



# Bilingual phraseological lexicography: the meeting of two cultures.

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**Abstract:** Based on the conceit that all brains are created equal, this article sets forth to explore the similarities in the phraseological discourse in languages, particularly Spanish and English, and aims to prove that, as a result, equivalent parallel expressions in the two languages can be found. It poses further that there's always a bilingual lexicographical solution to every phrase and idiom. To paraphrase Dr. Samuel Johnson: There's no language problem the mind of man has set, that the mind of man cannot solve.

**Key words:** linguistic equivalences, bilingual phraseology, parallel expressions, translation

*The horizon of our language is not the horizon of language, Mr. Landau*

Let's start from scratch. The brains of normal newborns in England (or Ireland, or New Zealand) and Spain (or Mexico, or Chile) are the same. They will develop in different directions as the two children grow and as they acquire a working knowledge of both English and Spanish, but, I repeat, both brains are physiologically the same. They will have the same needs, ideas, environmental responses, and fears. They will shy away from heights, snakes, darkness, and spiders. They will not fear speed or fire and will suck on anything, especially their mothers' breasts. Language will make an imprint in the wax of the brain, shaping it, but not altering it.

Brains are created equal. The brain will differ as far as it is molded by language which, in turn, will be altered by what is called *culture*, geography, history, sociology, religion, superstition, gastronomy, literature, and climate, creating an imprint in the way it communicates with other brains, although its core remains intact.

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Bilingual lexicography is the poor relation (relative), of lexicography, and it is not taken seriously by mono-lexicographers. Dictionary publishers –often true dictionary factories- set up teams of young interns, not dry behind the ears yet, and plunge them into compiling, for example, Spanish-English wordbooks for travelers, beginners, schools, and learners, with the idea of making a killing with the sale of such ill-made products. There are always discrepancies between the Spanish and English parts, because of the disparity of language skills among the teams of the so-called wordsmiths. To make matters worse, there is no accountability: no editor-in-chief is responsible for the fiasco. And phraseology in lexicography becomes the less, the almost forgotten relative with sparse room in every entry.

Bilingual lexicography requires a command of two languages, not some knowledge of one and a smattering of another. The result is the sorry state of two-language dictionaries which do list idiomatic expressions, in a helter-skelter way, with unhappy and sorry translations, without examples or citations that will aid the user to better understand and employ idioms that often defy proper rendering in another language. They are useless for the most part, at best. At worst, they are harmful.

In his *Dictionaries: The Art and Craft of Lexicography*, (2001), Sidney Landau deals with bilingual lexicons in 4 pages, out of 477, giving a succinct, and misleading, idea of what they are about, reinforcing my belief that such dictionaries are taken lightly -not seriously-, as the poor relation of mainstream lexicography.

Landau explains that the purpose of a bilingual dictionary is “to provide help to someone who understands one language but not the other. More, the presumption is that one of the languages is the user’s native language.” He assumes that 1) the native speaker has a profound and educated knowledge of his language, and 2) the user ignores the other. I pose that the bilingual dictionary, English-Spanish, must be addressed to both native speakers, and all those seeking language equivalencies, English or Spanish.

Landau writes that “there is often no equivalent in the target language for entry words in the source language, not only in the obvious instances of indigenous flora and fauna but for many common words



as well.” This shows that Mr. Landau has expertise in lexicography, but none in linguistics or philology, and certainly none in bilingualism. I believe that there are always equivalents in any language, especially in related ones like Spanish and English which share a very common cultural background.

Bilingual lexicography must take its rightful place in lexicography at large -not just 4 pages of dismissal. Of course, being a bilingual wordsmith requires the command of two languages, not just one, which is within the reach of 98 percent of the world population. Everybody speaks one language. How many speak two?

