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# Semi-Schematic Patterns and their Social Dimension: A Constructionist Study of the Proverb *Dime con quién andas y te diré quién eres* in Spanish and German

**Abstract:** Proverbs, as lexically filled phrasemes (also known as substantive phrasemes), offer a new research pathway in the opposition canonical vs non-canonical variants. In the context of Construction Grammar, the role of analogical extensions is of special interest, conceived as a trigger of productivity and schematicity. Against this background, the aim of this paper is twofold. First, to adopt a constructionist approach to the study of the Spanish proverb *Dime con quién andas y te diré quién eres* ‘A man is known by the company he keeps’ and its prototypical German equivalents *Sage(e) mir, mit wem du umgehst und ich sage dir, wer du bist* and *Zeig(e) mir deine Freunde, und ich sage dir, wer du bist*. To do so, we conducted a corpus-based study (esTenTen18 and deTenTen20, Sketch Engine) with the hypothesis that in both languages, there is a greater quantitative presence of modified instances of the canonical form(s) compared to the canonical uses. This allows to identify the canonical form or forms in each language, as well as to establish the different degree of variability of the proverbs in Spanish and German and to determine which semantic clusters typically tend to occupy the X slot. Second, to explore if the traditional social purpose seen in standard usage of proverbs remains applicable when changes are made, or if new communicative or persuasive functions associated with textual genres in which the non-canonical forms occur can be identified.

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# 1 Introduction

Proverbs, as lexically filled phrasemes (also called substantive phrasemes), and snowclones<sup>1</sup> present a new avenue of research when it comes to the opposition of canonical vs non-canonical variants, i.e. between the citation form of a fixed expression and the innovations deviating from such a canonical form (Hartmann and Ungerer 2023; Ivorra Ordines in press; Mellado Blanco 2024). In the context of Construction Grammar, the role of analogical extensions is particularly intriguing, as they are seen as triggers for productivity and schematicity. Regarding phraseme modification, we align with other works (Mellado Blanco 2020a: 25) in adopting a constructionist perspective to analogy because it can effectively account for: (i) the replacement of certain lexical items in idiomatic expressions with others in discourse as with the constructional idioms [(no) PRON *importar* NP[DET N<sub>[taboo object or of little value]</sub>] ⇔ ‘not care at all’ (e.g., *no me importa un pepino/comino/carajo* ‘I don’t give a damn’) (Mellado Blanco 2020b) or [DET ADJ *de* DET<sub>[possessive]</sub> N] ⇔ ‘critics or insult with respect to the propositional content’ (e.g., *el inútil de su hijo* ‘the useless of his son’) (Esteban-Fonollosa 2023), (ii) the potential of creativity as with the constructional idiom of vehement rejection [*por* PRON *como si* X] ⇔ ‘I don’t care at all’ (e.g., *por mí como si comes alimentos que no dan sombra*, lit. ‘for me as if you eat food that doesn’t provide shade’) (Ivorra Ordines 2023), (iii) the development of new phrasemes based on existing ones as with the constructional idiom *estar a un click de* ‘to be one click away of’ (Mellado Blanco 2023), and (iv) the emergence of semi-schematic patterns as with the semi-schematic construction [*kein(e)* N<sub>1</sub> *ist auch ein(e)* N<sub>1</sub>] ⇔ ‘no N1 is also a N1’ (e.g., *keine Reaktion ist auch eine Reaktion* ‘no reaction is also a reaction’) (Mollica 2018) (see Ivorra Ordines 2023: 111; Mellado Blanco 2022: 9; Mellado Blanco and Ivorra Ordines 2023: 26; Mellado Blanco, Mollica and Schaefroth 2022: 6; Rasulic 2010; Stumpf 2018: 171, 2022: 180).

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 discusses the interplay of form, meaning and function in both well-established constructions and idiomatic expressions, acknowledging the significance of context and genre in linguistic anal-

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<sup>1</sup> In the early 2000s, the term ‘snowclone’ emerged as a result of a naming contest initiated by Geoff Pullum on the linguistics blog *Language Log* in 2004. Pullum urged the community to come up with a suitable term to describe a “a multi-use, customizable, instantly recognizable, time-worn, quoted or misquoted phrase or sentence that can be used in an entirely open array of different jokey variants by lazy journalists and writers” (Pullum 2003; see Ivorra Ordines in press; Mellado Blanco 2024). Following Hartmann and Ungerer (2023), snowclones are characterized by (i) the existence of a lexically filled source construction, (ii) partial productivity, and (iii) extravagant formal and/or functional characteristics.

ysis –social meaning, i.e., the social and/or stylistic significance (see Leclercq and Morin 2023: 10)– in the constructional description, and recognizing that genres themselves can be seen as conventionalized linguistic structures, thus expanding the scope of conventional pragmatics within grammar. The first objective of this work is tackled in Section 3, that is, a constructionist analysis of the Spanish proverb *Dime con quién andas y te dire quién eres* (lit. ‘Tell me who you walk with and I will tell you who you are’) ‘A man is known by the company he keeps’ and its German equivalent *Sage(e) mir, mit wem du umgehst und ich sage dir, wer du bist*. For this purpose, we started with the hypothesis that in both languages, the modified uses of the canonical form(s) quantitatively outnumber the canonical uses. To validate the hypothesis, we conducted a corpus-based analysis using es-TenTen18 corpus for Spanish and deTenTen20 corpus for German (both from Sketch Engine). The second aim is discussed in Section 4. Through the corpus study, we aim to gain insights into identifying the canonical form of forms in each language. Additionally, we seek to establish the degree of variability within the proverbs and discern which semantic clusters typically fill the X slot. In this context, another sub-aim is to investigate whether the usual social function observed in canonical uses of the proverb remains valid in instances that undergo modifications or whether new illocutionary or perlocutionary functions linked to the textual genres in which the modifications appear can be detected. Section 5 summarizes the main findings.

## 2 Theoretical Background: Constructions all the Way and its Relation to Genre

The constructionist perspective to language seeks to comprehensively explain linguistic data within a language while rejecting the transformational aspect of the generativist tradition. This approach, exemplified by studies such as Fillmore, Kay and O’Connor (1988) and Kay and Fillmore (1999), is considered a maximalist theory, even though not all constructions in a language’s grammar are identified. These studies aimed to highlight structures previously overlooked due to their irregularity and apparent lack of productivity. In a constructionist approach, both well-established constructions and peripheral elements like stock phrases and idioms are equally important. This perspective abolishes the center-periphery distinction and focuses on language as a whole, shedding light on structures that do not conform to logical statements, and often carry additional pragmatic nuances. For instance, the *let alone* construction is sensitive to pragmatic considerations, such as Gricean maxims like providing sufficient information and maintaining

relevance. The analysis of constructions incorporates pragmatics into the grammatical theory, addressing the question of how speakers' understanding of context is systematic and conventional, making it an inherent part of grammar and constructional description.

The theoretical status of grammatical constructions – as flexible resources (Östman 2015) – is emphasized in this context, that is, conventionalized pairings of meaning and form, in articulating both language-specific and cross-linguistic generalizations, effectively explaining both regular and semi-schematic patterns. The meaning –the semantic pole of any construction–, whether it is related to words or sentence structure, is defined with reference to frames. In this context, Construction Grammar encompasses Frame Semantics and draws from valuable insights found in the frame semantic theory (as highlighted by Fillmore 1982, 1985; Ziem 2014; among others). Consequently, information related to pragmatic, discourse, textual, or register features associated with a particular linguistic form can be incorporated into the meaning aspect of the corresponding construction, alongside purely semantic information (as mentioned by Fried and Östman 2004; Goldberg 1995, 2006, 2019; Nikiforidou 2015, 2016, 2018; Östman 2005; among others). The meaning pole, for its part, stands for “all the conventionalized aspects of a construction's function, which may include not only properties of the situation described, but also properties of the discourse in which the utterance is found [ . . . ] and of the pragmatic situation of the interlocutors” (Croft and Cruse 2004: 258). In harmony with this reasoning, “constructions are abstract form-meaning-function constellations; form, meaning and function are inseparable in usage” (Östman 2015: 20).

