

# Cognitive Models in Spanish Metalinguistic Phraseology

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## ***Abstract***

This study analyses cognitive models underlying a number of phraseological expressions in Spanish. The expressions which will be discussed were selected from a collection of more than 250 units taken from the most recent Spanish dictionaries and phraseological repertoires. All of these units are fixed expressions which are used in present-day Spanish (mostly in the European variety) to refer to people's ways of speaking – by a verb of speech such as *hablar* (*speak, talk*), *decir* (*say, tell*) etc. The meaning of these expressions, together with the presence of verbs of speech, allows us to label them “metalinguistic”. Indeed, these phraseological expressions belong to what Rey-Debove described as “natural metalanguage”, more specifically, to the non-scientific metalanguage used in everyday discourse. Such expressions, which are found in different languages, are particularly significant as a reflection of how linguistic communication is conceptualized. Based mainly on Lakoff and Johnson's theoretical frame, this study uncovers the ‘folk’ understanding of Spanish speakers about language reflected in the data, and shows how this particular speech community perceives and interprets this field of reality.

## ***Keywords***

Phraseology, Cognitive Models (Metaphor and Metonymy), Spanish, Semantics.

# Cognitive Models in Spanish Metalinguistic Phraseology

## Introduction

The aim of the present paper is to contribute to the understanding of the ways in which linguistic action is expressed and conceptualized by speakers of Spanish<sup>1</sup>. I will focus on a number of phraseological expressions which contain a verb of speech and which are used to refer to different aspects of linguistic behaviour. These expressions are called *metalinguistic*. In them, we will find some of the most salient cognitive models (metaphors and metonymies) which shape the conceptualization of this field of reality. As we will see in the discussion, the number of expressions which represent each metaphor or metonymy is not large, but their fixedness makes them especially relevant.

This investigation focuses on the description of Spanish metalinguistic metaphors as found in some phraseological expressions, so its approach is not crosslinguistic. Nevertheless, throughout the discussion, some references to the English language will be made which suggest that there are some common metaphorical and metonymical connections at the level of thought in both languages. Presumably, the Spanish metalinguistic metaphors discussed here will differ from the ones found in other unrelated languages, however, in-depth contrastive research will be needed to determine to what extent these metaphors are shared or culture-specific.

I will start with an explanation of the framework used in this study, that is, a brief description of metalanguage, phraseology and the cognitive perspective. After that, I will offer a brief overview of the concepts of metaphor and metonymy and their relationship with phraseological units. Then, I will present the data, which will be described in the following sections, starting with the metaphorical expressions, followed by the metonymical ones, and finishing with stereotypical similes and comparisons.

## Metalanguage, Phraseology and Cognition

One of the characteristic features of language is its reflexiveness or what Jakobson (1960) called *metalinguistic function*. In languages, this capacity manifests itself in expressions which designate different aspects of linguistic communication. Languages have expressions which belong to the *natural metalanguage* (Rey-Debove 1997) either

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<sup>1</sup> This paper has been developed as part of the research project *Lo metalingüístico en español*, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science (BBF 2002-00801).

to the scientific-didactic one (words like *article*, *verb*, *preposition* etc.), or to the ordinary or every-day one (words like *speech*, *question*, *to tell*, *to swear* etc.). In the last decades, several scholars have pointed out the importance of looking at this second kind of metalanguage:

Our knowledge of language is largely implicit, so that it needs to be explicated by expert theories. However, there are also intuitive conceptions of language, as reflected in the metalinguistic repertoire of the lexicon. (Vanparys 1995: 1)

The lexicon of a language is a reflection – however imperfect it may be – of conceptual distinctions its speakers habitually draw; therefore, studying the lexical items speakers of different natural languages have at their disposal to describe linguistic acts may yield insights into people’s conceptualization of linguistic action and thus into the nature of linguistic action itself. (Verschuere 1985: 32)

Since the 80s, several studies have focused on the metalinguistic lexicon mostly of the English language<sup>2</sup>. The object of analysis in all of them though was lexical units, and very little attention was paid to multi-word lexical items.

In the field of Spanish Linguistics, a systematic study of metalanguage has only recently been developed by some scholars, especially those working in the project “Metalanguage in Spanish” in which I include myself. This project aims to analyse metalanguage at different linguistic levels: lexical, phraseological and textual<sup>3</sup>. In this paper, I will discuss metalanguage in phraseological expressions.

Phraseological units belong to what Coseriu (1966: 190) called *repeated speech* or “already said language”, and can be defined as institutionalized and fixed multi-word lexical items whose meaning is usually non-compositional or idiomatic<sup>4</sup>. As Ruiz Gurillo (2001: 108) pointed out, phraseological expressions have been set aside for many years in Linguistics because of its grammatically ill-formed, “folkloric” or “anecdotic” character<sup>5</sup>. However, as many studies have shown in the last decades, phraseology is not only an essential part of the structure of a language, but a mechanism with a psycholinguistic status which plays an extremely important role in cognition. We could say therefore that cognitive theories offer valuable tools to understand the apparent anomaly and irregularity of phraseological units, and that, phraseology at the same time, is a source that cognitive linguistics can use to trace conceptual systems.

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<sup>2</sup> Dirven *et al.* (1982), Verschueren (1985) and Wierzbicka (1987) among others.