But the proof of the taste is in the pudding, and as *el movimiento se demuestra andando*, let me propose a few examples of bilingual phraseology. Let me tell you **a shaggy-dog story**, a drawn-out story or narrative that leads nowhere and tries the patience of the listener. In *Through the Grapevine*, 2001, we read: “In a shaggy-dog story, the teller draws out the story, adding a lot of detail. When the story finally ends, some trick is involved.” And another citation: “The Huntchback’s Tale is, after all, a shaggy dog story that goes nowhere.” (Ulrich Marzolph, et. al., *The Arabian Night’s Encyclopedia*, 2004.) **WordReference** paraphrases it as “una historia larga y aburrida”. **Reverso** tells us it is “un chiste malo”, or chestnut, which, although true, is not the equivalent we are seeking. **Collins** insists on “chiste largo y pesado.” We cannot seriously accept “historias de perro peludo” as a Google possibility. However, we must accept “**cuento de la buena pipa**” as the parallel equivalent of the English phrase we are dealing with. **El cuento de la buena pipa**, is a never-ending story that, like its English counterpart, leads nowhere. Marta Portal explains in her novel *Pago de traición* (1983): “... como el cuento de la buena pipa que consiste en quererlo contar y no en saberlo, en incitar a escucharlo y en que nunca lleguen a oírlo.” And Javier Marías in his bestseller *Corazón tan blanco* (1992), comments: “¿Quieres que te cuente el cuento de la buena pipa, decía mi abuela con malicia.” A never-ending story, a long-drawn-out yarn is **a shaggy-dog story** in English and **el cuento de la buena pipa** in Spanish.

The old and truly worn-out Spanish saying **quien va a Sevilla pierde su silla**, which has the variation **quien va a la villa pierde su silla**, mostly used in America, and **quien fue a Sevilla, perdió su silla**,

hints that he who is not present, those who leave stuff unattended, lose. We must keep on our toes, lest we are taken advantage of. Federico Giménez Losantos uses the saying in his *Lo que queda de España* (1995), thus: “Alberto tenía derecho a apelar al dicho de el que se fue a Sevilla perdió su silla.” **Collins** has not heard of this idiomatic expression and **WordPerfect** gives “finders keepers, losers weepers” which is close, but no cigar. **SpaniDict** is funnier: “who goes to Seville loses his chair.” There is a close English equivalent to: **Move your feet, lose your seat** which has several variations: **on/shuffle/your meat, lose your seat**, for which I offer two citations: “Move your meat, lose your seat.” (Sherry A. McGee, *Skinny Women are Evil*, 2004.) “The bull rider’s mantra is, lose your feet, lose your seat.” (Jane Kubke, *Bull Riding*, 2006.)

Languages at large often have shocking expressions that become more preposterous as humanity makes forward strides in social and gender equality. **Bailar con la más fea** which I translate as **getting the short end of the stick**, is a point in question. “No sé por qué, pero a mí siempre me toca **bailar con la más fea**”, I don’t know why but I always **get the short end of the stick**. We all want to dance with the pretty girl, but this guy’s tough luck forces him to dance with the “fea”, the ugly one. Women didn’t have this problem because they were asked to dance and could refuse the man who was inviting them. The expression was: “May I have the pleasure of this dance?” ¿Me permite el placer de este baile? “La fea” was a sure bet because she never refused the request. I am not sure, but I guess that Spanish-speaking women never use this idiomatic turn of phrase. I wonder why! Jesús Cacho Cortés, in his *Asalto al poder*, (1988), explains a character’s woes thus: “Pero de nuevo, por órdenes superiores, Rubio se ve obligado a hacer de fontanero y bailar con la más fea.” Rubio gets the short end of the stick by orders from above. We must discard Google’s suggestion as a bona fide translation: “Dance with the ugliest” as not befitting a respectable solution. The cultural aspects of phraseology here point out that the Spanish idiom is no longer politically correct, but on the other hand, its English counterpart may be used anytime, anywhere, as in the Winnipeg Sun of 8 Nov 2003: “You know, it’s always the victims who get the short end of the stick.” We might substitute, so as not to offend, “tocar la peor parte” which may be more socially palatable nowadays.



The idea or conceit, meaning even, enclosed in a phraseological unit is not always clear-cut and easy to grasp, giving rise to confusion in its use, even among native speakers. If words are polysemous, the same can affect phrases. This might be the case of the Spanish **tarde, mal y nunca**, defined by Manuel Seco (*Diccionario fraseológico documentado del español actual*, 2004) as “con retraso e irregularidad” which might be misused or misinterpreted due to the addition of “nunca”, but this is the nature of phraseology, that it is set, even though at times it might alter its shape and appearance: “Las pensiones que se nos asignan suelen ser escasas y en la mayoría de las ocasiones pagadas tarde, mal o nunca.” (ABC, 08/06/1989.) Y Augusto Roa Bastos writes: “Mejor es gozar de lo bueno de vez en cuando que tarde, mal y nunca” which adheres to a more literate meaning of the idiom. But how are we going to render this unit in English? Collins does not list it but does insert in English “too little, too late” rendering it as “muy poco y muy tarde” which makes no sense at all. Doing a bit of research will lead us to **too little, too late** as the parallel rendering of “tarde, mal y nunca.” We will find still more, a more colloquial rendering of **a day late and a dollar short**, as in “Thanks always come a day late and a dollar short but my respect has and will always be there...” (Gillian G. Gaar, *Green Day: Rebels with a Cause*, 2009.) And Gerald Baron says about Firestone (*Now is Too Late: Survival in an Era of Instant News*, 2003.): “It didn’t matter because whatever Firestone said came off as too little, too late.”

