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**Proverbs in everyday speech versus frozen proverbs in dictionaries and texts: a
corpus-based study**

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Abstract

When proverbs are used in everyday speech, speakers tend to reproduce them with the same lexical and morphosyntactic structure and apply them to the same situations and contexts.

The aim of this paper is to highlight the differences between proverbs when used popularly in speech and their actual form and meaning in proverb dictionaries, collections or compilations, diachronic and synchronic corpora, literary quotations and the daily press.

Our research focuses on a small selection of traditional Spanish proverbs collected in Andalusia, southern Spain.

The selection includes, among others, the following proverbs:

(a) *No es señora quien lo es, sino quien lo sabe ser.* [A lady is not she who is a lady but she who knows how to be one.]

(b) *No se puede luchar contra el destino, el que nace lechón muere cochino.* [One cannot fight against destiny, he who is born a piglet dies a pig.]

(c) *Tiene el mal del milano, las patas malas y el pico sano.* [He is like the sick kite, bad legs and a healthy beak.]

Sometimes proverbs are adapted according to the speaker and thus the canonical *señor* (gentleman) becomes *señora* (lady) as in (a). Other times, speakers add an extension to a single-sentence proverb which functions as a sort of down-to-earth rhymed illustration, as seen in the first part of (b). However, and most often, lexical synonymic or hyponymic substitution is to be found, as shown in (c) where *patas malas* (bad legs) is used instead of *alas quebradas* (broken wings) and *pico* (beak) is used instead of *papo* (crop)/

Preliminary results demonstrate that proverbs are not frozen or immutable multi-words units kept in dusty boxes in old museums but that they take a new life when used by speakers in everyday situations. Further research that would use the same methodological approach could serve the purpose of updating, or at least completing, the data found in dictionaries and proverb collections.

Key-words: Spanish proverbs, orally transmitted proverbs, variant forms, proverb modifications, semantic shift, corpus-based analysis

Introduction

The genesis of this research is a list of fifty orally transmitted proverbs within the same family in Andalusia, southern Spain (see appendix). Most of them are related to life conditions in a rural environment during Franco's dictatorship. At that time, censorship was imposed to artistic, literary and academic activities but it also reached people's everyday life. Some issues could not be discussed, at least in public. In this context, proverbs were widely used to provide "survival strategies" to the younger generation. This research work originated to pay homage to the Celis Villalba family for their paremiological inheritance and life lessons.

Sources of the research, selection of proverbs and method of analysis

The original list of fifty orally transmitted proverbs was randomly gathered out of memory. Some of them were commonly used but others were not or seemed to have some specific features or variations. For this piece of research, we used several sources. First, the corpora of the Royal Academy of the Spanish language, that is the *Corpus diacrónico del español* (CORDE), a diachronic corpus that comprises texts from the early times of the Spanish language up to 1975, the *Corpus del español actual* (CREA), a corpus of the last quarter of the 20th century, and the *Corpus del español del siglo XXI* (CORPES XXI), a corpus of contemporary Spanish of the 21st century. Then the orally transmitted proverbs and their potential canonical forms were checked in the proverb collection by Hernán Núñez published in 1555. After consulting the corpora of the Royal Spanish Academy, we drew up a shorter list (actually seven proverbs) with specific lexico-grammatical features, including different shades of meaning between the canonical form and the orally transmitted form of the proverbs in the original list. The final step was to do research on written sources where those proverbs appeared, mainly literary works and the press.

We completed our research by searching for the canonical forms in the database of the *Refranero multilingüe* (multilingual proverb database) from the *Centro Virtual Cervantes* from which their figurative sense was taken. The *Refranero multilingüe* (RM) was used as a source to start classifying the proverbs according to different criteria trying to focus on what we considered specific features of the orally transmitted proverbs in the original list. We realized that there were lexical and syntactic differences between proverbs in this list and their corresponding forms in the RM and even found that some of the orally transmitted forms provided an extension functioning as a rhymed illustration of the canonical form.

