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CROSS-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF RUSSIAN AND LATIN AMERICAN IDIOMS

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Abstract

Idioms have aroused the interest of linguists around the world for over a century. From Logan Pearsall Smith (1925), Vinogradov (1946, 1947), Cacciari and Glucksberg (1991), and Fernando (1996), to other contemporary authors such as Kvetko (2009), Negro Alousque (2011), E. Piirainen (2015), C. Ce and S. Chornobay (2016), to mention but a few. Many of the studies of idioms carried out in the last years have analysed idioms from different perspectives and approaches.

The present paper aims to contribute to the cross-linguistic analysis by identifying similarities and differences in idioms in Spanish and Russian languages with an active component. Material includes idioms from 19 Latin American countries as samples of the Spanish language as an attempt to bring the Latin American phraseology into this research field for the first time. The author concentrates on the semantic specifics of these idioms based on the hypothesis that they have some similarities regardless of how geographically distant the two regions are from each other, and that their differences lie only in cultural aspects.

Keywords

Idiom, phraseology, culture, contrastive analysis, equivalence, Latin America.

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Introduction

In the field of linguistics studies, Phraseology has come to occupy an important place, embracing numerous theoretical approaches. This academic discipline has seen intense

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development since the 1960s thanks to scholars in the former Soviet Union and other countries of Eastern Europe. Comparative phraseology, on the other hand, can rightly be considered one of the mainstays of phraseology. An immense body of literature on comparisons of different types of phraseological units has been produced in North America, Europe, Asia, and, more specifically, in Russia [7, p. 1]. Many of these studies have focused specifically on *idioms*, highlighting similarities and differences between them among different languages.

The study on which this paper is based deals specifically with this type of phraseological unit. As Wood (cited in [17, p. 55]) explains, every language has certain phrases or constructions, which by the normal rules of grammar or syntax are quite inexplicable because their meaning cannot be worked out from the meanings of its constituent words. Native speakers have almost no difficulty in understanding this type of phrases because they are part of their daily speech. Such phrases are called *idioms*. In order to master them, we cannot ignore the importance of the cultural connotation they contain [17, p. 55].

Much of the linguistic research into *idioms* has been done from a cross-linguistic perspective focused on three domains: 1) *description and comparison of structural types of idioms* [14, 15, 30]; 2) *description of thematic groups*, i. e., idioms with constituents from the same semantic field [2, 6, 16, 20, 23, 29], and 3) *types of cross-linguistic equivalents* [8, 28, 33]. The present article focuses on the latter domain.

It was observed that among cross-linguistic studies of European languages, only *idioms* from Spain have been taken as samples of phraseological units from the Spanish language, leaving the rich phraseological tradition of the 33 Latin American countries unexplored. Because of this important finding, the present paper intends to be, precisely, a first serious attempt to bring the Latin American phraseology into this research field. Thus, the aim of this bilateral cross-cultural study is to identify similarities and differences at the semantical level of *idioms* with an active component from Latin America and Russia, as well as to be a great contribution to the phraseology of both cultures.

Methodology

For the purpose of this study, a corpus of 302 idioms with an active component was formed: 188 in Spanish and 114 in Russian. Idioms in Spanish are from 19 Latin American countries: Argentina (A.), Bolivia (B.), Chile (C.), Colombia (Col.), Costa Rica (C.R.), Cuba (Cu.), Dominican Republic (D. R.), Ecuador (E.), El Salvador (Sal.), Guatemala (G.), Honduras (H.), Mexico (M.), Nicaragua (N.), Panama (P.), Paraguay (Par.), Peru (Per.), Puerto Rico (P. R.), Uruguay (U.), and Venezuela (V.). They were selected from two dictionaries: *Big Spanish-Russian dictionary: Latin America* (1998) by A. S. Volkova [35] and *Diccionario de americanismos* (2014) by the Association of Spanish Language Academies (ASALE) [24]. The selection of Russian idioms was carried out in five phraseological dictionaries: *Phraseological Dictionary of the Modern Russian Language* (2014) by Yu. A. Larionova [18], *Phraseological Dictionary of Modern Russian Literary Language* (2004) by A. N. Tikhonov

(vols. 1 and 2) [32], *Phraseological Dictionary of the Russian Literary Language: approx. 13,000 phraseological units* (2008) by A. I. Fedorov [11], and *Phraseological Dictionary of the Russian language* (2006) by E. N. Telia [31].

The selection of idioms was made taking into account the following characteristics: 1) the idiom contains more than two words; 2) the idiom begins with or contains a verb in infinitive (the active component); 3) the idiom has equivalents in more than 10 countries in Latin America; 4) idioms with isolated reflexive verbs, i. e., those which are not accompanied by other components, were omitted due to their limited informative load.

