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SEMANTIC FIELD OF NEGATIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH PHRASEOLOGY

Abstract: *Semantic field is a set of expressions sharing a certain semantic feature and thus related in meaning or theme. This research employs a contrastive approach to examine the semantic field of negative personality traits in 53 English and 70 Spanish idioms obtained from dictionaries. It reveals differences in the frequency and distribution of traits across semantic subfields, with unintelligence as most frequent, along with malice and laziness in Spanish, and boastfulness in English. Unintelligence overlaps across different subfields in both languages, suggesting different cultural conceptualizations of the trait. Both languages link negative traits to animals and body parts through metaphor and metonymy, yet differ in their mapping, reflecting culturally shaped conceptualizations of traits. The results yield a deeper understanding of these idioms though further research is needed.*

Keywords: *semantic field, negative personality traits, English and Spanish phraseology, idioms, idiomatic expressions*

1. Introduction

Carlyle's (2002: 103) description of language as not only "the garment of thought" but also "the body of thought" captures its formative role in shaping our cognitive reality. Ludwig Wittgenstein's (2002: 68) observation that "the limits of his language means the limits of his world" reflects on the close connection existing between the constraints of language and the scope of human understanding while Whorf (1957: 213) goes a step further saying that "the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds". Subsequently then, phraseological expressions witness the creativity of human mind engraved in language. Jovanović (Јовановић 2013: 404) emphasizes the significance of phraseological expressions, highlighting three of their aspects: the reviving of the written word, establishing closer contacts among people and the fact that "the richness of all languages and their national color is evident not only in the existence of a fundamental lexical foundation but also in the use and application of numerous phraseological expressions that make them more subtle and memorable". The term phraseology, first put to use by Charles Bally in 1905 was later developed among Russian scholars from the late 1940s to 1970s such as Vinogradov, Amosova and Kunin (Nikulina 2015/Shtoltzel 2018) and is used nowadays to refer to a "fixed, sta-

ble combination of words, acting in the language as a single, indivisible and integral expression” (Shtoltsel 2018: 10). The etymology of the term *idiom* itself points to its stable and unique nature since “the ultimate root of the term *idiom* is the Greek lexeme *idios*, meaning ‘own, private, peculiar’ (OED, V-1)” (as cited in Strässler 1982: 13). Following this, Jovanović (Јовановић 2013: 404) concludes: “thanks to its stable structure and meaning, phraseology serves as one of the fundamental sources for the reconstruction of the linguistic image of the world”. Likewise, idioms also serve as linguistic reflections of human traits, including negative ones which are of special focus for this paper. The use of idioms to convey negative personality traits does not only show the human inclination to express complicated phenomena using concise phrases, but also highlights the fact that such occurrence is a universal cultural trait. In other words, phraseology can be described as “a unique language and culture symbiosis” (Baghana et al. 2023: 115).

Employing a contrastive approach, the paper analyzes English and Spanish idioms that belong to the semantic field of “negative personality traits” with an aim to highlight similarities and differences on both semantic and cultural level.

2. Theoretical Background and Methodology of the Research

Terms of great significance for this paper are semantic field and linguistic-cultural relativity, but also conceptual metaphor and metonymy. All these are essential for understanding how language reflects and shapes thought within cultural contexts.

The precursors of Semantic Field Theory (SFT) are German linguists and American anthropologists (Kleparski and Rusinek 2007). Yet, the realization that words are interdependent and should not be observed in isolation, but rather within a context may be said to date back to a Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure and his theory of structuralism as presented in his work “Course in General Linguistics” (2011). More precisely, as explained by Gitau (2012: 11), the Semantic Field Theory may be related to de Saussure’s notion of value. Namely, he used the analogy of chess to explain the previously mentioned linguistic interdependence. In chess, the value of each piece is determined not by its characteristics, but rather by the role it has in relation to other chess pieces on the chessboard. Likewise, the meaning of a word is determined by other words within a specific thematic domain. J. R. Firth (1957), as explained by Langendoen (1964), was another prominent figure in the development of contextual linguistics. He shifted the focus from isolated word examination to the analysis of words within their real use contexts thereby laying the groundwork for later theories, encompassing those addressing semantic fields. Apart from Michael Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics (Matthiessen and Halliday 1997), John Lyons (1977) and Geoffrey Leech (1981) also both contributed to the area of semantic fields, but each in his own way. Namely, Lyons (1977) proposed a radial structure of semantic fields with a central term and peripheral terms, and he also brought forth the idea of polysemy representing it as an important factor in the organization of fields. Leech (1981) on the other side focused on the thematic fields and the dynamic interactions within them.