Depending on the information retrieved from these previous sources and with the aim of finding earlier examples we used the archives of the *Hemeroteca digital* (Digital Newspaper Library) of the National Library of Spain, *Google Scholar*, *Google Books* and *Europresse*, a database which gives access to thousands of newspapers and magazines in several languages, thus making it possible to compile specific journalistic corpora for a given language and a given period.

For each of the seven proverbs that will be discussed below we provide the literal translation into English, the context of use of the orally transmitted form, the figurative sense of the canonical form, an analysis of the linguistic changes observed and some recorded written examples from corpora. It should be pointed out that the forms that have been chosen for the

titles of each of the following sections are the orally transmitted forms and not the canonical forms.

No es señora quien lo es, sino quien lo sabe ser.

The literal translation of this proverb is ‘A lady is not she who is a lady but she who knows how to be one.’ This orally transmitted form is generally used by women who think very high of themselves when referring to other women who, in their opinion, do not do so-called ‘traditional women’s chores’. The canonical form conveys a slightly different figurative sense that can be glossed as ‘What makes people respectable is not their birth but the way they conduct themselves’.

The most outstanding difference between the orally transmitted form (henceforth OTF) and the canonical form (henceforth CF) is the semantic restriction of the OTF as it refers specifically to women and how they relate to each other.

All the examples found in corpora and other written records are in the masculine, that is they use *señor* instead of *señora*. The canonical form translates as ‘A gentleman is not he who is born a gentleman but he who knows how to be one’: *Non es señor el que señor nace, sino el que lo sabe ser* (Martín Caro y Cejudo, 1792) and *No es señor quien señor nace sino quien sabe serlo* (Aguilera, 1955) ¹. There is also a variant form of the nominal constituent (*caballero* instead of *señor*, both of them meaning ‘gentleman’), found in an 18th-century proverb collection (Sbarbi, 1876).

Only one example has been found in the corpora of the Royal Spanish Academy (1) and very few in the archives of the *Hemeroteca digital*, exactly five, of which three include the variant form *noble* (nobleman) (2).

- (1) PRÍNCIPE Id con Dios. / MÚSICO 1 El cielo dé a vuestra alteza, señor, un siglo de vida, amén. / PRÍNCIPE Id con Dios. / MÚSICO 1 ¡Qué gran valor! / MÚSICO 2 ¡Qué cordura! / MÚSICO 1 Octavio, ven. **No es señor quien señor nace, sino quien lo sabe ser.** (CORDE, Luis Vélez de Guevara, c. 1630, *Reinar después de morir*)
- (2) Bienaventuradas las provincias que tienen autoridades de iniciativas propias, y bienaventurados los pueblos que saben cumplir una de las Obras de Misericordia, que **no es noble quien noble nace, sino quien lo sabe ser;** (*El Globo*, Madrid, 1875)

Example (1) is an extract of a comedy that illustrates the use of the canonical form in literature and which, following the CF, includes *nacer* (be born) and *señor* (gentleman) whereas in the OTF the verb is *ser* (to be) and the noun is *señora* (lady).

No se puede luchar contra el destino: el que nace lechón muere cochino.

The literal sense of this proverb is ‘One cannot fight against destiny, he who is born a piglet dies a pig.’ This OTF is used to express a reproof towards someone who recurrently behaves or acts in the same way. The canonical form in the RM, *Quien nace lechón muere cochino*, is registered with the following figurative sense: ‘It is impossible to change one’s nature when one has received it by genetic inheritance’² and does not include the rhymed introduction used in the OTF, *No se puede luchar contra el destino* (one cannot fight against destiny), which functions as a general maxim preceding the CF to provide a down-to-earth illustration of the proverb itself.