To analyse these idioms, general scientific and linguistic research methods were used. Among them are contrastive and semantic analysis as well as qualitative descriptive method in order to see the uniqueness of each datum. The research work was divided into three stages:

1. L1/L2 idioms were classified by their active component into 6 semantic fields: “to be poor”, “to be drunk”, “to be with no money”, “to die”, “to escape”, “to fool” — because 1) these are the semantic fields that register the biggest amount of idioms; 2) these idioms have equivalents in more than 10 Latin American countries;
2. Nominative components of L1/L2 idioms were classified into 23 lexical-semantic groups, e. g., “clothes”, “food and drinks”, “traditional items”, “fruits and vegetables”, etc.;
3. Semantic analyses of L1/L2 idioms were performed using the classification of the authors Robert Lado (cited in [2, p. 22]) and Isabel Negro Alousque [22].

Results and discussion

According to the American linguist Robert Lado (1957) [2], there should be seven types of analysis in order to find similarities and differences between two languages: 1) similar forms and meanings, 2a) similar form, different meanings, 2b) similar meanings, different forms, 3) different forms and meanings, 4) different construction, 5) same primary meaning, 6) different connotation, 7) same meaning, but has restrictions regarding the distribution of geographic areas (Lado 1957, p. 82 as cited in [2, p. 22]). In this study, only the first four types are discussed because they are considered the most appropriate for analysing the selected idioms in Spanish and Russian.

1. Similar forms and meanings (full equivalence)

These are the idioms derived from the six semantic fields in Spanish from Latin America and Russian, which have similar meanings and similar forms of expressions. Not a considerable proportion of these idioms are full equivalents, only 16 cases were found. The following are the idioms in both languages that are identical with regard to meaning, syntactic and lexical structure and imagery basis (Table 1).

Table 1

Latin American and Russian idioms with similar forms and meanings

Таблица 1.

Латиноамериканские и русские идиомы с похожими формами и значениями

Latin American idioms	Russian idioms	Meaning
<i>estirar la pata</i> (M., Am.) / to stretch out the leg	<i>протянуть (откинуть, вытянуть) ноги</i> / to stretch (recline, stretch out) your legs	to die
<i>pasar a mejor vida</i> (M.) / to move on to a better life	<i>отойти к лучшей жизни</i> / to go to a better life	to die
<i>irse al otro mundo</i> (M.) / to go off to the other world	<i>отправиться в мир иной (на тот свет)</i> / to go off to the next world (the other world)	to die
<i>ponerle los cuernos a alguien</i> (M.) / to put the horns on someone	<i>наставить рога кому-л.</i> / to put the horns on someone	to fool / to cheat on
<i>parar (alguien) la cola</i> (Am., Sal.) / to raise the tail	<i>показать хвост</i> / to show the tail	to escape
<i>dormir el sueño eterno</i> (Am.) / to eternally sleep	<i>заснуть навеки</i> / to fall asleep forever	to die
<i>dar (entregar, despedir, o exhalar) el espíritu</i> / to give (give up, dismiss, or exhale) the spirit	<i>испустить (выпустить, отдать) дух</i> / to let out, (give back) the spirit	to die
<i>dar el alma (a Dios)</i> / to give the soul (to god)	<i>отдать Богу душу</i> / to give back your soul to god	to die

Estirar la pata / “to stretch out the leg” (in Spanish “pata” is a colloquial word that stands for a person’s leg) = *протянуть (откинуть, вытянуть) ноги* / “to stretch (recline, stretch out) your legs”. Interestingly, both idioms are motivated by a scientific fact: when a body (human or animal) dies, it begins to lose temperature and the muscles stiffen, resulting in an apparently natural stretching of various parts of the body.

Regarding the rest of the idioms from the semantic field “to die”, it is likely that they are what Isabel Negro Alousque, Wotjak and Corpas call full equivalence resulting from the idioms being “interlingual loans” [22]. They come from a religious context, where constituents like “God”, “spirit”, “soul”, “the other world”, “a better life”, and “an endless sleep” contain a biblical reference to heaven. According to some religious beliefs, heaven is a wonderful place that people go to after they die.

Ponerle los cuernos a alguien / “to put the horns on someone” = *наставить рога кому-л.* / “to put the horns on someone”. As recorded by the dictionary of the Real Academia Española (2014), “cuernos” is a colloquial word that stands for a marital infidelity by either a woman or a man, which explains the meaning of the idiom as

being unfaithful to a partner [25]. According to A. I. Fedorov (2018), the same idiom in Russian has two meanings: 1) cohabiting with another man, cheating on your husband; 2) to insult the honour, dignity of a man by cohabiting with his wife. It seems that in both languages the imagery of horns is traditionally associated with a marital infidelity [11].

Parar (alguien) la cola / “to raise the tail” = *показать хвост* / “to show the tail”. Both idioms are almost identical with regard to the imagery basis, and their figurative meaning can be obtained through the metaphoric background of the constituent “tail (raised upwards)” that, in the case of some animals, like dogs, is linked to a state of alertness.

2a. Similar form different meanings (partial equivalence)

These are idioms derived from different semantic fields in Latin American Spanish and in Russian. They have different meanings but similar forms of expressions. From the total of analysed idioms, only 16 cases were found (Table 2).

Table 2.

Latin American and Russian idioms with similar forms and different meanings

Таблица 2.

