

## What the hell is a constructional idiom?

“Constructional idioms are (1) partially lexically filled constructions in which some constituents function as variable slots while others are fixed anchors. (2) Slots are renewed in discourse and may be constrained by phonological, morphological, lexical, or semantic preferences or restrictions. (3) Constructional idioms generally have a pragmatic or discursive meaning, (4) with prosody usually playing a fundamental role. Depending on their place along the grammar-lexicon continuum, (5) they can vary in idiomaticity and schematicity.” (Mellado Blanco in press).

This is a *snowclone* from the biblical quotation *No solo de pan vive el hombre*

Snowclones are a subtype of constructional idioms, originating from lexically fixed expressions that evolve to include open slots filled by variable lexical items (Ungerer and Hartmann 2024:218).

## EXAMPLE OF CONSTRUCTIONAL IDIOM

[What's X doing Y?] (Kay/Fillmore 1999)

Diner: Waiter, what's this fly doing in my soup?

[What's X doing Y] expresses acts of reprobation or reproach, conveying disapproval or criticism in context.

[No solo de N vive el hombre]

↔ [X is important, but not sufficient on its own. Used humorously]



Words	Frequency
pan	455
fútbol	22
vino	13
rumba	12
música	10
fotos	8
comida	7
cerveza	7
carne	6
amor	6
literatura	5
política	5

It refers to the canonical form **No solo de pan vive el hombre** (Man shall not live by bread alone)

## Theoretical framework: CONSTRUCTION GRAMMAR

Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995, 2006, 2009), a cognitive theory of language that defines constructions—form-meaning pairings—as the fundamental units of grammar. These constructions form a continuum from lexicon to syntax and can shift along this spectrum (Mellado Blanco, Esteban Fonollosa & Ivorra Ordines 2024). Promoting cross-linguistic research in German and Spanish through the lens of Construction Grammar (CxG) is particularly relevant within this theoretical framework, as this perspective remains largely unexplored. Against this background, leading recent research started to fill this gap (Iglesias Iglesias, López Meirama, 2024; Esteban Fonollosa, 2024; Mellado Blanco, Dobrovol'skij, 2021).

## Methodology: Corpus-based analysis

Analysis of the 50 most frequent types in SketchEngine, identifying lexicalized constructions and assessing the degree constructions' **cognitive entrenchment** and productivity (Mellado Blanco, 2020; Ivorra Ordines, in press). This stage enables a holistic description of constructional idioms, focusing on their semantic-pragmatic properties—particularly illocutionary function—and mapping horizontal relations among Spanish constructions (cf. Diessel 2023).

In order to identify equivalences, a **Contrastive Unilateral Method** is applied, evaluating the functional correspondences of constructions from L1 to L2 within linguistic contexts (Morciniec, 2001). Equivalent constructions in L2 are identified using **PaGeS**, a German–Spanish parallel corpus.

[alles andere als X]

Construcciones equivalentes

[Intensifying negation expressing exactly the opposite of what is expressed in the adjective or the nominal phrase]

[todo menos ADJ]; [nada ADJ]; [distar (mucho) de ser ADJ]; [cualquier cosa menos ADJ]; [no precisamente ADJ]	
Ejemplos de las construcciones equivalentes (PaGeS)	
Ich weiß nicht, wie ich mich an deiner Stelle fühlen würde. Aber ich kann mir vorstellen, dass es alles andere als einfach für dich ist. [0054, 3, 23]	No sé cómo me sentiría si estuviera en tu lugar, pero imagino que es de todo menos fácil para ti. [0054, 3, 23]
Aber das hier war alles andere als eine alltägliche Situation. [0059, 3, 19]	Pero esta era una situación nada cotidiana. [0059, 3, 19]
Auch in den hochentwickelten Demokratien der Europäischen Union ist die Situation in den Gefängnissen alles andere als rosig und demokratisch. [Europarl, 16/05/2001]	La situación en las cárceles también dista mucho de ser favorable y democrática en las democracias altamente avanzadas de la Unión Europea. [Europarl, 16/05/2001]
Tatsächlich war es aber alles andere als beschaulich. [0006, 4, 11]	Pero, de hecho, era cualquier cosa menos apacible. [0006, 4, 11]
Engel hat sich übrigens bei den polnischen Kollegen ziemlich für mich ins Zeug gelegt. Die waren alles andere als begeistert von unserer eigenmächtigen Aktion. [00007, Freitag, 1...]	Nicola Engel, por cierto, me defendió a capa y espada frente a la Policía polaca. No estaban precisamente entusiasmados con mi acción por cuenta propia. [00007, Viernes, 1...]