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Gender Stereotypes in Spanish Phraseology

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Abstract

In this paper the results of research on gender stereotypes underlying Spanish phraseology are presented. Its main aim is to reveal which gender stereotypes are explicitly or implicitly present in commonly used contemporary Spanish Phraseological Units (PUs). In order to achieve this goal, all PUs associated with men and women documented in the most complete dictionary of current Spanish phraseology (*Diccionario fraseológico documentado del español actual: locuciones y modismos españoles*) have been analysed. In order to systematize the analysis, an inventory of stereotypes has been collected and split into five main thematic categories: physical characteristics; attitude, personality and abilities; sexuality; family; activities and professions. Moreover, a sixth, transversal category has been added – the opposite male and female conceptualisations of the passing of time.

Keywords: Spanish phraseology, gender, stereotypes, society

Estereotipos de Género en la Fraseología Española

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Abstract

En este artículo se presentan los resultados de una investigación sobre los estereotipos de género que subyacen tras la fraseología española. El objetivo es sacar a la luz qué estereotipos de género se hallan, ya sea explícita o implícitamente, en las unidades fraseológicas (UFs) españolas de uso generalizado en la actualidad. Para ello se han analizado todas las UFs asociadas con hombres y mujeres presentes en el diccionario de fraseología española más completo (*Diccionario fraseológico documentado del español actual: locuciones y modismos españoles*). Además, se ha creado un listado de estereotipos de género que, con el fin de sistematizar el análisis, ha sido dividido en cinco categorías temáticas principales: a) características físicas; b) actitud, personalidad y habilidades; c) sexualidad; d) familia; y e) actividades y profesiones. A estos grupos se les ha añadido un sexto apartado: la distinta conceptualización del paso del tiempo en hombres y mujeres.

Keywords: fraseología española, género, estereotipos, sociedad

Since the seminal work on gender and language by Robin Lakoff (1973), many authors have analysed and discussed the relationships between gender and language from numerous perspectives. As can be observed in Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013: 66–79), all levels of language are affected – phonetics and phonology, morphology, the lexicon, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and discourse. However, neither these authors nor any other scholars devoted to language within gender studies and the feminist movement have accomplished an extensive analysis of gender and phraseology. The reason could be found in the lack of an established tradition of studies of phraseology in the Anglo-Saxon world, where the interest in language and gender emerged and where this discipline has been mainly developed. On the contrary, those countries and regions where phraseology has been perceived for decades as a major linguistic discipline – such as the former Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia or Poland – did not develop gender studies until recent times. Logically, it is not surprising that scholars have not yet paid enough attention to the way Phraseological Units (PUs) echo the gendered asymmetry of society.

This fact is especially crucial since phraseology seems to be a highly explicit and direct device for revealing the cultural and social values of a given group compared to the other elements of language. According to Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005: 1), idioms ‘record and preserve relevant knowledge as part of their content plane (as image traces), including, above all, reflection of the respective culture’. Moreover, at least according to these authors, along with many other scholars connected with the cognitive linguistics approach to phraseology, the majority of PUs are not linguistic but conceptual in nature; in other words: ‘An idiom is not just an expression that has a meaning that is somehow special in relation to the meanings of its constituting parts, but it arises from our more general knowledge of the world embodied in our conceptual system’ (Kövecses, 2002: 233). This fact reinforces the importance of applying the gender studies perspective to PUs in order to show the stereotypes associated with men and women that underlie phraseology.¹

As previously mentioned, it is in Eastern and Central Europe that the studies of phraseology have a more established tradition. It is therefore not surprising that the first attempt to apply gender studies to PUs is to be found

in Russia. Veronika Teliya, one of the first specialists devoted to culture in phraseology, presents some PUs reflecting the Russian conception of the relationship between women and sexuality and women and intellect. By means of this innovative (though still partial) analysis, Teliya (1996: 260–269) aims to illustrate how phraseology conceptually reflects the Russian idiosyncrasy regarding women.

More recently, Piirainen (2007: 217; 2008: 213) lays bare the fact that the gendered asymmetry of society can be a significant object of study in phraseology. Piirainen presents gender-specific PUs in English (*to be left on the shelf; an overdressed old bag; mutton dressed as lamb; a big girl's blouse; to be tied to sb.'s apron strings*), Dutch (*een zijden sok; een zacht ei*), German (*seinen Hut nehmen*), and Japanese (*hitohada nugu*), all of them revealing cultural models in the societies in which these languages are spoken.

One of the most inspiring works published to date is an analysis of 107 potentially gender-specific German PUs by Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2010). After a corpus analysis had been performed it was shown that sometimes the use of PUs is gender-specific because of the idiom's true etymology and therefore, in some cases, the present-day use of an idiom 'can only be explained by addressing its history, i.e. these idioms cannot be used in contexts that are not compatible with their etymological origins' (2010: 92).

Another inspiring work was that of Katerina Kedron in her book *Gender Aspects in Slavic Phraseology (Based on Belarusian, Polish and Czech)*² (2014). Among the cross-linguistic conclusions Kedron proposes the existence of a common gender model in the three languages in question. In other words, in Belarusian, Polish, and Czech there are many matching features regarding the conceptualisation of *men* and *women*. Moreover, Kedron brings to light some (minor) divergences among these three Slavic languages, such as, for instance, the lack of an image of an aggressive woman in Belarusian.³

If we now focus on the specific topic of this paper, i.e. Spanish phraseology, there are no previous studies investigating the values and stereotypes associated with men and women. On the other hand, there is an established tradition of gender-oriented studies on Spanish sayings and proverbs, i.e. in the frame of paremiology. Although a clear distinction can

be drawn between phraseology and paremiology, in the most prestigious taxonomy of Spanish phraseology Corpas Pastor (1996) includes paremies into her classification of phraseology. However, and for a few years now, it has generally been admitted that sayings and proverbs do not belong to phraseology in a strict sense (see, for instance, *García-Page Sánchez, 2008*).

