements based on culture.

Symbol-based motivation

In idioms with symbol-based motivation, the relevant cultural knowledge mainly extends to one single constituent, or more precisely, to the concept behind it. Consequently, it does not refer to the idiom as a whole, as is the case with the metaphorical type of motivation.

More specifically, the difference between metaphorical motivation and symbol-based motivation is that the former involves the idea of some kind of similarity between the entity encoded in the inner form and the entity denoted by the idiom taken in its lexicalized meaning, whereas the latter exploits certain cultural conventions based on the ability of material objects to “stand for” some non-material entity.

Examples of studies based on the concept of symbol as stated by Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen are the ones by Brumme. The author analyses the symbolism of different significant, demonstrating the common background shared by Latin languages, such as numbers or animals (Bernal, Brumme, 2010; Brumme, 2006-2007-2012).

Other authors have followed this line of study, studying and displaying the characteristics of phraseological units focusing on their symbolic and cultural motivation. Besides, these studies have made evident that this description can be developed from different points of view.

Therefore, these lines of research have led to a main concern, which is related to the approach from which to consider the examination of phraseological units. As a result, two main perspectives have been positioned, related to the two spheres which form phraseological units.

These two spheres make reference to the connotation and denotation dimensions. It is the dimension shaping the main focus of interest of the study which will indicate if the research takes an onomasiological or a semasiological point of view.

Connotative and denotative dimensions; historical onomasiology

A phraseological expression is formed by two dimensions. The connotative value corresponds to the fact that phraseological units evoke indirect information that conveys an expressive meaning linked to the motivation of that expression. It is with this intention that speakers use rhetorical figures, which can be found as fixed expressions, such as metaphors, to play an intensifier function. Thus, the connotative dimension goes far beyond denotative meaning.

We can distinguish two perspectives according to the direction of the relation between language and the world
(Taylor, 2002: 187).

As opposed of semasiology, the linguistics discipline which is focused on the expression of a word, onomasiology is concerned about word meaning. It is in this sense, so, that onomasiology is connected to the connotative dimension, whereas the denotative dimension would be the issue of semasiology.

Semasiology considers the isolated word and the way its meaning is manifested, while onomasiology looks at the designation of a particular concept, that is, a multiplicity of expressions which form a whole (Baldinger, 1980: 278).

The distinction between semasiology and onomasiology, then, equals the distinction between meaning and naming: semasiology takes its starting-point in the word as a form, and charts the meanings that the word can occur with. On the other hand, onomasiology takes its starting-point in a concept, and investigates by which different expressions the concept can be designated, or named (Grondelaers, Geeraerts, 2003: 69).¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ The semasiological perspective goes from language to the world, and asks: “For this expression, what kinds of situations can be appropriately designated by it?”, and it is derived from the Greek *semasia*, meaning “signification”. The onomasiological perspective goes from the world to language, and asks: “For this state of affairs, what range of linguistic expressions can appropriately describe it?”, and it is derived from the Greek *onoma*, meaning “name”. Traditionally, *onomastics* is the study of proper names (especially place names), while *onomasiology* is often used to refer to the study of semantic relations between words within a semantic field (Taylor, 2002: 187).

The onomasiology perspective allows approaching the phraseological discipline in a more responsive way to the human mind structure.

The main difference between a dictionary and the native speaker's mental lexicon is the fact that, in the former, the meanings are (more or less) isolated from each other, whereas, in the latter, they are mutually connected by powerful psycholinguistic networks (Pamies, 2017: 108).

Some authors have considered phraseological units regarding the linguistic aspect of semantics. This is the case, for instance, of Larreta Zulategui's classification (2001), focused on meaning¹⁵¹. Another example would be Susana Rodríguez-Vida's dictionary (2004), organized from an onomasiological approach. These books prove to be very valuable for the users of a language, as they provide useful resources to find how to express a certain concept by means of phrases.

An evolutive branch of onomasiology is historical onomasiology, which tries to give answers to the diachronic study of language elements.

¹⁵¹ See page 178 on the present research.

Historical onomasiology is the study of the history of words for a given concept. Since the baptism of the discipline by Zauner in 1902, studies have basically been concerned with the explanations of the internal and external side of words, i.e. their forms and (the motivations of) their meanings (Grzega, 2003: 22).

Theory of figurative language conventional

Cultural motivations may be ignored by speakers (metaphor opacity), but the imperceptibility of a fact does not prove its inexistence: if some metaphors remain obscure it is due to our insufficient knowledge, not to an effective absence of motivation (Martin, 1996: 300) (In Pamies, 2017: 107).

Comparative phraseology studies have focused, in the last decade, on the significant role that the cultural component plays on the motivation of the phraseological units.

It is in this sense that the Theory of figurative language conventional (Dobrovol'skii, 1998; Piirainen, 1998; Dobrovol'skii, Piirainen, 2005) offers an alternative to the cognitive theory of the metaphor initiated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) (Pamies, 2007b: 1).

Dobrovol'skii's postulations defend the fact that not all interlinguistic contrasts are cognitively relevant. This means that

cognitive base metaphorical universals do not give a whole vision of the link between the languages. The evidence of it is the contrastive study of the basic cultural elements that are present in phraseological expressions. These elements show important divergences in the means of interpretation of the world of every language and culture (Dobrovol'skiĭ's, 1998: 58).

It is with this aim that according to Dobrovol'skiĭ and Piirainen (2009), the motivation in phraseological expressions can derive from either a metaphorical or a symbolic origin. It is by taking into account the non-compositionality characteristic of idioms that Piirainen distinguishes between metaphors and symbols. She defends that cultural symbols, even though they are integrated in the metaphors fixated in a language, are still semantically active, since the interpretation of these units is based on the autonomous value that symbols have (Piirainen, 1998).

An example of this process would be Spanish expressions containing *pan* (*más bueno que el pan, ganarse el pan, quitarle el pan de la boca a alguien*). These expressions have a largely predictable global meaning based on the symbolic value of the reference of the word *pan* in the culture of the Spanish language (SUBSISTENCE, GOODNESS). In addition, this reference is not exclusive of the global meaning of some phrases, but rather has certain stability from one metaphor to another and is susceptible to generate new ones (Piirainen, 1998).

This example takes the form of a metaphor that is strongly based on the cultural values of a specific linguistic community. It is in this sense that this expression would be considered a symbol, according to the theory of figurative language conventional. In a more modern term, these expressions might also be referred to as ‘culturemes’.

Culturemes

The use of this term is relatively recent among phraseologists, and it aims to replace more fuzzy concepts such as symbols (Dobrovol'skij, Piirainen, 2005: 101).

Culturemes can be described as extra-linguistic cultural symbols, which behave like metaphorical models, motivating figurative expressions in language, both lexical and phraseological (Dobrovol'skij, Piirainen, 2005).

Phraseological expressions are special signs that can store and accumulate a rather significant amount of cultural knowledge and reflect through their images peculiar ways of national (or culture-bound) worldview of reality (Zykova, 2016: 135).

The development of the concept of cultureme in theoretical research on polysemy and phraseology shows that it can be an effective tool for organizing the representation of semantic networks of figurative

meanings, according to culture-based associations of ideas (Pamies, 2017: 100).

Each linguistic community inherits unconscious memories of cultural associations through its language, embedded into the relation between literal and figurative (Pamies, 2017: 105).

According to the Neo-Humboldtian linguo-culturological school of phraseologists, Dobrovol'skij among them, language and culture are two superimposed semiotic codes that interact, especially by means of figurative meanings and phraseologisms.

Phraseology is a privileged field to investigate this interaction, especially from a cross-linguistic point of view (Pamies, 2017: 105).

The metalinguistic concept of cultureme becomes the minimal unit of the interface between both codes, allowing the approaching of the phenomenon in a more systematic way (Dobrovol'skij, Piirainen, 2005).

The number of culturemes is difficult to quantify and is probably in the thousands. Though they may be opaque, culturemes constitute shared knowledge, generating implicit allusions to customs, prejudices, religion, mythology, superstitions, historical facts, famous characters (real or

fictional), agriculture, hunting, fishing, livestock, trade, folk, medicine, colours, fine arts, literature, songs, gastronomy, clothing, artistic creations, games, sports, etc. (Dobrovol'skij, Piirainen, 2005; Luque Durán, 2007).

3.4.6.11. The decomposition process of idiomatic expressions

Identifying the metaphorical process by which idioms have been generated can help find the motivation (either cognitive or cultural) behind them. This will, in turn, prove to be a useful tool in order to achieve educational methodologies that become more effective.

Metaphorical expressions, especially the ones with cultural origin, have developed gradually. As a consequence, their motivation has lost its transparency over time, leading to their lexicalization. Metaphors and other idioms are based on encyclopaedic knowledge and a few studies demonstrate that these conventionalized expressions are much more compositional than imagined in the first place (Cuenca, Hilferthy, 1999: 116).

We could investigate encyclopaedic knowledge of Spanish examples like *tomar las de Villadiego* and *no pintar nada*, which apparently are little motivated by their individual components, to see how their lexicalization process has been gradual. In another extreme there would be phrases such as *echar leña al fuego* or *de tal*

palo, tal astilla. Their internal structures are more analysable and consequently, the expressions could become more transparent. Other expressions, like *tener las manos atadas*, can be considered under the domain formula to relate the concept hands to capacity. It is not, so, an arbitrary idiom, as its parts are interpreted according to the motivation. So, from the cognitive point, this expression might become quite transparent for speakers (Cuenca, Hilferthy, 1999: 116-117).

Deepening in the encyclopaedic knowledge of idioms, under a complete diachronic exploration if necessary, would lead to the decomposition of its components. As a result, a lot of expressions generally considered as opaque or intermediate, could climb a grade in the opacity scale towards transparency for a larger number of speakers.¹⁵²

The idiom decomposition hypothesis (Gibbs, Nayak, Cutting, 1989) establishes that idioms are not just dead metaphors. On the contrary, they are considered to be constructions where their individual words seem to contribute to the overall figurative meaning of the idiom, due to the metaphorical potential that such words convey.

¹⁵² Another example provided by the authors (Cuenca, Hilferthy, 1999: 119) would be the expression *tirar la toalla*. If the person has certain knowledge about the sport of boxing, this would become a transparent expression, as this is the gesture that the trainer does when his boxer has lost the fight. On the contrary, without this encyclopaedic knowledge, this expression would be opaque for the speaker.

Gibbs' hypothesis is actually based on the work by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), where it is suggested that language items are motivated by pre-existing conceptual metaphorical mappings in human long term memory, which reflects our life experience.

According to Lakoff and Johnson's theories, in the production of metaphors a non-metaphorical base is used. This would be originated in the psycho-sensorial experience, from which a concept is projected over another. This basic material, which serves to project human knowledge and concrete experiences to more abstract domains, is shared by different languages, thanks to their biological and psychological nature (Lakoff, Johnson, 2007).

It is not always easy to determine whether a particular word, phrase, or expression originates in a dead metaphor or reflects the metaphorical concepts that are very much a part of our everyday cognition. Deciding whether a cliché is dead or just unconsciously conventional requires a search for its systematic presence in language and everyday thought (Gibbs et al., 2004: 1191).

Psycholinguistic decomposition processes

Psycholinguistics investigates the phraseology area basing its research on the way it is organized in the human mind. The approach that the various psycholinguistics studies take considers idiomatic nature as a central element.

At first, two opposed theories were proposed to explain the processing of phraseological units by the speakers (Corpas, 2001: 34): the idiom list hypothesis and the lexical representation hypothesis.

- Idiom list hypothesis

The first hypothesis presupposes the existence of a separate list of idiomatic phraseological expressions that the speakers independently store in their mental lexicon.

Since such units have a literal and another compositional or idiomatic meaning, they are ambiguous and therefore require two different modes of dissimilar processing. Here the first studies of Bobrow and Bell (1973) developed, centred on the recognition of phraseological expressions out of context. However, this position is later refuted (Corpas, 2001: 34).

- Lexical representation hypothesis

The second hypothesis was defended by Swinney and Cutler (1979). These authors maintain that language phraseological expressions are stored and retrieved from the mental lexicon like any other type of lexical unit, not requiring any special mechanism.

Therefore, the recognition of the unit triggers both interpretations, literal and figurative, although some experiments on lexical recognition based on the response speed of the subjects seem to indicate a certain preference for the idiomatic reading in the first place (Estill, Kemper, 1982) (Corpas, 2001: 34).

Key configuration hypothesis

Cacciari and Tabossi (1988) propose a different alternative. According to the authors, phraseological units are not processed in their compositional meaning until the speaker detects enough constituent elements.

These elements, which would constitute the central core (key), are capable of activating the corresponding phraseological unit (basic key configuration). This hypothesis would be in line with the psycholinguistic models of activation (spreading activation).

According to this model, the interpretation is first literal until the speaker recognizes, and therefore activates, the phraseological unit from a concrete configuration of elements that can vary from individuals to individual (Corpas, 2001: 34).

Direct access hypothesis

Faced with the previous hypotheses, an alternative arises. In this, the emphasis shifts from the supposed ambiguity of such units to their conventionality and fixation.

Gibbs and Gonzalez (1985), as well as Müller and Gibbs (1987), have shown that the degree of fixation and institutionalization of a phraseological unit facilitates its understanding and production in communication.

Moreover, speakers tend to select the idiomatic meaning in the first place, to recognize a stable unit, before discarding this interpretation in favour of a literal processing of the sequence in question. In this process of recognition, the context plays an essential role (Corpas, 2001: 34).

This theory is later developed by Gibbs. He bases his approach on the different theories of word meaning which assume that the lexicon is the repository of all the knowledge needed to specify the meanings of words in sentences. He states that, once a word's meaning, perhaps the literal meaning, is accessed from the lexicon, it is passed to the conceptual system for further nonlinguistic interpretation (Gibbs, 1994).

However, some experimental findings support the idea that a word's lexical representation simply points to a general-purpose conceptual system in which the meanings of words are retrieved and combined using both linguistic and nonlinguistic information (Gibbs, 1994: 34).

A revised version of the standard pragmatic models suggests that understanding nonliteral language involves the simultaneous computation of both the literal and nonliteral meanings of an utterance. This model proposes that people do not first process the literal interpretations of nonliteral utterances but do so at the same time as they understand their indirect or figurative meanings (Gibbs, 1994: 88).

The importance of the context

According to Gibbs (1994), the meanings of words are retrieved and combined using both linguistic and nonlinguistic information. Consequently, the context proves to be an element of significant value for phraseological competences to develop.

*No debemos olvidar que las UFS deben aprenderse en un contexto determinado puesto que pertenecen al plano del discurso*¹⁵³ (Leontaridi, Ruiz Morales, Peramos, 2008: 191).

¹⁵³ *We must not forget that phraseological expressions must be learned in a specific context since they belong to the plane of the discourse (Leontaridi, Ruiz Morales, Soler, 2008: 191, author's translation).*

It is key to clarify what the concept of context makes reference to. Under the cognitive linguistics approach, context is understood as all the circumstances and conditions involving a linguistic occurrence which relate it to the world.

What holds together the diverse forms of Cognitive Linguistics is the belief that linguistic knowledge involves not just knowledge of the language, but knowledge of the worlds as mediated by the language (Geeraerts, Cuyckens, 2007: 7).

As a consequence, the context, both in theoretical and in methodological approximations to phraseology, is a determiner factor. Methodologically speaking, if we introduce more knowledge about the context, we propitiate a motivated compositionality, or a correct interpretation of the whole motivated by the meaning of its parts (Gibbs, 1980).

Certain expressions were transparent at the moment of their creation, but have become opaque with time, as speakers lose the encyclopaedic knowledge that would allow the accurate interpretation of these expressions.

Interesting work has been developed in the field of phraseology that highlights the required link between idiomatic or metaphorical

expressions and the encyclopaedic knowledge that give sense to them.¹⁵⁴

Indeed, Gibbs's experiments demonstrated the importance of the context when learning and recalling phraseological items (Gibbs, 1980).

Three experiments examine people's understanding and memory for idioms. Experiment 1 indicates that in a conversational context, subjects take less time to comprehend conventional uses of idiomatic expression than unconventional, literal uses (Gibbs, 1980: 1).

To conclude, the link provided by the context will increase the level of transparency of an idiom, which will be especially useful in the field of phraseodidactics.

Conclusions

It is under these premises that an appropriate phraseodidactic methodology should be approached. In order to provide solid language learning, decomposition processes of phraseological expressions agree with the principles based on the cognitivist

¹⁵⁴ See, for instance: Inchaurrealde, C. (1997): "Space, reference and emotional involvement". In Niemeyer, S., Dierven, R. (eds.): *The Language of Emotion: Conceptualization, expression, and theoretical background*. Amsterdam-John Benjamins. 135-154.

approach. The cognitivist approach is responsive to the human mind structure, and it is under this light that a didactic methodology will prove to be effective.

3.5. Phraseodidactics

*Hoy en día, la Fraseodidáctica se define no sólo como la didáctica de la fraseología de una lengua sino también como la didáctica de toda una lengua a través de su fraseología*¹⁵⁵
(González Rey, 2012: 76).

Phraseodidactics is a fruitful field by its own. It is a linguistic area that needs to be especially considered, as it is not easily acquired by foreign learners of a language.

The renewed interest in phraseological studies has arisen from the cognitive perspective and it has consolidated as a line of research both in the field of phraseology and teaching-learning of foreign languages (Julià, 2014: 104).

*As Higuera García asserts, nos parece sorprendente la decisiva relevancia del concepto de colocación y la escasa o nula importancia que se le atorga tanto en la formación de lingüistas, como en la formación de profesores de ELE*¹⁵⁶
(Higuera, 2006: 97).

¹⁵⁵ *Nowadays, phraseodidactics is defined not only as the didactics of the phraseology of a language but also as the didactics of a whole language through its phraseology* (González Rey, 2012: 76, author's translation).

¹⁵⁶ *It seems surprising to us the decisive relevance of the concept of collocations and the little or null importance that is provided with both the training of linguists and in the training of ELE teachers* (Higuera, 2006: 97, author's translation).

Speakers of a language have in their mental lexicon a series of expressions that have been naturally incorporated. For the foreign language learner this mental lexicon must be created, and that is the reason for phraseodidactics to exist.

*Los hablantes nativos de una lengua poseen un repertorio de expresiones, frases y dichos que han ido incorporando en su lexicón mental a través de imágenes mentales a lo largo de su vida*¹⁵⁷ (Peramos, Leontaridi, Ruiz, 2009: 1).

We cannot forget the importance of phraseology in the leaning of a language, as natives speak in phrasemes; express themselves in phrasemes and use phrasemes in their linguistic task (Mel'čuk, 1993).

Consequently, the comprehension of figurative language is strictly linked to the communicative competence of a language.

¹⁵⁷ *Native speakers of a language possess a repertoire of expressions, phrases and sayings that have been incorporated into their mental lexicon through mental images along their lives* (Peramos, Leontaridi, Ruiz, 2009: 1, author's translation).

3.5.1. Phraseological competence

*La competencia comunicativa requiere la metafórica para captar esos sentidos figurados, ironías y el variado repertorio de connotaciones que tienen los fraseologismos*¹⁵⁸ (Navarro, 2003:103).

Phraseological competence is not autonomous, but it is disseminated among other competences (Martí, 2016: 60).



Fig. 14. Integral phraseological competence (González Rey, 2016: 178).

¹⁵⁸ *Communicative competence requires metaphors to transmit and catch the figurative sense, ironies and connotations of phraseologisms* (Navarro, 2003:103, author's translation).

3.5.1.1. Figurative competence

To the competences integrant in the phraseological competence, figurative competence should be included, as it is specifically involved in the ability to decipher and use phraseological units.

Figurative competence is defined by Cacciari as the ability to go beyond a literal-referential strategy and to use contextual information to construct a coherent semantic representation. To say it shortly, the figurative competence makes reference to the way a subject interprets a message in an idiomatic way (Levorato, Cacciari, 1995).

Cacciari's thesis is based on her previous research (Cacciari, Tabossi, 1988), which led to the key configuration hypothesis. The hypothesis is supported by considerable investigation in the field of acquisition of phraseology from the physiological perspective. In priming experiments, the access to idiomatic expressions was investigated, to see when subjects did faster in predicting an idiomatic meaning. The results showed that people performed a literal analysis of an idiomatic string before they initiated a non-literal interpretation. On the other hand, it was reaffirmed that an idiom could not be recognized before a certain amount of information had been received (Cacciari, Tabossi, 1988).

In subsequent research, Cacciari defined the specific competences involved in phraseology. These competences displayed the mechanisms that allowed understanding the dominant, peripheral and additional meanings related to a word. This ability implied the capacity to go beyond a purely literal-referential strategy, and to use contextual information to construct a coherent semantic representation (Levorato, Cacciari, 1995).

These assertions have led to the current confirmation of the effectiveness of a phraseodidactic approach which moves away from formal instruction, but that rather takes into consideration a contextual methodology which favours the recognition, and therefore the acquisition of idiomatic elements.

As Cacciari stated in the conclusion of the study:

It had not taken into account how context affects the recognition of an idiom. The well-known role of context in literal language comprehension is probably more crucial with idioms. In fact, what is peculiar about these expressions is that if taken literally they sometimes make no sense but, nevertheless, they do fit in an appropriate context. It is very likely therefore that the detection of this incongruency can play a role in the identification of an idiomatic expression (Cacciari, Tabossi, 1988: 680).

Contemporary research, such as Núñez-Román's¹⁵⁹ (2016), has confronted the issue of how phraseology is applied to foreign language learning. Based on Cacciari's principles, his investigation looks into the main psycholinguistic factors that intervene in the acquisition of phraseological units.

To do so, the study describes linguistic and extralinguistic mechanisms that allow the acquisition of the phraseological units in the native language, in confrontation to the learning processes of second languages. The results suggest that certain factors are more relevant than others in the acquisition of phraseological units in the native language. Therefore, these should be considered in order to reach success in the teaching-learning process of phraseology in second languages.

¹⁵⁹ Núñez-Román is a researcher focused on phraseodidactics.

Ya a punto de ultimar este breve texto, me entero con sorpresa de que un joven investigador de la Universidad de Sevilla, Francisco Núñez-Román, ha creado una página web dedicada a la Fraseología italiana y española. Dejo aquí constancia de ello porque, lógicamente, la aportación de cada uno de estos «granitos de arena» poco a poco va jalonando el camino aún enrevesado de quienes rastrean este terreno aún tan resbaladizo y, fundamentalmente, poco explorado (Durante, 2014: 9).

Author's translation: *Already about to finalize this short text, I find out with surprise that a young researcher at the University of Sevilla, Francisco Núñez-Román, has created a website dedicated to Italian and Spanish Phraseology. I leave here record of it because, logically, the contribution of each one of these "one's bits" little by little goes marking the still convoluted path of those who trace this still so slippery and, fundamentally, little explored land (Durante, 2014: 9).*

3.5.1.2. Cultural competence

*La inclusión de la formación de la competencia cultural complementa la formación de la competencia lingüística, como si fueran las dos caras de una moneda. Una no puede existir sin la otra*¹⁶⁰ (Sevilla, 2007: 170).

Coseriu's theory on the link between language and culture, in which language is understood as a primary form of culture, justifies the treatment of these expressions from the field of etnolinguistics, regarded as a symbol of a community (Biris, 2014: 30).

*La creación del significado “connotativo” se concibe como un hecho pragmático unido indisociablemente al contexto de uso de la frase en cuestión. Es nuestra experiencia del mundo, nuestro conocimiento enciclopédico, el que hace que de un determinado enunciado infiramos un nuevo sentido cargado de subjetividad en función de la situación en la que se usa*¹⁶¹ (Mellado, 2013: 307).

¹⁶⁰ *The inclusion of the cultural competence complements the formation of the linguistic competence, as if they were two sides of a coin. One cannot exist without the other* (Sevilla, 2007: 170, author's translation).

¹⁶¹ *The creation of connotative meaning is conceived as a pragmatic fact inextricably linked to the context of use of the phrase in question. It is our experience of the world, our encyclopaedic knowledge, which gives a statement a subjective new sense according to the situation in which it develops* (Mellado, 2013: 307, author's translation).

In fact, metaphors are used not simply to call the reader's attention to superficial similarity between concepts, but rather to label categories that have no conventional names of their own (Heredia, Cieślicka, 2015: XVI).

3.5.2. History of phraseodidactics

One of the first attempts to introduce phraseology in the didactics of languages was in 1900, with the publication of a German conversation manual aimed at French learners, which presented a big number of idioms and paremiological expressions (Martin, Leray, 1900), even if some other examples might have been found in the past.

The interest of this manual lies in the fact that it demonstrated *that phraseology was already being taught with a surprisingly modern approach in a book on French-German vocabulary at the turn of the century* (Ettinger, 2010: 88, abstract).

Several initiatives in different languages appeared in the following years. These initiatives were mainly launched by teachers, who tried to claim what they considered to be the liveliest part of the language they taught.

It was in 1987 when phraseodidactics officially took its name. The implantation of this denomination started in Germany, with Kühn's work (1987), and the consolidation that the publications by German phraseologists such as Lüger (1997) and Ettinger supposed (1998) (González Rey, 2012: 71).

In the 2000s, research on the area is a growing tendency, with a considerable group of publications clearly focused on phraseodidactics, such as Cavalla's (2008), Meunier and Granger's (2008), Pecman's (2005) and many others.

However, even though phraseology has been consolidated as a science in the second half of the 20th century, its entry into didactic guidelines is scarce. Today, after the full constitution of phraseology as a linguistic discipline, there is still some reluctance to give it a more relevant place (González Rey, 2012: 68).

3.5.2.1. Spanish history of phraseodidactics

With regard to Spanish taught as a foreign language outside of Spain, several studies situate the beginning of the didactics of its phraseology at the end of the seventies. It was the work by Skultety (1980) and Morvay (1980), both presented in the frame of the *Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Europea de Profesores de Español* in Budapest, which represented an inflection point.

Other contributions are those by Kurchatkina and Suprun (1981), whose interest in the didactics of Spanish phraseology continued in Russia. Their theoretical approach on the phraseology of the Spanish language was applied to philology students of Russian universities.

The same year, Sugano pointed out the little attention that the field of idioms received in the didactics of languages. *Idioms have received relatively little attention in descriptive linguistics; even less in linguistics applied to language teaching* (Zwerling, 1981: 65).

In Spain, it was necessary to wait until 1988 to find the first manual of exclusive teaching of Spanish expressions made by teachers, such as Domínguez, Morera and Ortega. However, the interest in the didactics of phraseology by Spanish phraseologists actually began in 1994, coinciding with the time of maximum explosion outside the country. This year was the starting point of theoretical-practical scientific studies about teaching strategies and translation techniques required to access the learning of phraseology. Ruiz Gurillo's work (1994) was especially relevant, as it boosted other studies such as the ones by García-Page (1995), Foment (1998), Penadés (1998), Beltrán and Yáñez (1996) or Taberero (1997).

The specific term “phraseodidactics” penetrated in Spain in 2001, when Larreta Zulategui, Germanist at the University of Murcia,

mentioned the concept under this denomination for the first time. A few years later, Corpas Pastor (2003) also made a slight reference to the term in the volume *Diez años de investigación en fraseología: Análisis sintáctico-semánticos, contrastivos y traductológicos* (González Rey, 2012: 73).

Since 2007 phraseodidactics has become an important branch of phraseology in Spain. This progression is mainly due to the investigation from *Universidad de Santiago de Compostela*, where an important group of studies has provided an important impulse for the Spanish phraseodidactic field to be considered at a scientific level.

*El grupo es un fiel testimonio del carácter innovador de la Fraseología y la Fraseodidáctica dentro de la Comunidad Gallega*¹⁶² (Saracho, 2015: 46-47).

In the frame of this research, the role played by the FRASESPAL team is significant. Lead by Mellado Blanco, its results are regularly exposed in congresses such as FRASESPAL2011 or FRADITRAD2012. Among its lines of work the group incorporates the teaching of fixed expressions in native and foreign languages, in order to develop teaching materials for the learning of these

¹⁶² *The group is a faithful testimony of the innovative character of phraseology and phraseodidactics within the Galician Community* (Saracho, 2015: 46-47, author's translation).

elements up to level C2 of the Common European Framework of Reference (González Rey, 2012: 76). It is currently focused on contrastive studies in Spanish and German languages.

From the same line of research derives the research group FRASEONET, with González Rey at the lead. In this case, this group is specialized in the didactics of the phraseology in French and Spanish (Saracho, 2015: 46-47).

Como consecuencia de todos estos pasos hacia adelante, la Fraseodidáctica se considera una rama aplicada de la Fraseología en España desde 2004. En ello juegan un papel fundamental los investigadores de la Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, que han promovido la publicación de varios trabajos de Fraseodidáctica, como La didactique du français idiomatique de González Rey (2007)¹⁶³ (Saracho, 2015: 46-47).

Likewise, the *Centro Ramón Piñeiro para a Investigación en Humanidades* plays an important role in the teaching of phraseology. Through its periodical publication *Cadernos de Fraseoloxía Galega*, authors such as Ettinger have published

¹⁶³ *As a result of all these steps forward, phraseodidactics is considered an applied branch of phraseology in Spain since 2004. In this a fundamental role is played by researchers from the University of Santiago de Compostela, who have promoted the publication of several works of phraseodidactics, such as La didactique du français idiomatique by González Rey (2007) (Saracho, 2015: 46-47, author's translation).*

renowned works in the field of the phraseodidactics of European Languages (Saracho, 2015: 46-47).

From the 21st century, phraseological studies proliferate and incorporate practical proposals characterized by a greater specialization regarding the object of learning. This is how the attention is driven towards figures like zoomorphisms, somatisms, formulas and collocations.

Examples of these proposals would be the work by Domínguez Morera Pérez and Ortega Ojeda (1996), González Hermono (1996), Ruiz Gurillo (2000a), Sanmartín (2000), Foment (2000), Penadés (2001), Ruiz (2002), Alonso (2002), Dante (2003) or Vranic (2004). Parallely, revised manuals appear, such as the one by Prieto (2007), focused on students of Spanish as a foreign language (González Rey, 2012: 73).

It is at this moment when many of these authors decide to take the step to the creation of teaching-learning material, elaborating methods or didactic units. Therefore, interesting material is released by publishers or specialized magazines in didactics of ELE. To mention some examples, during the first decade of the 21st century they appear the publications by Penadés (1999), Ruiz Gurillo (2002,

2008, et al. 2011), Dante (2003), Navajas (2006), Olimpio, Penadés, and Ruiz (2006) or Losada (2011)¹⁶⁴ (González Rey, 2012: 73).

An interesting review on the history of phraseodidactics is the article *De la didáctica de la fraseología a la fraseodidáctica* (Gonzalez Rey, 2012). It presents a description of the history of the discipline from a documentary point of view, concentrated on manuals and scientific studies. The article provides a complete revision of both Spanish and other languages, combining a didactic approach with a linguistic contrastive perspective.

In the following years, numerous research about Spanish phraseodidactics emerges, as well as contrastive studies between Spanish phraseology compared to other languages. However, there is still some ambiguity in the methodological proposals, both terminologically and conceptually. Contrastive studies that are

¹⁶⁴ Losada's book is especially interesting. It consists of a practical work of Spanish phraseology with an important number of innovative elements. The most important one is the fact that phraseological expressions are treated in thematic blocks, responding to an onomasiological criteria. Another element is the method by which the material is presented, which is done via illustrations that help to fix the underlying image of phraseological expressions and, thus, to retain the lexical chain. On the other hand, the examples provided reveal a high degree of naturalness, since most of them come from authentic databases. Besides, the exercises presented stimulate the construction of knowledge by the user. Finally, in the references section, the resources offered present the possibility of linking each phraseological unit to their functional equivalents in other European languages. In this way, the material intends to contribute to the enrichment of the multilingual and intercultural communicative competence.

focused on specific didactics of phraseology are necessary in order to establish a solid base for the discipline.

3.5.3. Factors involved in the phraseological competence

Fixed expressions are no longer considered phenomena at the periphery of language, but at its core; also in acquisitional linguistics (Hausmann, 1997: 289).

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages functions as the structure of reference for many phraseodidactic methodological approaches at present times.

Phraseological competence is considered to be both the unconscious knowledge of the existence of phraseological structures and the ability of using them correctly even when they do not follow conventional rules.

This is the way in which phraseological competence is related to phraseological conscience, which is what makes native speakers acquire a noted repertoire of these elements (Solano, 2007).

How to develop this phraseological conscience in non-native speakers is the main issue assumed by the discipline of phraseodidactics.

3.5.3.1. Phraseology acquisition vs. native phraseology

Núñez-Román's (2016) research is based on the theory that the acquisition of a native language and a foreign language is different. However, certain competences and cognitive mechanisms are common. For instance, in the acquisition process of second language phraseology, the general figurative competence that the subject displays in the native language proves to be an influential factor (Levorato, Cacciari, 1995).

Understanding a metaphor is as much a creative endeavour as making a metaphor, and as little guided by the rules
(Heredia, Cieślicka, 2015: XVI).

Besides, experimental evidence suggests that L2 knowledge or proficiency affects the comprehension of literal and non-literal language. As it is reasonable, the level of proficiency that speakers have in the foreign language will surely affect their phraseological competence.

Psycholinguistic research on bilingualism has historically been tended to be mainly focused on lexical or semantic variables. As a consequence, attention has been driven to the complexities of conceptual representations in bilinguals and how they might change

and interact with variations in language proficiency or use (Pavlenko, 2000).¹⁶⁵

Experimental studies of figurative language processing in bilinguals have been relatively scarce (Vaid, López, Martínez, 2015: 54).

In fact, the complex links between native or acquired languages has been totally ignored by influential books and textbooks on figurative language comprehension and production, and also by recent important handbooks on language and cognition.

In 2015, Heredia and Cieślicka's book is the first work to address how speakers acquire, store and process figurative language both in their native and foreign language. The particularity of Heredia and Cieślicka's publication is the fact that it draws the attention towards specific constructions like idiomatic expressions (such as "kick the bucket"), metaphors (such as "lawyers are sharks") and ironic structures. The authors' aim is to analyse how these tropes might

¹⁶⁵ Here the concept of bilingualism is related to Weinreich's classification (1953), which is thoroughly described in Heredia and Cieślicka's work (2014). As a result, bilingualism would respond to the situation where there is an integration of characteristics in speakers who possess a variety of linguistic knowledge of one or more languages. Several circumstances, such as the acquisitional conditions, would determine if a bilingual speaker is considered to present a compound, coordinate or subordinate bilingualism. Hence, foreign language learners are included in this formula.

interact in real time across the bilingual's two languages (Heredia, Cieślicka, 2015: XIX).

Some of the contributors to this book highlights that it is still needed to develop more experimental work with L2 participants that present similar characteristics (such as proficiency level, language exposure, or context), in order to obtain a more thorough understanding of non-literal processing in L2 (Heredia, Cieślicka, 2015: XVI).

The intention of this thesis, therefore, is to shed more light on this issue, by differentiating the way in which diverse phraseological figures interact in the languages of bilinguals or plurilinguals, when they develop a task of contextualized language comprehension.

Studies focused on the comprehension of figurative language agree on the fact that literal meanings do not have priority over figurative meanings. Consequently, figurative meanings are for the most part activated automatically and early on in processing (Vaid et al., 2015: 57).

As a consequence, the conclusion in some studies is that both bilinguals and monolinguals automatically activate metaphorical meanings, and do so for both their languages (Vaid et al., 2015: 78). These results seem to be partly contradictory to the key

configuration hypothesis (Cacciari, Tabossi, 1988)¹⁶⁶. It is coherent, however, to the direct access hypothesis, as reformulated by Gibbs (1994).¹⁶⁷

The consensus of these studies, though, is predominantly based on research about monolingual or bilingual language users. The question we posed was whether, among users of two or more languages, a similar pattern would emerge, or whether literal meanings would predominate in the processing of the bilinguals' less proficient language (Vaid et al., 2015: 57).

Here is when this thesis becomes necessary. Focused on the field of phraseodidactics, it will analyse the influence that third or additional languages might have on the learners' strategies of comprehension.

Furthermore, how learners make sense of figurative expressions partly relies on their cognitive ability to infer metaphorical meaning, dependent on their general conceptualizing capacity or relevant embodied experiences. Other factors such as linguistic

¹⁶⁶ According to which the interpretation is first literal until the speaker recognizes, and therefore activates, the phraseological unit.

¹⁶⁷ According to which, understanding non-literal language involves the simultaneous computation of both literal and non-literal meanings of an utterance. This model proposes that speakers do not first process literal interpretations of non-literal utterances but do so at the same time as they understand their indirect or figurative meanings.

realizations (compositionality, saliency, familiarity, etc.) may also affect learners' processing. Therefore, it is likely that L2 metaphorical competence is affected by various cofactors on a continuum, including L1 conceptual mapping and context. More research on hybrid approaches is required to better understand L2 learning of figurative language (Türker, 2016: 42). This is the interest underlying in this thesis.

3.5.3.2. Interlinguistic influence and phraseological competence

Heredia and Cieślicka's analysis raises a number of interesting questions concerning idiom processing in both L1 and L2. For instance, due to a general transfer mechanism between languages, which is well known in the bilingualism literature, both comprehension and production of L2 idioms are modulated by the degree of idiom similarity to their L1 translation equivalents (Heredia, Cieślicka, 2015).

Agreeing with earlier studies (Jiang, 2004; Kroll, Stewart, 1994; Yamashita, Jiang, 2010), the results of recent investigation suggest that L1 influences L2 learners' comprehension even at higher proficiency levels. Specifically, analyses reveal that L1 conceptual and linguistic knowledge, as well as L1 frequency, influence L2 figurative language comprehension, and that their incidence varies depending on the amount of context provided (Türker, 2016: 41).

