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IDIOMS WITH CLITIC PRONOUNS WITHOUT A NOMINAL REFERENT: THE CASE OF COSTA RICAN SPANISH, A SYNTACTIC AND LEXICOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Abstract: In this article, we present a description of verbal phraseological units with clitics without an expressed nominal reference. After detailing the morphosyntax of the clitics in some of the main phraseological units, extracted from several dictionaries of Costa Rican Spanish, we detailed the treatment that these units have received in the works consulted and, based on the morphosyntactic analysis, we showed the limitations on their definitions. Finally, we addressed the problem of the lemmatization of this type of phraseological units.

Key words: syntax, lexicography, collocations, idioms, clitics, non-referentiality, phraseology.

1. Introduction

Among the most interesting lexical phenomena, we find idioms. We understand idioms as groups of two or more lexical units with an arbitrary meaning; in other words, the meaning is not compositionally derived from a morphosyntactic
calculation of its terms and semantical values. For example, the meaning of idiomatic expressions, such as “buscarle tres pies al gato” (1) or “peinar la culebra” (2) must be learned, since none of its components allow to establish, in a cause-effect relationship, the meaning that they acquire in speech (Leoni de León 2008).

1. buscarle tres pies al gato
   look-to three legs to-the cat
   *To engage in things that can lead to harm*

2. Peinar la culebra
   To comb the snake
   *To laze around; to faff around*

3. Departamento de geología
   Department of geology
   *Department of geology*

   In contrast, the meaning of the construction in (3) is easy to calculate based on the fundamental Spanish grammar, that allows to establish a relation between both noun phrases through the preposition “de” (i.e. of), where the noun at the left (departamento) is a hyperonym (of a division or section, for example), and the noun at the right restricts the possible hyponyms to a specific subset (in this case related to geology). This is what is known as *compositionality*, because it is possible to infer the meaning of the phrase, in opposition to the *opacity* characteristic in (1) and (2), where the elements involved do not contribute with the production of their meaning. We understand, however, that *compositionality* and *opacity* of phraseological units are gradual values (cf. García-Page 2008).

   Among its most distinctive syntactical characteristics, Spanish has the possibility of pronominalizing a direct or indirect object argument, transforming it into one element that is dependent on the verb (Spencer, A., & Luis, A., 2012; Zagona, 2002):

4. Vi un reloj en la tienda. Lo compré inmediatamente.
   I-saw a watch in the shop. It I-bought t immediately
   I saw a watch in the shop. I bought it immediately.

5. Recibi la carta. Ya la lei.
   I-got the letter. Already it I-read t
   I got the letter. I read it already.

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For a more detailed approach, we recommend Langlotz (2006), chapter 2 in particular.
Example (4) consists of two phrases. In the first phrase, the direct object is the argument of the verb “ver”; in the second phrase, the argument is pronominalized by using the clitical pronoun “lo”, attached to the verb “comprar”, and this is why it is pronounced as a whole phonetical unit. The argument structure of both verbs demands a noun phrase as a direct object: [VP V₀ [DP D₀]]. The clitic pronoun that corresponds to the direct object must agree in gender, number and person, just as we can see in (4) and (5), where “lo” is singular masculine, like “reloj”, and “la”, singular feminine, like “carta”, respectively. In the case of phrases (1) and (2), the pronominalization produces, with the verb in infinitive, in impersonal mode, the enclitic sequences “buscárselos (al gato)” and “peinarla”, respectively; while the personal form produces the proclitic forms “se lo busca (al gato)” and “la peina”. With the pronominalization of (1), the idiomatic sense is lost, just as it often happens with the expressions that have a high level of opacity; these, after undergoing a modification, gain back the literal meaning (compositionality). Nonetheless, “peinarla” is a variant of “peinar la culebra” (2) with the same meaning of procrastination or waste of time. In fact, the characteristic of fixation gives the impression that the elements are invariable and unmovable, like in (1). For this, the pronominalization of internal arguments⁵ in (2) makes us wonder if we are dealing with the same idiom or a new expression. Nevertheless, the meaning remains the same, and this is the reason why we have to consider “peinar la culebra” and “peinarla” as simple variants. As we already said, the capacity that pronouns have of referring to an antecedent, such as “reloj” in (4) and “carta” in (5), are known as anaphoric reference; the particles capable of assuming that function are known as anaphores (Moeschler & Reboul 1994: 349-354).