Only one example has been found in the corpora of the Royal Spanish Academy (3), a very recent use in literature, most interestingly with a positive connotation, whereas the idea of reproof prevails in all the other examples. Example (4) has been retrieved from *Google Books* and includes a variant form of the rhymed introduction of the OTF, *es luchar contra el sino*, the first line of a quatrain with a rhyme scheme ABBA. In the case of (5), found in the archives of the *Hemeroteca Digital*, it should be noted that the proverb is not only used in direct speech (signaled by the quotation marks) but is also preceded by *como dirían en mi tierra* (as they would say in my region), which reinforces the idea of its current use in the spoken language.

(3) No conocía otra vida. Nació en un palacio rodeado de comodidades y sirvientes y murió en otro sin que le faltara bienestar y asistentes. Porque **el que nace lechón, muere cochino**. (CORPES XXI, Nieves Concostrina, 2018, *Pretérito imperfecto*)

(4) Es luchar contra el sino / Con que vienen al mundo ciertas gentes, / Querer hacerlas pulcras y decentes: / **El que nace lechón muere cochino**. (“El lavatorio del cerdo”, 1861-62, Miguel Agustín Príncipe y Vidaud, *Fábulas en verso castellano*)

(5) Para el portavoz adjunto del Grupo Parlamentario Popular, Luis Ramallo, “cada uno se retrata como es, y como dirían en mi tierra, **el que nace lechón muere cochino**”. (*El País*, 12/04/1988)

This proverb follows the same paremiological pattern as other proverbs with the same meaning: *quien negro nace, negro muere* (he who is born a black man dies a black man); *quien tronco nacio, tronco murió* (he who was born physically disabled, dies physically disabled), *quien asno nace, asno muere (o yace)* (he who is born an ass, dies an ass); *quien tuerto nace, tuerto se yace* (he who is born a one-eyed man, dies a one-eyed man) (Lida 1958: 27). This pattern is very productive in Spanish and particularly in the different national varieties of the Spanish language as can be observed in the quotation below:

Spanish zoonymic variants meaning “fate is unavoidable” are quoted by Arora (1998), like sp. *el que nació para caballo ha de morir pastando* *he who was born a horse, will die grazing; *el que nace tatú muere cavando* [Bol.] *he who was born a tatú (armadillo), he dies digging (Ibid.); *quien nace lechón muere cochino* *he who was born a sucker-pig dies as a swine (Mex.); [...] (Pamies-Bertrán, 2012: 295)

A veces se besan manos que se quisieran ver cortás.

This OTF is used as a survival strategy, as a piece of advice given to someone in a lower rank when dealing with a superior. It translates literally as ‘Sometimes one kisses hands that one would like to see cut off.’ The figurative sense of the CF, *Muchos besan manos que querrían ver cortadas* (Hernán Núñez, 1555) or *Muchos besan manos ke kerrían ver kemadas; o kortadas* (Correas, 1627) can be glossed as ‘Sometimes one has to make an effort to be dutiful and respectful to whom one despises.’

The most relevant feature of the OTF is the inclusion of the frequency adverb *a veces* (sometimes) that appears in initial position in place of the pronoun *muchos* (many people). This leads us to infer that the advice provided should not always be followed, but only when needs be. The use of the shortened form *cortás*, a dialectal truncated form of the standard past participle *cortadas*, is the reflection of a typical oral feature in the speech of Andalusian Spanish.

Contrary to the two previous proverbs, which only had one token in corpora, there are thirteen tokens of this proverb in CORDE although none in CREA or CORPES XXI, which accounts for the relative extent of use in the past and its decay in present-day Spanish.

Most of the examples are from the 16th century and show different types of variations, however, example (6) is the only case in which the frequency adverb *a veces* is used, although not in initial position. As for example (7), a later use of the proverb, it should be noted the use of the variant form *quemadas* (burnt) instead of *cortadas* (cut off) and the inclusion of the interpolated metalinguistic comment *decía mi abuela* (my grandmother used to say).

