Vocabulary building: the need of dedicated work
Construindo vocabulário: a necessidade de um trabalho dedicado

Rosa Marina de Brito Meyer
Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro
http://lattes.cnpq.br/0344501785488249
rosameyer@puc-rio.br

ABSTRACT

Building and expanding a Portuguese learner's lexicon cannot be understood as something that takes place spontaneously, without focus; much on the contrary, it requires hard work that deserves special attention and particular techniques. Only four types of vocabulary activities that are usually presented to Portuguese as a Second or Foreign Language (PSL/PFL) students are presented: contextualized dialogues; combinations of image and word; lists of words by semantic field; and exercises, usually fill the blanks ones. Eight myths ring up the teaching of vocabulary, as, for example, vocabulary not being as important as grammar. Nine lexicon phenomena that impact PSL/PFL vocabulary teaching and learning are approached: Onomatopoeias; Interjections; Pairs; Reductions; Vulgar language; Cultural meaning; Formulas; Collocation. Based on principles of Functionalism and Interculturalism, each one of these phenomena is presented, analyzed, and exemplified so as to prove the importance of dedicated work on vocabulary building.

Keywords: Portuguese as a Second or Foreign Language, vocabulary building, lexicon phenomena.

RESUMO

Construir e expandir o léxico do aprendiz de português não pode ser entendido como algo que ocorre de forma espontânea, sem foco; muito pelo contrário, requer um trabalho árduo que merece atenção especial e técnicas particulares. Apenas quatro tipos de atividades de vocabulário normalmente são apresentados a alunos de Português Língua Estrangeira (PSL / PFL): diálogos contextualizados; combinações de imagem e palavra; listas de palavras por campo semântico; e exercícios, geralmente preenchem os espaços em branco. Oito principais mitos remetem ao ensino de vocabulário, como, por exemplo, o vocabulário não ser tão importante quanto a gramática. Dentre outros, nove fenômenos do léxico impactam o ensino e a aprendizagem do vocabulário PSL / PFL: Onomatopeias; Interjeições; Pares; Reduções; linguagem comum; Significado cultural; Fórmulas; Colocação. Com base nos princípios do Funcionalismo e da Interculturalidade, cada um desses fenômenos é apresentado, analisado e exemplificado de forma a comprovar a importância de um trabalho dedicado à construção de vocabulário.

Palavras-chave: PL2E; Construção do Léxico; Fenômenos do Léxico

The teaching of vocabulary in the scenery of the teaching of second languages (L2s) today is generally approached in a non-systematic way, thus being considered a less important sector that does not deserve special attention. It could not be different in the teaching of Portuguese as a Second or Foreign Language (PSL/PFL). As long as spontaneous interactions and texts from authentical materials are privileged, little space is given to the systematization needed to construct the student's[1] lexicon. Nevertheless, as Coady and Huckin (1997: ix) state, "(...) lexical competence is at the heart of communicative competence, and ways of measuring the size and nature of the L2 lexicon offer a challenge to researchers."

Most language teachers in Brazil know the joke that tells that after many years of English learning, most students would be able to say only the sentence "The book is on the table"[2], meaning that the process of learning the language was not productive. Considering only the word "table", we could guess that probably they were not presented to synoyms used in specific circumstances as *The book is on the desk*, *The book is on the stand*, *The book is on the coffee table*, *The book is on the worktop*. In Portuguese, let's consider the sentence *Na sala tem uma mesa"[3]*, that can have variations as *Na sala tem uma escrivaninha*, *Na sala tem uma mesa de jantar*, *Na sala tem uma mesa de centro*, *Na sala tem uma mesa de canto*, *Na sala tem uma mesa de jogo*. They are all used naturally by native speakers. Still, very probably a PSL/PFL student is able to say only the first one, thus being limited to say correlate sentences like *Eu como na mesa*, *Eu estudo na mesa*, *Eu ponho o copo na mesa*, *Eu jogo cartas na mesa*. And why does this occur? Because the teaching of second languages, in general, focuses mainly on generic words, those that can replace all the more specific correspondent ones.

If I may tell a personal anecdote, it was only after 20 years of studying English, plus other 20 years of professional usage of the language, and with reasonably good fluency, that I found out that *mesinha de centro* translates as *coffee-table*. As a Brazilian not presented to this expression, I would never guess it for one simple pragmatic reason: in Portuguese, this type of table is named after its location: *no centro da sala, geralmente na frente do sofá*, while in English it is named after its function: *to put the coffee cup on*.

