

RESEARCH AND TEACHING OF CONJUNCTIONS IN BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE

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Abstract: This paper, in a revisional perspective, has as goal to resume the literature of the linguistics' postulates about the class of conjunctions, and from distinct researches and theoretical-methodological approaches (CÂMARA JR., 1970; SANTOS, 2003; RODRIGUES, 2018; BRITO, 2019). In order to do so, initially, we retake the discussions of works about the classification and use of these elements. After, we adress the treatment of conjunctions in teaching (PINILLA, 2007; MORAES PINTO and ALONSO, 2012; PAULIUKONIS, 2014; SANTOS, 2014; FREITAS, 2015; CASTANHEIRA and CASEIRA, 2020). At last, we present a critical landscape about the ways that still can be covered. We advocate that it is necessary to consider different criteria on this thematic treatment, encompassing new connectors and their distinct context of use.

Keywords: Teaching; Conjunctions; Literature revision

INTRODUCTION

Taking into consideration the Traditional Grammar's vision, the conjunctions are considered words that relate among themselves establishing a link between similar or different constituents, like the connectors “but”, “if” and “therefore”. They connect sentences or terms, which might create a dependence relation or intertwine independent sentences between them. The conjunctions could be classified as coordinative, when assemble elements of similar nature or independent sentences, or subordinative, when connect sentences which each one determines and complements the meaning of the other (ROCHA LIMA, 1972; CUNHA; CINTRA, 1985).

In this text, we have as main goal to revisit the literature about conjunctions from the linguistic studies' approach, highlighting their classification criteria (CÂMARA JR., 1970; OLIVEIRA *et al.*, 1977), and their use in real contexts of communication (RODRIGUES, 2018; BRITO, 2019). Besides that, we will resume works that deal with their teaching from textbooks' analysis and teaching proposals (FREITAS, 2015; CASTANHEIRA; CASEIRA, 2020).

We highlight that, beyond retaking works about this thematic, we will also show a final discussion with the paths that (still) should be covered. From that, we pursue to establish work guidelines for future researches about conjunctions in Brazilian Portuguese.

1 CONJUNCTIONS: LINGUISTIC APPROACH

In the field of Brazilian Linguistics, the discussion about word classes has as starting point the work of Câmara Jr. (1970), revisited after by diverse theorists, as Pinilla (2007) and Moraes Pinto and Alonso (2012). Câmara Jr (1970) criticizes the way the word classes are classified for considering that are used not homogeneous and hierarchical criteria and, for that, he proposes an analysis of three criteria – semantic, morphic and functional.

According to Câmara Jr. (1970), the semantic criterion makes reference to the relations of meaning which is established between the word and the alteration made by it in the reality. The morphic criterion, considering the class' formal nature, explores the grammatical properties they present, and the functional criterion refers to word's role in the sentence.

This discussion has been revisited and applied by many researchers, among which Oliveira *et al.* (1977). On his work, it is explicit how the three criteria elaborated by Câmara Jr. (1970) can be applied on every word class. For instance, the article can be defined as a word that works as core determinant term of the expression, according to the functional criteria; it is a word formed solely by grammatical morpheme, according to the morphological criteria; it is a word that defines or undefines the noun which refers to, according to the semantic criterion.

In relation to the theme treated on this paper, Oliveira *et al.* (1977) classifies prepositions and conjunctions as connectives' words class. For the authors, conjunctions can be understood as grammatical words that function as an element of connection between words or sentences, considering the functional criteria. In the morphological criteria, they are seen as words composed only by grammatical morpheme. At last, according to the semantic criterion, they are comprehended as words that relate to other words and sentences, that might indicate origin, possession, cause, among other meanings.

The use of connectives enfold, still, matters related to their roles in the construction of the text. Santos (2003) demonstrates that the connectives “e” and “mas”, for example, may present different pragmatic functions, as breach of expectation, discursive conduction change and temporal sequence. The postulates indicate, among other issues, that these elements are multifunctional and, therefore, must be analyzed contextually.

Still about the linguistic approach on this theme, we highlight the work of Rodrigues (2018), in which it is demonstrated how

items that work as connectors go beyond more prototypical conjunctions, further on what is reported on Traditional Grammars. In this work, it is prioritized the functionality of these items in language and their relevance in meaning construction, which is linked to the connectors' multifunctionality and the process of grammaticalization.

