

## La competencia lingüística en catalán del alumnado universitario valenciano: una aproximación a las unidades fraseológicas<sup>1</sup>

### The linguistic competence in Catalan of Valencian university students: an approach to phraseological units

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#### RESUMEN.

La fraseología es un aspecto de las lenguas que tradicionalmente, y hasta la aparición de algunos de los paradigmas teóricos de la lingüística más reciente, se había abordado de manera dispersa y superficial. Esta falta de sistematicidad y profundización en el estudio de las unidades fraseológicas también ha afectado al proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de las mismas. Por razones sociolingüísticas, cognitivas y pragmáticas, los jóvenes suelen presentar dificultades para comprender y utilizar de manera convencional determinados fraseologismos. En este artículo analizamos algunos de los resultados de una encuesta sobre la competencia fraseológica en catalán realizada a alumnos de primer curso de Traducción e Interpretación de la Universidad de Alicante.

#### PALABRAS CLAVE.

Enseñanza de lenguas, aprendizaje del catalán, fraseología, difusión del estándar, Traducción e Interpretación

#### ABSTRACT.

Phraseology is an aspect of languages which, until some theoretical paradigms of the most recent linguistics appeared, had traditionally been approached in a disperse and superficial way. This lack of systematization and deepening into the study of phraseological units has also affected their teaching-learning process. For sociolinguistic, cognitive, and pragmatic reasons, youngsters usually have difficulties to understand and conventionally utilize certain phraseologisms. The present paper analyzes some of the results obtained in a survey about

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phraseological competence in Catalan carried out with students enrolled in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of the Translation and Interpreting Degree at the University of Alicante.

## KEY WORDS.

Teaching of languages, learning of Catalan, phraseology, dissemination of the standard, Translation and Interpreting

## 1. Introduction.

The process of teaching-learning of phraseology in Catalan has not been studied in detail yet. The lack of works on this topic, which is not exclusive of the Catalan language, is partly due to the essentially ethnolinguistic, structuralist, taxonomical, or lexicographic treatment received by this area of language during the last few decades. As a matter of fact, until the principles of cognitive- and pragmatic-based linguistics were spread, phraseology had kept being regarded as a hard-to-define category (Martí, 2005, pp. 48-50) and a difficult one to deal with, either from a theoretical or from an applied point of view. This is how Elena Sánchez explains it when she refers to the most recent strands in phraseology analysis and states the following: “Nowadays, within the framework of pragmatics and cognitive linguistics, we can see that much of what was traditionally considered arbitrary and difficult to classify is in fact systemic and motivated” (Sánchez, 2015, p. 160). In short, these new theoretical approaches conceive phraseologisms as units perfectly integrated into the normal operation of languages (Ruiz, 2001). And, as such, they must be learned through all educational stages. In order to ensure the learning of these constructions, it becomes necessary to gather empirical evidence on the issues affecting the process of phraseology acquisition, from the factors influencing it to the possible strategies through which it could be improved.

The learning of phraseological units (PUs), the same as that of the other aspects of languages, is determined by phenomena of a cultural, cognitive, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic nature. Nevertheless, sociolinguistic factors acquire special relevance in a minorization context. Thus, the deficits in the exposure to the reference mode, the interferences of the dominant language, along with prejudice or linguistic insecurity, stand out as some of the causes that hinder the implementation of the standard at school, as well as the development of communicative competences in the minorized language.

More specifically with regard to Catalan, some studies establish the extent to which the standard model has been assimilated in the educational system and examine the sociolinguistic implications that determine it. The volume of works written about this is quite remarkable; hence why only some of the most recent studies will be mentioned in our paper. In the Valencian context, Josep Maria Baldaquí (2002) described the link between the lexical model of secondary education students and the different bilingual education programs. Furthermore, outstanding contributions have also been made in relation to the impact of linguistic insecurity on the linguistic model of Valencian youngsters enrolled in the last stage of compulsory education (Baldaquí, 2009). In turn, Carles Segura (2003) compared the levels of dialectal variation and standard model assumption in the *comarca* [administrative division smaller than the province] of *Baix Vinalopó*.<sup>1</sup>





The knowledge of the Catalan language standard by young university students is a topic which has mostly been dealt with from Catalonia. In this sense, Josefina Carrera Sabaté and Imma Creus (2015) analyzed the implementation of phonetic rules in a sample of university students from different specialties and from various dialectal origins. María Pilar Perea (2015) also examined the knowledge about several aspects of nominal and inflectional morphology with a group of students enrolled in first- and fourth year of the Catalan Philology Degree as well as in the Master's Degree of the same specialty. Finally, in the field of syntax, Joan Costa and Aina Labèrnia (2014) delved into the utilization of relative pronouns made by students enrolled in the first year of the Translation and Interpreting Degree.