<sup>3</sup> Some of the results of this project can be found in Casado Velarde, M., R. González Ruiz, and O. Loureda Lamas (eds.) (2005).

<sup>4</sup> Phraseology has been described as a *continuum* where units are prototypical or peripheral, depending on their degree of fixedness and idiomaticity.

<sup>5</sup> The first study of phraseological expressions in Spanish Linguistics was the one carried out by Julio Casares in 1950, but Phraseology as a discipline was not developed until the ‘80s and ‘90s, especially with the works of Zuluaga (1980), Corpas Pastor (1997) and Ruiz Gurillo (1997).

The approach of the analysis which will be carried out here is linguistic and descriptive, but cognitive theories – more specifically Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual metaphor theory – will be used to explain the data. Given the presence of conceptual models in language and thought, an analysis focused in the former can also be useful to understand the latter. As Deignan and Potter point out (2004: 1233), “(...) although the primary goal of a language description approach is to account satisfactorily for language, it is nonetheless possible that the detailed examination of superficial linguistic features could have implications for our understanding of thought”.

## Metaphor, Metonymy and Phraseological Units

Metaphor is one of the principles which structure the *idealized cognitive models* (Lakoff 1987: chap. IV) in which our knowledge of the world is organized. Metaphor, according to cognitive theories, constitutes a fundamental part of people’s ordinary thought, reason and imagination. The essence of metaphor, as Lakoff and Johnson explain (1980: 5), is “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another”. In a metaphorical expression, there is a connection of two conceptual domains: the source or donor domain and the target or recipient domain. The latter is more abstract, and it is understood in terms of the first, which is a more physical kind of domain. For example, the target domain of *affection* is interpreted in terms of the source domain of *warmth* in the metaphor AFFECTION IS WARMTH, which is reflected in language in expressions such as *warm relationship*; similarly, the target domain of *life* is understood in terms of the source domain of a *journey* in the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, which manifests itself in the English language in many expressions such as *to be at a crossroads in life* or *to be over the hill*.

In metonymy, however, the connection is not established between two discrete conceptual domains but within a single domain<sup>6</sup>. It consists of taking one well-understood or easy-to-perceive aspect of something and use it to stand either for the whole thing or for some other aspect of it (Lakoff 1987: 77). For instance, a part of the body can stand for the whole person, or the physiological effects of an emotion or feeling can stand for that emotion or feeling. Some examples in English of these metonymies are *to hate someone’s guts* or *to have cold feet*.

One of the issues frequently addressed in studies of these models is their universality. Some crosslinguistic studies have shown that some metaphors are common to a number of unrelated languages, but haven’t shown yet to what extent they can really be considered as “shared metaphors”. Kövecses suggests that even though there are some *primary metaphors* based on universal primary experiences, like the conceptual

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<sup>6</sup> In spite of the traditional distinction between these two conceptual processes, some scholars have pointed out that metaphor and metonymy are not mutually exclusive, and that they both interact in figurative language (see Goossens 1995).

metaphor AFFECTION IS WARMTH, when we look at metaphors in the world's languages, we realize that variation is just as important and common as universality: "(...) metaphors are just as much cultural as they are cognitive entities and processes" (Kövecses 2005: 11).

Metaphors and metonymies manifest in language, and phraseology is one of the areas in which these processes are more salient. Deignan and Potter (2004) noticed that a large proportion of metaphors and metonymies found in their corpus of English and Italian appeared in expressions that had some degree of fixedness. Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 52) also noticed the importance of fixed expressions as a reflection of metaphorical thought: "the metaphorical structuring of concepts is necessarily partial and is reflected in the lexicon of the language, included the phrasal lexicon, which contains fixed-form expressions such as *to be without foundation*". Indeed, a lot of the metaphors we use are fixed units or are in the process of becoming *repeated discourse*, that is, phraseological expressions. On the other hand, metaphor and/or metonymy are often the starting point of a fixation process for a new phraseological unit.

## The data

The group of expressions analysed for this paper is dictionary-based and it has been taken from the most recent general and phraseological dictionaries of the Spanish language<sup>7</sup>. These are the Royal Academy's *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* (2001), the María Moliner's *Diccionario de Uso del Español* (1998), and the two dictionaries by Manuel Seco and others': *Diccionario del Español Actual* (1999) and *Diccionario Fraseológico Documentado del Español Actual* (2004). Due to the large number of expressions which can be used to refer to linguistic action, the search was narrowed down to those units which contained a verb of speech<sup>8</sup> and whose actual usage in present-day Spanish was proven by examples found in the CREA (On-line Present-Day Spanish Corpus) or in different websites from the Spanish-speaking world<sup>9</sup>.

The result of the search was a collection of more than 250 expressions of different kinds. Due to the limited scope of this paper, only 44 of them – the most illustrative

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<sup>7</sup> Although the expressions have been found in general dictionaries, some of them belong just to the Peninsular (European) variety of Spanish.

<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the expressions analysed are metalinguistic not only because they refer to linguistic action, but also because they contain a metalinguistic word. Metalinguistic expressions containing other kinds of verbs are also a very rich area for the study of conceptual models. Some examples can be found in González Aguiar (2005).