Just as bullfighting has given many expressions to the Spanish language, baseball has done the same in English. **Step up to the plate** is when the batter steps up to the plate to bat and prepares and assumes the responsibility of hitting the ball. The Oxford Dictionary explains the idiomatic expression: “Take action in response to an opportunity or crisis.” The Cambridge English dictionary gives us a similar definition: “To take action when something needs to be done, even though this is difficult.” “The board will have to step up to the plate and solve the monetary problems the company has” which means that the board will have to **tomar cartas en el asunto** and solve the economic situation. Manuel Seco’s *Diccionario fraseológico documentado del español actual* defines the idiomas “Intervenir (alguien que tiene autoridad).” María Moliner

gives a similar definition: "Intervenir en el asunto de que se trata alguien que tiene autoridad." The *Diccionario fraseológico del español moderno* (Fernando Varela, 1996) insists on *autoridad*: "Intervenir con autoridad" which comes to show how lexicographers pilfer. The word "autoridad" flies in the face of the examples of usage: "... nosotros sí tomaríamos cartas en el asunto para obligar al estado a que proteja el inmueble." (Proceso de México, 15/12/1996.) And further: "Aunque pienses que no hay nada malo en este tipo de diversión infantil, los padres de los amigos de tu hijo pueden no opinar igual que tú y tomar cartas en el asunto." (Dunia, 07/1995.) We must be wary of definitions given by most dictionaries, and translations offered by Collins which say of "tomar cartas en el asunto": "to step in."

"I was asked to **step up to the plate** and solve the problem." Me pidieron que **tomase cartas en el asunto** y resolviese el problema.

"I have been waiting for a long time for you to **step up to the plate** and fix this mess." Hace tiempo que espero que usted **tomase cartas en el asunto** y resolviese este lío.

"The government should **step up to the plate** and do something about poverty." El gobierno debería **tomar cartas en el asunto** y hacer algo sobre la pobreza.

The cultural aspects of phraseology mentioned earlier stick out like a sore thumb when we get into Spain and its centuries-old romance with bullfighting or *tauromaquia*, *fiesta*. Bullfighting has added many idioms to Spanish, like **estar para el arrastre**, weak, tired, and near death, which refers to the dead bull when it is dragged ("arrastrado") out of the ring. English has **to be on one's last legs** which refers to the last leg of a trip – "último tramo" -, possibly the end of life, when one is exhausted and ready to exit. So, we may say: "Jack doesn't look so good and he may be on his last legs." In Spanish, we might exclaim "Jack no tiene buen aspecto y está para el arrastre." We can also say that someone **está en las últimas** (see a few lines down). In his play *Cementerio de automóviles* (1979) Fernando Arrabal writes: "Y si no duermo ahora, mañana estaré para el arrastre." Google insists the translation is: "Be one for the drag" which we may dismiss without regrets.

"Ramsey replied he was **on his last legs**, too, and could not climb at all." (Dobald L. Price, *The First Marine Captured in Vietnam*, 2007.) Let us





not forget that phraseology also has synonyms, just like ordinary words, and in this case, we could mention: be totaled, ready to drop, dead on one's feet, ready for the scrapyard, pooped, all done in, and more.

Believe it or not, there was a time when society was crueler than now and language reflected that cruelty with expressions that today we would find hurting. Those expressions are no longer in use simply because we have made forward strides in gender equality, but there was a time when the expression **old maid (on the shelf, in the garret)** ("**vieja solterona**") was applied to women, girls really, who had not gotten married by the age of, approximately, 20. It was understood that they had remained single not by choice but because they were ugly, or their fathers did not have a pot to piss in, or such circumstances. The Spanish language came up with the expression: **quedarse para vestir santos** because unmarried girls would spend their time in church, either praying or helping around with the "santos." In English and Spanish, the old maid was always supposed to be "bitter", "amargada", and had a terrible temper, and Hugh Rawson (*Wicked Words*, 1989) says: "Old maid, from 1530, almost always appears in a negative context..." Similar to the Spanish "solterona." Luckily, such language is no longer heard but can be read in literature before 1980.