Even so, some aspects of Catalan language –such as phraseology, for instance– have still not been analyzed from this perspective. The existence of such a gap encouraged us to perform a small statistical study about the mastery of standard language phraseological expressions by students enrolled in the first year of the Translation and Interpreting Degree at the University of Alicante who were taking the subject of ‘Catalan Language for Translation I.’ The present paper is nothing but an initial quantitative approach to the results of that test.

## 2. Objectives and methodology.

### 2.1. Objectives.

This study seeks to achieve a twofold aim:

- a) Showing the results of the test about Standard Catalan phraseology according to different variables of a sociolinguistic nature: the bilingual program that the informants attended during *ESO* [Compulsory Lower Secondary Education] and *Bachillerato* [Upper Secondary Education] (the learning of second languages has been studied extensively in the literature; see, e. g., Checa-Garcia, 2016; Chui, 2016), the number of languages that they claim to master, the language that students speak with their parents, the language of identification, and the social environment which has allowed them to learn Catalan.
- b) Analyzing the degree of influence that the aforementioned variables have on the assimilation of the phraseological standard model.

### 2.2. Methodology.

#### 2.2.1. The sample.

The data supplied in this paper come from a research work undertaken in May 2016. The study population was formed by 18-to-19-year-old students enrolled in the subject ‘Catalan Language for Translation I’ (a first-year subject of the Translation and Interpreting Degree at the University of Alicante) at the time. The students who take this subject come from various specialties. More specifically, 23 of those who participated in this project (39.65%) came from the English specialty, 21 (36.21%) from the French specialty, and the remaining 14 students (24.14%) from the German specialty.



### 2.2.2. The information collection instrument.

A quantitative questionnaire with two distinct parts was prepared to collect the data corresponding to the sample: a first group of sociolinguistic questions; and a second one focused on the meaning of various phraseologisms. The purpose of the sociolinguistic part was to bring together information about the age and sex of students, the linguistic program, the language (or languages) that those students speak with their parents, the number of languages that they master, the language with which they identify, or their level of knowledge of Catalan. As for the questions referring to phraseology, our aim was to obtain quantifiable data about the extent to which the informants knew the standard language PUs. In this respect, a test was prepared with ten verbal phrases —*donar carabassa* ('to reject a suitor'), *estar de mala lluna* ('to be in a bad mood'), *fer l'agost* ('to obtain high profits; to earn a lot in a business'), *no cabre dins la pell* ('to feel very satisfied'), *ser un mussol* ('to be a person who speaks little, half asleep, charmed'), *tindre corretja* ('to have patience'), *perdre l'oremus* ('to go out of one's mind, to go crazy'), *fer eixir els cabells blancs* ('to make somebody suffer hardships'), *comptar les bigues* ('to get distracted in a conversation'), and *fer cinc cèntims* ('to summarize')<sup>ii</sup>— with three answer choices, of which only one was correct. The criteria described below served to select the phraseological units:

- a) The PUs had to appear in at least three of the following reference dictionaries (cf. Table 1): *Diccionari de la llengua catalana (DIEC)* [Dictionary of the Catalan Language] of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans [Institute of Catalan Studies] (2007); *Diccionari descriptiu de la llengua catalana (DDLC)* [Descriptive Dictionary of the Catalan Language], of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (1985-) too; *Gran diccionari de la llengua catalana (GDLC)* [Great Dictionary of the Catalan Language], of the publishing company Enciclopèdia Catalana (2001); *Diccionari de frases fetes (DFF)* [Dictionary of Set Phrases], by Joana Raspall and Joan Martí (2001); and *Diccionari de sinònims de frases fetes (DSFF)* [Dictionary of Synonyms of Set Phrases] by Maria Teresa Espinal (2006).
- b) The group of phrases had to illustrate the three most common types of PUs as regards the reinterpretation<sup>iii</sup> or construction of phraseological meaning (Baranov & Dobrovolskij, 1996; Timofeeva, 2012): simple reinterpretation (*donar carabassa*, *fer l'agost*, *tindre corretja*, *comptar les bigues*, and *fer cinc cèntims*); partial reinterpretation (*estar de mala lluna*, *ser un mussol*, and *perdre l'oremus*) and intensional reinterpretation (*no cabre dins la pell* and *fer eixir els cabells blancs*).





Table 1. Dictionaries containing the PUs selected for the questionnaire.