Building and expanding a Portuguese learner's lexicon cannot be understood as something that takes place spontaneously, without focus; much on the contrary, it requires hard work that deserves special attention and particular techniques. For this competence to be achieved, it is necessary to systematize the teaching and learning process: "The lexicon learning is a progressive and continuous process that should not be restricted to the received input and the produced output in

---

[1] In this text, "student", "learner" and non-native speaker are used interchangeably.

[2] In this text, most Portuguese examples are compared to English. They are not translated to English, though, because the text is meant to be read by PSL/PFL Portuguese teachers and teachers in training.

[3] This text considers Brazilian Portuguese only.

class. It is fundamental that the student is trustful of the importance of his/her active participation along all the learning process." (DIAS 2020, n/p; translation by the author, henceforth t.a.). However, this does not always happen. Vocabulary is generally seen as a field of less importance, not deserving of dedicated intensive work. Even the term "vocabulary" can be approached with some disdain and prejudice, as if it were a L2 part less deserving of attention. Yet, if we change *vocabulary* for *lexicon*, teachers may tend to take it more seriously once the latter is an academic word.

Susanto (2017) stresses the importance of vocabulary in L2 teaching and learning by stating that "Vocabulary acquisition plays a vital role in mastering a language. A learner with insufficient vocabulary size will not perform well in every aspect of language itself. (…) The main reason for those college students who cannot read comprehensively is their limited vocabulary size." (SUSANTO 2017: n/p). This means that dominating grammar rules is not enough for efficient use of a L2, once students must also dominate a large and comprehensive amount of words and expressions. One cannot make a cake if he/she does not know which ingredients are to be mixed.

As a consequence, coursebooks tend to present vocabulary in only four types of activities:

(1) in dialogues and texts, usually contextualized, as, for example, "My family", "At the restaurant", "Asking for directions". These dialogues tend to present a kind of speech with correct grammar but distant from the real language in use. Here is a simplified example:

My Family

- Bom dia, Mário.
- Bom dia, Sérgio.
- Este é meu irmão, Ronaldo.
- Muito prazer. Você tem uma irmã também?
- Não, tenho só este irmão. E você?
- Eu tenho uma irmã, a Alice.
- Venha almoçar na minha casa! Vou apresentá-lo ao meu pai e à minha mãe. Meu primo Marcelo vai estar lá também.
Etc.

A more usual conversation could be as such:

- Oi, Mário.
- Fala, Sérgio.
- Meu irmão, Ronaldo. (*apontando para o irmão*)
- (*Se dirigindo ao Ronaldo*) Oi. (*Se dirigindo ao Sérgio*) Você tem uma irmã também?
- Não, e você?
- Só uma irmã, a Alice.
- Vem almoçar em casa com a gente! Vão estar lá o meu pai, a minha mãe e o meu primo Marcelo.
Etc.

(2) in a combination of image and word, such as

porta

chave

(3) in lists of words related among themselves in a semantic field, sometimes with their translation to the learners' native language as

caderno		caderno – notebook
livro		livro - book
lápis	or	lápis – pencil
caneta		caneta - pen
estojo		estojo – case

(4) in exercises, generally "Fill the blank" ones:

Eu escrevo com a minha _____.
Eu guardo os meus lápis no _____.
A lição está no _____.

There are many reasons for vocabulary not being taken seriously. Folse (2004:1) points out eight myths that ring up the teaching of vocabulary:

> (1) Vocabulary is not as important in learning a foreign language as grammar or other areas. (2) It is not good to use lists of words when learning vocabulary. (3) Vocabulary should be presented in semantic sets. (4) The use of translations is a poor way to learn new vocabulary. (5) Guessing words from context is as productive for foreign language learners as it is for first language learners. (6) The best vocabulary learners make use of only one or two effective specific vocabulary learning strategies. (7) Foreign language learners should use a monolingual dictionary. (8) Vocabulary is sufficiently covered in our curricula and courses."(t.a.)

Let's briefly comment on each one.

(1) The importance of learning grammar has been stressed in many L2 teaching methods. However, it is essential to remember that words are at the base of any language, along with its grammar rules. Everybody has already seen films where a stranger, without speaking skills in the local language, uses only spare words to try minimal communication. It is the same with travelers or L2 beginners: they may say á*gua*, ô*nib*us, *comprar roupa* and be understood, although they may not

be able to say whole sentences as *Eu quero água*, *Onde pego o ônibus*?, *Preciso comprar roupas*. Words are the core of communication.