(6) y que las mugeres puedan / tanto, que nos humillemos / a ellas y las amemos; / pero no por esso quedan / desculpadas, / antes muy más condenadas / con sus pliegues y doblezes; / **manos se besan a vezes / que devrian ser cortadas** (CORDE, Cristóbal de Castillejo, 1544, *Diálogo de Mujeres*)

(7) Es como lo dice Vuesa Señoría, contestó con desfachatez el imprudente barbero; y no ha sido el menor de mis sacrificios el aparecer favorito y paniaguado del Conde de la Gomera y de algunos de sus amigos. **Manos besamos que quisiéramos ver quemadas**, decía mi abuela, señor Visitador. (CORDE, José Milla y Vidaurre, 1867, *El visitador*)

Tiene el mal del milano, las patas malas y el pico sano.

This proverb, which has a second part with a parallel opposite symmetrical pattern, translates as ‘He/she is like the sick kite, bad legs and a healthy beak.’ This OTF is generally used as a reproof to someone who willingly accepts an invitation to eat but rejects a suggestion to work. The CF, *El mal del milano, las alas quebradas y el pico sano*, has two distinct senses. On the one hand, it refers to people who being cowardly boast about their bravery (*Diccionario de Autoridades*). On the other hand, it can also refer to people who being healthy and with a good appetite, pretend to be sick (Suñé Benages 2008: 115).

The OTF features lexical variation if compared with the forms found in Marqués de Santillana 1454, Hernán Núñez 1555 and Correas 1627, all of which include *papo* (crop) instead of *pico* (beak). Although the use of *papo* was coeval with *pico* in the 16th century, as observed in (8) and (9), the noun *papo* was more widely used than *pico* at that time.

Ten tokens of the proverb have been found in CORDE although none in CREA or CORPES XXI. It is important to point out that most of the cases that appear in the different corpora go back to the 16th century and that there is no real synchronic canonical form one can refer to, hence the importance of the OTF under analysis.

(8) Elicia. Matado sea tal garguero. Por ella se puede dezir, **el mal del milano, las alas quebradas y el papo sano** / Areusa. Y cómo se dirá con razón esso y más, pues con tal herida tiene tales alientos. (CORDE, Gaspar Gómez de Toledo, 1536, *Tercera parte de la tragicomedia de Celestina*)

(9) Dixo don Francisco Fenollet: Ximeno, por su mal conoce el ajeno. / Dixo Joan Fernandez: Don Francisco, vos no quereis acabar de conoscer ese milan; por él se dixo: **El mal de milano, las alas quebradas y el pico sano**. (CORDE, Luis Milán, 1561, *El Cortesano*)

This is one of the proverbs found in the *Diálogo de la lengua* by Juan de Valdés (González Martín, 1997: 285), *El mal del milano, el ala quebrada y el papo sano*, at a time, the 16th century, when proverbs were used as illustrations to teach specific grammatical features, in this case the use of the masculine determiner *el* and not the feminine *la* before a feminine noun, *ala*, for euphonic reasons.

Hay ojitos que se enamoran de lagañas.

The literal translation of this proverb is ‘There are little eyes that fall in love with eye mucus’. This causal contradictive proverb (Dundes 1981: 57) is used to pass a personal judgment on the members of a couple in which one is more virtuous than the other, to the eyes of the speaker. This proverb is not registered in the RM, so there is no synchronic canonical form but a diachronic one *Ojos hay que de lagaña se pagan*³ (Hernán Núñez 1555, Pedro Vallés 1549) whose figurative sense can be glossed as ‘Taste is not always governed by reason’.

Several lexico-grammatical changes can be observed if the OTF is compared with the CF. First of all, the hyperbaton found both in the topic and in the comment of the CF (*ojos hay* instead of *hay ojos* and *de lagaña se pagan* instead of *se pagan de lagaña*) is absent in the OTF which, besides, uses the modern verb *enamorarse* instead of the dated *pagarse* and introduces the diminutive *ojitos*.