The presence of pronominal units in Costa Rican Spanish idioms has been pointed out in several occasions, for example in Leoni de León (2008) and Cordero Monge (2016b). The article that we present in this opportunity is an update and deepening of the research done by Cordero Monge and Leoni de León (2017).

Concerning their morphosyntactic behavior, idiomatic expressions with clitics can present characteristics that range from the simple substitution of its constitutive elements, with no effect on its original meaning, to constructions where we can only find a verb with a clitic pronoun, whose referent is often lost and is not part of the expression. For instance, in the first case, the phraseological unit “metió

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⁵By “internal argument” we refer here to those arguments that are part of the phrase, expressed or not; that is, those selected only by the main verb of the phraseological unit. By “external argument” we mean those that are not part of the phrase, that is, those selected by the whole pluriverbal unit in its syntactic context.
las patas” (‘doing or saying something inappropriate or wrong’) can turn into “las metió hasta el fondo”, while in the second case, we have “peinarla” instead of “peinar la culebra” (2). This is what García-Page (2008) notes as a particularity of the Spanish phraseological unit, where it is possible to find idioms in which one of the fixed components is a clitic pronoun without expressed nominal referent, generally unknown or irretrievable by current synchrony, especially in the case of former phraseologisms. In this occasion, we will advance a description of this type of constructions in Costa Rican phraseology, which, eventually, could also be identified in other varieties of Spanish.

2. Clitic idioms

In the dictionaries that collect Costa Rican Spanish words, we find some typical Costa Rican expressions characterized by the presence of clitic pronouns, in which their referent, in synchronical terms, disappeared, or is on its way to disappearing. For the speaker, on the other hand, such pronouns do not fulfill an anaphoric function, but instead, they are an integral part of the expression. In (6)-(12) we provide some representative examples:

6. asoleársela
   to-sun-to-(someone)-it
   [Indirect Object] [Feminine, Direct Object]
   To gravely insult someone

7. caiteárselas
   to-sandal-himself-it
   [Feminine, Direct Object]
   to run away

8. a) amarrársela
   to-tie-himself-it
   [Indirect Object] [Feminine, Direct Object]
   to get drunk
   
   b) clavársela
   to-hammer-himself-it
   [Indirect Object] [Feminine, Direct Object]
   to get drunk

9. clavárselo [ser alcohólico]
   to-hammer-himself-it
   [Indirect Object] [Masculine, Direct Object]
   to be an alcoholic

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6 For a broader discussion on these issues in Romance languages, we recommend Espinal (2009).
10. a) picarla
to-sting-it [Feminine, Direct Object]
to boast vainly
b) picársela
to-sting-himself [Indirect Object] -it [Feminine, Direct Object]
to boast vainly
c) tirárselas
to-throw-himself [Indirect Object] -them [Plural, Feminine, Direct Object]
to boast vainly

11. peinarla
to-comb-it [Feminine, Direct Object]
To laze around

12. hacerla toda
to-make-it [Feminine, Direct Object] all [Feminine]
To get an important benefit

13. caiteárselas para el otro barrio
to-sandal-oneself-them [Plural, Feminine, Direct Object] to the next neighbourhood
to die

14. llevarla del cuello
to-carry-it [Feminine, Direct Object] from-the neck
to live without concerns

15. a) verla fea
to-see-it [Feminine, Direct Object] ugly [Feminine]
to live with troubles or concerns
b) verla peluda
to-see-it [Feminine, Direct Object] hairy [Feminine]
to experiment concerns or troubles

In relation to the phraseological trait of compounding, in cases such as (6)-(9), it is nothing more than the presence of the unstressed pronoun that determines that these constructions can be analyzed as idioms: they are composed of a verb and a complement7. Nonetheless, the deixis is suspended in every case and there are no extra sentence referents with which the clitic pronouns are linked. This way, in (6) and (7) it is not possible to trace back either the meaning of “asoleado” or

7 Assuming, of course, that a syntactical analysis can be carried out inside an idiom, nonetheless, phraseologists have not reached an agreement concerning this matter.
“caiteado” from the speech act\textsuperscript{8}, situation that emphasizes the autonomy of these constructions, regardless of the degree of idiomaticity of these verbs.