Nevertheless, as noted by Kleparski and Rusinek (2007: 189), "... it is generally agreed that Trier's (1931) version of field theory opened a new era in the history of semantics". As explained by Ohman (1953: 126 – 127), Trier (1931) drew a distinction between conceptual field and lexical field, whereby they exist independently or side by side, but yet form a structure. Namely, the lexical field includes a main word and its related meanings, forming a whole conceptual field. The arrangement of the words within the lexical field resembles a mosaic whereby the meaning of the word is determined by its relation to other words within the field¹. Trier's (1931) view of a semantic field is the one this paper accepts and can be more precisely defined as "a set of linguistic units united by some common (integral) semantic feature; in other words, having some common non-trivial value component" (Haydarov 2023: 59).

The idea of *linguistic relativity* that presents language as the representation and conceptualization of reality within a particular culture, introduced by Edward Sapir and further developed by Whorf (Chandler 1994), Cowie (1998: 59) transforms into *linguistic-cultural relativity* emphasizing a strong, mutual connection between language and culture in the sense that culture is a part of language and therefore language is the means of representing the culture. In this sense, this paper's interest to uncover the cultural similarities and differences reflected in the semantics of words.

Following *Conceptual Metaphor Theory*, developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), abstract concepts are understood through the use of metaphors that rely on our basic embodied experience. In other words, there are two domains: a source domain and the target domain whereby the former refers to the non-abstract and more concrete terms, and the latter refers to the abstract terms. Cross-domain mapping links the source to the target, helping explain complex ideas. For example, the love-as-journey mapping expresses abstract love through concrete terms like "we're stuck" or "we've come a long way together."

Metonymy, on the other hand, as explained by Kövecses and Radden (1998), functions within a single domain whereby the relationship between the source and the target is more direct or part based. It involves the reference to something related, but distinct within the same conceptual domain. As Kövecses and Radden (1998: 50 – 58) illustrate, America may be used to refer to the United States (whole-for-part metonymy), a part of the car can be used to represent the entire car (part-for-whole metonymy), healthy complexion may stand for the good health (cause-for-effect metonymy), glass may stand for wine (container for contained), etc.

For this research, 53 English idioms and 70 Spanish ones belonging to the semantic field of negative personality traits were excerpted from Spanish and English Idiom Dictionaries: Buitrago (2012), Cambridge University Press (1998), Collins (2010), Real Academia Española. (Diccionario de la lengua española, n.d.), Weibel (2004), and Spears (1998). The excerpts were then grouped in both languages

¹ Nevertheless, Trier wasn't the one who coined the term "semantic field"; he preferred the term linguistic field whereas the first use of the mentioned term was used by Ipsen (1924) "to characterize a group of words which together form a unit of meaning as, for instance, the Indo-European vocabulary for 'sheep' and 'sheep raising'" (Ohman 1953: 125).

depending on the negative personality trait they refer to. Afterwards, quantitative analysis was performed in order to observe its distribution and the frequency with which each trait occurs within the given corpus.

3. Negative Personality Traits

Following Oxford Reference Dictionary, “a personality trait” refers to “relatively general and enduring personal characteristics that predispose a person to think and behave in certain ways in given situations”, so we can define “a negative personality trait” as “relatively general and enduring *negative* personal characteristics that predispose a person to think and behave in certain ways in given situations.” Therefore, idioms that are excerpted as belonging to this semantic field match the given definition. Negative personality traits found in the corpus are being: *unintelligent, boastful, deceitful, malicious, rude, irrational, overtalkative, stubborn, party breaker, stingy, lazy, annoying, impatient, intrusive, critic, greedy, grumbler, insensitive, old-fashioned* and *of a bad character*. The following sections show a deeper insight into the mentioned semantic fields. Literal translation of the idioms is given in the brackets and it should also be noted that variants of the same idioms, such as *tonto del haba/tonto el haba, hijo de puta/de la gran puta/ de la grandísima puta* or *tocarse/rascarse la barriga/la tripa* were counted as single entries in the analysis.