PU	DIEC	DDLC	GDLC	DFF	DSFF
<i>Donar carabassa</i>	X		X	X	X
<i>Estar de mala lluna</i>	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Fer l'agost</i>	X	X	X	X	X
<i>No cabre dins la pell</i>	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Ser un mussol</i>	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Tindre corretja</i>	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Perdre l'oremus</i>	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Fer eixir els cabells blancs</i>			X	X	X
<i>Comptar les bigues</i>	X			X	X
<i>Fer cinc cèntims</i>	X	X	X	X	X

### 2.2.3. Statistical methodology.

The statistics applied by us to analyze the data and to present them in this paper is purely descriptive. The following section will show the quantification of the results obtained by the 58 informants interviewed, subsequently relating them to some of the questions from the sociolinguistic part that we considered most relevant.<sup>iv</sup> More precisely, our selection of variables included: (1) language that students speak with their parents; (2) language of identification; (3) environment in which Catalan was learned; (4) number of languages mastered by students; (5) linguistic program during *ESO* [Compulsory Lower Secondary Education]; and (6) linguistic program during *Bachillerato* [Upper Secondary Education]. The examination of these aspects allowed us to describe how factors such as the schooling language, the level of polyglotism or multilingualism, or the informants' language affect the results of our study.

### 3. Results.

Before comparing the results with some of the sociolinguistic questionnaire items, it is worth highlighting that our informants gave a total of 580 answers in the section about PU knowledge. Of these 580 answers, 303 (52.24%) were right; and the other 258 (the remaining 47.76%) were wrong. As for the phraseologisms which shaped this part of the test, *ser un mussol*, *fer eixir els cabells blancs*, *comptar les bigues*, and *fer cinc cèntims* are the least correctly identified phrases, with a total of 42, 53, 45, and 43 wrong answers, respectively (72.42%, 91.38%, 77.59%, and 74.14% of all the answers referred to each one of those PUs, 58). Instead, *donar carabassa*, *estar de mala lluna*, and *no cabre dins la pell* are the most correctly identified expressions, with only 3, 4, and 8 mistakes (5.18%, 6.9%, and 13.8% of all the answers linked to these forms). An intermediate position corresponds to *fer l'agost*, *tindre corretja*, and *perdre l'oremus*, with 23 (39.66%), 18 (31.04%), and 33 (56.9%) errors in each case (cf. Table 2 and Figure 1).



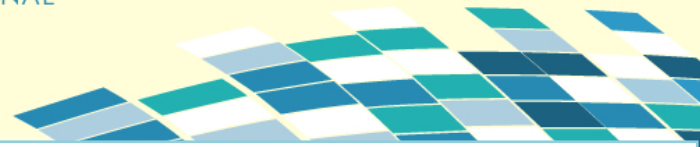
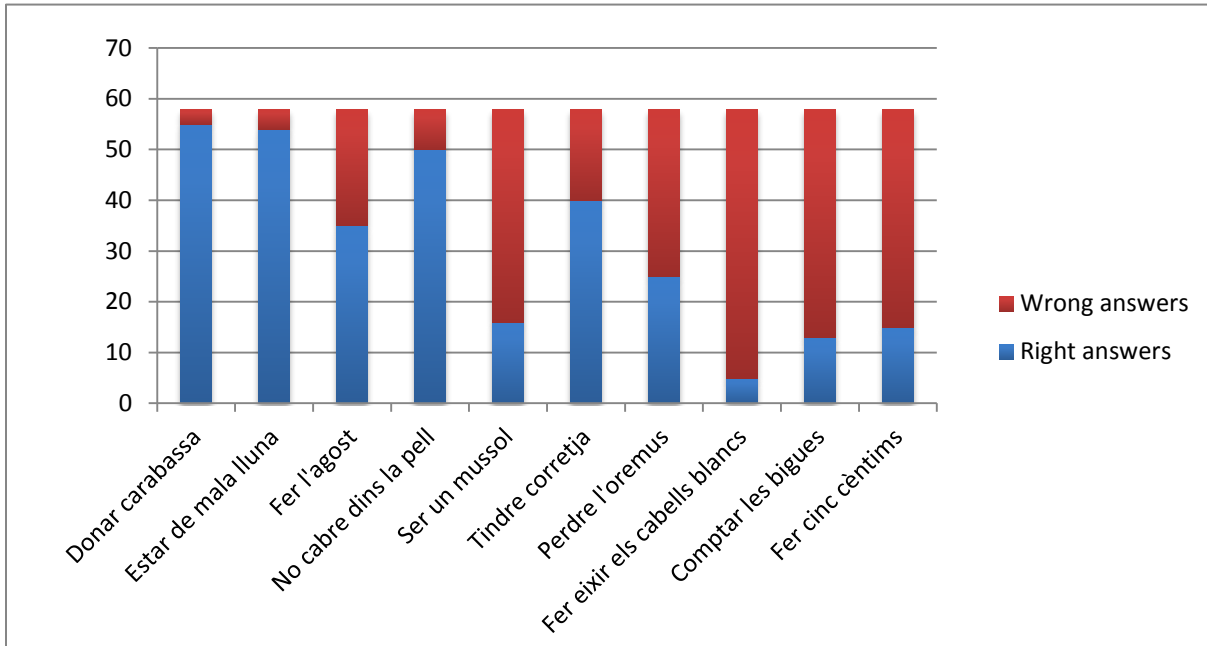


Table 2. Questionnaire results.