Language -phraseology- mirrors society, not otherwise, and Anna Lapine deals with the spinster, old maid, subject in depth in her doctoral dissertation *The Old Maid in the Garret. Representation of the Spinster in Victorian Culture*, where she says: "... the negative terms in which the spinster was figured, either as a grotesque body or as a homeless wanderer to be feared, ridiculed and banished from sight."

But is this attitude gone and buried?

We read in the *Daily Courier* (November 28, 2015): "Luke Kelly, who headed a traditional Irish group called The Dubliners, singing a chorus that went, "Oh, dear me, How would it be, If I died an old maid in a garret?"

Mario Vargas Llosa, Nobel Prize Winner, in his 1977 novel, *La tía Julia y el escritor* writes: "Era una gordita cariñosa, risueña y parlanchina y yo tomaba su defensa cuando en la familia, a sus espaldas, comentaban que se estaba quedando para vestir santos."

The English and Spanish-speaking worlds have the same attitude toward visitors who stay longer than patience would tolerate, and thus we have sayings like “visitas, pocas y cortitas”, and “fish and guests stink after three days.” (Delfín Carbonell, *Dictionary of Proverbs*, Barron’s, 1998). In the Bible (Proverbs, 25:18) we read: “Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbor’s house, lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.” This attitude has been the butt of jokes for centuries and language has invented expressions to say for the hosts to rid themselves of unwanted, pestering visitors. One such in Spanish is: **Vámonos a la cama que estos señores se querrán marchar** which is by no means subtle, or even polite, but it has been used plenty of times. And, of course, there’s a parallelism in **here’s your hat, what’s your hurry?** Which *The Free Dictionary* defines as “A humorous phrased used to encourage someone to leave.” It has been attributed to Winston Churchill. It is the title of Elizabeth McCracken Novel (1997) *Here’s Your Hat, What’s Your Hurry?* Neither phraseological unit will be found in bilingual dictionaries.

When a Spanish speaker or an English speaker is provoked, they can either accept the challenge or ignore it. For example, the bullfighting expression **entrar al trapo** means that the bull goes after the lure of the red rag, “capote,” and does precisely what the bullfighter wants him to do. Manuel Seco (*Diccionario fraseológico documentado del español actual*, 2004) defines the phraseological unit thus: “Responder, como se pretende, a la provocación que le hacen.”

One of the automatic translators gives “enter the rag” as the equivalent, and WordReference (WR) goes off the deep end and whistles Dixie, saying “caer en la provocación, morder el anzuelo.” Collins simply says: “picar.” However, if we say **rise to the bait**, we find the idea faithfully reflected: “react to a provocation just as intended.” Molly, for example, was rude to David on purpose, but he did not rise to the bait and said nothing. Likening how a fish rises to take the bait dangling in the water to human behavior has been in the English language since the 1500s.

“Rather than rise to the bait, Eilish gave this succinct response just a few hours later.” En vez de entrar al trapo, Eilish dio esta breve respuesta justo unas horas después.” (The Wrap, Katie Campione, Feb. 10, 2022.) “It’s to your credit that at that stage you didn’t rise to the bait and remained calm.” “Tienes mérito que en ese momento no hayas entrado al





trapo y hayas mantenido la calma". (TechCrunch, 22/02/2021.)

If the bilingual lexicographer gives it a try, they will nearly always find parallel phraseological units in English and Spanish.

What is the bilingual lexicographer to do with the phrase: **ante el vicio de pedir, la virtud de no dar**, with its variation **contra el vicio de pedir, está la virtud de no dar**? Collins very wisely abstains. Tureng Dictionary online poses an answer which, although not bad, gets no cigar again: "A shameless beggar must have a short denial", taken from the Centro Virtual Cervantes, which is never to be trusted. WordPerfect passes, and even Seco's *Diccionario fraseológico* keeps mum on this one. And so on. There must be a similar way to express the rebuff we must give those "gimme pigs" in English, now that we know how to do so in Spanish. How about **I want doesn't get**, or **I want never gets**? In *Brewtiful* (Sept. 13, 2011) a mother says: "How many times have you all heard this phrase? I was always one of these people who said I would never be like mum, I would never say the things she said and now I found myself saying them all the time... Without fail though my favorite phrase comes out, "I want doesn't get", I even annoy myself when I say it." If this mum (mom) had been a Spanish speaker she would have said to her child: **contra el vicio de pedir, está la virtud de no dar**." We still have another possibility in English: **gimme, gimme, never gets, don't you know your manners yet?** Unfortunately, this question has a retort: **Yes, I do, but not today, so gimme, gimme anyways**.