3.1. Unintelligence

Within the semantic field of negative personality traits, *unintelligence* showed up to be the most frequent trait, along with *malice*, among Spanish idioms with 15 instances while at the same time being considerably frequent in English corpus as well with 11 instances. Following idioms are found to conceptualize the negative personality trait of *unintelligence* that Online Meriam-Webster Dictionary defines as “lacking intelligence.”

In Spanish: *tonto del haba/tonto el haba (fool of the bean), tonto del higo (fool of the fig), tonto del pijo (d*ck idiot), tonto de baba (drooling fool), tonto de capirote (fool with a hood (or pointed hat), tonto del bote (fool from the can), tonto del culo (a*s idiot), más bruto que un arado (dumber than a plow), un animal de bellota (an acorn animal); no tener dos dedos de frente (not to have two fingers of forehead), más tonto que Abundio/la mierda de pavo/Perico el de los palotes (dumber than Abundio/turkey droppings/Perico with the sticks), un berzas/berzotas (a cabbage), cabeza de alcornoque (a head of an oak tree).*

In English: have nothing between your ears, be all brawn and no brains, be as thick as two (short) planks, be dead from the neck up, a half-wit, pea-brained, dry as dust, a dipstick, be one card short of a full deck, not the sharpest tool in the box, thick as pig sh*t.

3.2. Boastfulness

The negative personality trait of *boastfulness* earned the first place as the most frequently used, but only in the English corpus with 16 instances, as opposed to that of 6 in Spanish.

This term is in Online Cambridge Dictionary defined as “a way of talking in which you praise yourself and what you have done.”

In Spanish: no necesitar abuela (*in no need of grandma*), no tener abuela (*not to have a grandma*), el ombligo del mundo (*a bellybutton of the world*), un narciso (*a narcissist*), el gallito (*a rooster*), tener ínfulas (*have airs*).

In English: be too big for your boots, a big-head, as bold as brass, be too clever by half, the cock of the walk, holier-than-thou, a smart alec/aleck, a smart-arse, a smart-a*s, a smart mouth, a smarty pants, a (little) tin god, toffee-nosed, be up yourself, a wise a*s, blow one’s own trumpet.

3.3. Malice

There is a considerable difference in the frequency of the negative trait of *malice* in Spanish and in English. Spanish corpus contains 15 instances of the representation of this trait which makes this trait the most frequent one along with the trait of *unintelligence*. On the contrary, English corpus contains only 1 instance. Following Online Cambridge Dictionary, malice is “the wish to harm or upset other people.”

In Spanish: un (mal) bicho (*a bad bug*), un cerdo (*a pig*), un cabrón (*a male goat*), un demonio (*a devil*), una mala pécora (*a bad female sheep*), una víbora (*a poisonous snake*), lengua de víbora (*language of a poisonous snake*), hijo de puta/de la gran puta/ de la grandísima puta (*son of a wh*re/ a big wh*re/ the biggest wh*re*), hijo de mala madre (*son of a bad mother*), hijo de su madre (*son of his/her mother*), hijo de tal (*son of such-and-such*), mala uva (*bad grape*), hijo de perra (*son of a b*tch*), hijo de Satanás (*Satan’s son*), mala leche (*bad milk*).

In English: a snake in the grass.

3.4 Rudeness

Spanish corpus contains 5 instances of the representation of the trait of *rudeness*, described as “the quality of being offensive or not polite (Online Cambridge Dictionary),” thereby being the second most common one. Quite the opposite, English corpus does not exhibit any instances of this trait.

In Spanish: un berzas/berzotas (*to be a cabbage*), un ceporro (*to be a tree trunk*), un mendrugo (*a crust of bread*), un(a) bestia (*a beast*), cabeza de alcornoque (*a head of an oak tree*).

3.5 Laziness

The trait of *laziness*, defined as “the quality of not being willing to work or use any effort” (Online Cambridge Dictionary) has also been found to be present much more in Spanish than in English corpus, the proportion being 14:4. As mentioned above, *laziness* is the second frequent negative personality trait found in Spanish corpus just after *malice* and *unintelligence*.