<sup>9</sup> Only websites originally in Spanish were used. The search for these examples was done through the search engine Ariadn@.

ones – were selected for description<sup>10</sup>. From the phraseological point of view, the units which will be discussed are semi-idiomatic simple and complex collocations. In both kinds of units, the verb of speech, with its literal meaning, is followed by a more or less idiomatic adverbial modifier: in the simple ones it is an adverb or an adjective, and in the complex ones it is an adverbial fixed phraseological unit.

The following table shows the expressions which will be discussed<sup>11</sup>:

Table 1. The data.

COLLOCATIONS			
Simple		Complex	
verb + adv.	[discutir] acaloradamente [hablar] alto [hablar] fuerte/recio	[preguntar] a bocajarro [hablar] a borbotones [hablar] a chorros/a chorretadas [hablar/decir] a espaldas de alguien [hablar/decir] a/en la cara [traducir/citar] a la letra [preguntar] a quemarropa [decir] al hilo de... [traducir/citar] al pie de la letra [hablar/decir] cara a cara [decir/contar] letra por letra [decir] lisa y llanamente [decir/contar] punto por punto [discutir] con calor [hablar/decir] con el corazón en la mano/con la mano en el corazón	[decir] con la cabeza muy alta [decir] con un hilo de voz [decir/contar] con puntos y comas [hablar/jurar] como un carretero [hablar] como una cotorra [hablar] como un libro [hablar] como un libro abierto [hablar] como un papagayo [hablar] como un perico/loro [hablar] como un descosido [decir/recitar] de carrerilla [decir/recitar] de corrido/a [hablar] más que un sacamuelas [hablar] más que una urraca [decir] para su capote/coleto/sayo [hablar] por boca de ganso [hablar] por detrás [decir/confesar] sin rebozo(s)

## Metaphors where discourse is the target domain

Linguistic communication is largely an abstract phenomenon, and, as many abstract phenomena, it is conceptualized in terms of physical domains of experience. As

<sup>10</sup> For a complete study of the whole collection of metalinguistic expressions involving verbs of speech in Spanish see Aznárez Mauleón (in press). For a study of metalinguistic simple collocations see Aznárez Mauleón (2005).

<sup>11</sup> These expressions vary in their degree of collocational restriction, that is, in the number of different verbs they combine with. Due to the limited scope of this paper, an in-depth analysis of this aspect can't be offered (see Aznárez Mauleón in press for further discussion). Based on the examples from the corpus, I have specified in brackets the verbs of speech which appear most frequently in each of the expressions.

Kövecses explains “the choice of a particular source to go with a particular target is motivated by an experiential basis, that is, some embodied experience” (2005, 6). In that sense, Spanish metalinguistic metaphorical expressions are not an exception, and they constitute another example of how metaphors have an experiential motivation. Now we will examine a number of metaphors where discourse – or a particular aspect of it – is the target domain: DISCOURSE IS A SURFACE, DISCOURSE IS A JOURNEY, DISCOURSE IS A LIQUID, DISCOURSE IS A THREAD and ASKING IS SHOOTING.

#### **EL DISCURSO ES UNA SUPERFICIE [DISCOURSE IS A SURFACE]**

This metaphor is in the origin of [*decir*] *lisa y llanamente* (*lit.* “to say smoothly and flatly”) and it is based in what has been called an *image schema*. *Image schemata* are recurring bodily experiences that get a structure through constant repetition and that are commonly used in metaphorical thought (Kövecses 2005, 18). Johnson (1987, 29) explains that “these patterns emerge as meaningful structures for us chiefly at the level of our bodily movements through space, our manipulation of objects and our perceptual interactions”<sup>12</sup>. In the expression [*decir*] *lisa y llanamente*, a smooth and flat surface stands for a discourse that is easy to understand. This is understood because we know from our physical experience in the world that a flat surface offers no obstacles and it is simple and easy to see in its entirety. The metaphor DISCOURSE IS A SURFACE is combined here with UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING. The same concept can be found in other expressions such as “lenguaje llano” (*lit.* “flat language”).

#### **EL DISCURSO ES UN TRAYECTO [DISCOURSE IS A JOURNEY]**

The idea of linguistic action as motion along a path can be found in the adverbial locutions *de corrido/corrida* and *de carrerilla* (*lit.* “on the run”) which collocate with verbs such as *decir* (say) or *recitar* (recite):

- (1) *Yo quería que terminara todo rápido, de una vez, que el cura que vino al pueblo dijera de corrido la misa [...].* [I wanted it all to finish quickly, in one go, I wanted the priest who came to the village to **say de corrido** mass. (Renato Prada Oropeza, *Larga hora: la vigilia*, 1979, CREA, Mexico)
- (2) - *¿Recuerda la teoría?*

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<sup>12</sup> As we will see, other basic schemata underlying metalinguistic expressions – apart from the surface one – are PATH, CONTAINER, SCALE, FORCE and CENTER/PERIPHERY.

(...)

- *Sí, maestro -recitó de carrerilla, como un escolar-. Si paro con círculo en segunda y no puedo encontrar el florete contrario (...).*

[-Do you remember the theory? (...)]

- Yes, master -he **recited de carrerilla**, like a schoolboy-. If I stop with a circle in second and I can't find the opposite foil (...).] (Arturo Pérez-Reverte, *El maestro de esgrima*, 1988, CREA, Spain)

As we can see in the examples, these complex collocations refer to the manner of saying something, specifically to uninterrupted monological discourses (which are also often quick and from memory). The idea of motion is here on the part of the speaker.