In her book *Stereotypes and gender roles in popular proverbs*,⁴ Fernández Poncela (2002a)⁵ states that these linguistic expressions reflect the hegemonic cultural model of Spanish society, according to which women are ‘gossiping, indiscreet, incoherent, changeable, lying, evil, dangerous, guilty of every evil, usable objects, sillier than animals and worst than the devil himself’ (2002a: 118).⁶ In addition, Spanish proverbs reflect the way women should behave according to a series of *idealised* features clearly opposed to their *real* behavior: ‘quiet, discreet, obedient, home-loving and hard-working’⁷ (2002a: 118). In her own analysis of stereotypes of women in Spanish proverbs, Mitkova (2007: 91) adds a list of further very similar characteristics associated with idealised women – submissiveness, sweetness, fidelity, honesty, and prudence.⁸

One of the problems of inferring extralinguistic conclusions from the analysis of proverbs is that most of them represent archaic states of the language and they are not used (or even known) by the majority of the contemporary speakers of the language in question. On the contrary, a common speaker masters thousands of PUs and uses (some of) them often. So, unlike proverbs, by analysing present-day idioms it is possible to reveal which values are potentially active in contemporary society.

The aim of this paper is to reveal which gender stereotypes are explicitly or implicitly present in commonly used contemporary Spanish PUs. In order to achieve this goal, 407 PUs associated with men and women and excerpted from a dictionary of current Spanish phraseology have been analysed⁹.

Theoretical principles and methodology of research

In this research it is assumed that languages are not isolated from the contexts they are spoken in and that they actually reflect the values and stereotypes of the societies in question. These assumptions can take us to a certain extent back to the tradition of the Sapir-Whorf doctrine of linguistic relativity, and especially to its *mild* hypothesis, commonly associated with

Sapir, who, for instance, states that ‘[h]uman beings do not live in the objective world alone [...], but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society’ (2008 [1929]: 221–222). This premise is also generally accepted within the framework of gender and feminist studies, as can be read, among others, in Mills (2008: 9): ‘Language does indeed reveal to us the values of groups and institutions within our culture in the past who were instrumental in encoding their own perspectives within the language’.

Moreover, some feminist authors support the so-called *stronger view*, maintaining that ‘language does not just reflect gender divisions; it actually creates them. Things like differences in the use of politeness strategies [...] actively create and sustain inequality’ (Talbot, 2010: 15). According to this, by changing the way we speak, we could change the inferior position of women in the patriarchal society. This more extreme standpoint is closer to the ideas of Sapir’s pupil Whorf, who radicalised linguistic relativity to the extreme that language does not just influence the speaker’s worldview, but that it determines our thoughts:

It was found that the background linguistic system (in other words, the grammar) of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual’s mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade. [...] The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds—and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. (Whorf, 1956: 212–213)

For the purposes of this paper, it is not particularly important whether language just reflects the gender asymmetry in society or it actually reinforces it. Its aim is to analyse gender values and stereotypes present in today’s Spanish phraseology and, in particular, all PUs associated with men and women documented in *Diccionario fraseológico documentado del español actual: locuciones y modismos españoles* by Seco, Andrés and Ramos (2004). This dictionary does not include proverbs and sayings, but just idioms (and only from Spain, not from American Spanish). In addition,

the dictionary is *up to date* and *documented*, since all its 16 000 PUs are illustrated with examples excerpted from Spanish texts dated between 1955 and 2004.

The methodology of the analysis is structured on three levels of specificity.

On the first level, *Conceptual Stereotypes in Focus* (CSFs) are taken into account. What is meant by a CSF is a generalised conceptualisation or stereotype in a given society that has become phraseologised as a result of a figurative process.¹⁰ For instance, the widespread stereotype that men are (both physically and mentally) stronger than women clearly underlies the Spanish PU *Sexo débil* (just the same as its English counterpart *weaker sex*). Of course, it is not argued that every widespread stereotype automatically implements a PU; it is claimed that the very foundation of the process of phraseologisation often relies on generalised conceptualisations shared by a significant portion of the society. For instance, the stereotype referring to the supposed inability of women to drive cars properly has not activated any PU in Spanish such as **Bad driving sex* or the like.

On a second level of specificity, I make use of the concept of a *Frame* proposed by Fillmore, who defines it as ‘any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one of them you have to understand the whole structure in which it fits’ (2006: 373). In its application to the study of phraseology, Dobrovolskij and Piirainen (2009: 24–25) stress the importance of analysing not just the explicit elements of PUs, but also their implicit constituents. These authors illustrate it with a German PU with Spanish cultural motivation: *Ein rotes Tuch für jmdn sein* ‘to provoke someone’ (lit. ‘to be a red rag [to a bull] for someone’, similar to the English expression *Something acted like a red rag to a bull*). The image component of this PU can easily be inferred when examining it within the frame BULLFIGHTING. This frame includes some other implicit elements (called *slots*) such as BULLFIGHTER or BULL that provide the PU with its lexicalised metaphoric semantics. By applying this approach to the specific topic of this paper, a PU such as *Hijo/niño de papá* ‘someone living at the expense of his/her well-off father’ (lit. ‘Daddy’s son/boy’) implicitly refers to the frame (PATRIARCHAL) FAMILY, in which the father is the head of the family and the only person who has financial resources at his disposal. A female version of this PU with ‘mother’ **Hijo/niño de mamá* has not been conventionalised in

Spanish, probably since children stereotypically *do not* live at the expense of their mothers, for the simple reason that in the (near) past most women lacked proper incomes.