This is the proverb that has the greatest number of tokens in corpora, 14 tokens in CORDE, but, as is practically the general case, none in CREA or in CORPES. The relative high frequency can probably be due to the fact that the first recorded written record is found in one of the most influential literary works in Spain together with *Don Quixote*, that is *The Tragicomedy of Calisto and Melibea*, known as *La Celestina* (10). The proverb is then used more than a century later, this time with the verb *enamorarse*, as in (11) and (12) and not with the former verb *agradarse*.

(10) ¿A quién “gentil”? ¡Mal me haga Dios si ella lo es ni tiene parte dello, sino que **hay ojos que de lagaña se agradan**! Santiguarme quiero de tu necedad y poco conocimiento. (CORDE, Fernando de Rojas, 1499, *La Celestina*)

(11) Rojas.- Ésa misma, pues tenía muy mala cara, era un poquita sucia y no sé si tuerta; y sobre todo, más vieja que el alcabala. / Sol.- Señor, **ojos hay que de lagaña se enamoran**. / Rojas.- Quien feo ama, hermoso le parece. (CORDE, Agustín de Rojas Villadrando, 1603, *El viaje entretenido*)

(12) Vase Valenzuela y sale Gálvez. / Gálvez. ¡Que haya mujer de tan mal gusto! Por ésta se debió de decir que **hay ojos que de legañas se enamoran**. (CORDE, Anónimo, c. 1611, *El hospital de los podridos*)

Por una vez que maté un gato, me llamaron matagatos.

This OTF, which translates as ‘Once I killed a cat and, from then on, I was called the cat-killer’, is a quite transparent proverb about someone’s bad reputation. It should be noted that the verb in this proverb is in the first person singular and that is used by the speaker to justify an exceptional wrong behaviour or action when they are accused of doing it regularly. The figurative sense of the CF, *Por un perro que maté, mataperros me llamaron*, can be glossed as ‘Sometimes an isolated case is enough to give somebody a bad reputation.’ (RM). The main difference between the CF and the OTF is lexical: *perro* (dog) becomes *gato* (cat) and *mataperros* (dog-killer) becomes *matagatos* (cat-killer). There are, however, no notable differences from a semantic point of view.

No tokens of the OTF have been found in any of the three corpora of the Spanish Royal Academy. However, several examples of the CF, such as (13) and (14), have been retrieved from the Hemeroteca digital. Even though the use of *perro* is the general rule, one case of the use of *gato* has been found (13).

(13) Pero esta ocurrencia no ha de ser causa de lo que vulgarmente se dice de “**por una vez que maté un gato me pusieron mata-gatos**” (*El Eco del Comercio*, Madrid, 22/05/1846)

(14) –Si, si... buenas felpas me costaron tus torpezas. Parecia que de intento tropezabas siempre con rivales ó maridos... –Qué! señor, **por una vez que maté un perro...** Ya no os acordais de mis buenos servicios. (*El Corresponsal*, Madrid, 22/05/1843)

Aceitunita comida, huesecito fuera.

‘Little olive eaten, little stone away’ is the literal translation of this proverb, or otherwise stated, when one has finished eating an olive, one throws the stone away, which, obviously, seems the logical thing to do. The proverb suggests that once a question or a topic is over one should stop thinking or talking about it, especially if it has been problematic or painful and recommends a course of action by advising someone to move ahead in life putting difficulties aside. The OTF uses the diminutive of the two nominal constituents of the proverb, which

means that *aceituna* (olive) becomes *aceitunita* (little olive) and *hueso* (stone) becomes *huesecito* (little stone).

As can be seen in (15), an example from Peru and the only one found in the corpora of the Royal Spanish Academy, it is the CF, without the diminutives, that is used.