The author understands the connectors' class as elements that bind sentences or whole segments of the text, creating a semantic or pragmatic relation between the parts connected. Different word classes might occupy the position of a connector, such as conjunctions, prepositions, some adverbs, and equivalent locutions of those classes.

According to Rodrigues (2018), the connectors are suffering a process of grammaticalization, because the speakers, with the purpose of creating a new function inside a language, use old structures. This process magnifies the semantic values connectives have. Then, the polysemy is a factor that includes such word class, and it will be defined by the context of production.

Other relevant research about conjunctions is the work of Brito (2019). According to the author, the uses of the connective "só que" are connected to social and discursive issues. In her research, the author demonstrates that the educational level and modality directly influence this element's frequency, with greater use among less educated speakers and in the oral modality, which might be connected to its recent entrance in the language (LONGHIN, 2003).

Besides that, according to Brito (2019), these elements are multifunctional, since, from their use contexts, they may present distinct textual roles. Thereby, according to the author, the sentences initiated by "só que" are linked to coordination and have similar patterns of use to others coordinated introduced by "mas", for example (SANTOS, 2003).

In different works about conjunctions and sentences, as Santos (2003), Brito (2019) and Sant'Anna (2021), it is possible, still, to

observe that the connectives can combine themselves. These uses, as in “mas só que”, “mas se bem que” and “mas e”, indicate that it is needed to map these patterns and analyze if there are distinct uses in face of such combinations.

2 TEACHING OF CONJUNCTIONS: REVISITING THE LITERATURE

In addition to analytical issues, Linguistics also has been devoting itself to study how this thematic can be explored in the classroom. As explained by Pinilla (2007), through the research of Neves (1990), the words' classes are a theme of great importance inside Portuguese's classes, but the criteria applied to them are sometimes disorganized, sometimes absent.

Pinilla (2007) performs a compiled of studies about the analysis of grammars and textbooks related to the theme of words' classes and, while she observes the definitions, she realizes a preference by the semantic criterion, with less focus on the morphic and functional criteria. For the author, the criteria that should be considered need to include the syntactic and morphological characteristics and the traces of meaning.

Another important investigation is from Moraes Pinto and Alonso (2012). The authors endorse that the best methodology for teaching is a combination between a more conservative perspective, turned to metalanguage, and a more innovative one, which focuses on text study. This study must occur from a contextualized grammar, which creates the possibility of reflection about language considering real texts production and approaches diverse levels on linguistic analyses. Regarding to the word classes' classification, the authors highlight that it would be more effective a proposal that avoids the creation of too many categories and consistently is able to explain the various uses.

Still in relation to teaching word classes, Pauliukonis (2014) defends that it is more productive, for teaching connectors, the achievement of discussions about the relationships created by

elements that connects parts of the text, therefore as its enunciative-argumentative potential, than perpetuate the traditional teaching approach. In this perspective of language's studying, the students are used to classify sentences, recognize the connectives that link them and decorate them; however, they do not productively use these structures in their texts, and they have difficulties to comprehend the meaning created by them.

The author evidences, in her work, how certain connectives assist on the elaboration of sense pretend by the author. It is demonstrated how adversative, concessive, and contrasting constructions, despite demonstrating certain opposition and denial in relation to a phrase, alter the meaning's shaping, they have diverse argumentative values and change the focus of the proposition in a text. These argumentative strategies are essential on reading and text production to individuals that are developing critical literacy.

These discussions are also seen in Castanheira (2017), since, for the author, the word classes' teaching must be contextualized, beginning at activities of reading, linguistic analyses, and textual production through oral and written text genre. By thinking the text as a sociocognitive and interactional process, there is a possibility to explore, in an efficient way, text genre, considering their historic and social context. There is also the possibility to work cohesion and coherence jointly, going beyond textual surface.

According to Santos (2014), on her analyses of how grammars and didactic materials approach the theme of conjunctions, that issue is portrayed repetitively, disregarding their real usage and without reflecting to a context of practice. During teaching's practice, the relations of meaning that the items are capable to create, nor the previous knowledge of the students about the theme, are taking into consideration.

The author also manifests how the exercises do not work reflexively the use of conjunctions, but automatically, it drives the students to only memorize their classification. On the use of textual

genre to develop the theme, there are also problems, as the fact that few textual genres are been used on the demonstration of conjunctions' use and they do not improve the critical thinking of the student about this matter, serving only as decontextualized examples.