In Spanish: no dar un palo al agua/ no pegar un palo al agua (*not to hit the water with a stick*), no dar/pegar (ni) golpe (*not to give (even) a blow*), no dar/pegar ni chapa (*not to give even a sheet of metal*), no dar/pegar (ni) un clavo (*not to hit (even) a nail*), no pegar (ni) sello (*not to hit (even) a stamp*), un perro (*a dog*), una

manta (*a blanket*), más vago que la chaqueta de un guardia (*lazier than a police officer's jacket*), tocarse/rascarse la barriga/la tripa (*to touch/scratch one's belly/tummy*), tocarse las narices (*to touch one's nose*), tocarse/ rascarse las pelotas/los cojones/los huevos (*to touch/ scratch one's testicles*), tocarse la pera (*to touch one's pear*), tocar el violón (*to touch one's violin*), un vago de siete suelas (*to be a lazy person with seven soles*).

In English: be bone idle, a couch potato², skiver, lazybones.

3.6. Other Traits

Five previously mentioned traits, *unintelligence*, *boastfulness*, *rudeness* and *laziness*, have been found to be the most frequent in the given corpus with the exception of *rudeness* being present in Spanish but non-existent in English corpus. Anyhow, it can be argued that the two languages show similarity regarding the semantic subfield of *unintelligence*, being the most frequent trait in both languages and having very high number of instances: 15 in Spanish corpus and 11 in English corpus. The frequency of the mentioned traits in our corpus is presented in Figure 1 below:

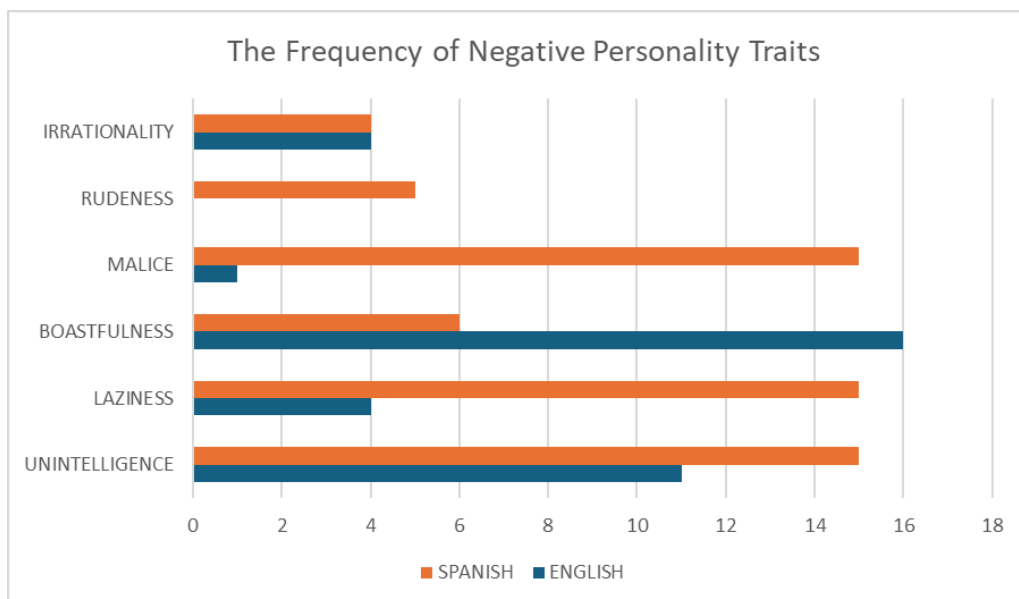


Figure 1: The Frequency of Negative Personality Traits in English and Spanish corpus

Other negative personality traits do not exhibit such a frequency but should not go unnoticed. Namely, only one trait (*rudeness*, as in *ser un ceporro* (*to be a tree*

² “This is probably because of the colourful metaphor of the stereotypical TV addict who leads a vegetable-like existence in front of the ‘box’, sitting on his couch. As for the choice of potato as the vegetable, one can only hazard the guess that it has a reputation of a dull, inert and shapeless mass – just like the obese TV watcher” (Flavell and Flavell 1994: 62).