(2) Lists of words are not efficient if they are the only type of vocabulary dedicated activity presented to students. Nonetheless it is an effective way to reinforce previously learned vocabulary such as words presented in dialogues or exercises, for example;

(3) According to the author, presenting new words in semantically defined sets of words (family, food, colors, etc.) may be confusing because the student may mix them; he proposes that presenting small combined sets may be more helpful (family + parts of house + colors, for instance, but only 3 or 4 of each at a time).

(4) The Grammar-Translation method of teaching second languages, used until the mid-twentieth century, led the student to read and write. However, it was pretty less efficient in helping him/her to understand and speak. It is clear that, in complex cases, it is much more convenient to translate the word to the student's native language if the class is homogeneous, or to English, the lingua franca, than to spend a lot of class time doing mimics and acrobatics in order to avoid translating the word. Translation does have usable space in the teaching of vocabulary.

(5) In a given text or communicative situation, L1 speakers may not know one word, but most probably will know all the others, while the L2 learner may not know many words – or at least not feel so confident about how s/he understands the context. That happens because L2 learners usually do not have a consistent lexicon repertoire; they are still building it. Consequently, it is much more difficult for them to guess words from the context than for L1 speakers. So it will be much more effective to train students to use a dictionary whenever possible.

(6) Every learning strategy is useful in the teaching-learning of vocabulary. Each one has its own value and it is up to the coursebook author and ultimately to the teacher to decide where and when to use each one.

(7) Monolingual dictionaries are effective only for advanced L2 students, even though, as most teachers know, the dictionary translation may mischief even the native speakers. As we know, words may have many translations, each one applicable to specific semantic, grammar and text contexts. Students on the Beginning and Intermediate levels should use bilingual dictionaries; on the Advanced levels they can still be useful, but monolingual ones may be preferable.

(8) Considering myth (1), that is, vocabulary is not considered an essential part of the teaching of a second language, it is evident that it is not sufficiently included in curricula and syllabuses. However, as we will see below, it should be. *"Learning vocabulary is largely about remembering, and students generally need to see, say, [hear] and write newly learned words many times before they can be said to have learned them."* (MCCARTEN, 2007: 21)

In a mainly Didactic approach, there would be plenty to elaborate about how methods of teaching L2s have approached vocabulary so far (Grammar-Translation, Structuralist, etc.), or to debate over the efficiency of different sequences of activities, themes that can be found in numerous books and papers (CARTER & MCCARTHY 1988; COADY & HUCKIN 1997; SCHMITT 2000; WAGNER, MUSE & TANNENBAUM 2007; BARDEL, LINDQUIST & LAUFER 2020; among others).

Nonetheless, another very productive path is considered here: the Language Description approach. Based on Principles of the Functionalism (JAKOBSON 1995, HALLIDAY 1987, NEVES 2016, among others) and of Interculturalism (Hall 1966, BENNETT 1998, LEWIS 2006, HOFSTEDE 2010, among others) some lexicon phenomena that impact L2 vocabulary teaching and learning are presented below.

These phenomena are : (1) Onomatopoeias, (2) Interjections; (3) Pairs; (4) Reductions; (5) Vulgar language; (6) Cultural meaning; (7) Formulas; (8) Collocation. The informal colloquial register, mainly oral, was prioritized in the selection, presentation and exemplification of these items.

Other phenomena, like cognates, semantic fields, and polysemy, among others, will not be approached since there can be found many studies on them.

(1) Onomatopoeias seem very simple and obvious to anybody's ears. But not exactly to L2 learners' ears. Almeida (2006: 11) states that

> The informal daily discourse of Brazilians is full of these unique words. While native speakers use them with ease and dexterity, foreigners often do not have the opportunity to know them or even to be able to decipher them. Consecrated by use, they are so internalized by their native speakers that they do not even realize how they use this type of linguistic resource at all times, both in speech and writing. Even less do they easily perceive the feeling of strangeness that a foreign individual who is a Portuguese learner usually presents when faced with such linguistic expressions and/or the disturbance that they can cause. (t.a.)

Brazilian cat lovers know that cats' sound is represented by the onomatopoeia *miau*, while for English speakers, it is *meow*; the different writing hides the fact that the sound of the two words is, in fact, quite similar. But dog barking is reproduced as *au-au* in Portuguese and as *woof-woof* in English. That's a totally different case, once the onomatopoeias correspond to very different

sounds. How could a Portuguese learner understand the meaning of *au-au* spoken in a conversation? No way.