	Right answers	Wrong answers
Total	303 (53.34%)	258 (47.76%)
Total number of answers	580 (100%)	

Figure 1. Questionnaire results by PU.



Next can be found the questionnaire results in relation to the sociolinguistic variables that were considered most relevant for our paper. As explained above, these variables are:

- language that students speak with their parents;
- language of identification;
- environment in which Catalan was learned;
- number of languages mastered by students;
- linguistic program during *ESO*; and
- linguistic program during *Bachillerato*.

### 3.1. Results according to the language that students speak with their parents.

The first aspect that deserves to be stressed about this variable is the fact that most of our students declare that they speak either Spanish —24 students (41.38% of the sample)— or Spanish and Catalan —17 students (29.31%)— with their parents. Thus, there are only 8 students (13.79%) who claim to speak Catalan with the family, 4 (6.9%) who speak other languages, and 5 (8.62%) who speak both Spanish and other languages.

Concerning results (cf. Table 3), the group of students with the best results is that of students who speak in Catalan and in Spanish with their parents, with a total of 95 right answers (55.89% of the answers given by these informants, 170) and 75 mistakes (44.11%). Those students who only speak Catalan with their parents show a rate of correct and wrong answers which is almost identical to that of students who only speak Spanish: the difference between both profiles is 0.42% –the former obtaining a slightly higher percentage of right answers than the latter. Finally, the results of students who use Spanish and some foreign language or only some foreign language in this family context are considerably lower than those corresponding to the already described profiles: the former get 52% of answers right; the former, only 40%.

Table 3. Results according to the language that students speak with their parents.

Results	Cat.	Sp.	Others	Cat. and Sp.	Sp. and others
Right answers					
<i>Donar carabassa</i>	8	24	3	15	5
<i>Estar de mala lluna</i>	7	22	4	16	5
<i>Fer l'agost</i>	5	14	1	12	3
<i>No cabre dins la pell</i>	6	22	4	15	3
<i>Ser un mussol</i>	2	6	0	6	2
<i>Tindre corretja</i>	5	16	1	15	3
<i>Perdre l'oremus</i>	5	10	1	7	2
<i>Fer eixir els cabells blancs</i>	0	1	1	2	1
<i>Comptar les bigues</i>	2	6	0	4	1
<i>Fer cinc cèntims</i>	3	7	1	3	1
Total right answers	43 (53.75%)	128 (53.33%)	16 (40%)	95 (55.89%)	26 (52%)
Mistakes					
<i>Donar carabassa</i>	0	0	1	2	0
<i>Estar de mala lluna</i>	1	2	0	1	0
<i>Fer l'agost</i>	3	10	3	5	2
<i>No cabre dins la pell</i>	2	2	0	2	2
<i>Ser un mussol</i>	6	18	4	11	3
<i>Tindre corretja</i>	3	8	3	2	2
<i>Perdre l'oremus</i>	3	14	3	10	3
<i>Fer eixir els cabells blancs</i>	8	23	3	15	4
<i>Comptar les bigues</i>	6	18	4	13	4
<i>Fer cinc cèntims</i>	5	17	3	14	4
Total mistakes	37 (46.25%)	112 (46.67%)	24 (60%)	75 (44.11%)	24 (48%)
Total number of answers	80 (100%)	240 (100%)	40 (100%)	170 (100%)	50 (100%)

### 3.2. Results according to the language of identification<sup>y</sup>.

Of all the interviewed students, 37 (63.79%) identify with Spanish, 17 (29.31%) with Catalan, and 4 (6.9%) with other languages. This last group of students—which, as can be seen, is the smallest of the ‘language of identification’ variable— obtain significantly lower results (with 55% of wrong answers) than those with the other two profiles, which have very similar proportions of correct and incorrect answers. The percent difference actually amounts to only 0.6% (cf. Table 4).

Table 4. Results according to the language of identification.