### EL DISCURSO ES UN LÍQUIDO [DISCOURSE IS A LIQUID]

The phraseological units where we can find this metaphor involve also the idea of motion. In this case, the motion is not on the part of the speaker but on the part of its words or the speech itself. We can say that LIQUID as a source domain for discourse has as its major theme or *meaning focus*<sup>13</sup> the idea of movement. More specifically, in the expression [*hablar*] *a chorros/chorretadas* (lit. “to speak in streams”), the image of self-propelled liquids is used to refer to large quantities of speech (see example 3), while in [*hablar*] *a borbotones* (lit. “to speak in bubblings”) it is the manner of the movement of the liquid gushing out which serves as an image for a quick and hasty articulation of the words (see example 4):

- (3) *Hablaba a chorros poniendo paño al Púlpito*. [He **spoke a chorros**, boasting about all his knowledge]. (Fernando Arrabal, *La torre herida por el rayo*, 1982, CREA, Spain)
- (4) *Cúidese de caer en el frecuente defecto de hablar a borbotones, o sea correr en las palabras largas, y alargar las breves o, aún peor, escamotear o suprimir del todo las primeras o las últimas sílabas de las palabras largas*. [Be careful not to make the mistake of **speaking a borbotones**, that is, to rush in the long words and to prolong the short ones or, even worse, to remove or omit completely the first and the last syllables of the long words]. (Cristián Caballero, *Cómo educar la voz hablada y cantada*, 1985, CREA, Mexico)

### EL DISCURSO ES UN HILO [DISCOURSE IS A THREAD]

THREAD as a source domain for discourse has as a meaning focus the idea of “long and continuing”. The expression [*hablar*] *como un descosido* (lit. “to talk like an

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<sup>13</sup> “I believe that conceptual metaphors (both the complex and primary ones) have one or several ‘meaning foci’. By this I mean that each source domain contributes predetermined conceptual materials to the range of target domains to which it applies. This conceptual material is agreed upon by a community of speakers and represents extremely basic and central knowledge about the source.” (Kövecses 2005: 11).



unstitched/loose thread”) which means to talk a lot, uses the specific image of the continuation and length of a thread when pulled out of a seam. In the expression [*decir algo*] *al hilo de...* (lit. “to say something on the thread of...”) which means “to say something connected or related to something else” we can also see the image scheme of PATH<sup>14</sup>. Here is an example of this expression:

- (5) *Como ciudadano que vivo en la Corporación Metropolitana de Barcelona, no me considero en situación beligerante con el Gobierno catalán (...). Lo **digo al hilo de** las afirmaciones de Obiols, que parecen indicar que con esta propuesta el Consell Executiu ha declarado la guerra a más de la mitad de la población de Cataluña.* [As a citizen who lives in the Metropolitan Corporation of Barcelona, I don’t consider myself to be in a belligerent situation with the Catalan Government (...). I say this **al hilo de** Obiol’s statements, that suggest that with this proposal the *Consell Executiu* has declared war on more than half the Catalan population]. (*El País*, 01/02/1986, “La supresión de la CMB”, CREA, Spain)

There is also a metalinguistic expression in which the source domain THREAD is used: [*decir*] *con un hilo de voz* (lit. “to say something with a thread of voice”). In this case, the source domain is not used to refer to discourse, but to the volume of the voice of the speaker:

- (6) - (...) *Omar no soportó. Quiso reunirse con usted, trató de escapar en una balsa y... murió ahogado.*  
 - *Eso no es verdad -afirmó ella con una convicción absoluta.*  
 - *El mar devolvió su cuerpo -dije con un hilo de voz-. Yo lo vi muerto.*  
 [- (...) Omar couldn’t cope. He wanted to meet you, he tried to escape in a boat and... he drowned.  
 - That’s not true –she stated with total conviction.  
 - The sea brought his body back -I said **con un hilo de voz**-. I saw him dead].  
 (Jesús Díaz, *La piel y la máscara*, 1996, CREA, Cuba)

The meaning focus here is that of “thinness”, and it is used as an image for a very low volume of the voice. It is interesting to notice the synesthetic process behind this metaphor: an aural phenomenon such as low volume is understood in terms of features perceived by other senses like thinness, which can be touched or seen but not heard. Features that we can touch or see are therefore used to refer to those which we can hear.

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<sup>14</sup> There are other expressions not included in our collection (because they don’t contain a verb of speech) that reflect the metaphor DISCOURSE IS A THREAD like *perder el hilo*, which has the English equivalent *to lose the thread*.

**PREGUNTAR ES DISPARAR [ASKING IS SHOOTING]**

Two clear conceptual correspondences or mappings have been found in the expressions: ‘asking is shooting’ and ‘words are bullets’. This metaphor also involves the idea of the speaker as a container, more specifically, as a loaded gun<sup>15</sup>.