Many onomatopoeias have an expressive, even jocose use: *Já estou cheia de tanto <u>chororô</u>*, *Ele escorregou na escada e <u>tchum!</u>[4] caiu como uma empada no chã*o. In this case, it is vital that the pragmatic context is shown to the student, otherwise s/he may never understand exactly what is being said.

Another group of onomatopoeias is composed of sounds or words repeated twice or three times: *Quando eu quero alguma coisa, é <u>pá-pum</u>, sem chance de me enrolarem*; *Você está tentando me enrolar, chega de <u>blá-blá-blá</u>*. This is a very interesting group that leads us to the item (3) below.

So there should be space for working with onomatopoeias in PSL/PFL coursebooks and classes. Not doing so creates a vacuum of understanding in our students' communications in Portuguese.

(2) A somewhat pleasant surprise is received with a *Wow!* in English and a *Uau!* or a *Nossa!* In Portuguese. *Wow* and *uau* correspond to similar, maybe same pronunciation. But there are issues there. If we can suppose that all humans may feel the same emotions, it is clear that they express these emotions differently and with words that mean different, although they seem the same. A good example is the German word *angst* and the English word *anxiety*, where the first one represents a much deeper, more painful feeling than the second one. (WIERZBICKA 1999: 137-139). We could add to this comparison the Portuguese word *angústia*: it seems to represent a feeling much more related to *angst* than to *anxiety*. The same happens with *sentir saudade de alguém* and *to miss someone*, where *sentir saudade*, like *angst*, expresses a much more distressing, painful feeling than *to miss*. But there are also emotions that have a word in a given language but not in the others: the German s*chadenfreude* (pleasure of seeing someone in trouble) and *waldeinsamkeit*[5] (pleasant sensation of solitude when in contact with nature) are two examples.

It could not be different with interjections.

Rebello (2016: 22) states that "Interjections are presented as important elements of the language when we consider the knowledge of communicative use, as they are valid as sentences, often transmitting complex meanings." She divides the interjections into four groups. Three are based on Wierzbicka (1999): emotional (*Caramba!*), volitional (*Tomara!*), and cognitive (*Xi!*), and the fourth one, created by herself: persuasive (*Ei!*).

---

[4] This work presents the most frequent spelling of onomatopoeias.

[5] Thanks to my former graduate student and current colleague Adriana Borgerth Vial Correa Lima for the examples.

In general, interjections are not consistently included in the teaching of PSL/PFL, there included the coursebooks. They can appear randomly in dialogues but without much or any systematization. However, of course they should be there.

Starting with different sounds, we can compare the Portuguese *Ai!* with the English *Ouch!*. Two different sounds represent the same reaction to pain or a somewhat unpleasant surprise. It can take some time for an English speaker to realize that that sound in Portuguese, equivalent to the first person personal pronoun *I* in his/her language, corresponds to a different meaning. Of course, when in immersion, contextual encounters with *Ai!* being said in moments of pain can clarify the real meaning. But in PFL, when students get in touch with Portuguese only in class, this needs to be systematically taught.

The case of interjections used only regionally is also relevant. *Tchê*, from the state of Rio Grande do Sul, and *Uai*, from Minas Gerais, for example: How can one translate *O quentão estava uma barbaridade, tchê!*? or *Uai, esta gaiinhada está boa demais da conta!?*. These sentences can easily be translated, but the interjections present a different type of difficulty, once they do not have correspondents in English or any other language other than, probably, the Spanish spoken at the Brazilian border, in the case of *Tchê*!.

Moreover, there are the cases of interjections representing emotions that do not have similar ones in other languages, like *Ué!*? in *Por que você não vai à praia? Ué, porque está chovendo, ora!*" Google Translate presents the translation *Why don't you go to the beach? Hey, because it's raining, oh!*, where *Hey* and *Oh* definitely do not have the same meaning and communicative value.

So interjections are as important as other classes of words and must be systematized to Portuguese students.

(3) Portuguese has an important phenomenon in vocabulary but with a syntactic touch: the pairs, that can occur with words, groups of words, and even sentences. Without the pair, the first component is not capable of supporting the same meaning. Many onomatopoeias fall in this group: *reco-reco*, *tic-tac*, b*lá-blá-bl*á. But not only. There are many pairs composed of sentences: B*obeou, dançou*; *Quebrou, comprou*; *Nem cá, nem lá*; *Escreveu e não leu, o pau comeu*; U*ma coisa é uma coisa, outra coisa é outra cois*a.