trunk), has not been found in English corpus whereas there are 9 negative personality traits not found at all in Spanish corpus, those being: *insensitive* (e.g. *a cold fish*), *impatient* (e.g. *a short fuse*), *grumbler* (e.g. *to be a backseat driver*), *critic* (e.g. *to be an armchair critic*), *annoying* (e.g. *a pain in the neck*), *greedy* (e.g. *to be a bottomless pit*), *old-fashioned* (e.g. *to be a stick-in-the-mud*) and *intrusive* (e.g. *a nosey parker*³). This, of course, does not suggest that Spanish language does not have such idioms referring to these traits at all, but the absence of those in our corpus may suggest that they might not be used as much as in English language. Moreover, English corpus contained those, but it should be noted that the number of the instances of the mentioned idioms has been pretty lower compared to the occurrence of 5 frequent traits. To take a closer look of the number, the majority of them occurred once (*impatient, annoying, critic*), twice (*grumbler, intrusive, old-fashioned*), three times (*insensitive*) and four times (*greedy*). This can further be suggestive of the possibility of general lesser representation of these traits through idioms in both languages.

The number of other traits found in both English and Spanish (*deceitful, overtalkative, stubborn, party breaker, stingy, irrational* and *of bad character*) is almost equally low and does not cross the number of 5 instances, in this sense again showing similarity regarding these semantic subfields. Therefore, it can be concluded that Spanish and English share more similarities regarding the low use of idioms belonging to certain semantic subfields as opposed to higher frequency expressions that actually exhibit differences between them. However, another interesting thing that the analysis of the corpus reveals is the phenomenon of *overlapping* across semantic subfields of the negative personality trait of *unintelligence*. Such an occurrence is observed once in both English and Spanish corpus.

4. Overlapping across Semantic Subfields

What has been observed is the case of the overlapping of certain idioms across two semantic subfields in both English and Spanish. The subfield of *unintelligence* has been shown not only to be the most common negative personality trait in both languages (though in Spanish along with *malice* and *laziness*), but it has also been shown to be the only trait that exhibits overlapping across two semantic subfields. To be more precise, in English the domain of *unintelligence* overlaps with the domain of *irrationality* (the idiom *be one card short of a full deck* belongs to both fields simultaneously) whereas in Spanish the domain of *unintelligence* overlaps with the domain of *rudeness* (the idiom *ser un berzas/berzotas* (*to be a cabbage*) belongs to both fields simultaneously). This may point to a possible cultural difference in the conceptualization of negative personality trait of *unintelligence* in the sense that in English it is more closely associated with the lack of rationality or log-

³ “It is likely that this expression refers back to a specific person – Matthew Parker, the Archbishop of Canterbury under Elizabeth I, is the prime candidate. However, it could be connected with a dialectal verb *to pauk*, meaning ‘to be inquisitive’, or (as one eminent etymologist suggests) with a park-keeper (a *parker*) officiously spying on everything going on in his domain” (Flavell and Flavell 1994: 105).

ical thinking whereas in Spanish it is more closely linked to socially inappropriate behavior. However, this phenomenon has been noticed only on one occasion, so further research is necessary.

The overlapping of two and three semantic subfields is presented in Figures 2 and 3 below:

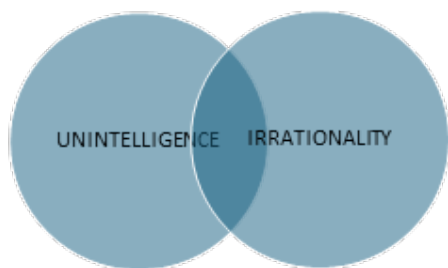


Figure 2: The overlapping of 2 semantic subfields: unintelligence and irrationality