There are two expressions in which this metaphor manifests: [*preguntar*] *a bocajarro* and [*preguntar*] *a quemarropa*. When the adverbial modifiers are not used with their metalinguistic but with their literal meaning, they collocate with the verb *disparar* (to shoot) and they mean “to shoot at a very close range”<sup>16</sup>. We can say that these units in their metalinguistic use are twice metaphorical, because they already contain a metaphorical compound word to express their literal meaning: *bocajarro* (lit. “the mouth of a jar”), and *quemarropa* (lit. “burning the clothes”). They refer therefore to shooting at such a close range that it will make a hole, like the hole (mouth) of a jar or that it will burn the target’s clothes. In their metalinguistic use, they collocate with the verb *preguntar* (to ask) and they refer to sudden and abrupt questions that can therefore represent an aggression to the addressee, because they are presented with no preparation. The cognitive and emotional effects in the hearer are understood as the physical effects produced by a close range shooting<sup>17</sup>. Here are some examples of the use of both expressions:

- (7) - *Aquí tienen, colegas, éste es uno de los comunistas del congreso -dijo Zamorano, señalando al maestro de ceremonias-. ¿Tú eres comunista, no es cierto? -le preguntó, a quemarropa. El tipo se puso pálido, sonrió sin saber qué decir y regresó a la mesa directiva.* [Here you are, colleagues, this is one of the communists of the congress -Zamorano said, pointing to the master of ceremonies-. You are a communist, aren’t you? -he **asked a quemarropa**. The guy turned pale, smiled not knowing what to say and went back to the managers’ table]. (Jaime Bayly, *Los últimos días de "La Prensa"*, 1996, CREA, Peru)
- (8) (...) *pese al cuidado que ambas delegaciones habían tenido para no hablar de Ceuta y Melilla durante la visita, un periodista español le preguntó a bocajarro al marroquí sobre las dos ciudades.* [In spite of both delegations’ care to avoid talking about Ceuta and Melilla during the visit, a Spanish journalist **asked** the Moroccan **a bocajarro** about the two cities]. (Julio Feo, *Aquellos años*, 1993, CREA, Spain)

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<sup>15</sup> The same idea is found in the English expression *to shoot one’s mouth off*.

<sup>16</sup> The verb *disparar* (to shoot) can also be used to refer to speech, especially in the command “¡Dispara!”.

<sup>17</sup> The interpretation of cognitive and emotional effects of discourse as physical effects can be found in many English verbs such as *to shove s.o. around*, *to knock s.o. out*, *to knock s.o. off his/her feet* etc.

## Other metaphors related to discourse

### SABER ES VER/NO SABER ES NO VER [KNOWING IS SEEING/NOT KNOWING IS NOT SEEING]

Some expressions were found that refer to the way a discourse which affects a person negatively is presented. In them, proxemic or situational features – described through the use of body part words – are used to express that the person concerned can or cannot know what the speaker is saying about him/her. These expressions are: [*hablar/decir*] *a espaldas de alguien* (lit. “speak/say at someone’s back”), [*hablar*] *por detrás* (lit. “to speak behind someone”), [*hablar/decir*] *a/en la cara* (lit. “to speak/say/tell to/on the face”), [*hablar/decir*] *cara a cara* (lit. “to speak/say/tell face to face”):

- (9) *ALCES No comprendo cómo puedes soportar a esta grosera. ¿Por qué no la echas a patadas de aquí?*  
*ATÉ Porque tiene razón.*  
*ALCES Eso no es motivo para hablarte así.*  
*PENIA Claro, tú, como eres una hipócrita, lo **dices a sus espaldas**.*  
 [ALCES I don’t understand how you can stand such a rude woman. Why don’t you kick her out?  
 ATÉ Because she is right.  
 ALCES But that is not reason to speak to you like that.  
 PENIA Of course, you, since you are a hypocrite, you **say it a sus espaldas**].  
 (Isabel Hidalgo, *Todas hijas de su madre*, 1988, CREA, Spain)
- (10) *La pregunta era bastante de doble filo (...). No le tengo temor a eso. Creo que es bastante más honesto hacer esa clase de preguntas que andar **hablando por detrás**, inventando tonteras.* [The question was quite a double-edged one (...). I am not afraid of that. I think it is more honest to make those sorts of questions than to **speak por detrás**, making up nonsense]. (*La Tercera. Mujer*, 26/05/2001, “Ella está con él porque está enamorada”, <http://mujer.tercera.cl>, Chile)
- (11) *Saca un recorte de periódico y le dice a la cámara de televisión que has firmado una información en la portada de un periódico que tú sabes que no. (...). Le **dices a la cara que miente**.* [He takes out a newspaper cutting and says to the television camera that you have signed a column in a newspaper front page and you know you haven’t. You **tell him a la cara** that he is lying]. (Ernesto Ekaizer, *Vendetta*, 1996, CREA, Argentina)
- (12) *¡Cobarde será tu Inés! -saltó Nadine, dejándome turulato-. ¡Por qué no se atreve a **decirle cara a cara** a Enrique que es policía!* [It is your Ines who is a coward! -said Nadine, leaving me flabbergasted-. Why doesn’t she dare to **tell Enrique cara a cara** that he is a policeman!]. (Afredo Bryce Echenique, *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña*, 1981, CREA, Peru)

The first two expressions refer literally to the situation where the speaker is behind the person concerned, so that this person can’t “see” what he is doing. The last two, on

the contrary, refer literally to the part of the body where the eyes are, to describe a discourse presented in front of the person concerned, so that he/she can “see”. It is interesting to notice again that even though discourse is perceived by hearing, sight seems to be considered more important in the conceptualization of linguistic communication.