We all have had the experience of listening to someone who talks and talks and says nothing, giving us the shaggy-dog story, and whom we are finally forced to cut short, telling him, in Spanish, **al grano**, so that he sticks to the subject and quits bothering us with long-winded details. Leopoldo Alas (Clarín), the one who wrote *La Regenta*, exclaims in his work *Apollo in Paphos*: "No, no señor, no consiento preliminares ni prolegómenos... ¡Al grano!" The origin is from thresh, (thrash) where the grain is separated from the chaff and straw, which is what the charlatan is asked, to give us grain and not chaff. **Ir al grano** is, then, to stop beating around the bush and extravagance. The English language has a phrase with the same meaning: **cut to the chase**, which has a very curious origin. In the early days of cinema, in silent movies, there was a lot

of movement and constant comings and goings (moving pictures). And there were always chases, cops and robbers, good guys and bad guys. When a static scene was prolonged, they would exclaim **cut to the chase**, which is what the audience wanted to see, action and chase.

"But let's cut to the chase: who wouldn't want to work with her?" (USA Today, 2011.) "Vayamos al grano, ¿quién no querría trabajar con ella?" And, of course, we can also say: **get to the point**, which means the same thing.

"Finally, he **cut to the chase**, asking me what kind of physical shape I was in." (Katherine Skiba, *Sister in the Band of Brothers*, 2005.)

Faced with painful situations, we sometimes take the way of humor as an evasive resource to escape the pain they cause us. And as there is a phrase for every idea, the Spanish language has its own for this emotional state. When we relate to or hear of, a painful situation, we laugh, trying to mitigate the pain, while exclaiming **río por no llorar**. And the English language has created its parallel phrase in **laugh to keep from crying**. "Your story is so very sad, and, yes, I am laughing, but I am laughing to keep from crying." Freud would explain to us the relationship between the tragic and the humorous. We can laugh in stressful situations and at events that force us to cry, but we laugh to keep from crying.

"There's an old African American adage: you have to laugh to keep from crying." (The Art Newspaper, Jan. 10, 2022.) African-Americans know a thing or two about crying and laughing to keep from crying. **Reír por no llorar, laugh to keep from crying**.

When we hear expressions like the Spanish **dársela a uno con queso**, we never think about giving anyone cheese, but we soak up the idea of swindle, deception, trickery, fraud, cheat. All these words (and there are more), encapsulate the meaning of **dársela a uno con queso**, but it's not as colloquial, as picturesque, or as jocose as, for example, **take someone to the cleaner's**, which has the same meaning as the Spanish idiom. In English, we also have another expression: **take someone for a ride**, and even another, that I have written about elsewhere: **pull the wool over someone's eyes**, defined by Webster's New World Dictionary (1968) as "deceive or fool someone." María Moliner says that *darla* (*dársela*) *con queso*, means "engañar o estafar a alguien." Manuel Seco follows suit.



“Cuidado que nos la **quieren dar con queso**.” Careful, they want to **take us to the cleaner’s**.

“A David se la **dieron con queso** en el banco y firmó todo lo que le pusieron delante.” David was **taken for a ride** at the bank and he signed everything they placed before him.

“Esta vez **no me la dan con queso** porque ya conozco a esos estafadores.” This time they are not going to **pull the wool over my eyes** because I know those swindlers.

A few centuries ago, wine merchants tried to sell low-grade wine by offering strong cheese along with it, for buyers to eat and dull their taste buds. The cheese masqueraded the poor quality of the wine and thus patrons were tricked.

To **take someone to the cleaner’s (downtown)** means to clean, wipe them out, deceive, and even swindle. The cleaner’s is the Spanish “tinte” or “tintorería.”

“I hate the idea I’m being **taken for a ride**. That’s not making room for the fool in me; it’s merely being stupid.” Me molesta la idea de que **me la den con queso**. Eso no es hacer sitio para el tonto que hay en mí; es simplemente ser estúpido. (Roger Housden, *Seven Sins for a Life Worth Living*, 2005.)