	Results	Sp.	Val.	Others
Right answers	<i>Donar carabassa</i>	36	16	3
	<i>Estar de mala lluna</i>	35	15	4
	<i>Fer l’agost</i>	19	15	1
	<i>No cabre dins la pell</i>	32	14	4
	<i>Ser un mussol</i>	12	4	0
	<i>Tindre corretja</i>	25	13	2
	<i>Perdre l’oremus</i>	16	7	2
	<i>Fer eixir els cabells blancs</i>	3	1	1
	<i>Comptar les bigues</i>	10	3	0
	<i>Fer cinc cèntims</i>	10	4	1
Total right answers		198 (53.51%)	92(54.11%)	18 (45%)
Mistakes	<i>Donar carabassa</i>	1	1	1
	<i>Estar de mala lluna</i>	2	2	0
	<i>Fer l’agost</i>	18	2	3
	<i>No cabre dins la pell</i>	5	3	0
	<i>Ser un mussol</i>	25	13	4
	<i>Tindre corretja</i>	12	4	2
	<i>Perdre l’oremus</i>	21	10	2
	<i>Fer eixir els cabells blancs</i>	34	16	3
	<i>Comptar les bigues</i>	27	14	4
	<i>Fer cinc cèntims</i>	27	13	3
Total mistakes		172 (46.49%)	78 (45.89%)	22 (55%)
Total number of answers		370 (100%)	170 (100%)	40 (100%)

### 3.3. Results according to the environment in which Catalan was learned.

It must firstly be borne in mind that this variable included the following answer choices in the questionnaire: (a) “It was transmitted to me by my parents”; (b) “I learned it with my friends”; and (c) “I learned it at school and high school.” Out of 58 interviewed students, 37 (63.79%) chose option (c) (“I learned it at school and high school”); and the other 21 (the remaining 36.21%) chose (a) (“It was transmitted to me by my parents”). Consequently, no informants put a tick on option (b) (“I learned it with my friends”).





As for results according to this sociolinguistic factor, it deserves to be highlighted that the group with the highest percentage of correct answers is that of students claiming to have learned Catalan at school, with a total of 196 (52.97%). Nevertheless, the other profile shows slightly lower results; in other words, both groups are nearly identical from a percentage point of view, the difference between one and the other being only 0.12%.

Table 5. Results according to the environment in which Catalan was learned.

	Results	School	Family
Right answers	<i>Donar carabassa</i>	36	19
	<i>Estar de mala lluna</i>	35	19
	<i>Fer l'agost</i>	19	16
	<i>No cabre dins la pell</i>	32	17
	<i>Ser un mussol</i>	10	6
	<i>Tindre corretja</i>	23	17
	<i>Perdre l'oremus</i>	18	7
	<i>Fer eixir els cabells blancs</i>	4	1
	<i>Comptar les bigues</i>	8	5
	<i>Fer cinc cèntims</i>	11	4
Total right answers		196 (52.97%)	111 (52.85%)
Mistakes	<i>Donar carabassa</i>	1	2
	<i>Estar de mala lluna</i>	2	2
	<i>Fer l'agost</i>	18	5
	<i>No cabre dins la pell</i>	5	4
	<i>Ser un mussol</i>	27	15
	<i>Tindre corretja</i>	14	4
	<i>Perdre l'oremus</i>	19	14
	<i>Fer eixir els cabells blancs</i>	33	20
	<i>Comptar les bigues</i>	29	16
	<i>Fer cinc cèntims</i>	26	17
Total mistakes		174 (47.03%)	99 (47.15%)
Total number of answers		370 (100%)	210 (100%)

### 3.4. Results according to the number of languages that students master.

Of all the students in the sample, 8 (13.79%) claim to master one language, 24 (41.37%) speak two languages, and the remaining 26 (44.82%) assure that they can communicate fluently in more than two languages. Table 6 shows how the questionnaire results are directly proportional to the number of languages mastered by students. Thus, the students who speak one language obtain worse results than those who speak two. The percent difference between both groups is 10%. As for the difference between the profiles of bilingual students and those who claim to be able to speak more than two languages, it continues to be significant, 3.65 in this case.



Table 6. Results according to the number of languages that students master.

Results		1	2	More than 2
Right answers	<i>Donar carabassa</i>	8	22	25
	<i>Estar de mala lluna</i>	7	22	25
	<i>Fer l'agost</i>	4	16	16
	<i>No cabre dins la pell</i>	1	20	23
	<i>Ser un mussol</i>	3	6	8
	<i>Tindre corretja</i>	4	14	21
	<i>Perdre l'oremus</i>	4	11	10
	<i>Fer eixir els cabells blancs</i>	0	1	4
	<i>Comptar les bigues</i>	2	7	4
	<i>Fer cinc cèntims</i>	1	7	10
Total right answers		34 (42.5%)	126 (52.5%)	146 (56.15%)
Mistakes	<i>Donar carabassa</i>	0	2	1
	<i>Estar de mala lluna</i>	1	2	1
	<i>Fer l'agost</i>	4	8	10
	<i>No cabre dins la pell</i>	7	4	3
	<i>Ser un mussol</i>	5	18	18
	<i>Tindre corretja</i>	4	10	5
	<i>Perdre l'oremus</i>	4	13	16
	<i>Fer eixir els cabells blancs</i>	8	23	22
	<i>Comptar les bigues</i>	6	17	22
	<i>Fer cinc cèntims</i>	7	17	
Total mistakes		46 (57.5%)	114 (47.5%)	114 (43.85%)
Total number of answers		80 (100%)	240 (100%)	260 (100%)