(15) El verdugo, comprendiendo la burla de estas palabras, le contestó: - Holgárame de no ser pagado, que la paga ha de ser tal, que después que concluya con estos compañeros, venga yo a hacer cabal la docena del fraile. **Aceituna comida, hueso fuera**. (CORDE, Ricardo Palma, 1877, *Tradiciones peruanas, cuarta serie*)

All the other examples, (16), (17) and (18), were found in the *Hemeroteca digital*, include one or two diminutive forms and come from the press from South-western Spain. As with (5), example (18) also shows the importance of using the press as a corpus since, in these two instances, either proverb is used in direct speech, which demonstrates the use of the proverbs in the contemporary spoken language.

(16) No saben ná los alemanes... Han conseguido lo que siempre buscaron: tener a sus pies a toda la mano de obra que necesitan a precio de saldo. Deben su bienestar a que los demás países le compren sus medicamentos, coches, trenes, tanques y demás, pero “**aceitunita comida, huesecito fuera**”. (*Diario de Huelva*, 29/03/2014)

(17) Antañazo era lo de **aceitunita comida huesecito fuera**, esto es lo que admite el estadio propio y de ahí no se puede pasar. Es más, entonces ni a soñar que la demanda fuese a acercarse a la oferta. (*Diario de Sevilla*, 13/07/2022)

(18) “**Aceitunita comida, huesecito tirado**”. Son las palabras de Joaquín Caparrós cuando se le pregunta por la planificación de un Sevilla que se encuentra ya en plena competición oficial. (*El País*, Sevilla, 03/08/2018)

Two other pieces of evidence of the Andalusian origin of this OTF are its inclusion in *Modismos comparativos de Andalucía* (Comparative Idioms from Andalusia), in which the proverb appears as *Aceituna comida, huesecito fuera* (Antequera Luengo, 2007: 17), but also the fact that *Aceituna comida, hueso fuera* is one of the many proverbs collected from informers by the Spanish writer Fernán Caballero⁴ when living in Andalusia (Jarilla Bravo, 2019: 178).

Conclusions

Orally transmitted proverbs should be used as a benchmark against canonical forms and other written forms as found in texts since a thorough description of a given paremiological unit should include all its variant forms and detailed information about nonstandard semantics and pragmatics.

The search for examples in corpora shows that some of them are either non-existent (*Por una vez que maté un gato me llamaron matagatos*) or nonce forms (*No es señor quien señor nace sino quien sabe serlo*, *Quien nace lechón muere cochino*, *Aceituna comida, hueso fuera*). However, the daily press provides examples of actual uses of proverbs that account for the vitality of their variant forms both in spoken language (direct or indirect speech) and in specific regional contexts, which is extremely helpful for acknowledging orally transmitted forms not as nonce formations or deviations but as real variant forms.

Collecting the greatest number of examples is essential for research on the evolution of paremiological semantics. The diversity of contexts of use will allow the researcher to identify and check whether the semantic specificities of the orally transmitted form are reflected or not in recorded written sources.

Endnotes

1. Even though two references are provided, in fact they can be subsumed to only one canonical form as the difference between the two (*el que* / *quien*) are exact grammatical equivalents (he who / who).
2. The analogical equivalent proverb in English is “A leopard can’t change its spots” (used to say that people cannot change their basic personalities, habits, etc.).
3. The verb *pagarse* in the sixteenth century is used in the same sense as the verb *enamorarse* (to fall in love) in contemporary Spanish.
4. Fernán Caballero was the pseudonym of Cecilia Böhl de Faber y Ruiz de Larrea, her real name.