This does not necessarily lead to improvements in the capacity of L2 learners to understand idioms and/or use them appropriately, because cross-language similarities may cause interference and misunderstanding.

Whether transfer from L1 to L2 reflects pure retrieval of stored units from semantic memory or it is mediated by words and conceptual structures is still an open issue. This is related to the question of whether subjects differentially use compositional versus direct retrieval strategies in comprehending idioms in their L1 and L2.

In fact, the investigation carried out by Heredia and Cieślicka gives a partial answer to the issue. It proves that bilingual speakers may be more inclined to process idioms, and multiword units in general, analytically or compositionally rather than globally. Thus, according to the study, these speakers would activate the literal meaning of the constituent words of an idiom because they would not recognize at all the presence of an idiom in a sentence, or they would do it to a lesser extent and not as easily and early in as L1 speakers.

However, this is indeed a “double-edged sword”, because idiom semantic transparency is often illusory when the conventionalized idiom meaning is unknown. Indeed, the ability to trace back the motivation for an idiomatic meaning, which is based on the

constituent word meanings and the rhetorical structure underlying the idiom string, is often coming when global meaning is already known (Heredia, Cieślicka, 2015: XV).

Even if apparently contradictory, these findings are actually coherent to the psycholinguistic decomposition process of idiomatic expressions defined by Gibbs. According to Gibbs, the process takes place following the rules of the direct access hypothesis, where it is assumed that the lexicon gives access to the literal meaning and, at the same time, it transfers it to the conceptual system for its figurative interpretation. Subsequently, several studies prove that the context, by which linguistic and nonlinguistic information is provided, is fundamental to develop the comprehension of both the literal and non-literal meanings (Gibbs, 1994).

3.5.3.3. Encyclopaedic knowledge, culture and phraseological competence

Gibbs's theories, which highlight the importance of contextualization in order to provide a frame for figurative meanings to be accessed, are especially applicable in the case of culturally-motivated phraseological expressions.

There are numerous cultural expressions which are related to social and civic competences. As a result, a great number of

phraseological units present difficult comprehension due to their historic-cultural references. In these cases, contextual information might be determining.

In Spanish language, an example of this kind of cultural expressions would be *armar la de San Quintín*. Even though it can be a familiar element thanks to its extended use, its origin is mainly unknown¹⁶⁸.

Other cultural phraseological expressions have common roots in literature or similar cultural references across several countries. This circumstance creates a rich link where literature and language are encountered and shared between linguistic communities. Examples of these in the Spanish language are *no dejar títere con cabeza*, whose origins are at *El Quijote*, by Cervantes, or *poderoso caballero es don dinero*, from the poem by Quevedo.

Furthermore, diverse disciplines give origin to numerous phraseological expressions, such as philosophy (*solo sé que no sé nada*), religion (*ojo por ojo y diente por diente, ser más viejo que Matusalem*), history (*más se perdió en Cuba, París bien vale una misa*), mathematics (*elevantar algo a la enésima potencia*) or science (*estar como el perro y el gato*) (Núñez-Román, 2015). Other examples coming from cultural events would be expressions such as

¹⁶⁸ It makes reference to the historic event of Phillips II's victory in the French city of *San Quintín*.

discusión bizantina, ser la cenicienta, pasar las de Caín or arder Troya.

These phraseological expressions all have a historic-etymological origin. Besides, they are encyclopaedically or culturally motivated. Consequently, several studies claim that they should be treated differently in phraseodidactical methodologies, whereas semantically motivated expressions might be considered from another approach (Ulrike, 2016). Nevertheless, it is not always that simple to draw a divisor line between the two types of motivation.

3.5.3.4. Cognitive strategies and phraseological competence

Compositionality and motivation of phraseological units are key concepts from which the learner's figurative competence is dependent. Although the most frequent motivation in phraseology is the metaphorical, either in the form of conceptual metaphors or based on symbols, it is unrealistic to disconnect it from cultural motivation. In fact, many idioms are actually the result of a conceptual system developed from cognitive mechanisms of comparison or metaphorical procedures, which in turn are the product of cultural foundations.

Consequently, in phraseodidactics it is necessary to consider all the elements from the prism of culture. The perception of cultural

expressions will change over time, as they are usually historically contingent, whereas conceptual-based elements maintain a universal nature. The hard task is to discern the optimal didactic approach to tackle with this phenomenon, even more if we consider the fact that a lot of expressions are usually both semantically and culturally definable.

In fact, according to Dobrovolskiĭ and Piirainen (2009), the presence of cultural symbols in several languages is not always equivalent to a similar interpretation of these phraseological units. Thus, it is claimed that the cognitive bases which gave ground to a big number of phraseological units in diverse languages, are at the root of their evolution into each linguistic community by a process of cultural integration.

Each phraseological unit acquires, then, another figurative meaning, more or less approximate to its equivalent in other languages, and dependent on the perception of the world that each culture has. These culturemes may acquire a status of high identification within a given community, to the point that the image component of idioms semantics becomes a blurred element. Literal and figurative meanings that form an idiom are interconnected so that the global meaning is automatically identified within the lexical form by native speakers. As a result, these expressions experience a process by which a metaphor is deeply integrated in the conceptual system of a community. In summary, a cultureme is born from a process of

metaphorical evolution within a concrete human group. Consequently, culturemes belonging to diverse languages might be based on common cognitive concepts, but they may differ considerably over time.

From the point of view of foreign language phraseodidactics, the decomposition process of these strongly-rooted culturemes is exactly the point at which the attention should be drawn. It is effective to implement analysing procedures in which both the cultural and the cognitive aspect are considered.

Teaching methodologies in which the concrete is taken as a starting point to arrive to the abstract may be applied to phraseology as well. Specifically, the semantics or meaning of an expression can help reaching the image behind it. The decomposition process that considers both the cultural and the cognitive aspect will provide a proper guidance to disentangle the different layers of motivation.

3.5.3.5. Compositionality and phraseological competence

Interestingly, some processing differences seem to exist among different types of non-literal expressions, in that proficient bilinguals seem to understand metaphors and irony (but not idioms) not dissimilarly from monolinguals, although in general at a slower pace.

We have the ability to speak in riddles. These riddles are neither constructed nor interpreted in the normal way. Yet we use them so readily that we are usually unaware of their special character – unless we have the misfortune not to be a native speaker. We call these special riddles idioms (Johnson-Laird, 1993: VII-X).

The fact that metaphorical meanings may be easier to grasp than conventionalized idiomatic meanings may not be surprising if it is considered that metaphors are assertions of categorization similar to those conveyed by literal language (Glucksberg, 2001).

According to the theory of figurative language conventional, motivation in phraseological expressions can derive from either a metaphorical or a symbolic origin. Thus, symbols take the form of metaphors that are strongly based on the cultural values of a specific linguistic community. As we have seen, these expressions might also be referred to as ‘culturemes’ (Dobrovolskij, Piirainen, 2009).

It is by taking into account the non-compositionality character that authors such as Piirainen (1998) define symbols. Cultural symbols, even though they are integrated in the metaphors fixated in a language, would still be semantically active, since the interpretation of these units is based on their autonomous value (Piirainen, 1998).

On the other hand, idioms are certainly considered to be a type of metaphors, as an idiom is a combination of words that *is a product of a conceptual system, motivated by cognitive mechanisms such as the metaphor, the metonymy, and for which cultural models play an important role* (Kövecses, Szabó, 1996; Bílková, 2000).

However, they present some particularities. The main idiosyncrasy of idioms, even though being metaphorical elements, is their non-compositionality. This makes reference to the fact that they are fixed expressions, but whose meaning does not include the meaning of any of its constituents. Consequently, the cognitive processes involved in the comprehension of idioms are complex.

Independently from the fact that they might become more or less transparent for a specific speaker, and unregarding the kind of motivation that generates them, idioms represent a step further in the cognitive mechanism of metaphORIZATION. This fact renders evident that, for a foreign language learner, applying the decomposition process to idioms will present more difficulty than in the case of metaphors and other derived figures, such as symbols.

The cognitive process, by which foreign language learners comprehend and acquire these singular linguistic elements as compared with other type of figures, is an interesting object of study. This is one of the purposes of this thesis. The deeper understanding of this issue will help establish more solid bases from

which to build competent and firm phraseodidactical methodologies.

3.5.3.6. The cognitive approach in phraseodidactics

Following the cognitive perspective, the acquisition of phraseological expressions should be carried out through a constructive process that covers all skills (grammatical, sociolinguistic, discursive and strategic competence) and where the student has the opportunity to participate actively and consciously.

For this, it is necessary that phraseodidactics is integrated into the general programming and therefore is treated as one more aspect in the development of the learner's communicative competence, since the lexical domain is actually exercised through the four components of the communicative competence.

*De ahí la poca validez que tienen ciertos enfoques tradicionales donde las UFS se aprenden como listas sin utilidad funcional o criterios de uso y, la mayoría de las veces, sin atender al índice de frecuencia, presentadas al azar y careciendo de áreas temáticas, nocionales y funcionales*¹⁶⁹ (Navarro, 2003).

¹⁶⁹ Hence the lack of validity of certain traditional approaches where phraseological units are learned as lists without functional utility or criteria of use and, most of the time, without attending to the frequency index, presented at

Foreign language methodologies concerning phraseology are linked to the approach taken regarding the psycholinguistic decomposition process of phraseological or metaphorical linguistic elements.

Firstly, a proper methodological approximation would be that which is coherent with theories like the metasemantics hypothesis. This hypothesis states that the learner tries to infer the non-literal meaning from the literal meaning of the expression (Nippold, Rudzinski, 1993). It is also consistent with Cacciari's theories, according to which people perform a literal analysis of an idiomatic string before they initiate a non-literal interpretation (Cacciari, Tabossi, 1988).

This vision seems to be contradictory to Gibbs's theories, as in his direct access hypothesis (1994), it is stated that understanding non-literal language involves the simultaneous computation of both the literal and non-literal meanings of an utterance. Consequently, this model proposes that people do not first process the literal interpretations of non-literal utterances but do so at the same time as they understand their indirect or figurative meanings.

random and lacking thematic, notional and functional areas (Navarro, 2003, author's translation).

The approach taken in this thesis responds to a combination of both models. Thus, the perspective in this study considers that one theory might not necessarily suppress the other. In fact, decomposition processes should take into account several factors that might influence phraseological comprehension. Among these we might find literal meaning, context, individual's previous knowledge and other information provided. As a result, all these elements will influence the mechanism that the learner activates when accessing the figurative meaning of an expression. In conclusion, both hypotheses might be feasible and depending on the circumstances.

On the other hand, according to the prototype model on which cognitive semantics is based, the gradual nature will also determine the effectiveness in their interpretation, which will be variable from individual to individual.

3.5.4. Methodological approaches in phraseodidactics

In recent years, didactic proposals concordant to the cognitive methodological approach have arisen. Although these resources have provided some space to phraseology in the sphere of language learning, there is still an evident lack of material produced so that the objectives desired become achieved.

*La fraseodidattica lamenta un importante deficit nella elaborazione di materiali da utilizzare come strumento per l'apprendimento*¹⁷⁰ (Bergerová, 2010; in Giacoma, 2016).

The most extended difficulty in phraseodidactics proposals is the issue of reaching a methodology in which both the cultural and the cognitive aspect are considered.

3.5.4.1. Cultural motivation versus universal concepts

Simplifying it, two types of phraseological units are distinguished, according to the characteristics motivating their origins. Cultural or sociocultural motivation is at the root of a group of phraseological units, while others are described as having a universal or “semi-universal” character. In phraseodidactics research, it is generally considered that they should be differently regarded.

In the field of didactics, it is essential to differentiate them (Julià, 2014: 106). It is important to resort to cognitive mechanisms such as metaphor and metonymy to introduce the universal phraseological units -since we believe that cultural phraseological units should receive another

¹⁷⁰ *Phraseodidactics laments an important deficit in the development of materials to be used as a tool for learning* (Bergerová, 2010; in Giacoma, 2016, author's translation).

treatment, perhaps linked to the teaching of culture and literature (Julià, 2014: 108).

This differentiation does not infer that these categories should be treated separately, but methodologies should rather provide blended techniques that emulate language in real use.

Decompositional methodologies

Among other factors, the features of phraseological items affect their comprehension –and thus, their subsequent use—. It is in this sense that their characteristics will determine the level of transparency that they offer to each individual.

In some cases, the existence of some phraseological expressions with literal homophones affects the level of transparency that the figurative homophone has for speakers. Thus, the potential comprehension of figurative meaning partly depends on the image coming from the meaning of its literal homophone.

For instance, there are some metaphors that might present a high level of opacity for learners, but which, at the same time, possess this characteristic of semantic duality. Therefore, these metaphors allow a literal interpretation, besides the figurative sense that is usually the one prevalent in language.

Examples of this kind in Spanish language might be *salirse del carril*, *pisarle los talones (a alguien)*, *cerrar los ojos*, *pagar los platos rotos* or *naranjas de la china*, which can also be interpreted compositionally. Other cases, such as *darle la vuelta a la tortilla* or *poner toda la carne en el asador*, might also be used as free combinations (Ruiz Gurillo, 1997: 45).

However, even though figurative sense is usually highly deducible from the literal meaning of its homophone, the learner does not necessarily recognize idiomatic uses automatically. Consequently, the interpretation of some metaphors that apparently might be very transparent, as those whose meaning can be easily intuitive, such as *ser un camaleón* or *recibir con los brazos abiertos*, will once again depend on each individual's ability.

On the other hand, it seems unlikely or significantly more difficult to recover the image that originated those phraseological expressions with no literal homophone. Apparently, these elements seem to be unmotivated. However, it is usually possible to retrieve part of their lost motivation in the context of a specific text or context (Ruiz Gurillo, 1997: 45).

Examples of this group of phraseological units in Spanish language would be *ponerse como una sopa*, *a buenas horas mangas verdes* or *a troche y moche*, which do not present a literal homophone. These items lead to more interpretive difficulties since their meaning is

entirely figurative. In these cases, applying other methodologies different from decompositional techniques might work better.

From the point of view of foreign language phraseodidactics, the analysis of these strongly-rooted culturemes should be implemented from a perspective in which both cultural and cognitive aspects be considered.

Semasiological methodologies

Semasiology is concerned with the denotative dimension of language, that is to say, the way in which words manifest their meaning. Although onomasiological perspectives prove to be a more responsive method to the human mind structure, these two methodologies might not, and should not, be incompatible.

*Estos dos sistemas no son incompatibles*¹⁷¹ (Julià, 2014: 111).

Phraseological units present a dual nature given by the existence of connotative and denotative dimensions. Consequently, semasiological methodologies should not be completely unattached from onomasiological approaches.

Source domain

In the terminology of cognitive semantics, the term of source concept or domain is used to designate the dimension that lends its

¹⁷¹ *These two systems are not incompatible* (Julià, 2014: 111, author's translation).

concepts to another, which is more abstract, so that they can be more easily understood.

In this way, numerous expressions have certain common semas that refer to the same origin. Semasiological methodologies, therefore, are focused on the semas of the expressions.

A viable teaching technique based on a semasiological methodology, would be to present the phraseological units according to the concept of origin to which they make reference. This would provide the students with a semasiological classification consistent with the word that all these linguistic structures share.

In Spanish language, examples of this strategy would be to show the learners a group of phraseological items containing the lexeme *mano* (*tener algo a mano, tener las manos atadas*) or *corazón* (*estar en el corazón de la ciudad, ser todo corazón*) and link them to their meaning through the different semantic mechanisms that underlie them (Julià, 2014: 110-112).

Following with the examples from Spanish language, and retrieving the metaphorical senses for the word *corazón*, we could see that it usually makes reference to abstract concepts such as kindness or sincerity. It can also make a more concrete allusion to a recipient that covers emotions; or it can refer to the centre part of something (Julià, 2014: 110).

*De este modo, se parte [...] de los lexemas para asociarlos al sentido metafórico-metonímico que adquieren en las UFS. Se trata de un procedimiento que permitiría a los aprendices establecer relaciones con las expresiones lingüísticas de su lengua materna (y otras que conozcan) a partir del lexema para llegar a la metáfora y comprender el sentido de la expresión*¹⁷² (Julià, 2014: 110).

Several Spanish authors have worked on a classification which exposes the phraseological expressions by scopes to which the lexical units that shape phraseological units can be ascribed.

García-Page, for instance, does it in a very extensive way (García-Page, 2008: 372-377).¹⁷³

¹⁷² *In this way, one starts from the significant of the lexemes to associate them with the metaphoric-metonymic sense that they acquire in the phraseological units. It is a procedure that would allow apprentices to establish relationships with the linguistic expressions of their mother tongue (and others they may know) from the lexeme in order to reach the metaphor and understand the meaning of the expression* (Julià, 2014: 110, author's translation).

¹⁷³ In García-Page, M. (2008): *Introducción a la fraseología española*. Barcelona: Anthropos. Col. Autores, textos y temas: Lingüística; the author exposes the phraseological expressions by scopes to which the lexical units that shape phraseological units can be ascribed. Several examples are presented here:

- Nombres de colores (Colours): *poner verde, estar verde en (algo), darse un verde (con dos azules), A buenas horas, mangas verdes, ¡Voto al chápiro verde!, poner de oro y azul (a alguien), ver la vida de color de rosa, (estar) al rojo vivo, colorín colorado, más vale poner una vez colorado que ciento amarillo, pasarlas moradas/negras, ponerse morado...*
- Nombres de instrumentos musicales (Musical instruments): *a bombo y platillo, sonar la flauta, entre pitos y flautas, tomar por el pito del sereno, no tocar pito, más contento que unas castañuelas, lanzar las campanas al vuelo, oír campanas y no saber dónde, tocar campanas, a tambor batiente...*

-
- Nombres del arte culinario y gastronomía (Culinary art and gastronomy): *valer un pan por ciento, el pan de cada día, a pan y manteles/cuchillos, ganarse el pan, paz y pan, ser pan comido, comer el pan de los niños, comer pan con corteza, nacer con un pan debajo del brazo, buscar pan de trastigo, al pan, pan, y al vino, vino, engañar el pan, ser pan y miel...*
 - Nombres de flora y productos agrícolas (Flora and agriculture products): *meter cizaña, criar malvas, estar bajo la férula de (otro), meterse en un berenjena, estar un la higuera, caerse del guindo, no caerse de un pino, hacer el pino, pedir peras al olmo, subirse a la parra, Cada mochuelo a su olivo...*
 - Nombres de animales (Animals): *desplumar el gallo, ponerse gallito, Otro gallo me cantara, en menos que canta un gallo, entre gallos y media noche, gallo en corral ajeno, cantar el gallo, al canto del gallo, poner la carne de gallina, acostarse con las gallinas, cuando las gallinas meen...*
 - Nombres de minerales, piedras preciosas (Minerals and gemstones): *prometer el oro y el moro, guardar como oro en paño, hacerse de oro, No es oro todo lo que reluce, valer lo que pesa en oro, frío como el mármol, ser un diamante en bruto, echar perlas a los cerdos, de perlas, hablar en plata, andarse con pies de plomo...*
 - Nombres de objetos del hogar (Home objects): *tirar la casa por la ventana, tener la sartén por el mango, meter cuchara, de cuchara, pagar los platos rotos, ser segundo plato, no haber roto un plato en su vida, hacer pucheros, a boca de jarro, en jarras, pegarse (le) las sábanas, tirar la toalla, liarse la manta a la cabeza...*
 - Nombre de prendas de vestir o partes de ellas (Clothes and cloth): *saber dónde aprieta el zapato, meter en un zapato, ser más necio que un zapato, ponerse las botas, jugarse hasta la camisa, no llegar la camisa al cuerpo, meterse en camisa de once varas, cambiar de chaqueta, apretarse el cinturón, sacar de la manga...*
 - Nombres relativos a la climatología, la astrología, fenómenos naturales (Weather, astrology, natural phenomena): *llover sobre mojado, como agua de mayo, bailar el agua, hacer la boca agua, echar agua en el mar, aguantar el chaparrón, romper el hielo, hacer fuego, la punta del iceberg, estar en el ojo del huracán...*
 - Nombres de profesiones (Jobs): *tomar por el pito del sereno, fumar más que un carretero, el cuento de la lechera, pasar más hambre que un maestro de escuela, pedir más que los curas, gritar como una verdulera...*
 - Nombres relacionados con el deporte (Sports): *meter un gol, pasar la pelota, estar la pelota en el tejado, echar balones fuera, estar en fuera*

Onomasiological methodologies

On another perspective, onomasiology is concerned about word meaning. Consequently, it takes its starting-point in a concept, and investigates in which different expressions that concept might be designated. It is in this sense, therefore, that onomasiology is connected to the connotative dimension of words.

Target domain

The designation of target domain refers to that in which the concepts of the origin domain are superimposed. In this way, if the concepts are illustrated with the classical example of the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY, as proposed by Lakoff (1993: 206), the origin domain would be the JOURNEY and the target domain, LOVE.

Another example, in this case in Spanish language, would be to relate expressions in Spanish like *ir a paso de tortuga*, *ir a todo gas* or *navegar viento en popa* to the metaphor “action is movement” (Ulrike, 2016).

de juego, hacer diana, subir el listón, casarse de penalti, dar en el blanco, salir el tiro por la culata...

An onomasiological teaching technique would consist of integrating the phraseological units into the classroom according to the meta concepts they refer to. As a result, students would be presented with a set of phraseological expressions according to the concept they point to, independently from the main lexeme they contain.

Iñesta and Pamies (2002) present an example for Spanish language in which they refer to pluriverbal units that are related to the concept of fear (*miedo*). This concept is the starting point from which the diverse types of metaphors underlying it are studied. According to the author, this procedure facilitates the process of evidencing the existence of similar categorization processes between languages, in this case in order to categorize fear.

Going on with this example, a possible onomasiological technique would be to provide students with different phraseological expressions that are used to designate fear according to different metaphors whose origin is associated with the human body structure and the physical manifestations of fear. For instance, *bajarse la sangre a los talones*, *subírsele el corazón a la garganta* or *temblar como un flan*, which would be related to bodily movements (Julià, 2014: 111).

Onomasiological perspectives have gained ground to semasiological approaches. It is generally considered that departing from the metaphorical structure instead of the lexeme allows the establishment of connections between different languages that

might share the same metaphorical construction. Besides, didactically speaking, displaying the phraseological units grouped around a metaphorical concept allows a learner's effective cognitive development.

The fact of presenting them organized in metaphors and metonymies is thought to help the learning process from the cognitive relationships that the learner can establish through synonymous expressions in their native language (Iñesta, Pamies 2002; Moreno Pereiro 2008; Penades 1999).

In summary, it is useful to link phraseological and metaphorical expressions to their origin, motivation or cognitive scheme. These authors' proposals aim to show that the presentation and conceptual arrangement of phraseological units in relation to their origin, motivation and underlying cognitive scheme is likely to facilitate their global understanding and allow the student to establish general comparisons with the language that they dominate.

It is, therefore, a procedure in which learners are intended to create cognitive and conceptual correspondences between the languages they know and those they are learning.

La presentación de las UFS según el procedimiento semántico que subyace a ellas permite al estudiante poner en relación el aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera con los

*conocimientos que posee sobre su lengua materna y otras lenguas que haya aprendido, de manera que se trata de un procedimiento conceptual e interlingüístico (Iñesta y Mena) puesto que permite establecer conexiones entre lenguas de muy diverso origen a partir de relaciones conceptuales*¹⁷⁴ (Julià, 2014: 108).

An inspiring proposal based on the onomasiological approach is the classification suggested by Larreta Zulategui (2001: 81). The author bases the organization on an ideographic structure, in accordance to Dobrovol'skij's theories (1995) and other main figures from the field of phraseologies studies.

Shortly, Larreta Zulategui simplifies the process by dividing the concepts that diverse language elements designate in then different following fields and subfields:

- Time, space, movement, senses
- Life, death
- Characterization of man: external; emotions and feelings; moral

¹⁷⁴ *The presentation of the phraseological units according to the semantic procedure that underlies them allows the students to relate the learning of the foreign language with the knowledge they have about their mother tongue and other languages learned, so that it becomes a conceptual and interlinguistic procedure (Iñesta and Mena) since it allows establishing connections between languages of very different origin, based on conceptual relationships* (Julià, 2014: 108, author's translation).

- Human knowledge and thinking: talking, informing, learning, knowing; thinking, reflecting, arguing
- Action of man
- The human being and his environment
- Power
- Possession
- Critical situations: disorder, difficulties, success, failure; help, fight, competition
- Preferences

Another very useful proposal is the repertoire of Rodríguez-Vida (2004), the only Spanish phraseological dictionary organized from an onomasiological approach; or the project DICE, by Alonso.¹⁷⁵

However, onomasiological approach should be combined with other perspectives, as the search for equivalent expressions in the native language cannot be applied to all the expressions, since while some of them show an ontological character, others are intimately linked to the culture in which they are originated (Luque Durán, Manjon, 2002).

The most appropriate group of phraseological units to apply the method described is that corresponding to the so-called universal

¹⁷⁵ DICE project: <http://www.dicesp.com/paginas/index/2>

phraseologisms or conceptual phraseological universals (Dobrovol'skij, 1993: 96).

This group is formed by structures that are associated with a certain group of concepts widespread in all cultures and societies in the world, such as fear, anger, injustice, food, hunger, thinness or poverty, among others (Iñesta, Pamies, 2002). For other groups of phraseological or metaphorical expressions, other methodologies might be more appropriate.

Contextualized methodologies

It is possible to determine the historic origin (or of other kinds) of certain phraseological expressions. However, usually the process of retrieving the motivation “hidden” behind a phraseological expression is an individualized procedure that is only executed subsequently, from a top-bottom process. Contextualized methodologies offer a framework from which this procedure is facilitated.

Mendoza's proposal (2011), for instance, elaborates a complete didactic unit formulated under the Baralo's guidelines (2006). The didactic unit establishes connections with a socioeconomic context of international range: the economic crisis. Mendoza contextualizes it in journalistic texts, from which phraseological units are integrated in the students' plurilingual lexicon. Thus, the aim of the material is to create lexical networks, without disregarding the

approximation to sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects (Mendoza, 2011).

Conclusions

Contextualized methodologies are coherent to the principles stated by the cognitive approach, as they are respectful with the real use of language, offering the framework in which a blended method may be applied.

Furthermore, contextualized methodologies permit the complementary treatment of phraseological units, providing a space for both the cultural and the cognitive aspect to be considered. In addition, the fact of having a contextualized approach allows the inclusion of both the semasiological and onomasiological perspectives. Consequently, this is the methodological line to be followed in this research.

3.6. Contrastive phraseology

Adoption of (a second) language generally leads to changes in the adopted link language, or even in the native language of the speaker, and thus can have profound effects on linguistic change (Hock, Joseph, 1996: 369).

Contrastive phraseology is a relatively new discipline dedicated to investigating the equivalence of phraseological units between different languages. The studies in the area present two main threads. The first line of research is based on the Saussurian differentiation between “language” and “speech”, and it is centred on studying the elements as units of a system and not as within a context. The second line of investigation, more common in translation and language didactics studies, takes into account other procedures that consider the contextualized integration of different linguistic chunks, such as lexemes, composed words or paraphrases.

The second line of studies is widely applied in phraseological research. The study and comparison of phraseological units from two or more languages is a particularly complex area. However, when phraseology is considered from the area of translation studies, it is usually referred to as the linguistic part of a language where translation becomes more difficult and requires specific procedures. The non-compositional nature of the elements, for instance, presents an additional difficulty for translation tasks.

3.6.1. Interlanguage equivalences from the cognitive approach

Many phraseological units share the same semantic mechanisms of configuration and an interlingual agreement between the images that underlie them. All these conclusions are drawn in studies such as the ones by Iñesta and Pamies (2001), implying the existence of metaphors that are not exclusively circumscribed to a given culture (Corpas, 2004: 21).

We talk about the globalization in phraseology not in the extreme meaning of the word, but as the convergence of phraseological units fed by shared sources like linguistic universals, conceptual metaphors and cultural aspects (Corpas, 2004: 36).

Compared phraseology has highlighted the coincidence in form and content of phraseological units belonging to diverse languages (Corpas, 2000). For instance, Europeanisms (Morvay, 1996), concretely, make reference to the units arising from the observation of the world (natural Europeanisms), from common sources of European culture (cultural Europeanisms) or to elements sharing the same origin in both cases.

Equivalence, thus, is also a subjective attribute of language, and its study will be deeply rooted on the principles of the field in which it

is developed¹⁷⁶. The cognitive approach presents a particular taxonomy of the phraseological cross-equivalence. Thus, cognitive linguistics considers language from a dual perspective in which the denotative and connotative dimensions converge. This duality will determine the line of research from which cross-equivalence phraseology will be confronted.

3.6.2. Parameters of cross-equivalence

The world contains too many things for us to have one word for each, we economize by using words in more than one sense, leaving context to disambiguate. Unfortunately, different languages parcel up meaning into words in different ways; and so a word in language A may have various

¹⁷⁶ For instance, from the point of view of translation theories, equivalence terms make reference to the textual context. Thus, in this discipline, equivalence is based on the discourse level present in texts. From this level, language equivalency would be abstracted. Language equivalence, thus, would belong to the historic level (Coseriu).

En las investigaciones teóricas sobre la traducción de las locuciones, se suele partir de tres grados de equivalencia, que serían la equivalencia plena, la equivalencia parcial y la equivalencia nula (Corpas, 2000: 516; Koller, 2007: 605). [...] Dichos términos no tienen ni pueden tener el mismo significado ni la misma aplicación según se utilicen desde el punto de vista de la fraseología contrastiva o desde el punto de vista de la teoría de la traducción (Torrent, 2012: 273).

Theoretical investigations on the translation of idioms are usually based on three degrees of equivalence, which would be full equivalence, partial equivalence and zero equivalence (Corpas, 2000: 516, Koller, 2007: 605). [...] These terms do not have and can not have the same meaning or the same application as they are used from the point of view of contrastive phraseology or from the point of view of translation theory (Torrent, 2012: 273, author's translation).

equivalents in language B, depending on exactly what is meant (Swan, 1997: 157).

To analyse the diverse kinds of cross-equivalence that phraseological units present, the traits and intralinguistic properties of these elements must be considered. It is by focusing on the relevant differences in the functioning of phraseologisms, and using comparison as the tool of research, not only of translinguistic issues but also of the traits and intralinguistic properties of the elements studied, that a complete representation of cross-equivalence can be drawn.

These relevant parameters can be divided into three groups: syntax, semantics and pragmatics (Dobrovol'skij, 2005: 364).

3.6.2.1. Syntax

Syntax refers to the questions of words combinations, their insertion in syntactic structures and transformations allowed (Dobrovol'skij, 2005: 365). It is, consequently, focused on the structural layer of language.

3.6.2.2. Semantics

Semantics refers to the content level of the phraseological units based on two macroconcepts: real meaning and mental image, both

being the starting point and the conceptual base for semantic reinterpretation (Dobrovol'skij, 2005: 365).

In contrastive phraseology, this semantic duality is determinant when tasks of comparison and contrast are being performed. Indeed, meaning and mental image are interdependent with each other. A consequence of this fact is the existence of phraseological units that have practically the same image but that differ in their meaning.

On the other hand, other cases present what it is described as a contrast in images. This occurs when phraseological expressions have similar meanings in L1 and L2, but they differ in their underlying images.

En tales casos encontramos una gran similitud semántica, ya que con significados parecidos y rasgos sintácticos y pragmáticos similares, pueden ser considerados básicamente como equivalentes totales. Pero en ciertos contextos, el componente icónico del plano del contenido de cierto fraseologismo juega un papel central en su funcionamiento. En tales casos, el fraseologismo no puede ser bien traducido a una L2 por el fraseologismo correspondiente¹⁷⁷ (Dobrovol'skij, 2005: 373).

¹⁷⁷ *In such cases we find a great semantic similarity, since with similar meanings and similar syntactic and pragmatic features, they can be considered basically as total equivalents. But in certain contexts, the iconic component of the content*

Furthermore, another frequent phenomenon may arise when tasks of contrastive phraseology are developed, as the combined semantic contrast. It occurs when some expressions are traditionally considered as total equivalents, even though the fact that they actually differ considerably both in meaning and iconic component. The reason why they are considered equivalents is because, in terms of the cognitive theory of the metaphor, both mental images can be traced back to an identical conceptual structure.

*Esta estructura conceptual sirve de dominio fuente para la inferencia metafórica en ambos casos. Esto parece dar pie al tratamiento de ambos fraseologismos como equivalentes en ciertos diccionarios bilingües, probando al mismo tiempo la realidad psicológica de las metáforas conceptuales*¹⁷⁸ (Dobrovol'skij, 2005: 374).

In other cases, it is the symbolic component, as described by Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (1998), that operates to explain that

level of a certain phraseological unit plays a central role in its operation. In such cases, that phraseological expression cannot be translated into an L2 by the corresponding expression (Dobrovol'skij, 2005: 373, author's translation).

¹⁷⁸ *This conceptual structure serves as the source domain for the metaphorical inference in both cases. This seems to explain the treatment of both phraseological units as equivalents in certain bilingual dictionaries, at the same time proving the psychological reality of conceptual metaphors* (Dobrovol'skij, 2005: 369, author's translation).

certain apparent differences between languages might actually derive into manifestations of equivalence in the field of contrastive phraseology.

*Desde la perspectiva de la teoría lingüística estos casos son de sumo interés porque demuestran la necesidad de una herramienta adicional para analizar el componente imaginal del plano del contenido de los fraseologismos. Así, el componente simbólico ayudaría a explicar los fenómenos que no pueden ser explicados con las bases de las metáforas conceptuales*¹⁷⁹ (Dobrovol'skij, 2005: 374).

Precedent interesting work by these authors can be found in “Idioms: motivation and etymology” (2000), an interlanguage study where the common symbols in nine languages are analysed. Besides, other interesting results are those published by Pamies Bertrán and Luque Durán (2000), such as “Sobre los símbolos. Aspectos cognitivos y culturales del lenguaje figurado” or *La especificidad nacional y cultural en fraseología*.

Muchas unidades fraseológicas comparten los mismos mecanismos semánticos de configuración. Se produce

¹⁷⁹ *From the perspective of linguistic theory these cases are of great interest because they demonstrate the need for an additional tool to analyse the imaginal component of the content plane of phraseological units. Thus, the symbolic component would help explain the phenomena that cannot be explained with the bases of conceptual metaphors* (Dobrovol'skij, 2005: 374, author's translation).

*coincidencia interlingüística entre las imágenes que subyacen a las unidades fraseológicas. Los mecanismos mentales señalados por la semántica cognitiva son comunes a muchos fraseologismos en diferentes lenguas. Todas estas conclusiones, extraídas de estudios de Iñesta y Pamies (2001), implican la existencia de metáforas que no se circunscriben de forma exclusiva a una determinada cultura*¹⁸⁰ (Corpas, 2004: 21).

The study of this phenomenon is crucial in phraseodidactics, as it helps to describe occurrences such as contrasts of meaning that usually develops into idiomatic or false friends, trans-linguistic or quasi-synonymous cases and asymmetric polysemy (Dobrovól'skij, 2005: 369).¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ *Many phraseological units share the same semantic configuration mechanisms. Interlinguistic coincidence occurs between the images that underlie phraseological units. The mental mechanisms indicated by cognitive semantics are common to many phraseological expressions in different languages. All these conclusions, extracted from studies by Iñesta and Pamies (2001), imply the existence of metaphors that are not exclusively limited to a specific culture* (Corpas, 2004: 21, author's translation).

¹⁸¹ *Piirainen (2012) continued this line of study, giving rise to a research project called "Widespread Idioms in Europe and Beyond", which analysed idioms sharing the same lexical and semantic structure across a large number of European and extra-European languages. The development of a cross-linguistic approach to phraseology has had important implications for translation studies and for research on Second Language Acquisition (SLA)* (Benigni et al, 2015: 277).

3.6.2.3. Pragmatics

Semantics is traditionally concerned with the linguistically determined meaning of an expression, pragmatics with the contextually conditioned interpretation of an expression. Pragmatic aspects can, however, be incorporated into the conventionalized meaning of an expression. Because conventionalization is a matter of degree, the distinction is a graded one, with no clear cut-off point between the entrenched meaning of an expression and its context-dependent interpretation (Taylor, 2002: 30).

The third parameter which needs to be considered when analysing phraseological units in the context of equivalence is pragmatics.

Pragmática es el campo en el que las diferencias de los fraseologismos similares semánticamente y sintácticamente en L1 y L2 pueden derivarse de diferencias en sus propiedades estilísticas, o con respecto al grado de familiaridad y/o frecuencia textual, en el componente cultural del plano del contenido, en su función ilocutiva¹⁸² (Dobrovol'skij, 2005: 375).

¹⁸² *Pragmatics is the field in which the differences of semantically and syntactically similar phraseological units in L1 and L2 can be derived from differences in their stylistic properties, or with respect to the degree of familiarity and/or textual frequency, in the cultural component of the content plane or in its illocutionary function (Dobrovol'skij, 2005: 375, author's translation).*

The phenomenon in which there is equivalence at the pragmatic level, even though there might not be equivalence in the other parameters described, is known as functional equivalence.

Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005) made an important theoretical contribution to the problem of cross linguistic comparability of idiomatic structures, by introducing the notion of "functional equivalence" to indicate equivalents that can be used in the same functional context in spite of the differences in their lexical structure (Benigni et al, 2015: 277).