Related to this metaphor we find TO MAKE KNOWN IS TO MAKE VISIBLE in [*decir/confesar*] *sin rebozo(s)* (*lit.* “to tell/confess without cloak or without cover”) which refers to a frank and open discourse<sup>18</sup>:

- (13) *Ratzinger dijo algunas cosas que debían hacernos meditar a todos. (...) Confiesa sin rebozo algo que no se esperaría de él: "las grandes ideologías -dijo- han podido dar un cierto fundamento ético a la sociedad".* [Ratzinger said some things that should make us all meditate. (...) He **confesses *sin rebozo*** something we wouldn't expect from him: “the big ideologies -he said- have been able to give a certain ethical basis to society]. (Enrique Magdalena Manrique, *¿Qué nos falta para ser felices? Un nuevo modo de pensar y de vivir*, 2002, CREA, Spain)

#### **INTENSIDAD ES FUERZA [INTENSITY IS FORCE] + MÁS ES ARRIBA [MORE IS UP].**

The schema of SCALE (Johnson 1987: 121-123) has also been found relevant in the collection of metalinguistic expressions, especially in those referred to the volume of the voice of a speaker. More specifically, the scale of intensity, combined with the schema of FORCE is in the origin of the units [*hablar*] *fuerte/recio* (*lit.* “to speak strong”) which is used to describe a loud volume. A loud volume of voice is also described by [*hablar*] *alto* (*lit.* “to speak high”) in which we also find an instance of the scale schema: the primary metaphor MORE IS UP. Given that these meanings are the regular or literal ones of these adverbs, we can consider them as incorporated metaphors.

## **Metonymies**

The most salient metonymies found in the collection are the following:

### **Clothes stand for the person**

This metonymy can be found in [*decir*] *para su capote/coleto/sayo* (*lit.* “to one's cloak/smock”) which refers to a discourse addressed to oneself or pronounced inwardly. In the following example we can see this idea in both the expression *para su coleto* and the use of the pronoun *se* which in this context means “to himself”:

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<sup>18</sup> These two metaphors found in Spanish metalinguistic units are consistent with the metaphorical use of many verbs of the seeing domain to refer to knowledge or understanding that we can find in many languages, like in the Spanish “No lo veo” (“I don't see it”) or the English “I see what you mean”.

- (14) *¡Trabaja, puta, trabaja! -se decía Juan Pérez para su coleteo al retirar las tulipas vacías.* [Work, bitch, work! -said Juan Pérez *para su coleteo* when he removed the empty lampshades]. (José Donoso, *Casa de campo*, 1978, CREA, Chile)

### The physiological effects of an emotion stand for the emotion

This metonymy is in the origin of many expressions in English and Spanish like *to have cold feet* or *helársele a alguien la sangre/el corazón* (lit. “to have one’s heart/blood freezing”) where a drop in body temperature stands for fear. In the collection of metalinguistic units we have found this metonymic principle applied to angry or passionate discourses in the expressions [*discutir*] *con calor/acaloradamente* (lit. “to argue heatedly”). These units are an example of the metonymy BODY HEAT STANDS FOR ANGER (OR FOR AN INTENSE EMOTIONAL STATE) which can be found in many languages and which is in the base of a very productive conceptual metaphor (see Kövecses 2005, 39-42)<sup>19</sup>.

### The kinesthetic expression of an attitude stands for the attitude

The attitude of the speaker is described through this kind of metonymy in the expressions [*decir*] *con la cabeza muy alta* (lit. “to say/tell with one’s head high”) and [*hablar/decir*] *con el corazón en la mano/con la mano en el corazón* (lit. “to speak/say/tell with one’s heart in one’s hand/one’s hand on one’s heart”). These expressions can actually be used to describe discourses where the designated gesture is not made. Here are two examples of their usage:

- (15) (...) *pero os aseguro que seguiré recogiendo firmas, seguiré levantándome por la mañana, seguiré diciendo con la cabeza muy alta que soy VIH.* [(...) but I assure you that I will keep collecting signatures, I will keep getting up in the mornings, I will keep **saying con la cabeza muy alta** that I am HIV+]. (*Foro positivo*, 04/09/2002, <http://interactua.net/cafeteria>, Spain)
- (16) *Díganos una cosa con la mano en el corazón. ¿Hoy se celebraba el quinto aniversario de El Siglo o una convención de exministros del PSOE?* [**Tell us something con la mano en el corazón.** Today it’s the celebration of the fifth anniversary of *El Siglo*, or is it a convention of ex-ministers of the PSOE?]. (Oral, *Tele 5*, “Caiga quien caiga”, 03/11/1996, CREA, Spain)

The first one is used to refer to discourses where the speaker shows confidence and expresses him/herself with dignity. The folk understanding of confident speech is based therefore on the body expression (specifically the position of the head) which is often correlated to it in experience. The second one involves a more complex conceptualization. It refers to sincere discourses through the gesture which often

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<sup>19</sup> The fact that this metonymy is based on the physiological (or “natural”) effects of anger explains the agreement of many different cultures in their folk theories about it, and their use of similar expressions to refer to it.

accompanies them in Spanish culture (and presumably in a number of other cultures too). The position of the hand on the heart is a common *illustrator*<sup>20</sup> of sincerity in discourse and it is based on the general folk model of the heart as the location of our inner feelings<sup>21</sup>. As Deignan and Potter (2004: 1248) point out, although gestures are usually conventional in a culture, some are also partly motivated by an instinctive physical reaction. As we saw before (see footnote 19), when the latter case occurs in the creation of a metonymy, similarities will presumably be easier to find between different languages.