The “se” pronoun participates in idiomaticity thanks to the complexity that characterizes it. For this reason, we will not refer to it, since it requires a particular research. However, we will only add that, in some cases, the form “se” usually appears lemmatized as a constitutive element of the idiom, without this actually being the case. For instance, in the expression “asoleársela (a ALGUIEN)”, the clitic pronoun “se” refers to the external argument of indirect object “a ALGUIEN” (to someone); this is clearer in the equivalent expression of “mentar(\textit{le}) la madre (a ALGUIEN)\textsuperscript{9}”, that has the meaning of ‘decir [a ALGUIEN], para injuriarle gravemente, insultos contra su madre’ (Diccionario de la lengua española)\textsuperscript{10}. This is the expression of one of the “external” arguments of the phraseological unit (alguien se \textit{la asolea} a alguien), the so called external arguments (see below), whose presence in the lemma could be justified in an idiom, like “asoleá[r]se[la]” by the different meaning, and in consequence, the disappearance of the phraseological unit, if the argument structure is different: “asolearla” (alguien asolea a alguien/algo) = ‘poner al sol’\textsuperscript{11}.

Also, we have more complex constructions, as in (12)-(15), where the internal syntactical structure of the idioms includes other complements. For instance, in (12), we find a pseudo-copulative sentence, in which the complement of the verb “hacer” selects the indefinite adjective “toda” as an attribute to the argument of the direct object (t\textsubscript{DO}), this structural relation is similar to the one present in (15). In (16) we indicate a brief analysis of the relations established in this type of constructions, where the subindex expresses the link between the clitic pronoun and the position of the argument and its required relation with the attribute “toda”:

16. hacer-la\textsubscript{t\textsubscript{DO})} toda

In (13) and (14), the clitic pronouns correspond to the internal arguments of the verb phrase, specifically, we can affirm that we go from the syntactical sequence (17a) to the pattern of (17b), where, once more, DO corresponds to the position of the substituted noun phrase and the subindex establishes a relation between the argument and the pronoun through coindexation. The accent in (17b) is only

\textsuperscript{8}In cases like these, it is possible to retrieve such non expressed elements in the speech through “reconstruction” processes, which are more or less conscious processes, according to different factors by the speaker or, ultimately, by the linguist.

\textsuperscript{9}In this context, the “se” pronoun cannot be confused with the reflexive “se” pronoun, instead, it is an allomorph of the third person clitic pronoun, plural or singular, phenomenon widely known, described by Perlmutter (1971).

\textsuperscript{10}The underlined text stands for: “To insult someone severely, insults against someone's mother”.

\textsuperscript{11}To put in the sun.
an orthographic indication that marks where the stress is placed once the enclitic sequence is formed.

17. a) caitearse $\text{DP}_{[\text{DO}]}$
    b) caiteárselas $\text{j}_{[\text{DO}]/[\text{j}]}$

The high frequency of the feminine form of the unstressed pronoun is also a characteristic of this type of idiom, in general Spanish, as well as in Costa Rican Spanish, situation that, in some cases, can be simply explained by the agreement of grammatical gender and number of the elided antecedent, at least, when this is easily retrievable:

18. a) asolearle $\text{la madre}$ a alguien
    b) asoleársela a alguien

19. a) caitearse alguien $\text{las patas}$
    b) caiteárselas alguien

20. a) $\{\text{amarrarse, clavarse}\}$ alguien $\text{una borrachera}$
    b) $\{\text{amarrar, clavar}\}$-se-la alguien.

In (19), we have the direct object noun phrase expression of “caitear”, anotated in (17), of which the speaker is not necessarily conscious. This process of change was recorded by Gagini (1919). It is interesting to point out that the verb “caitear” means “ponerles caites a las patas de alguien”\(^{12}\), where “patas” is a colloquial pejorative equivalent to “feet”. In (18), the noun phrase “madre” is used in a derogatory way, hence the meaning of the idiom refers to the act of insulting. On the other hand, it is frequent to use the pronominal verb “amarrarse” combined with synonym nouns such as borrachera, juma, tanda, mona, etc.\(^{13}\), which, from our perspective, is a support verb construction with its use being restricted to noun phrases associated with the intake of alcoholic beverages; this plays a role in the creation of new idioms with clitics, which is certainly a domain to be explored. However, it has been treated as an idiom in several dictionaries of Costa Rican expressions, see Agüero Chaves (1996) and Quesada Pacheco (2007). Our affirmation implies that “amarrar” forms collocations\(^{14}\) of this type, but not idioms. This is not the case of the combination of “clavar” with “trago de licor” (21); therefore, it does form

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\(^{12}\)This text stands for: “To put sandals in someone's feet”.