When developing translation tasks, the dimension of pragmatics also needs to be well considered. Attention to the meaning should be enhanced, as the elements in the languages confronted must be equivalent at the discourse level. Thus, at the pragmatic level, the communicative situation and other contextual traits become essential.

3.6.3. Levels of equivalence

Taking these parameters into account, studies in line with the cognitive approach analyse the phraseological cross-equivalence between different languages. Diverse cognitive studies (Mellado, 2007; Dobrovol'skij, 2013), present an effective system to standardize the interlanguage levels of equivalence. Thus, the

classification establishes the categories of full equivalents, partial equivalence, parallels and non-equivalence.

Nevertheless, following the premises stated by cognitive studies, the concept of phraseological equivalence is also affected by a gradual progression, thus providing a considerable number of intermediate cases. By way of example, other classificative systems which consider additional layers of equivalence might be implemented, as it will be later observed.

La equivalencia fraseológica se puede concebir como una escala gradual, en cuyos extremos se sitúan las UFS con equivalentes funcionales, de un lado, y las culturalmente específicas de difícil reproducción en el TM, del otro. Entre uno y otro extremo se da toda una serie de casos intermedios, de comportamiento y grado de equivalencia desigual¹⁸³ (Corpas, 2000: 516).

3.6.3.1. Main categories

The main categories commonly shared in investigations on the contrastive phraseology field are present in most of the research.

¹⁸³ *Phraseological equivalence can be conceived as a gradual scale, at the extremes of which phraseological units with functional equivalents are located, on the one hand, and culturally specific ones that are difficult to reproduce in the target language, on the other hand. Between them, a series of intermediate cases occur, with unequal behaviour and degree of equivalence (Corpas, 2000: 516, author's translation).*

Full equivalence

Full equivalence occurs when a phraseological unit in L1 coincides, both in its semantics and in its lexical configuration, with another phraseological unit in L2 (Schellheimer, 2016: 123). Consequently, these elements usually show a similarity both in their literal meaning and in their lexical form.

These cases are considered to be absolute equivalents because they are identical with regard to meaning, syntactic and lexical structure, and imagery basis.

Consequently, they display coincidences in relation to diverse criteria and responding to the three parameters of contrastive equivalence stated from the cognitive approach. First, they match in their morphosyntactical structures, showing similarities in genre, number, article, case and sequence of components. Secondly, they agree at semantics level, by presenting matching semas. And finally, they also coincide in pragmatics, displaying parallel connotations depending on sociological traits (Schellheimer, 2016: 123).

Partial equivalence

Partial equivalence takes place when a phraseological unit in L1 corresponds in the figurative meaning with another element in L2, but not in the literal meaning (Schellheimer, 2016: 123).

Partial equivalence would also occur with the expressions that usually have identical or near-identical meanings both in L1 and L2, but that do not fully correspond in their syntactic and lexical structure, or imagery basis.

As a consequence, in this group there would be integrated the designated as ‘phraseological analogues’ by some authors (Baranov, Dobrovol’skij, 2016: 13; in Naccarato, Pinelli, 2016). These phraseological parallels would be different phraseological units of L1 and L2, which correspond to each other in the core meaning, but not with regard to the image component.

Non-equivalence

There is no semantically equivalent phraseological unit in L2 of a phraseological unit in L1 (Schellheimer, 2016: 124).

3.6.3.2. The metaphor model in contrastive phraseology

Cognitive premises such as the theory of the metaphor provide an interesting model to analyse interlinguistic equivalence. According to Lakoff and Johnson’s theories (2007), in the production of metaphors a non-metaphorical base coming from the psycho-sensorial experience is applied. It is from this experience that a concept is projected over another. This basic material that serves to project human knowledge and concrete experiences to more abstract

domains is shared by different languages, thanks to their biological and psychological nature.

An interesting approach to accomplish this objective is the model by Rusieshvili (2005). In it, phraseological expressions are identified according to the model of the metaphor. Therefore, semantic structure of phraseological units consists of three interdependent layers:

- Metaphorical layer: the first layer of an expression reveals its metaphorical form. For instance, as in the case of the idiom *ball is in your court*.
- Pragmatic layer: the middle layer shows the general meaning and pragmatic-contextual parameters of the expression. Following the example of the idiom *ball is in your court*, the second layer would unveil its general meaning – *it's your responsibility now*.
- Linguistic layer: finally, the third layer demonstrates the linguistic model of the world reflected in the expression. In the example provided, the third layer of the idiom would emphasise its connections with tennis, where it means to serve or return ball.

The idioms which coincide by all the layers will be considered as full cross-language equivalents, whereas the idioms which correspond only with the middle layer will be considered as partial equivalents (Dolidze, Rusieshvili, 2016: 24).

Nonetheless, in contrastive phraseology, it is essential to be aware of the fact that a fully reciprocity between languages is hard to be found.

*No existen paralelismos interlinguales/interculturales absolutos en la formación de metáforas*¹⁸⁴ (Mellado, 2005: 78).

Some applications of this model have been developed. For instance, in the research paper by Dolidze and Rusieshvili (2016), the cross-language equivalents of a hundred of idioms are explored according to the structure presented.

The model of the metaphor shows a parallelism with the classification defined by Mellado Blanco, as it defines the diverse levels of equivalence in the same direction.

¹⁸⁴ *There are no absolute interlingual/intercultural parallelisms in the formation of metaphors* (Mellado, 2005: 78, author's translation).

3.6.4. Analysis of corpus according to the cognitive interlanguage equivalences

One of the most fruitful areas of contrastive phraseology, is the task of identifying cross-equivalent phraseological units between languages. Currently, a growing number of investigations are dedicated to contrastive studies around specific languages corpuses.

A rich group of phraseological studies are those based on a conceptual approach which demonstrates the universality and sistematicity underlying phraseological expressions in a high number of languages. This common background is related to what is known in cognitivism as idealized cognitive models.

Idealized cognitive models are a group of metaphors whose knowledge is contextualized, within a certain domain of field (Geck 2003: 30), which constitutes a key idea of our knowledge (Geck, 2003: 11).

In some cases, research is focused in a pair of languages, while in other the scope is wider. This is the case of the work developed by Pamies and Iñesta (2002), who analyse up to twenty-five languages from a corpus pointing to ten target domains, taking Spanish language as a reference.

However, most studies are centred on the analysis of a pair of languages¹⁸⁵. A representative analysis of idiomatic convergences from a cognitive approach is carried out by Mellado Blanco (2001, 2005). Her studies constitute a necessary example for other contrastive investigations, as it takes the premises of cognitive semantics applied to phraseology in a pair of languages, in this case, German and Spanish.

Specifically, FRASESPAL, an investigation project of interuniversity collaboration, presents an interesting proposal which employs an onomasiological corpus to tackle the idiomatic structure of German and Spanish from a cognitive point of view (Mellado, Buján, Herrero, Iglesias, Mansilla, 2010).

The research leads to the conclusion that, leaving apart the differences, these languages share a common background. As an example, an analysis which has been performed in the frame of the FRASESPAL research project, is the onomasiological classification of phraseological material related to the topic of “silence”. The study shows that in most of the cases the languages share the same cognitive model.

¹⁸⁵ As an example, interesting investigation has been developed by Brumme, who examines the translation of Spanish idioms into Catalan from the perspective of common speakers (Brumme, 2008).

*Se ha constatado que en la tematización del silencio se reflejan las máximas de cortesía de valor cultural, sobre todo en el subcampo cognitivo “dejar hablar a alguien”. Tanto en español como en alemán se observan modelos cognitivos y construcciones sintácticas análogas para designar las distintas vertientes del silencio, lo cual refuerza la teoría de que la fraseología se sirve de mecanismos cognitivos de naturaleza universal para conceptualizar la realidad circundante*¹⁸⁶ (Pamies, 2011: 203).

3.6.5. Italian and Spanish contrastive phraseology

3.6.5.1. Main models

In research studies focused on the grade of equivalence, numerous classificative systems can be found, responding to the requirement of applying an appropriate contrastive methodology.

One of the examples used in Italian-Spanish contrastive phraseological research is the classification stated by Navarro. In Navarro's (2003, 2004, 2007), the proposed system establishes up to six grades, with a progression ranging from total to partial

¹⁸⁶ *It has been noted that the thematization of silence reflects the courtesy maxims of cultural value, especially in the cognitive subfield "let someone speak." Both in Spanish and in German, cognitive models and analogous syntactic constructions are used to designate the different aspects of silence, which reinforces the theory that phraseology uses cognitive mechanisms of universal nature to conceptualize the surrounding reality* (Pamies, 2011: 203, author's translation).

equivalence, plus one that corresponds to the cases of homonymy between languages. Her classification shows an interesting sample of how contrastive phraseology can provide varied cases of equivalence that offer a wide variety of language uses. Navarro also includes a vast study of corpus equivalences in the pair of languages Italian-Spanish.¹⁸⁷

First level: total equivalence

This first group is formed by interlanguage synonyms. Total equivalence takes place when there is the phenomenon of isomorphy. Therefore, parallelism between the morphosyntactic structures of the expressions in L1 and L2 occurs, with a congruence in their elements.

According to Martín Bosque (2007: 109), there is complete total equivalence when idioms have the same connotative and denotative meaning. Moreover, in this case they share the same use and registration marks and there is also an identical correspondence between the words.

In the pair of Spanish-Italian languages, examples of total equivalence would be:

¹⁸⁷ Navarro's system is coherent with other authors' proposals, such as those by Martín Bosque (Martín Bosque, 2007: 109).

Morderse la lengua – mordersi la lingua (to not speak because it is not convenient)

Perder la cabeza – perdere la testa (to lose the common sense)

De primera/segunda mano – di prima/seconda mano (Navarro, 2007) (to know something from a direct source/to use something already used by another person)

Abrir la boca/el pico – aprire la bocca/il becco (Corpas, 2000) (to try to speak or answer)

Tomar el sol como lagartijas – prendere il sole come lucertole (Martín Bosque, 2007: 110) (to sunbathe during a long time)

The idioms between Spanish and Italian are characterized by the affinity of these two languages, since there are a large number of utterances with total equivalence (Gläser, 1986: 45).

Circumstances where a slight change at syntactic level occurs do not prevent these cases from being considered total equivalents.

Examples of this fact in Spanish-Italian languages would be:

No pegar ojo – non chiudere occhio (to not sleep)

Estar en buenas manos – essere in buone mani (to be to the care of someone able to handle the situation well)

(Navarro, 2007)

In these expressions, the verbs used in Spanish are diverse from those in their Italian equivalents, either because of a parallelism in

their meaning (*pegar–chiudere*), or absence of difference between the verbs in one of the languages (*essere, estar*).

Consequently, all the idioms whose verbal component is *estar* in the case of Spanish, and *essere*, in Italian, can be considered total equivalents.

Estar en la boca de todos – essere sulla bocca di tutti (to be known publicly)

Estar armada hasta los dientes – essere armata fino i denti (to affront a situation highly prevented)

(Navarro, 2004: 8)

These are clearly cases of total equivalence, taking in consideration the correspondence between image and meaning that occur in all the examples.

The level of total equivalence is denominated as full equivalence by other authors. For instance, Corpas Pastor's definition for full equivalence is parallel to that of Navarro's:

Presentan el mismo significado denotativo y connotativo, una misma base metafórica, una misma distribución y frecuencia de uso, las mismas implicaturas convencionales, la misma carga pragmática y similares connotaciones: restricciones

*diastráticas, diafásicas y diatópicas*¹⁸⁸ (Corpas, 2000: 490-491).

Partial equivalence

The equivalence relations established between the phraseological units of different languages reflect the existence of a continuum that goes from full equivalence to absence of equivalence, passing through cases of partial equivalence that can be caused by inconsistencies of semantic, figurative or connotative type (Corpas, 2000).

*No consideramos que se pueda hablar de equivalencia total cuando nos encontramos ante una ligera variación en la locución, a pesar de tener el mismo significado connotativo y denotativo, y las mismas marcas de uso y registro*¹⁸⁹ (Martín Bosque, 2007: 110).

Partial equivalents are usually those cases in which the phraseological units share a basic idea, although their components are different.

¹⁸⁸ *They have the same denotative and connotative meaning, same metaphoric base, distribution and frequency of use, conventional implicatures, pragmatic charge and similar connotations: diastratic, diaphasic and diatopic constraints* (Corpas, 2000: 490-491, author's translation).

¹⁸⁹ *We do not consider that we can speak of total equivalence when we are faced with a slight variation in the idiom, in spite of having the same connotative and denotative meaning, and the same use and registration marks* (Martín Bosque, 2007: 110, author's translation).

Spanish-Italian examples of partial equivalence would be:

Dejar la osamenta – tirare le cuoia

Both expressions make reference to the action of dying, although they differ in terms of the parts of the body named.

(Navarro, 2007)

Other examples:

Trabajar como un cabrón – lavorare come un stronzo/ lavorare come un dannato

Both expressions make reference to the fact of working a lot.

(Navarro, 2007)

*Dos locuciones tienen equivalencia parcial cuando tienen diferencias de significado connotativo, denotativo, de registro, de variedad o de matiz expresivo*¹⁹⁰ (Martín Bosque, 2007: 110).

Second level of partial equivalence

This second equivalence level contains phraseological units whose image and structure are similar, but that have a variation in lexicon or semantics. There are cases of partial equivalence that present divergences of structural nature, but which do not affect the metaphorical base that conveys the semantic-pragmatic content of

¹⁹⁰ *Two idioms present partial equivalence when they have differences in connotation, denotation, register, variety or expressive nuance* (Martín Bosque, 2007: 110, author's translation).

the unit. Usually, this includes the cases when phraseological units are completely different, in terms of structure and lexicon, but they share the same semantic meaning.

In the pair of Spanish-Italian languages, some examples of partial equivalence that present variation of one of the lexemes in terms of structural identity would be the following ones:

Costar algo un ojo de la cara – costare qualcosa un occhio della testa (when something is very expensive)

Poner /tener la cabeza como un bombo – fare /avere la testa come un pallone (to cause, or to be caused, headache, especially for being very insistent, in real or figurative sense)

(Navarro, 2007)

Also, at this level the units that have the same image and meaning but which present a slight structural variation are included.

For instance, in Spanish-Italian the cases that diverge in the use of the plural and the singular are considered partial equivalents, as they also present a slight variation of structural nature:

Mirar con buenos ojos – guardare di buon occhio (to judge with sympathy)

Ojos de lince – occhio di lince (very sharp and penetrating gaze)

Meter las narices – ficcare il naso (to meddle in matters that are not of the own concern)

(Navarro, 2007)

Other cases present modifications between the languages, such as the absence or presence of articles. In Spanish and Italian, we can find:

Soñar con los ojos abiertos – sognare a occhi aperti (to imagine a desired and not real situation)

(Navarro, 2007)

Another slight difference to be found is variation in word order, such as in:

Darse en cuerpo y alma – darsi anima e corpo (to make a great effort)

No tener ni pies ni cabeza – non avere né capo né coda (to make no sense)

(Navarro, 2007)

Still another divergence might be found, related to the use of determinate or indeterminate articles:

Ser el cabeza de turco – essere una testa di turco (to be attributed, usually with malice, all the faults of what happened, thus freeing another, or others, to bear the responsibility for them)¹⁹¹

(Navarro, 2007)

¹⁹¹ Even if this expression is not so extendedly used in Italian as it is in Spanish.

Third level of partial equivalence

This level contains elements that, even if they have a similar image, are differentiated in the scope of the meaning. Consequently, these elements present partial semantic equivalence.

An example in the Spanish-Italian pair of languages would be:

Chuparse los dedos – leccarsi le dita

Both expressions make reference to an excellent meal, but in Italian the phrase is also linked to an interesting or pleasant situation (Quartu, 1993).

Others examples would be:

Romperser/calentarse la cabeza – rompersi la testa

Both are related to the fact of thinking over something without rest, but in the Italian idiom it also indicates that the person might be insensitive (Quartu, 1993).

Fourth level of partial equivalence

The fourth level is composed of phraseological units without great morphosyntactic differences, with the same or similar image and convergence in the denotative meaning, but where one of the two languages presents phraseological homonymy.

For example, in Spanish there are cases in which two expressions indicate the same meaning, while in Italian there is just one, or the opposite case:

Ser de buena boca/tener buen diente – essere di bocca buona (to eat a bit of everything, and by extension being a person of simple and essential tastes about various aspects of life)

Calentarse la cabeza/comerse el coco – rompersi la testa (to think a lot about something)

And the opposite situation:

Tener la cabeza en su sitio – avere la testa a partito/avere la testa sull collo/avere la testa sulle spalle (to indicate that someone is very judicious, acting with maturity and sanity)

(Navarro, 2007)

Fifth level of partial equivalence

The fifth equivalence level contains units with differences in lexemes and images but with the same meaning. Some of them share the same syntactic structure but have different components.

For instance, in Spanish-Italian the cases with different images or lexemes would be:

Colgarse de la boca de alguien – pendere dale labbra di qualcuno (to be in love)

Tener bueno ojo – avere un buon naso (to have the ability to quickly find the solution to any type of problems)

A brazo partido – a denti stretti (to do something with all the might)

Sentar la cabeza – mettere la testa a posto (to settle down)

Untarle las manos a alguien – ungere il dente a qualcuno (to corrupt or bribe someone with promises)

Fruncir el ceño – arricciare il naso (to wrinkle the forehead)

(Navarro, 2007)

Sixth level of partial equivalence

The last equivalence level is formed by units with same meaning but with a total divergence in lexical and structure. ¹⁹²

Examples in the pair of languages presented would be:

No perder de vista – tenere d’occhio (to keep the attention and interest)

Echar el guante a alguien – mettere le mani su qualcosa (to challenge)

No dar su brazo a torcer – non mollare di un pollice (not to give in, allow to be convinced or let be won in what others think)

En un abrir y cerrar de ojos – in un batter d’occhio (it makes reference to the fact of something being achieved very quickly)

Estar en el quinto pino – essere fuori mano (to be very far away)

Hacerle a alguien la boca un fraile – batter cassa (to ask a lot, demand)

Llenar los ojos antes que la tripa- avere gli occhi più grandi della bocca (it makes reference to the fact that when something looks very appetizing, it is difficult to eat everything that is desired)

¹⁹² This level of equivalence might be considered quite similar to the first and second levels.

Tenérsela jurada a alguien – legársela al dito (to swear revenge on someone)

Creer algo a pie juntillas – credere qualcosa a occhi chiusi (it expresses firmness, consistency or security when it comes to believing something)

No apearse del burro – puntare i piedi (to give in an opinion)
(Navarro, 2007)

False friends, interlanguage homonymy

This level shows the cases of homonymy between languages. The phenomenon of interlanguage homonymy responds to the situation in which expressions share the same syntactic structure and image in both languages, but that have a complete different meaning.

Examples of them would be the following:

Alzar o levantar las manos – alzare le mani

In Spanish, the expression has the connotation of threat and aggressivity, whilst in Italian it means exasperation due to one's own impotence (Quartu, 1993).

Tener buena mano – avere una buona mano

The Spanish phrase is applied to crafty people. Contrarily, the Italian one is mainly used in the semantic field of cards (by extension indicating the fact of being in a favourable situation), or also to indicate that a person draws well (Quartu, 1993).

Interlanguage homonymy gives place to the phenomenon of false friends. This is related to the circumstance in which two idioms are apparently equivalent. Consequently, they seem to totally correspond in two languages, but their meaning is modified. For example:

Hacer el indio/ Hacerse el tonto – fare l'indiano

The Italian expression indicates the attitude of those who, for their own convenience, pretend not to hear what they are told, not to understand, not to know or not to be interested in something. The Spanish equivalent would be *hacerse el tonto*, while *hacer el indio* in Spanish usually has another meaning, related to a festive (or unwise) behaviour (Martín Bosque, 2007: 110).

*La mayor dificultad para el estudiante de ELE es encontrar el equivalente exacto, manteniendo el registro y el nivel de uso*¹⁹³ (Martín Bosque, 2007: 110).

Non-equivalence

The null equivalence occurs when there are no equivalent phraseological units between the languages.

¹⁹³ *The greatest difficulty for the student of ELE is finding the exact equivalent, maintaining the register and the level of use* (Martín Bosque, 2007: 110, author's translation).

For example, in Spanish there is the expression *Tener más problemas que pelo*, which means “to have a lot of problems”. The equivalence in the Italian language does simply not exist.

(Martín Bosque, 2007: 110)

3.6.5.2. Europeanisms

Approaching contrastive phraseology from the cognitive linguistics perspective allows considering the motivation of full or partial equivalents. Italian and Spanish languages, among others, share some common sources.

Natural Europeanisms

It is noted the existence of a high number of cases where there is absolute morphosyntactic and semantic-communicative identity between the phraseological expressions in Spanish and Italian. Among European languages, and also other languages, coincidences of this type frequently occur.

Concretely, natural Europeanisms are phraseological units with an almost identical form and similar meanings.

Se caracterizan por compartir un origen común, como unidades genéticamente independientes, surgidas como

*producto de la observación del mundo que nos rodea*¹⁹⁴
(Corpas, 2000: 487).

Natural Europeanisms usually reflect characteristic behaviors of living beings, making reference to the parts of the body, its functioning and symbolism.

Cultural Europeanisms

In other cases, the coincidences between languages are due to genetically dependent factors. Cultural Europeanisms make reference, thus, to phraseological units whose common source derives from the European culture.

*Other factors are to be considered when confronting two languages, as extralinguistic factors, especially the sociocultural ones. The symmetries or divergences between combinations are due to the presence or absence of these factors in each linguistic community. For example, Spanish and Italian language have the Bible as a common text, and this is reflected on various expressions: ojo por ojo, diente por diente – occhio per occhio, dente per dente; lavarse las manos – lavarsene le mani*¹⁹⁵ (Iribarren, 2015: 595).

¹⁹⁴ They are characterized by sharing a common origin, as genetically independent units, emerged as a product of the observation of the world around us (Corpas, 2000: 487, author's translation).

¹⁹⁵ Me lavo las manos: a phrase that is used when one discards an issue or tries to avoid all responsibility in it, as Pontius Pilate did in the process of Christ. It

The main sources of contact between Italian and Spanish communities are the Bible, classical culture, shared historical facts and literature.

Examples of these combinations are:

Ver la paja en el ojo ajeno – vedere la pagliuzza negli occhi altrui (expresses that it is easier to see mistakes in others than in oneself)

Darse golpes en el pecho – battersi il petto (the fact of claiming for oneself and for others the own state of competitive advantage in front of a concrete situation)

Lágrimas de cocodrilo – lacrime di cocodrillo (to pretend to feel grief in order to deceive)

Carne de cañón – carne da cannone (it makes reference to the person or group of people, usually belonging to a very low social position, who are exposed to suffer any kind of damage, including death)

Meterse en la boca del lobo – cacciarsi nella tana del lupo (to enter the place where the danger is)

(Navarro, 2004: 13)

alludes to the symbolic custom, used in some ancient towns, of washing one's hands in the presence of people to demonstrate that one was innocent of the crime attributed to him. In the Bible, there is a reference in: Lavi intere inocentes manus meas, which has passed to the mass liturgy.

It is also mentioned in Shakespeare's work (Iribarren, 2015: 595, author's translation).

Cultural Europeanisms might present partial equivalence, as these specific components are linked to linguistic and cultural uses that have subsequently been developed in each language. Consequently, cultural idiosyncrasies of each culture imply that some divergences occur between both systems.

Some examples of partial equivalents that belong to the category of cultural Europeanisms are the following ones:

Hacerle a alguien la boca un fraile – batter cassa

A ojo de buen cubero – a occhio e croce (meaning «roughly, at trial»)

Entrar por la cara – fare il portoghese (without being allowed)

Como anillo al dedo – come cacio sui maccheroni (to adjust, adapt or harmonize things with each other)

Hacer de su capa un sayo – fare di testa propria (to act according to one's own will and with freedom in things or matters that belong to oneself alone)

Ser mano de santo – essere come i cerotti dei frati (to be a remedy or a very good solution, fast and effective for any type of problem)

Con una mano delante y otra detrás – più povero di San Quintino (without any possessions)

(Navarro, 2004: 13)

Estos fraseologismos se caracterizan fundamentalmente por un alto grado de motivación sociocultural que obligan a asociar su forma y contenido a una situación extralingüística

*específica y no comparable con aspectos similares en la otra lengua*¹⁹⁶ (Navarro, 2004: 13).

*No existe una separación tajante entre europeísmos naturales y culturales, pues muchas UFS pertenecen en justicia a ambos. Por ejemplo la paremia ojo por ojo y diente por diente contiene somatismos y, a su vez, es una alusión bíblica procedente del Nuevo Testamento según San Mateo (5: 38)*¹⁹⁷ (Corpas, 2000: 489).

3.6.5.3. Status of contrastive phraseology in Italy and Spain

In Spain and in other countries where phraseology and paremiology are already in a full development phase, there is a certain thematic diversification of research and scientific production. However, it is not possible to say that in Italy, where the phraseological and paremiological investigations are hardly supported (Sardelli, 2016).

¹⁹⁶ *These phraseological units are mainly characterized by a high degree of sociocultural motivation that requires to associate their form and content to a specific extralinguistic situation, not comparable with similar aspects in the other language* (Navarro, 2004: 13, author's translation).

¹⁹⁷ *There is no sharp separation between natural and cultural Europeanisms, as many phraseological units fairly belong to both. For example, the paremiological expression Ojo por ojo y diente por diente contains somatismos and, at the same time, it is a biblical allusion from the New Testament according to Saint Matthew (5:38)* (Corpas, 2000: 489, author's translation).

*A diferencia de lo que sucede en España, en Italia la fraseología y la paremiología solamente están experimentando cierto interés por parte de un reducido grupo de especialistas y un nutrido grupo de aficionados, pero no se puede hablar todavía de reconocimiento de la paremiología y la fraseología como disciplinas, ni mucho menos de consolidación de las investigaciones fraseológicas y paremiológicas en Italia. De hecho, estas disciplinas siguen suscitando recelo por parte de estudiosos que no reconocen su utilidad de cara a la traducción, la didáctica y cualquier otro enfoque que su carácter interdisciplinar favorece*¹⁹⁸ (Sardelli, 2016: 83).

As a result, studies around the Italian and Spanish phraseological units are scarce. Consequently, more comparative studies are necessary. Investigation on this area is strongly required in order to launch a functional didactic methodology that will meet the essential competences requested by the common European structures.

¹⁹⁸ *Unlike the situation in Spain, in Italy phraseology and paremiology are only experiencing some interest to a small group of specialists and a large group of amateurs, but we cannot speak yet of a recognition of paremiology and phraseology as disciplines, not much less of a consolidation of the phraseological and paremiological investigations in Italy. In fact, these disciplines continue to arouse suspicion on the part of scholars who do not recognize their usefulness in the areas of translation, didactics and any other approach that their interdisciplinary character favours* (Sardelli, 2016: 83, author's translation).

Among the interesting research around Italian-Spanish contrastive phraseology that has been developed during recent years, we could mention the publication by González Royo (2016). In it, a parallel corpus is analysed in order to study the variation in register of the language used by young people in literature, in reference to the semantic fields related to death, emotions and moods. This study derives from the project *Il progetto di ricerca in fraseologia contrastiva multilingüe e traduzione dell'Università di Alicante* (Frasytram), which has worked effectively also on other various semantic fields (González Royo, 2014).

Another example is Zamora Muñoz's prolific publication, especially in reference to the analysis of colloquial language (Calvi, 2003: 23).

Apart from the work by the Spanish authors mentioned so far, other interesting investigation which has hoisted Italian-Spanish contrastive phraseology by the cognitive perspective is that by Pietrzak (2014).

Besides, the research developed by Italian Hispanist investigators, such as Capra (2015-2016-2016b), has represented a step forward. Her work is focused on the presence of phraseological units within bilingual dictionaries in Italian and Spanish.

La lengua italiana y la española, a pesar de sus semejanzas, en muchas ocasiones muestran divergencias y la fraseología es un terreno en el que esta condición se manifiesta con más

*claridad, ya que no siempre existe una UF que funcione como equivalente total*¹⁹⁹ (Capra, 2016b: 56).

Conclusions

This thesis aims at ensuring that the learners are provided with resources substantiated on cognitive schemes and which, at the same time, become culturally enriching. It is essential to assist students in the process of approaching the culture of the target language. This will eventually lead to the overcoming of the difficulty that so frequently occurs, such as the lack of resources in front of a case of non-equivalence appears, or the confusion between phraseological units.

¹⁹⁹ *Italian and Spanish languages, in spite of their similarities, often show divergences and phraseology is a terrain in which this condition manifests itself more clearly, since there is not always a phraseological unit that functions as a total equivalent* (Capra, 2016b: 56, author's translation).

4. Objectives

Si potrebbe coniare un slogan divertente: “Studiate l’inglese, il francese, il tedesco per...imparare l’italiano?”. Bisogna periodicamente allontanarsi da qualsiasi luogo dove la consuetudine ha ucciso l’obiettività. Succede così anche per le lingue. Quando si è costretti a parlare un’altra per molti mesi, come a me è accaduto, quanto ritorni alla tua ti accorgi che la lontananza ti è servita per riscoprirla nella sua essenza più profonda²⁰⁰ (Coetzee, 2006).

The interest of this research is particularly relevant because of the pair of languages it is focalized on. Actually, Italian phraseology is a quite unexplored field of study, as it has historically been more centred in diachronical linguistics. Consequently, phraseology has been mostly left in the margins of research, regarded as an area traditionally only meritorious to be considered from a dialectal and oral perspective. This lack of regulation brings with it a low consideration of phraseology as a praiseworthy subject itself. As a consequence, studies such as this PhD research, to be applied in Italy and considering Spanish as a contrast language to be compared to Italian, will help to the construction of a solid base that fosters

²⁰⁰ *A funny slogan could be coined: “Do you study English, French, German for ... learning Italian?”. It is necessary to periodically move away from any place where the custom has killed objectivity. It also happens in languages. When you are forced to speak another for many months, as it happened to me, as you return to yours, you realize that distance has served you to rediscover it in its deepest essence (Coetzee, 2006).*

good visions on the issue and motivates more research within the field.

The second point of interest of the research is the didactic approach by which phraseology is regarded. As a result, phraseodidactics is the fundamental issue to be considered. Phraseodidactics means the practical implementation of linguistic and learning theories on phraseology, and it is in this connection that this research is intended.

Consequently, this investigation will take the form of an applied experimentation on language learning and phraseology. The main aim of the project is to unveil the phraseological competence involved in the learning of a foreign language and which aspects are concerned with it. This objective will have consequences in the didactic field, as analysing what are the factors that allow – or impede – the development of this competence will favour the achievement of a better approach in language learning disciplines. The main factors to be considered will be the role of first and other languages, as well as other aspects, such as contextualization and cognitive strategies.

This research is also constructive on the issue of interlanguage influence, a field in which the investigation about the effect of additional languages in plurilinguals has been rather underexplored so far, since attention has been more focused on the effect of

mother-tongue languages. Eventually, the intention in this thesis is to deepen in the strategies applied by the students, according to their linguistic profile; and to analyse if learning is affected, either positively or negatively.

In order to confine the observable reality that will in turn allow an approachable exploration of the phraseological competence, the factor of interest in this thesis will be the comprehension of figurative language. The consensus of a high number of studies focused on this issue, though, is based predominantly on research with single language users. Contrarily, the question posed in this research is whether, among users of two or more languages, a similar pattern would emerge. This is the reason why this thesis becomes necessary in the exploratory work of phraseodidactics, as it will also analyse the influence that a third or additional language might have on the level and strategies of comprehension, as revealed by the learners.

How the students make sense of figurative expressions partly relies on their cognitive ability to infer metaphorical meanings, which is related to their general conceptualizing capacity of relevant embodied experiences. That is why figurative and metaphorical competences are intimately linked, and in this thesis they will be both considered as a whole. Factors such as linguistic realizations – compositionality, familiarity, etc. – may also affect learners’

processing of figurative or metaphorical meaning, so these are aspects to be explored in this project.

In summary, it is likely that L2 metaphor acquisition is affected by various cofactors on a continuum that includes L1 conceptual mapping and context. Actually, more research on hybrid approaches is required to better understand L2 learning of figurative language (Türker, 2016: 42). The research question posed in this thesis will hopefully contribute to provide more insightful perspectives to better enhance the knowledge about L2 learning of figurative language.

On the other hand, foreign language methodologies concerning phraseology are rooted on the approach assumed regarding the psycholinguistic decomposition process of these linguistic elements.

Precisely, this is the sense in which the learners' strategies will be analysed. Cognitive strategies in this phraseodidactic investigation make reference to the decomposition process that students develop in order to reach an effective understanding of a phraseological and/or metaphorical structure. Thus, exploring this procedure is one of the aims of this investigation. The deeper understanding of this question will help establish more solid bases from which to build competent and firm phraseodidactical methodologies.

In summary, the objectives of the study are:

1. To implement a phraseodidactic inquiry in which the metaphorical and figurative competence of foreign language learners is analysed.
2. To discern the individual factors involved in the metaphorical and figurative competence: the role of first and other languages, interlanguage influence and familiarity.
3. To determine the impact of the diverse kinds of phraseological and metaphorical expressions on the cognitive strategies involved in the comprehension of language.
4. To uncover the influence of the diverse characteristics of phraseological and metaphorical figures on the cognitive strategies involved in the comprehension of language: compositionality, layer of equivalence.
5. To reveal the psycholinguistic decomposition process developed by plurilingual learners of phraseological and metaphorical elements.

5. Assumptions

The theoretical framework developed will determine the assumptions considered in this study, which are summarized here.

1) The broader is learners' linguistic background, the higher is their phraseological and metaphorical competence in a foreign language (interlinguistic influence).

The measure of the linguistic background will be considered according to each learner's previous known languages, including dialects, native and foreign languages.

For reasons of concreteness, the focus will be laid on three aspects of phraseological metaphorical competence: comprehension, translation and metalinguistic knowledge of phraseological units.

For instance, deriving from the first assumption, it is considered that the broader is the learner's linguistic background the major is the intercomprehension of unknown elements in the target language. It is also assumed that this intercomprehension will be higher correspondingly to the level of bilingualism – or plurilingualism. To say it in another way, intercomprehension will be proportional to the language proficiency level of other languages different from the own.

2) Familiarity will be a significant factor when considering the phraseological and metaphorical competence of learners who deal with foreign language elements (encyclopaedic knowledge).

This assumption would confirm the hypothesis according to which culture is a determinant factor when applying comprehensive learning strategies. The whole brain acts in a coordinated way when the subjects develop interpretations, as it has been mentioned in the state of the art in this thesis. Consequently, other cognitive aspects are essential in order to ensure a complete understanding. Here, encyclopaedic knowledge and culture are considered components of the same cognitive network. It is basic, therefore, to include these aspects in the didactic methodologies, as they point directly to meaning.

As a result, it is assumed that the familiarity the students in this research display towards certain elements presented in the study will be decisive in their phraseological and metaphorical competence.

On the other hand, this assumption defends the notion according to which learners have more success interpreting idioms when these are presented with supportive context than without it (Levorato, Cacciari 1999; Ishida 2008).

3) Phraseological and metaphorical competence varies depending on the semantic compositionality (semantic compositionality influence).

It can be assumed that the lesser idiomatic character a phraseological unit shows, the greater is the learner's ability to interpret it correctly.

This assumption also concurs to the metasemantic hypothesis (Nippold, Rudzinski, 1993), according to which the learner tries to infer the non-literal meaning from the literal meaning of the expression. This is linked to the thesis by Levorato and Cacciari (1995, 1999), referred to the fact that the meaning of the components in an expression is the gateway to access the meaning of the whole phraseological unit.

Consequently, in compositional phraseological units, subjects will tend to give more idiomatic interpretations, while in non-compositional ones they will be liable to provide literal readings. Therefore, the learners' figurative competence (Levorato, Cacciari, 1995), which is their ability to interpret a message idiomatically, will be reduced in the cases when the element does not present compositionality.

Previous studies on this topic have been developed by Núñez-Román (2016), where the results pointed to a confirmation of the

thesis by Levorato-Cacciari and Nipold-Rudzinski. In Núñez-Román's study, students decodified the individual parts of a non-compositional phraseological expression to confer a literal meaning. On the contrary, in compositional expressions, they tended to give idiomatic answers. He also demonstrated the important role of the first language, which in some cases was the responsible that led to a wrong answer, especially in those cases with non-compositionality.

4) Phraseological and metaphorical competence varies depending on the interlanguage equivalence level of the elements (interlanguage equivalence influence).

It can be assumed that metaphorical and phraseological units will be more comprehensible for learners if the interlanguage equivalence level is higher. Besides, in the cases that present higher equivalence with the learners' previous languages, the decompositional process performed by them will be different from those with lower equivalence. Thus, common conceptual links will involve similar cognitive mechanisms.

Los mecanismos mentales señalados por la semántica cognitiva son comunes a muchos fraseologismos en diferentes lenguas. Todas estas conclusiones, extraídas de estudios de Iñesta y Pamies (2001), implican la existencia de

*metáforas que no se circunscriben de forma exclusiva a una determinada cultura*²⁰¹ (Corpas, 2004: 21).

²⁰¹ *The mental mechanisms indicated by cognitive semantics are common to many phraseological expressions in different languages. All these conclusions, extracted from studies by Iñesta and Pamies (2001), imply the existence of metaphors that are not exclusively limited to a specific culture (Corpas, 2004: 21, author's translation).*

6. Research methodology

6.1. Interpretation method

In this thesis, a qualitative investigation approach is adopted in order to analyse the data according to an interpretative paradigm. In qualitative investigation the methodology for examination is based on cases. Consequently, the aim is not to represent data by variables, but it is to be focused on circumstances. Traditionally, qualitative investigation has approached the topics of study by classifying the subjects in types. These types will share common characteristics according to the considered factors. This will lead to an understanding of the social actor's role, not to the systematization of the variables as in the positivist paradigm (Corbetta, 2003).