Латиноамериканские и русские идиомы с похожими формами и разными значениями

Latin American idioms	Russian idioms
<i>hacer la comedia</i> / to make a comedy	<i>сыграть комедию</i> / to play a comedy
<i>torcer alguien la cola (el rabo)</i> (M.) / to twist the tail	<i>вертеть (крутить, вилять) хвостом</i> / to spin (twist, wag) the tail
<i>solo comer frijoles</i> (G., H.) / to eat only beans	<i>сидеть на бобах</i> / to eat only beans
<i>dar la espalda a alguien</i> / to give someone your back	<i>показать спину</i> / to show someone your back
<i>dejar a alguien con tantas (un palmo de) narices</i> / to leave someone with so many noses	<i>оставить с носом</i> / to leave someone with nose
<i>no tener ni segundo calzón</i> (M.) / to not have a second pair of underwear	<i>оставаться в одной рубашке</i> / to stay in one shirt
<i>dar el alma al diablo</i> (M.) / to give your soul to the devil	<i>отдать Богу душу</i> / to give back your soul to God
<i>echarle tierra a alguien</i> (M.) / to dust someone	<i>пускать пыль в глаза</i> / to dust someone's eyes

The similarity in several of these idioms is striking, considering that they belong to geographically distant cultures with different historical and social contexts. We provide some examples below:

Вертеть (крутить, вилять) хвостом / “to spin (twist, wag) the tail” = “to cheat, to deceive”.

Torcer alguien la cola (el rabo) / “to twist the tail” = “to accept what the other person proposes or imposes”.

These idioms are totally identical both in their syntactic and lexical structure, as well as in the imagery basis, but they have completely different meanings. While in Russia, the constituent “tail” has a full negative connotation, in Mexico, this same constituent can be linked to a personal characteristic of weakness (not necessarily a negative characteristic) and lack of character for allowing or accepting what someone else imposes.

Сидеть на бобах / “to eat only beans” = “to be left with no money, with nothing, having cheated in the calculations”.

Solo comer frijoles / “to eat only beans” = “to have to eat only cheap food for a specific reason”.

The constituent “bean” is one of the most popular among Latin American phraseological units of any type as observed in the *Big Spanish-Russian Dictionary: Latin America* (2020), which is explainable, since beans have been a traditionally important element in Latin America as a staple food in the diet of that region. Interestingly, in these two idioms the constituent “bean” is directly or indirectly associated with poverty: a cheap food consumed by poor people. Although they are identical in their syntactic and lexical structure, imagery basis, and the main constituent is associated with the same concept (poverty), they have meanings applied to totally different (and even opposite) contexts.

Оставаться в одной рубашке / “to stay in one shirt” = “to be with no money”.

No tener ni segundo calzón / “to not have a second pair of underwear” = “to be very poor”.

These idioms have different lexical structures. However, in the imagery basis, they are similar: there is no second shirt and no second pair of underwear. Their constituents belong to the same lexicosemantic group of “clothes” (shirt and underwear) and are metaphorically linked to the economic situation of a person, the difference lies in the degree of the economic situation, which, of course, defines the contexts in which they can be used.

Пускать пыль в глаза / “to dust someone’s eyes” = “to give a false impression of yourself to someone”.

Echarle tierra a alguien / “to dust someone” = “to slander someone”.

These two idioms are similar in their lexical and syntactic structure and, to some extent, in the imagery basis (the Mexican idiom does not specify the part of the body dusted by the subject). In both, the constituent “dust” has a negative connotation; yet, their meanings are different.

2b. Similar meanings, different forms (partial equivalence)

These are the idioms derived from the six semantic fields in Latin American Spanish and Russian, which have similar meanings and even constituents, but different forms of expressions; 21 cases have been found (Table 3), which makes this the second most common type of cross-linguistic idiom among those analysed here.

Table 3.

Latin American and Russian idioms with similar meanings and different forms

Таблица 3.

Латиноамериканские и русские идиомы с похожими значениями и разными формами

Latin American idioms	Russian idioms	Meaning
<i>hacerle a uno teatro</i> (M., Col.) / to make someone a theatre	<i>сыграть комедию</i> / to play a comedy	to fool / to trick
<i>dejar el cacaste (trabajando)</i> (M., H., N., Sal.) / to leave your skeleton (working)	<i>сложить свои кости</i> / to fold your own bones	to die
<i>ponerle los ojos verdes a alguien</i> (B.) / to paint someone's eyes green	<i>замазывать (замазать) глаза кому-л.</i> / to cover someone's eyes with something colouring	to fool / to trick
<i>no tener uno un cobre</i> (M., S. Am.) / to not have a single cobre coin	<i>не иметь не гроша (за душой)</i> / to not even have two kopek coins (for the soul)	to be left with no money
<i>no tener uno ni un quinto</i> (M.) / to not have a single quinto coin		
<i>tener unas chirolas</i> (A., Par., U.) / to have some chirola coins	<i>перебиваться с копейки на копейку</i> / to make a living from kopek coins to kopek coins	to be poor
<i>estar de bola</i> (D. R.) / to be a ball	<i>налить (залить) шары</i> / to pour balls	to be drunk
<i>estar como bola</i> (P. R.) / to be like a ball		
<i>andar (ponerse, estar) hasta las chanclas</i> (M.) / to be full from head to sandals	<i>нализаться в стельку (как стелька)</i> / to get drunk to the insole	to be drunk
<i>estar hasta la zapatilla</i> (P.) / to be full from head to slippers		
<i>prometer las perlas de la virgen</i> (M.) / to promise the Virgin's pearls	<i>обещать золотые горы</i> / to promise golden mountains	to fool / to trick
<i>darle capú a uno</i> (D. R., P. R., Cu.) / to give somebody the capú	<i>играть в кошки-мышки</i> / to play the game "little cats and mice" with somebody	to fool / to trick