\(^{13}\)All of these combinations ($\text{amarrarse una borrachera/tanda/juma}$) mean “to get drunk”.

\(^{14}\)A collocation is a style sequence, while an idiom is a morphosyntactic and semantic sequence. Thus, $\text{cometer un error}$ (to make a mistake) is a collocation, because the style requires using “commit” instead of “doing”, but in no way its meaning is opaque like in $\text{untar la mano}$ (grease one's palms), which means bribing. (Leoni de León, 2008).
idiomatic expressions, since “clavar” is hardly a support verb, at least according to the research we have carried out so far. In consequence, this should be taken into account in a phraseological inventory.

21. a) clavarse alguien un trago de licor
    b) clavárselo alguien

The idiom in (11), whose origin is illustrated in (22), has the characteristic of preserving both forms, (22a) and (22b), without detriment or preference for any of the two, either in their meaning or in their use:

22. a) peinar la culebra
    b) peinarla

In this case, according to the *Diccionario de costarricense* by Arturo Agüero (1996), the complete form (22a) alternates in use with the elliptical form (22b), this, of course, allows the elided noun to be easily identified. This can be proven by giving examples of current use:

“Habrá gente que se la pase peinando la culebra, pero una gran parte de los desempleados (me atrevo a pensar que la mayoría) se dedican a trabajitos precarios, [...]” (Vargas Cullell 2015).

“Peinarla... Actitud holgazana y negligente de eludir abiertamente una responsabilidad; llevar la vida livianamente y con desenfado. ‘Aquí, peinándola’” (Méndez Howell 2016).

At the same time, we also have example (15), that we analyzed in a similar way to (16), characterized by coexistence, in the colloquial use, of (23a) and (23c) with (23b) and (23d). The singular feminine clitic pronoun of the direct object can be explained by the noun phrase *cosa*, and the position of the direct object in the original idiom. In (24a) and (24b), we have the analysis of the internal structure for (23b) and (23d) respectively.

23. a) ver la cosa peluda
    b) verla peluda
    c) ver la cosa fea
    d) verla fea

    a) ver-la_{DO} j peluda_{j}
    b) ver-la_{DO} j fea_{j}

This idiomatic expression, quite frequent in Costa Rican Spanish, is expressed in the following ways in daily speech:
24. “...yo solo medio solté una risa y le dije ‘ah bueno’ y seguí en lo mío, pero el mae siguió que si iba a ver una película y la vara como queriendo que lo invitara o algo así, pero como **vi la cosa fea** mejor di media vuelta y jale”15 (Foro de Costa Rica, Internet)

   “**Un trailero la vio fea** al chocar contra una nave y volcarse sobre la carretera Braulio Carrillo, que comunica con Limón”16 (MOPT, Internet)

Concerning expression (14), “llevarla del cuello”, based on the definition that appears in the Diccionario de americanismos (ASALE 2010), it could be said that the elided noun in the idiom “llevarla del cuello” and “llevarla suave” is “vida” (i.e. *life*): “**Vivir la vida sin experimentar grandes apuros gracias a que se disfruta de condiciones muy favorables**”17. Also, “la vida”, as referent, is very productive in social imaginary, and it usually appears in other constructions of general Spanish and different American varieties: “hacer la vida imposible”, “hacer la vida a cuadritos” (several Hispanic countries), for ‘to bother continually’, “hacer la vida un yogurt” (Cuba), also meaning ‘to bother continually’, “joderse la vida”, “echarle a perder la vida”, “vida del oso” (Chile), for ‘peaceful life, without worry or need’, etc.

25. “Apenas oscurecía, mi papá nos mandaba a acostar. Eso sí, a las 2 de la mañana teníamos que estar levantadas, haciendo desayuno. Si yo le contara la vida mía... Uuuuuh. Y lavábamos la ropa en el río. **Las mujeres ahora la llevan suave. Antes nada: al río. Las gentes de ahora la llevan del cuello**”18 (Montero 2008).