6.2. Subjects

The subjects of the study are a total of 45 students from the third course of the grade *Lingue e Culture Europee*, specialized in Spanish language. The learners have a common profile academically speaking, as they are all students of linguistics subjects and have good notions of translation and language strategies. Consequently, they already have a good command of language, with a homogenous level of B2 in all the participants.

This level is standardized by the protocol stated from the academic qualification requirements, according to which all students must certify a minimum level of B2 by the end of the second course. Actually, the validation procedure is derived to an external service, the *Centro Linguistico di Ateneo*²⁰².

According to the parameters established by the Council of Europe, C1 and C2 levels are the most appropriate to work on phraseological aspects. However, the reason why the level of B2 has been established as favourable for this research is based on the recent tendencies that support a transversal methodology. In this way, a more realistic practice of language elements is assured, as phraseological units are actually present in all the stages of language use.

Besides, the use of linguistics elements that might be applicable to higher levels of language learning is also justified by the fact that no production or other mechanisms of use are required in this project. For example, learners are not asked to perform tasks in which to represent or place the phraseological expressions. On the contrary, this research is focused on the comprehensive aspect of language. Consequently, a higher level of material is considered to be perfectly suitable to develop this language skill.

²⁰² Centro Linguistico di Ateneo: <http://www.clamore.unimore.it/>

6.3. Adopted methodology

6.3.1. Stages of the research

6.3.1.1. Rehearsal with a sample group

A rehearsal exploration has been developed with a sample group, to provide a test before the main experimentation process. This stage has been a necessary step in the research, as it has allowed the identification of possible inaccuracies in the methodology, which has been improved in the process. The results are not to be included in the final results.

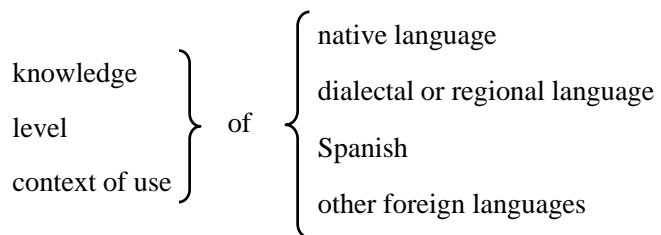
6.3.1.2. Experimentation

Experimentation is developed within the main group, and divided into various parts.

Part 1: Subjects' linguistic profile

The first step consists of describing the subjects' linguistic profile in order to create convergences and divergences. Although subjects display significant similarities in relation to their academic and linguistic background, particularities are presented, which need to be primarily analysed.

The factors considered in the analysis are summarized here:



The method of inquiry is a questionnaire. The questions are given to the subjects in their native language, Italian.

ENGLISH VERSION

Questionnaires: Subjects' linguistic profile

- a) Native languages
 - What is your native language?
 - When and where do you use your native language?
 - When and where did you use your native language during your childhood and youthfulness?
 - Do you have more than one native language?
 - When and where do you use this second native language?
 - When and where did you use this second native language during your childhood and youthfulness?
- b) Regional languages and/or dialects
 - Do you use any dialect or regional language?
 - When and where do you use this dialect or regional language?
 - When and where did you learn this dialect or regional language?
 - When and where did you use this dialect or regional language during your childhood and youthfulness?
 - In case of not using them, do you have any knowledge – such as vocabulary – of any dialect or regional language? How did you learn it? Did you use it at any time of your life?
- c) Spanish
 - What is your level of Spanish?
 - When and where do you use Spanish?
 - When and where did you learn Spanish?
 - During your childhood and youthfulness, did you use Spanish? When and where?
- d) Foreign languages
 - Do you know other foreign languages? What level do you have of every one of them?
 - When and where do you use these foreign languages?
 - When and where did you learn these foreign languages?
 - During your childhood and youthfulness, did you use any foreign language? When and where did you use them?

ITALIAN VERSION

Questionario: Profilo linguistico dei soggetti

a) Lingue native

- Qual è la tua lingua madre?
- Quando e dove usi la tua lingua madre?
- Quando e dove hai usato la tua lingua madre durante l'infanzia e la giovinezza?
- Hai più di una lingua madre?
- Dove e quando usi questa seconda lingua madre?
- Quando e dove hai usato questa seconda lingua madre durante l'infanzia e la giovinezza?

b) Lingue regionali e / o dialetti

- Utilizzi qualche dialetto o lingua regionale?
- Dove e quando usi questo dialetto o lingua regionale?
- Quando e dove hai imparato questo dialetto o lingua regionale?
- Quando e dove hai usato questo dialetto o lingua regionale durante la tua infanzia e la giovinezza?
- In caso di non utilizzo, hai qualche conoscenza – come vocabolario – di qualche dialetto o lingua regionale? Come l'hai imparato? L'hai usato in qualche momento nella tua vita?

c) Spagnolo

- Qual è il tuo livello di spagnolo?
- Quando e dove usi lo spagnolo?
- Quando e dove hai imparato lo spagnolo?
- Durante la tua infanzia e la giovinezza, hai usato lo spagnolo? Quando e dove?

d) Lingue straniere

- Conosci altre lingue straniere? Qual è il livello di ognuna?
- Quando e dove usi le lingue straniere?
- Quando e dove hai imparato queste lingue straniere?
- Durante la tua infanzia e la giovinezza, hai usato una lingua straniera? Quando e dove l'hai usata?

Part 2: Corpus

The corpus is extracted from the journalistic discourse used in press covers, specifically from the Spanish newspaper “El País”, during the months of January, February and March of 2017.

Informative texts from covers in newspapers have been chosen because of their characteristics. First of all, apart from informing and communicating, these kinds of texts should also bring an aesthetic value. They should reach the reader’s heart and mind and do it in an economical and clear way, linguistically speaking. Secondly, the use of linguocultural clichés in the press is a known way of concentrating information and creating images. It is, besides, a magnificent method to attract the reader’s attention to the most relevant element of all the journalistic information: the headline (Mironesko, 2015: 175-176).

Headlines are important in their own way. They are the first text that a newspaper reader sees when buying and reading the paper. They employ a range of creative language devices to produce short attention getting highly memorable texts, and have the capacity to encapsulate an entire story in a few words (Reah, 1998: 32).

Another reason why the corpus based on informative texts has been selected is because of the abundance of phraseological units appearing in this media.

Uno studio di carattere paremiologico (Corpas, 1998) basato su un corpus vario e consistente dello spagnolo attuale è giunto alla conclusione che la maggior concentrazione di proverbi (inclusi detti e citazioni) si trova nel giornalismo, con un 35,5% delle occorrenze, seguito dall'oralità, con il 25%; inoltre, risulta che nel 40% dei casi l'espressione paremiologica appare formalmente modificata (Capra, 2008: 100)²⁰³.

Indeed, as stated by Navarro (2001: 203-206), there are three functions that phraseological units accomplish in the text, and for which they are suitable to act as press headlines. Firstly, a phraseological function (as denominated by Zuluaga), in order to simplify both the message and its reception. In fact, even though its brevity and concision, phraseological units express contents of complexity. Secondly, their connotative function, because they give indirect or additional evaluations to the discourse. And last, Navarro assigns an iconic function to some phraseological units, which consists in the representation of the context through images, allowing information to be perceived with more agility.

²⁰³ *A paremiological study (Corpas, 1998) based on a varied and consistent corpus of current Spanish has come to the conclusion that the greatest concentration of proverbs (including sayings and quotations) lies in journalism, with 35, 5% of occurrences; followed by orality, with 25%. Moreover, in 40% of cases the paremiological expression appears formally modified (Capra, 2008: 100, author's translation).*

A referential publication is Fernández Álvarez's (2011), where the author extracts a real corpus from the German press in order to analyse its possible Spanish translation. Also, the work by Ruiz (2000) has been a reference to this thesis, where an interesting analysis of the metaphors employed in a piece of news is developed in order to study the idealized cognitive models involved in it. Other work that precedes this research is Capra's recollection of phraseological expressions in Italian and Spanish newspapers during a period of time, in order to establish and compare their concurrence (2015).

*En la prensa española encontramos muchas expresiones y palabras que todavía no se han registrado o que han adquirido nuevos significados que no aparecen en los diccionarios*²⁰⁴ (Verbá, Breus, 1997: 176).

In order to build the material for the applied experimentation, total of twenty-six metaphorical or figurative expressions appearing in informative press covers have been retrieved.

The selection of the corpus is based on the premises of cognitive linguistics. Thus, the borders between the concepts of metaphor and phraseological expression have been reduced. As a result, in the

²⁰⁴ *In the Spanish press we find many expressions and words that have not yet been registered or that have acquired new meanings that do not appear in the dictionaries* (Verbá, Breus, 1997: 176, author's translation).

expressions selected, it can be observed that the starting point is actually the metaphor, which is certainly at the base of a big number of phraseological units. In fact, it is often by means of a metaphorical process that the bridge between the literal and the figurative meaning is created.

On the other hand, the limits of a narrow perspective regarding what elements are integrated in the phraseological categorization are avoided in this research. It is in this sense that the approach implemented is a broad consideration of phraseology, in line with the principles established by the prototypes theory. As a result, the boundaries marked by the typical characteristics of phraseological expressions, such as stability or idiomatic nature, are flexible. Thus, both the central and the peripheral elements of word combinations are considered as belonging to phraseology. Consequently, collocations are regarded as phraseological units, as well as some metaphors that have been fixated in language use, regardless if they are strictly considered as pure phraseological units.

Corpus

EL PAÍS –JANUARY, FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2017

1) Plantar cara



Meryl Streep planta cara a la falta de respeto de Trump P21

2) Darse de bruces

Críticos, exigentes, comprometidos, participativos, reformistas. Y digitales, claro. También perezosos, narcisistas y consentidos. Así son los ocho millones de ‘millennials’ españoles

La generación de la crisis

JAVIER AYUSO, **Madrid**
Los jóvenes que nacieron entre 1982 y 2004 (los llamados *millennials*) serán más del 70% de la fuerza laboral del mundo desarrollado en 2025. Probablemente habrán empezado a tomar las riendas del futuro de la humanidad. En España, son una generación de más de ocho millones de personas que nacieron en la prosperidad, con un entorno político, económico y social infinitamente mejor que el de sus padres, pero que

cuando llegaron a la mayoría de edad se dieron de bruces con una durísima crisis que truncó las expectativas de muchos de ellos. Según la Fundación Porcausa, son el colectivo de los sueños rotos.

La generación del milenio vive con la etiqueta de formar un ejército de gente perezosa, narcisista y consentida; sin embargo, los jóvenes españoles de entre 18 y 34 años son también críticos, exigentes, reformistas, poco materialistas, comprometidos, digita-

les y participativos. Pero piensan que la sociedad está en deuda con ellos. Eso se deduce, al menos, de todos los informes y encuestas consultados por EL PAÍS. “Aspiramos a todo lo que han aspirado nuestros padres, pero superándolos. Ellos se conformaban con un trabajo que les diera de comer y nosotros queremos que nos dé de comer y nos guste. Es nuestra mala suerte y nuestra fortuna”, resume María Viajel, de 25 años. PASA A LAS PÁGINAS 24 Y 25

3) Con la boca pequeña

Aluvión de peticiones de cese del jefe del Eurogrupo por sus insultos

CLAUDI PÉREZ, Bruselas
Jeroen Dijsselbloem, jefe del Eurogrupo, se disculpó ayer —con la boca pequeña— por los “malentendidos” que ha causado su entrevista en un diario alemán en la que acusa al Sur de derrochar el dinero “en licor y mujeres”. Dijsselbloem atribuye sus declaraciones “a la cultura calvinista, a la sinceridad holandesa” y se niega a dimitir. Espa-

ña, Italia y Grecia consideran inadmisibles sus palabras y le exigen una rectificación “sentida, formal y pública”. Portugal y el Partido Socialdemócrata Europeo, en el que figuran los laboristas holandeses de Dijsselbloem, quieren que deje el cargo. La Comisión Europea y eurodiputados de todas las fuerzas tildan sus declaraciones de insultantes, vulgares y machistas. **PÁGINA 37**

4) (Ser) la mano derecha



IRENE MONTERO
Mano derecha de Iglesias

“La dirección de Podemos no puede ser un reparto de familias” **P16**

5) Con mal pie

La nueva Administración arrincona
a la primera minoría del país

Los hispanos y el español, a la defensiva

P. DE LLANO / P. X. SANDOVAL
Miami / Los Ángeles

La nueva Administración de Estados Unidos ha empezado **con mal pie** sus relaciones con los hispanos. En el Gabinete presidencial no figura ninguno de ellos por primera vez en décadas, y la página en español de la Casa Blanca, activa durante el mandato de Obama, ha desaparecido.

Al menos de momento. "Es un detalle espantoso. Casi un 20% de la población es hispanohablante y de la noche a la mañana el español desaparece. El mensaje es: no nos importa que seáis bilingües, es vuestro problema". Así valora el catedrático Phillip M. Carter la novedad de que la web oficial, ahora en revisión, solo hable inglés. **PÁGINAS 4 Y 15**

6) Estar en manos²⁰⁵

El Gobierno relevará a Trillo en la Embajada de Londres

La sustitución coincidirá con otros cambios de embajadores para no vincularla con la decisión del Consejo de Estado sobre el Yak-42

MIGUEL GONZÁLEZ, Madrid
Federico Trillo, ministro de Defensa en mayo de 2003, cuando se produjo el accidente del Yak-42 en el que murieron 62 militares que regresaban de Afganistán, será relevado de la Embajada de Londres. Su cese, aún sin fecha, fue confirmado ayer por fuentes del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, un día des-

pués de que toda la oposición se apresurase a pedir su destitución fulminante tras el dictamen del Consejo de Estado que responsabiliza a Defensa del accidente. El Gobierno va a hacer

Cospedal recibirá a las familias de las víctimas

coincidir la sustitución de Trillo con el previsto relevo a lo largo de este año de otros 72 embajadores. Si Mariano Rajoy no le ofrece otro puesto, lo más probable es que el exministro y expresidente del Congreso vuelva a España y reactive su despacho profesional de abogado, que **dejó en manos** de sus hijos, según fuentes de su entorno. **PÁGINA 17**

²⁰⁵ Also the variation *Dejar en manos* is frequent.

Europa convoca a la unidad ante las amenazas de Trump

Alemania y Francia alertan de que el destino de los europeos está en sus manos El presidente electo alaba el 'Brexit' y dice que la OTAN ha quedado obsoleta El FMI teme que se desaten guerras comerciales con el nuevo líder de EE UU

7) Sobre ruedas

La revolución sobre ruedas

El coche eléctrico y la conducción autónoma cambiarán nuestra vida y la organización de las ciudades Manuel Gómez Blanco y Manuel Planelles

- 8) Dar el primer paso

Susana Díaz hará una gira para defender su proyecto

La presidenta de Andalucía dará el próximo fin de semana el primer paso hacia su candidatura en el PSOE

- 9) Sobre la marcha

La democracia interna es todavía un reto tanto en partidos viejos como nuevos

Lecciones de la Caja Mágica y Vistalegre

J. P. COLOMÉ / K. LLANERAS, Madrid
¿Qué necesitan un partido tradicional como el PP y otro recién llegado como Podemos para que su democracia interna sea mejor? Tras sus congresos del fin de semana, hay unos cuantos desafíos pendientes. Los populares tienen que resolver los problemas de votar a mano alzada y aclarar tanto el método exacto

de la doble vuelta para elegir presidente en futuros congresos como el proceso de selección de los compromisarios. Podemos debe decidir si las reglas —para elegir las listas, por ejemplo— se pueden cambiar sobre la marcha, y entender que el sistema debe ser claro, como el censo, y que es chocante conocer los resultados antes de la hora prevista. PÁGINA 20

10) Por todo lo alto



EL RITO DE LAS QUINCEAÑERAS SE EXTIENDE EN ESPAÑA. Alejandra Zapata, hija de colombianos, va a cumplir su sueño en Getafe. Es su fiesta de 15 años, el rito del paso de niña a mujer que los latinos celebran por todo lo alto. En una nave con las paredes pintadas de fucsia, donde aguardan un centenar de invitados, el padre de Aleja le calza unos elegantes zapatos de tacón antes de comenzar el baile. / VICTOR SANZ PÁGINA 24

11) Jugar con fuego

Trump añade sanciones a Irán y reduce controles a los bancos

La Casa Blanca advierte a Teherán de que no va a ser "amable como Obama"

El nuevo presidente anula regulaciones financieras impuestas tras la crisis

La cumbre europea critica las primeras decisiones del Gobierno de Estados Unidos

SILVIA AYUSO / SANDRO POZZI
Washington / Nueva York
La respuesta de la Casa Blanca a la última prueba con misil balístico de Irán de hace una semana se concretó ayer en nuevas san-

ciones sobre 12 empresas y 13 personas, todas ellas conectadas con el programa de misiles. Las sanciones no afectan al acuerdo nuclear firmado con Teherán, pero la llamada de atención es muy

clara: Donald Trump dijo ayer que "Irán está jugando con fuego". El presidente firmó además dos decretos que revisan la ley Dodd-Frank, adoptada por la Administración de Obama tras la

gran crisis financiera de 2007 para regular el sistema bancario. En Malta, la cumbre de la UE defendió la unidad europea frente a los retos de la nueva presidencia estadounidense. PÁGINAS 3 A 5

12) Dar a luz

Las jóvenes venezolanas se van a dar a luz a Colombia P10

13) Sin tapujos



APLAUSOS EN LA AUTÓNOMA AL 'EXPRESIDENT'. La mayoría de los 60 alumnos que asistieron a la conferencia de Artur Mas en la Facultad de Derecho de la Autónoma de Madrid eran extranjeros. Casi todos aplaudieron su exposición, en la que definió a Cataluña como "una sociedad de acogida muy mezclada". El *expresident* agradeció la invitación, "una oportunidad para hablar sin tapujos", dijo. / SAMUEL SÁNCHEZ

14) Dar luz verde

Trump siembra el caos en el proceso de relevo del mando

La confirmación de los nombramientos de altos cargos en EE UU comienza sin que se haya completado la investigación ética

MARC BASSETS, **Washington**
Si la tensión que rodea la transición de la Casa Blanca de Barack Obama a la de Donald Trump sirve para anticipar la nueva etapa, no es nada arriesgado pronosticar que va a ser tempestuosa. Tras la denuncia de las interferencias de Rusia en la campaña, la presión sobre las inversiones empresariales y la sustitución de las conferencias de prensa

por los mensajes a través de Twitter, en la recta final hasta el 20 de enero surge ahora el conflicto de la confirmación de nom-

El presidente electo coloca a su yerno como asesor en la Casa Blanca

bramientos, que hoy comienza. El responsable de la Oficina independiente de Ética de la Administración cree que la excesiva velocidad a la que se quiere **dar luz verde** a esos nombramientos es "muy preocupante" y que hay algunos "con problemas éticos potencialmente desconocidos o sin resolver". Los demócratas quieren aplazar el proceso. Los republicanos se niegan. **PÁGINA 3**

15) Poner las cartas sobre la mesa²⁰⁶

“A Trump hay que darle una oportunidad y juzgarle después”

El ministro es optimista sobre Europa, a pesar del *Brexit*, la crisis de la emigración y los avances de los nacionalismos. "2017 puede ser un año difícil, pero no desde luego el del principio del fin de la UE". Y asegura que España, ausente en los últimos tiempos del núcleo dirigente en Bruselas, está de vuelta en el puesto de mando. "Tanto desde el Consejo como desde la Comisión nos han pedido que España, que ahora mismo tiene una situación de estabilidad y de menos incertidumbre, tire del carro. España tiene la obligación de dar un paso adelante y lo estamos haciendo". ¿En qué sentido? "En **poner sobre la mesa** propuestas sobre seguridad y defensa o inmigración. Y en la unión

²⁰⁶ In this example, the short form of *Poner las cartas sobre la mesa* is adapted. Other variations of this expression admit: *poner las cartas sobre el tapete* or *poner las cartas boca arriba* (Seco et al., 2004: 258; Cantera et al., 2010: 81).

16) Contra reloj

El Estado Islámico amenaza con aumentar las matanzas

El grupo yihadista reclama la autoría del atentado de Año Nuevo en Turquía. La policía detiene a ocho sospechosos y sigue la búsqueda

MARGA ZAMBRANA, **Estambul**
El Estado Islámico asumió ayer la autoría del ataque que en las primeras horas del año causó 39 muertos en una discoteca de Estambul. En un comunicado, el grupo yihadista dice que "la sangre de musulmanes vertida por ataques aéreos y fuego de artillería

prenderá un fuego" en Turquía, en referencia a la intervención de este país en la guerra de

Temor a nuevos ataques en la frontera con Siria

Siria. Las autoridades turcas avanzan ahora contra reloj para localizar al asesino. Ayer detuvieron a ocho personas sospechosas de estar vinculadas con el ataque. Los equipos de investigación han conseguido huellas dactilares y una descripción del atacante. **PÁGINA 3**

P3

EDITORIAL EN LA PÁGINA 10

17) Por la puerta trasera

Mas se prepara para volver a ser candidato a la Generalitat

El expresidente del Palau de la Música de Barcelona se plantea confesar ante el fiscal las comisiones ilegales de Convergència

M. NOGUER / J. GARCÍA, **Barcelona**
Presidente de la Generalitat de Cataluña durante cinco años y forzado a dejar el cargo por la puerta trasera a instancias de sus socios anticapitalistas de la CUP, Artur Mas, líder del Partit Demòcrata Català, era visto por su propio partido como un político amortizado. Pero todo ha cambiado desde que el actual *president*, Carles Puigdemont,

descartó repetir mandato. Mas, pendiente de sentencia por haber auspiciado la consulta soberanista del 9 de noviembre de 2014, busca una segunda oportunidad al frente de la Generalitat. O, como mínimo, quiere tenerlo todo a punto para optar a ser candidato de la nueva Convergència si el partido sigue sin encontrar sustituto para Puigdemont. El fis-

cal ha pedido para él 10 años de inhabilitación por desobediencia y prevaricación. Además, su formación tiene otro frente abierto: el expresidente del Palau de la Música, Fèlix Millet, se plantea sumarse a un pacto con la fiscalía y confesar el pago de comisiones ilegales a Convergència. Su mano derecha, Jordi Montull, lo hará la próxima semana. **PÁGINAS 13 Y 14**

18) Tender puentes

Las obras de Unamuno, Lorca, Valle-Inclán y Muñoz Seca pasan a dominio público

Los autores del 36, a disposición de todos

J. R. MANTILLA / T. KOCH, **Madrid**
La obra de Miguel de Unamuno se sumó ayer a la lista de autores de los dos bandos desaparecidos al inicio de la Guerra Civil cuyos derechos de autor pasan a ser de dominio público transcurridos 80 años desde su fallecimiento. Unamuno murió el 31 de diciembre de 1936. Aquel año España se partió en dos y arrasó un futuro de

brillantez en las letras al grito de "¡Mueran los intelectuales!". La Biblioteca Nacional ha elaborado un índice con 377 autores cuyas obras quedan libres de derechos. Valle-Inclán, Lorca, Muñoz Seca, Maeztu... "Toca tender puentes entre ellos, más ahora que se multiplican las posibilidades de difusión", afirma Ana Santos, directora de la biblioteca. **PÁGINA 23**

19) Pasar página

Reivindicación del olvido

La memoria histórica es un deber moral, pero a veces es mejor pasar página David Rieff

20) De la vieja escuela²⁰⁷

Díaz anunciará el 26 de marzo su decisión de ser candidata

La presidenta andaluza prepara un acto con militantes en Madrid para iniciar la disputa del liderazgo del PSOE a Patxi López y Pedro Sánchez

ANABEL DÍEZ, Madrid Susana Díaz resolverá en dos semanas las dudas sobre su futuro político. Según confirmaron ayer fuentes autorizadas, el 26 de marzo anunciará su candidatura a la secretaría general del PSOE en un acto con militantes en Madrid en el que se comprometerá a trabajar para unir el partido y recuperar el voto de los ciudadanos.

La presidenta de la Junta de Andalucía será así el tercer candidato en la pugna por el liderazgo socialista, junto a Pedro Sánchez y Patxi López, y deberá afrontar dos importantes retos: la fractura que vive la militancia y la compatibilidad de su candidatura con su responsabilidad institucional en esa comunidad. La candidata, que siempre ha postulado que prime-

ro hay que definir las propuestas de partido y luego elegir a las personas idóneas para defenderlas, esperará a que, un día antes, el PSOE debata el documento politi-

PERFIL

El socialismo de vieja escuela
Luis Barbero

co encargado a Eduardo Madina, que servirá de base para redactar la ponencia marco del congreso de junio. El pasado 25 de febrero, el partido ya debatió el texto económico, dirigido por José Carlos Díez. Los dos adversarios de Díaz en las primarias ya llevan tiempo de campaña: López se presentó el 14 de enero y Sánchez lo hizo dos semanas después. PÁGINAS 13 A 15

21) Pasar factura



CARMENA DESTITUYE A SU POLÉMICA CONCEJAL DE CULTURA. La criticada gestión de Celia Mayer al frente de la Concejalía de Cultura de Madrid ha terminado por pasarle factura. La alcaldesa Manuela Carmena resolvió ayer darle otra carterera: igualdad. Las crisis del Matadero, la memoria histórica, la Cabalgata y los tintereros han pesado en el relevo de la edil (a la derecha, junto a Carmena, en su rueda de prensa). / CARLOS ROSILLO MADRID

²⁰⁷ Occasionally, the absence of the article is admitted, as in *de vieja escuela*.

22) Dar alas (a alguien)

La crisis de Fillon da alas a Juppé para liderar la derecha francesa

CARLOS YÁRNOZ, **París**

La catastrófica situación de François Fillon, candidato a las elecciones presidenciales del 23 de abril y cercado por los escándalos, ha desatado una tormenta entre Los Republicanos, la alianza conservadora francesa. Los partidarios del ex primer ministro Alain Juppé, que quedó segundo en las primarias de noviembre, se están moviendo para apartar al acorralado Fillon. Tanto ellos como el círculo del expresidente Nicolas Sarkozy creen que sus únicas posibilidades de éxito electoral pasan por la renuncia de Fillon. **PÁGINA 3**

23) Cerrar filas

El Parlamento Europeo veta al representante de Trump

Socialistas y populares rechazan el nombre elegido por EE UU para la UE El nuevo presidente escoge a un juez ultraconservador para el Tribunal Supremo El secretario general de la ONU pide a Washington que cese el bloqueo migratorio

C. PÉREZ / S. AYUSO / S. POZZI
Bruselas / Washington / Nueva York
El enfrentamiento entre Europa y la nueva Administración estadounidense alcanzó ayer una dimensión superior: los grupos de la Eurocámara cerraron filas y expresaron su rechazo a Ted Malloch, futuro embajador de EE UU

ante la UE. El antieuropeísmo declarado de Malloch y las inquietantes primeras medidas de Donald Trump han llevado a populares y socialdemócratas a liderar la queja del Parlamento Europeo. La inquietud se ha extendido a la ONU, donde el secretario general, António Guterres, exigió ayer a Washington que elimine

"lo antes posible" el veto migratorio al considerar que viola principios básicos. En casa, Trump trata de esquivar la oposición de los demócratas a sus nombramientos. Forzará que la votación en el Senado del juez Neil Gorsuch para cubrir la vacante en el Supremo sea por mayoría simple. PÁGINAS 3 A 6

OPINIÓN

México puede prosperar sin Trump Ernesto Zedillo

24) En el punto de mira (de alguien)

Wikileaks filtra los códigos de espionaje electrónico de la CIA

Documentos hechos públicos por la organización de Assange describen los supuestos instrumentos para pinchar teléfonos, ordenadores y televisores

AMANDA MARS, Nueva York
Wikileaks, la organización que lanzó Julian Assange para filtrar información confidencial, empezó a publicar ayer miles de documentos atribuidos a la CIA. Si fueran auténticos, se trataría de los programas de ciberespionaje que los servicios de inteligencia de EE UU usan

o han usado para piratear ordenadores y teléfonos, y para convertir televisores inteligentes en micrófonos de espionaje. Wikileaks asegura no haber da-

do a conocer todo el material que posee. Y afirma que se trata de la mayor filtración de documentos de la CIA, que, añade, habría perdido "el control

de la mayoría de su arsenal de hacking, incluyendo software, virus maliciosos, troyanos, sistemas de control remoto y documentación asociada". Como es habitual, la CIA no hizo comentarios sobre la autenticidad y el contenido de los documentos, que abarcan el periodo de 2013 a 2016. PÁGINA 3

Los gigantes de Silicon Valley, en el punto de mira del ciberespionaje

25) Echar un pulso²⁰⁸

Schulz sufre un duro revés en su primer pulso con Merkel

LUIS DONCEL, **Berlín**

El partido de Angela Merkel superó ayer con holgura en el *land* de Sarre su primer duelo con el SPD de Martin Schulz, a quien las encuestas conceden muchas opciones para desbancar a la canciller. La CDU logró el 40% de los votos, frente al 30% de los socialdemócratas, muy por debajo de sus expectativas. La Izquierda sumó un 13%, y un 6% la ultraderechista AfD, que logra acceder a la Cámara regional. **PÁGINA 3**

²⁰⁸ The short form of the expression has been used in the headline. Modifications and adaptations are a recurrent resource in the journalistic discourse.

26) Librar una batalla²⁰⁹

Los rivales de Sánchez critican que se presente como el único de izquierdas

A. DÍEZ / R. LIMÓN
Madrid / Sevilla

“Todos somos de izquierdas”, proclamó ayer la presidenta de Andalucía, Susana Díaz. La frase tiene intención y objetivo: Pedro Sánchez, candidato a la secretaría general del PSOE, se había declarado “autónomo y de izquierdas”. En el PSOE se libra ya la batalla sobre quién abandera más la izquierda y la socialdemocracia. **PÁGINA 15**

²⁰⁹ Variations in the article are admitted in the phraseological expressions, such as in *librar la/una batalla*. In fact, this expression would belong to the category of collocations, as *batalla* is usually combinable with the verb *dar*.

Corpus translation to Italian:²¹⁰

- 1) Plantar cara: affrontare qualcuno
- 2) Darse de bruces: cadere bocconi
- 3) Con la boca pequeña: a mezza bocca
- 4) (Ser) la mano derecha: (essere) il braccio destro
- 5) Con mal pie: con il piede sbagliato
- 6) Estar en manos: essere nelle mani
- 7) Sobre ruedas: a gonfie vele/tutto liscio
- 8) Dar el primer paso: fare il primo passo
- 9) Sobre la marcha: cammin facendo, strada facendo, via via, sul momento
- 10) Por todo lo alto: alla grande, con grandiosità, in grande stile
- 11) Jugar con fuego: giocare con il fuoco
- 12) Dar a luz: dare alla luce
- 13) Sin tapujos: senza veli, così com'è, senza sotterfugi, alla luce del sole
- 14) Dar luz verde: dare il via libera
- 15) Poner las cartas sobre la mesa: scoprire le carte, mettere le carte in tavola, giocare a carte scoperte
- 16) Contra reloj: contro il tempo, molto in fretta
- 17) Por la puerta trasera: di nascosto, in modo illegale
- 18) Tender puentes: gettare un ponte

²¹⁰ Sañé, S., Schepisi, G. (2013): Dizionario Spagnolo-Italiano di frasi idiomatiche, colloquiali e gergali. Bologna: Zanichelli.

- 19) Pasar página: voltare pagina
- 20) De la vieja escuela: della vecchia scuola
- 21) Pasar factura: presentare il conto
- 22) Dar alas (a alguien): incitare/ incoraggiare, dare spago a (qualcuno)
- 23) Cerrar filas: serrare le file, stringere le file
- 24) En el punto de mira (de alguien): nel mirino (di qualcuno)
- 25) Echar un pulso: fare a braccio di ferro
- 26) Librar una batalla: dare battaglia

Definition of the metaphorical expressions

The expressions have been analysed according to the following dictionaries:

- a. Seco, M., Andrés, O., Ramos, G. (1999): *Diccionario del español actual*. Madrid: Aguilar.
- b. Varela, F., Kubarth, H. (1994): *Diccionario fraseológico del español moderno*. Madrid: Gredos.
- c. Cantera Ortiz de Urbina, J. (2010): *Diccionario de dichos y expresiones. Su interpretación al alcance de todos*. Madrid: ABADA Editores.
- d. Moliner, M. (2016): *Diccionario de uso del español*. Gredos.
- e. DRAE (2001) *Diccionario de la lengua española, 23^a edición*. [<http://dle.rae.es/>].

1) Plantar cara (definition: “to face someone / something”)

- a. (A una pers.o cosa): Hacer (le) frente o enfrentarse (con ella).
MGaite *Nubosidad* 135: “Es demasiado cansado pasarse la vida plantándole cara a la soledad”.
- b. Enfrentarse con alguien/algo.
Es una mujer de mucho carácter, la he visto plantándoles cara a cuatro hombres armados.
- c. —
- d. Desafiarle, discutir lo que se dice, afrontar su enfado o resistir su autoridad.

e. –

2) Darse de bruces (definition: “to fall face down”)

a. (Una persona): Caerse boca abajo.

Mendoza *Gurb* 109: “Pruebo de arrastrar un solo pie y dar un salto con el otro hacia delante. Me doy de bruces”.

b. (Caerse de bruces): Caerse con la cara contra el suelo.

El niño se ha caído de bruces y tiene la cara llena de sangre.

c. Caer boca abajo.

d. Tumbado con la cara contra el suelo, por ejemplo por haberse caído.

e. –

3) Con la boca pequeña (definition: “by mere compliment or without conviction”)

a. (Con la boca chica/chiquita): Por mero cumplido o sin convicción.

Mayoral *Amiga* 144: “Ella sonreía y decía que no, pero con la boca pequeña”.

b. –

c. (Con la boca chica/chiquita/pequeña): Simplemente por cumplido, sin convicción alguna.

d. (O con la boca chica): Sin deseo de hacer lo que se ofrece.

e. –

4) (Ser) la mano derecha (definition: “to be the person of confidence”)

a. –

b. –

c. –

d. –

e. Persona muy útil a otra como auxiliar o colaborador.

5) Con mal pie (definition: “with bad luck, or with little success”)

a. (O con el pie izquierdo): Con mala suerte, o con poco acierto.

Preverte *Sombra* 136: “Fue una entrada con mal pie, sin vítores ni gente mirándonos”.

b. –

c. Con mala suerte.

d. Con desgracia, mala suerte o desacierto.

e. –

6) Estar en manos (definition: “in charge or in the care of the person in question or under their responsibility”)

a. –

- b. –
- c. A merced de.
- d. Encargados o al cuidado de la persona de que se trata o bajo su responsabilidad.
- e. –

7) Sobre ruedas (definition: “prosperously, without obstacles or difficulties”)

- a. Muy bien.
Gironella *Hombres* 167: “Marta organizó un almuerzo en su casa con motivo de su cumpleaños y todo marchó sobre ruedas”.
- b. Funcionar perfectamente.
Desde que vendo este producto tan bueno, el negocio marcha sobre ruedas.
- c. –
- d. –
- e. Persona muy útil a otra como auxiliar o colaborador.

8) Dar el primer paso (definition: “to begin, to start”)

- a. –
- b. –
- c. Comenzar, iniciar.
- d. Gestión.

e. –

9) Sobre la marcha (definition: “improvising, without previous plan. At the same moment of something being doing”)

a. A medida que se producen los hechos, o sin decisión previa.

AMillán *Juegos* 116: “Yo sigo sin entender...Espero ir aprendiendo sobre la marcha”.

b. Improvisando, sin plan previo.

Este tipo de problemas hay que resolverlos sobre la marcha, según se van presentando las dificultades.

c. A medida que se van produciendo los hechos.

d. En el mismo momento de estar haciendo algo.

Habrà que ir corrigiendo el texto sobre la marcha.

e. –

10) Por todo lo alto (definition: “with great luxury”)

a. Con magnificencia, lujo o esplendidez.

GSerrano *Macuto* 545: “Lo celebraron a modo. Lo celebraron por todo lo alto”.

b. Con todo el lujo.

Hicieron una fiesta por todo lo alto, una fiesta que ni muchos viejos aristócratas se permitirían.

c. Con gran lujo.

d. A lo grande. Con mucho lujo o rumbo.

Han puesto un piso por todo lo alto. Hicieron una boda por todo lo alto.

e. –

11) Jugar con fuego (definition: “dedicating oneself imprudently to an action that can bring bad consequences”)

a. Dedicarse imprudentemente a una acción que puede traer malas consecuencias.

Torrente *Inf* 24.9.70, 2: “La rivalidad entre la República Árabe Unida, de una parte, y Siria y el Iraq, de otra, va a dirimirse ahora...Unos y otros juegan con fuego”.

b. Entretenerse por diversión en algo que puede ocasionar sinsabores o perjuicios.