### 3.5. Results according to the linguistic program.

The first outstanding piece of information with regard to the linguistic program has to do with the fact that the number of students who attend school in Catalan during primary and secondary education is lower than that of students enrolled in Spanish-language-based programs.<sup>vi</sup> 33 students (56.89%) declare that they studied in Spanish during ESO (Compulsory Lower Secondary Education); the others, 25 informants (43.11%) claim to have done so in Catalan. The difference between these two profiles increases if the working language during *Bachillerato* [Upper Secondary Education] is considered. In this case, only 16 (27.58%) were schooled in Catalan, whereas the others, 43 students (72.42%), attended classes in Spanish.



As for results, the informants who obtain the highest number of right answers are those schooled in Catalan, both in the case of *ESO* and in that of *Bachillerato*. In the former, the informants schooled in Catalan got right 146 (58.4%) of the 250 answers given within this profile; instead, students schooled in Spanish only answered 162 (49.09%) out of 330 questions correctly. The difference between these two types of students is situated at 9.31%. That difference diminishes for *Bachillerato*, even though it remains highly significant, more precisely 6.08%. See Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7. Results according to the linguistic program during *ESO*.

	Results	Schooling in Spanish	Schooling in Catalan
Right answers	<i>Donar carabassa</i>	33	22
	<i>Estar de mala lluna</i>	31	23
	<i>Fer l'agost</i>	21	14
	<i>No cabre dins la pell</i>	27	23
	<i>Ser un mussol</i>	7	9
	<i>Tindre corretja</i>	20	20
	<i>Perdre l'oremus</i>	13	12
	<i>Fer eixir els cabells blancs</i>	0	5
	<i>Comptar les bigues</i>	7	6
	<i>Fer cinc cèntims</i>	3	12
Total right answers		162 (49.09%)	146 (58.4%)
Mistakes	<i>Donar carabassa</i>	0	3
	<i>Estar de mala lluna</i>	2	2
	<i>Fer l'agost</i>	12	11
	<i>No cabre dins la pell</i>	6	2
	<i>Ser un mussol</i>	26	16
	<i>Tindre corretja</i>	13	5
	<i>Perdre l'oremus</i>	20	13
	<i>Fer eixir els cabells blancs</i>	33	20
	<i>Comptar les bigues</i>	26	19
	<i>Fer cinc cèntims</i>	30	13
Total mistakes		168 (50.91%)	104 (41.6%)
Total number of answers		330 (100%)	250 (100%)





Table 8. Results according to the linguistic program during *Bachillerato*.

	Results	Schooling in Spanish	Schooling in Catalan
Right answers	<i>Donar carabassa</i>	41	14
	<i>Estar de mala lluna</i>	39	15
	<i>Fer l'agost</i>	24	11
	<i>No cabre dins la pell</i>	36	14
	<i>Ser un mussol</i>	12	4
	<i>Tindre corretja</i>	28	12
	<i>Perdre l'oremus</i>	15	10
	<i>Fer eixir els cabells blancs</i>	2	3
	<i>Comptar les bigues</i>	9	4
	<i>Fer cinc cèntims</i>	41	14
Total right answers		216 (51.42%)	92 (57.5%)
Mistakes	<i>Donar carabassa</i>	1	2
	<i>Estar de mala lluna</i>	3	1
	<i>Fer l'agost</i>	18	5
	<i>No cabre dins la pell</i>	6	2
	<i>Ser un mussol</i>	30	12
	<i>Tindre corretja</i>	14	4
	<i>Perdre l'oremus</i>	27	16
	<i>Fer eixir els cabells blancs</i>	40	13
	<i>Comptar les bigues</i>	33	12
	<i>Fer cinc cèntims</i>	32	11
Total mistakes		204 (48.58%)	68 (42.5%)
Total number of answers		420 (100%)	16 (100%)

## 4. Discussion.

### 4.1. Overall result description.

The first remark which needs to be made about the results shown in this paper is that a high total percentage of wrong answers (47.76%) was obtained. This must mean that the interviewed students have a very limited degree of exposure to the reference linguistic model of the Catalan language.