The idiom in (14) follows a syntactical pattern similar to (15), with the difference that the prepositional phrase is a circumstantial complement, “del cuello”, which curiously is a heavy constituent that is part of the phraseological unit as a whole. The original referent of the clitic pronoun, “cuello”, is given in (27a), the structural pattern is indicated in (28).

26.   a) **llevar la vida del cuello**
      b) **llevarla del cuello**

27.   a) **llevar** [NP la vida] [PP del cuello]
      b) **llevar-la** [NP DO] [PP del cuello]

15 The underlined text stands for “(...)but things looked so bad that I turned around and left”.
16 The underlined text stands for “A truck driver was in big trouble when he crashed against another vehicle”.
17 The underlined text stands for “To live life without much trouble due to favourable conditions”.
18 The underlined text stands for “And we washed the clothes in the river. Women now take it easy. Before there was nothing: to the river. People nowadays take it easy”.

The square brackets in (28) show the independence of the prepositional phrase in regards to the noun phrase “vida”, then substituted by a direct object pronoun. We do not go into details related to the construction of the determiner phrase, since it does not contribute to the discussion.

3. Lemmatization of pronominalized units in dictionaries

In what is related to Costa Rican Spanish lexicography, we must emphasize the fact that every dictionary we consulted resolves the lemmatization of these units in a different way. In the *Diccionario de costarricense* by Arturo Agüero (1996), the locution with a clitic appears complete (without recurring to the diacritical mark “~”) in the article of the simple verb: 19

28. **asolear** tr. fam. Hurtar, robar. *En el tumulto me ASOLEARON el reloj.* //

29. **asoleársela a uno** fig. fam. Decirle hijo de puta. *El jugador SE LA ASOLEÓ al árbitro y este lo expulsó.*

30. **peinar** tr. fig. Pasar sobre la tierra de labranza el instrumento llamado peine... // **peinarla o peinar la culebra** fr. fig. fam. V. *culebra.* (Esta expr. es cubanismo.)

In the *Nuevo diccionario de costarricense* by Quesada (2007), these units, unlike other types of idiomatic expressions, appear headed by their own article, in other words, they do not sublemmatize under the simple verb: 20


32. **asoleársela** loc. Insultar, maldecir con palabras soeces. (*A Fulano se la asolearon*).

33. **peinar** tr. [Agr.] Trabajar con el peine. // 2. Regañar, reprimir. (*A Fulano lo peinaron*).

34. **peinarla** loc. Perder el tiempo.

19 *asolear*. tr. fam. To steal, to rob. [...] 
*asoleársela* a uno. fig. fam. To call someone a son of a bitch. [...] 
*peinar*. tr. fig. To plow the fields with the instrument called “peine”... // **peinarla o peinar la culebra** fr. fig. fam. V. *culebra.* (This expression is a Cubanism)

20 *asolear*. tr. To set in the sun. // 2. prnl. To sunbathe. 
*asoleársela* loc. Insult, to curse with rude language. [...] 
*peinar*. tr. [Agr.] To work with the “peine”... // 2. To rebuke, to reprimand [...]
In the *Diccionario de americanismos* of ASALE (2010), every verb phrase starts by the article of the verb, nucleus of the phraseological unit. The idioms with clitic in which the form “se” appears are recorded as complete in the corresponding article (*asoleársela, caiteárselas*), while the rest of the verb phrases, with or without clitic, appear abbreviated with the diacritical mark (*picarla > ~la, llevarla del cuello > ~la del cuello*):\(^{21}\)


36. *caitear.* ... || *caiteárselas. CR. dar agua a los caítes.*


In the *Diccionario del español actual de Costa Rica*, project in development by the Lexicography Research Program of the University of Costa Rica (Sánchez Corrales, n.d.), the idioms with clitic appear sublemmatized under the simple verb form, even if this does not have any acceptance (such as in *asolear* and *caitear*). Also, they are always lemmatized in an abbreviated form with a diacritical mark:\(^{22}\)

38. *asolear:* ~la. *coloq* Ofender a alguien mediante un insulto en el que se hace referencia degradante de su madre.