The third and lower level of specificity provides less conclusive data. In this case, it is not possible to extract any CSFs or to analyse frames implicitly present in the PUs. For this level, non-figurative elements of the lexical form are taken into account. This sort of analysis is especially productive when considering activities and professions that have been performed through the centuries exclusively by men or by women. For instance, although at present both women and men practice legal professions, all the documented PUs with the lexical form *abogado* ‘lawyer, advocate’ are male-specific: *Abogado de causas perdidas*, *Abogado de secano*, and *Abogado del Diablo*. Consequently, it can be concluded that this occupation was historically segregated by sex.

In this study it is assumed that the gender stereotypes present in Spanish phraseology will reflect the speakers’ conceptual system and values regarding men and women. Therefore, it is necessary to characterise what a gender stereotype is and which the most common ones in Western culture, to which Spanish society belongs, are. According to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet:

[Stereotypes] serve as a kind of organizing device in society, an ideological map, setting out the range of possibilities within which we place ourselves and assess others. They are means for constructing and highlighting social categories, whether for positive or negative purposes. For this reason, stereotypes, and their relation to behavior, are central to the study of language and gender [...] stereotypes typically constitute norms – often rather extreme norms – that we do not obey, but that we orient to. As such, they provide us with crucial information about the ideological landscape in which language unfolds. (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2013: 58–59)

For this study, an inventory of stereotypes has been collected mainly on the basis of gender oppositions excerpted exclusively from works written within the framework of gender and feminist studies,¹¹ such as, for instance, the list below presented by Connell:

[...] bodily strength and speed (men are stronger and faster), physical skills (men have mechanical skills, women are good at fiddly work), sexual desire (men have more powerful urges), recreational interests (men love sport, women gossip), character (men are aggressive, women are nurturant), intellect (men are rational, women have intuition) [...]. (Connell, 2009: 53)

In order to systematise the analysis, the inventory (see Tables 1–5) was split into five thematic categories: physical characteristics; attitude, personality and abilities; sexuality; family; activities and professions.

Table 1

Physical characteristics

Physical characteristics	
Men	Women
Strong	Weak/Delicate
Muscular	Thin/Little
Quick	-
-	Beautiful (temporally)
-	Walking gently
-	Care for outward appearance

Table 2

Attitudes, personality, and abilities

Attitudes, personality, and abilities	
Men	Women
Rational	Irrational/Intuitive
Impassive	Emotional/Unstable
Controlling	Submissive
Tough	Sensitive
Rough	Gentle
Indifferent	Empathetic
Direct	Indirect
Practical	Nurturing

Attitudes, personality, and abilities	
Determined	Shy
Discreet	Given to gossip
Competitive	Cooperative
Aggressive	-
Stoical	-
Independent	-
Brave	Timid
Adventurous	Passive
Realistic	-
Wise	-
Intelligent	-
Mechanical skills	Fiddly work
-	Incompetent outside the home
-	Communicative
Interested in cars/sports	-

Table 3
Sexuality

Sexuality	
Men	Women
Sex-driven	Relationship-driven
Sexual predator	Evasive
Promiscuous	Monogamous
Active	Passive
Boastful	Coquettish
Younger partners	-
Rapist	-
Homophobic	-

Table 4
Family

Family	
Men	Women
Incompetent father	Competent mother
Head of the family	-
Sustenance	-
Authority	-
Discipline	-
-	Homemaker
-	Children's carer
-	Kitchen
-	Cleaner
Do-it-yourselfer	-
Take care of and use the car	

Table 5
Activities and professions

Activities and professions	
Men	Women
Public sphere	Private sphere (home)
Doctor	Nurse
Hunter	-
Fighter	-
Warrior	-
Contact sports	-
Hero	-
King	-
Writer/Composer	-
Thinker	-
Judge	-
-	Friend
-	Wife/Partner

Activities and professions	
-	Lover
-	Breeding
-	Teacher of children
-	Secretary
-	Stewardess
-	Prostitution/Pornography

As can be observed, not all male stereotypes are necessarily more positive than the female ones. For instance, while men are incompetent fathers, women are competent mothers. Unfortunately, in the androcentric society even these positive characteristics associated with women tend to be used against them. For instance, a favourable and undeniable fact such as ‘only women are able to be pregnant and give birth to children’ turns into a much more questionable assumption: ‘only women are competent at raising kids’. As a result of this, women have to stay at home long after the birth, taking care of the children and the house, which reinforces their socio-economic discrimination. In this sense, Oakley refers to the so-called ‘mystiques of motherhood’:

However, the male idealisation of motherhood proceeds by representing mothers as higher in the scale of core human values than men. Mothers’ lives are seen as geared to the production of love and the facilitation of growth in a way that is contrary to the values of the rest of (male) society, which occupies itself in the aggressive pursuit of self-aggrandisement. (Oakley (2005: 181)

However, it is evident that many changes have occurred in Western society and that today’s women can pursue a professional career and be mothers at the same time. Nevertheless, new negative stereotypes have appeared regarding this new role of women as working mothers that tend to coexist with the so-called *conservative stereotypes* (cf. Gill, 2007). According to these new stereotypes, women devoted to their employment are ‘bad mothers’. On the contrary, ‘good mothers’ are not efficient at work.