Regarding the PUs which obtained fewer right answers, it becomes visible that most of them are constructions almost exclusively spread through the formal standard model. It is the case of *fer eixir els cabells blancs* (91.38% of wrong answers), *comptar les bigues* (77.59% of wrong answers), and *fer cinc cèntims* (74.14% of wrong answers). This makes us think that, on the whole, most of our informants have an insufficient exposure to the standard variety of the language. At the other end, the PUs with a higher percentage of right answers—*donar carabassa*, *estar de mala lluna*, and *no cabre dins la pell*, with only 3, 4, and 8 mistakes (5.18%, 6.9%, and 13.8% of all the answers referred to these expressions)—are not only forms disseminated by the standard but also typical expressions of the southernmost Catalan dialects.



The construction *ser un mussol* deserves a special mention because, despite being a common PU in the Catalan varieties spoken in the south of the Valencian territory, and even though the standard variety disseminates it too, it obtained a considerable percentage of mistakes (72.42%). The difficulty that students had to identify the conventional meaning of this expression actually has to do, above all, with factors of a cognitive nature (Garcia, in press), such as the motivation of phraseological meaning (Piirainen, 2012, p. 48; Sánchez, 2015, p. 162)<sup>vii</sup> or the inability to activate specific experiential referents or encyclopedic knowledge—in the form of conceptual frameworks (Fillmore, 1985) or idealized cognitive models (Lakoff, 1987; Padilla, 2015)—which makes it impossible to infer the prototypical meaning of certain PUs (Garcia, 2014). After all, according to the *DIEC* and the *DDLC* (s. v. *mussol*), *ser un mussol* means “*ser una persona que parla poc, ensopida, encantada*” (“*ser una persona que habla poco, adormilada, encantada* [to be a person who speaks little, half asleep, charmed]).” The motivation behind this PU must be related to the fact that the *mussol* (*mochuelo*) [little owl] is a solitary, taciturn, and quiet bird. Nevertheless, a majority of the interviewed students was unable to project such encyclopedic aspects, since they chose the wrong options: “*Ser una persona que es gita tard*” (“*ser una persona que se acuesta tarde*” [To be a person who goes to bed late]) and “*Tenir els ulls grans*” (“*tener los ojos grandes*” [To have big eyes]). This denotes that youngsters no longer conventionalize the images by means of direct contact with the natural environment, but rather through other channels, as could be films, illustrations, the Internet, etc.

#### 4.2. Description of results according to the sociolinguistic factors specified.

In accordance with the variables described, it must be stressed that the most influential factor is the linguistic program, followed by the number of languages spoken by informants. Instead, the influence of other aspects, the language that students use with their parents, the language of identification, and the environment in which Catalan was learned, is much lower. It has to be remembered that the difference in right answers between students schooled in Catalan during pre-university education and those schooled in Spanish amounts to 9.31% in the case of *ESO*, and to 6.08% in the case of *Bachillerato*. As for the number of languages mastered by informants, the difference between the various profiles is directly proportional to the number of languages that students can speak. Thus, bilingual students obtained 10% more right answers than monolingual ones, and those who claim to speak more than two languages outperformed bilingual ones by more than 3.65%.

The percent difference between the different types of informants decreases to a large extent in the other variables: it is 0.42% between those who declare that they speak Catalan in the family context and those who state that they speak Spanish; 0.6% between those who identify with Spanish and those who do so with Catalan; and 0.12% between those who learned Catalan at primary and secondary education centers and those who learned it from their parents. The language spoken with their parents and the language of identification seem to have a remarkable impact if the attention is focused on (1) the number of right answers obtained by the group of students who claim to speak Spanish and other languages or only other languages with their parents; and (2) the results of those who state that they



identify with languages other than Catalan and Spanish. Not in vain, these profiles show significant error rates compared to the other groups of their respective variables.

Finally, two interesting data need to be highlighted. The first one is that the students obtaining the highest percentage of right answers according to the language that they use with their parents are the ones who claim to speak in Spanish and Catalan in this family context, a fact that refers us back to the results of the variable 'number of languages mastered by students' (the higher the number of languages mastered, the better results). The second aspect to be taken into account has to do with the variable 'environment in which Catalan was learned,' namely that the students who learned this language at school during primary and secondary education obtain a slightly higher proportion of right answers than the group of informants who acquired it within the family environment. Added to the results according to the linguistic program, this confirms the fact that schooling in Catalan appears as a much more determining factor in the questionnaire results than students' language.

In short, the data provided are largely in keeping with the trends suggested by other works, such as those of Carles Segura (2003), Josep Maria Baldaquí (2002, p. 56), Vicent Pascual (2011) or Josep Vicent Garcia (in press) amongst others, according to which the only educational option which can ensure a proper acquisition of the reference standard model in a student's own language is the one which has Catalan as its working language.