39. *peinar* [...] ~la *coloq* Pasar el tiempo holgazaneando

As it is known, establishing the lemma for these idioms from the infinitive of the corresponding verb is the common practice in Spanish lexicography; this certainly is the most appropriate way of conventionally representing the paradigm of conjugation of these units. Having said that, it would be appropriate to consider if, in these lexicographical works, the eventual grammatical restrictions that constrain many of these verb phrases should be indicated explicitly, by signaling any verbal characteristic according to which the verb phrase, just like other simple verbs, is not used in some or various tenses, modes or persons. We have not confirmed this in the corpus used for this research, but it still is a hypothesis for future work. However,

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\(^{21}\) *asolear(se).* ... a. || ~ de solo. loc. verb. *Pa.* To sing with one of the members of the choir some verses of the tamborito without accompaniment. b. || *asoleársela.* loc. verb. *CR.* To insult someone severely.

*caitear.* ... || *caiteárselas. CR. dar agua a los caítes.* (literally “to give water to the sandals”.)

*picar(se).* || ~la. *CR. obsol. To boast about something.*

\(^{22}\) *asolear:* ~la. *coloq* To offend someone with an insult in which their mother is referred to in a degrading way.

*peinar* [...] ~la *coloq* To laze around.
this is not a minor difficulty, if we take into account the contexts in which they are produced and are a source of ambiguity, sometimes even intentional:23

40. Me encanta el fut [fútbol] e ir al estuche [estadio], uno ve güilas [muchachas], uno se asolea, se la asolea al árbitro, comparte con los compas, se toma unas frías después de la mejenga.... (Foro de Costa Rica, Internet)

In (41), the verb asolear is a source of ambiguity that contributes to the strengthening of the idiomatic expression. Without a doubt, this deserves its own analysis.

On the other hand, it is frequent -and in some cases inevitable- that elements of the syntactic-semantic context of the verb phrase are expressed in the space of the lemma, this is, they are lemmatized along with the fixed components of the verb phrase. Actually, elements of the “external arguments” (Martínez Marín 1996: 65-66; Olímpio de Oliveira Silva 2007: 90-93) or the participants not fixed lexically (García-Page 2008: 144, 288) appear in the following lemmas (elements of the external arguments are in bold):

41. corrérsele las tejas A ALGUIEN
to-get-moved-to-someone the tiles TO SOMEONE
to go crazy (enloquecer)

42. soltársese el ruedo A ALGUIEN
to-drop-to-someone the hem to someone
to suffer diarrhea (‘sufrir diarrea’)  

43. cortarle el rabo A UNO
to-cut-to-someone the tail TO SOMEONE
to fire someone (despedir de su empleo a alguien).

44. darle duro
to-give-to-someone hard
to hit hard (‘golpear duro a alguien’).

Some dictionaries differentiate, either in the lemma (cortarle el rabo a uno) or in the definition (Despedir de su empleo a alguien), the elements of the contour of the fixed components in the phraseological units, generally, through typographical resources. The indistinction of these type of elements, foreign to the idiom itself, can bring about a problem when these have unstressed pronouns without a specific referent among their fixed components.

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23The underlined text stands for “I love football and going to the stadium, you can see girls, you can get some sun, you can insult the referee[...]”.

| 19 | ΦΙΛΟΛΟΓΙΑ | X | 2019 | 31 |
Note in the following examples that the *Diccionario de americanismos* records the lemmas *dar una pasada* (46b) and *darle una pasada* (46d), that correspond to the same idiom with the meaning ‘rebuke harshly’, and that the appearance of the pronoun *le* is completely optional in these cases. Note, too, that in the same article appear the lemmas *dar duro* ‘to hit someone’ (46a) and *darle duro* ‘to work hard’ (46c), both corresponding to two different idioms, where the pronoun *le* is optional only in the first, while in the second it is a fixed element of the phraseological unit:

45. *dar(se).*

a) ||~ **duro**. [...] loc. verb. [...] Golpear a alguien.\(^{24}\)

b) ||~ **una pasada**. loc. verb. [...] Reprender con vehemencia a alguien.\(^{25}\)

c) ||~ **le duro**. [...] loc. Verb. [...] Trabajar con empeño, denodadamente.\(^{26}\)

d) ||~ **le una pasada**. loc. verb. [...] Reprender con vehemencia.\(^{27}\)