According to Freitas (2015), the connectives elements, as conjunctions, act in the cohesive construction of texts, besides being relevant in the argumentative constructions of reading activities and text production. This is relevant in the students' preparation to comprehend the semantic values acquired by these structures and to appropriation of their different functions to achieve intended meaning.

In the analysis of Middle School's textbooks, Freitas (2015) attest that the relations created by conjunctions many times are not perceived in relation to textual cohesion, coherence and communicative achievements. Thereby, these elements are reduced to conjunctions and clauses classification exercises, not being considered their argumentative orientation and their distinct semantic relations analyzed contextually.

Still about the analysis of didactic materials, Castanheira and Caseira (2020) demonstrate that High School's textbooks have already been considering morphological, syntactic, and semantic issues on the definition of conjunctions, although, in their exercises are prioritized semantic issues.

Furthermore, according to the authors, the textual aspect is not very focused on by the materials. Usually, there are used several texts that belong to different textual genres, but the pragmatic issues are not explored in these examples, having only the list of connectives presented in these texts. It demonstrates that it is still needed to explore clearer and with systematicity the connectives' role in texts' construction.

3 CONJUNCTIONS: (RE)THINKING PATHS

After the discussion established throughout this text, it is possible to recognize some tendencies in relation to the research papers and teaching in relation to conjunctions.

We highlight, initially, that the postulates and investigations about the thematic indicate that these elements present different patterns of use and that, frequently, the conjunctions are multifunctional and have distinct semantic value. In this way, we can notice that this class presents great discursive complexity, which it has been mapped in several recent works.

Other matter that we realized in these works is that the proposal of Câmara Jr. (1970) started to appear as a central issue in the description of words' classes, which certainly includes conjunctions. In the researches of Oliveira *et al.* (1977), Pinilla (2007), Moraes Pinto and Alonso (2012) and Castanheira and Caseira (2020), for example, the influence of this work is quite pronounced.

Even we having listed only a few existing researches in the Brazilian Linguistics about this theme, it is possible to affirm that are countless questions already explored over the last decades, which involves the entrance of new connectives in Portuguese language, their current patterns of use and their relation to textual and social matters (cf. LONGHIN, 2003; RODRIGUES, 2018; BRITO, 2019, among others).

However, even with so many advances, the teaching of conjunctions still seems centered in quite exhausted aspects, considering these elements attached only to lists of classification and identification of connectives in loose and decontextualized phrases. Thereby, it is possible to affirm that, from the works that we revisited, the didactic materials still do not incorporate these debates.

We defend that is needed to consider these matters in teaching and it is necessary to unite theory and practice. In order to do so, we should consider the official documents for language teaching

and the recent linguistic theories from their different results and complexities without taking into consideration the use of technical names of these perspectives in classroom but considering the investigations' postulates.

It is necessary, therefore, to consider the interaction between the languages practices as essential for a productive teaching of language, because grammar happens to be seen as an aspect directly related to interpretation and text production. In this approach, the language is seen as a living organism, variable and mutable, that must be analyzed from its sense effects. That does not imply putting aside metalinguistic issues but associate them with other discussions.

In general, it is possible to say that, in this vision, the text is seen as a central object and could be defined as a complex social and cognitive process in which there are present linguistic, visual e sonorous aspects, that are triggered by mental load of each language speaker. This vision is grounded and is directly related to the concept of text as a process (VAN DIJK, 2015).

To relate teaching of conjunctions to these matters, it is necessary to consider, for example, the role of these elements on the text's construction. This must be done from real texts and highlighting how some elements help on textual texture, especially in relation to cohesion and coherent, properly connected by the meanings' comprehension involved in the text production.

It is relevant, still, taking into consideration the textual aspects of these elements, since, in different modalities and genres, their use can be distinct. It is necessary, then, to use oral and written texts, considering the specificities of each genre and its context. A chat, for example, will have different uses compared to an academic article; even both of them are inserted in the written modality. This is due to the hybridism of many texts, which, effectively, may motivate the use of connection elements not yet predicted by tradition, as "só que".

In the comic strip, it is possible to observe the relation between conjunction and text construction.

1.



¹ “Queromeu, what advice would you give for a corrupt person on the beginning of his career?” / “Remember, the justice is delayed...” / “Thus, enjoy it.”