While some of these expressions may have a quite clear meaning (*nem cá, nem lá*; *quebrou, comprou*), others may be very opaque (*bobeou, dançou*; *uma coisa é uma coisa, outra coisa é outra coisa*). As expressive expressions (ALMEIDA 2006), they usually have a metaphoric nature (Cf. 6 below), which must be pointed out to students. Teachers must lead their students to understand their metaphoric meaning and their pragmatic value in each context of usage.

Pairs are therefore of serious difficulty to non-native speakers, thus demanding specific work in the teaching and learning of PSL/PLE.

(4) The reduction of words in their oral use plays a considerable role in the students' misunderstanding in conversations. From *para* to *pra*, v*ocê* to *cê*, reductions may seem fairly obvious to the native speaker, but not to the Portuguese learner. We write *Você está cansada*? but we say *Cê tá cansada?*.

And here comes another personal anecdote. When I visited the Communications University of China in Beijing, the then Brazilian Lecturer on campus, Fleide Daniel Santos de Albuquerque, today President of SIPLE, kindly invited me to present about Portuguese and Brazilian Culture to his students. After that, exchanging ideas about the teaching of PFL, he showed me the very creative lesson that he had built: "The personal pronoun *Cê*". Genius!

Textbooks generally present grammatically correct and complete sentences like *Onde está a chave do carro? Está na estante.* while what is truly said is *Cadê a chave do carro? (Tá) na estante*. From e*stá* to t*á* the distance is not so large, and a student possibly could guess on his own the relation between the two.   But from *Onde está*? to *Cadê*? there is a vast difference in sound and morphosyntactic structure.

Currently, a Banco do Brasil advertisement is running on TV. Being very persuasive, it shows different kinds of people saying *Bora, Bora!* (open an account), not *Vamos embora, vamos embora!*. Of course, in this context, *Vamos embora! - Bora! -* means *Let's do it*, not *Let's go away*, as it would be possible in another situation. There we find two levels of reduction: the erasing of the verb *vamos* and the reduction of the adverb *embora*. *Vam'bora* is also frequently heard but was chosen not to be used in this ad; they wanted something even shorter that spoke very closely to the viewer. Obviously, it is almost impossible for the student to grasp that *bora!* is a reduction of *vamos embora!*.

Reductions must be not only shown to students, but also and mainly practiced. There is no point in training them to say complete and grammarly correct sentences that are not said in real life, at least in very informal conversations, at the risk of their sounding always as learners, foreigners.

(5) Vulgar language teaching awakens a lot of strong emotions. Some are favorable, some are completely against it, and some are reluctant even to give an opinion. Here we will divide the vulgar language theme into two parts: the vulgar very colloquial speech and the coarse language.

There is a group of vulgar words that do not offend heavily those to whom they are directed; they are never included in coursebooks and, possibly, in classes. But we must at least think about them and their use.

Meyer (2020: 2) presents the group of words that she nominates as "disgusting words": "the lexical items of the vulgar register that have referents taken as disgusting and that, when used in less

vulgar contexts, can cause discomfort and, consequently, repulsion; they differ from foul words, also characteristic of the vulgar register, as they are not swear-words, that is, forbidden words." (t.a.)

Let's say that they are mild insults, if this is possible. For their nature, when directed to someone, they present a threaten to the hearer's face. *Seu xexelento!* does offend as nobody likes or expects to be called *xexelento*. The author proposes the existence of a continuum of meanings from the less face threatening to the more face threatening as in

glúteos – nádegas – bumbum – traseiro – bunda

- threatening --- + threatening

where *bunda* is the disgusting word, the one that should not be used openly in less informal contexts. (MEYER 2020: 11) (t.a.)

The disgusting words are then classified in 5 groups according to their semantic fields as follows (Idem: 13):

Disgusting words: tentative glossary				
Parts of the human body	Excrements	Odors	Diseases	Criticism
bunda	cocô	fedor / fedorento	hemorroida	xexelento
sovaco	mijo / mijar	cecê	frieira	nojento
ventas	titica	inhaca	piolho/ piolhento	bebum
tetas	cagada / cagar	catinga	sarna / sarnento	pinguço
	caganeira	morrinha/ morrinhento	pereba/ perebento	bundão
	arroto / arrotar	chulé / chulepento		bunda mole
	remela	bafo		piranha
	peido / peidar	xexéu		
	vomitado	fudum		
		bodum		

This group does not include words related to sexuality because these are included in the following group.