## 5. Conclusions.

It was verified throughout the present paper that our informants —students enrolled in the first year of the Translation and Interpreting Degree at the University of Alicante— show a remarkable lack of knowledge about phraseology in Catalan. All the same, the description of statistical data allowed us to observe that the PU knowledge of the interviewed students varies depending on the number of languages that they speak and according to the degree of exposure to the reference linguistic model. This is indicated by:

- 1) the fact that monolingual students obtain worse results than bilingual ones and that, in turn, students speaking more than two languages outperform bilingual ones;
- 2) the percent difference in right answers between the students schooled in Catalan during pre-university education and those schooled in Spanish, which is favorable to the first of these two groups;
- 3) the fact that students who learned Catalan at school during primary and secondary education achieve a slightly higher proportion of right answers compared to those informants who learned it in the family context.

These conclusions match those of other previous studies about the learning of languages in the Valencian educational context, which demonstrate that programs where Catalan plays the role of working language are the only ones which ensure the acquisition of the standard model in the language specific to the territory.





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<sup>i</sup> Despite not focusing strictly on the educational context (insofar as it is based on a representative sample of the whole population living in this *comarca*), it brings together generational data which permit to observe the role that teaching in Catalan plays in the acquisition of the reference linguistic model.

<sup>ii</sup> The *Diccionari de la llengua catalana* is the reference prescriptive dictionary, since it was elaborated by the regulatory institution when it comes to the Catalan language, i.e. the *Institut d'Estudis Catalans*. Instead, the *Diccionari descriptiu de la llengua catalana*, despite having been prepared by the same entity, has a descriptive character, similarly to the *Gran diccionari de la llengua catalana*; both dictionaries consequently seek to collect the lexical units which are characteristic of current language usage. Finally, both the *Diccionari de frases fetes* and the *Diccionari de sinònims de frases fetes* are descriptive lexicographic works focused on phraseology.

<sup>iii</sup> According to Timofeeva (2012) and Baranov and Dobrovol'skij (1996), reinterperation is the process through which the meaning 'A' (of an expression A) moves in such a way that a meaning B is generated by means of cognitive procedures (such as image schemes, metaphor, or metonymy to quote but a few). These authors distinguish several types of reinterperation, even though it is true that simple, partial, and intensional reinterperations are the most common ones. The first type of reinterperation has a correspondence with the formation processes of PUs which stem from a literal meaning and, therefore, from a specific situational extension (Timofeeva, 2012, p. 133). In partial reinterperation, the semantic movement only affects some PU component, in such a way that the other referential elements keep the literal meaning. Finally, intensional reinterperation is characterized by the absence of situational extension; thus, the phraseologism only permits a figurative interpretation. It is worth noting that the border between the categories established by Baranov and Dobrovol'skij (1996) —and disseminated by Timofeeva (2012)— is blurred. Specifying which phraseologization came into play according to this taxonomy not always turns out to be an easy task. After all, this is actually a classification which greatly simplifies the inferential projection processes, normally of a metonymic nature, which usually motivate the construction of phraseological meaning. It must be admitted, though, that the types of reinterperation proposed by these authors proved useful to us when choosing phraseological expressions with various degrees of literality and idiomaticity.

<sup>iv</sup> Due to space constraints, it was impossible for us to include the results obtained with all the sociolinguistic questions in this paper.

<sup>v</sup> The term *language of identification* is used in demographic studies of a sociolinguistic nature to designate the language that informants see as theirs for reasons of identity or attachment (Torres, 2005). This category tends to refer to the answers given to questions such as “¿Cuál es su lengua? [What is your language?]” or “¿Cuál considera que es su lengua? [What language do you consider to be yours?]”. It is therefore a psycholinguistic concept associated with linguistic attitudes and must not be confused with the sociolinguistic terms *initial language* —the first language that interviewees learn to speak, normally with their parents— or the usual language —the language that informants use more often.

<sup>vi</sup> With regard to the working language, the Valencian educational model applied in the Catalan-speaking areas (*comarcas*) is based on a system of bilingual lines or programs. These programs —already described in the *Llei d'ús i ensenyament del valencià (LUEV)* [Law on the Use and Teaching of (the) Valencian (Language)] of 1983— are the *Programa d'Ensenyament en Valencià (PEV)* [Program for Teaching in Valencian (language)], the *Programa d'Immersion Lingüística (PIL)* [Linguistic Immersion Program], and the *Programa d'Incorporació Progressiva (PIP)* [Progressive Incorporation Program]. PEV and PIL have Catalan as their working language, the basic difference between them lying in the fact that the former is addressed to Catalan-speaking students and the latter to students who do not have Catalan as their first language or who live in environments where Spanish largely prevails. In turn, Spanish is the working language of PIP, which only includes Catalan as a language subject.

<sup>vii</sup> According to Elisabeth Piirainen (2012, p. 48) and Elena Sánchez (2015, p. 162) *motivation* is the cognitive process thanks to which speakers are able to relate the conventional use of a PU with the image that it evokes for them.

