

A corpus-based analysis for Superlative Construction of Body Expression

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This work focuses at the Superlative Construction of Body Expression (SCBE) ("Quando vou a Barcelona meus irmãos 'morrem de rir'"; "[...] mesmo que 'rebetasse de fome!'"; "[...] ele podia 'se fartar de ouvir' todos os discos que quisesse [...]"), here postulated as a major link in the network of constructions of Portuguese named by Miranda (2008a) as Superlative Constructions. The primary theoretical assumptions come from the Cognitive Linguistics (CROFT & CRUSE, 2004; FILLMORE, 1982; FILLMORE & ATKINS, 1992; JOHNSON, 1987; LAKOFF, 1987; LAKOFF & JOHNSON, 1999; MIRANDA, 2002, 2005, 2008a, 2008b; SALOMÃO, 1997, 2006; among others), which assumes the language as a non-autonomous cognitive faculty regulated by general cognitive principles; advocates a central role for imaginative processes (metaphor, metonymy, conceptual blending) in the human language and cognition; sees grammar as conceptualization; and understands that the knowledge about language emerges from the use of language. More specifically, this study is endorsed by a model of grammar developed in the interior of cognitive paradigm, the Cognitive Construction Grammar (GOLDBERG, 1995, 2006; BOAS, in press), which, defining constructions as pairs of form and function, attributes to them the status of basic units of language. In this framework, both grammar and lexicon are defined as a network of constructions instituted by the use through culture. Having these presuppositions in mind, it is proposed the description of formal and semantic-pragmatic pattern that emerges from occurrences as a form to elucidate the configuration of form-sense pair and the cognitive processes which define the abstract pattern under study. Given the amount of use in the theoretical and analytical model adopted, a corpus-based approach (ALUÍSIO & ALMEIDA, 2006; GRIES & DIVJAK, 2003; SARDINHA, 2000, 2004; STEFANOWITSCH, 2006) is chosen as the methodological approach due to the possibility of working with a large mass of natural data, situated in real discourse and quantify them. The Cognitive Construction Grammar, as a used-based model of language (GOLDBERG, 1995, 2006; CROFT & CRUSE, 2004), sees language through an empirical view, understanding it as a probabilistic system. For that reason, the verification of token and type frequency has a central role on the definition of conventionalization and productivity of the construction. The corpus used for this research is the Corpus do Português (<http://www.corpusdoportugues.org/>), composed of forty-five million words, allocated in texts that pervade the XIV-XX centuries. Based on the work of Sampaio (2007), in which part of the SCBE was analyzed within the limits of the metaphorical field of "death" (morrer de rir "to die of laugh", morrer de medo "to die of fear"), our analysis extend such study, investigating the productivity and conventionalization of this network and the nature of the mismatch that establishes synchronously its pattern. This pattern - [Xv de YN/V] - has a verb as the X (chorar "to cry", rolar "to roll", morrer "to die", cair "to fall", among others) that stands for the physical or physiological impact triggered by the excess of Y, a NP (medo "fear", tristeza "sadness") or a VP (rir "laugh", estudar "study"). The two variable elements of the construction, X and Y, are linked via the genitive preposition "de", which is a fixed part of the constructional pattern. The most important points in the description are: (i) the mismatch in semantics of XV (verbs that activate the frames of physical or physiological impact), that, in the context of the construction, functions as a scalar operator modifying Y (morrer de medo "to die of fear", rolar de rir "to roll of laugh"); (ii) the condition of modal semiauxiliar of XV when Y is a verb; (iii) the pragmatic use of the construction as an argumentative strategy relevant to discursive contexts in which the speaker/writer has more freedom of subjective expression; (iv) the centrality of figurative processes (specially metaphorical ones) in the institution of grammatical patterns. The primary metaphors "Causes Are Physical Forces" and "Intensity Is Scale" (LAKOFF & JOHNSON, 1999) act as conceptual bases of the constructional pattern. From the analysis of type frequency emerges the assertion of productivity of the SCBE, which

instantiate, in the corpus investigated, 19 different types. The process of conventionalization is outlined by the presence of 1.726 tokens, that corresponds to 43,9% of the usage of the searched verbs followed by the genitive preposition "de" in the corpus (3.929), although there exist variation between one type to another (just "Cansar(-se) de Y", "Cair de Y", "Chorar de Y", "Fartar(-se) de Y" and "Morrer de Y" appeared to be the conventionalized types in the corpus data). The analytical findings of the research, revealing the specificities of the investigated pattern, legitimate the postulation of SCBE as a construction of Portuguese, with its own form, meaning and pragmatics, and as a major link of Superlative Constructions network of this language. It is important to consider as a substantial gain of this work the methodological approach used that, based in corpus, brings to our analysis information which emerged naturally from the data, permitting thus more precise descriptions that overtake answers coined only by our intuitive judgment. Therefore, the Cognitive Linguistics is enriched by having the usage as an analytical condition of their constructional units and with a corpus-based linguistics.