Starting from this example, it is possible to realize that in the comic strip there is a dialogue among some characters about corruption. Queromeu advises that justice is delayed, and, for that, it is necessary to enjoy it in order to be corrupt.

In order to interpret this text, it is necessary to understand, firstly, the Brazilian context, in which corruption scandals are constant and, therefore, the thematic may generate interest in possible readers. Beyond that, there is a recognition of the saying “a justiça tarda, mas não falha”, because this provides expectation upon the readers, since they, probably, expect the saying will be finalized or, at least, make this association in their minds.

We highlight that the conjunction “portanto” exercises essential role in the meaning construction of the text, since this connector has a conclusive function, helping to construct the idea of text closure. It is valid to emphasize, also, that, as the saying has not been finalized, there was a natural expectation for its conclusion

but, by its complement being “Portanto, aproveitem”, there is a conclusion that breaks expectations. If there was used a connector with alternation or contraposition function, there would not have the same placement of ideas and, therefore, the same humor.

Other issue to be considered is the meanings’ fluctuation, which needs to be seen from different contexts of use. The same connective might have distinct values, then, it is necessary that the student can analyze examples in which this is evident, that, priority, should involve real texts in order to map the meanings’ effect.

This can be elaborated, for example, from the connective “e”. This connective, depending on the context, can express distinct values, such as addition and contraposition, according to the examples (2) and (3), withdraw of Santos (2003) from children’s and youth literature books.

² I guess that the passion of eight for the letter N happened in the beginning, when Eight was still lying. He was also a little fish just as little fish Nun. Both has the same origin. And it is possible, also, that such a beautiful love had made them – the letter N and Eight – two symbols of infinity.

2. Eu acho que a paixão do oito pela letra N aconteceu no princípio, quando o Oito ainda era deitadinho. Ele também foi um peixinho igualzinho ao peixinho Nun. Os dois têm a mesma origem.

E é possível, também, que esse amor tão bonito é que tenha feito deles – da letra N e do Oito – dois símbolos do Infinito. ²

³ My Friend has been frozen on the stage. He and the other two. Without moving or saying a word. The public was losing its temper, it started to clap, stomp, whistle. And the representation did not begin.

3. O meu Amigo tinha ficado parado no palco. Ele e as outras duas. Sem se mexer nem dizer nada.

O público foi perdendo a paciência, começou a bater palma, a bater pé, assobiou. E nada da representação começar. ³

From that data, we realized that, in the first example, there is an additive role with the addition of information in relation to what it has been said, exercising, still, a narrative construction role when connecting the text. In the second example, there is a contraposition of ideas, since they are contrasted by the public will and that, in fact, occurred a break of expectation. Thereby, we can assume that the same connective, “e”, presents meanings that are linked to distinct issues, which it must be analyzed by its use contexts.

The union among morphological, syntactic, and semantic criteria needs to be considered and should take into account not only the definitions, as we have seen in textbooks, but the exercises as well. It is evident that this links to the aspect already approached of meanings’ fluctuation and also to metalanguage with the identification and classification of these elements.

The teaching, in this vision, has as foundation the reflection about language lined in real linguistic usages properly contextualized. In this way, teaching grammar encompasses, beyond the expositions and exercises about metalinguistic aspects, the reflection based on the linguistic relations in the text. Thereby, it is possible to work genres’ construction, real contexts of use and the issues of identification and classification of these elements.

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Resumo: *Este trabalho, de cunho revisional, tem como objetivo retomar a literatura acerca dos postulados linguísticos sobre a classe das conjunções a partir de distintas pesquisas e abordagens teórico-metodológicas (CÁMARA JR., 1970; SANTOS, 2003; RODRIGUES, 2018; BRITO, 2019). Para isso, inicialmente, retomamos as discussões de trabalhos sobre a classificação e os usos desses elementos. Posteriormente, abordamos o tratamento das conjunções no ensino (PINILLA, 2007; MORAES PINTO e ALONSO, 2012; PAULIUKONIS, 2014; SANTOS, 2014; FREITAS, 2015; CASTANHEIRA e CASEIRA, 2020). Por fim, apresentamos um panorama crítico acerca dos caminhos que ainda podem ser percorridos. Defendemos que é preciso considerar diferentes critérios no tratamento da temática, englobando novos conectores e seus distintos contextos de uso.*

Keywords: *Ensino; Conjunções; Revisão da literatura.*

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