As observed in Table 3, the difference in the constituents of most of these idioms lies mainly in cultural aspects. Some clear examples of this are *darle capú a uno* and *играть в кошки-мышки*. "Capú" is a popular children's game in Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. The game consists of knocking an object out of your opponent's hands and getting hold of it, which is probably why it is associated with fooling or tricking someone. In Russia, "кошки-мышки" is also a children's game in which the players stand in a circle, holding hands, and prevent the "cat" from catching the "mouse". Both idioms have in their structure the same constituent: a children's game, and in both cas-

es, the game is associated to the act of fooling, tricking, cheating on someone, even though their syntactic and lexical constructions are completely different.

Another illustrative example that stands out in this category is *ponerle los ojos verdes a alguien* and *замазывать (замазать) глаза кому-л.* In both idioms, the figurative meaning stands for painting or covering someone's eyes with some kind of colouring liquid. However, in the Bolivian expression, the colour plays an important role: "green eyes" is associated with fooling or tricking, while "white eyes" in the expression *poner alguien los ojos en blanco* / "to make your eyes white", e. g., denotes great admiration or astonishment according to the dictionary of the Real Academia Española [25].

Among the most colourful examples in this category, two other phraseological expressions stand out: *prometer las perlas de la Virgen* / "to promise the Virgin's pearls", and *обещать золотые горы* / "to promise golden mountains". These idioms have in their structure the same action: to promise something. Their main nominative constituents are different: in the Mexican idiom — pearls, in the Russian one — gold, but they are metaphorically similar considering that both constituents are high-value objects: the pearls that belong to a saint of the Christian tradition, and gold in large quantities; both are associated with trickery.

Other items such as a country's currency are part of the list of nominative constituents frequently present in the structures of the idioms analysed here. An example of this are *no tener uno un cobre* / "to not have a single cobre coin"; *no tener uno ni un quinto* / "to not have a single quinto coin"; and *не иметь не гроша (за душой)* / "to not even have two kopek coins (for the soul)". The difference in the syntactic and lexical structures of these expressions lies purely on a cultural basis, since their constituents are traditional items: "cobre coins" from Mexico and South America, "quinto coins" from Mexico, and "kopek coins" from Russia. If a similar idiom existed in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay, it would probably contain in its structure the constituent "chirola" as it is their currency.

3. Different forms and meanings (non-equivalence)

These idioms are derived from the six semantic fields in Spanish from Latin America and Russian, which have not only different meanings but also different syntactic and lexical structures, as well as different imagery basis. A vast majority of idioms analysed here belong to this group: 169 Latin American idioms and 91 Russian idioms (260 in total). It was noted that most of the non-equivalence of these idioms is, obviously, culturally based. Therefore, we have used the classification proposed by Isabel Negro Alousque [22] in order to find the type of cultural non-equivalence that these idioms register (Table 4).

1) *Idioms with a culture-specific constituent.* As can be seen in Table 4, the analysis shows that the lack of equivalence in 141 Latin American and Russian idioms is because in their structure, there are constituents, which are specific and unique to a certain cultural community. This culture-specific constituent can be anything from a traditional item, clothes, dishes, and drinks, fruits and vegetables, plants, animals, utensils, materials used in construction to even furniture. We provide some examples:

Table 4.

Latin American and Russian idioms with different forms and meanings

Таблица 4.

Латиноамериканские и русские идиомы с различными формами и значениями

Non-equivalence type of idiom	L. A. idioms		R. idioms		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
1) with a culture-specific constituent	107	63.3	34	37.3	141
2) evoke an aspect of the target culture	29	17.1	29	31.8	59
3) from culturally relevant domains	11	6.5	21	23.1	31
4) built upon a stereotype	19	11.2	2	2.2	21
5) interlingual loan	1	0.6	4	4.4	5
6) undefined	2	1.2	1	1.1	3

Traditional items

Petate — a mat made of woven palm branches for multiple uses. In Latin America, it is also considered a deathbed.

doblar (liar) el petate (M, C. Am.) / “to roll up the petate”; *arrollar los petates* (C. R.) / “to wrap up the petates”; *quedar en el petate* (N.) / “to stay lying down on the petate”; *no tener ni un petate en que caer muerto* (N.) / “to have no petate on which to die”

Reverbero — a small appliance used for heating water or cooking food, powered by alcohol (Am.). In Cuba, it is also a person who viciously drinks alcoholic beverages.

heder a reverbero (Cu.) / “to smell like an alcohol burner”

Копейка — a Russian unit of money equal to one hundredth of a rouble, as well as a small coin of that denomination.