In this context, the emphasis of construction grammarians on meaning and their exploration of encoding idiomaticity has inevitably brought Construction Grammar close to the phraseological tradition, as can be attested in the numerous contributions in the last few years (Ivorra Ordines 2021; Mellado Blanco 2022; Mellado Blanco, Mollica and Schafroth 2022; Mellado Blanco, Ivorra Ordines and Esteban Fonollosa 2024). With encoding idioms, in contrast to decoding idioms, we are dealing with expressions that language users may or may not comprehend without prior exposure, but they would not recognize it as a conventional<sup>2</sup> way of expressing its intended meaning (Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor 1988: 504–505; see

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2 Identifying thematic regularities as constructional characteristics undeniably constitutes an expansion of the existing approach, although it is a well-founded expansion, as these characteristics are conventionally part of the structure. Conventionality, indeed, “is the most important, in fact necessary, feature for assigning idiomatic/constructional status” (Antonopoulou and Nikiforidou 2011: 2596). On top of that, taking discursal properties into constructional description avoids any criticism on cognitive theories ignoring social or discursal properties (see Geeraerts 2005; Langacker 2008).

Croft and Cruse 2004: 225 or Gries 2008: 14). To put it differently, while these expressions conform to the grammatical and semantic rules of a language, still exhibit idiomatic characteristics by linking a specific form to a particular meaning.

As evident from the discussion in the previous section, the incorporation of encoding idiomaticity can apply to various types of formal-pragmatic combinations, significantly broadening the scope of conventional pragmatics and, consequently, constructional pragmatics. In this sense, constructional analysis has arguably expanded its scope to include conventionalized discourse phenomena into the realm of grammar. The arguments for linking specific forms to identifiable contexts is in harmony with two main factors (Nikiforidou 2018): (i) there are frequency-based considerations, where a particular formal pattern may be more prevalent in certain contexts than in others, and (ii) there are stricter criteria, such as the impossibility of a pattern (or some of its features) appearing outside of specific genre contexts. While the latter criteria might provide a more compelling argument for including genre specifications in grammatical descriptions, the former aligns well with usage-based frameworks and are naturally encountered in broader contexts like registers.

Such step is justified by one of Charles Fillmore's fundamental principles regarding Construction Grammar, which asserts that a constructionist approach should align with our understanding of cognition and social interaction, and that textual analysis should not be dismissed from the outset (Antonopoulou and Nikiforidou 2011; Nikiforidou 2009, 2010, 2018, 2021; Nikiforidou and Fischer 2015; Östman 2005, 2015; Östman and Fried 2005; among others). This involves addressing and potentially formalizing the systematicity and regularity of discourse patterns, particularly focusing on their cognitive foundations that shape the interpretation of all related texts. It becomes crucial to acknowledge such conventional associations when dealing with discourse-based-licensed patterns that cannot be derived from other language constructions and might even be considered theoretically implausible. The most primary obstacle when attempting to expand constructional analysis beyond the sentence lies in the way of handling context systematically while ensuring it remains plausible.

Previous attempts to address genre within the framework of Construction Grammar have explored three distinct approaches (see Nikiforidou 2019; Nikiforidou and Fischer 2015). The first approach involves incorporating genre-related information as a feature within the grammatical description. For example, Nikiforidou (2015) conceived empathetic narration as a unique form of narration that deviates from the typical past narrative, which is usually tied to the narrator's perspective and the context of conversation. The second approach entails providing a detailed description of how a particular situation enables specific language functions. In this case, the connection to a genre is not an inherent part of the construc-

tion itself; instead, it emerges from the functional requirements of the situation. For example, Matsumoto (2015) discusses that the stand-alone construction in Japanese is genre-sensitive, in that the variation with a noun (referred to as the stand-alone noun-modifying construction) is closely linked to specific contexts of verbal activities and practices. The third approach involves describing genres as complex signs. This approach is relevant when examining recipes (Östman 2005), football chants (Hoffmann 2015; Hoffmann and Bergs 2018), Instagram posts (Fried and Aarstrup 2021), Knock Knock jokes (Hoffmann and Bergs 2023), among others, where the components and structure have been conventionalized. Taking this last approach even further, Hoffmann and Bergs (2018, 2023) follow up the idea of “constructions all the way *down*” (Goldberg 2006: 18) and, on top of that, add that it is also constructions all the way *up*, since even larger linguistic structures such as genres can be conceived as constructional templates as long as they are frequent enough (see Nikiforidou 2018 for a discussion).

### 3 Corpus Extraction and the Notion of Cognitive Canonical form

In the approaches to the phenomenon of variation, the notion of *base form* has been quite prominent because it allows to distinguish what is fixed in a phraseme from what is updated in discourse according to syntactic idiosyncrasies. A widely used term to refer to this base form in the Spanish phraseological tradition is *forma citativa* ‘quotative form’ (Wotjak 1998) or *forma canónica* ‘canonical form’ (Mellado Blanco 2020a), terms that refer to the paradigmatic form that a phraseme should have outside of context and typically appears as the lemma in dictionaries. Indeed, this is a fairly common practice in the study of phraseological variation, as expressed by Langlotz:

*For purely practical reasons*, I will equate a given base-form with the idiom’s citation-form in idiom dictionaries. I take it for granted that lexicographic practice attempts to record only highly familiar lexicalised constructions belonging to the langue of a given variety (i.e. those units that are entrenched in the mental lexicons of most speakers). Dictionary citation-forms therefore approximate the present view of a usage-based default construction. (Langlotz 2006: 178; italics in the original)

According to the results obtained from the corpus analysis<sup>3</sup>, the Spanish proverb shows a clear canonical form, that is, *Dime con quién andas y te dire quién eres*, not only because it is the form that is usually encountered in phraseological dictionaries (see DFDEA or *Refranero Multilingüe*<sup>4</sup>), but also because it is the most frequent type in the corpus with 497 instances (Pfeiffer 2017: 26; see also Petrova 2011). From the corpus esTenTen18, we started with the lexically filled second part of the proverb, which is *y te diré quién eres* ‘and I will tell you who you are’, together with the filtering of the lemma *decir* ‘tell’ KWIC -10 -1. The search yielded a total amount of 1111 instances, taking also into consideration those constructs that belong to the canonical form. Such a query would lead to the semi-schematic pattern [*Dime X*<sub>[indirect interrogative clause]</sub> *y te diré quién eres*] ⇔ ‘people are defined by the entity referred to in X’. Other possibilities in terms of queries would involve leaving *y te diré* ‘and I will tell you’ lexically specified, offering two potential slots. This would result in a more abstract construction<sup>5</sup>, which could have a notable impact on its degree of productivity, schematicity and entrenchment (see Goldberg 2006, 2019).