Results of the analysis

As a result of a detailed search, 407 Spanish PUs related, to a greater or lesser degree, to male and female characteristics were documented in the *Diccionario fraseológico documentado del español actual: locuciones y modismos españoles* by Seco, Andrés and Ramos (2004).¹² After the application of the three-level research methodology presented above to these PUs, the following conclusions can be drawn.

Physical characteristics

An unexpectedly low number of units reflecting these sorts of stereotypes was documented in the dictionary. One of the most salient conceptualisations reproduced by Spanish PUs is that men are bigger and stronger than women, as can be explicitly observed in *Sexo débil* (*Weaker sex*) and its counterpart for men *Sexo fuerte* (lit. ‘strong sex’). Additionally, the positive PU *Buen mozo* (lit. ‘good boy’) refers to a handsome, tall, and strong young man and, on the contrary, *Medio hombre* (lit. ‘half a man’), to an emaciated, cowardly man. Moreover, *Niño bonito* (lit. ‘pretty [male] kid’) is associated with adjectives like *boastful* or *privileged* (in its negative connotation), which could imply that ‘real men’ are not supposed to be pretty.

On the contrary, (young) women are stereotypically beautiful, as can be observed in *Sexo bello* (lit. ‘beautiful sex’) or in *Bailar con la más fea* (lit. ‘to dance with the ugliest [woman]’), which metaphorically expresses the necessity of dealing with the worst part of a given issue. In addition, there are some PUs with *barba* (‘beard’) and *bigote* (‘moustache’) – *Jugarse el bigote*, *Tener bigotes*, *Por barba*, *Correrse una barba*, *Mentir por (la) mitad de la barba*, *En las barbas/En sus propias (mismas) barbas*. Although we are dealing here with clearly male physical characteristics, all these expressions can be used for denoting men and women. This would speak for a man-human being identification. Since no female features are metonymically used in the Spanish phraseology for denoting both women and men, these expressions would evidence the androcentric nature of Spanish society.

Attitude, personality, and abilities

Compared to physical characteristics, the PUs regarding attitudes, personality, and abilities are more frequent in the dictionary. The most salient male characteristic is *courage*, as can be observed in PUs such as *Ser un hombre (para algo)* (lit. ‘to be a man [for something]’), *Tener huevos/pelotas/cojones (bien puestos)* (lit. ‘to have (one’s) eggs/balls/bollocks (in their right place)’), equivalent to the English *Have the balls*), *A puro huevo* (lit. ‘to pure egg’), *(Con) dos huevos huevos/pelotas/cojones* (lit. ‘(with) two eggs/balls/bollocks’), *Tener pelos en los huevos/cojones* (lit. ‘to have hair on the eggs/bollocks’), or in the previously mentioned *Medio hombre*.

On the other hand, the PU *De hombre a hombre*, a clear equivalent to the English expression *Man to man*, seems to point to the fact that men are open and frank, probably in opposition to the ‘gossipy women’ stereotype. Interestingly, Seco, Andrés and Ramos (2004) include in their dictionary a female version of this PU, *De mujer a mujer*, with exactly the same meaning as the male version.¹³ This relatively new but already established expression (otherwise it would not have been included in an up to date dictionary) would suggest that some of the advances accomplished in the last decades in Spanish society regarding gender are starting to be present in the phraseology.

Sexuality

Regarding sexuality, the more than 130 documented PUs echo the fact that men have a more active attitude than women – *Meterla* (lit. ‘to put it inside’, roughly ‘to have sex’), *Metérsela* (lit. ‘to put it inside someone’, *idem*), *Mojar (en) caliente* (lit. ‘to wet (in) hot’, *idem*), *Hacer mujer (a una virgen)* (lit. ‘to make a woman (a virgin)’, roughly ‘take the virginity’), *Hacer un hijo* (lit. ‘make a child’), *Hacer un bombo* (lit. ‘to make a bass drum’, roughly ‘make a woman pregnant’), *Arrimar material (a una pers.)* (lit. ‘bring material closer (to someone)’, roughly ‘to rub a woman up lasciviously’), *Poner rabos (o un rabo)* (lit. ‘to put tails (or one tail)’, *idem*), *Viejo verde* (lit. ‘old green [man]’, roughly ‘dirty old man’). Moreover, there is a relatively long list of PUs denoting male masturbation

(*Hacer una paja, Machacársela, Meneársela, Pelársela, Hacer fuentes*) and fellatio (*Comer la polla, Chupársela, Mamarla, Me la chupas*). On the contrary, just one female PU denotes oral sex performed on a woman: *Comer el coño/chocho (a una mujer)*.

In addition, a woman who does not behave elusively and reticently regarding sex is commonly evaluated very disapprovingly. It can be observed in PUs such as *Abrirse de piernas (una mujer)* (lit. ‘to open her legs’), *Más puta que las gallinas* (lit. ‘worse bitch than the hens’, used to stress the licentious habits of a woman), and *Ligero de cascos* (lit. ‘light of helmets’, used for people, but especially women, having sexual open relationships). Moreover, the PU denoting a provocative woman *Pedir pelea (una mujer)* (lit. ‘to ask for fight (a woman)’) recalls the stereotype according to which men are conquerors and women have to be conquered. The opposite situation, when a woman feels attracted to a man, is expressed by the PU *Estar (un hombre) para hacerle padre (y darle las gracias)* (lit. ‘to be (a man) for making him a father (and thank him for it)’. This PU could be analysed as a sign of female sexual liberation. However, it has to be taken into account that, even in this sort of open expression of female sexual desire, there is a clear underlying link to their main role as women. Unlike men, women seem not to be able (or allowed) to isolate motherhood from their sexuality.