From the perspective of the grammatical analysis, on the one hand, and the phraseological analysis, on the other hand, with repercussions on the lexicographical treatment, in *dar[le] duro* ‘to punch someone’ (46a) and *darle duro* ‘to work hard’ (46c), the clitic *le* plays two different functions; in the first (punch...), the pronoun corresponds to an external argument that is required by the phraseological unit whose inclusion in the lemma is completely optional: «ALGUIEN le da duro A ALGUIEN», for example:

46. “Mi hermana tenía patadas, puñetazos y lesiones por todo el cuerpo. Le **dieron duro**, nos dijo un agente del OIJ [...]”, relató ayer el hermano de la victima. (La Nación, Internet)\(^{28}\)

In the second (work...), the pronoun *le* is a constitutive part of the idiom, that is to say, it is a fixed and invariable element that, as a pronoun, does not have a determined or known referent, for this, its inclusion in the lemma is mandatory: «ALGUIEN le da duro», for example:

47. Son 10 las divisas que estarán en competición y que prometen **darle duro** para figurar en el campeonato. (Diario Extra, Internet)\(^{29}\)

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\(^{24}\)In English: “to punch someone”.

\(^{25}\)In English “to rebuke someone vehemently”.

\(^{26}\)In English “to work hard”.

\(^{27}\)In English “to vehemently rebuke”.

\(^{28}\)The underlined text stands for “My sister had kicks, punches and injuries all over her body, they hit her hard”.

\(^{29}\)The underlined text stands for “There are 10 teams that will be competing and they promise to work really hard to be in the championship”.

Sergio Cordero Monge, Jorge Antonio Leoni de León
48. El famoso cantante Pedro Capmany […] hace lo imposible para aprender a bailar […] “Hacer las vueltas es lo que más me cuesta, pues yo me embarqué en esta nueva aventura del baile, así que debo darle duro”, comentó Pedro. (Tecletica, Internet)

With pairs of lemmas such as the following:

dar una pasada (46b) = darle una pasada (46d)
dar duro (46a) ≠ darle duro (46c)

it is convenient to consider that not establishing a clear distinction between the contextual elements and the own components of the phraseological unit entails a problem of description when units, where the pronoun le is part of the idiom itself, are recorded, a topic that we will approach in another research.

5. Conclusions

In this investigation we describe the phenomena of clitic pronouns of direct object in idioms, leaving aside all the values of the pronoun “se”. We did not address the pronouns of indirect object as cases of suspended deixis (or anaphoricity), either because they corresponded to a “se” or because they scarcely appeared in our corpus (darle duro), which confirms the idea that it tends to maintain their referentiality, a topic that we shall no doubt broaden in the future. The idioms that we studied, in which the pronoun of direct object tends to lose its deictic or anaphorical value, can be classified in the following two categories: 1) Deanaphorized idioms and 2) Pseudo-copulative clitic idioms. The deanaphorized idioms encompass our examples (6)-(11), without excluding others, while the pseudo-copulative clitic idioms include (12) and (15), among which, eventually, it may be convenient to consider (14). The idioms of this last category are also deanaphorized, but the relevant trait is the pseudo-copulative function of the verb. Even if the lexicographical description does not bring about problems, it does leave unanswered questions such as the restrictions of such expressions and how the context in which they are produced should be taken into account, as well as how we should include it in the definition.

References


30 The underlined text stands for “I went on this new dancing adventure, so I have to work really hard.”
Idioms with Clitic Pronouns without a Nominal Referent: The Case of Costa Rican Spanish, a Syntactic and Lexicographic Survey


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IDIOMI SA ZAMJENIČKIM KLITIKAMA BEZ IMENIČKOG REFERENTA: SLUČAJ KOSTARIKANSKOG ŠPANSKOG, SINTAKSIČKI I LEKSIKOGRAFSKI PREGLED

Rezime

U ovom radu daje se prikaz glagolskih frazeoloških jedinica sa kliti-kama bez izraženog nominalnog referenta. Nakon opisa morfosint-a takse klitika u nekim glavnim frazeološkim jedinicama, izvučenim iz nekoliko rječnika kostarikanskog španskog, daje se način pristupa ovim jedinicama u konsultovanim djelima, a zatim, zasnivajući se na morfosintaksičkoj analizi, pokazuju se ograničenja postojećih pristupa. Konačno, rad se bavi problemom lematizacije ovakvog tipa frazeoloških jedinica.

Ključne riječi: sintaksa, leksikografija, kolokacije, idiomi, klitike, nereferencijalnost, frazeologija.