None of these words visit Portuguese classes. Ever. Nevertheless, students will get in touch with them not only in real conversations, maybe in a family or close friends environment, but also in films and some literary texts. So they should be presented to students, although it may be questionable if they should be stimulated to say them.

The second vulgar language group is composed mainly of coarse language, mostly swear words, name calling. Most of them are related to sexuality, sex organs, DSTs, etc. SHARMA (2020)

extensively studied them based on seven swear words (*buceta, cu, caralho, foder, pau, porra,* and *puta*) and proposed that they should be taught to PFL students in India. She bases her statement on the fact that Cariocas tend to use swear words profusely in colloquial conversations, mainly among the younger generations. A Portuguese learner or speaker from India could be shocked when arriving in Rio if not previously warned. It must be added that these words are also strongly present in films and stand-up comedy, being accessible to students through the internet.

More than disgusting words, it is highly questionable if swear words should be presented to students. Each teacher must decide based on his/her own sense of morality.

(6) Word meanings are culturally motivated, as well as metaphors. In English, something easy to do is *a piece of cake* (something easy to find), while in Portuguese, it is said as u*ma sopa* (something easy to eat). *Um osso de roer* translates to *a hard nut to crack*, e *Está chovendo canivetes to It's raining cats and dogs*.

What led each culture to choose a specific object or animal for its metaphors? Diachronic analysis is capable of explaining each one of these expressions' origins. But what do they mean culturally? Why *osso* and *nut*? That's still to be explained.

Uma *mãe coruja* is probably very opaque to Portuguese learners. It is equivalent to the Spanish expression *mamá gallina*; in Portuguese, *mãe galinha* would have an opposite meaning, once *galinha* is a swear word for a woman of bad behavior who has sexual relationships with many men. A similar sense has *vaca* in *Ela é uma vaca*. A student from India would never perceive the offense in this term because cows are sacred there, and consequently, to call a woman a cow would sound as a compliment. (SHARMA 2020).

The expression *nem a pau* may also be non-understandable to Portuguese learners who would hardly get the meaning that someone will not do something even if hit by a piece of wood. Worst, if they know that *pau* can be a swear word for the male sexual organ, they may have a problematic understanding of the expression.

Single words may also have a cultural charge. Indeed, the terms *pontualmente* and *atrasado* have a much looser meaning in Portuguese than their English correspondents, for example, because the Brazilian culture is very tolerant of delays. *Já*, *já-já* too: *Eu te entrego o relatório já-já* does not mean that the report is really going to be delivered immediately; it means that the person is going to rush, but it is understood between the lines that it will be done is the person's own path and the report may be delivered anytime in the near future..

Many adjectives and substantives in an adjective function are used as culturally defined metaphors. Animals are frequent in this group: besides *mãe coruja*, we can mention *Ela é uma galinha* and *Ela é uma vaca*. *Ele é um cachorro* may not be perceived as an insult by PSL/PFL

learners. Much less non-native speakers would know how to differentiate it from *Ele é o cão*. There is also *Ele é porco*, which is different from *Ele é um porco.* The sequence goes on and on with *Ele é um cavalo*, *Ele é burro,* etc.; but *Ele é um gato* and *Ele tem olhos de lince* are compliments, not offenses. All these expressions denote how the society sees these animals.

Because they express unique cultural actions or values, some words do not translate to another word, needing a long explanation of their meaning. *Jeitinho* is the most obvious one: it represents a social practice of a person asking someone to bend the rules in order to achieve something desired or needed and thus have a problem solved. *Madrugada* means the fourth part of the day when people either sleep, dance or do any other thing, like watch TV - all together with *manhã*, *tarde* and *noite*, the only three ones with correspondence in English. The same happens with *(à/de) tardinha* e *(à/de) noitinha*. In the field of meals, The words *lanch*e (*da tarde*) and *ajantarad*o also seem to be particular of the Portuguese language; they represent meals that are usual in Brazilian homes: the small meal between lunch and dinner and the Sunday late lunch when many parents get together, usually at the patriarch's or the matriarch's home.

Rarely coursebooks mention these expressions and metaphors. And when it happens, they are included in lessons with another goal and not systematized. Therefore, it is essential that each one of these culturally marked words are presented in context and explained, at least to PFL students.

