
... Und ich sage dir, wer du bist. The creative potential of proverbs from a contrastive point of view. A constructionist approach

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The potential creativity of idiomatic expressions has been explored under the assumption that novel utterances are the result of free combinations of constructions, as long as there are no conflicts (Goldberg 2006). In other words, creativity is conceived of as an intrinsic feature of language, not as an anomaly.

Against this background, this study examines the creative potential of the proverb *Sage mir, mit wem du umgehst, und ich sage dir/so sage ich dir, wer du bist* in German and its counterpart in Spanish *Dime con quién andas y te diré quién eres* ('A man is known by the company he keeps'). With a corpus comprising 1173 occurrences extracted from the *deTenTen20* and 1069 occurrences from the *esTenTen18*, this analysis departs from a shared semantic core that is adapted according to speakers' needs in discourse, which is the result of the great flexibility that the proverb can undergo (Van Wetteere 2021: 424).

This corpus-based contribution has the following goals: (i) determine to what extent the abovementioned proverb in German and Spanish has given rise to a semi-schematic construction by means of variability and type frequency of their non-canonical forms (Stumpf 2016); (ii) explore the degree of creativity based on type and token frequency in German and Spanish; (iii) uncover whether in both languages there are pragmatic similarities with regards to non-canonical forms of the proverb (examples 1 and 2).

- (1) ***Sage mir, wie dein Flughafen heißt, und ich sage dir, wer du bist. Wie Länder und Städte ihre Airports benennen, sagt manchmal einiges über den jeweiligen Zielort aus.*** (deTenTen20, 19763524)
- (2) ***Dime cómo amas y te diré quién eres. Cada uno tiene una manera única de amar, que a veces nos satisface y con frecuencia nos traiciona.*** (esTenTen18, 2058685837)

References: • Goldberg, A. (2006). *Constructions at Work*. Oxford University Press.
• Stumpf, S. (2016). Modifikation oder Modellbildung? Das ist hier die Frage – Abgrenzungsschwierigkeiten zwischen modifizierten und modellartigen Phrasemen am Beispiel formelhafter (Ir-)Regularitäten. *Linguistische Berichte* 247, 317–342. • Van Wetteere, N. 2021. Productivity of French and Dutch (semi-)copular constructions and the adverse impact of high token frequency. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 26(3): 396–428.