Conducir tan rápido es jugar con fuego; un día vas a sufrir un accidente grave.

c. Dedicarse imprudentemente a algo que puede acarrear muy graves consecuencias.

d. Entretenerse frívolamente con algo que puede resultar peligroso.

e. –

12) Dar a luz (definition: “physiological action of giving the woman birth to the child”)

- a. Expulsar (una mujer) al exterior (el hijo concebido).
Gala *Séneca* 136: “Esta virgen lo siguió siendo después de dar a luz”.
- b. Parir.
Estaba muy preocupado porque pensaba que no iba a tener descendencia, pero su mujer acaba de dar a luz a dos niños gemelos.
- c. Parir.
- d. Acción fisiológica de dar la mujer nacimiento al hijo.
- e. –

13) Sin tapujos (definition: “clearly, frankly, without disguising anything”)

- a. –
- b. –
- c. A las claras, francamente, sin disimular nada.
- d. (Andar con): Engaño, rebozo o rodeo con que se obra o habla.
- e. –

14) Dar luz verde (definition: “to give permission, authorization”)

- a. (Luz verde): Aprobación o autorización.

Diosdado *Anillos* 1, 209: “Ramón me ha dicho que ya tiene en marcha todos los papeles para el divorcio. Solo está esperando a que lo dé luz verde”.

- b. Dar permiso, autorización.

Quisiera saber cuándo el Ayuntamiento va a dar luz verde al proyecto de retirar el tráfico de automóviles por el centro de la capital.

- c. Autorizar, permitir.

- d. Permitir que se haga algo.

La comisión ha dado luz verde al proyecto.

- e. –

15) Poner las cartas sobre la mesa (definition: “to speak frankly, exposing intentions without hiding anything)

- a. (Poner las cartas boca arriba, poner las cartas sobre el tapete, descubrir las cartas): Declarar abiertamente las intenciones que hasta el momento se mantenían ocultas. Mendoza *Tocadors* 268: “Les propongo desbloquearla (la situación) por el único medio que funciona en estos casos, es decir, poniendo las cartas boca arriba o sobre el tapete”.

- b. (Poner las cartas sobre la mesa/el tapete): Hablar con toda franqueza, exponer sus intenciones sin ocultar nada. *Tenemos que ser sinceros y poner las cartas sobre la mesa, de lo contrario nos pasaremos la vida sospechando los unos de los otros.*

- c. (Poner las cartas boca arriba/sobre la mesa/sobre el tapete): Revelar o poner de manifiesto sus intenciones, mantenidas antes sin descubrir.
- d. (Poner las cartas boca arriba): Poner al descubierto, al tratar de un asunto, todo lo que se guardaba oculto.
- e. –

16) Contra reloj (definition: “something that has to be done very fast or in a very short period of time”)

- a. (Cosa) muy rápida o que ha de hacerse en un plazo de tiempo muy corto.
A.Romero *ELM* 6.10.94, 12: “Los negociadores continúan sus reuniones contra reloj”.
- b. –
- c. Se dice de una carrera o de una etapa de carrera que se realiza saliendo los corredores de uno en uno a intervalos regulares.
- d. -Expresión con que se designa una modalidad de carreras de bicicletas en que éstas salen no todas a la vez, sino con intervalos regulares.
-A toda prisa para intentar realizar una tarea en el menor tiempo posible.
- e. –

17) Por la puerta trasera (definition: “by the back door”)

- a. –
- b. –
- c. –
- d. –
- e. Puerta que se abre en la fachada opuesta a la principal.

18) Tender puentes (definition: “what serves to bring people or things closer, particularly if there is tension or enmity between them”)

- a. –
- b. –
- c. –
- d. Lo que sirve para acercar a personas o cosas, particularmente si existe entre ellas tirantez o enemistad.
- e. –

19) Pasar página (definition: “to stop dealing with (it) or relegate (it) to oblivion”)

- a. Dejar de ocuparse (de ello) o relegar (lo) al olvido.
S.País 19.12.99, 10: “El nacimiento del siglo XX provocó aluviones de artículos en la prensa española, ávida de pasar página a un período aciago en la historia del país”.

- b. –
- c. Dar por zanjada una cuestión.
- d. –
- e. –

20) De la vieja escuela (definition: “set of preferences or customs from another time”)

- a. Conjunto de formación, gustos o costumbres de otro tiempo.
J. Salas *Abc* 11.8.64, 33: “El sentimiento por las condiciones de Antonio Segni es general. Y a ello contribuye su gran personalidad de gentil hombre de la vieja escuela”.
- b. –
- c. Se dice de personas, costumbres o conductas de otro tiempo.
- d. –
- e. –

21) Pasar factura (definition: “to make suffer the consequences”)

- a. Reclamar una compensación por algo (también figurado).
Ide 16.9.86, 12: “Francia pasará factura al Gobierno español por las expulsiones de etarras”.
- b. –

- c. Hacer sufrir las consecuencias.
- d. Pedir algo a una persona a cambio de un favor o servicio que se le ha prestado anteriormente.
Prefiero no recurrir a él, porque luego te pasa factura.
- e. –

22) Dar alas (a alguien) (definition: “to encourage or to give facilities to someone to dare to do something that is inconvenient”)

- a. Alentar (le) o dar (le) facilidades para que se atreva a algo que no conviene.
Delibes Cinco horas 60: “Tú das demasiadas alas a los niños”.
- b. Incitar, animar, alentar a alguien, generalmente a hacer algo malo.
Con esas leyes tan liberales, el gobierno no hace otra cosa que darles alas a los terroristas.
- c. Darle facilidad para que se decida a hacer algo.
- d. –
- e. –

23) Cerrar filas (definition: “to tighten the bonds of union, in front of a certain danger or threat”)

- a. Estrechar la unión (un grupo), frente a un peligro.

Anson *Oriente* 159: “Los demás serán llamados a cerrar filas tras el Papa”.

- b. Estrechar los lazos de unión, ante un determinado peligro o amenaza.

Antes los partidos de oposición estaban desunidos, pero ahora han cerrado filas en torno a un solo candidato y su éxito es seguro.

- c. Hacer más estrecha la unión.
- d. Estrechar la unión entre sí los que forman una comunidad, por ejemplo frente a un peligro.
- e. –

24) En el punto de mira (de alguien) (definition: “as an objective that is to be observed, attacked or achieved”)

- a. Como objetivo que se trata de observar, atacar o conseguir.

GCortázar-GVesga *Historia* 391: “Las fábricas reales, astilleros y empresas catalanas acapararon abundante mano de obra contratada, siempre en el punto de mira del gobierno por su espíritu reivindicativo”.

- b. –
- c. -Parte de un arma de fuego que sirve para hacer puntería.
-Objetivo posible.
- d. –
- e. –

25) Echar un pulso (definition: “to rivalize, to compete with someone”)

a. Desafiar o retar.

P. Urbano *Ya* 27.11.88, 2: “Una oposición capaz de echarle un pulso al Gobierno”.

b. Rivalizar, competir con alguien.

Los sindicatos acaban de echarle un pulso al gobierno, si no aumentan los salarios en un 20%, convocarán una huelga general.

c. -Competir con él.

-Someterse a la prueba que consiste en derribar el brazo de su contrincante.

d. -Probar una persona con otra sus fuerzas respectivas, situándose frente a frente, cogiendo cada una con su mano la de la misma situación de la otra y con el codo apoyado, por ejemplo en la mesa, y tratando cada una de derribar el brazo de la otra.

-Se usa también en sentido figurado: *Los sindicatos echaron un pulso al gobierno.*

e. –

26) Librar una batalla (definition: “to face and fight”)

a. (Dar la batalla): Enfrentarse.

VMontalbán *Galíndez* 165: “Qué fácil sería acomodarse a muchos convencionalismos...Quisiera tener dinero, pero sería para dar la batalla a todos ellos”.

- b. –
- c. (Dar batalla): Esforzarse y luchar por conseguir algo.
- d. –
- e. –

Relationship or bridge between the image and the base in the metaphorical expressions

1) Plantar cara

Meaning “to face someone or something”, the expression is formed by the transitive verb *plantar*. One of the meanings of this verb makes reference to the situation where someone affronts another person with clarity and courage (apart from its usual meanings: “to fix”, “to place”, “to stand” or “to place in the ground”). On the other hand, the element *cara* acts as a complement to the verb *plantar* and it can be related to the action of facing somebody (*encarar*, in Spanish).

Example:

Es una mujer de mucho carácter, la he visto plantándoles cara a cuatro hombres armados.

The expression in this sentence conveys the image of a woman facing (literally) four armed men. The figurative message transmitted by the image (which acts as a bridge between the concrete and corporal experience and the abstract sense) gives the idea of confrontation.

Corpus:

Meryl Streep planta cara a la falta de respeto de Trump.

The sentence describes the situation in which the famous actress is confronting the political leader, in an ideological sense.

2) Darse de bruces

Even if the noun *bruces* is difficult to be found in a formal dictionary, as its singular form does not exist in the Spanish language, the noun is widely known in the Spanish culture, and it is related to the part of the face where the nose and the mouth are situated. The origin of the word *bruces* is attributed to etymological theories. The meaning of the expression is to crash, hit or stumble across something, usually associated to a blow received in the part of the nose and the mouth.

Example:

El niño se ha caído de bruces y tiene la cara llena de sangre.

The relationship between the image and the figurative meaning is very close in this expression, as the verb *darse* already transmits a literal sense of stumbling across something. Hence, the figurative meaning gives the idea of crashing against something, even if not physically.

Corpus:

En España, son una generación de más de ocho millones de personas que nacieron en la prosperidad, con un entorno político, económico y social infinitamente mejor que el de sus padres, pero que cuando llegaron a la mayoría de edad se dieron de bruces con una durísima crisis que truncó las expectativas de muchos de ellos.

The presence of *darse de bruces* in this sentence conveys the idea of

stumbling across a social reality that, psychologically, hits the new generations.

3) Con la boca pequeña

The relationship between the terms *boca* and *pequeña* does not let the whole meaning go through (saying something publicly although one might not be internally and/or entirely convinced), so that an effort of deduction of the figurative meaning must be done in this idiom. The term *boca* makes reference to the part of the body with which we speak (mouth). Consequently, the image transmitted by this lexeme can be related to the act of communicating. The second term adds a connotation to the expression that can be connected to a sense of decreasing. The relationship between the literal image conveyed by the expression and the idiomatic meaning can be in some way deduced, especially from the adjective *pequeña*, moving through a bridge where a low measure is related to a speaker's little conviction.

Example:

Ella sonreía y decía que no, pero con la boca pequeña.

The relationship between the image and the figurative meaning is not very close in this expression, but it can be deduced that the act of smiling of the subject in the sentence is not done in a broad way, so it is not completely sincere.

Corpus:

Jeroen Dijsselbloem, jefe del Eurogrupo, se disculpó ayer –con la boca pequeña- por los “malentendidos” que ha causado su entrevista en un diario alemán en la que acusa al Sur de derrochar el dinero “en licor y mujeres”.

The presence of *con la boca pequeña* in this sentence emphasizes the idea of insincerity or low conviction of the apologies declared by Jeroen Dijsselbloem.

4) (Ser) la mano derecha

The expression is quite transparent, as *derecha* is usually combined to other nouns to give the idea of someone who has another person's confidence. On the other hand, the word *mano* transmits the idea of the most useful tool that human beings have, as the hands are used for a vast number of tasks. Thus, the expression defines a skilled person who executes something with dexterity, usually helping another one for whom he or she becomes a useful collaborator. Consequently, it has been established a relationship between the image of the right hand to a more abstract concept, such as being the person of confidence. Thus, the base of the expression conveys the figurative meaning desired by means of a metaphor.

Example:

El director confiaba en su secretario una buena parte de sus tareas. Era talmente su mano derecha.

Here we can see an example of how the image of a person of high confidence is related to a corporeal image to express the idea of high reliance.

Corpus:

Irene Montero, mano derecha de Iglesias.

In this sentence, a definition of the role of Irene Montero –in relation to Iglesias- is expressed by means of the metaphorical expression *mano derecha*, which has become fixated in language use to represent a person of confidence.

5) Con mal pie

Meaning with bad luck or little success, the metaphorical relationship is deducible, as there is a link between the image of a bad foot and the abstract concept of carrying something out that results into a bad outcome.

Example:

Fue una entrada con mal pie, sin vítores ni gente mirándonos.

This example conveys quite clearly the concept of starting something, in this case expressed by the presence of the word *entrada* (“entrance”). Consequently, the relationship between the image of someone entering an event, and the figurative sense of doing it without success, is conveyed by the metaphorical image “with bad foot”, linked by human experiential elements.

Corpus:

La nueva Administración de Estados Unidos ha empezado con mal pie sus relaciones con los hispanos.

The connection between the bad beginnings of the relationship of United States with a particular group of people is easily identified by the image transmitted by the expression *con mal pie*, which is both marking a starting point and a bad assessment of this circumstance.

6) Estar en manos

This expression makes reference to an event or circumstance that is in charge or in the care of the person in question or under their responsibility. The image is literally related to a physical phenomenon in which an object is carried with a particular part of the human body, the hands. The figurative meaning is tightly linked with the image, as the development of human tasks are typically related to the hands, so the abstraction of taking a responsibility is metaphorically expressed by this corporeal reference.

Example:

Elena dejó a su hija en manos de sus suegros para asistir al examen.

In this sentence this tight relationship between leaving a responsibility or care to someone and the corporeal reference is easily seen. The image of having something in our hands and the

task of taking care of a baby –on request- is directly showing the relationship between the literal meaning and the figurative sense, as taking care of a baby is physically “having it in our hands”, but also metaphorically (feeding it, checking its wellbeing....etc.).

Corpus:

Si Mariano Rajoy no le ofrece otro puesto, lo más probable es que el exministro y expresidente del Congreso vuelva a España y reactive su despacho profesional de abogado, que dejó en manos de sus hijos, según fuentes de su entorno.

The example from the corpus adopts the meaning of leaving a responsibility to someone else; in this case, a firm that is left under the control of the subject’s sons or daughters.

7) Sobre ruedas

When something goes *sobre ruedas*, literally “on wheels”, it works prosperously, without obstacles or difficulties. The image of having something on wheels indicates that there is probably little need to push, and so to struggle, for certain circumstances to occur. Thus, the relationship between the literal meaning and the figurative sense is easily seen in this metaphorical approximation.

Example:

Desde que vendo este producto tan bueno, el negocio marcha sobre ruedas.

This sentence conveys the message that a business is running well as the product is very good. Here, the expression *sobre ruedas* empathizes this message.

Corpus:

La revolución sobre ruedas. El coche eléctrico y la conducción automática cambiarán nuestra vida y la organización de las ciudades.

In the corpus, as it usually happens in the journalistic discourse, a play on words has been developed in order to convey a social and industrial renovation that will probably bring an improvement on the means of transport. Thus, the beneficial outcomes of electrical cars and automatic driving are expressed by the expression *sobre ruedas*, at the same time that the relationship between the image and the figurative sense is strengthened.

8) Dar el primer paso

Both the adjective *primer* and the noun *paso*, take significant part in the final meaning of the expression, giving the literal idea of someone starting a way on foot. Thus, the idea of movement is metaphorically related to social, working or life changes.

Example:

Felipe siempre daba el primer paso cuando se trataba de empezar una relación con una chica.

In this example, the message conveyed is that the subject of the sentence is usually the one taking the initiative when starting a personal relationship. Thus, the connection between the abstract beginning of a relationship and a physical step is metaphorical.

Corpus:

La presidenta de Andalucía dará el próximo fin de semana el primer paso hacia su candidatura en el PSOE.

In the corpus, the movement conveyed is abstract and related to the life event related to the work place. It is a movement represented metaphorically by the literal image of *dar el primer paso*.

9) Sobre la marcha

This idiom defines an activity which is improvised and developed on the progress, especially when we make reference to decision-making tasks. In this expression the link between the image and the figurative sense is quite clear, as the idea conveyed by *sobre la marcha* points to the fact of being “on” or “during the course of” a situation of movement. This image is metaphorically representative of the decision-making processes which are developed on the course of events.

Example:

Este tipo de problemas hay que resolverlos sobre la marcha, según se van presentando las dificultades.

In this example we can consider the relationship between the literal image “on the way” and the reference to an abstract problem-solving situation which is developed in an improvised way.

Corpus:

Podemos debe decidir si las reglas –para elegir las listas, por ejemplo- se pueden cambiar sobre la marcha, y entender que el sistema debe ser claro, como el censo, y que es chocante conocer los resultados antes de la hora prevista.

In this case, the plans to be decided in an improvised way are related to the rules within the politics system.

10) Por todo lo alto

The figurative meaning of this expression makes reference to an event celebrated with great luxury. Literally, it transmits the idea of height and fullness. Thus, the relationship between the image and the metaphorical sense derived from it is easily identifiable, resulting into an orientational metaphor.

Examples:

Han puesto un piso por todo lo alto.

Hicieron una boda por todo lo alto.

In both cases, we can appreciate the use of the expression to refer to a luxurious situation, event or purchase. Again, the metaphor is deduced by the relationship between concrete aspects of the human

experience, as it is spatial orientation, and the more abstract concept of monetary cost.

Corpus:

Es su fiesta de 15 años, el rito del paso de niña a mujer que los latinos celebran por todo lo alto.

In this example, the context of the expression is a celebration, one of the most recurrent areas in which it is employed.

11) Jugar con fuego

This expression defines the situation in which one is imprudently dedicated to an action that can bring bad consequences. The relationship between the literal image, which conveys the idea of someone being directly hurt by the fire because of the imprudence of playing with it, and the figurative meaning, is easily abstractable. The danger to which someone is exposed when looking for harmful situations is symbolically represented by the fire.

Example:

Conducir tan rápido es jugar con fuego; un día vas a sufrir un accidente grave.

The danger expressed in this sentence is the fact of driving fast, which is compared with a risky activity as would be the action of playing with fire. Thus, the metaphor here is clearly established by a mechanism of comparison, by identifying a simple event with a more complex one.

Corpus:

Las sanciones no afectan al acuerdo nuclear firmado con Teherán, pero la llamada de atención es muy clara: Donald Trump dijo ayer que “Irán está jugando con fuego”.

Dangers can be very various and be found in plenty of situations, from daily life to geopolitical issues. Thus, in the example from the corpus, the relationships between two countries are at hazard because of the imprudent behaviour displayed by one of them.

12) Dar a luz

The physiological action of giving a woman birth to a child is expressed by a metaphorical connection with the experiential element of light. When children are given birth, it is the first time they are exposed to the light. It is by means of a significant effort of abstraction of this image, that the bridge to the figurative meaning of the expression can be deduced.

Example:

Estaba muy preocupado porque pensaba que no iba a tener descendencia, pero su mujer acaba de dar a luz a dos niños gemelos.

In this example, the connection between the figurative meaning and the literal one can be understood if a metaphorical abstraction is developed.

Corpus:

Las jóvenes venezolanas se van a dar a luz a Colombia.

In this example from the corpus, the same relationship is established.

13) Sin tapujos

When something is covered with a cover, it transmits the idea of *tapujo*. So, the image of something being physically uncovered means undisguised. Consequently, the figurative meaning is derived from the base of the idiom, which makes reference to something being clear and frank. It is usually combined with the verb *hablar* (“to speak”).

Corpus

El expresidente agradeció la invitación, “una oportunidad para hablar sin tapujos”.

As we can see in this example, the verb *hablar* (“to speak”) is the recurrent combination for this expression, meaning to communicate without subterfuges.

14) Dar luz verde

The fact of giving permission or authorization is represented here by a metaphorical link related to a particular attribute of light and colour deeply rooted as a symbol of human civilization. In this case, the organizational system of traffic lights works as the base from

which the figurative sense is built, in order to transmit that a way is permitted.

Example:

La comisión ha dado luz verde al proyecto.

The metaphor works in abstract situations in which allowance is to be shown, as it occurs in this example.

Corpus:

El responsable de la Oficina independiente de Ética de la Administración cree que la excesiva velocidad a la que se quiere dar luz verde a esos nombramientos es “muy preocupante” y que hay algunos “con problemas éticos potencialmente desconocidos o sin resolver”.

Again, the metaphor is represented by this experiential and concrete element of human experience, in order to convey a more abstract message.

15) Poner las cartas sobre la mesa

The connection between the figurative meaning and the literal meaning is built through a cultural process in which the encyclopaedic knowledge plays an important role. Thus, the fact of speaking frankly and exposing the own intentions without hiding anything is related to a particular situation from a specific context. Thus, a common human activity, as it is the fact of playing with

cards, serves here as the image to raise the metaphor in which the idea of clarity is transmitted.

Example:

Tenemos que ser sinceros y poner las cartas sobre la mesa, de lo contrario nos pasaremos la vida sospechando los unos de los otros.

The abstract idea of “being sincere” and the concrete idea of “setting the cards on the table” are present in the example, showing the relationship between the literal image and the figurative sense that this metaphor allows.

Corpus:

España tiene la obligación de dar un paso adelante y lo estamos haciendo. ¿En qué sentido? “En poner sobre la mesa propuestas sobre seguridad y defensa o inmigración”.

The idea of transmitting a message with sincerity and clarity is implicit in the use of this expression. This metaphor is easily and frequently identifiable by the language speakers.

16) Contra reloj

This expression, whose figurative meaning refers to something that has to be done very fast or in a very short period of time, is also built by a process of cultural identification. Thus, the literal meaning or image of the lexemes designates a modality of race in which the participants leave the starting point not all at once, but at

regular intervals. The metaphorical process has been extended to other spheres of human life in order to convey the idea of haste.

Example:

Los negociadores continúan sus reuniones contra reloj.

Another sphere in which the idea of hurry is applied.

Corpus:

Las autoridades turcas avanzan ahora contra reloj para localizar al asesino.

In this example, the urgency of the situation described is defined by the expression.

17) Por la puerta trasera

“By the back door” is defining a situation in which someone leaves with discretion. The relationship between the image of the expression and the figurative sense is direct, as the denotation and the connotation dimensions are very much near.

Corpus:

Presidente de la Generalitat de Catalunya Durante cinco años y forzado a dejar el cargo por la puerta trasera a instancias de sus socios anticapitalistas de la CUP, Artur Mas, era visto por su propio partido como un político amortizado.

This example is illustrative of the relationship between the image and the figurative sense. Being a successful public character, the person being described in the piece of news has been forced to leave his position in a discrete and humble way. Here, the metaphor plays with the image of someone leaving a space by the back door (without being observed) and an important person leaving a figurative space without any public recognition.

18) Tender puentes:

The figurative sense of the expression is defining what serves to bring people or things closer, particularly if there is tension or enmity between them. The image is identifiable with the building of bridges, which represents the union between two points or positions. The metaphorical abstraction here is direct, as the union that links two psychological or social positions has been extrapolated from the literal union of these physical buildings.

Corpus:

La Biblioteca Nacional ha elaborado un índice con 377 autores cuyas obras quedan libres de derechos. Valle-Inclán, Lorca, Muñoz Seca, Maeztu... Toca tender puentes entre ellos, más ahora que se multiplican las posibilidades de difusión.

In this example, the use of the expression is defining an effort to provide support in order that an objective is reached. For it to

succeed, it is necessary to bring together some elements, that is, by building a passage, metaphorically speaking.

19) Pasar página

The image of this expression is referred to the action of moving one page forward while in the activity of reading. The figurative meaning is to do with the abstract act of stop dealing with something or relegating it to oblivion. It is by a metaphorical relationship that, once more, the concrete gives sense to human realities that are more difficult to express.

Example:

El nacimiento del siglo XX provocó aluviones de artículos en la prensa española, ávida de pasar página a un período aciago en la historia del país.

In this case, the act of “turning page” is related to the willingness of the peoples of forgetting about a political period and moving forward to the next phase.

Corpus:

La memoria histórica es un deber moral, pero a veces es mejor pasar página.

In the example of the corpus, the act of moving forward and to relegate a past period to oblivion is again related to historic, social and political issues.

20) De la vieja escuela

The literal image of this expression conveys the idea of an old school. This image, if interpreted in terms of figurative sense, can transmit social connotations that might be connected to a group of tastes or customs from another time, usually establishing a group of methods and principles instituted by a person or group of people.

Example:

El sentimiento por las condiciones de Antonio Segni es general. Y a ello contribuye su gran personalidad de gentil hombre de la vieja escuela.

The expression is acting in this sentence as a qualifying complement of the subject in the statement, interpreted in its figurative sense.

Corpus:

El socialismo de vieja escuela.

In this case the figurative meaning of the expression is describing a particular political party, in terms of traditionalism and establishment of old premises.

21) Pasar factura

To “pass the bill”, literally translated, belongs to the world of finances and money, referred to the fact of charging someone for a service or good provided. The figurative meaning is related to a

wide range of daily life events, in the sense of making someone suffer the consequences for some past fact. Thus, the metaphorical sense of this idiom is derived from a more concrete action.

Example:

Prefiero no recurrir a él, porque luego te pasa factura.

We can see in this example how the figurative sense is applied in the use of an expression whose image is readily identifiable with paying a price for something. Thus, paying the price is extrapolated to the action of replying to the consequences of some request for which there will later be some requirements.

Corpus:

La criticada gestión de Celia Mayer al frente de la Concejalía de Cultura de Madrid ha terminado por pasarle factura.

It is exactly the same case here. The fact of “paying the consequences” might respond to a wide range of situations. Here, instead of responding to a previous favour or request, the costs respond to a bad action or management, in this case performed by a political figure, which was performed in the past.

22) Dar alas a alguien

The figurative meaning of this expression is to encourage or give facilities so that someone dares to do something that is inconvenient. Even if the literal meaning is not used, the image is easily conceivable. Moreover, the connotation can be interpreted

from the image, where the wings are associated with the action of flying, and consequently it might be related to the freedom of accomplishing what is desired. The metaphor is again related to some empirical experience, from which a more complex structure of meaning is built.

Example:

Con esas leyes tan liberales, el gobierno no hace otra cosa que darles alas a los terroristas.

We have identified the action of “giving wings to someone” with the fact of accomplishing what is desired with freedom. What is hard to deduce from the image is that the connotation of this idiom is usually negative. This is easily observed in this example, where the concession of more freedom to the terrorists by the government will probably lead to bad consequences.

Corpus:

La crisis de Fillon da alas a Juppé para liderar la derecha francesa.

In this example the negative consequence that a political circumstance will have is also subtly interpretable.

23) Cerrar filas

The literal meaning of this combination of words is rarely used, but the image is straightforward. Even that, the metaphorical process by which the figurative meaning -to tighten the bonds of union, in front

of a certain danger or threat- might be hard to understand. It is identifiable with some battle strategies in which the union of a group of people has usually served as a powerful resource of defence and attack.

Example:

Antes los partidos de oposición estaban desunidos, pero ahora han cerrado filas en torno a un solo candidato y su éxito es seguro.

The political ambit is one of the most recurrent areas in which this idiom is employed, as the figurative meaning of uniting forces against an opposition is metaphorically very near to the source domain.

Corpus:

El enfrentamiento entre Europa y la nueva Administración estadounidense alcanzó ayer una dimensión superior: los grupos de la Eurocámara cerraron filas y expresaron su rechazo a Ted Malloch, futuro embajador de EEUU ante la UE.

In the example from the corpus we can see again how this expression is related to the sphere of politics.

24) En el punto de mira (de alguien)

The literal meaning of this idiom, which is directly connected to the image that it transmits, is usually applied to the weaponry domain, referred to the group of pieces of firearms used to ensure an aim. Its figurative sense describes an objective that is to be observed,

attacked or achieved, a metaphorical approximation that is easily traceable to the original image.

Example:

Las fábricas reales, astilleros y empresas catalanas acapararon abundante mano de obra contratada, siempre en el punto de mira del gobierno por su espíritu reivindicativo.

The figurative sense of this expression is applied in this example to describe an object of interest of the Spanish government, in this case referring to a group of people.

Corpus:

Los gigantes de Silicon Valley, en el punto de mira del ciberespionaje.

This example proves that the original image has expanded its implications by building metaphorical relations in which an element of interest is at the focus of another area or subject.

25) Echar un pulso

The image of this idiom defines the situation where two people put the elbows in a firm place and try to hold each other's right hand, in order to show who of them has more strength in the pulse and manages to break the opponent's arm. In its metaphorical sense, it is also attributable to a situation in which two people are measuring their strengths, with the intention of winning. Here we can see a metaphorical abstraction where a more concrete literal meaning has

been expanded to represent a confrontation in more intangible issues.

Example:

Los sindicatos acaban de echarle un pulso al gobierno, si no aumentan los salarios en un 20%, convocarán una huelga general.

The confrontation between the trade unions and the government is represented by the expression, which is applied here in its figurative sense.

Corpus:

Schulz sufre un duro revés en su primer pulso con Merkel.

The confrontation in the example from the corpus is referred to two political leaders in their fight for political power.

26) Librar una batalla

This expression is referred to the fact of fighting or confronting someone, literally speaking. Nevertheless, this image is manifested in its figurative sense to describe any kind of situation that implies conflict, opposition or fight.

Example:

Qué fácil sería acomodarse a muchos convencionalismos... Quisiera tener dinero, pero sería para dar la batalla a todos ellos.

The act of fighting is figurative here, as conventions are conceptual and social schemes not physically fightable, but ideologically.

Corpus:

En el PSOE se libra ya la batalla sobre quién abanderará más la izquierda y la socialdemocracia.

Again, the struggle being described in the example has to do with social conflicts within a political party, thus applying the figurative sense of the expression.

Part 3: Task, phraseological competence and strategies

In the core of the experiment, the corpus is presented to the subjects. The task is individually-focused, in order to achieve conclusive results that give resolution to the assumptions presented.

The subjects are answering to three main tasks: explaining the metaphorical and phraseological units, translating them into Italian, and relating which elements have been conclusive to allow them understanding the meaning of each expression.

Before starting the tasks, a clarification about the four strategies to be considered is presented to the students. Thus, it is ensured that the concepts of linguistic, contextual, metaphorical and intercultural elements are unambiguous to the subjects.

The task is key in order to analyse thoroughly the strategies used in the exercises and to discern what the roles of interlanguage, familiarity, encyclopaedic knowledge and semantic compositionality take in the correct interpretation of the expressions.

ENGLISH VERSION

Questionnaires: Phraseological competence and strategies

- What does this expression mean? Give a definition for the expression.
- How would you translate it to Italian?
- Did you know this expression?
- If you do, how and when did you learn it?
- If you don't, how have you deduced its meaning?
- What elements are helpful in deducing the meaning of this expression? Explain them.
 - Linguistic elements
 - Contextual elements
 - Metaphorical elements
 - Intercultural elements

ITALIAN VERSION

Questionari: Competenza fraseologica e strategie

- Cosa significa questa espressione? Puoi dare una definizione?
- Come la tradurresti in italiano?
- Conosci questa espressione?
- Nel caso che già la conosci, come l'hai imparata?
- Nel caso contrario, come hai dedotto il significato?
- Quali elementi della espressione ti hanno aiutato a costruire il significato? Spiegali.
 - Elementi linguistici
 - Elementi contestuali
 - Elementi metaforici
 - Elementi interculturali

Part 4: Idiomatic character of the metaphorical and phraseological expressions

The next part of the investigation is centred on analysing the effect that the diverse kinds of phraseological and metaphorical expressions have on the cognitive strategies involved in the comprehension of language. A formal linguistic classification of these elements is to be avoided, as the focus of this research is to discern the comprehensive strategies according to cognitive premises. Consequently, the reference to the type of linguistic units present in the corpus is just referred to in an accidental and informative way.

Contrarily, in order to develop the results, the corpus selected is to be categorized according to the level of compositionality of the elements analysed. In this way, the main phraseological characteristic to be measured is the idiomatic character of the different elements examined.

The idiomatic nature, or compositionality, is a trait which can be quantifiable. Idiomatic nature makes reference to the fact that the meaning of an expression is not deductible from the union of its elements. Thus, according to the cognitive linguistics premises, phraseological and metaphorical elements are to be distributed according to their idiomatic nature, regardless of their grammatical typology. Consequently, even if an expression is considered to

belong to the category of idiom or collocation, this fact will be unconnected to the level of idiomaticity of such elements.

According to the cognitive linguistics principles, the rigorousness in establishing categories is not realistic with the unstable characteristics that these units present. Thus, the aim of cognitive linguistics is not to categorize, but rather to structure and analyse in tune with the compositionality presented, which is a feature especially relevant when dealing with phraseodidactic issues. In summary, the approach in the classification presented below is intended at confronting the traditional linguistics methods of categorization, which, once faced with the comprehensional techniques responsive to human cognitivism, prove to be ineffective. Indeed, we are going to see some inconsistencies that directly deny the traditional correspondence *collocation-compositionality*, *idiom-non-compositionality*. This occurrence will prove as valid the prototypes system that cognitive semantics is based on, and which has served as a base for our theoretical model.

On the other hand, at this point of our investigation, it has to be declared that the delimitation between the category of idiom and collocation is still a complex area in which linguists are engaged at the present time. Consequently, whatever arising inconsistency or disagreement of the classification established in this thesis is mostly welcome.

Despite the undeniable scientific progress that has been made in lexical combinatorics, there are still many areas in which no agreement has yet been reached. Therefore, some fundamental issues, such as the definition of the very notion of collocation, are still under discussion (Torner, Bernal, 2017: 1).

1) Plantar cara

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: Yes

Observations: As we have seen, the expression is formed by a transitive verb, *plantar*. One of the meanings of this verb makes reference to the situation where someone affronts another person with clarity and courage (apart from its usual meanings: “to fix”, “to place”, “to stand” or “to place in the ground”).

This fact, apart from making the expression highly transparent, gives more weight on the word *plantar*, in terms of the final action represented by the whole expression.

The element *cara* acts as a complement to the verb *plantar* and it can be related to the action of facing somebody (*encarar*, in Spanish). In conclusion, this idiom is compositional, as each one of its components gives sense to the whole expression.

2) Darse de bruces

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: Yes

Observations: The meaning of the expression is to crash, hit or stumble across something, usually associated to a blow received in the part of the nose and the mouth.

The fact here is that the intransitive pronominal form of the verb *dar* (to give) does not manifestally have any relationship with the noun *bruces*. In fact, if the word *bruces* is omitted, the verb in its reflexive form still conveys the meaning of kicking against something. Consequently, the connotation is not absolutely lost, so we consider it compositional.

3) Con la boca pequeña

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: No

Observations: This idiom makes reference to the fact of saying something publicly although one might not be internally and/or entirely convinced. The relationship between the terms *boca* and

pequeña does not let the whole meaning go through, so this is considered to be a non-compositional idiomatic expression.

4) (Ser) la mano derecha

Type of unit: Collocation

Compositionality: No

Observations: Presenting a fixed form and meaning, thus with a stable character, this is considered a collocation that defines a skilled person who executes something with dexterity, usually helping another one for whom he or she becomes a useful collaborator.

However, collocations may have a relative idiomaticity, and this one could be considered non-compositional²¹¹. Actually, the words

²¹¹ We are confronting again the traditional view where categories are strictly defined:

Las colocaciones son sintagmas libres formados a partir de las reglas de la sintaxis, que presentan también cierta fijación, rasgo esencial que las distingue de las combinaciones libres de palabras (Corpas, 1996: 53). *Las colocaciones se caracterizan, pues, por el hecho de no presentar el "sentido unitario consabido" del que hablaba, ya en los años 50, Julio Casares (1950), es decir, porque su sentido global es extraíble a partir del significado de sus constituyentes. Por esta razón se las considera unidades fraseológicas no idiomáticas, característica que las opone a las demás unidades fraseológicas* (González Rey, 1998: 61), (in Pérez, Batista, 2005: 83).

Collocations are free syntagmas formed from the rules of syntax, which also have a certain fixation, an essential feature that distinguishes them from free combinations of words (Corpas, 1996: 53). *Collocations are characterized, then, by the fact of not presenting the "common unitary meaning" of which, already in*

in the expression do not transmit, if isolated, a significant meaning to the final message of the idiom. Even if the whole expression is quite transparent—in fact, *derecha* is usually combined to other nouns to give the idea of someone who has another person’s confidence—, *mano* or *derecha* alone do not convey the connotation sought with the expression, so they are interdependent.

5) Con mal pie

Type of unit: Idiom

the 50s, Julio Casares (1950) spoke of, that is, because his global sense is extractable from the meaning of his constituents. For this reason they are considered non-idiomatic phraseological units, a characteristic that opposes them to the other phraseological units (González Rey, 1998: 61), (in Pérez, Batista, 2005: 83, author’s translation).

We prefer to make reference to the “relative” idiomaticity of collocations, as the theory of prototypes is based on a gradation where it would be unrealistic to establish limiting labels. In fact, already in Pérez and Batista (2005: 83), the authors defended certain flexibility when defining a group of expressions between free syntagmas and collocations:

Lo fundamental de este tipo de colocaciones es que muestran un punto de transición entre la sintaxis libre y la fraseología. No pueden ser consideradas verdaderas expresiones fijas, pero sí unidades en un terreno intermedio lo suficientemente restringidas para no ser consideradas libres y lo suficientemente transparentes para no ser consideradas idiomáticas (Pérez, Batista, 2005: 84).

The fundamental thing about this type of collocations is that they show a point of transition between free syntax and phraseology. They cannot be considered true fixed expressions, but they can be considered as units in a middle ground restricted enough to not be considered free, and transparent enough not to be considered idiomatic (Pérez, Batista, 2005: 84, author’s translation).

Compositionality: Yes

Observations: In this case, the adjective *mal* gives a clear sense to the connotation of the idiom, which makes reference to a situation that is leading to have a negative outcome. The whole meaning is related to the fact of starting an activity unfortunately, badly or with bad luck. This nuance is transmitted by the word *mal* (“bad”), which, combined with *pie* (“foot”), conveys the complete meaning. *Pie* may transmit the idea of a start, a movement or a course of action. Nevertheless, *mal* by itself already conveys a significant part of the sense. In summary, it is considered to be a compositional idiom.

6) Estar en manos

Type of unit: Collocation

Compositionality: Yes

Observations: The meaning of the expression means “to be in power of” or “to command”. So when something or someone is “at hands of others”, it means that it depends on their choice or decision.