On the other hand, male genitalia are the source of dozens of units, probably because of the enormous expressivity associated with this element: *Con un par de huevos/pelotas/cojones, Con dos cojones, Costar un huevo/un huevo y medio, De cojón (de pato o de mico), De cojones (o de tres pares de cojones), De pelotas, De las pelotas, Estar hasta los mismo (cojones), Hasta las pelotas, Hinchar los huevos a alguien, Hinchársele a alguien los huevos, Importar (algo a alguien) tres pelotas, Los cojones, Manda huevos, Ni cojones, No haber (no quedar, no tener) más huevos, Ole tus huevos, Pasarse (alguien algo) por los huevos, Poner las pelotas encima de la mesa, Poner los huevos encima de la mesa, Por pelotas, Qué pelotas, Rascarse los huevos, Salirle (algo a alguien) de las pelotas, Tener (alguien a un hombre) cogido por los huevos, Tener pelotas (algo), Tener las pelotas bien puestas, Tenerlos bien puestos (un hombre), Tocar las pelotas, Tocarse los huevos, Tócate las pelotas, Un cojón, Como si se la machaca, Cortársela, Hacer (a alguien) la picha un lío, Me la refanfinfla, Ponérsele (algo a un hombre) en*

la punta del nabo (de la polla), Salirle (algo a un hombre) de la punta del nabo (de la polla), Sudársela.

One of the most interesting phenomena revealed in the study is the existence of phraseological variants that explicitly name female genitalia: *Hasta el coño, Hasta los ovarios, Qué coño, Salir del coño (algo a una mujer), Salir del chocho, Salirle de los ovarios, Sudar el chocho, Tener (una mujer) los ovarios bien puestos, and Un par de ovarios.* The last two PUs are especially remarkable, since they are used for expressing *courage*, one of the key male features. The presence in the dictionary of these nine PUs – exclusively used by women – is truly remarkable, since they are related to two taboos for women: sexuality and vulgarity. This seems to be further evidence of a clear tendency to adjust language to the advances in favour of women achieved in Spanish society in recent decades. This is particularly evident when compared with the only two ‘original’ PUs expressed by references to female genitalia, both with a patent negative connotation: *Dar el coñazo* and *El quinto coño.*

Besides, although in the PUs regarding male homosexuality a clear negative connotation is revealed, this stereotype is not documented in the corpus as frequently as expected; in the dictionary there are just six PUs denoting or involving homosexuality, and not all of them have a pejorative connotation: *Contra natura, (De) la acera de frente (o (de) la otra acera), Marica/maricón el último, Palomo cojo (o más maricón que un palomo cojo), Poner rabos (o un rabo), Tener pluma.*

Family

Spanish phraseology echoes the traditional domestic gender division of roles in the family. While *Hombre de la casa* (lit. ‘man of the house’) refers to the classic male figure of the head of the family, its counterpart *Mujer de la casa* (lit. ‘woman of the house’) is focused on her role as homemaker and children’s carer. Seco, Andrés and Ramos (2004) document other units that reproduce this clear gender division, such as the previously mentioned *Hijo/niño de papá* or *Estar de rodríguez* (lit. ‘be like rodríguez’) that recalls the situation (usual in Spain some years ago) when men stayed alone in the city working during the summer, while their non-working wives enjoyed the holidays with the children out of the big city.

Undoubtedly, there are many expressions that reflect the condition of women as wives and mothers. However, three of them need to be highlighted here, since they unmistakably reveal the way the whole life of adult women revolves around getting married. Consequently, when they get old without a wedding that fulfils their main duty in life, women ‘lose their meaning’: *Pasársele el arroz (a una mujer)* (lit. ‘to overcook the rice (to a woman)’), *Quedarse (una mujer) para vestir santos/imágenes* (lit. ‘to be left (a woman) for dressing [statues] of saints’) and *Irse al poyetón (o quedarse en el poyetón) (una mujer)* (lit. ‘to go (or to stay) on the stone bench (a woman)’). According to these last two expressive images, women who do not find a husband while they are still young are doomed to spend the rest of their lives without a meaningful duty. On the other hand, the metaphor underlying *Pasársele el arroz*, although quite transparent, is more abstract – a woman that waits too long to find a husband gets *ruined* in the same way as rice that is boiled for too long does.

Finally, the presence in Spanish of PUs reflecting the so-called *new men*, who at least partially share the housework and childcare, is almost imperceptible.

Activities and professions

In this sense, Spanish phraseology echoes the secondary role played by women during history. In opposition to the huge spectrum of male activities (up to 40 are documented in the dictionary), the female ones are limited to the space inside the house or the convent (the only exceptions are milkmaid, grocer, witch, muse, queen, and old maid). In addition, most of the female activities performed in the public sphere tend to have a very pejorative connotation, with prostitution – the most common profession in the dictionary, including the male ones – standing out among all of them. In total, Seco, Andrés and Ramos (2004) register 17 PUs denoting or involving prostitutes: *Casa de putas*, *Como puta por rastrojo*, *Como putas en cuaresma*, *El oficio más viejo del mundo*, *Hacer chapas*, *Hacer la calle*, *Hacer la carrera*, *Hacer la(s) acera(s)*, *Hijo de la gran puta*, *Hijo de puta*, *Mala mujer*, *Más puta que las gallinas*, *Moza de fortuna (de(l) partido)*, *Mujer de la calle*, *Mujer de vida alegre*, *Mujer de precio*, *Pasarlas putas*, and *Putón verbenero (desorejado)*.