Out of the 1111 instances, 497 instances appear in the canonical form and 614 occurrences in the modified form, i.e. 55.26%. Adopting the productivity cline proposed by Barðdal (2008), token frequency is a relevant factor for speaker’s choice of model items in lower-level constructions. This reasoning would explain how the canonical, and highly frequent type *con quién andas* ‘who you walk with’, is responsible for the construction’s extensibility, i.e., the productivity of a slot conceived as the likelihood that a slot of a construction must be renewed with a new lexical item based on such highly frequent type (Goldberg 2019: 60). Based on the friendships that people cultivate (semantic constraint), we identified 35 analogical extensions (80 occurrences). Among these, *con quién vas* ‘who you go with’ appears 19 times, *con quién te juntas* ‘who you hang out with’ appears 14 times, and *quién es tu amigo* ‘who your friend is’ appears 4 times, as the most common analogical extensions

3 For our study, we used the macro-corpora esTenTen18 and deTenTen20 (Sketch Engine) for Spanish and German, respectively.

4 This resource is a distinctive multilingual compilation of popular proverbs in Spanish, offering equivalents in various languages, including German, Catalan, French, Galician, Ancient Greek, Modern Greek, English, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, and Basque. This includes potential variations and synonyms, as well as hypernyms and proverbial antonyms. You can access this resource at <https://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/refranero/>.

5 We are referring to a more schematic construction such as [*X y te diré Y*] ⇔ ‘X determines or has a great influence on Y’; e.g., “**Cuéntame de qué presumes y te diré de que careces**” ‘**In-form me on your boosts and I shall reveal your lacks**’ (esTenTen18, 66327358). For reasons of purpose of this contrastive study, this more schematic form will not be taken into account. This may be the subject of future studies.

(see examples 1-2). The slot productivity is further evidenced by the significant number of unique instances (hapax legomena), with 300 nonce instances out of 1111 occurrences (27% of potential productivity; see Baayen 2009: 209).

- (1) **Dime quiénes son tus amigos y te diré quién eres.** Todo hombre se alía con su propia imagen, y se aparta de su disimilitud. (esTenTen18, 8919352416) **‘Tell me who your friends are, and I will tell you who you are.** Every man allies himself with his own image, and turns away from his dissimilarity.’
- (2) Conocer personas diferentes a tu círculo: al parafrasear el dicho popular **dime con quién estás y te diré quién eres**, se expresa con mayor claridad que el conocimiento y los contactos son determinantes para el futuro. (esTenTen18, 9426829755) **‘Getting to know people outside your circle: paraphrasing the popular saying “tell me who you are with I will tell you who you are”, it becomes clearer that knowledge and contacts are decisive for the future.’**

The German proverb, for its part, presents a canonical form with significant formal variability, making it challenging to determine exactly what the prototypical form is. Furthermore, if there is no evidence of a single, commonly recognized canonical form, the concept of modification loses strength and is difficult to implement (see Pfeiffer 2017). Using the deTenTen20 corpus (Sketch Engine), we started with the most frequent form of the second part of the proverb, which is *und ich sage dir, wer du bist* ‘and I will tell you who you are’<sup>6</sup>. The number of occurrences of this search is 810. In addition to the sequence *un dich sage dir, wer du bist* ‘and I will tell you who you are’, we have observed similar forms such as *dann sage ich dir, wer du bist* ‘then I will tell you who you are’ and, to a lesser extent, *und weiß, wer du bist* ‘and I know who you are’, which we have omitted from the analysis for the sake of simplification. The analysis based on the sequence *und ich sage dir, wer du bist* ‘and I will tell you who you are’, which primarily aims to decipher the variability and creativity in indirect interrogative sentences, is just one of the possible approaches that could have been taken. It would also be possible to study variability in both clauses by searching for *und*

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<sup>6</sup> In this case, the comma is included in the search. Occurrences without a comma, that is, the phrase *und ich sage dir wer du bist* have not been considered for the study (amounting to 201 occurrences).



*ich sage dir* ‘and I will tell’ to describe the pattern [X, *und ich sage dir*, Y]. Other potential semi-schematic patterns that could be the subject of study in future research include [*Sage mir* X, *und ich sage dir*, Y] ‘tell me X and I will tell you Y’ or [*Zeige mir* X, *und ich sage dir*, Y] ‘show me X and I will tell you Y’<sup>7</sup>.

Out of 810 occurrences (462 with *sagen* ‘to tell’, 348 with *zeigen* ‘to show’), 612 instances exhibit modifications in the first part of the proverb (75.56%) and barely a quarter (198 occurrences, 24.44%) appear in a canonical form, which we will refer to as flexible because they all have the same meaning, paraphrased as ‘people are defined by the friendships they cultivate’, and in most cases, the same moralizing intention. The four most common variants are:

- (1) *Sag(e) mir(,) mit wem du umgehst(,) und ich sage dir, wer du bist* ‘Tell me who you associate with, and I will tell you who you are’ (49 occurrences).
- (2) *Zeig(e) mir deine Freunde(,) und ich sage dir, wer du bist* ‘Tell me your friends and I will tell you who you are’ (39 occurrences).
- (3) *Sag(e) mir(,) mit wem du gehst(,) und ich sage dir, wer du bist* ‘Tell me who you go with, and I will tell you who you are’ (22 occurrences).
- (4) *Sag(e) mir(,) wer deine Freunde sind(,) und ich sage dir, wer du bist* ‘Tell me who your friends are, and I will tell you who you are’ (18 occurrences).

There are other constructs that can be also considered part of the flexible canonical form, for example:

- *Sag(e) mir(,) mit wem du verkehrst(,) und ich sage dir, wer du bist* ‘Tell me who you socialize with, and I will tell you who you are’ (5 occurrences).
- *Sag(e) mir(,) mit wem du dich umgibst(,) und ich sage dir, wer du bist* ‘Tell me who you are surrounded yourself with, and I will tell you who you are’ (5 occurrences).
- *Sag(e) mir(,) wer dein Freund ist(,) und ich sage dir, wer du bist* ‘Tell me who your friend is, and I will tell you who you are’ (4 occurrences).
- *Sag(e) mir(,) mit wem du Freund bist(,) und ich sage dir, wer du bist* ‘Tell me who you are friends with, and I will tell you who you are’ (2 occurrences).
- *Sag(e) mir deine Freunde(,) und ich sage dir, wer du bist* ‘Tell me about your friends, and I will tell you who you are’ (2 occurrences).

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<sup>7</sup> Outside the scope of our study are the occurrences in which the main verb in the first part of the proverb is neither *sagen* ‘to tell’ nor *zeigen* ‘to show’, of the following type: “**Verkleide dich und ich sage dir, wer du bist.** Oder so ähnlich. Im Maskworld Onlineshop bekommst du Glitzerfummel, Superheldenkostüme, Perücken [ . . . ].” ‘**Dress up, and I will tell you who you are.** Or something like that. In the Maskworld online shop, you can find glittery outfits, superhero costumes, wigs, and more.’ (deTenTen20, 18423047636)

- *Zeig(e) mir dein Umfeld(,) und ich sage dir, wer du bist* ‘Show me your environment, and I will tell you who you are’ (2 occurrences).

We consider that in these occurrences, there is no modification because the original meaning of the proverb prevails, and therefore, there is no creative intent on the part of the speaker. To put it simply, the constructs presented above rely on two distinct patterns, one with an indirect interrogative sentence and another with a direct object NP in the first part of the proverb:

- i. *Sag(e) mir* + indirect interrogative clause + *und ich sage dir, wer du bist*.
- ii. *Zeig(e) mir* + NP + *und ich sage dir, wer du bist*.

Within the 348 occurrences with *zeigen* ‘to show’, only 41 instances can be considered canonical, accounting for just 11.2% within the pattern *Zeig(e) mir* + NP + *und ich sage dir wer du bist* ‘show me + NP + and I will tell you who you are’. In contrast, in the pattern with *sagen* ‘to tell’, the percentage of the canonical occurrences is 33.9%, leading us to conclude that the allostruction [*Zeig(e) mir* NP *und ich sage dir, wer du bist*] stands out due to a very high degree of entrenchment, given the low number of canonical constructs it licenses compared to non-canonical ones (Bybee 2013).