остаться без копейки / “to stay without any kopek coin”

Конек — skate, a boot with a metal part on the bottom, used for moving across ice.

отбросить коньки / “to throw away the skates”

Traditional dishes and drinks

Machorrucio — a Colombian soup made of boiled corn and vegetables.

meterle (jugarle) a uno machorrucio (Col.) / “to make somebody eat machorrucio”

Rosquete — biscuit, usually circular in shape, made of coarse cornmeal and sugar. It is considered a variant of the Easter doughnut (C. Am., M., C. R., Par.).

entregar el rosquete (A., Par., U., B.) / “to hand over the sweet biscuit”

Сало — traditional Russian food consisting of cured slabs of fatback.

подмазать (смазать) пятки салом / “to lubricate someone’s heels with salo”

Крендель — pretzel, a twisted (usually muffin) bun in the shape of a B or the number 8. For a long time, pretzels were baked only on public holidays.

выделявать ноги кренделя / “to make pretzel legs (move in zigzags)”

Atole — also called **atol** in Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador, and **atolillo** in Costa Rica. It is a hot, thick drink made from maize. According to the Mexican newspaper *Zócalo* [3], atole was prepared to give thanks for the fertility of the land and as an offering to the dead.

dar atole/atol/atolillo con el dedo a alguien (M., C. Am., H.) / “to give someone atole with your finger”

Tepache — a Mexican pre-Hispanic beverage made of corn and aromatic herbs. The word comes from the Náhuatl “*tépiatl*”. Mesoamerican peoples used it in religious cults.

regar el tepache (M.) / “to water the tepache”

Traditional clothes

Poncho — a warm garment consisting of a square or rectangular blanket, made of sheep’s, alpaca or vicuña wool, with an opening in the centre for the head to pass through.

perder hasta el poncho (A.) / “to lose even the poncho”; *alzar el poncho* (A.) / “to lift up the poncho”

Caite — a coarse leather sandal worn by indigenous people or peasants, consisting of a thick sole and straps attached to it that cross over the instep (C. R., Sal., G., H., N.).

doblar el caite (Sal.) / “to fold the sandal”; *colgar los caites* (C. R.) / “to hang up the shoes”; *dar agua a los caites* (C. Am.) / “to give water to the sandals”

Лапша — a common dish known as noodles, made from plain flour and unleavened dough (in contrast to the similarly composed and eaten vermicelli, pasta and spaghetti made from durum wheat flour). It is present in the Russian cuisine.

вешать лапшу на уши / “to hang noodles on someone’s ears”

Квас — a sour drink made with water from rye bread or rye flour and malt. Present in the Russian cuisine.

перебиваться с хлеба на квас / “to make a living from bread to kvass”

Конек — skate, a boot with a metal part on the bottom, used for moving across ice.

отбросить коньки / “to throw away the skates”

Лапоть — woven peasant shoes made of bast or rope, covering all sides of the foot.

обувать (обуть) кого-л. в (чертовы) лапти / “to put someone on woven shoes”; *плести (сплести) лапти* / “to weave peasant shoes”

Within this category, terms (as nominative constituents) from specific regions that have no equivalent in others were also included. According to the dictionaries in Russian and Spanish language consulted for the purposes of this study, the following words are particular to a region and, sometimes, are used only in a specific expression:

Palomera — the back of the trousers. This word from Colombia has no equivalent even in other Latin American countries.

salir por la palomera (Col.) / “to get out from the back of the trousers”

Catitear — it is a verb from Argentina and Uruguay that means to entangle a paper kite.

estar catiteando (A.) / “to be with tangeling a kite”

Carraplana — it is a term from Venezuela that stands for total poverty, misfortune, disaster and collapse.

estar en la carraplana (V.) / “to be poor”

Вензеля — the initial letters of a first and last name or two names linked together in a common pattern. *Писать вензеля* / “to write letters when the legs move in zigzags”.

Мыслете — the obsolete name of the letter “m” of the Russian alphabet.

писать мыслете / “to write the old name of the letter ‘m’”

Фуфу — another word very often used in Russian phraseology. It stands for “not thoroughly, frivolously, somehow”.

поднимать на фуфу / “to rise someone in a fu-fu style”

2) *Idioms that evoke an aspect of the target culture.* The Russian language has the highest percentage of such idioms (31.8%). A total of 59 cases in both languages have been found. Among the aspects evoked by these idioms are, e. g., customs, traditions, literary works, historical events and figures, as well as cultural practices of specific countries. The following are some examples:

Customs and traditions

hacer cuadrilla (E.) / “to make a cuadrilla dance”

An idiom based on the festivities of San Juan, Ecuador. In his book *Leyendas y tradiciones del Ecuador*, H. Garcés Paz [13, p. 119] describes this tradition in which groups of men and women in costume danced in the square in pursuit of entertainment.

hacerle a uno de chivo los tamales (M.) / “to cook goat tamales for somebody”

In Mexico the traditional tamales are made of pork meat, so it is believed that the origin of this idiom is that someone cooked them with goat meat (because they did not have pork meat) and lied about the flavour of the tamals.