### Thorough writing stands for thorough speaking

There is a large group of units which use the domain of written language to refer to oral discourse. Again, a more abstract activity is understood in terms of a more concrete one. The action of writing carefully every letter, dot or comma, is used to refer to an exact, detailed or complete speech in the expressions *a la letra* (lit. “to the letter”), *al pie de la letra* (lit. “at the foot of the letter”), *letra por letra* (lit. “letter by letter”), *punto por punto* (lit. “dot by dot”), *con puntos y comas* (lit. “with dots and commas”). The first two usually collocate with *traducir* (translate) and *citar* (quote), and they refer to speeches which correspond exactly to the original:

- (17) *Evidentemente, traduciendo a la letra lo que hay ahí me produce perplejidad.* [Of course, **translating a la letra** what is there baffles me]. (Oral, Conversación del Grupo de Estudios Andaluz de la Escuela Europea de Psicoanálisis (GEA-EEP), Granada, 2000, CREA, Spain)
- (18) *Jesús responde citando al pie de la letra el pasaje del Dt 6, pero añade inmediatamente el mandamiento del amor al prójimo (...).* [Jesus answers **quoting al pie de la letra** the excerpt from Dt 6, but he adds immediately the commandment of love of one’s neighbour]. (Semanao cristiano de formación e información, “Eucaristía”, 1976, <http://www.mercaba.org>, Spain)

*Letra por letra, punto por punto* and *con puntos y comas* collocate mostly with *decir* and *contar* (tell) and, as we can see in the following examples, they describe speeches where the speaker tells something completely and in detail:

- (19) *Le conté letra por letra lo que había dicho al verme solucionar un problema geométrico por procedimientos completamente peregrinos, «peregrinos» es lo*

<sup>20</sup> “[Illustrators] are non verbal acts that are directly tied to, or accompany, speech and serve to illustrate what is being said verbally” (Knapp 1980: 6).

<sup>21</sup> This conceptualization involves the schema of CENTRE-PERIPHERY (the heart is the center) (see Pauwels and Simon-Vandenberghe 1995, 64) and it is also salient in some English expressions like *to bare one’s heart* or *to say something from the bottom of one’s heart*. In Spanish, the heart as the “center” stands for true feelings, while the “periphery” is represented by words such as *barba* (beard), *boca* (mouth) and *afuera* (outside) in the expressions *[mentir] por la barba*, *[decir] de (la) boca para afuera* and *[decir] de boquilla*, used to refer to the act of lying or to unsincere discourses.

*que dijo don Joaquín.* [I **told** him *letra por letra* what he said when he saw me solve a geometrical problem by completely strange means, "strange" is what Don Joaquín said]. (Rosa Chacel, *Barrio de maravillas*, 1976, CREA, Spain)

- (20) *Todo me lo **contó** -dijo orgulloso- **punto por punto**, en aquella semana que estuvo escondida en la casa (...).* [She **told** me everything -he said proudly- *punto por punto*, during the week she was hiding in my house]. (Edwin Cifuentes, *La nueva esmeralda*, 1987, CREA, Guatemala)
- (21) *Lo peor es que es probable que ese amante no tarde en **contar con puntos y comas** su "affaire" al primer amigo que encuentre en su camino.* [The worst is that it won't take that lover too long to **tell con puntos y comas** his affair to the first friend he runs into]. (*Terra Mujer*, "Cuando la mujer engaña", 2002, <http://www.terra.com.cr/mujer>, Costa Rica)

## Stereotypical Similes and Comparisons

We couldn't close a discussion on metalinguistic cognitive models in Spanish phraseological units without paying attention to the stereotypes embedded in comparative expressions. The most important domain used to describe discourse is that of animals, more specifically that of birds<sup>22</sup>. The metalinguistic expressions containing an identification of the speaker behaviour with that of specific birds often involve a negative value judgement. The linguistic aspect they assess is the quantity of discourse, often linked to its emptiness or foolishness. The expressions are: [*hablar*] *como una cotorra/como un papagayo* (lit. "to talk like a parrot"), [*hablar*] *como un perico/loro* (lit. "to talk like a parakeet") and [*hablar*] *más que una urraca* (lit. "to talk more than a magpie"). Here are some examples of their use:

- (22) *Ni siquiera he podido preguntárselo a Felipe González, que llama por teléfono, **habla como un papagayo** y no escucha...* [I haven't even been able to ask Felipe González, who phones, **talks como un papagayo** and doesn't listen]. (*ABC*, 16/06/1996, "Contraventana", CREA, Spain)
- (23) - *¿Cómo era tu vida de niño?*  
- ***Hablaba como un perico**, jugaba a que era locutor. Me ponía a presentar canciones en el auto y enloquecía a mi mamá.* [- How was your life as a child? - I used to **talk como un perico**, I played at being a radio presenter. I presented songs in the car and would drive my mum insane]. (*Univision online*, "Lo mejor del Chat con Regil", 13/01/2005, <http://www.univision.com>, Mexico)

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<sup>22</sup> The source domain of animals can also be found in the onomatopoeic words used in the predicate phraseological expressions *no decir (ni) pío* (lit. "not to say a tweet") and *no decir (ni) mu* (lit. "not to say a moo"), that is, not to say a word.