Out of the 198 canonical occurrences, 25 of them deviate further from the prototype because they exhibit a certain playful intent and creativity (see examples 3–4), or they feature less common vocabulary, such as *Sag(e) mir, mit wem du Umgang pflegst, und ich sage dir, wer du bist* ‘Tell me who you associate with, and I will tell you who you are’. These 25 occurrences are all unique and can be placed along a continuum between the classic canonical forms and the modified ones.

- (3) **Zeige mir deine 5 besten Freunde und ich sage dir, wer du bist.** Hier gilt das Gesetz des Durchschnitts der 5 besten Freunde. (deTenTen20, 16218779753) ‘**Show me your 5 best friends, and I will tell you who you are.** Here, the law of the average of the 5 best friends applies.’
- (4) Da beißt sich die Katze in den Schwanz, oder ein anderes Sprichwort abgewandelt: **Sag mir, wer Deine Partner sind und ich sage Dir, wer Du bist . . .** Aber theoretisch ist Ihr Gedanke natürlich richtig. (deTenTen20, 16588011681) ‘That’s a catch-22 situation, or to put it differently, **tell me who your partners are, and I will tell you who you are . . .** But theoretically, your thought is, of course, correct.’

The idea of flexibility of a canonical form is connected to the theory presented in other works (Mellado Blanco 2020a) that we have termed *fijación cognitiva* ‘cogni-

tive fixedness', which does not always imply lexical fixedness. Indeed, lexically filled phrasemes, of any type (idioms, formulas, proverbs), constitute cognitive units that consist of a structure and meaning and are stored in our mental lexicon. However, the meaning of these units is not tied to specific words but to a certain notion with diffuse profiles, hence the lexical flexibility observed in instances of the construction in corpora. The canonical form found in dictionaries is, in most cases, just one of the possible realizations of the phraseme, and not always the most frequent one. On top of that, depending on the dictionaries, the canonical form can be divergent, so taking the canonical form from dictionaries for conducting phraseological variability studies is not always the appropriate method (see Mellado 2020a: 23; Pfeiffer 2018). Lexicographically, the ideal situation is for this form to match the most prototypical discursive realization (see above Langlotz 2006: 178). It could be argued that the canonical form of phrasemes is based on the generalization of instances of a prototypical idealized pattern (Bybee 1998: 428). In this sense, "[i]dioms do not function as words but constitute linguistically pre-coded cognitive micro-models" (Langlotz 2006: 289), which also explains that, when necessary, they can adapt to the context and undergo creative modifications without losing their idiomatic nature. Against this background, it is worth highlighting the discrepancies between the canonical forms of both languages. On the one hand, the canonical form in Spanish relies on, following Barðdal (2008), a highly frequent type which serves as a model of productivity by means of analogical extensions. On the other hand, the canonical form in German does not rely on one only highly frequent type, but medium-to-low-frequent types that are bound together by the same abstract cognitive core, according to the semantic connectedness of the types following Van Wettere's (2021) reasoning (see also Goldberg 2019 on the notion of *coverage*, or Mellado Blanco and Ivorra Ordines 2023). The latter form could be conceived as a kind of "cognitive canonical form".

Finally, there are 300 hapaxes legomena in Spanish and 68 nonce instances in German, where originality, expressivity, and creativity are often directly related to the length of the instance (examples 5–6). Some nonce occurrences stand out for their sharp sense of humor and dispheemic nature (examples 7–8):

- (5) **Dime a qué noticias de la red le das importancia, qué tan confiables son tus fuentes, qué decides compartir y cuestionar, y te diré quiénes eres.** (esTenTen18, 7985605409)  
 'Tell me which internet news you prioritize, how reliable your sources are, what you choose to share and question, and I will tell you who you are.'

- (6) **Zeige mir die Stelle, an der ich behauptet habe, du hieltest StarCraft für gewaltverherrlichend und ich sage dir, wer du bist** [. . .]. (deTenTen20, 1353865372)  
**‘Show me the place where I claimed you consider StarCraft to promote violence, and I will tell you who you are.’**
- (7) Estos cruces verbales en defensa de los árboles marcados por una mirada tan sesgada en su espacialidad muestran que Macri, Cristina y Foster comparten el mismo paradigma espacial y afectivo de una nación [. . .]. **Dime qué tipos de árboles te preocupan y cuáles ignoras y te diré quién eres.** (esTenTen18, 11511346806).  
 ‘These verbal exchanges in defense of the trees, marked by such a biased perspective on their spatiality, demonstrate that Macri, Cristina, and Foster share the same spatial and affective paradigm of a nation [. . .] **Tell me which types of trees concern you and which ones you ignore, and I will tell you who you are.**’
- (8) Kleine Pinkologie NUR FÜR MÄNNER: **Sag’ mir, wie du pinkelst, und ich sage dir, wer du bist!** Schamhafter Typ: Kann nicht pinkeln, wenn jemand zusieht, und tut so, als ob er schon fertig wäre. (deTenTen20, 11467300580)  
 ‘Small Pinkology ONLY FOR MEN: **Tell me how you pee, and I will tell you who you are!** Shy Guy: Can’t pee when someone’s watching and pretends he’s already finished.’

As a way of summarizing, after the corpus-based analysis of both proverbs, we validated our initial hypothesis that the high index of variability of the first part of the proverb supports the existence of a type of snowclone, or following Stumpf’s (2016) terminology, of a *Modellbildung* (and not a *Modifikationsmuster*), both in Spanish and German. Indeed, the number of modified instances outnumber the number of occurrences corresponding to the canonical form(s); more precisely, the modified forms account for 55.26% in Spanish while in German 75.56%. For this reason, we confirm the existence of the productive semi-schematic construction [*Dime* X<sub>[indirect interrogative clause]</sub> *y te diré quién eres*] in Spanish and the allostructions<sup>8</sup> [*Sag(e) mir* X<sub>[indirect interrogative clause]</sub> *und ich sage dir, wer du bist*]

<sup>8</sup> Cappelle defines allostructions as “(truth-)semantically equivalent but formally distinct manifestations of a more abstractly represented construction” (Cappelle 2009: 187). Regarding the questions whether the allostructions are semantically and pragmatically equivalent and how this may conflict with the “principle of no synonymy” (or as recently reformulated “principle of no equivalence”), see Leclercq and Morin (2023).

and [Zeig(e) mir NP und ich sage dir, wer du bist] in German. Comparing the variability index between the two languages, it is evident that German is much more prone to lexical substitution, and the German allostructions, particularly [Zeig(e) mir NP und ich sage dir, wer du bist], exhibit a much higher degree of entrenchment than the Spanish semi-schematic pattern. The results regarding the number of hapaxes (27% in Spanish and 8.39% in German) demonstrate that the construction in Spanish is more productive in terms of nonce instances, which has a great impact on the schematicity of the construction. In any case, we are dealing with a model considered a “pattern of coining” rather than a “construction proper”, so its nature is different from that of “constructional idioms” (Taylor 2016: 464; see Ivorra Ordines in press or Mellado Blanco 2024). This conditions the relationship between these types of constructions and textual genre, as we will see in the following section.