This collocation is considered to be compositional. If the word *manos* is substituted by another word, the sense of the composition is completely lost. Contrarily, if the word *estar* is substituted by

another similar verb, the meaning could still be transmitted effectively.

As a consequence, the relationship between the verb *estar en* (“to be in”) and the noun *manos* (“hands”) constitute a fixed phrase, which, by its own idiosyncrasy, is forming a syntactic and semantic union where one of the components is predominant over the other, as it can occur in some collocations.

7) Sobre ruedas

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: No

Observations: A clear case of non-compositional idiom. It makes reference to the development of something in favour of the interests of a person, that is performed easily and without any effort. The idiom might be quite transparent for the speakers, as the fact of having something on wheels indicates that there is probably little need to push and so to struggle for certain circumstances to occur.

However, each one of the words depends strongly on the other in order to convey the meaning of the idiom, which is independent from their isolated significances, so we are confronting a combination with considerable idiomaticity.

8) Dar el primer paso

Type of unit: Collocation

Compositionality: Yes

Observations: It is said that collocations are usually more transparent than other phraseological units because each lexical unit retains its meaning, and in a lot of cases one of them predominates over the other. When this occurs, the lexical unit that predominates and gives the meaning to the semi-idiomatic expression is called base, which is complemented by a collateral unit that completes or nuances it, thus forming a semantic unit between them.

In the case of this expression, we have three lexeme elements composing the phraseological expression that have a semantic charge, differently from the cases of articles, prepositions and so on²¹². Both the adjective *primer* and the noun *paso*, take significant

²¹² This linguistic occurrence is defined as complex collocations by Koike (2001): *Al igual que las colocaciones simples, las complejas se caracterizan por presentar restricciones combinatorias impuestas por el uso tradicional* (Aguilar-Amat Castillo, 1993: 80; Írsula, 1994: 279; Corpas, 1996: 53; Koike, 2001: 27). *En las colocaciones simples la restricción léxica se establece entre dos unidades léxicas simples, mientras que en las complejas, dicha restricción se establece entre una unidad simple y otra compleja. En otras palabras, uno de sus constituyentes en las colocaciones complejas no es una palabra, sino una unidad léxica compuesta por más de una palabra* (Koike, 2001: 55-60). *As with simple collocations, complex ones are characterized by combinatorial restrictions imposed by traditional use* (Aguilar-Amat Castillo, 1993: 80; Írsula, 1994: 279; Corpas, 1996: 53; Koike, 2001: 27). *In simple collocations, the lexical restriction is established between two simple lexical units, while in complex ones this restriction is established between a simple unit and a complex one. In other*

words, one of its constituents in complex collocations is not a word, but a lexical unit composed of more than one word (Koike, 2001: 55-60, author's translation).

Dar el primer admits some flexibility, which fits with the description of these units developed by the author:

Otra característica de las colocaciones complejas es la composicionalidad formal que caracteriza también las colocaciones simples (Koike, 2001: 27-28), la cual permite ciertas flexibilidades formales. Por ejemplo, la colocación compleja seguir al pie de la letra es composicional, puesto que la locución al pie de la letra puede aparecer modificando a otros verbos como cumplir, tomar (se), crear, interpretar, etc. Otra colocación compleja dar un golpe de Estado admite la modificación adjetival en su elemento nominal: dar un nuevo golpe de Estado, dar un golpe de Estado militar (Koike, 2005: 170).

Another characteristic of complex collocations is the formal compositionality that also characterizes simple collocations (Koike, 2001: 27-28), which allows certain formal flexibilities. For example, the complex collocation seguir al pie de la letra is compositional, since the idiom can literally appear modifying other verbs such as cumplir, tomar (se), crear, interpretar, etc. Another complex collocation dar un golpe de Estado admits the adjectival modification in its nominal element: dar un nuevo golpe de Estado, dar un golpe de Estado militar (Koike, 2005: 170, author's translation).

En las UUFF que forman parte de colocaciones complejas se produce una especialización semántica al combinarse con otro elemento que funciona literalmente (luchar contra viento y marea) (Mendivil, 1991: 718), (in Koike, 2005: 171).

In the phraseological expressions that are part of complex collocations, a semantic specialization occurs when combined with another element that works literally (luchar contra viento y marea) (Mendivil, 1991: 718), (in Koike, 2005: 171, author's translation).

Por ejemplo, a cal y a canto tiene un significado más específico que el adverbio herméticamente. La locución a cal y a canto solo se combina con el verbo cerrar, mientras que el adverbio herméticamente puede aparecer con otros verbos como envasar, envolver, soldar, etc. En conclusión, cerrar herméticamente es una colocación simple), y cerrar a cal y a canto una colocación compleja (Koike, 2005: 181).

For example, a cal y a canto has a more specific meaning than the adverb herméticamente. The idiom a cal y a canto is only combined with the verb cerrar,

part in the final meaning of the expression. Consequently, even if the verb and the noun have a similar semantic dominance, *dar* is acting as a complement here, which reaffirms the idea of movement.

9) Sobre la marcha

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: No

Observations: This idiom defines an activity which is improvised and developed on the progress, especially when we make reference to decision-making tasks.

In this case, the elements *sobre* and *la marcha* are interdependent, as the complete meaning would not be conveyed unless these components are united. As a result, this is another non-compositional expression. We should not be confused by the high transparency transmitted by this idiom, as even if the idea conveyed by *sobre* and *marcha* (one pointing to the fact of being “on”

while the adverb herméticamente can appear with other verbs such as envasar, envolver, soldar, etc. In conclusion, cerrar herméticamente is a simple collocation, and cerrar a cal y canto a complex collocation (Koike, 2005: 181, author’s translation).

something, and the other one making reference to an action of displacement) is quite comprehensible, they are not independent.

10) Por todo lo alto

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: No

Observations: This idiom qualifies an event when this is celebrated with a lot of luxury, splendour and without paying attention to expenses, usually with joy and noise.

The sense transmitted by the components of the idiom, if are isolated, lose this final purpose, so this is considered to be a composition with a considerable idiomatic charge.

11) Jugar con fuego

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: No

Observations: The idiom means “to do something imprudently so that it can bring negative consequences”. It is a short form of a phrase that explains the fact that playing with fire can lead to the consequence of burning, which is a symbolical reference to the danger to which someone who looks for very harmful situations is exposed.

The verb *jugar con* (“to play with”) here responds to one of its usual meanings, that is related to the fact of treating someone or something without the consideration or respect that it deserves. Nevertheless, in order to bring the connotation of danger, the verb needs to be complemented with the required object and to be formulated in its prepositional form, as it occurs in this case.

Consequently, again the balance between the two elements that constitute the idiom is steady. In other words, both constituents are required in order to build the final meaning of the construction, so it is a non-compositional expression.

12) Dar a luz

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: No

Observations: This is an idiom which means “giving birth”. It is constituted by the prepositional verb *dar a* (“to give to”) and the noun phrase *luz* (“light”). By interpreting the figurative meaning of the expression, it can be deduced that the origin of the expression is due to the fact that when children are given birth, it is the first time they are exposed to the light.

Nevertheless, the elements do not maintain their original sense when combined. If any of the elements of the compositions is altered, the general meaning is completely lost, as none of them alone conveys no idea of the figurative sense of the idiom. Concluding, both elements are essential for transmitting the figurative sense, which transforms the expression in a highly idiomatic one.

13) Sin tapujos

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: Yes

Observations: In this idiom, there is a combination of the preposition *sin* (“without”) and the noun *tapujo*. *Tapujo* is a word that, formally, makes reference to a type of coating that covers people in order to disguise them. However, in its colloquial usage, it makes reference to a situation of deception, reserve or dissimulation

with which the truth is disguised, and also to a tangle or murky affair.

The meaning of the idiom makes reference to the fact of communicating without taboos and to talk straight. As a result, the word *tapujo* is conserving its original sense (although we should consider its colloquial form), and it is carrying a big part of the meaning of the idiom, where *sin* acts as a mere complement. That is why it is considered to be compositional.²¹³

14) Dar luz verde

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: No

Observations: This is another example with three lexemes that have a considerable semantic charge²¹⁴. If we consider the combination

²¹³ Usually, idioms are non-compositional, as compositionality is an attribute traditionally ascribed to collocations. However, the perspective in this research is considering the cognitive linguistics broad conception when approaching the phraseological units according to their linguistic characteristics. Consequently, the attributes do not respond to a steady measurement system where categories form unbreakable compartments. As a result, idioms might also be compositional. That is why it is frequently very difficult to distinguish idioms from collocations (other examples were previously seen in *plantar cara*, *darse de bruces* or *con mal pie*, considered compositional idioms).

²¹⁴ It would also be considerable as a complex collocation, according to Koike (2005). Here, we focus on the combination *luz verde*, which is why it is considered an idiom, so that the bounded intentions of the investigation are approachable.

luz and *verde*, it would belong to the category of idioms, as they are absolutely interdependent so that the figurative meaning of the expression is transmitted. Nevertheless, the addition to the formula of the verb *dar* gives us an idea of collocation, as is it comparatively less responsible for the final significance. To simplify it, and in order to define the level of compositionality, we are focusing on the combination *luz* and *verde*, as if we changed one of them, the meaning would go completely lost.

15) Poner las cartas sobre la mesa

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: No

Observations: This combination is formed by three components²¹⁵: the verb *poner*, the object *las cartas* and the complement *sobre la mesa*. The combination of the verb with the other parts of the expression could be easily interchangeable, and it is in this sense that it could be considered a collocation. However, it is the union between the object and the complement that designates this unit as an idiom with a non-compositionality nature, as each one of them are equitably relevant to convey the figurative meaning searched in this idiom.

²¹⁵ This is following the same considerations as the previous entrance.

16) Contra reloj

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: No

Observations: This idiom is non-compositional, as each one of the components is dependent on the other part in order to transform their original meaning to a complete new figurative meaning. Even if it quite transparent, as it gives the idea of a fight against time, which would be the metaphorical image to express that there is little time to achieve something, the compositionality is inexistent, as none of the components maintains its original sense.

17) Por la puerta trasera

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: No

Observations: This idiom cannot be modified without losing its figurative sense, and none of the elements *puerta* (“door”) and *trasera* (“rear”) maintains its initial connotation. That is why it is considered non-compositional.

18) Tender puentes

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: Yes

Observations: Here, the verb *tender* (“to lay”) is represented in one of its main meanings: to suspend, place or build something supporting it on two or more points. On the other hand, *puentes* (“bridges”) brings a significant part of the figurative sense of the expression, as it is displaying a metaphorical image to represent a union between two points or positions. We could easily substitute the verb for another one -as *construir* (“to build”), *poner* (“to put”). Thus, this idiom, by conserving one of the figurative senses of one of the elements, presents compositionality.

19) Pasar página

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: No

Observations: In this case, even if the meaning of the verb *pasar* (“to turn”) and of *página* (“page”) are clear, the final connotation of the idiom is different from the sense transmitted by the elements if they are isolated. Consequently, the idiomaticity degree is high in this case.

20) De la vieja escuela

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: No

Observations: *Vieja* (“old”) is suggesting the idea of something archaic, while *escuela* (“school”) gives the idea of a group of methods and principles established by a person or group of people. Nevertheless, as both of the components have the same weight in the final meaning of the expression, and we could not modify one of them without losing this sense, this is an idiom with non-compositionality. Even if it is transparent enough, the connotation of the idiom is different from that of the components.

21) Pasar factura

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: No

Observations: This is another case where the lack of opacity of the idiom could be confusing. However, even if the idea of “to pass the bill” is metaphorically understandable, we are confronting an idiom with non-compositionality. The word *factura* (“bill”) and *pasar* (“to pass”), by themselves, do not imply any connotation to the final

idea desired with the use of the idiom, even if the metaphorical sense is derived from the literal meaning of the original collocation.

22) Dar alas (a alguien)

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: No

Observations: We can observe a high level of idiomaticity in this idiom, where *alas* (“wings”), even if it easily related to the sense of freedom, does not have any relationship to the final meaning of the idiom, which means “to encourage someone into something, usually not convenient”. The same happens with the verb *dar* (“to give”), which without its union to the complement, has absolutely no sense.

23) Cerrar filas

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: No

Observations: The verb *cerrar* (“to close”) and the noun *filas* (“rows”) do not have any relationship with the final significance of

the idiom: to join closely in order to deal with something. This independence points to a non-compositionality of the idiom.

24) En el punto de mira (de alguien)

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: No

Observations: This is an idiom usually applied to the armament world, where it makes reference to the group of pieces of firearms used to ensure an aim. It has also been extended to a general connotation, describing an object and centre of attention or interest. It is an idiom where compositionality is not present, as these two elements are interdependent so that they are able to transmit the connotation of the whole expression.

25) Echar un pulso

Type of unit: Idiom

Compositionality: Yes

Observations: This is an idiom which describes the situation where two people try to show who of them has more strength in the pulse

and manages to break the arm of the opponent. In its metaphorical sense, it is also attributable to a situation in which two people are measuring their strengths, with the intention of winning.

This is a case with compositionality, as this combination can be separated without losing the sense of the action expressed by the idiom. In fact, *pulso* is described as a confrontation between two parties that are balanced in their forces, which maintain different interests or points of view. On the other hand, the verb *echar* could be easily substituted by another one, such as *hacer*.

26) Librar una batalla

Type of unit: Collocation

Compositionality: Yes

Observations: This collocation makes reference to the action of fighting or confronting someone. It is considered compositional, as the sense of *batalla* (“fight”) is maintained and is providing the main sense to the expression. So, it is an element related to the final connotation of the combination.

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²¹⁶ Some definitions are extracted from DRAE (2001) Diccionario de la lengua española, 22ª edición. <http://www.rae.es/recursos/diccionarios/drae>

Part 5: Cross-equivalence of the metaphorical and phraseological expressions

The next part of the investigation is centred on analysing the effect that the diverse types of equivalence between the Spanish and the Italian versions of the phraseological and metaphorical expressions have on the cognitive strategies involved in the comprehension of language.

To develop the results, the corpus selected is to be categorized according to the contrastive phraseology premises based on cognitive linguistics. The system of equivalences to be followed is Navarro's (2003, 2004, 2007) classification, where six grades are established, with a progression from total to partial equivalence, plus one that corresponds to the cases of homonymy between languages.

However, an own adaptation has been elaborated, with the scope of simplifying the system, so that it is more convenient for the goals of our research. Consequently, the classification results in the following chart:

Total equivalence

Observations: Interlanguage synonyms: same connotative and denotative meaning.

Examples: *Morderse la lengua – modersi la lingua*²¹⁷

Corpus: *Estar en manos: essere nelle mani*

Dar el primer paso: fare il primo passo

*Jugar con fuego: giocare con il fuoco*²¹⁸

*Dar a luz: dare alla luce*²¹⁹

*Tender puentes: gettare un ponte*²²⁰

Pasar página: voltare pagina

De la vieja escuela: della vecchia scuola

Cerrar filas: serrare le file, stringere le file

²¹⁷ (Navarro, 2007).

²¹⁸ We can observe a little variation in the Italian equivalence, where the presence of the determinate article is not shared with its Spanish equivalent. Nevertheless, considering the exact structure that both expressions have, they are considered to be total equivalents in this thesis.

²¹⁹ We can observe a little variation in the Italian equivalence, where the presence of the determinate article is not shared with its Spanish equivalent. Nevertheless, considering the exact structure that both expressions have, they are considered to be total equivalents in this thesis.

²²⁰ We can observe a little variation in the Italian equivalence, where the lexeme is expressed in singular, whereas the Spanish equivalent is expressed in plural. Nevertheless, considering the exact structure that both expressions have, they are considered to be total equivalents in this thesis.

First partial equivalence

Observations: Similar structure and same connotative meaning, but with a variation in the image, semantically or through the verbalized lexeme.

Examples: *Costar algo un ojo de la cara – costare qualcosa un occhio de la testa*
Colgarse de la boca de alguien – pendere dale labbra di qualcuno
Dejar la osamenta – tirare le cuoia
No perder de vista – tenere d’occhio

Corpus: *Con mal pie: con il piede sbagliato*
(Ser) la mano derecha: (essere) il braccio destro
Plantar cara: affrontare qualcuno
Con la boca pequeña: a mezza bocca
Librar una batalla: dare battaglia
Dar luz verde: dare il via libera
Contra reloj: contro il tempo
Pasar factura: presentare il conto
En el punto de mira (de alguien): nel mirino (di qualcuno)
Poner las cartas sobre la mesa: scoprire le carte, mettere le carte in tavola, giocare a carte scoperte

Observations: We also include in this group partial equivalences with phraseological homonymy in one of the two languages.

Examples: *Ser de buena boca/tener buen diente – essere di bocca buona*²²¹

Second partial equivalence

Observations: Same connotative meaning, but with a variation in both the structure and the image, semantically or through the verbalized lexeme.

Examples: *No dar su brazo a torcer – non mollare di un pollice*
Estar en el quinto pino – essere fuori mano
Hacerle a alguien la boca un fraile – batter cassa

Corpus: *Darse de bruces: cadere bocconi*
Echar un pulso: fare a braccio di ferro

Observations: We also include in this group partial equivalences with phraseological homonymy in one of the two languages.

Corpus: *Sobre ruedas: a gonfie vele/tutto liscio*

²²¹ (Navarro, 2007).

*Sobre la marcha: cammin facendo, strada facendo, via via,
sul momento*

*Por todo lo alto: alla grande, con grandiosità, in grande
stile*

*Sin tapujos: senza veli, così com'è, senza sottafugi, alla luce
del sole*

Por la puerta trasera: di nascosto, in modo illegale

*Dar alas (a alguien): incitare, incoraggiare, dare spago a
(qualcuno)*

Corpus classification according to idiomatic nature and cross-equivalence

| | COMPOSITIONAL | NON-COMPOSITIONAL |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| TOTAL EQUIVALENCE | Estar en manos Dar el primer paso Tender puentes | Jugar con fuego Dar a luz Pasar página De la vieja escuela Cerrar filas |
| 1st PARTIAL EQUIVALENCE | Plantar cara Librar una batalla Con mal pie | Con la boca pequeña Ser la mano derecha Dar luz verde Poner las cartas sobre la mesa Contra reloj Pasar factura En el punto de mira (de alguien) |
| 2nd PARTIAL EQUIVALENCE | Echar un pulso Darse de bruces Sin tapujos | Sobre ruedas Sobre la marcha Por todo lo alto Por la puerta trasera Dar alas (a alguien) |

Table 2. Corpus classification according to idiomatic nature and cross-equivalence.

7. Results

The answers given by the subjects will be assessed according to two categories: idiomatic or inadequate answer. Nevertheless, an analysis of the answers will be applied in order to measure the subjects' comprehension level and discover the kind of interpretation that they apply to the various phraseological and metaphorical expressions²²².

A first trial has been developed with a rehearsal group, which has been formed by six students of similar characteristics from those who will form part of the final results of this thesis.

Subsequently, several modifications have been applied, especially regarding formalities in the presentation of the material. The methodology, however, has not been substantially modified. The trial has been useful especially in reference to the timing and organizational circumstances of the research.

²²² Adapted from Núñez-Román (2016): “La adquisición de unidades fraseológicas en lengua materna vs. los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje en segundas lenguas: factores diferenciales”. In *Fraseología Contrastiva: Lingue e culture a confronto*. Congress in Università degli Studi di Milano. 9-11 novembre 2016.

7.1. Result 1: Linguistic profile and phraseological competence

Assumption 1: The broader is a learner's linguistic background, the higher is the phraseological competence in a foreign language (interlinguistic influence).

In the first section, it is analysed how the linguistic profiles relate to the competence achieved in the experimentation. The results will either confirm or deny the assumption.

| LINGUISTIC PROFILE | SUBJECTS (identification number) | NUMBER OF STUDENTS | APPROXIMATE PERCENTAGE |
|--|----------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| High bilingualism (good knowledge of 2 languages), with high-level of Spanish | 14, 40 | 2 | 4,5% |
| Low bilingualism (knowledge of 2 languages, 1 strong and 1 weak), with high-level of Spanish | 30, 41 | 2 | 4,5% |
| Low bilingualism (knowledge of 2 languages, 1 strong and 1 weak), with | 17, 19 | 2 | 4,5% |

| | | | |
|--|---|-----------|--------------|
| low-level of Spanish | | | |
| High plurilingualism (good knowledge 2 or 2+ languages), with high-level of Spanish | 2, 5, 10, 11, 24, 27, 28, 29 | 8 | 18% |
| High plurilingualism (good knowledge of 2 or 2+ languages), with low-level of Spanish | 7 | 1 | 2,25% |
| Low plurilingualism (knowledge of 2 or 2+ languages, some strong and some weak), with high-level of Spanish | 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 16, 18, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 42, 43, 44, 45 | 26 | 58% |
| Low plurilingualism (knowledge of 2 or 2+ languages, some strong and some weak), with low-level of Spanish | 1, 8, 13, 21 | 4 | 9% |

Table 3. Distribution of linguistic profiles.

The results extracted from the questionnaires show that a great percentage of learners, a total of twenty-six students, belong to the category of low plurilingualism, who are characterized by possessing knowledge of two or more foreign languages, but with unequal level in them, and with good level of Spanish.

The next category is formed by eight students who present high plurilingualism, with an equal level in two or more foreign languages, and a high level of Spanish as well. It is followed by the less numerous group, with a representation of four students, that manifest low plurilingualism, using two or more foreign languages, but with different level, and also with a low knowledge of Spanish.

The categories with a scarce representation, of just two students each, are those describing subjects with a high bilingualism level, considering their knowledge of two languages at proficiency level, at the same time as they show a high level of Spanish; and the category of low bilingualism, where one of the two languages of the learners is at inferior level respecting the other one, at the same time as they present a lower level of Spanish. Finally, the category of low bilingualism but with a high level of Spanish is also presenting a low representation of two students.

The last category shows an obvious limited representation of learners, with just one of them belonging to the type of high

plurilingualism but with low level of Spanish. Nevertheless, it is also worth considering.

Level of knowledge of foreign languages

The levels of the languages have been established according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The students show a variety of knowledge of foreign languages such as German, French, English, Russian, Chinese, Arabic, Portuguese, and some of them even some command of the sign language in Italian. From the reference of levels from A1 to C1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the range is wide. In order to systematize the results, the classification in the charts takes into account the following premises, when dealing with the knowledge of foreign languages:

| Level of knowledge of foreign languages | |
|--|------------|
| A1-B1 | Low level |
| B2-C1 | High level |

Table 4. Level of knowledge of foreign languages.

Level of Spanish

In the case of Spanish, and given the homogeneous circumstances of the particular course of application of the research, the level is much more uniform. Thus, the subjects present a progression from B1 to C1 levels, with a prevalent presence of B2 level.

| Level of Spanish | Number of students |
|------------------|--------------------|
| B1 | 3 |
| B2 | 35 |
| C1 | 7 |

Table 5. Level of Spanish.

That is why the levels of Spanish are re-established in the following method:

| Level of knowledge of Spanish language | |
|--|------------|
| B1 | Low level |
| B2 | High level |
| C2 | |

Table 6. Distribution of Spanish levels.

Factors incident in bilingualism and plurilingualism levels

The factors related to the circumstances of bilingualism or plurilingualism have also been taken into account. There is a relatively low percentage of pure bilinguals or plurilinguals in our project: a total of eleven students, which represents a proportion of 24,5% of the total. This is due to the fact that usually, as it has been extracted from the answers to the questions in the surveys of the thirty-four students that are neither pure bilinguals nor plurilinguals, which represent the 75,5% of the total, the context of learning of those languages have been academic or circumstantial, and in most

cases not developed from childhood, diversely than in the ones presenting high bilingualism or plurilingualism.

| | High bilingualism or plurilingualism | Low bilingualism or plurilingualism |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Number of students | 11 | 34 |
| Percentage | 24,5% | 75,5% |

Table 7. Distribution of students in high or low bilingualism/plurilingualism.

Predominance of known dialects

A significant factor to be considered from the questionnaires is the presence and consideration of the dialects. From the answers of the students, it is noticeable that the majority of them do not consider the dialect as another language. For example, there are a few subjects –even though a very small percentage of the total- who are able to speak and understand a dialect, and that have used it quite regularly in their childhood, but that, though, do not include it as a language to be considered as another mother tongue.

Nevertheless, this could be explained by the fact that the usage, and consequently the presence of these dialects, are gradually disappearing, as the same students have revealed in their answers. As a result, it is understandable that they are not to be considered to be mother tongues, as they do not use it regularly enough.

Moreover, the knowledge, level and context of use of their native language, which is Italian in the 100% of the cases, are exactly the same. Italian is the language they mainly use in their daily life, both in formal and informal contexts.

Besides, the knowledge, level and context of use of dialects or regional languages are also quite similar among the students. From the forty-five subjects, only one declares not knowing or using any dialect at all (1 student, an approximate 2%). The other forty-four subjects (44 students, an approximate 98%) have some kind of knowledge of the following dialects:

- Modenese: 29 subjects (66%)
- Emiliano: 4 subjects (9%)
- Bolognese: 3 subjects (7%)
- Napolitano: 3 subjects (7%)
- Romagnolo: 2 subjects (4%)
- Reggiano: 2 subjects (4%)
- Parmigiano: 2 subjects (4%)
- Siciliano: 1 subject (2%)
- Veneto: 1 subject (2%)
- Trentino: 1 subject (2%)
- Piacentino: 1 subject (2%)
- Other not defined regions: 2 subjects (4%)

Knowledge of the dialects

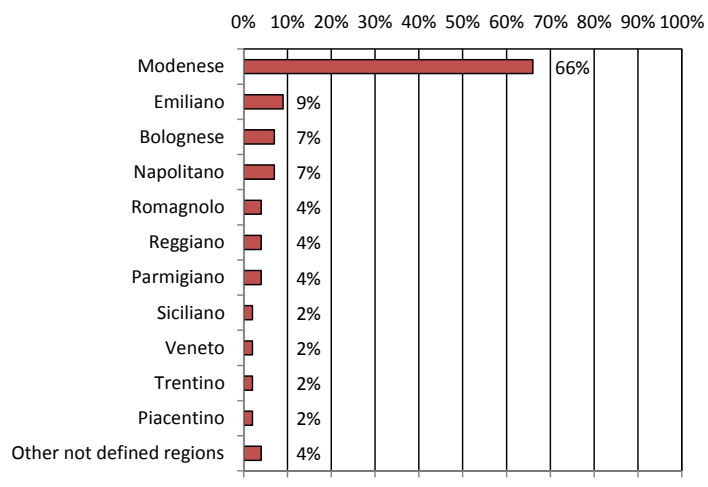


Fig. 15. Distribution of the knowledge of the dialects among the students.

Acquisition of the dialects

The majority of subjects have acquired their notions of these dialects in their familiar context. That is why most of them know just one dialect. There are just seven students (7 students, 16%) that have some knowledge of a pair of dialects, being the results of a combination the following possibilities:

- Emiliano and Siciliano.

The subject explains having acquired them from the two different parts of the family.

- Napolitano and Bolognese.

The subject declares that the first dialect is just comprehended, but not spoken. In the Bolognese, he/she presents a higher level of command, as it is the city where he/she is living at the moment.

- Veneto and Emiliano.

The subject declares knowing just a few expressions in both dialects, which were learned from the grandparents.

- Reggiano and Napolitano.

The Reggiano was learned from the grandparents and it is just used among friends to add expressiveness to their discourse. The Napolitano was learned from another part of the family.

- Napolitano and Emiliano.

This is another case where the Napolitano is just understood but not spoken. However, the Emiliano is used in certain contexts, even though the pressure during his/her childhood to avoid the use of the dialect.

- Napolitano and Modenese.

In this case, the Napolitano is quite well known, whereas the Modenese is just understood.

- Piacentino and Trentino.

This subject declares using these dialects rarely, whose expressions were learned from his/her family, both grandparents and parents, who were originally from the area.

The context of learning is in all the cases the family, detailed as followed:

- Grandparents: 19 subjects (43%)
- Family, in general: 10 subjects (23%)
- Family and friends: 10 subjects (23%)
- Grandparents and parents: 4 subjects (9%)
- Parents: 1 subject (2%)

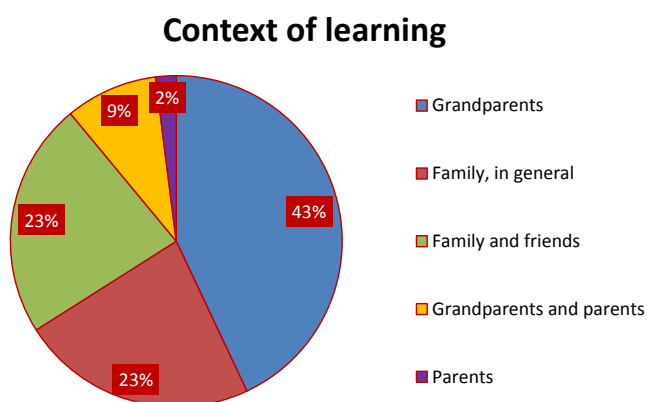


Fig. 16. Context of learning of the dialects among the students.

Context of use of the dialects

The context of use, nevertheless, has been mostly reduced to specific and very informal occasions.

- With family and friends: 18 subjects (41%)
- With family: 18 subjects (41%)
- With family and old people: 3 subjects (7%)

- With friends, mostly to emphasize or making jokes: 2 subjects (4%)
- Declares not using it anymore: 2 subjects (4%)
- With friends and old people: 1 subject (2%)

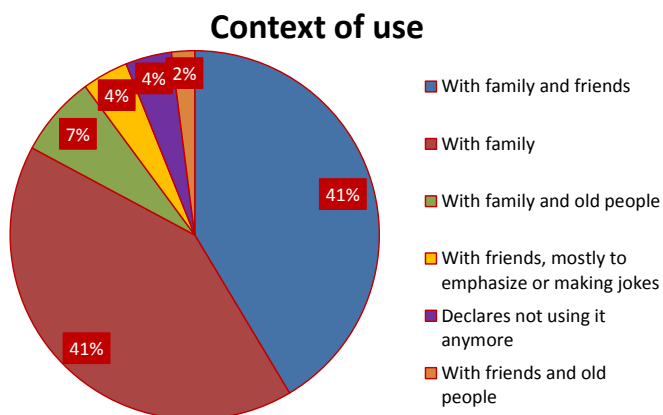


Fig. 17. Context of use of the dialects among the students.

Level of the dialects

The level of the dialects that the subjects manifest is described as quite low, related to the gradual regression of their use in their daily life. This might be the reason why most of them have not included the dialect as another potential language of use, neither as a mother-tongue nor a second language.

- Some expressions: 8 subjects (18%)

A big part of the subjects declares knowing just some expressions of the dialect, both words and phrases, thus being unable to uttering a coherent discourse.

Some of them state that they did not use it in their childhood, mostly due to the gradual attempt of reducing their use among the following generations.

- Not spoken, just understood: 11 subjects (25%)

A significant part of the students affirms not being able to speak the dialect, but understanding it.

- Used, even if rarely: 25 subjects (57%)

Other subjects use the dialect, even if in rare occasions, just with family and some friends. Nevertheless, they declare being able of both understanding and speaking it. In some cases, the use is reduced to situations in which emphasis, expressiveness, irony or humour are added to the conversation.

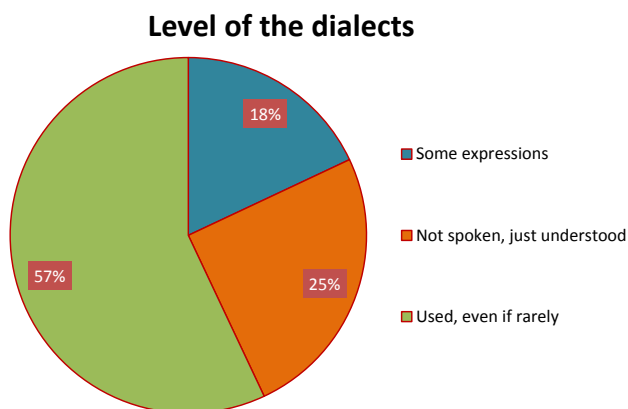
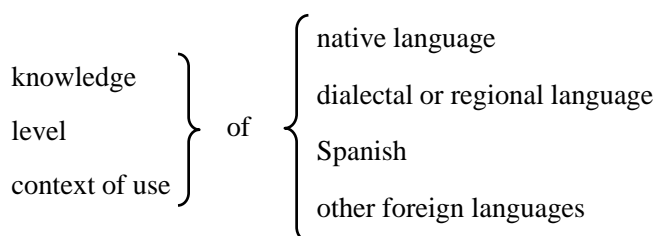


Fig. 18. Level of the dialects among the students.

Summary of the linguistic profile

In conclusion, the subjects' linguistic profile present quite homogeneous elements, considering all the factors analysed:



Distribution of answers according to the linguistic profiles

| | Correct answers | Inadequate answers |
|---|---|---|
| High bilingualism (good knowledge of 2 languages), with high-level of Spanish | 14: 100% 40: 66,6% Average: 83,3% | 14: 0% 40: 33,4% Average: 16,7% |
| Low bilingualism (knowledge of 2 languages, 1 strong and 1 weak), with high-level of Spanish | 30: 60% 41: 60% Average: 60% | 30: 40% 41: 40% Average: 40% |
| Low bilingualism (knowledge of 2 languages, 1 strong and 1 weak), with low-level of Spanish | 17: 40% 19: 25% Average: 32,5% | 17: 60% 19: 75% Average: 67,5% |
| High plurilingualism (good knowledge 2 or 2+ languages), with high-level of Spanish | 2: 57,2% 5: 50% 10: 66,6% 11: 66,6% 24: 66,6% 27: 66,6% 28: 100% 29: 33,4% | 2: 42,8% 5: 50% 10: 33,4% 11: 33,4% 24: 33,4% 27: 33,4% 28: 0% 29: 66,6% |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | Average: 63,3% | Average: 36,7% |
| High plurilingualism (good knowledge of 2 or 2+ languages), with low-level of Spanish | 7: 80% Average: 80% | 7: 20% Average: 20% |
| Low plurilingualism (knowledge of 2 or 2+ languages, some strong and some weak), with high-level of Spanish | 3: 80% 4: 85,7% 6: 80% 9: 100% 12: 71,5% 15: 80% 16: 60% 18: 57,2% 20: 66,6% 22: 60% 23: 40% 25: 57,2% 26: 60% 31: 85,8% 32: 40% 33: 60% 34: 57,2% 35: 80% 36: 100% 37: 85,8% 38: 100% 39: 50% 42: 80% 43: 57,2% 44: 80% 45: 50% Average: 70,1% | 3: 20% 4: 14,3% 6: 20% 9: 0% 12: 28,5% 15: 20% 16: 40% 18: 42,8% 20: 33,4% 22: 40% 23: 60% 25: 42,8% 26: 40% 31: 14,2% 32: 60% 33: 40% 34: 42,8% 35: 20% 36: 0% 37: 14,2% 38: 0% 39: 50% 42: 20% 43: 42,8% 44: 20% 45: 50% Average: 29,9% |
| Low plurilingualism (knowledge of 2 or 2+ languages, some strong and some weak), with low-level of Spanish | 1: 66,6% 8: 100% 13: 75% 21: 80% Average: 80,4% | 1: 33,4% 8: 0% 13: 25% 21: 20% Average: 19,6% |

Table 8. Distribution of answers according to the linguistic profiles.

The characteristics related to the level of plurilingualism or bilingualism, as established previously, will determine the assumption presumed for the first objective of this study: *the broader is a learner's linguistic background, the higher is the phraseological competence in a foreign language (interlinguistic influence).*

High bilingualism with high-level of Spanish

The results related to the profile of the subjects who present a high bilingualism (good knowledge of two languages) with high-level of Spanish show that this is the category in which the subjects are more competent in relation to the metaphorical and phraseological ability to interpret the expressions correctly. Thus, the average of correct answers is of 83,3%, whereas the inadequate ones are present in a low percentage, 16,7%.

The incorrect answers are to do with the phraseological expressions *cerrar filas*, which is interpreted only in a literal way, even if the interpretation is quite near from the correct one; as well as the expression *dar a a luz*, which is interpreted compositionally: *mettere sotto il riflettore, mettere in mostra* (“to set under the spotlight, to show off”), and translated to Italian as *fare luce su* (“to light up”).

Low level of bilingualism with high-level of Spanish

The results in the group with a low level of bilingualism (knowledge of two languages, one strong and one weak) and with high-level of Spanish show less competence in the interpretation of the phraseological and metaphorical elements, as expected from the assumption of this thesis. Thus, the average of correct answers is of 60%, leaving a percentage of inadequate answers of 40%.

In reference to the type of incorrections encountered, they are related to a partial interpretation of the phraseological expression. So, even if the subjects understand quite coherently the meaning of *empezar con mal pie*, for instance, they deduce it from the context and do not define the expression in its whole figurative meaning, but they interpret it in a limited context: “to start a conversation in a bad way when you meet someone”.

Low level of bilingualism with low-level of Spanish

The results from the next category continue to show coherence in relation to the first assumption of the thesis. The group with low level of bilingualism (knowledge of two languages, one strong and one weak), who also present less level of Spanish than the other first two groups, present less competence in the interpretation of the phraseological and metaphorical elements. The average of correct answers is just 32,5%, while the inadequate answers ascend to 67,5%.

In this case, the inaccuracies are related to a compositional interpretation of the elements, as in the case of *sobre la marcha*, whose meaning is deduced from one of the elements of the construction, *sobre*, in the sense of “about”. Thus, the interpretation of this idiom is “on the argument that is being discussed”, causing an inability to translate it correctly.