дать дуба / “to give an oak-tree”

The main constituent of this idiom stands for a large deciduous tree of the beech family with staple wood and acorn fruits. According to the Russian Language Blog (online version from 2021 [27]), it is likely that the idiom came from the old Russian tradition of burying people under the oak trees and also from Slavic rituals connected to Perun, a God who is often represented by a sacred oak tree.

не иметь ни кола ни двора / “to not have either a stake or a yard”

According to the dictionaries consulted here, in the 19th century in Russia, кол was a strip of arable land two fathoms wide (about 4 m). In this sense, not having a кол (stake) meant not having a field, and not having a двор (yard) meant not having a house and living with others.

ponerle la cacona a uno (D. R.) / “to dress sb. up in a cacona costume”

This idiom makes much sense, it means to die, and it comes from the tradition of dressing a child with a “cacona” that is a gala costume, usually worn for baptism or burial.

быть во хмелю / “to be under the mulberry plant”

The word *хмель* was found in the 11th c. in written sources belonging to the Old Russian language period. This term stands for “a climbing plant of dried inflorescences which are used in brewing”, which is probably the reason why it is associated to drunkenness [9].

Historical events

irse a vivir a los caños (A.) / “to move in to the canals”

It is one of the most popular idioms in Argentina. According to Roberto Bongiorno and Juan Pizzorno [5], it emerged during the so-called Crisis of the Thirties, when the world economic depression hit Argentina particularly hard. In those years, the classic landscape of large pipes piled up on the side of roads and highways began to appear. Soon these pipes became the homes of the poor.

llevarse el tren a uno (M.) / “the train takes somebody away”

According to the Mexican newspaper *Milenio Diario* [21], at some point in the 20th century, during the Mexican revolution, trains were used to move troops of soldiers from one side of the country to the other, which meant being in danger and even dying when travelling to a war zone.

откинуть (отбросить) копыта / “to throw back (throw away) the hoofs”

The Russian author D. Absentis (2014) speculates in his book *Christianity and Ergot* about the etymology of this idiom that may be associated to horse diseases. He explains that, in the past, the hooves of some animals fell off from the disease ergot, and others would get them off during drastic epidemics in order for them to survive [1].

ласты склеить / “to glue the flippers together”

According to Yu. Matyushko, this idiom comes from prison jargon, where the word *ласты* was used to refer to the hands of the prisoners. It is said that when a prisoner was dying, his hands were folded on top and glued together [19].

Historical figures

Idioms that include a historical character have only been found in the Russian idioms selection. These historical figures are the Colonel Rayevsky and Prince Svyatoslav. The first one is considered the author of two popular expressions classified within the semantic field “to drink”: *закладывать (заложить) за галстук* / “to put it behind a tie”, and *заливать (залить) за воротник* / “to flood it behind the collar”. According to V. V. Vinogradov (2013), these two expressions came from the military environment, a place where the verb *заложить* is widely spread (*заложить заряд, мину, etc.*), and he states that there is a testimony of Prince Pyotr Andreyevich Vyazemsky about the time of origin of this expression [34].

The latter (Prince Svyatoslav) is considered the inventor of the expression *лечь костьюми (головой, грудью)* / “to lie down with your bones (head, chest)”. As V. Grachikov recorded in his platform (article from 2018, February 10 [12]), historically,

this expression has been attributed to Prince Svyatoslav, who said these words before the battle with the Byzantine soldiers: “We have nowhere to go, whether we want to or not — we must fight. So let us not disgrace the Russian land, but let us lay down our bones here”.

Literary works

Literature also plays an important role in the phraseological construction of a linguistic community. In this analysis, 11 expressions in both languages were observed which, apparently, are of literary origin. Among Russian idioms, Pushkin is one of the most popular authors, whose works have remained not only in the legacy of literature, but also in the phraseology of Russia. A clear example of this are the idioms:

— *оказаться у разбитого корыта* / “to end up with a broken laundry trough”.

It is believed that the source of this expression is the famous Pushkin’s tale *The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish* [in Russian *Сказка о рыбаке и рыбке*]. In this literary work, there is an old woman, who wanted to take the opportunity to make her wishes come true, but at the end of the tale she is left sitting at the broken trough.

— *лечь (пойти) в гроб (в могилу, в землю)* / “to lie down (to go) in a coffin (in a grave, in the ground)”. There is a register of this idiom in the narrative poem by the Russian writer Pushkin “Poltava” written in 1829: “*Повремени: дай лечь мне в гроб*”.

Regarding Latin American idioms, an illustrative example is *no tener palo donde rascarse* (P. R., A., Par., U.) / “to have no stick to scratch with”. This expression came from the epic poem *Martín Fierro* by the famous Argentine writer José Hernández, and it is part of the popular heritage. At the time it was written, it reflected the characteristic features of Argentine culture. *Estar uno en la lata (las latas)* (Am.) / “to be in tin cans” is another good example from the Latin American phraseology. According to the *Diccionario histórico del español de Costa Rica* in the *Tesoro de los diccionarios históricos de la lengua española* of the Real Academia Española (2021), this idiom comes from 1907, from a text by the author A. Echeverría entitled *Pascuala* in the publication *El Figaro* [26].