These extreme differences regarding male and female activities speak volumes of the endurance in Spanish phraseology of a radically androcentric view.

Conceptualisation of the passing of time

A last, transversal category has to be added, since it has been shown to be one of the most interesting revelations that has emerged from this research on Spanish phraseology – the opposite male and female conceptualisations of the passing of time. A negative association is clearly evident with regard to male children. According to the values underlying the PUs that were analysed, only adult men fulfil the archetypal characteristics of *real men*, i.e., brave and strong. This stage of a man's life is symbolised in Spanish phraseology by the presence of hair on the face (*Con toda la barba*), chest (*De pelo en pecho*), and genitalia (*Tener pelos en los cojones (o en los huevos)*). Consequently, boys are conceptualised in a negative or even derogatory manner. Accordingly, Seco, Andrés and Ramos (2004) propose adjectives such as tacky, arrogant, immature, affected, or insubstantial in their definition of the following PUs, all of them including the word *niño* 'boy': *Niño de papá*, *Niño de Serrano*, *Niño gótico*, *Niño litri*, *Niño mimado*, *Niño pitongo/bitongo*, *Niño zangolotino*, and *Ser (como) un niño*.

On the other hand, female children are *treated* better in Spanish phraseology, probably since, unlike their male counterparts, the stereotyped positive values of little girls and young adult women are not in contradiction (beauty, fineness, sensitivity, small size, etc.).

Contrary to this, and always according to the excerpted PUs, as soon as women leave childhood behind, they have to find a husband in order to fulfil their main task in life as mothers and homemakers. Otherwise, they end up alone and useless to society, as was previously observed.

Final observations

Although Spanish phraseology does not reflect all the Western societal stereotypes related to male and female roles, it is more than clear that many of them are explicitly or implicitly included in the 407 phraseological units that were analysed. Among the major differences identified in relation to the

stereotypes presented in Section 2 the following can be highlighted: the most relevant are the characteristics regarding attitudes, personality, and abilities, in which some gender oppositions are not documented in the list of PUs – rational/intuitive, rough/gentle, indifferent/empathetic, competitive/cooperative, mechanical skills/fiddly work. Interestingly, some of the few stereotypical female professions are not included in the corpus, such as nurse, teacher of children, secretary, or stewardess. On the contrary, the Spanish phraseology does reflect most (if not all) of the Western societal stereotypes related to sexuality, family, and physical characteristics, although the supposed female care for outward appearance is lacking.

In general, it can be proposed that Spanish phraseology reflects the subordination of women in society. Nevertheless, it reveals above all the very same division of almost all dimensions of life into two discrete groups – men and women. However, Seco, Andrés and Ramos (2004) document the generalisation of female versions of PUs regarding male prototypical stereotypes and characteristics. Given the strong tendency of phraseology to perpetuate values and stereotypes for centuries, even after the society they are based on has left them behind, the presence of these PUs in a dictionary seems to speak for a firmly established change in the situation of women and men in contemporary Spanish society. Consequently, it could be interpreted as a sign of the decadence of Western androcentric society, a society that has subjugated women for centuries and that in many senses – despite all the advances accomplished in recent decades, especially in Spain – keeps on treating them as second-class citizens.

Notes

¹ Even so, some specialists (Piirainen, 2008a, p. 220; Sabban, 2008; Mieder, 2007, p. 402) warn about the danger of overgeneralising this kind of analysis. Logically, in this study PUs will not be treated as mere mirrors reflecting specific cultural worldviews, but as fragmentary pieces that allow us to reconstruct a holistic view of the topic in question.

² *Genderové aspekty ve slovanské frazeologii (na materiálu běloruštiny, polštiny a češtiny)* in its Czech original.

³ Within the framework of the Slavic phraseological tradition, a few papers on gender have been published recently, for instance, Zakharova's analysis of male and female cultural dimensions in Russian and English Phraseology (2014), Hrnjak's works (2012; 2014) on Russian and Croatian PUs regarding women, or the paper focused on English PUs semantically oriented to men by Konopleva and Kayumova (2015).

⁴ *Estereotipos y roles de género en el refranero popular* in its Spanish original.

⁵ Along with a whole series of papers analysing values and stereotypes associated with men and women in Spanish proverbs (cf. Fernández Poncela, 1994; 1996; 2000a; 2000b; 2001; 2002b; 2010; 2015), this author published a second book about gender stereotypes in Catalan proverbs (cf. Fernández Poncela, 2004).

⁶ ‘charlatanas, indiscretas, incoherentes, mudables, mentirosas, malvadas, peligrosas, culpables de todo mal, objetos utilizables, más tontas que un animal y más malas que el mismo diablo’.

⁷ ‘calladas, discretas, obedientes, caseras y trabajadoras’.

⁸ Analogous studies can be found in Cebrián Sevilla (1996) and Calero Fernández, who deals with this problem from a general perspective first (1991) and, later, focusing on two occupations that were traditionally performed by women – sewing (1998) and prostitution (1993). Finally, Álvarez Díaz (2007) devotes his analysis to the relationship between women and weapons as it is reflected in Spanish proverbs.

⁹ In this paper some of the conclusions presented in a book published in 2016 in Spanish and entitled *La imagen de la mujer (y del hombre) en la fraseología española: Pervivencia de los estereotipos de género en el siglo XXI / The Image of Women (and Men) in Spanish Phraseology. Endurance of Gender Stereotypes in the 21st Century*, are given. Moreover, I would like to gratefully acknowledge the financial support for this research provided by the project IGA_FF_2018_015 (“Románské literatury a jazyky: tradice, současné tendence a nové perspektivy”), financed by the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic.”