## 4 Structure and Meaning of the Constructions

The form of the Spanish proverb aligns perfectly only with the German allostruction that includes the indirect interrogative clause, depending on the verb *decir* ‘to tell’ in Spanish and *sagen* ‘to tell’ in German (in the imperative form in both languages). It is interesting to note the conditional-consecutive value of the proverb’s structure, since  $V_{[imperative]} y/und V_{[future]}$  should be interpreted as ‘if X, then Y’. This means that conceptually the proverb in both languages is based on the logical formula ‘if A, then B’, which can also take other forms in proverbs, such as the German [Wer A, der B] (e.g., *Wer wagt, der gewinnt* ‘Who dares wins!’) or Spanish [Quien A, B]<sup>9</sup> (e.g., *Quien a hierro mata, a hierro muere* ‘Those that live by the sword die by the sword’; *Quien no arriesga, no gana* ‘Nothing ventured, nothing gained’).

The proverbs under study can be used in diverse situations, and this variability affects how they are understood and their significance. As a result, a part of their meaning is shaped by the specific contexts and situations in which they are employed. To put it in Fillmore’s (1975) terms, to comprehensively understand a sentence, it is essential to have some information about the context in which it was employed. In numerous instances, grasping the meaning of a sentence entails

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9 In this case, we are dealing with one of the formulas or “deep semantic models” of proverbs that Permjakov describes in his works (see Grzybek 2000), which are common to many languages (see Mieder 2004: 6–7). These patterns, unlike snowclones, are “Modelle der Analyse” (Fleischer 1997). See Mellado Blanco (2024) for further details.

being aware of the range of situations in which it can be suitably spoken and understanding the impact they have in that particular context. Following this line of reasoning, the proverbs in question have distinct denotative and pragmatic meanings depending on whether it appears in one of its canonical forms or in modified uses. In the former case, the denotative meaning is paraphrased as ‘people are defined by the friendships they cultivate’.

From a pragmatic point of view, it is necessary to differentiate between the social function of proverbs and their illocutionary functions (Burger 2015: 110–116). The social function, in the case of non-modified proverbs, carries a moralizing tone, while the proverb serves to convey an idea commonly accepted as an absolute truth by the linguistic community. This instructive and moralizing value has lost its strength over time in our Western world, and proverbs are no longer regarded as a source of authority. According to Mieder (2012: 147), the decline in didactic intent seems to coincide with the fact that new generations do not appreciate the moralistic tone of proverbs. In the proverbs under consideration, the use of the imperative mood of the verbs *decir* ‘to tell’ (*dime* ‘tell me’ in Spanish) and *zeigen* ‘to show’ and *sagen* ‘to tell’ (*zeig(e)/sag(e)* ‘show me/tell me’ in German) aligns with the instructive and moralizing nature of these phrasemes (Manero Richard 2000: 347) and also serves a clear generalizing and appellative function.

Concerning the illocutive functions, the canonical form of the proverb is often used as a warning, advice, or reproach to disapprove of or discourage certain friendships. Following a corpus-based methodology, in this usage, the most common illocutionary acts in both languages, related to the speaker’s intention, are:

- Prototypical directive illocutionary acts: WARNING, ADVICE, REPROACH.
- Prototypical expressive illocutionary act: CRITICISM.

Furthermore, in its canonical form, the proverb is used as a mechanism of cohesion of the discourse, fulfilling the discursive function of ARGUMENTATION (examples 9-13). Regarding the usage of domain of the canonical forms of the analyzed proverbs, politics predominates in both languages. In these contexts, the speaker criticizes coalitions between political parties.

- (9) Por otra parte, yo no acuso a VOX de ser proabortista. Sí lo son los partidos con los que Vidal Quadras quiere aliarse. Y advierto aquello de **dime con quién andas y te diré quién eres**. Todavía no ocurre eso . . . pero por si acaso. (esTenTen18, 6314498987)

‘On the other hand, I am not accusing VOX of being pro-abortion. The parties with which Vidal Quadras wants to ally are. And I caution against that

old saying **tell me who your friends are, and I will tell you who you are.** It has not happened yet . . . but just in case.’

- (10) Y el PSOE empeñado con la reacción del PP y Ciudadanos, **dime con quién andas y te diré quién eres.** (esTenTen18, 3796800194)  
 ‘And PSOE is determined by the reaction of PP and Ciudadanos, **tell me who you walk with and I will tell you who you are.**’
- (11) **Zeige mir, wer deine Freunde sind und ich sage dir, wer du bist,** lautet ein geläufiges Sprichwort. Im Falle der Zeugen Jehovas dürfte die Antwort demnach recht eindeutig ausfallen. (deTenTen20, 10271137475)  
 ‘The common saying goes, **show me who your friends are, and I will tell you who you are.** In the case of Jehovah’s Witnesses, the answer is likely to be quite clear.’
- (12) Es gibt ein Sprichwort: „**Sage mir, mit wem Du gehst und ich sage Dir, wer Du bist.**“ Ich hätte etwas mehr Taktgefühl von Herrn Bisky erwartet. (deTenTen20 7113102448)  
 ‘There is a saying: “**Tell me who you walk with, and I will tell you who you are.**” I would have expected Mr. Bisky to show a bit more tact.’
- (13) **Zeige mir Deine Freunde, und ich sage Dir, wer Du bist.** Meine Botschaft an Kanzler Kurz und Vizekanzler Strache lautet: Ihr habt die falschen Freunde! (deTenTen20, 24814120)  
 ‘**Show me your friends, and I will tell you who you are.** My message to Chancellor Kurz and Vice Chancellor Strache is: You have the wrong friends!’

The modifications found predominantly fall within the indirect interrogative clause in the case of the Spanish proverb and within the indirect interrogative clause or the NP, in accordance with the schemata (i) for Spanish and (ii) and (iii) for German<sup>10</sup>.

- (i) *Dime* + indirect interrogative clause + *y te diré quién eres.*

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<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that the pattern with *zeigen* ‘to show’ exhibits greater variability (88%) with regards to the canonical constructs, while the pattern with *sagen* ‘to tell’, the use of non-canonical forms is lower (66.1%).

- (14) **Dime que Converse llevas y te diré quién eres.** Si Converse logra destacarse es gracias a la renovación de sus colecciones en sus zapatos clásicos. (esTenTen18, 4473805197)

**‘Tell me which Converse you are wearing, and I will tell you who you are.** If Converse manages to stand out, it’s thanks to the renewal of their collections in their classic shoes.’

- (ii) *Sag(e) mir* + indirect interrogative clause + *und ich sage dir, wer du bist*.

- (15) **Sag mir, wie Du schläfst, und ich sage Dir, wer Du bist** und ob Deine Beziehung glücklich ist [. . .]. (deTenTen20, 112131)

**‘Tell me how you sleep, and I will tell you who you are** and whether your relationship is happy.’

- (iii) *Zeig(e) mir* + NP + *und ich sage dir, wer du bist*.

- (16) **“Zeig mir dein Büro und ich sage dir, wer du bist”:** Um zu verstehen, wie ein Unternehmen tickt, hilft oft ein Blick in dessen Arbeitsumgebung. (deTenTen20, 112131)

**‘Show me your office, and I will tell you who you are:** To understand how a company operates, a glance into its work environment often provides insight.’

The patterns under study constitute semi-schematic constructions with lexically filled items and empty slots that must be renewed in the discourse, placing them halfway in the lexicon-grammar continuum. What is interesting from a Construction Grammar approach is the possibility of specifying the structural, semantic and pragmatic properties, and constraints of their slots. Such a description can provide a solid empirical analysis of the properties of such items (Mellado Blanco and Ivorra Ordines 2023). Generally speaking, the slots in both languages are filled by means of a wide variety of semantic classes, which is an indicator of the productivity of the constructions (a pattern’s degree of openness; see Goldberg 2006: 93).