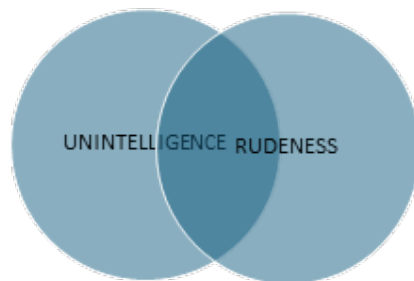


Figure 3: The overlapping of 2 semantic subfields: unintelligence and rudeness

5. Cultural Zoology

Analyzing the corpus, it has been found that both Spanish- and English-speaking people associate negative personality traits with animals, and this has been the most common association in Spanish corpus with 12 instances. In English corpus, there are 3 idioms associated with animals, meaning that in the case of English such associations are present, but not to the same extent as in Spanish. As explained by Nanay (2018: 171), it is necessary to make a distinction between two closely related, but different terms: *anthropomorphism*⁴ and *zoomorphism* whereby the former refers to the attribution of human-like characteristics to animals while the latter refers to the attribution of animal-like characteristics to people. In the case of our corpus analysis, we deal with zoomorphisms since personality traits are described, or more precisely said, compared to animals. Furthermore, Spanish and English both employ the conceptual metaphor *HUMANS ARE ANIMALS* to represent negative personality traits, using zoomorphic idioms that attribute animal characteristics to human behavior. An entire range of different animals serve as associations for different negative traits: *a dog, a snake, fly*⁵, *sheep, etc.* Yet, not all associations are different. From the perspective of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the source domain

⁴ Aesop's Fables (Aesop 2007) attributed to the ancient Greek storyteller Aesop, use animals as powerful symbols to convey moral lessons and insights into human behavior. These short stories, such as "The Tortoise and the Hare", "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" etc., feature animals with human qualities, emotions, and behaviors, interacting to illustrate virtues, vices, and life lessons.

⁵ A fly in the ointment (a person who spoils fun) – "In the Old Testament, in Ecclesiastes 10:1 we find: 'Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour'" (as cited in Flavell and Flavell 1994: 87).

(animals) remains constant across both cultures, but the target domain, that is, the way traits are mapped onto specific animals differ, pointing to the linguistic and cultural variation.

Spanish corpus contains 12 idioms associated with animals whereas English corpus contains 3 such idioms. The difference between two corpora is that Spanish idioms are distributed across 6 semantic fields: *unintelligence*, *malice*, *rudeness*, *laziness*, *boastfulness* and *being overtalkative* has a pretty high number of occurrence whereas English idioms are distributed across 3 semantic fields: *unintelligence*, *malice* and *boastfulness*. Anyhow, both languages show the presence of animal associations when it comes to negative personality traits.

Despite the fact that there is a wide range of animals associated with negative traits in both languages (*a dog*, *a donkey*, *a bug*, *fly*⁵, *bug*, *sheep*, etc.), the actual associations are shown to differ. This means that Spanish- and English-speaking people associate different negative personality traits with different animals. In other words, both languages use animal associations as part of the conceptual metaphor *HUMANS ARE ANIMALS* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), in which negative personality traits are understood in terms of animal traits. However, while the source domain (animals) remains constant, the target domain (human traits) shows variation. For instance, *unintelligence* is in English corpus seen to be associated with *a pig* (*thick as pig sh*t*) whereas in Spanish corpus it is not only associated with *a pig* (*an acorn animal*), but also with *a turkey* (*dumber than turkey droppings*). Furthermore, *a pig* is in Spanish also associated with *malice* while in English it is not. As mentioned, an entire range of different animals serve as associations for different negative traits: *a dog*, *a donkey*, *a bug*, *fly*⁵, *bug*, *sheep*, etc. Yet, not all associations are different. Both Spanish and English speakers associate *malice* with *a snake* and *boastfulness* with *a rooster*, as well as *stubbornness* with *mule*.

Therefore, what Spanish and English idioms of negative personality traits have in common is undoubtedly animal association with Spanish showing a broader range of animal-related idioms, but one should be careful not to think right away that the same animal will be associated with the same trait since they may differ. These similarities and differences point to the fact that the conceptualization of traits is influenced by the cultural and cognitive frameworks of the speakers.

6. Body Idioms

Analyzing the corpus, it has also been found that both Spanish- and English-speaking people associate negative personality traits with body as well quite frequently. Spanish corpus contains 10 idioms associated with the body, or more precisely, parts of the body, whereas English corpus contains 9 such idioms. In both corpora, these idioms are distributed across the semantic fields of *boastfulness* and *unintelligence*, with an addition of the semantic field of *laziness* in the case of Spanish corpora. To be more precise, *laziness* is the negative personality trait in the

Spanish corpus that turns out to be most frequently associated with body parts with 5 instances out of total 10 whereas it is the trait of *boastfulness* that is mostly associated with body parts in English corpus. Further differences arise when analyzing the use of the specific body parts. The head, for example, plays a significant role in both languages, but it conveys different characteristics. In English, idioms such as *a big-head* connect the head with *boastfulness*. However, in Spanish, the head is linked to *unintelligence*, as seen in the idiom *cabeza de alcornoque* (*a head of an oak tree*). Another difference is seen in the use of *the nose*, as in English it is used to conceptualize *boastfulness* (*toffee-nosed*), whereas in Spanish it is used to conceptualize *laziness* (*tocarse las narices* (*to touch one's nose*)).