3) *Idioms from culturally relevant domains*. This type of non-equivalence idiom is the third most popular among the Russian idioms (23.1%) and one the fourth most popular (6.5%) among the idioms from Latin America. Considering the observations of Isabel Negro Alousque [22], most of the idioms analysed here could be perfectly classified into this category, as a large number of Latin American idioms are gastronomic idioms; for example, there were also found zoomorphic idioms in both languages, and several military and prison idioms in the Russian language. However, it was decided to classify in this category all the idioms: 1) which do not contain a specific-cultural constituent, 2) which do not evoke an aspect of the target culture, and 3) which are not constructed on the basis of a stereotype, but rather belong to the same lexicosemantic field.

In the case of Latin America, several idioms were found that include some means of transport in their structure, e. g.: *meter carreta* (N.) / “to get the carriage in”; *pasarle a alguien por la parrilla* (P.) / “to pass through someone’s luggage carrier”; *guardar el carro* (Cu.) / “to put the car in the garage”.

In both languages, we have found idioms that include body parts in their structure, but most of them belong to the Russian language. We provide further examples of these idioms (Table 5).

Table 5.

Таблица 5.

Latin American and Russian idioms that include body parts in their structure **Латиноамериканские и русские идиомы с частями тела**

hair	<i>alzar el pelo</i> (M., C.R.) / “to rise your hair” Hair associated with the action of escaping.
belly	<i>estar hecho una pipa</i> (Per.) / “to be a pipa”; <i>andar en pipa</i> (C.) / “to walk on your stomach” In some parts of Central America, the word <i>pipa</i> is used as a synonym for a bulging belly and, for the same reason, alludes to a tanker truck.
bottom	<i>andar hasta el culo</i> or <i>rabo</i> (C. R.) / “to be full (of alcohol) from head to butt” The bottom associated with a state of drunkenness.
feet/ leg/ heel	<i>quemarle a uno las canillitas</i> or <i>la canilla</i> (C. Am.) / “to burn someone’s calves”; <i>quemarle a uno los caites</i> (N.) / “to burn someone’s soles”; <i>pasar la pata a uno</i> (A., Par., U.) / “somebody makes you pass under their leg” Feet associated with the act of fooling and deceiving someone. However, Russian idioms with the constituent “leg” are merely associated with the act of running away from a place, like in <i>уплестать (уносить) ноги</i> / “to tuck into someone’s feet”; <i>пуститься наутек, со всех ног</i> / “to run away very hurriedly from all your legs”.
eyes	<i>смежить глаза (очи)</i> / “to shut/close your eyes”; <i>заливать глаза</i> / “to flood the eyes”; <i>отводить глаза кому-л.</i> / “to direct someone eyes away”; <i>ослеплять глаза</i> / “to blind someone’s eyes” These Russian idioms associate the eyes with death, drunkenness, and fooling.
teeth/ tongue	<i>подобрать подол в зубы</i> / “to pick up a hemline in the teeth”; <i>жить на голые зубы</i> / “to live with bared teeth” In the case of the first idiom, teeth are associated with an escape; in the second, — with poverty. <i>еле, еле-еле языком ворочать</i> / “to roll over the tongue a little” The tongue here is associated with a state of drunkenness.
nose	<i>наклеивать нос</i> / “to stick a nose on someone”; <i>натянуть нос</i> / “to stretch someone’s nose” In both idioms, the nose is associated with the act of deceiving a person.
hand	<i>свистеть в кулак</i> / “to whistle into a fist” The hand here is associated with being left with no money.
head/ brain	<i>морочить голову кому-л.</i> / “to mess with the head”; <i>пудрить мозги</i> / “to powder the brain” These two parts of the body are associated with cheating a person.

4) *Idioms built upon a stereotype*. Most of these types of non-equivalence idioms have been found in the analysed units of Latin American Spanish (19 cases). Only two such cases have been found among Russian idioms. It is important to mention that in the Latin American cases (only one case found in the Russian language), most of them are idioms built on stereotypes about animals that create fictitious images of good, bad, dumb, unlucky, etc. The examples are in Table 6.

Table 6.

Latin American and Russian idioms built on stereotypes about animals

Таблица 6.

Латиноамериканские и русские идиомы, построенные на стереотипе о животных

rat	<i>pelar rata</i> (G., N., Sal., V.) / “to skin a rat”; <i>salir como rata por tirante</i> (A., Par., U.) / “to leave like a rat through a horse-drawn carriage rope”; <i>asentar el ratón</i> (M., G., V.) / “to sit the mouse on the chair”; <i>estar ratón</i> (P. R.) / “to be a mouse” Associated with death, escape, drunkenness, hard economic situation.
rooster	<i>pelar gallo</i> (M.) / “to skin a rooster” Associated with death.
eagle	<i>andar a palos con el águila</i> (C.) / “to fight against the eagle with sticks”; <i>estar águila</i> (A.) / “to be an eagle” Associated with poverty, hard economic situation.
rabbit	<i>poner conejo a uno</i> (Col.) / “to turn somebody into a rabbit” Associated with being fool, silly.
turkey	<i>pasar por debajo de la cola del pavo</i> (C.) / “to pass a person under the turkey’s tail” Associated with a deceit.
horse	<i>врать, как сивый мерин</i> / “to lie as a greyish-blue castrated stallion” Associated with the act of lying.