If someone talks *como una cotorra/papagayo/perico/loro* or *más que una urraca*, that is, a lot, he/she is being as annoying as the sound of a parrot or a magpie. Also, the ability of some of these birds to imitate human words without any knowledge or without making any sense is used in some cases to imply that the speaker doesn't know what he/she is talking about or that his/her discourse is empty or foolish, as the following example shows:

- (24) (...) *los verdaderos estragos, catástrofes y despropósitos del viajero alegre tienen asiento terrenal, pues es fama que casi no quedan países en los cuales no haya hecho historia hablando como un loro, para no decir nada.* [(...) the real damages, catastrophes and stupid remarks of the happy traveller have a worldly base, for it is known that there are hardly any countries where he hasn't made history **talking como un loro**, just to say nothing]. (Manuel Malaver, "El viajero alegre en Porto Alegre", <http://www.talcualdigital.com/ediciones>, 2003, Venezuela)

Similarly, *ganso* (goose) is used to refer to talking with no knowledge or repeating what other people have already said in the expression [*hablar*] *por boca de ganso* (lit. "to talk through goose mouth"):

- (25) (...) *normalmente habla –como escribe– por boca de ganso, soltando palabras que ni él sabe lo que quieren decir: Entropía, hermenéutica....* [he usually **talks** - like he writes- **por boca de ganso**, dropping words that not even he knows the meaning of: Entropy, hermeneutics...]. (*La Vanguardia*, 18/08/1994, "Los fuegos de Pandora", CREA, Spain)

Finally, similes and comparisons are also established with things, or with particular characters which prototypically represent some discourse features. For example, the word *libro* (book) is used to designate an elegant and/or erudite discourse in *hablar como un libro* (lit. "to speak like a book") and a clear exposition in *hablar como un libro abierto* (lit. "to speak like an open book"). The word *sacamuélas* (lit. "teeth-puller") designates a character of the past who remains in the expression *hablar más que un sacamuélas* (lit. "to talk more than a teeth-puller"). The *sacamuélas* were pedlars or hawkers who did all sorts of things, including taking out teeth, and, of course, they used to talk a lot. A *carretero* (lit. "cart driver") is used prototypically as the person who speaks in a very coarse way in the expression *hablar/jurar como un carretero* (lit. "to speak/swear like a cart driver").

## Conclusion

The study of this group of metalinguistic fixed expressions with verbs of speech in Spanish has revealed some of the concepts which shape the understanding of linguistic activity of this particular speech community. The salient patterns or schemata in the conceptualization of language are the following:

- (1) SURFACE: the concept of a flat surface is used to refer to the understandability of discourse.



- (2) **PATH:** the directionality of the movement along a path is used to refer to the continuation of discourse.
- (3) **CONTAINER:** the speaker is understood as a container, specifically a loaded gun.
- (4) **SCALE AND FORCE:** the schemata of scale and force are used to refer to the intensity in the volume of the speaker's voice.
- (5) **CENTER/PERIPHERY:** the heart is understood as the central location of inner feelings to refer to sincere discourses.

As we have seen through the discussion, the aspects of linguistic communication which have been conceptualised through metaphor or metonymy, or which are understood in comparison with other realities are the following:

<b>Aspects of linguistic action</b>	<b>Domains used to refer to those aspects</b>
Understandability of discourse	Flat surface
	Open book
Completeness and exactitude of discourse	Thorough writing
Elegance of discourse	Book
Continuity of discourse	Thread
	Motion along a path
Large Quantity of discourse	Stereotypical characters
	Animals
	Liquids in motion
Foolishness of discourse	Animals
Quick articulation of discourse	Liquids in motion
Aggression in discourse	Shooting
Impolite discourse	Prototypical character
Concealment or openness in presenting the discourse	Situational features (Proxemics)
	Sight
Low volume of the voice of the speaker	Thin thread
Emotional state of the speaker	Physical sensations
Attitude of the speaker	Gestures (Kinesthetics)

The results of this study are consistent with the idea that metaphor is mostly grounded in embodiment<sup>23</sup>. In metalinguistic phraseology, bodily experience seems to be essential, especially visual perception and physical sensations (as seen in the metaphor KNOWING/UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING, the metonymy THOROUGH WRITING

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<sup>23</sup> For recent evidence of this idea see Gibbs *et al.* (2004).

STANDS FOR THOROUGH SPEAKING, and in the use of physical sensations and kinesthetic expressions to refer to oral speech).

As explained previously, this paper offers a sample of some metalinguistic fixed expressions in Spanish, and a more detailed and complete study of phraseological units containing a verb of speech can be found in Aznárez Mauleón (in press). This kind of research should be continued in the future by further investigations in other areas of the Spanish metalanguage as well as in the metalanguage of other languages. This further study will complete the description of the conceptual models involved in metalanguage and will lead to discover to what extent these models about linguistic communication are similar to those found in other cultures.

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