Further comparison of English and Spanish idioms reveals that both languages use body-part metonymy, or more specifically, part-for-whole metonymy, to express negative personality traits. In other words, body parts represent the person as a whole. For example, in the Spanish idiom *el ombligo del mundo* (*a bellybutton of the world*), the bellybutton stands for a boastful person. However, despite this shared characteristics, certain cultural differences are noticed. Within the semantic field of *unintelligence*, English idioms rely on *head*, *brain* and *ear* metonymy (*be all brawn and no brains*, *pea-brained*, *have nothing between your ears*) whereby *brain* and *ears* represent a person's intellectual capacity. The absence or the small size of the brain implies the lack of intellectual capacity while ears are used to point to the fact that the area between the ears, expected to contain intellect, is empty. Similarly, Spanish uses *forehead* (*no tener dos dedos de frente* (*not to have two fingers of forehead*)), a body part connected to foresight and rational thinking, to refer to the same thing, that is, to the lack of intellectual capacity. The idiom at the same time uses *fingers* as the smallest amount of intellect conveying that the person lacks even that. Moreover, Spanish idiom exchanges brain, or intelligence, with a lower, non-thinking body part, *the buttocks* (*tonto del culo*). This part-for-whole metonymy emphasizes a complete lack of intellect by humorously implying that thinking occurs in a body part typically associated with physical, non-rational functions and the one which is far from the head, where intellect is supposed to be located.

These differences therefore emphasize how each language reflects different cultural perceptions of negative traits through the choice of body parts. Furthermore, associations of negative personality traits with *body parts* and *animals* are not the only ones found in the corpus; there are many others such as association with *food*, *clothes* and others, but the number found in our particular corpus is much lower and therefore not enough for the analysis and coming to conclusions.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the comprehensive contrastive examination of idiomatic expressions portraying negative personality traits in English and Spanish revealed several interesting findings. Analyzing 53 English and 70 Spanish idioms belonging to the semantic field of *negative personality traits*, this research identified recurrent patterns as well as distinctions in the representation of specific traits. Among the

most common traits, *unintelligence* is shown to be highly prevalent in both languages, with 15 instances in Spanish and 11 in English. *Boastfulness* followed, but only in English (16 instances) as opposed to Spanish (6 instances). *Malice* exhibits a substantial difference between the two languages, with 15 Spanish instances compared to only 1 in English. Another difference was observed regarding the semantic field of *laziness*, since there are 15 instances in Spanish corpus and only 4 in English. Furthermore, the study highlighted the unique phenomenon of *overlapping* idioms within semantic subfields, a feature referring to the presence of one negative personality trait in two semantic fields at the same time, has been observed in both Spanish and English expressions. *Unintelligence* is the semantic field exhibiting this phenomenon in both languages, but in English, *unintelligence* overlaps with *irrationality*, while in Spanish, it overlaps with *rudeness*. The overlap of idioms suggests that *unintelligence*, while a prominent trait in both languages, may be conceptualized differently, as a lack of logical thinking in English, and as a form of socially inappropriate behaviour in Spanish, but further research is needed. The shared practice of commonly associating negative traits with *animals* and *body parts* in both languages provided deeper insights into cross-linguistic similarities in using conceptual metaphor *HUMANS ARE ANIMALS* and a part-for-whole metonymy. Yet, the analysis showed the differences in the mapping of target domain, that is, that the use of one and the same animal does not necessarily mean to be associated with the same negative personality trait in both languages, just as in the case of metonymy the use of the same body parts is seen to represent different negative personality traits in each language. This further led to the conclusion that the meaning behind idioms is not shaped only by language, but also by cultural and cognitive factors.

Despite the need for further research, these results deepen our understanding of cross-cultural distinctions or similarities in the usage of idioms related to the semantic field of negative personality traits in Spanish and English.

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