The results in Figure 1 and Figure 2 indicate that food and drinks are predominant in both languages, with a very similar percentage in both cases (21%). In this regard, it seems plausible that the semi-schematic patterns have specialized in both languages to emphasize the relationship between what/how a person eats and their personality. However, social networks and likes and preferences are more frequently mentioned in Spanish, whereas house decoration and telephone/computer games are more prevalent in German.



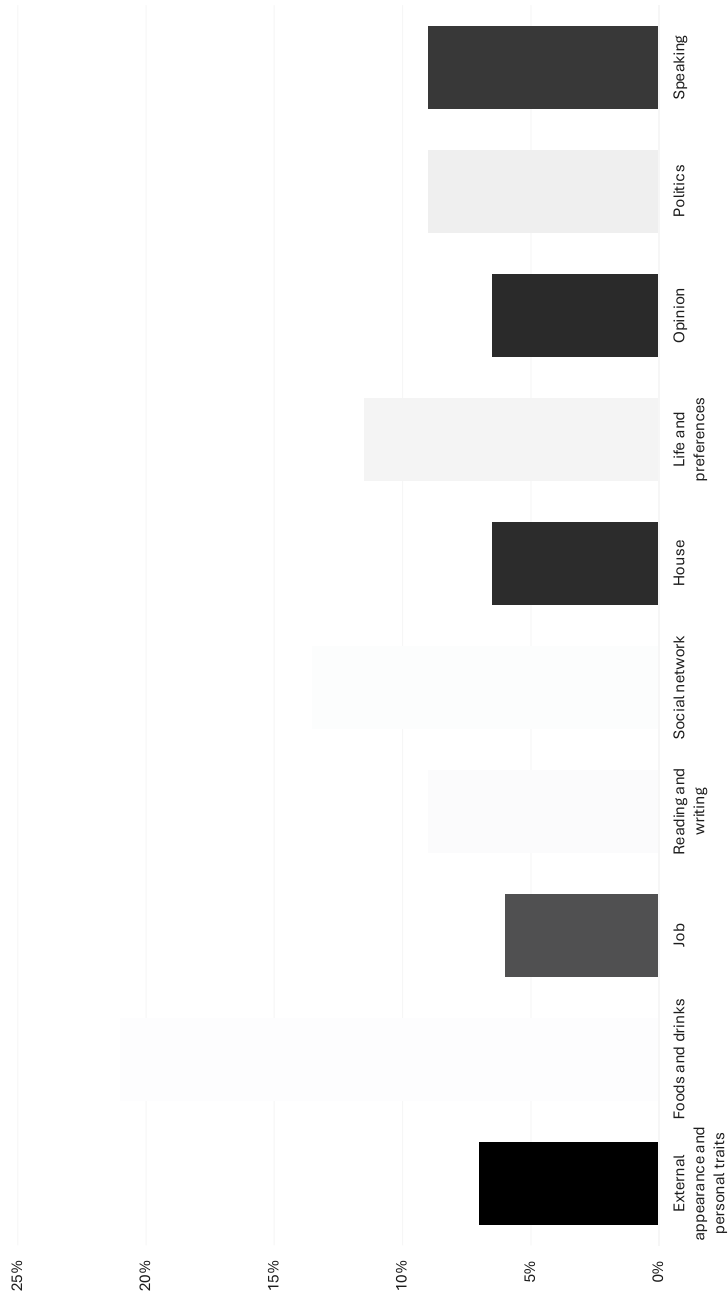


Figure 1: Semantic clusters of the creative potential of the semi-schematic construction in Spanish.

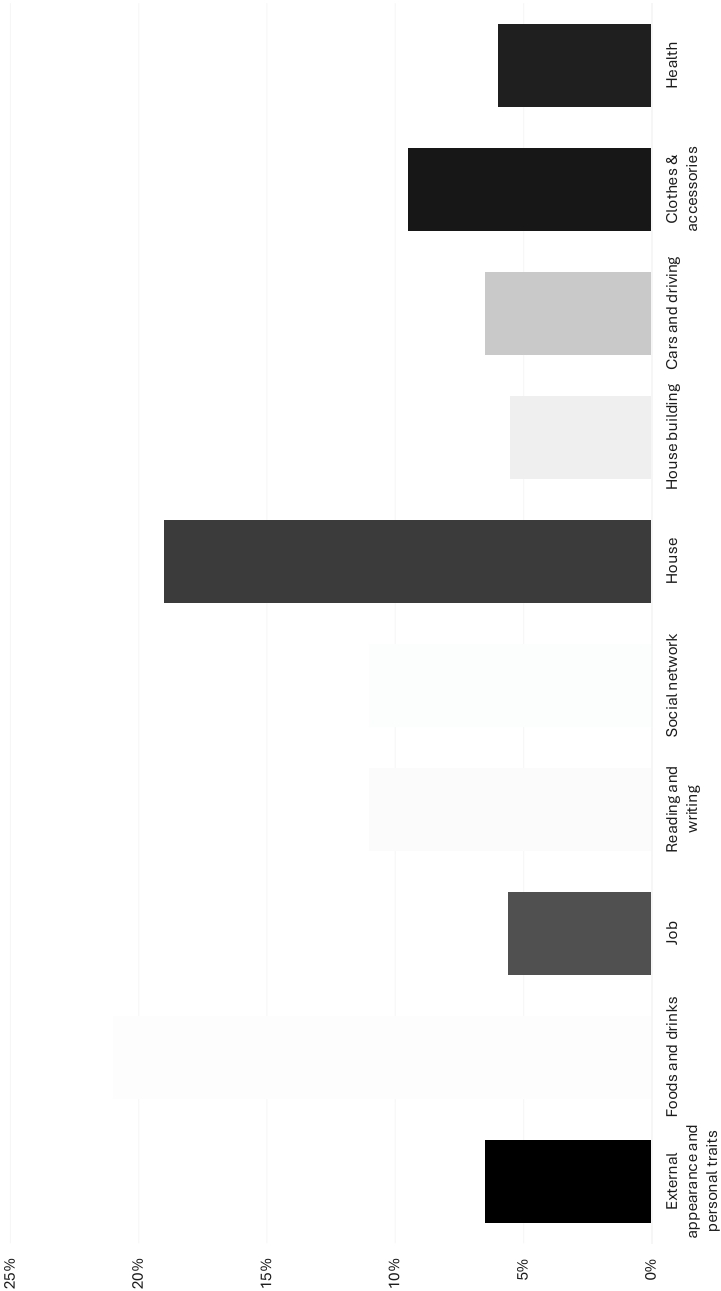


Figure 2: Semantic clusters of the creative potential of the semi-schematic constructions in German.

If the denotative meaning of the unmodified proverb is ‘people are defined by the friendships they cultivate’, the meaning of the modified instances depends on the semantic slot filler X in the semi-schematic constructions, in line with the different lexical-semantic clusters to which most instances of the construction can be attributed:

- i. [*Dime* X<sub>[indirect interrogative clause]</sub> *y te diré quién eres*]: ‘people are defined by the entity referred to in X’.
- ii. [*Sag(e) mir* X<sub>[indirect interrogative clause]</sub> *und ich sage dir, wer du bist*]: ‘people are defined by the entity referred to in X’.
- iii. [*Zeig(e) mir* X<sub>[NP]</sub> *und ich sage dir, wer du bist*]: ‘people are defined by the entity referred to in X’.

In this way, following the typical process of analogy that characterizes the emergence of semi-schematic constructions (patterns emerging from proverbs) from lexically saturated phrasemes, if X refers to food, the meaning of the instance will be ‘people are defined by the food they consume’. Conversely, if the slot filler alludes to clothing, the meaning will consequently be ‘people are defined by the clothing they wear’.