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APPENDIX

1. Cuanto más te agachas, más se te ve.
2. No es señora quien lo es sino quien lo sabe ser.
3. Más largo es el tiempo que la fortuna.
4. Más vale (*or* es preferible) que te echen de menos a que te echen de más.
5. Yo sé que en la iglesia estorbo y a misa no voy.
6. A quien madruga, Dios le ayuda.
7. Tiene el mal del milano, las patas malas y el pico sano.
8. Cuando marzo mayea, mayo marcea.
9. Buey suelto bien se lame.
10. Agosto, frío en rostro.
11. Hasta el 40 de mayo no te quites el sayo.
12. A caballo regalado no hay que mirarle el diente.
13. El ojo del amo engorda el caballo.
14. A todo cerdo le llega su San Martín.
15. No se puede luchar contra el destino, el que nace lechón muere cochino.
16. Pan con pan, comida de tontos.
17. Por una vez que maté un gato, me llamaron matagatos.
18. Mucho te quiero perrito, pero pan poquito.
19. Quien siembra, recoge.
20. Agua parada no mueve molino.
21. Caballo grande, ande o no ande.
22. Cuando el diablo está aburrido, con el rabo mata moscas.
23. A rey muerto, rey puesto.
24. Aceitunita comida, huesecito fuera.
25. Ni arre que trote, ni so que te pare.
26. Cuando te diga miso, meneas el rabo.
27. Perro ladrador, poco mordedor.
28. De las aguas mansas líbreme Dios, que de las bravas me libro yo.
29. Dios le da pañuelo a quien no tiene nariz.
30. Hay ojitos que se enamoran de legañas.
31. Más vale pájaro en mano que ciento volando.
32. La sartén le dijo al cazo, échate pallá que me tiznas.
33. Más vale una vez colorá que ciento amarilla.

34. A veces se besan manos que se quisieran ver cortás.
35. En boca cerrada no entran moscas.
36. La mejor palabra es la que no se dice.
37. Quien tuvo retuvo y guardó para la vejez.
38. No hay mal que cien años dure (ni cuerpo que lo resista).
39. Petra se casó con Blas, que era tuerto y jorobado, como no sería ella que fue él el engañado.
40. Dime con quién andas y te diré quién eres.
41. El más amigo la pega.
42. Cada uno en su casa y Dios en la de todos.
43. El casado casa quiere.
44. No siento que mi niña enfermó sino la guasita que se le quedó.
45. Que cada perrito se lama su pijito.
46. Quien hace lo que puede, hace lo que debe.
47. Es más el querer que el poder.
48. Aunque la mona se vista de seda, mona se queda.
49. Cuando uno no quiere, dos no se pelean.
50. Quien come, resiste.

Curriculum Vitæ

Ramón Martí Solano is a specialist in English linguistics at the University of Limoges, France. Phraseology and paremiology are his main fields of research. His doctoral dissertation analyses a range of phenomena of idiom variation and innovation in the British press. In his monograph for professorship, he focuses on contrastive phraseology between English and Romance languages. Other fields of research include lexicology, lexicography, lexical morphology and semantics, corpus linguistics, linguistic variation, contrastive linguistics, neologisms, and lexical and phraseological borrowings and loan translations. He is a member of the European Society of Phraseology (EUROPHRAS) and of the International Association of Paremiology (AIP-IAP). In the research project ALIENTO (Intercultural and Linguistic Analysis of brief sapiential units and of their transmission Orient/Occident and Occident/Orient) he is responsible for the proofreading of the sapiential units in English and in Spanish as well as for the paremiological analysis of Hernán Núñez's *Refranes o proverbios en romance*, published in 1555. He is the lead researcher of the international collaborative project *The peculiarities of the phraseology of English from a contrastive perspective* funded by the University of Limoges.

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Isabel Celis Villalba is an independent researcher. She did a MD in Anglo-Germanic Philology at the University of Seville. Her career has always been related to teaching, holding different positions both in Spain and abroad. She was appointed Spanish language assistant teacher in Glasgow, Scotland. She has mainly developed her career as an English teacher in different secondary schools in Andalusia, Spain. She has also taught at Instituto Español "Giner de los Ríos" in Lisbon, where she held the position of head of the English Department. In addition to teaching, she has worked for Consejería de Educación y Cultura de la Junta de Andalucía as responsible for the management of José Saramago Program, an educational program designed for the promotion of the Portuguese language and culture in Secondary schools in Andalusia. She is a member of the International Association of Paremiology (AIP-IAP).

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