In other situations, the answer is near the correct figurative meaning of an expression, but the meaning is not thoroughly right and just interpreted partially. That is the case of *por todo lo alto*, which is linked to a big celebration, but just relating it to the accomplishment of big dreams, eluding the key concept of the idiom, which is the circumstance in which the expanses are not considered. Thus, the translation of this idiom is *in modo sfarzoso o con orgoglio* (“in a gorgeous way or with pride”), which does not correspond exactly to the accurate meaning of the expression, even if it is approaching its metaphorical sense.

Other cases show a literal interpretation of the expression, as in *pasar factura*, which is interpreted as a mode of confirming an action, relating it to the fact of confirming a payment. The same occurs with *cerrar filas*, where the sense is literally interpreted, defined as *essere l'ultimo in serie di avvenire* (“being the last in a series of events”).

More inadequate interpretations are related to lexical confusions, where some terms are confused with other references. For example, in *en el punto de mira*, one of the subjects seems to relate it to the Spanish expression *punto de vista*, a confusion that is comprehensible due to its similarity, as he interprets the expression as *secondo un determinato punto di vista* (“according to a certain point of view”).

The very same subject interprets the idiom *echar un pulso* partially, focusing his attention in the word *pulso*, which is related to the beat of the human body, and thus he interprets it metaphorically, as related to the rhythm of a situation: *cercare di avere un'idea generale della situazione* (“try to get a general idea of the situation”), and translates it by *avere il polso della situazione* (literally, “to have the pulse of the situation”).

High plurilingualism with high-level of Spanish

The results from the next categories, however, seem to contradict the assumptions that could be interpreted so far, and that are coherent with the initial presumptions. Hence, the students with a profile of high plurilingualism (with good knowledge two or more languages) and with high-level of Spanish do not present such a good performance in the tests as it was initially expected. As seen, the correct answers confirm an average of just a 63,3%, and the inadequate answers are as high as the percentage of 36,7%. The justification that could explain this apparent incoherence might be

related to the theory of interlanguage influence, in this case converted in an interference that might hinder the accurate interpretation of the phraseological expressions.

An analysis of the answers gives us more detail about the kind of inaccuracies that the subjects have incurred. In some cases, the subjects refuse to deduce the meaning of an idiom, manifesting not having seen it before, as in *darse de bruces*, *dar alas* or *echar un pulso*, which some students refuse to give any explanation to.

In other cases, as in the idiom *darse de bruces*, the expression is read by exclusively by employing the context. So, in this case the element is wrongly interpreted as something that has to do with *dovere fare i conti* (“having to do the bills”).

In a different example, where the subject also recognizes not knowing an expression, he risks at giving a compositional interpretation. Thus, *plantar cara* is translated to *metterci la faccia* (“to put your face on it”), in the sense of interpreting *plantar* as the action of setting, and where *cara* is literally read.

Others dare to deduce the meaning from a combination of the context support and a compositional interpretation, as in *con la boca pequeña*, which some subjects translate as *con un pò di imbarazzo* (“with a little embarrassment”).

In some occasions, idioms are literally interpreted, which situate them far away from the figurative sense they transmit. For instance, this occurs in *contra reloj*, which a student defines as *antiorario* (“counterclockwise”).

Different subjects go a step further, trying to add a metaphorical sense to the literal interpretation of this idiom, and so translate it as *contra orologio, al contrario* (“against clock, on the contrary”), and define it as the fact of opposing to a situation. The same attempt is executed in *dar alas*, which is defined as “to become free to build a new and independent life, changing the own future”, and translated to *spiccare il volo* (“to take flight”). This subject declares having tried to give a literal translation to the expression in order to deduce its meaning, and, being unsuccessful, has later given it a metaphorical interpretation. The answer is quite original and might be feasible. Other innovative solutions for the same expression appear, as in the translation *fuggire da una situazione, scappare*, where the subject also declares not knowing the idiom, but interpreting it compositionally, where the term *ali* (*alas*, “wings”) has been associated to the action of *volare via* (“to fly away”). Another subject who also affirms not knowing the idiom *dar alas* also tries to give a compositional interpretation of it. Declaring having tried to read every component of the expression individually to find the general meaning, he is actually more near the success. Thus, he defines it as *dare l’energia necessaria per fare qualcosa* (“to give the energy necessary to do something”), and translates it

as *mettere le ali*, which is a literal translation not exactly corresponding to the actual one.

Other cases in which the subjects seem to give a compositional sense to an expression can be found in *cerrar filas*, which is literally translated to *chiudere le file* (“to close up the rows”), and interpreted as ending with something. It seems that, once again, the students try to infer the figurative sense from a literal interpretation of the elements.

An alternative situation occurs when the subject is approaching the correct interpretation of a phraseological expression, but fails to give the accurate definition. Thus, in the expression *sin tapujos*, one subject defines it as something that is done without interruptions or filters, and translates it as *senza freni, senza filtri* (“without brakes, filters”), which is not exactly the corresponding figurative sense of the element.

In short, the kind of inadequate interpretations encountered in this group of subjects is contradictory to the level of these students, who are supposedly at a high-level of Spanish. A big percentage of them do not recognize a series of phraseological and metaphorical expressions. The assumption it might be deduced from this incongruous result, is the fact that maybe the level of Spanish declared responds to a systematic program of contents more focused on grammar and other formal aspects of language, consequently

leaving apart more pragmatic aspects as phraseology. Nevertheless, this is just a supposition, and therefore further investigation should be performed in order to determine the factors influencing in these results.

An interesting observation that can be done from the kind of answers attributed to the tasks is the fact that most of students show a high level of confidence in their metaphorical competence, as in many cases they try to infer a figurative sense that, even if it most of the cases is far from the correct one, becomes quite feasible. They also show good dexterity in using the resources available, whatever it is the context, the literal meaning of the elements of an expression or their own encyclopaedic knowledge.

High plurilingualism with low-level of Spanish

The next group confirms this apparent contradiction that has already appeared in the previous category. Hence, the students with high plurilingualism (good knowledge of two or more languages) and with low-level of Spanish present more positive answers in relation to their metaphorical competence. A total of 80% of them answer correctly to the questions, with an average of only a 20% of incorrect answers.

Besides, observing the kind of inadequate interpretations made, they are not wrong in relation to the figurative sense of a particular phraseological expression, but in the application to the context of

the sentence. For example, the expression *dar a luz* is correctly translated into *dare alla luce* (“giving birth”) and properly defined as *fare nascere* (“to give birth”), but the sense given to the sentence is wrong. Thus, the student explains the meaning of the statement *Las jóvenes venezolanas se van a dar a luz a Colombia* (“Venezuelan girls are going to give birth to Colombia”) as *I giovani venezolani faranno rinascere la Colombia* (“The young Venezuelans will make Colombia reborn”). This is a curious interpretation of the sentence, as the original sense is more literal than the analysis done by the student, who has gone more far away by giving a figurative implication.

Low plurilingualism with high-level of Spanish

The most numerous group, the one with the subjects presenting low plurilingualism (knowledge of two or more languages, some strong and some weak) and with high-level of Spanish, present a more congruent tendency to the expected results. Accordingly, the correct answers ascend to an average of 70,1%, while the incorrect ones descend to an average of 29,9%. It is the high level of Spanish the factor that seems to be correspondent to the assumptions of this thesis, while a lower level of plurilingualism seems harmonizing with the contradictory results seen recently.

At this point of the analysis, it is necessary to explain that there has been a general misunderstanding of one of the expressions presented. It might be honest to admit that the context where the

corpus chosen is presented might have led to this common confusion. Concretely, the expression *sobre ruedas* appear in the headline *La revolución sobre ruedas* (“The revolution on wheels”), which is quite incomprehensible on its own, as it occurs in the the majority of expressions used in the headlines, which are short and concise. However, the subjects have relied on the context defined by the extensive information given through the subtitle, which verses *El coche eléctrico y la conducción automática cambiarán nuestras vidas y la organización de las ciudades* (“The electric car and automatic driving will change our lives and the organization of cities”). In this example it can be confirmed the existence of linguocultural clichés usually present in the press as a way of concentrating information and creating images. Consequently, they are creating a magnificent method to attract the reader’s attention to the most relevant element of all the journalistic information: the headline (Mironesko, 2015: 175-176). In this piece of news, the theme of interest is actually the vehicles and the transformation that the introduction of automatic driving and electronic cars represents. Consequently, the headline includes the expression *sobre ruedas* (“on wheels”) as a play on words that becomes very useful when trying to attract the reader’s attention. As a result, the figurative sense of this expression is actually quite lost in this sentence, and thus the students have failed to give a figurative interpretation to it, but have succeeded in relating it to the context where it is applied.

It is in this sense that a big number of subjects have defined the expression as an element describing a revolution that occurs in the field of transport on wheels, that is to say, cars. An important group of students, at the same time, recognize not having encountered this expression before, but having deduced this particular sense from the context and they explicitly declare that the subtitle has helped them in deducing the meaning. Examples of answers given by the subjects are: “it is something related to cars”; “it is an adjective referred to vehicles that by definition have wheels”; “it is related to a revolution in the way of driving”; “the object has to do with vehicles and means of transport with wheels” and so on. Besides, according to the students, typical translations to Italian are *su/a quattro ruote* (“on four wheels”) or *su ruote* (“on wheels”).

Further cases in which the subjects are wrongly led by the context occurs in *dar a luz*, which is defined as *trasferirsi per avere nuove opportunità* (“to move to get new opportunities”), and translated as *avere una nuova vita, un nuovo inizio* (“to have a new life, a new start”). The information given by the headline seems to have confused some learners into the thought of interpreting the movement of “girls that go to give birth to another country”, whose actual reading is quite literal, as a metaphorical portrait of an immigration wave.

The context also acts as an ambiguous resource in the interpretation of *darse de bruces* given by another student, who interprets it as

darsi per vinti (“to give up”). The same happens with other learners, who translate it into Italian as *essere rimasti fregati* (“to be cheated”) or *bruciarsi* (“to burn oneself”), this last defining the situation as the fact in which, despite the positive rewards, something is broken and damaged. A third case is more near the actual meaning, but the translation of *dovere fare i conti* (“having to do the accounts”) does not convey the same meaning. However, he describes it as “being in front of a problem to face”, which is nearer the right sense than in the previous cases. In another case, the student also identifies the idiom as the fact of “having to face a situation”, and recognizes not knowing the expression, and having deduced it by the context.

As for the other answers given by the category with a profile of low plurilingualism and with high-level of Spanish, it is frequent that, as it occurred with the previous group analyzed, the subjects try to give a figurative sense from the compositional meaning transmitted by the elements of the expression. For example, in *por la puerta trasera*, the definition given is *fare qualcosa per una via secondaria, si trova una scappatoria, un secondo accesso* (“to do something for a secondary way, a way out is found, a second way”), and translated into Italian as *dalla porta sul retro* (“from the back door”). It is a plausible answer, as the learners are giving it a figurative sense that is not far away from the actual meaning. Other subjects give also this definition: “by a second alternative, according to a less direct line”, justifying it by the metaphorical

coherence according to which the back door is not immediately accessible. And yet another definition for *por la puerta trasera* is *per la via più facile* (“by the easiest way”), which occurs in two examples. Yet, in one of the cases, the student recognizes that the inspiring item for him has been *puerta* (“door”), meaning “passage”, as he ignores the meaning of *trasera* (“backwards”). Interesting as well is the definition of this expression as the fact of doing something without following the protocol, translated as *prendere altre traverse* (“to take other crosses”).

In other cases, the image that expression depicts in the subjects’ mind is more significant, even leading to errors. That occurs in *con la boca pequeña*, that is translated as *a voce bassa, sottovoce* (“in a low voice”), and defined as “to do something while maintaining a low profile, sometimes reluctantly”. Another image interpreted from this figurative expression is “having to admit something unwillingly”, wrongly translated to *a denti stretti* (“tight-lipped”). And yet another interpretation given to the expression is “with obvious embarrassment, to try to cope with an embarrassing situation that caused damage”, translated into Italian as *con la bocca asciutta* (“with a dry mouth”), and justified for the information given by the context. Another curious translation is *a testa bassa, con la coda tra le gambe* (“head down, with the tail between the legs”), which does not have the same sense as *con la boca pequeña*, expressions for which, indeed, total equivalents do exist also in Spanish. This is the definition given, actually, by two of the subjects

in the study. One of them describes this expression as “saying something with fear and embarrassment”, similarly as the example in the previous case. The other one defines it as “admitting making a mistake, being wrong”, and justifies it because of the relationship between the element of “mouth” and the adjective “small”, affirming that “who knows he is wrong does not express his opinion loudly”. The same does another student, who even translates it into *farsi piccolo piccolo* (“to get smaller and smaller”). From these elements it can be confirmed that *con la boca pequeña* is the expression with more controversy in this group.

A further interesting instance is the one in which the subject translates this expression differently, as in the case where the official Italian phraseological expression (*a mezza bocca*) is wrongly translated into *di malavoglia* (“reluctantly”). However, he succeeds in describing it as the fact of doing something without feeling it, reluctantly. What is more interesting is that he describes the image that the expression conveys for him: when the mouth is closed, it speaks in a low voice, with a not real desire of doing it.

This is also the case of another interpretation given to *sobre ruedas*, which one of the subjects describes as “something that is developing right now”, translates as *in atto* (“in the act”) and justifies this explanation by the image conveyed by the expression, that gives the idea of development and movement. Another subject, on the other hand, is near to the actual meaning of the expression,

describing it as “something that goes as planned”. They are two of the few cases which have tried to relate the expression to a metaphorical sense, hard to be attributed from the context, as we have commented before.

More mislead interpretation occurs in *contra reloj*, whose image is interpreted as *andare contro corrente* (“to walk against the flow”) by another learner, who describes it as “something goes against a certain thing, as a clock marks, in theory, the exact time”.

The same kind of metaphorical, but wrong, interpretation of an expression happens in *cerrar filas*, figuratively translated as *serrare i battenti* (“to tighten the doors”). The meaning attributed by this subject to the image of this idiom is “to close the negotiations”, incorrectly interpreted.

Further ambiguous interpretation of the image depicted by the expression occurs in the case of *pasar factura*, which is described as the action in which someone is repenting of something, or when another person looks for revenge. The subject justifies it by attributing a metaphorical meaning to the idea of debt or payment.

In *echar un pulso*, the general image is altered, to be seen as a way of fighting or striving to achieve a goal, and translated as *avere la meglio su qualcosa* (“to get the best of something”), an interpretation not loyal to the actual one.

Other students find their way in a literal interpretation of the expression, by describing *pasar factura* as the actual action of “to collect money, or to give something back to someone”, and translated as *essere pagato, ricevere soldi*. In a different example, it is translated as *mettere una fattura* (“to put an invoice”), and describes it as the action performed after the purchase of an object, in this way giving a complete literal interpretation.

An additional literal interpretation is the one applied to *cerrar filas*, which some subjects define as *chiudere le file* (“to close the rows”), meaning “to finish, being the last one”.

In *vieja escuela*, it is also its literal interpretation that leads into a partial reading: “something that can be learned from the past, considered an old school”. The fact of learning is the focus of attention for this subject, thus giving a literal interpretation to the whole sense, which is in fact more complex.

The same occurs in *dar luz verde*, which one of the subjects translates as *mettere sotti i riflettori* (“to put the spotlight on”), and describes it as *mettere in evidenza, dare peso a qualcosa*, or “to highlight, to give weight to something”. In this case, the interpretation has been mainly focused on the element of “light”, and thus the compositional reading of the whole element is not adequate.

Other cases are more interlinguistically affected. That is the case of *plantar cara*, where the lexical elements of the component confuse

the student, who translates it as *tenere testa* (“to have head”), which has a different meaning (“to succeed in being at its levels and its capabilities”). It is clear that in this case the elements forming the phraseological expression are linguistically confused and the translation process has led to the inadequate interpretation. The subject, thus, defines it as the action of not giving up, conveying the idea of rigidity and firmness, which, even if it is not far from the actual meaning, is not correct.

One more example is the fact of interpreting one expression paying attention to one of the meanings of its elements. For instance, in *echar un pulso*, the expression is compositionally analyzed, so that *pulso* is the main item from which the meaning is deduced. And when doing it, it is related to the sense of the beats produced by the heart, which is not actually the meaning attributable to this idiom. Thus, the student defines the expression as “being still alive, as the heart beats”, and translates it as *dare segno di vita* (“to give sign of life”). This is not correct, and it corresponds to an expression that already has an equivalent in Spanish. The interesting observation in this example is that the very same student humbly recognizes in the test “not thinking that he has understood the expression correctly”.

A diverse element which suffers from a confusion related to the image and its linguistic elements is *dar alas*, which is compared to a plane that takes off, and thus defined as a promotion or starting of a project. The translation into Italian is *dare il via, prendere il volo*

("to get started, to take flight"), and the student declares having deduced it by the literal translation.

On the other hand, there are some occasions in which the subject succeeds in giving the correct translation of an expression, but he simplifies the definition by applying it to a too much concrete context. That is the case of *empezar con mal pie*, which is correctly translated as *iniziare con il piede sbagliato*, but wrongly applied to the exclusive act of not starting well the relationship with a person, or not getting along right away. The same happens with *tender puentes*, which is restrictedly interpreted in relation to the bond between two people, even if it is correctly translated as *costruire dei ponti*.

Low plurilingualism with low-level of Spanish

Finally, the last group of our study is formed by the students presenting low plurilingualism (with knowledge of two or more languages, some strong and some weak), but with low-level of Spanish, differently from the last one. The results extracted from this group are absolutely confusing, according to the assumptions established in the project. Indeed, the low level presented both in Spanish and in the other foreign languages known by the students would signify lower expectations respecting their metaphorical and phraseological competence. The results, however, seem to point in another direction, giving an average of 80,4% of correct answers and 19,6% of incorrect ones.

In fact, the inadequate results respond to very similar confusing circumstances to the ones analyzed so far.

The students rebuild the metaphorical meaning of the expression *dar alas*, as it happened in some other occasions, to infer that it is related to “to let something fly in the sense of giving it the opportunity to get up and take off” or “to increase, kick off something”. Besides, they give a literal translation to Italian: *mettere le ali*.

Once again, the metaphorical sense of *dar a luz* is correctly interpreted and translated, but wrongly applied in the context of the sentence. Thus, again the subjects interpret the situation in the piece of news as “to resolve, to rebuild, to revolutionize the country, giving it a new face”.

And the very last case is the one already commented before: *sobre ruedas*, which is once again literally interpreted as a fact linked to the revolution in the field of cars and transports, motivated by the information received from the context, which is confusing.

Conclusions

The characteristics related to the level of plurilingualism or bilingualism, as established previously, will determine the assumption presumed for the first objective of this study: *the broader is a learner’s linguistic background, the higher is the*

phraseological competence in a foreign language (interlinguistic influence).

The assumption seems to be confirmed, as the higher percentage of correct results are seen in the categories of high bilingualism with high-level of Spanish, followed by the group of high plurilingualism with low-level of Spanish.

However, the groups related to the students with low plurilingualism and low-level of Spanish, or with low plurilingualism and high-level of Spanish, as well as with high plurilingualism and high-level of Spanish, contradict the previous conclusions, as the metaphorical and figurative competence of the students in these categories are inferior.

Nevertheless, the lowest score is the one obtained in the group with low bilingualism with low-level of Spanish, which once again seems to be coherent with the hypothesis of this part of the investigation.

In short, the incongruencies seen in the data collected does not allow a confirmation of the assumption in its entire sense. Consequently, it is necessary to affirm that the assumption is not fully accomplished.

7.2. Result 2: Encyclopaedic knowledge and phraseological competence

Assumption 2: Familiarity will be a significant factor when considering the phraseological competence of learners who deal with foreign language elements (encyclopaedic knowledge).

The second part of the research will confirm the hypothesis according to which familiarity is a determinant factor on the phraseological and metaphorical competence. Encyclopaedic knowledge and culture are components of a same cognitive network. It is basic to include these aspects in the didactic field, as they help to build the general competence displayed by efficient language users.

The analysis to be provided will summarize the varied performance in the tasks by relating it to the subjects' familiarity with the expressions of the corpus. This systematization will serve to validate at which level familiarity guides the subjects towards establishing the relationship between the literal and the non-literal meaning. The results will either confirm or deny the assumption.

| | Correct answers | Inadequate answers |
|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Familiarity | 29,8% | 7,3% |
| No familiarity | 35,2% | 27,7% |

Table 9. Distribution of answers according to familiarity.

Firstly, the total percentage of correct answers ascends to a 65%, in front of the 35% of inadequate answers. Consequently, the level of metaphorical and phraseological competence of the subjects, taken as a whole, is quite satisfactory.

Secondly, the results relating the degree of familiarity of the subjects to the corpus analyzed appear to be contradictory with the assumption of this thesis. That is due to the result obtained from the data, which shows a greater percentage of correct answers when the students are unfamiliar with the expressions of the corpus, with a result of up to 35,2% of correct answers. Contrarily, the correct answers under the circumstances in which the students declare to be familiar with the expressions of the corpus descends to a percentage of 29,8%.

This data show an unexpected 35,2% of correct answers in the case of unfamiliarity with the elements of the corpus. This 35,2% corresponds, in turn, to a 54% if the correct answers are isolated considered, confronted to a 46% of correct answers in the cases when the students were already familiar to the elements of the corpus.

On the other hand, the incorrect or inadequate resolution show a proportion of 27,7% when the students are unfamiliar with the elements of the corpus, while just a 7,3% respond inappropriately in the cases where the students are familiar with the corpus. These

results seem to be more coherent with the assumption according to which familiarity is a significant factor directly proportional to the metaphorical and figurative competence of the students. The hypothesis that was assumed was the fact that when encyclopaedicknowledge and culture fail to establish connections in the subjects' understanding of an expression, their answers are likely to be more inaccurate. Whereas when the students reveal previous knowledge of the expressions to which they are affronted, their phraseological competence will display an improvement.

This hypothesis is confirmed in the case of inadequate answers, but not thoroughly accomplished if the data related to the correct responses is observed. However, a few remarks might be done according to these apparent contradictory findings.

On the one hand, the gap between the numbers is not very significant: 29,8% versus 35,2%. Consequently, this fact shows an unclear delineation regarding the information related to the encyclopaedicknowledge or other aspects of familiarity when phraseological and metaphorical competences are involved.

On the other hand, the particularities of the corpus analyzed, the pair of languages involved and the subjects' own characteristics all play significant relevance when analyzing this data. Thus, in most of the cases, when the correct answers are given even though the students declare not having encountered the expression before and

not possessing any information related to it, other factors might have incited the deduction, and consequently in the subsequent success in the outcome of their tasks.

Factors: intercultural influence

The main factor is related to the next point of analysis of the thesis, the intercultural influence. This is illustrated in the kind of answers given by the students, which justifies the level of accuracy of their results. This is a sample of these answers:

- *Esiste in italiano un equivalente con lo stesso significato* (In Italian there is an equivalent with the same meaning).
- *Uguale verbo e nome, struttura grammaticale uguale all'italiano* (Same verb and noun, grammatical structure equal to Italian).
- *Simile all'italiano* (Similar to Italian).
- *Traduzione letterale, c'è un'espressione con un significato simile* (Literal translation, there is an expression with similar meaning).
- *Ho letteralmente tradotto l'espressione e ho cercato di trovare un'espressione nella mia lingua* (I literally translated the expression and tried to find an expression in my language).
- *Simile al italiano* (Similar to Italian).
- *Una metafora usata in italiano* (A metaphor used in Italian).

- *Non sapevo che questa espressione esistesse in spagnolo, ma è simile all'italiano* (I did not know that this expression existed in Spanish, but it is similar to Italian).
- *Dalla forte somiglianza con l'espressione italiana* (From the strong resemblance with the Italian expression).
- *Affidarsi al significato italiano della parola "marcha"* (Relying on the Italian meaning of the word "marcha").
- *Mi ha aiutato la parola "mira"* (The word "mira" helped me).
- *Cambia la parte del corpo, ma è simile all'italiano* (The body part changes, but it is similar to Italian).

These types of justifications demonstrate that the interlanguage influence has played an important role when the subjects had to deduce the figurative meaning of a phraseological or metaphorical expression. This factor is related to the data in this thesis that is focused on analyzing the equivalence influence in the metaphorical competence of the students, but it is worth considering as a significant element when familiarity is regarded.

In short, the examination of the evidence declared by the students shows that, from the partial data of the correct answers, which are a majority, as they represent a 65% of the results, up to a 63% of cases respond to a relationship established with their native

language, Italian, which is characterized by a strong equivalence in a big number of the expressions investigated.

Factors: encyclopaedic and contextual information

The second factor that influences this apparent incongruence regarding the assumption of the thesis is related to the contextual information provided by the elements that complement the corpus. This component has proved to be a useful resource in a 23% of the correct cases in which the subjects declared not to be familiar with the expressions analyzed.

In some cases, encyclopaedic knowledge is already present in the students' previous known information, even if the subjects might not be conscious of this fact and might have declared not being familiar to the elements. Nevertheless, the high level of accuracy demonstrated by the subjects suggests that familiarity has more to do with the encyclopaedic and contextual information that is added to the corpus, more than to a conscious awareness of their familiarity with these elements. Some kind of answers literally transcribed from the students follows here:

- *Ho dedotto dal contesto: "tapujo" mi da l'idea di qualcosa che blocca* (I deduced it from the context: "tapujo" gives me the idea of something that blocks).

- *La frase in cui è stata trovata l'espressione mi ha aiutato* (The phrase where the expression is found has helped me).
- *Leggendo il contesto ho provato a capire cosa si intendesse: con il termine "marcha" viene fornita l'idea di un percorso e inoltre dal contesto si può confermare l'idea* (Reading the context I tried to understand what it meant: with the word "marcha" the idea of a path is given and furthermore from the context we can confirm the idea).
- *Il contesto mi ha dato l'idea di una situazione inaspettata, in cui i soggetti sono in battuti indipendentemente dalla loro volontà* (The context gave me the idea of an unexpected situation, in which the subjects are beaten independently from their will).
- *L'evento della notizia lo conosco* (I know the event of the piece of news).
- *Leggendo la frase ho interpretato* (Reading the sentence I interpreted it).
- *La situación donde se emplea me ayudó a deducir el significado* (The situation where it is used helped me to deduce the meaning).

Factors: metaphorical and figurative competence

Finally, the level of accuracy exhibited by the subjects responds to a certain kind of intuition. Under cognitive linguistic premises, this

intuition would respond to an acquired ability to discern the metaphorical and figurative sense of unfamiliar elements. In some cases, this perception, which is easily subjective, leads to inaccurate and unsuccessful results, as many of the answers belonging to the sphere of inadequate answer respond to this mechanism. However, the rate of success encountered in our research is considerable. Thus, a 14% from the correct results in the cases with no previous familiarity with the elements reaches a positive outcome through this strategy. The justification is informed by the subjects in examples as the following ones:

- *Il fuoco rappresenta qualcosa di pericoloso, e giocare con il fuoco porta a bruciarsi* (The fire represents something dangerous, and playing with fire causes burn).
- *Ho ragionato il contesto figurato di “far volare” qualcosa nel senso di dargli la possibilità di alzarsi e prendere il via* (I have reflected on the figurative context of “flying something” in the sense of giving it the opportunity to get up and take off).
- *Ho detratto valutando completamente l'espressione, cercando il suo significato figurativo. Mi dà l'immagine di un ponte che unisce e se qualcuno fa un ponte, vuole che qualcun'altro passi e si unisca* (I have deducted it by evaluating the expression completely, looking for its figurative meaning. It gives me the image of a bridge

that unites something and if someone builds a bridge, he wants someone else to pass and join).

- *Dal punto di vista militare ho pensato che potesse essere tipo radunarsi attorno a qualcuno per proteggerlo* (From the military point of view I thought it could be like gathering around someone to protect him).
- *L'ho dedotto per immaginazione* (I deduced it by imagination).
- *Per logica, in quanto leggendo "sin" e "hablar", ho collegato il fatto di parlare come parlare senza problemi* (By logic, since reading "sin" and "hablar", I have connected the action of speaking to speaking without problems).
- *Dare la luce verde è come il semaforo* (To give green light is like the traffic lights).
- *Dal contesto economico ho scoperto il significato metaforico* (From the economic context I discovered the metaphorical meaning).

From these examples we can observe that this so-called metaphorical and figurative competence actually responds to specific processes of decomposition or metalinguistic analysis of the elements, which are correspondent to the principles described by the cognitive linguistics depiction of language comprehension. Thus, it is usual that the students examine the elements by a decompositional process in which the components of the

construction try to serve as clues to deduce its overall meaning. In this case, a more literal reading of the expressions is tested. In other cases, the students try to develop a more complete and integrative reading of the element in front of them. Thus, they elaborate a mental representation of the image denoted by the complete phraseological expression. In this occasion, they are closer to a non-literal interpretation.

Conclusions

The results related to the degree of familiarity of the subjects with the corpus analyzed appear to be contradictory with the assumption of this thesis, as the level of metaphorical and phraseological competence of the subjects, taken the correct answers as a whole, is quite satisfactory in all the circumstances. However, the intervention of influencing factors such as the intercultural influence, the metaphorical and figurative competence, and especially the encyclopaedic and contextual information, along with the low metaphorical competence displayed by the learners when the unfamiliarity level arises, might show a coherence with the assumption according to which familiarity is a significant factor directly proportional to the metaphorical and figurative competence of the students. Nevertheless, we might conclude that the results of this part of the thesis are too discrete to establish a clear delimitation for the assumption considered.

7.3. Result 3: Semantic compositionality and phraseological competence

Assumption 3: Phraseological and metaphorical competences vary depending on semantic compositionality (semantic compositionality influence).

In the third part, results will be driven towards the idiomatic nature of phraseological or metaphorical elements, and how this is related to the subjects' performance. According to the metasemantic hypothesis (Nippold, Rudzinski, 1993), the learner tries to infer the non-literal meaning from the literal meaning of the expression, in line to Levorato and Cacciari's thesis (1995, 1999).

If the assumption is to be confirmed, the subjects in this study will give idiomatic interpretations of compositional phraseological units, while in non-compositional cases they will tend to provide literal interpretations, displaying a lower ability to interpret a message idiomatically in expressions with a high degree of idiomatic character.

The methodology that will allow us to clarify the traits that enhance the subjects' comprehension of the phraseological expressions is based on a classifying system in which two groups are established. The categories corresponding to each column respond to the quality of compositionality of the elements from the corpus. On the other

hand, within each kind of compositionality, a distinction according to the type of equivalence of the elements exposed is arranged. In this way, we will be able to identify whether or not compositionality is the main factor inciding in the subjects' metaphorical and figurative competence. The contrast of the elements according to their equivalence level in Italian will act as control data in this part of the study.

| | TOTAL EQUIVALENCE | ANSWERS |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| COMPOSITIONAL | <i>Estar en manos</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 100% Literal answer (inadequate): 0% |
| | <i>Dar el primer paso</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 100% Literal answer (inadequate): 0% |
| | <i>Tender puentes</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 88,8% Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 11,2% |
| NON- COMPOSITIONAL | <i>Jugar con fuego</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 100% Literal answer (inadequate): 0% |

Table 10. Distribution of answers in total equivalence cases according to semantic compositionality; interest in compositional cases.

| | 1st PARTIAL EQUIVALENCE | ANSWERS |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| COMPOSITIONAL | <i>Plantar cara</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 70% Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 20% Literal answer (inadequate): 10% |
| | <i>Librar una batalla</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 83,3% Literal answer (inadequate): 16,7% |
| | <i>Con mal pie</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 77,8% Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 22,2% |
| NON- COMPOSITIONAL | <i>Con la boca pequeña</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 25% Literal answer (inadequate): 75% |

Table 11. Distribution of answers in first partial equivalence cases according to semantic compositionality; interest in compositional cases.

| | 2nd PARTIAL EQUIVALENCE | ANSWERS |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| COMPOSITIONAL | Darse de bruces | Idiomatic answer (correct): 40% Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 60% |
| | Echar un pulso | Idiomatic answer (correct): 42,8% Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 14,4% Literal answer (inadequate): 42,8% |
| | Sin tapujos | Idiomatic answer (correct): 75% Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 25% |
| NON- COMPOSITIONAL | Sobre ruedas | Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 88,8% Literal answer (inadequate): 11,2% |

Table 12. Distribution of answers in second partial equivalence cases according to semantic compositionality; interest in compositional cases.

| | TOTAL EQUIVALENCE | ANSWERS |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| COMPOSITIONAL | <i>Estar en manos</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 100% Literal answer (inadequate): 0% |
| NON-COMPOSITIONAL | <i>Jugar con fuego</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 100% Literal answer (inadequate): 0% |
| | <i>Dar a luz</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 55,5% Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 33,4% Literal answer (inadequate): 11,1% |
| | <i>Pasar página</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 77,8% Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 11,1% Literal answer (inadequate): 11,1% |
| | <i>De la vieja escuela</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 100% Literal answer (inadequate): 0% |
| | <i>Cerrar filas</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 42,8% Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 42,8% Literal answer (inadequate): 14,3% |

Table 13. Distribution of answers in total equivalence cases according to semantic compositionality; interest in non-compositional cases.

| | 1st PARTIAL EQUIVALENCE | ANSWERS |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| COMPOSITIONAL | <i>Con mal pie</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 77,8% Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 22,2% |
| | <i>Con la boca pequeña</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 25% Literal answer (inadequate): 75% |
| NON-COMPOSITIONAL | <i>Ser la mano derecha</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 100% Literal answer (inadequate): 0% |
| | <i>Dar luz verde</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 85,7% Literal answer (inadequate): 14,3% |
| | <i>Poner las cartas sobre la mesa</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 88,8% Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 11,2% |
| | <i>Contra reloj</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 66,6% Literal answer (inadequate): 33,4% |
| | <i>Pasar factura</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 30% Literal answer (inadequate): 70% |
| | <i>En el punto de mira (de alguien)</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 75% Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 12,5% Literal answer (inadequate): 12,5% |

Table 14. Distribution of answers in first partial equivalence cases according to semantic compositionality; interest in non-compositional cases.

| | 2nd PARTIAL EQUIVALENCE | ANSWERS |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| COMPOSITIONAL | <i>Sin tapujos</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 75% Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 25% |
| | <i>Sobre ruedas</i> | Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 88,8% Literal answer (inadequate): 11,2% |
| NON-COMPOSITIONAL | <i>Sobre la marcha</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 66,7% Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 11,1% Literal answer (inadequate): 22,2% |
| | <i>Por todo lo alto</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 75% Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 25% |
| | <i>Por la puerta trasera</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 50% Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 50% |
| | <i>Dar alas (a alguien)</i> | Idiomatic answer (correct): 16,7% Idiomatic answer (but inadequate): 83,3% |
| | | |

Table 15. Distribution of answers in second partial equivalence cases according to semantic compositionality; interest in non-compositional cases.

| | | Idiomatic adequate interpretations | | | Idiomatic inadequate interpretations | | | Literal inadequate interpretations | | |
|-------------------|---|------------------------------------|-----------------|-------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-------|------------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Compositional | | 96,2% | 77% | 52,6% | 3,7% | 14% | 33,1% | 0% | 8,9% | 14,2% |
| | T | 1 st | 2 nd | T | 1 st | 2 nd | T | 1 st | 2 nd | |
| | | 75,3% | | | 16,9% | | | 7,7% | | |
| | | 92,2% | | | | | | 7,7% | | |
| Non-compositional | | 75,2% | 67,3% | 41,7% | 17,5% | 3,4% | 51,6% | 7,3% | 29,3% | 6,7% |
| | T | 1 st | 2 nd | T | 1 st | 2 nd | T | 1 st | 2 nd | |
| | | 61,4% | | | 24,2% | | | 14,4% | | |
| | | 85,6% | | | | | | 14,4% | | |

Table 16. Analysis of the answers according to semantic compositionality.

Compositional elements

It can be observed that in compositional elements, such as *estar en manos*, which displays a total level of interlanguage equivalence, the subjects' answers show an average result of complete idiomatic interpretation. Other data related to total equivalent cases show the same tendency, as it can be observed in *dar el primer paso* and *tender puentes*, where the correctness of the idiomatic answers is the tendency, with just a small percentage (11,2%) of inadequate idiomatic answer in the case *tender puentes*, for instance.

With expressions such as *con mal pie* and *sin tapujos*, which show a partial level of equivalence (first and second, respectively), the subjects' answers still tend to be idiomatic. However, in the first partial equivalence the total average of adequate answers descend to a 77%, and in the second partial equivalence elements it is of a 52,6%.

As a result, the level of accuracy of their answers in the partial equivalent case is worse, even if idiomatic. It is in this sense that we observe a 14% of inadequate idiomatic answers in the case of first partial equivalences, and a 33% in the second partial equivalences.

These inaccuracies might be explained by the logical added difficulty that the expressions with lesser level of equivalence represent for language learners. Even the fact that the learners still detect the compositional character of the components forming the elements, they fail to concede the correct meaning to these constituents.

The examples of these inaccuracies maybe found in expressions as *plantar cara*, which some subjects interpret, in a partial and wrong way, as an attitude of *non cedere e tenere testa* ("not giving in and being stubborn upon a situation"). Others learners translate this expression as speaking publicly and seriously about a problematic issue. Other examples can be located in *empezar con mal pie*, which some students reduce to a bad way of beginning a relationship with another person, when in fact the sense of the expression is broader.