Regarding the pragmatic potential of the proverb, in the occurrences found in the corpus, the moralizing use of the proverb, through its canonical forms, co-exists with modified forms, which are the majority, i.e. slightly more than three-quarters of the total in German and half of the instances in Spanish. In line with Burger (2015: 147), our corpus analysis provides evidence of a shift in the pragmatic functions of the proverb when it appears in a modified form: “[d]as Sprichwort hat im Laufe der Jahrhunderte einen deutlichen Wandel seiner Funktionen erlebt. Insbesondere der einstmals dominierende didaktische Aspekt ist in den Hintergrund gerückt zugunsten einer spielerischen und kreativen textuellen Verwendung.”<sup>11</sup>

Unlike what happens in the canonical moralizing use of the proverb, modified instances, in certain contexts, serve a perlocutive function of PERSUASION. Indeed, one of the breeding grounds for modified forms is popular media (book titles) and advertising, and it is precisely in these areas where the speaker/writer resorts to creative forms with the ultimate goal of being more effective in persuading the listener/reader to purchase a product, whether it be a book (examples 17-19), or any other product advertised in commercials (examples 20-22).

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11 ‘Over the centuries, the proverb has undergone a clear transformation in its functions. In particular, the once-dominant didactic aspect has receded into the background in favour of a playful and creatively textual use’ (the translation is ours).

- (17) **Dime cómo te castigaron y te diré quién eres.** Como un grito de alerta llega este libro que aborda la manera como se está educando a los hijos, [. . .]. (esTenTen18, 15396077206)  
**“Tell me how you were punished, and I will tell you who you are”.** This book arrives as a warning, addressing the way children are being raised.’
- (18) **Dime lo que no comes y te diré quién eres.** Todos prometen lo mismo: pérdida de peso, aumento de la energía y, sobre todo, la salud de un roble. (esTenTen18, 814117731)  
**‘Tell me what you do not eat, and I will tell you who you are.** Everyone promises the same thing: weight loss, increased energy, and above all, the health of an oak tree.’
- (19) Neues Buch über Luzerner Hobbygärtnerinnen und Hobbygärtner **„Zeig mir deinen Garten und ich sage dir, wer Du bist“.** (deTenTen20, 184880024)  
**‘New book about hobby gardeners in Lucerne: “Show me your garden, and I will tell you who you are.’**
- (20) **Dime qué zapato llevas y te diré quién eres.** [. . .] En B&W tenemos un amplio catálogo de zapatos de moda para mujer donde puedes encontrar el calzado perfecto para ti. (esTenTen18, 4455486530)  
**‘Tell me what shoe you are wearing, and I will tell you who you are.** [. . .] At B&W, we have an extensive catalog of fashionable women’s shoes where you can find the perfect footwear for you.’
- (21) **„Sage mir was Du ißt und ich sage Dir, wer Du bist“.** Auf zum Spielplatz! Eis-Lieferservice in Wien Der Frühling ist endlich da [. . .]. (deTenTen20, 8744670250)  
**“Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you who you are.”** Off to the playground! Ice cream delivery service in Vienna. Spring is finally here.’
- (22) In kaum einem Raum gilt das Motto **„zeige mir, wie du wohnst und ich sage dir, wer du bist“**, ausgeprägter als im Wohn- und Essbereich. Ein gut sortiertes Einrichtungshaus und Möbelladen [. . .]. (deTenTen20, 15912060148)  
**‘In hardly any room does the motto “show me how you live, and I will tell you who you are”** apply more than in the living and dining area. A well-stocked furniture store and home decor shop.’

The fact that these semi-schematic patterns are linked to specific textual genres indicates that they evoke what Schmid (2020) calls pragmatic associations that are

mediated by contextual factors. Pragmatic associations indeed contribute to the routinization and schematization of these semi-schematic constructions in three different ways (Schmid 2014: 275):

- (i) Their effectiveness in communication as persuasive mechanisms can lead to frequent usage, promoting gradual chunking process both within individual minds and across a community of speakers.
- (ii) Repeated pragmatic associations can reinforce the symbolic connections of previously chunked elements, thereby increasing their stability within the speech community and granting the status of “social gestalts” (Feilke 1996).
- (iii) Pragmatic associations can strengthen the productive use of schemas related to recurring situations and communicative intentions. Being linked to a specific discursive function (such as popular media and advertising) enhances their frequent and productive usage, contributing to contextual entrenchment.

What we observe from these semi-schematic patterns is that the emergence of novel associations between form and meaning (in the process of constructionalization<sup>12</sup>) has not only been accompanied by shifts in schematicity, productivity and compositionality (Traugott and Trousdale 2013; see Ivorra Ordines in press or Mellado Blanco 2024), but also by shifts in the specialization of their instances in terms of textual genres. More precisely, the textual genres in which these partly filled patterns of the proverb most frequently appear, with a clear predominance of the first category, are as follows:

- (a) Self-help manuals, personality tests, popular texts on health and psychology. The message conveyed through the pattern is that there are traits of the human being that inevitably relate to certain personality characteristics, whether it is how a person wears their hair, their color preferences, what they eat, what they read, how they write, etc. Within these genres, the sub-genre of book titles or popular articles stand out. By choosing a modified proverb, the title fulfills its characteristic appellative function as a lure to generate curiosity in the reader and encourage them to read.
- (b) Advertising texts for homes/gardens and clothing/shoes, including accessories and complements.

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<sup>12</sup> While the fundamental trigger for the emergence of these types of constructions is, from a cognitive perspective, analogy (see Ivorra Ordines in press), in these schemata generated by lexical substitution, it is not entirely clear whether, as Langlotz (2006: 205) suggests, we are also dealing with a phenomenon of contamination, wordplay or even lapsus. In our opinion, this issue should be resolved on a case-by-case basis, depending on the creative intent of the speaker (see Mellado Blanco 2020a).

In this context, the notion of “discourse patterns”, introduced by Östman (1999) and further elaborated in Östman (2005), is prevalent to account for the interdependence between clusters of grammatical features and certain types of texts or genres. Such is the case of headlines, as examined by Östman (2005), whose morphosyntax in structures like *Dog saves baby* or *Mother drowned baby* are fully conventional and expected, with the absence of articles (both definite and indefinite) forming an integral part of the convention. Östman argues that such conventions can be theoretically formalized in terms of discourse patterns, “by specifying a construct as [dp headline], we indicate that articles do not unify in the manner they would by default” (Östman 2005: 140), which would allow to preserve certain unification-based formalism principles from linguistic theory (as proposed by Kay and Fillmore 1999; see Hoffmann 2022 or Sommerer 2023 for an example of a constructional template). The goal is not to replace the insights generated by discourse analysis but to incorporate those that align with the conventions well-established in grammatical theory. This means that information regarding the pragmatic, discursal, textual, and register characteristics linked to a specific form can be incorporated into the meaning aspect of the corresponding construction, in addition to purely semantic details (Fried and Östman 2004). In Construction Grammar, the term “meaning” encompasses all the conventionalized elements of a construction’s function. This may comprise not only attributes of the situation described by the utterance but also aspects of the discourse context in which the utterance is situated (Croft and Cruse 2004: 258; see Antonopoulou and Nikiforidou 2011).

When the usage of domain is not that of headlines or book titles, nor is it advertising, modified forms serve to cohere the discourse and have the illocutive function of ARGUMENTATION (examples 23–25). This is the function that the proverb in its canonical form also fulfills, as is mentioned above (see examples above).