Gender stereotypical idioms were also found among the Latin American idioms, they include in their structure sexual organs that are associated with hard economic situations and even deceits, e. g.: *estar en la raja* (Col.) / “to be in the female genitals”; *pincharse las huevas* (C.) / “to prick the testicles”; *darle mazo a alguien* (N.) / “to give somebody a penis”.

5) *Interlingual loans*. Among the 302 idioms analyzed here, five such idioms have been found, one case in the Spanish from Latin America, and four cases in the Russian language. These are expressions taken from languages other than Spanish and Russian. The following are examples:

Loans from the English language: *patear el balde* (H., N., C. R., P., G.) / “to kick the bucket”. According to the *Diccionario de Americanismos*, this is a loan (or “calco”) from the English idiom to *kick the bucket*. In addition *уносить, унести (с собой) в могилу* / “to carry off (something with you) to the grave”. This expression seems

to be a loan from the English language; it is almost identical to the idiom *to take a (the, your) secret to the grave*, that means “to die without revealing a secret” according to the *Farlex Partner Idioms Dictionary* (2017) [10]. There is a Spanish version of this same idiom, *llevarse un secreto a la tumba*, but there is no register of its use in Latin America.

Loans from the French and Latin language: *отправиться к праотцам* / “to go off to one’s ancestors”. According to N. T. Babichev and Y. M. Borovsky (1982), this idiom is an “interlingual loan” of full equivalence with the Latin idiom *ad patres*, and the French idiom *aller ad patres* and *envoyer ad patres* recorded in the *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française d’Émile Littré* (1872-1877) [4].

Religious loans: *исчезать (исчезнуть) с лица земли* / “to disappear from the face of the earth”. Considering the similitude with another religious Russian idiom *стереть с лица земли*, this is probably an interlingual loan from culturally relevant domains as it contains a biblical reference in the Book of Job, one of the books of the Old Testament.

6) *Undefined idioms*. Only three idioms have been classified into this category as no information was found on their origin, nor was it possible to identify whether they are borrowings from other languages, or whether their main constituent is culturally grounded:

быть пьяней вина / “to be drunker than wine”;

doblar la esquina (C.) / “to turn the corner”;

estar pila (C. Am.) / “to be like a water tap”.

Conclusion

In this article, we provide a cross-cultural analysis of idioms, focusing on semantic similarities and divergences between Spanish idioms from Latin America and Russian idioms. The analysis has revealed three degrees of equivalence in both languages: similar forms and meanings (full equivalence), similar forms and different meanings, and similar meanings but different forms (partial equivalence), as well as different forms and meanings (non-equivalence).

The results show that the lack of cross-linguistic equivalence among these idioms is grounded in culture rather than in the aspects of the languages, as they include specific constituents and elements that evoke aspects of the Latin American and Russian culture. We believe that idioms from Latin America are a topic that deserves further research for two reasons: 1) the phraseology of Latin America is so vast that in order to systematise it specific terms have been established, e. g., *peruvianisms* from Peru, *dominicanisms* from Dominican Republic, *cubanisms* from Cuba, etc.; 2) Latin American idioms are, by far, different from Spanish idioms, as they contain nominative components derived from regional dialects like *nahuátl*.

The practical significance of this research work is due to the possibility of using the findings in the development of academic processes in the field of intercultural communication, as well as in language teaching.

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КРОСС-КУЛЬТУРНЫЕ АСПЕКТЫ РУССКИХ И ЛАТИНОАМЕРИКАНСКИХ ИДИОМ

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Аннотация

Идиомы вызывают интерес лингвистов всего мира уже более века. От Логана Пирсолла Смита (1925), Виноградова (1946, 1947), Каччиари и Глаксберга (1991), Фернандо (1996) до современных авторов, таких как Кветко (2009), Негро Алуск (2011), Е. Пийрайнен (2015), К. Се и С. Чернобай (2016), и это лишь некоторые из них. Многие исследования идиом, проведенные в последние годы, анализировали идиомы с разных точек зрения и подходов.

Цель настоящей работы — внести вклад в кросс-лингвистический анализ, выявив сходства и различия в идиомах испанского и русского языков с актантным компонентом. Было решено включить идиомы из 19 стран Латинской Америки в качестве образцов испанского языка как попытку впервые ввести латиноамериканскую фразеологию в поле данного исследования. Мы сосредоточились на семантической специфике этих идиом, исходя из гипотезы, что они имеют некоторые сходства независимо от того, насколько географически удалены друг от друга эти два региона, и что их различия заключаются только в культурных аспектах.

Ключевые слова

Идиома, фразеологизм, культура, кросс-культурные аспекты, эквивалентность, Латинская Америка.

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