The kind of inadequate idiomatic answers in second partial equivalences are seen in *echar un pulso*, where some interpretations reduce it to the fact of *combattere, sforzarsi per raggiungere un obiettivo* (“to fight and strive in order to achieve a goal”), when the meaning is not exactly this one. Another one is the idiom *darse de bruces*, which is explained as *dovere fare i conti* (“having to deal”), *darsi per vinti* (“to give up”), *essere fregati* (“to be screwed”), *qualcosa si rompe e la situazione si precipita* (“something breaks and the situation rushes”) or *trovarsi davanti ad un problema ad affrontare* (“to in front of a problem to face”).

As for the literal answers, they just show a small presence, with a total average of a 7,7%. They are represented by *librar una batalla* (10%) and *plantar cara* (16,7%), with a total percentage of 8,9% in the first partial equivalence cases. *Plantar cara*, for instance, is read as *metterci la faccia* or “to put your face on something”.

In the second partial equivalence elements, literal answers display a subtle increasing, with a total average of 14,2%. Some examples where the students have given literal interpretations to idiomatic are found in *echar un pulso*. It is literally interpreted in a compositional mode, taking *pulso* as the core of the meaning of the element, and thus the Italian translation given are *essere ancora vivi, il cuore batte* or *dare segno di vita* (“to be still alive, the heart beats or to give signs of life”).

In summary, in the results obtained in the expressions with compositional character, the subjects tend to give idiomatic answers, even if some of them prove to be unsuccessful, with a total amount of 92,2% of idiomatic responses. The sum total of literal answers descend to an average of 7,7%.

Non-compositional elements

In non-compositional elements the average of correct idiomatic answers in total equivalence elements is of a 75,2%. The inadequate idiomatic interpretation are of a 17,4%.

The kind of inaccuracies in total equivalences idiomatic answer are related to the context of application of the metaphorical or phraseological unit. For instance, the subjects tend to interpret the expression *dar a luz* in a even more idiomatic way than the real sense. Thus, in many cases, they understand the expression in the sentence given as the fact of moving to get new opportunities or to have a new life and a new beginning. Other examples are seen in *cerrar filas*, which is interpreted as *chiudere le trattative* (“to close the negotiations”).

Finally, the literal interpretations in the total equivalence cases, which are not correct, show an insignificant percentage of a 7,3%. The non-compositional elements analyzed are *jugar con fuego*, *dar a luz*, *pasar página*, *de la vieja escuela* and *cerrar filas*.

Examples of literal interpretations to these elements are *mettere sotto il riflettore, in mostra* (“to put under the reflector, on display”) for *dar a luz*; *andare avanti* (“to move on”) for *pasar página*; or various interpretations for the case of *cerrar filas*, with *unirsi insieme in modo rigoroso un'unità di persone* (“to join together severely a unit of people”), *essere l'ultimo in serie di avvenire* (“being the last in a series of events in the future”) or *terminare, essere l'ultimo* (“to finish, being the last one”).

As for the non-compositional elements with a level of equivalence belonging to the first degree, the number of idiomatic correct answers is of a 67,3%, whereas the idiomatic incorrect ones is just represented by a small 3,3%. The literal interpretation of the phraseological units, on the other hand, is of a 29,3%. The first partial equivalents are represented by *con la boca pequeña, ser la mano derecha, dar luz verde, poner las cartas sobre la mesa, contra reloj, pasar factura* and *en el punto de mira*.

Con la boca pequeña, for instance, is idiomatically interpreted in many cases as saying or doing something *con imbarazzo* (“with a little embarrassment”), or *dovere ammettere qualcosa contra voglia* (“having to admit something without will”), or *dovere ammettere di avere commesso un errore e di essere torto* (“having to admit having made a mistake and being wrong”). *Dar luz verde* is explained as *mettere qualcosa in evidenza* or *dare peso a qualcosa* (“to put something in evidence or to give weight to something”). *Pasar factura* is also idiomatically seen as *qualcuno che si penta di*

qualcosa (“someone who repents of something”), or *qualcuno che la fa pagare per qualcosa che ha fatto* (“someone who makes it pay for something he did”), or *fare una vendetta* (“to get a revenge”). Another example of idiomatic and inaccurate interpretation is *en el punto de mira*, which is understood as *secondo un determinato punto di vista* (“according to a certain point of view”).

Another example is seen in *contra reloj*, which is literally understood, as in the literal translation given in *anti-orario* (“counterclockwise”) or in *contra orologio* (“contra clock”), interpreted as *al contrario* (“in reverse”). Other subjects give a more detailed justification, as in the answer *qualcosa va contra una cosa certa, contracorriente, mentre un orologio segna, in teoria, l'ora esatta* (“something goes against a certain thing, countercurrent, while a clock marks, in theory, the exact time”). In *pasar factura*, the learners usually interpret the expression in its literal sense, as when someone collects money, gives something back to someone or passes the invoice once having bought something. In other cases, this literal sense is more related to the fact of confirming something, which is compared to the verification of a payment.

In the elements with a second partial equivalent in Italian, the percentage of idiomatic interpretations that lead to accurate results is of a 41,6%, whereas the ones that are incorrect is of a 51,6%. Examples are found in *sobre ruedas*, which is interpreted as some fact that is being is developing right now, or *por todo lo alto*, which

is partially interpreted as something that is shown with pride. *Por la puerta trasera*, on the other hand, is seen as *fare qualcosa per una via secondaria* (“to do something for a secondary way”), *tramite una seconda alternative* (“through a second alternative”), *nel modo più semplice* (“by the easiest way”), or *fare qualcosa senza seguire il protocollo* (“doing something without following the protocol”). Finally, *dar alas* is idiomatically interpreted as *diventare libero di costruire una vita nuova e indipendente* (“to become free to build a new and independent life”), or *fuggire da una situazione, scappare* (“to escape from a situation, to run away”), *dare l'energia necessaria per fare qualcosa* (“to give the energy necessary to do something”) or, otherwise, it is metaphorically compared to a plane taking off in order to refer to the fact of promoting or starting something. Finally, *sobre la marcha* is related to *sull'argomento in discussion* (“on the argument that is being discussed”), or *qualcosa che potrebbe cambiare nel lungo periodo, non ora* (“something that could change in the long run, not now”).

Literal interpretations in second partial equivalences, on the other hand, show a presence of a 6,6%. The expressions in this category include *sobre ruedas*. This element, as it has been seen in another part of the study, is literally interpreted in many cases due to the fact that the context of the piece of news leads to confusion, and thus the students relate it to the transportation field.

In summary, the results obtained in the expressions with non-compositional character show that the subjects tend to give less

idiomatic answers, with a total amount of 85,6% of idiomatic responses. However, the difference between the results in compositional and non-compositional elements is quite discrete. On the other hand, literal answers demonstrate an increasing if compared to the compositional elements, with a total average of 14,4%.

Conclusions

In brief, the results in this part seem to prove the assumption according to which language learners tend to give idiomatic interpretations of compositional phraseological units, while in non-compositional cases they provide literal interpretations, displaying a lower ability to interpret a message idiomatically in expressions with a high degree of idiomatic character. Even though the figures confirm this hypothesis, the results are quite discrete, showing a numerical difference of just around 8-9%. Consequently, the assumption is confirmed, although in a slight measure.

7.4. Result 4: Cross-equivalence and phraseological competence

Assumption 4: Phraseological and metaphorical competences vary depending on the equivalence level of the elements (interlanguage equivalence influence).

In the final part, results will be driven towards the equivalence in Italian and Spanish language of the phraseological and metaphorical elements analysed. It is assumed that if the equivalence degree is higher, the phraseological and metaphorical competence displayed by the subjects will become improved. The results will deny or confirm this assumption.

The corpus has been previously categorized in a scale of gradation according to the contrastive phraseology premises based on cognitive linguistics. Thus, the elements of the corpus have been distributed in a gradation that contemplates total, first partial and second partial equivalences.

| COMPOSITIONAL | | ANSWERS | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| TOTAL EQUIVALENCE | <i>Estar en manos</i> | Adequate answer: 100% | Inadequate answer: 0% |
| 1st PARTIAL EQUIVALENCE | <i>Plantar cara</i> | Adequate answer: 70% | Inadequate answer: 30% |
| | <i>Librar una batalla</i> | Adequate answer: 83,3% | Inadequate answer: 16,7% |
| | <i>Con mal pie</i> | Adequate answer: 77,8% | Inadequate answer: 22,2% |
| 2nd PARTIAL EQUIVALENCE | <i>Sin tapujos</i> | Adequate answer: 75% | Inadequate answer: 25% |

Table 17. Distribution of answers in compositional cases according to equivalence level; interest in first partial equivalence cases.

Compositional expressions, first partial equivalence

The hypothesis according to which the total equivalence expressions are assumed to present a higher interpretative accuracy and better figurative competence by the students is confirmed if we focus on the expression analysed in this chart, which presents a precision of a 100%. *Estar en manos*, whose equivalent in Italian is *essere nelle mani*, presents interlanguage synonymy, phenomenon in which the connotative and denotative meanings are shared in both languages.

As for the first partial equivalence elements, the average of adequate answers is of 77%, whereas the second partial equivalence elements present a slightly lower score, a 75% of accuracy.

This second data is coherent to the assumption according to which the higher the equivalence degree is, the better the phraseological and metaphorical competence displayed by the subjects.

The first partial equivalents include those elements with similar structure and same connotative meaning, but with a variation in the image, semantically or through the verbalized lexeme. This is considered to be the case in *plantar cara*, *librar una batalla* and *con mal pie*, whose Italian equivalents are *affrontare qualcuno*, *dare battaglia* and *con il piede sbagliato*.

The kind of inexact translations given by the subjects to *librar una batalla*, for instance, are: *condurre una battaglia*, *preparare una battaglia*, *combattere una battaglia*, *scatenare la battaglia*, *dichiarare battaglia* or *dare il via a un conflitto*.

Second partial equivalents, on the other hand, share the same connotative meaning, but with a variation in both the structure and the image, semantically or through the verbalized lexeme. That is the case of *sin tapujos*, which in Italian might be translated into several expressions: *senza veli*, *così com'è*, *senza sotterfugi* or *alla luce del sole*. In this part of the study, this element, which presents the lowest grade of equivalence in the group, exhibits a quite high performance by the subjects, with a 75% of correct answers. Nevertheless, it is still a lower competence than that performed in the case of first equivalences, and, certainly, those with total equivalence.

The answers attributed to the second partial equivalent of *sin tapujos* are as various as *senza ostacoli*, *senza peli sulla lingua*, *senza filtri* or *apertamente*, which are not absolutely distant from the exact translation.

| NON-COMPOSITIONAL | | ANSWERS | |
|--------------------------------|---|--------------------|-------|
| TOTAL EQUIVALENCE | <i>Jugar con fuego</i> | Adequate answer: | 100% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 0% |
| 1st PARTIAL EQUIVALENCE | <i>Con la boca pequeña</i> | Adequate answer: | 25% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 75% |
| | <i>Ser la mano derecha</i> | Adequate answer: | 100% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 0% |
| | <i>Dar luz verde</i> | Adequate answer: | 85,7% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 14,3% |
| | <i>Poner las cartas sobre la mesa</i> | Adequate answer: | 88,8% |
| | Inadequate answer: | 11,2% | |
| 2nd PARTIAL EQUIVALENCE | <i>Contra reloj</i> | Adequate answer: | 66,6% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 33,4% |
| | <i>Pasar factura</i> | Adequate answer: | 30% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 70% |
| | <i>En el punto de mira (de alguien)</i> | Adequate answer: | 75% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 25% |
| | <i>Sobre ruedas</i> | Adequate answer: | 0% |
| | Inadequate answer: | 100% | |

Table 18. Distribution of answers in non-compositional cases according to equivalence level; interest in first partial equivalence cases.

Non-compositional expressions, first partial equivalence

The hypothesis according to which the total equivalence expressions are assumed to present a higher interpretative accuracy and better figurative competence by the students is also confirmed in this part of the study, again if we focus on the expression analysed in this chart,

which presents an accuracy of a 100%. In this case, the expression contrasted is *jugar con fuego*, whose equivalent in Italian is *giocare con il fuoco*.

In the case of partial equivalence, the elements with first partial equivalence show a percentage of correctness of 67,3%, whereas the ones with second partial equivalence a 0%. As a result, this data also confirms the hypothesis of our study.

The first equivalence elements of this part are *con la boca pequeña* (*a mezza bocca*), *ser la mano derecha* (*essere il braccio destro*), *dar luz verde* (*dare alla luce*), *poner las cartas sobre la mesa* (*scoprire le carte, mettere le carte in tavola, giocare a carte scoperte*), *contra reloj* (*contro il tempo*), *pasar factura* (*presentare il conto*) and *en el punto de mira de alguien* (*nel mirino di qualcuno*).

The kinds of translation given to *con la boca pequeña* are quite various and they usually are translated into, even if near, wrongly applied idioms in Italian language. For instance, *a denti stretti, con la boca asciutta, farsi piccolo, di malavoglia* or *con la coda fra le gambe*. In *ser la mano derecha*, the expression is literally translated into *essere la mano destra*, thus omitting the correspondent component in Italian, which is *braccio*. For *dar luz verde*, an inadequate translation is *mettere sotto i riflettori*. *Poner sobre la mesa* is inaccurately translated into *fare i conti*. Another item usually literally translated is *contra reloj*, with examples like *anti-orario* or *contra orologio*. Other subjects try to translate them figuratively,

such as in *al contrario* or *contro corrente*. *Pasar factura* is translated as *farla pagare, mandare il conto* or *mettere una fattura*. And finally, *en el punto de mira* is interpreted in Italian as *stare sotto i riflettori*, such as it has been observed in *dar luz verde*.

The expression belonging to the category of second partial equivalence is *sobre ruedas (a gonfie vele, tutto liscio)*. This expression, as it has been previously commented, has led the learners into confusion because of the context of presentation, and consequently it has been in most of cases literally translated as *su ruote, con le ruote* or *a quattro ruote*. Other subjects have succeeded in reaching the idiomatic sense in the sentence of the corpus in which it is applied, and thus they have figuratively translated it into *secondo i piani* or *tutto va bene*, interpretation that even though not being exact, is near its metaphorical meaning.

| COMPOSITIONAL | | ANSWERS | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| TOTAL EQUIVALENCE | <i>Estar en manos</i> | Adequate answer: | 100% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 0% |
| | <i>Dar el primer paso</i> | Adequate answer: | 100% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 0% |
| | <i>Tender puentes</i> | Adequate answer: | 88,8% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 11,2% |
| 1st PARTIAL EQUIVALENCE | <i>Plantar cara</i> | Adequate answer: | 70% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 30% |
| 2nd PARTIAL EQUIVALENCE | <i>Sin tapujos</i> | Adequate answer: | 75% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 25% |

Table 19. Distribution of answers in compositional cases according to equivalence level; interest in total equivalence cases.

Compositional expressions, total equivalence

In the data collected in this part of the study, it is confirmed the hypothesis according to which the higher level of equivalence is manifested, the better the subjects' figurative competence is. The average of adequate answers in the total equivalent expressions, corresponding to the elements *estar en manos*, *dar el primer paso* and *tender puentes* is of 96,3%. On the contrary, the average of correct partial equivalence responses is of 72,5%, distributed in a 70% to first partial equivalence, represented by the expression *plantar cara*, and a 75% to second partial equivalence, with the expression *sin tapujos*.

The gap revealed between the first and the second partial equivalents is a 5%. This shows a slightly higher figurative competence in the case of the second partial equivalence expression, contradicting the main assumption of our study. However, a percentage of 5% is insignificant and might be attributed to side factors such as the encyclopaedicknowledge of the students and the context of presentation of the elements. Nevertheless, a pattern seems to be established in the results of this part of the study, where there is the tendency for the subjects to present a slightly higher competence in the second partial equivalence.

The kind of inaccuracies found in the total equivalences cases can be seen in the example of *tender puentes*. In most cases, the subjects are near the precise translation, but even though this fact, they tend to modify the lexemes. For instance, they translate it as *creare*

ponti, creare un ponte, costruire (dei) ponti, allacciare i ponti or fare da ponte. In other cases, the translation is more remote, as in *tendere la mano.*

As for the imprecisions related to the elements of the first partial equivalence group, the translations for *plantar cara* show that the subjects understand the figurative meaning of the expression, but translate it wrongly, as in *contrapporsi, opporsi, controbattere, ribattere* or *prendere posizione.* In other cases, however, the figurative meaning is confused, and thus the subjects give to the expression another sense, as in *tenere testa.* Finally, the literal translation of the element is also very common, as it occurs in *metterci la faccia* or *rinfacciare.*

| NON-COMPOSITIONAL | | ANSWERS | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| TOTAL EQUIVALENCE | <i>Jugar con fuego</i> | Adequate answer: | 100% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 0% |
| | <i>Dar a luz</i> | Adequate answer: | 55,5% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 44,5% |
| | <i>Pasar página</i> | Adequate answer: | 77,8% |
| | Inadequate answer: | 22,2% | |
| | <i>De la vieja escuela</i> | Adequate answer: | 100% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 0% |
| | <i>Cerrar filas</i> | Adequate answer: | 42,8% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 57,1% |
| 1st PARTIAL EQUIVALENCE | <i>Con la boca pequeña</i> | Adequate answer: | 25% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 75% |
| 2nd PARTIAL EQUIVALENCE | <i>Sobre ruedas</i> | Adequate answer: | 0% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 100% |

Table 20. Distribution of answers in non-compositional cases according to equivalence level; interest in total equivalence cases.

Non-compositional expressions, total equivalence

The tendency in this part of the data also confirms the hypothesis of the investigation. In this case, the information referred to the total equivalence expressions seems to be confirmed, as the average of accurate results is 75,2%, whereas in the partial equivalence results, the average of both the first (with a 25%), and the second (with a 0%) shows a total of 12,5%.

The inexact answers for *pasar página*, for instance, are related to the components of the expression, as in *cambiare pagina*. In *dar a luz*, on the other hand, some answers attribute its translation to *mettere sotto il riflettore* or *mettere in mostra*, as it has been observed before. In the examples seen in *cerrar filas* the attempts are various, as in *chiudere le file*, *serrare i battenti* or *serrare i ranghi*.

| COMPOSITIONAL | | ANSWERS | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|------|
| TOTAL EQUIVALENCE | <i>Estar en manos</i> | Adequate answer: | 100% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 0% |
| 1st PARTIAL EQUIVALENCE | <i>Plantar cara</i> | Adequate answer: | 70% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 30% |
| 2nd PARTIAL EQUIVALENCE | <i>Darse de bruces</i> | Adequate answer: | 40% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 60% |
| | <i>Sin tapujos</i> | Adequate answer: | 75% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 25% |

Table 21. Distribution of answers in compositional cases according to equivalence level; interest in second partial equivalence cases.

Compositional expressions, second partial equivalence

This part of the investigation confirms the hypothesis as well. The total equivalence expression, represented by *estar en manos* (*essere nelle mani*), shows an accuracy of 100%. The first equivalence elements, with *plantar cara* (*affrontare qualcuno*) presents a lower competence by the subjects, with an average of 70%. On the other hand, the elements with second partial equivalents in the Italian language, with *darse de bruces* (*cadere bocconi*) and *sin tapujos* (*senza veli, così com'è, senza sotterfugi* or *alla luce del sole*) show the lowest score, with an average of 57,5% of adequate answers by the students.

Darse de bruces shows great difficulties for the students, who interpret it in a varied range of ways. In the first case, the students catch the sense of the expression correctly, but fail to supply the exact translation, as in *scontrarsi, andare a sbattere contro, piombare in, affrontare, imbattersi* or *sbattere contro il muro*. In other examples, however, the students confuse the meaning of the phraseological expression, and give it a great variety of possibilities, as for example *darsi per vinti, prendere una doccia fredda, essere fregati, bruciarsi* or *dovere fare i conti*, all of which are not related to the meaning of the element.

| NON-COMPOSITIONAL | | ANSWERS | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| TOTAL EQUIVALENCE | <i>Jugar con fuego</i> | Adequate answer: | 100% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 0% |
| 1st PARTIAL EQUIVALENCE | <i>Con la boca pequeña</i> | Adequate answer: | 25% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 75% |
| 2nd PARTIAL EQUIVALENCE | <i>Sobre ruedas</i> | Adequate answer: | 88,8% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 11,2% |
| | <i>Sobre la marcha</i> | Adequate answer: | 66,7% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 33,3% |
| | <i>Por todo lo alto</i> | Adequate answer: | 75% |
| | Inadequate answer: | 25% | |
| | <i>Por la puerta trasera</i> | Adequate answer: | 50% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 50% |
| | <i>Dar alas (a alguien)</i> | Adequate answer: | 16,7% |
| | | Inadequate answer: | 83,3% |

Table 22. Distribution of answers in non-compositional cases according to equivalence level; interest in second partial equivalence cases.

Non-compositional expressions

The tendency in this part of the data seems to confirm the incongruence detected in some cases during the previous sections. In this situation, the information referred to the total equivalence expressions seems to be confirmed, as the average of accurate results is 100%. Besides, in the partial equivalence results, the average of both the first (with a 25%), and the second (with a 59,4%) is a 42,2%. However, the results taken separately indicate contradictory information. The result obtained in the second partial equivalence, actually, is 59,4%, which is considerably higher than in the first partial equivalence elements.

The first partial equivalent considered is *con la boca pequeña*, whose Italian equivalent is *a mezza bocca*. Indeed, this element shows a similar connotative meaning and a structure not very dissimilar between both languages, while its image and part of the lexemes of the expressions are different.

The second partial equivalents, on the other hand, share the same connotative meaning, but with a variation in both the structure and the image, semantically or through the verbalized lexeme. This is the case of *sobre ruedas*, *sobre la marcha*, *por todo lo alto*, *por la puerta trasera*, *dar alas (a alguien)*, whose Italian equivalents are, respectively, *a gonfie vele*, *tutto liscio*; *cammin facendo*, *strada facendo*, *via*, *sul momento*; *alla grande*, *con grandiosità*, *in grande stile*; *di nascosto*, *in modo illegale*; *incitare*, *incoraggiare (qualcuno)*, *dare spago a (qualcuno)*.

The cases in which the students show a higher tendency to give inadequate translations are found in *sobre la marcha*, *por todo lo alto*, *por la puerta trasera* and *dar alas*. *Sobre la marcha*, for instance, is translated into *lungo il cammino*, *lungo la via* or *in corso d'opera*, equivalence not very remote from the correct answers, however. The sense in *por todo lo alto* is subtly altered in *in modo sfarzoso* or *con orgoglio*. In the case of *por la puerta trasera*, the literal translation is a recurrent resource, as it has been observed in *por la porta posteriore*, *dalla porta sul retro* or *dal retro*. Other more idiomatic alternatives are seen in *per vie secondarie* or *dalla porta di servizio*. Finally, *dar alas* is translated

as *mettere le ali*, *spiccare il volo*, *dare il via* or *prendere il volo*, which is a mixture of idiomatic and literal translations for an idiom that in some cases is difficult for the subjects to access to.

Conclusions

The hypothesis according to which the total equivalence expressions are assumed to present a higher interpretative accuracy and better figurative competence by the students is confirmed in most of the results in this part of the investigation.

However, a pattern seems to be established in the results of this study, where there is the tendency for the subjects to present a slightly higher competence in the second partial equivalence, so that it contradicts the assumption according to which the level of equivalence of phraseological and metaphorical elements is directly proportional to the metaphorical and figurative competence of the language learners. This might be explained once again by side factors such as the encyclopaedic knowledge of the students and the context of presentation of the elements. Besides, the learners might rely on other cognitive strategies in the cases where they detect that interlanguage equivalence is not as trustable as in other elements. Consequently, the application of other, and perhaps more effective strategies, might explain the incongruence presented in this part of the study. Besides, it would prove the permeability of the language learners, who adapt their metaphorical and figurative competence to the conditions of use and learning context.

8. Conclusions

*Las interlenguas de hablantes políglotas son sistemas en continuo proceso de permeabilidad, alcanzando niveles de competencia inestables, según variables que dependen de las circunstancias personales y el grado de funcionalidad que la lengua cumple*²²³ (Vázquez, 1998: 116).

The unveiling of the phraseological competence involved in the learning of a foreign language, and the aspects concerned with it, have been the main issue of interest in this thesis. Besides, the pair of languages it has been focused on is particularly relevant in the phraseodidactics field, as the building of a foundation on which Italian phraseology and its didactics is developed is essential if compared with the field development in other languages.

Resuming the objectives of this thesis, it can be affirmed that they have been mainly accomplished. The very first aim of the investigation established the implementation of a phraseodidactic inquiry in which the metaphorical and figurative competence of foreign language learners is analysed. From this purpose, the recognition of the individual factors involved in the metaphorical and figurative competence has been developed, paying special attention to the role of first and other languages, relating them to the

²²³ *The interlanguages of polyglot speakers are systems in continuous process of permeability, reaching unstable levels of competence, according to variables that depend on personal circumstances and the degree of functionality that the language fulfills* (Vázquez, 1998: 116).

interlanguage influence. Familiarity has been another referential factor of interest, as well as the determination of the impact of the diverse kinds of phraseological and metaphorical expressions on the cognitive strategies involved in the comprehension of language. The characteristics involved have comprised the degree of compositionality and the layer of equivalence of the elements of the corpus, which have been related to the psycholinguistic decomposition processes of phraseological and metaphorical elements developed by the learners.

From the objectives of this research project, four main assumptions have been determined. At the end of this investigation, and by means of the research methodology developed, the assumptions have been either confirmed or denied, in some cases with nuances that lead to a thorough or partial conclusion. The uncertainty of some of the results should work as an incentive for further research that explores more conscientiously the factors affecting the conditions of learning. On the other hand, in a social area as learning sciences, the human factor is a strong condition that might easily lead to variable results.

In summary, the assumptions of the thesis have been confirmed in some cases, whereas partly confirmed in others:

- 1) The broader is learners' linguistic background, the higher is their phraseological and metaphorical competence in a foreign language (interlinguistic influence).

Partly confirmed

The measure of the linguistic background has been elaborated regarding the learners' previous known languages, including dialects, native and foreign languages. The main hypothesis established that the intercomprehension of unknown elements in the target language is directly proportional to the broadness of the learner's linguistic background. Besides, the intercomprehension was supposed to be higher correspondingly to the level of bilingualism or plurilingualism of the subjects.

From the results retrieved, the hypothesis is partly confirmed, as the higher phraseological and metaphorical competence shown in correct results are seen in the categories of high bilingualism with high-level of Spanish and with high plurilingualism and low-level of Spanish. The same seems to be revealed by the group with low bilingualism and low-level of Spanish, which attains the lowest metaphorical competence level, outcome that is coherent with the assumption.

However, the group of students with low plurilingualism and high-level of Spanish and the one formed by high plurilinguals with high-level of Spanish contradict the previous conclusions, as the metaphorical and figurative competence of the students in these

categories are inferior, even if their linguistic background is supposed to be rich. The result obtained by the group with low plurilingualism and low-level of Spanish is also contradictory, as they acquire a surprisingly high score.

In conclusion, these contradictions observed do not allow a confirmation of the assumption. Consequently, it is necessary to affirm that the assumption is not fully accomplished.

- 2) Familiarity will be a significant factor when considering the phraseological and metaphorical competence of learners who deal with foreign language elements (encyclopaedic knowledge).

Partly confirmed

The aim of this part of the investigation is to confirm the theory according to which culture is a determinant factor when applying comprehensive learning strategies. As a result, it is assumed that the familiarity the students in this research display towards certain elements presented in the study will be decisive in their phraseological and metaphorical competence.

Once again, the results point to a contradiction in this part of the investigation. Actually, the level of metaphorical and phraseological competence of the subjects is quite satisfactory. Thus, this homogeneity reveals an ambiguity that does not allow a total confirmation of the assumption. Nevertheless, the subtly low

metaphorical competence displayed by the learners when the unfamiliarity level arises might point to a slight confirmation of the hypothesis. On the other hand, several factors that are clearly influencing on the abilities displayed by the learners have been considered and analysed, such as the intercultural influence, the metaphorical and figurative competence, and the encyclopaedic and contextual information, all of which might interact with one another and lead to equivocal results.

- 3) Phraseological and metaphorical competence varies depending on the semantic compositionality (semantic compositionality influence).

Confirmed

The hypothesis derived from this assumption is related to the idiomatic character of a phraseological unit, which is supposed to be inversely proportional to the learner's ability to interpret it correctly. Consequently, it is assumed that the learner will infer the non-literal meaning from the literal meaning of the expression (see the metasemantic hypothesis by Nippold, Rudzinski, 1993; and Levorato, Cacciari, 1995, 1999).

It is presumed that the meaning of the components in an expression is the gateway to access the meaning of the whole phraseological unit. As a result, in compositional elements subjects are supposed to give more idiomatic interpretations, while in non-compositional expressions, literal readings would prevail. As a consequence, in

non-compositional cases, the metaphorical and figurative competence are supposed to be reduced, as the learners' ability to interpret a message idiomatically is to be reduced in the cases when the element does not present compositionality.

The results prove that the assumption is accomplished, even if with discrete observations. Certainly, in compositional phraseological units, the learners give more idiomatic interpretations, while in non-compositional cases they provide literal interpretations, thus displaying a lower ability to interpret a message idiomatically in expressions with a high degree of idiomatic character.

- 4) Phraseological and metaphorical competence varies depending on the interlanguage equivalence level of the elements (interlanguage equivalence influence).

Confirmed

This assumption establishes that the phraseological and metaphorical competence is directly proportional to the degree of interlanguage equivalence. The hypothesis is confirmed.

Nevertheless, an apparently contradictory outline is replicated in the examination, as there is the predisposition for the subjects to present a superior accuracy in the second partial equivalence, as related to the first equivalence cases. This might be explained by side factors such as the encyclopaedicknowledge of the students and the context of presentation of the elements. Besides, the learners might rely on

other cognitive strategies in the cases where they detect that interlanguage equivalence is not as trustable as in other elements. Thus, the hypothesis according to which the decompositional process performed by the learners is to be different depending on the degree of equivalence is confirmed, even if not exactly in the tendency previously assumed.

Certainly, cognitive mechanisms are applied and modified in order to develop more effective strategies, and this fact might explain the incongruity presented in this part of the study. On the other hand, the adaptable character of the learning processes, where the language learners' flexibility allows them to adapt their metaphorical and figurative competence to the conditions of use and learning context, is once again proved.

Finally, the assumption is considered to be wholly accomplished as in general terms the ability of the learners is better in the cases of total equivalence with regard to partial equivalent elements.

Future research

-Level of bilingualism/plurilingualism

The subjects of the study have been inspected regarding their level of bilingualism and/or plurilingualism. However, the exact degree of bilingualism or plurilingualism might be refined if a more thorough examination was applied. An example of a questionnaire that presents a complete exploration is the one developed by Poch,

Machuca, Freixas and Prat (2016). In the form of a linguistic questionnaire, it presents a useful and reliable resource in the line of the objectives outlined in this research. The questionnaire explores the level of bilingualism of Catalan/Spanish speakers. Consequently, it should be adapted to other languages or to plurilingual situations if that is the case.

-Level of the foreign language

Besides, the level in the foreign languages of the subjects analysed in the project could be standardized through official tests. However, the homogeneity in the level of Spanish is guaranteed by the protocol stated from the academic qualification requirements, according to which all students must certify a minimum level of B2 by the end of the second course.

-Metaphorical and phraseological competence in L1

One of the factors influencing the acquisition of second language phraseology is the level of metaphorical and phraseological competence that the learners already possess in their first language. That is why the exploration of this competence would be an interesting factor to consider in future research.

Núñez-Román's (2016) research is based on the theory that the acquisition of a native language and a foreign language is different. However, certain competences and cognitive mechanisms are common. For instance, in the acquisition process of second language phraseology, the general figurative competence that the

subject displays in the native language proves to be an influential factor (Levorato, Cacciari, 1995).

-Pragmatic equivalences

In the analysis of the Italian/Spanish equivalences, it is frequent to incur in the simplification, relying on the translation processes as a trustworthy resource, when the equivalence system does not actually work as simply, even though in the cases where the languages analysed are so near.

To avoid this phenomenon, an approach focused on the use that the equivalent expressions have in the languages is essential. This approach should analyse elemental aspects such as the frequency of use, the register and the context of use. These pragmatic factors might explain some inconsistencies regarding the metaphorical and phraseological competence of the learners, who are naturally affected by their native language.

-Cross-linguistic transfer

For some 40 years, research into second language acquisition has focused on mother-tongue influence. It seems obvious, however, that when learners try to compensate for lack of knowledge, other foreign languages may also be sources of borrowing. The positive or negative impact of the (relative) knowledge of a third language may have on the acquisition of a second one or vice versa has seldom been studied systematically to date (Bouvy, 2000: 143).

This is a fact that could, and should be explored, with the data compiled in this thesis.

Indeed, the results obtained in relation to the first assumption point to a further need to deepen in the factors underlying the apparent inconsistencies that have emerged in the investigation. This thesis shows that it is necessary to develop an exploratory work in the field of phraseodidactics that thoroughly analyses the influence that third or additional languages have on the level of metaphorical and phraseological competence and the strategies of comprehension.

Its mechanism is one linguistic –essentially lexical– interference (unconscious) or borrowing (conscious). It seems conceivable that learners may have access –consciously or not– to an L2 word stored in their mental lexicon instead of the corresponding L3 one. One can equally argue that the closer phonetically and semantically two L2/L3 words are to one another, the more easily they can be substituted for one another in production (Bouvy, 2000: 152).

Along the thesis, the influence and interference, either positive or negative, of the learners' knowledge of additional foreign languages have been considered to be a significant factor. However, this influence does not show a process of linearity. Contrarily, it behaves in a dynamic and irregular way. That might be the reason why the disparity of knowledge levels in plurilingual or bilingual

subjects does not develop into a linear system. Actually, in the interrelation of different languages in a learner's baggage, a sum of interrelated factors may lead to unpredictable results.

Final remark

The results described in this thesis seem to verify the complexity, both in nature and in exploration, of the metaphorical and figurative competence. Previous studies on the relationship between this ability and other affecting factors conclude the same principle.

Metaphoric competence is more complex than assumed. It seems that the probability of understating is not fully predictable from these factors alone (Pamies, Potapova, 2005: 279).

This observation should not impede the further investigation on this stimulating area. On the contrary, it should arouse our motivation to move forward in its investigation.

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This errata sheet lists the errors and the corresponding corrections for the doctoral thesis written by Ester Mellado Blanes, titled *Native Italians' comprehension of press information in Spanish. A phraseodidactic approximation from a cognitive linguistics approach*. Universitat Pompeu Fabra.

| | Location | Error | Correction |
|-----|-------------------------|---|--|
| 1. | p. 328, p. 1, line 1 | <i>modersi</i> | <u>mordersi</u> |
| 2. | p. 384, line 4 | a mezza <i>boca</i> | a mezza <u>bocca</u> |
| 3. | p. 384, line 18 | <i>scopire</i> le carte | <u>scoprire</u> le carte |
| 4. | p. 452, p. 2, line 4 | <i>modersi</i> | <u>mordersi</u> |
| 5. | p. 453, par. 3, line 14 | a mezza <i>boca</i> | a mezza <u>bocca</u> |
| 6. | p. 453, par. 3, line 20 | <i>scopire</i> le carte | <u>scoprire</u> le carte |
| 7. | p. 483, par. 1, line 3 | <i>brucciarsi</i> | <u>bruciarsi</u> |
| 8. | p. 483, par. 2, line 19 | <i>acceso</i> | <u>accesso</u> |
| 9. | p. 484, par. 1, line 4 | the <i>students</i> recognizes that the inspiring item for him has been | the <u>student</u> recognizes that the inspiring item for him has been |
| 10. | p. 486, par. 2, line 6 | andare <i>contra</i> corrente | andare <u>contro</u> corrente |
| 11. | p. 487, par. 3, line 24 | the lexical elements of the component <i>confuses</i> the student | the lexical elements of the component <u>confuse</u> the student |
| 12. | p. 496, par. 3, line 21 | the examination of the evidence declared by the students <i>show</i> that | the examination of the evidence declared by the students <u>shows</u> that |
| 13. | p. 497, par. 4, line 19 | Ho <i>dedutto</i> dal contesto | Ho <u>dedotto</u> dal contesto |
| 14. | p. 498, par. 1, line 18 | Leggendo <i>le</i> frase | Leggendo <u>la</u> frase |
| 15. | p. 499, par. 2, line 12 | <i>brucciarsi</i> | <u>bruciarsi</u> |
| 16. | p. 499, par. 2, line 15 | Ho <i>rigionato</i> | Ho <u>ragionato</u> |
| 17. | p. 512, par. 2, line 9 | The inadequate idiomatic interpretation <i>are</i> of a 17,4%. | The inadequate idiomatic interpretation <u>is</u> of a 17,4%. |
| 18. | p. 520, par. 1, line 2 | senza <i>pelli</i> sulla lingua | senza <u>pelì</u> sulla lingua |
| 19. | p. 521, par. 3, line 9 | a mezza <i>boca</i> | a mezza <u>bocca</u> |
| 20. | p. 521, par. 3, line 10 | <i>scopire</i> le carte | <u>scoprire</u> le carte |
| 21. | p. 522, par. 1, line 1 | <i>contra</i> corrente | <u>contro</u> corrente |
| 22. | p. 524, p. 2, line 7 | <i>contrabattere</i> | <u>controbattere</u> |

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| 23. | p. 525, p. 2, line 13 | serrare i <i>renghi</i> | serrare i <u>ranghi</u> |
| 24. | p. 526, p. 1, line 9 | <i>sottafugi</i> | <u>sotterfugi</u> |
| 25. | p. 526, par. 2, line 20 | <i>brucciarsi</i> | <u>bruciarsi</u> |