¹⁰ This activation of some stereotyped characteristics by means of conceptual focusing is based on the more general cognitive theories of profiling by Langacker (2006).

¹¹ Cf. Bradley (2013), Collier (2004), Connell (2005; 2009), Doka and Martin (2010), Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013), García Mouton (2010), Kedron (2014), Kimmel (2011), Lakoff (1973), Martín Casares (2012), Mills (2008), Oakley (2005), Talbot (2010).

¹² A full list of all the excerpted and analyzed PUs is included in Annex 1.

¹³ Neither the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms* (2004) nor the *Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms* (1998) includes the PU *Woman to woman*.

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Annex 1. List of all excerpted and analysed Spanish Pus

a capa y espada; a cuerpo de rey; a puro huevo; abogado de causas perdidas; abogado de secano; abogado del Diablo; abrirse de piernas (alguien); abrirse de piernas (una mujer); acordarse de Santa Bárbara cuando truena; al baño (de) maría (María); año(s) de Maricastaña/tiempo de Maricastaña; aparecérselo la Virgen; arrimar material (a una pers.); así se las ponían a Fernando VII; averígüelo Vargas; bailar con la más fea; bien armado/-da; bien dotado/-da; buen (o real) mozo; buen samaritano; cada uno de su padre y su madre; cagarse en su madre (en su padre); caja de Pandora; cajón de sastre; callarse como un puto; cara de juez; cara de pepona; casa de putas; casar(se) por el sindicato de las prisas; casarse de penalti; caza de brujas; ciento y la madre; colgar los hábitos; comer el coño; comer el chocho (a una mujer); comer la polla; comerse una rosca; como don Tancredo; como la madre que lo parió; como Mateo con la guitarra; como Pedro por su casa; como Perico por su casa; como puta por rastrojo; como putas en cuaresma; como si se la machaca; como un anacoreta; como un carretero; como un figurín; como un Judas; como un maharajá; como un marqués; como un novio; como un patriarca; como un pepe; como un príncipe (hecho un príncipe); como un/a rey/reina; como un sacamuelas; como un señor; como un señorito; como un sultán; como un tren/para parar un tren; como una

bruja/más que una bruja; como una Dolorosa; como una Magdalena; como una pepona; como una ursulina; como una verdulera; compuesta y sin novio/compuesto y sin novia; con dos cojones; con pólvora ajena (del rey); con toda la barba; con un par de cojones/huevos/pelotas; conceder la mano (de una mujer a un hombre); conocer mujer; conocer varón; contra natura; correrse una barba; corta, Blas, que no me vas; cortársela; costar un huevo/un huevo y medio; criar (una mujer a alguien) a sus pechos; cuando Fernando VII gastaba paletó; cuando San Juan baje el dedo; cuéntaselo a tu abuela/se lo cuentas a tu abuela; cuéntaselo a tu tía; cuéntaselo a un guardia; cueva de ladrones; chupársela (a un hombre); dar (alguien) palabra (de caballero); dar a luz; dar el braguetazo; dar el coñazo; dar el pecho (una mujer a alguien); dar la teta (a un niño); dar tres cuartos al pregonero; dar un revolcón; darle calentón (a alguien); darse el calentón; de (entre) caballeros; de bigote(/s); de bombero; de cojón (de pato o de mico); de cojones (o de tres pares de cojones); de flor en flor; de Herodes a Pilatos; de hombre a hombre; de la acera de frente; de las pelotas; de los cojones; de mujer a mujer; de padre y muy señor mío; de pelo en pecho; de pelotas; de propia minerva; de psiquiatra; de puta madre; derecho de pernada; descender de la pata del Cid; desertor del arado; Dios y su madre/y su padre; doctores tienen la (Santa Madre) Iglesia; dolor de viudo; don Juan; donde dije digo, digo Diego; dos huevos; dos pelotas; dueño y señor; echar un casquete; edad de merecer; el cuento de la lechera; el eterno femenino; el hijo de mi madre (de mi padre); el hombre de la calle; el hombre del saco; el huevo de Colón; el oficio más viejo del mundo; el parto de los montes; el Preste Juan (de las Indias); el quinto coño; el rey de la creación; el rey de Roma; el rey del mambo; elemental, querido Watson; en estado; en sus propias (mismas) barbas; entre caballeros; eres mi padre; (eso) será lo que tase un sastre; estado de merecer; estar (un hombre) para hacerle padre; estar/quedarse en bragas; estar cañón; estar de rodríguez; estar hasta los mismos (cojones); fe del carbonero; hacer (a alguien) la picha un lío; hacer a pelo y (a) pluma; hacer chapas; hacer el amor; hacer fuentes; hacer la calle; hacer la carrera; hacer la(s) acera(s); hacer mujer (a una virgen); hacer un bombo; hacer un hijo; hacer un hombre; hacer una paja; hacer vida marital; hacerse el Lorenzo; hasta el coño; hasta el moño; hasta el Tato; hasta las pelotas; hasta los cojones; hasta los huevos; hasta los ovarios; hecho un adán/como un adán; hecho un nazareno; hijo de la Gran Bretaña; hijo de la gran puta; hijo