- (23) Son de un mal gusto tremendo, riéndose de las enfermedades de sus pacientes. **Dime de qué te ríes, y te diré quién eres.** Hay cosas con las que simplemente no se juega. (esTenTen18, 6545066559)  
 ‘They have a terrible sense of taste, laughing at their parents’ illnesses. **Tell me what you laugh at, and I will tell you who you are.** There are things that you simply should not joke about.’
- (24) –La cuestión es como cobras a tus clientes. **Dime cómo cobras y te diré quién eres.** Por eso el replanteamiento del modo de cobrar. (esTenTen18, 2453197000)  
 ‘–The question is how you charge your clients. **Tell me how you charge, and I will tell you who you are.** That is why the reconsideration of way to charge.’

- (25) **Sage mir, worüber du lachst, und ich sage dir, wer du bist.** Kinder unter Zehn lachen am liebsten über Witze, in denen gepupst wird. (deTenTen20, 12352035041)

**‘Tell me what you laugh about, and I will tell you who you are.** Children under ten prefer to laugh at jokes in which someone farts.’

Considering the semantic clusters mentioned in Figures 1 and 2, an interesting phenomenon is the emergence of micro-constructions that are originally phraseological quotes, as they have a known author (similarly as how snowclones work following Hartmann and Ungerer 2023; see Ivorra Ordines in press or Mellado Blanco 2024). In this respect, diffusion plays a role in how conventions (emergent micro-constructions and potential analogical extensions) spread within a speech community or its subgroups, across various genres and types of text, and across different activities and situations (Schmid 2020). Driven by the diffusion process, successful emergent micro-constructions gradually extend their influence beyond their original regional and social boundaries within the speech community, expanding into new areas of discourse and application. A common pathway of diffusion “goes from use in a specialized community related to topics of shared interest to its members to use by more and more members of the larger community in more and more contexts” (Schmid 2020: 94). Three different originally phraseological quotes were found in both corpora:

- The expression “Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai ce que tu es” ‘tell me what you eat, and I will tell you who you are’ in French, appearing in *Physiologie du goût*, one of the most famous literary works by the French gastronome Jean-Antelme Brillat-Savarin (1825–1926), a work considered one of the foundational texts of gastronomy. In such a case both the Spanish calque “Dime qué comes y te diré quién eres” ‘Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are’ (43 occurrences in esTenTen18) and the German calque “Sag(e)/Zeig(e) mir, was du isst, und ich sage dir, was du bist” ‘Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are’ emerge (14 occurrences in deTenTen20). Cluster: food and drinks.
- The expression “Dis-moi ce que tu lis, je te dirai ce que tu es” ‘Tell me what you read, and I will tell you who you are’ by the French magistrate, lawyer and historian Pierre de la Gorçe (1846–1934). In this example the Spanish calque “Dime qué lees y te diré quién eres” ‘Tell me what you read, and I will tell you who you are’ (14 occurrences in esTenTen18) and the German calque “Sag(e)/Zeig(e) mir, was du liest, und ich sage dir, wer/was du bist” ‘Tell me what you read, and I will tell you who you are’ (5 occurrences in deTenTen20). Cluster: reading and writing.

- The expression “Sag(e)/Zeig(e) mir, wie du baust, und ich sage dir, wer du bist” ‘Show me how you build, and I will tell you who you are’ by the German writer, dramatist, journalist, and translator Christian Morgenstern (1871–1914) (Duden 12). This emergent micro-construction appears 8 times in deTenTen20. Cluster: house building.

This phenomenon demonstrates the entrenchment of the semi-schematic constructions, capable of generating new micro-constructions based on the token frequency of certain types (see Ivorra Ordines and Mellado Blanco 2021; Mellado Blanco and Ivorra Ordines 2023). It is worth noting that these micro-constructions are supported by a specific author, who most likely was not the person who coined the form but only reproduced it, and as a public figure, contributed to its dissemination. From this perspective, the process of diffusion facilitates change in spatial, social, and stylistic dimensions of conventionality, that is, “spread from urban centres to rural areas or vice versa, from higher and middle social classes to lower ones or vice versa, from colloquial to formal contexts or vice versa, or from technical genres to everyday ones and vice versa” (Schmid 2020: 201).

## 5 Conclusions

The corpus-based study carried out revealed that the Spanish proverb *Dime con quién andas y te diré quién eres* and its prototypical German equivalents *Sag(e) mir, mit wem du umgehst, und ich sage dir, wer du bist* and *Zeig(e) mir deine Freunde, und ich sage dir, wer du bist* tend to exhibit variability in the interrogative clause and in the NP (in German), albeit to varying degrees. In line with Stumpff’s proposal (2016), the fact that more than half of the occurrences found in the respective searches feature a modification of the canonical form in the first part of the proverb confirms our initial hypothesis that the proverb has developed a pattern closely related to the notion of snowclone following Hartmann & Ungerer (2023), that is, a semi-schematic construction through lexical substitution (Ivorra Ordines in press; Mellado Blanco 2024). This means that we cannot speak of occasional modifications but rather systematic variability. The semi-schematic constructions in German are shown to be highly productive by means of non-canonical forms with 77.56% of the instances alluding to modified forms compared to the 55.26% in Spanish. In German, to be more precise, the pattern with *zeigen* ‘to show’ exhibits a considerable variability (88%) compared to the canonical constructs. On top of that, both constructions can be seen as productive in terms of semantic dispersion considering the wide variety of semantic clusters,



while the number of hapaxes is relatively high in the construction in Spanish in comparison with the German ones (27% and 8.39%, respectively).

Concerning the slot fillers of both constructions, there is a parallel development in the semantic fields of modifications in Spanish and German. However, while the lexical-semantic of the slot fillers show some overlap, there are also discrepancies, with varying degrees of prototypicality among those that do not align. Notably, the cluster of ‘food/drink’ stand out among the clusters in both languages.

German also exhibits a higher index of variability in its canonical form, not allowing us to determine just a single form but rather two (with an interrogative clause and with a direct complement), and within each form, various lexical variants are detected in the corpus. This leads us to reinforce the idea of cognitive fixedness rather than lexical fixedness in the German proverb, with a flexible lexicalized core referring to people’s friendship. Moreover, the presence of two distinct syntactic patterns accounts for the coexistence of two allostructions in German, unlike in Spanish. We also confirmed the existence of the productive semi-schematic construction [*Dime* X<sub>[indirect interrogative clause]</sub> *y te diré quién eres*] in Spanish and the allostructions [*Sag(e) mir* X<sub>[indirect interrogative clause]</sub> *und ich sage dir, wer du bist*] and [*Zeig(e) mir* NP *und ich sage dir, wer du bist*] in German.

Regarding the meaning of the constructions, we noted that there are differences in modified uses compared to the canonical form(s). While the denotative meaning is similar (‘people are defined by X’ with X corresponding to the slot filler of the construction [*Dime* X *y te diré quién eres*]), the pragmatic meaning varies. In this way, the social function by means of which the proverb is perceived as a moral authority, which has been present throughout the centuries, is no longer evident in the modified uses of the proverb, yet it is exploded. A new perlocutionary function has indeed emerged, that of PERSUASION, for the purpose of argumentation, especially in textual genres such as advertising and popular science books, particularly in the subgenre of book titles, which are primarily aimed at promoting the purchase of the work. As for illocutionary functions, in other literary genres (such as journalist language: articles on politics, in particular), similar functions are observed in the canonical forms. These functions include ADVICE, REPROACH, and CRITIQUE.

Finally, this study has highlighted that social and contextual usage constraints are essential characteristics of the constructional templates, which allows to extend the domain of conventional form-meaning associations –focusing on entrenched formal and discourse-pragmatic properties. Additionally, we have shed light on the connection between lexical features and specific speech acts, potentially allowing a comprehensive examination of idiomaticity within discourse patterns, which encompass various levels of productivity and fixedness.

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