Those who compose bilingual dictionaries are bone lazy, and always take the easy way out. Perhaps this may not be out of laziness or malice, but out of ignorance or lack of time. The fact is, for example, that when a sentence is complicated, they go for the easiest or most hackneyed way. In **cortar por lo sano**, María Moliner defines it as “Terminar de una vez un asunto que proporciona preocupaciones, molestias o disgustos” I give the English **lance the boil** which is, for the Free Dictionary: “to take a decisive and dramatic action that resolves or puts to an end a problematic, troublesome, or unpleasant situation.” The two definitions are almost identical, but this is not known to bilingual lexicons, perhaps for the reasons I give above. They tell us that for **cortar por lo sano** we “make a clean break, cut your losses, take extreme measures, go to the root of the problem” but none cuts to the chase and gives us **lance the boil**.

“You must **lance the boil** and find yourself another job.” Debes cortar por lo sano y buscarte un empleo. Ian Watson uses the phrase in his

novel *Inquisitor*: "...or because he hopes you might **lance the boil** of a conspiracy without him needing to show his hand?" And "Yet when leadership has so obviously failed, there has been a marked reluctance to **lance the boil** by removing the officer." (Th. A van Baarda, *The Moral Dimension of Asymmetrical Warfare*, 2009.) And Julio Cortázar employs the Spanish idiom in his *Queremos tanto a Glenda* thus, "...el grupo se va a ir irremisiblemente al diablo si Mario no se decide a **cortar por lo sano...**" And "... decidió cortar por lo sano en el conflicto intra-partidario post-electoral." Listín Diario 4/11/1997. Rep. Dom.

**Lance the boil** refers to slashing, lancing, a pimple, or boil, to cure it and alleviate discomfort.

The meaning of **back and fill (backing and filling)** is to be indecisive, doubtful, hesitant, and vacillate. "Such a rest is called a consolidation or a period of backing and filling... people wait to rethink." (Jeannette Young, *The Option's Doctor*, 2007.) As it is a phraseological unit, we should not use "vacilar, dudar, titubear" but must find a Spanish phraseological unit that will fit that original.

The following citation enlightens us as to the meaning. From Jeannette Young (*The Option Doctor: Option Strategies for Every Kind of Market*, 2007): "Such a rest is called consolidation or a period of **backing and filling**. Why **backing and filling**? Because that is precisely what the market is doing; it is going back and forth within a narrow range, gaining enough energy to continue..." And another citation: "I see that the dressmaker was able to prevail despite your **backing and filling**." (Diana Burg, *Dalliance: A Novel*, 2008.)

Although SpanishDict translates this as "relleno hacia atrás" we must endeavor to find a more suitable equivalent, such as: **Que sí, que no; que si sí, que si no; nadar (estar) entre dos aguas**. The idea of backing and filling is well expressed in Spanish in "El veterano festival británico ha estado a punto de no celebrarse por problemas de seguridad, que sí, que no, y finalmente sí." (El País, 05/07/2004.) An also in, "La cosa está que si sí, que si no..." (El Mundo, 18/05/1994.) Further: "...viven situación opaca y ambigua entre dos aguas..." (Luis Cardoza, *Guatemala. Las líneas de su mano*, 1985.)

And what are we to say about *under the wire, get off the dime, be sitting*



*pretty, lather, rinse and repeat, bring up to speed, Chinese fire drill, cheek by jowl, get one's just deserts, batten down the hatches, run rings around someone, tomar a uno por el pito del sereno, estar curado de espanto, por la boca muere el pez, ser culo de mal asiento, pared con pared, llevarse uno su justo merecido, apretarse los machos, dar cien vueltas a* that are to be found in daily conversation but not in bilingual wordbooks? I must again paraphrase José Ortega y Gasset: "The horizon of our language is not the horizon of language."

The brain is not a computer and although we are ignorant of its language-storing capacity, often, no matter how learned we are, it slips and makes us falter. We then seek enlightenment from tools that will aid us in remembering and learning. And I contend that, as ideas, feelings, and attitudes are the same, we will always find equivalents, especially in phraseological units, in both languages. Will computer scientists find algorithms that will match idioms in two languages given a specific meaning? In the meantime, we must make do with bilingual lexicographers and hope for the best and run to improve things (last one is a rotten egg, *marica el último*) while mouthing Samuel Johnson's words in an attempt to apologize for mistakes: "Ignorance, madam, pure ignorance."

And snip, snap snout, this tale's told out, or if you prefer: you've had your fun, the tale is done. *Y colorín, colorado, este cuento se ha acabado.*

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