(7) Formulas – or formulaic expressions, or routines, or hedges - are sets of words available to speakers in a language dictionary so that they do not have to use creativity to build original sentences at every utterance. According to ALENCAR (2004: 30), "… formulaic expressions are formulas which meaning is [to be understood] inside a situational context. Said expressions, although presenting certain fix elements, present form mobility." (t.a.) So formulas are a pre-determined group of words composed of more or less fixed words that speakers can use in specific contexts.

Usually, formulas are exemplified with greetings: *Bom dia, Boa tarde, Boa noite,* shorten forms of *Eu te desejo bom dia/boa tarde/boa noite*; but nobody says *Boa madrugada*, except if in a joke. The same happens with *Feliz aniversário!/Natal/Ano Novo*. Another type of formula are the expressions formed with "Que + adjective or substantive": *Que lindo! Que festa!* which express admiration.

Alencar (2004: 59-61) proposes the following semantic types of formulas with examples collected in his corpus (the TV show "Os Normais"): Greeting (*Bom dia!*), Expressing appreciation (*Muito obrigada!*); Expressing feelings (*Que Maravilha!*); Expressing solidarity (*Que pena!*); Calling attention (*Olha só!*); Agreeing or disagreeing (*É isso!, Nada a ver!*); Inciting (*Vai fundo!*); Expressing amazement (*Não brinca!*); Seeking confirmation (*Né não?*); Expressing indifference (*Sei lá!*); Asking to calm down (*Fica tranquilo.*); Asking for permission (*Dá licença?*); Asking for something (*Vê ...*

pra mim?). It's an extensive study that demonstrates how present formulas are in our colloquial communication.

There are numerous other examples to be given, once collocations are present in most conversations: *Dá pra…?, Tem… aí?, Melhor sim/Melhor não, Fica pra depois, Não dá* (*não cabe* or *não é possível*), etc. An efficient way to deal with them didactically may be by associating them to situations and/or semantic fields.

For their power of simplifying the creative aspect of formulating speech acts, formulas definitely must be included in PSL/PFL lessons, with steady systematization and training, so as to allow students to achieve communicational levels faster than without the consciousness of this precious resource.

(8) Collocation is generally understood as the tendency of certain words to be used accompanied by other certain words. FIRTH (1957: 196) introduced the term "collocation," stating that "you shall know a word by the company it keeps". Collocations differ from formulas because they are not fixed groups of words; they are the preferred combinations of words.

Carvalho (2015, n/p) defines collocations as "conventional semi-crystallized combinations between two (or more) lexical items, with syntactic autonomy and semantic transparency, resulting from discursive patterns in textual genres." (t.a.)

The substantives used to mean "list/account" are a revealing example of what collocation is. In English, we have *grocery list*, *electricity bill*, *bank statement*, and *expenses report*. In Portuguese it seems to be the same: *lista de compras*, *conta de luz*, *extrato bancário*, *relatório de despesas*; and at least two others can be added to this list: *rol de roupas* (*para lavar*), and *listagem de funcionários*. A less proficient Portuguese speaker would probably use the word *lista*, the generic one that labels the semantic field, in all examples: *lista de funcionários, lista bancária* (?), *lista de roupas* (?), etc.; it fits, although with some strangeness.

Examples with verbs are to be considered too: *falar pelos cotovelos*, *dizer a verdade*, *contar uma história*, *revelar um segredo*, *dar um palpite*; *dirigir um carro*, *conduzir um trem*, *pilotar um avião*.

Kreutzfeld (2019: 44-45) studied collocations in expressions formed by substantives + color adjectives. Working with the concept of "metaphoric collocation" (Idem: 44-45), she analyses twenty-five expressions with the said formation and with six colors - yellow, red, blue, green, black, and white - based on the contribution of studies about collocations in Portuguese by Tagnin (2013) and Carvalho (2014).

Sorriso amarelo, as in *Ela negou emprestar o dinheiro com um sorriso amarelo,* is an example. The author proposes that the metaphor *yellow* means *discomfort,* once it evokes the image

of yellow teeth, therefore, lack of hygiene. However, we cannot say *sorriso azul, sorriso vermelho, or sorriso verde* instead*,* because they have no meaning – except the latter, as a mocking, in case the person has greens on his/her teeth. In this case, it would be a creative utterance, not a collocation, because it is a non-usual combination of substantive + adjective of color.

Another collocation with color that she presents is *tudo azul*. The metaphor is "blue means wellness" (KREUTZFELD 2019: 69-71), as in *Tudo azul durante a viagem até agora*. In the Brazilian culture, wellness, calmness, well-being are almost always metaphorized with the color blue.