de papá (de familia); hijo de puta; hijo de puta/perra/su madre/mala madre/Satanás/la grandísima; hinchar las pelotas/huevos/cojones; hinchársele a alguien las pelotas/ huevos/cojones; hombre de armas; hombre de la casa; hombre de paja; hombre de su casa; hombría de bien; importar (algo a alguien) tres pelotas/huevos/cojones; irse al poyetón (quedarse en el poyetón); Juan Lanás; Juan Palomo; jugador de ventaja; jugarse el bigote; jurar por mi madre/padre; la acera de frente/la otra acera; la gran vida/la vida padre; la jodimos, tía Paca (tía María); la madre del cordero; la niña de sus ojos; la purga de Benito; la reina de los mares; ladrón/-na de guante blanco; lanzar el guante (a alguien); las bodas de Camacho; las de Caín; le digo a usted, señor guardia; ley de Murphy; ligero de cascós; lo dijo Blas, punto redondo; lo que ve la suegra; los (señores) del margen; los cojones; los polvos de la madre Celestina; llevar (a alguien) a la silla de la reina; llevar los pantalones bien puestos; llevarse a la cama; machacársela; madre de alquiler; madre de leche; madre mía (madre de Dios); madre mía (madre santísima); madre patria; mala mujer; mamarla; manda cojones; marcar paquete; más (maricón) que un palomo cojo; más desgraciado que el Pupas; más feo que pegarle a un padre; más feo que Picio; más galán que Mingo; más hambre que un maestro de escuela; más listo que Briján; más listo que Cardona; más papista que el Papa; más puta que las gallinas; más que Carracuca; más que el palo de un churrero; más tonto que Abundio; más tonto que Pichote; más viejo que Matusalén; matar al mensajero; me cago en tu madre (en tu padre; en tus muertos); me la chupas; me la refanfinfla; medio hombre; meneársela (alguien a un hombre); mentar (a) madre; mentir por (la) mitad de la barba; meterla; meterse a farolero (alguien); meterse a redentor/-ra; metérsela; mi santo; mojar (en) caliente; mover el bigote; moza de fortuna (del partido); mujer de la calle; mujer de la vida/de vida alegre; mujer de precio; mujer de su casa; nacido de madre; ni cojones; ni el Tato; ni la madre que lo parió; ni su padre; niño bonito; niño de papá; niño de Serrano; niño gótico; niño litri; niño mimado; niño pitongo/bitongo; niño zangolotino; no casarse ni con su padre; no contar con la huésped; no haber (no quedar/no tener) más huevos; no haber más (no quedar/no tener) cojones; no hay tío pásame usted el río; no hay tu tía; no te enrolles, Charles Boyer; no tener/necesitar abuela; no tener padre (alguien) padre ni madre ni perro (o perrito) que le ladre; objetor de conciencia; ole/ olé tus huevos/pelotas/cojones; padre conscripto; padre de alquiler; padre de la

patria; Palomo cojo; pantalón de montar; para que te vayas con los soldados; pasarlas putas; pasarlo teta; pasarse (alguien algo) por los huevos/pelotas/cojones; pasársele el arroz (a una mujer); pedir la mano; pedir pelea (una mujer); pegársele el arroz (a una mujer); pelársela (a un hombre); pelos de bruja; pellizco de monja; Perico el de los palotes; pillar cacho; poner las pelotas encima de la mesa; poner los huevos/pelotas/ cojones encima de la mesa; poner rabos (o un rabo); ponerse como el Quico; ponerse como un pepe; ponerse los pantalones; ponerse moños; ponérsele (algo a un hombre) en la punta del nabo (de la polla); por barba; por huevos/pelotas/cojones; por los cojones; príncipe azul (encantado); putón verbenero (desorejado); qué cojones; qué coño; qué pelotas; qué risa, tía Felisa, quedar como un cochero; quedarse (una mujer) para vestir santos; quedarse para vestir imágenes; rascarse los huevos; real hembra; Rita la cantaora; saber más que Lepe; sacar de madre; salir del coño/chocho (algo a una mujer); salir(se) de madre; salirle (algo a alguien) de las pelotas/huevos/cojones; salirle (algo a un hombre) de la punta del nabo (de la polla); salirle de los ovarios; santo varón; ser (algo) como tener un tío en Alcalá; ser (algo) Juan y Manuela; ser (algo) puñalada de pícaro; ser (alguien o algo) la carabina de Ambrosio; ser hombre (con una mujer); ser hombre (para algo); ser madre; ser moza; ser mujer (una jovencita); ser padre; ser profeta en su tierra; ser un niño; sexo femenino (débil/bello); sexo masculino (fuerte/feo); soplar (a alguien) la musa; su abuela/tu abuela; su madre; su padre (tu padre); sudar el chocho; sudársela; suplicio de Tántalo; tener (alguien a un hombre) cogido por los huevos/pelotas/cojones; tener (una mujer) los ovarios bien puestos; tener bigotes; tener huevos (tener los huevos bien puestos); tener las pelotas bien puestas; tener más cuento que Calleja; tener pelos en los cojones; tener pelotas (algo); tener pluma; tener un polvo (estar para un polvo); tener un revolcón; tenerlos bien puestos (un hombre); tiempos de Maricastaña; tío bueno; tío de América; tirar de la oreja a Jorge; tirar los tejos (a alguien); tocar las pelotas/huevos/cojones; tocarse las pelotas/huevos/cojones; tócate las pelotas; tócate los huevos (manda huevos); tomar (a alguien) por el pito del sereno; un cojón; un par de ovarios; venir el tío Paco con la rebaja; verdad de Pero Grullo/ Perogrullo; viejo verde; y lo que te rondaré; (morena); yo que tú no lo haría, forastero.

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