Collocations are, therefore, an essential topic in the PSL/PFL teaching and learning process. They reveal aspects of the cultural basis of our society. This way they can help students acquire more language skills and better understanding of the Brazilian cultural environment.

As pointed out previously, many other lexical phenomena could have been approached. Choices had to be made, and the topics less studied or with fewer articles published were privileged.

This paper is meant to prove to PSL/PFL teachers that Vocabulary is not a topic of minor importance or interest. It is a crucial, capital part of the learning process and, as such, deserves special attention by the teachers. It must be presented in a dedicated way, systematized, and trained in all its vast set of particular phenomena.

Let us hope that it will be successful.

REFERENCES

ALENCAR, R. B. E aí? uma proposta descritiva das expressões formulaicas para português L2 para estrangeiros. *Tese de Doutorado*. Rio de Janeiro: PUC-Rio, 2004

ALMEIDA, M. A. 2006. Blá-blá-blá: a presença dos vocábulos expressivos na identidade linguística do brasileiro e sua relevância para o português como segunda Língua para estrangeiros (PL2E). *Tese de Doutorado*. Rio de Janeiro: PUC-Rio, 2006.

BARDEL, C.; LINDQUIST, C.; LAUFER, B. (Orgs.). *Vocabulary Acquisition, Knowledge and Use – new perspectives on assessment and corpus analysis*. European Second Language Association: Eurosla, 2020.

BENNETT, M. J. "Intercultural Communication: a Current Perspective". *In:* BENNETT, M. J (Ed.). *Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication*. Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, 1988.

CARTER, R.; MCCARTHY, M. *Vocabulary and Language Teaching*. Essex: Longman, 1988.

CARVALHO, O. L. S. *Colocações e português brasileiro como língua estrangeira*. Palestra repr., rev. e aum. Bolonha, Itália: Universidade de Bolonha. Unpublished, 2014.

COADY, J.; HUCKIN, T. *Second Language Vocabulary Acquisition*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

DIAS, S. O. Aprender léxico através das TIC: aplicações informáticas para PLE. In: *2D/Revista de Humanidades Digitais*, vol. 2, No. 1. Universidade do Minho, 2020, pp 1-13.

FIRTH, J. R. *Papers in Linguistics, 1934-1951*. London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1957.

FOLSE, K. S. Myths about Teaching and Learning Second Language Vocabulary: What Recent Research Says. In: *TESL Reporter*, vol. 37, Nº. 2., 2004, pp. 1-13.

HALL, E. T. *The Hidden Dimension*. New York: Doubleday, 1966.

HALLIDAY, M. A. K. *An introduction to Functional grammar.* London: Edward Arnold, 1987.

HOFSTEDE, G.; HOFSTEDE, G.J.; MINKOW, M. *Cultures and Organizations*. (3rd. Ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010.

JAKOBSON, R. *On Language*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

KREUTZFELD, D. L. Colorindo as aulas de PL2E: o valor metafórico das colocações formadas por substantivo + adjetivo de cor. *Dissertação de Mestrado*. Rio de Janeiro: PUC-Rio, 2019.

LEWIS, R. D. *When Cultures Collide*: Leading Across Cultures. Boston: Nicholas Brealy International, 2006.

McCARTEN, J. *Teaching Vocabulary - Lessons from the Corpus, Lessons for the Classroom.* Cambridge, New York: Cambridge Unniversity Press, 2007.

REBELLO, A. *Interjeição – um Fator de Identidade Cultural do Brasileiro*. Jundiaí: Paco Editorial, 2016.

SCHMITT, N. *Vocabulary in Language Teaching*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

SHARMA, M. Taboo Words for better Intercultural Competence: Why not? Context, meaning and use of *palavrões* in the Teaching of Brazilian Portuguese as a Foreign Language in India. *Tese de Doutorado*. Orientadora: Rosa Marina de Brito Meyer. Rio de Janeiro: PUC-Rio, 2020.

SUSANTO, A. The teaching of vocabulary: a perspective. In: *Journal Kapta*, vol. 1, Nº. 2. Indonesia: Lembaga Layanan Pendidikan Tinggi, 2017.

TAGNIN, S. E. *O jeito que a gente diz*. 2a. ed. Barueri, SP: Disal, 2013.

WAGNER, R. K.; MUSE, A. E.; TANNENBAUM, K. R. (Orgs.). *Vocabulary Acquisition – Implications for Reading Comprehension.* New York, London: The Guilford Press, 2007.

WIERZBICKA, A. *Emotions across Languages and Cultures*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

105