A Cognitive and Constructionist Approach to the Portuguese Grammar:
The Case of Superlative Construction of Body Expression

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This paper presents a cognitive and constructionist analysis (under the goldberian model of Construction Grammar) for the Superlative Construction of Body Expression (SCBE), $[X_V$ of $Y_{N/V}]$. The focused construction presents itself in the repertoire of Portuguese as a strategy to modify the degree of utterances and relies on verbs of Portuguese that evoke what is being called Physical_impact frame (*cair* "to fall down", *contorcer* "to writhe", *rasgar* "to tear", etc.) or Physiological_impact frame (*morrer* "to die", *fartar* "to glut", *mijar* "to pis", etc.) as superlative scale operators (SSO) to modify gradable cores (GC) of different natures. Examples (1) and (2), below, show the verbs *morrer* "to die" and *rasgar* "to tear", in the context of SCBE, modifying the degree of the GCs *ciúmes* "jealousy" and *fome* "hunger", to indicate that such instances are experienced in a superlative way:

(1)   Isto   lhe   **rasgava** **de**   **dor**   o   coração.
       DEM.PRON   PERS.PRON-3rd   rip-PAST   GEN.PREP   pain   DEF.PRON   heart
                                          SSO   GC
       'It makes his heart suffer very much.'

(2)   Esse   cara   **morre**   **de**   **ciúme**   de   mim.
       DEM.PRON   guy   die-SP   GEN.PREP   jealousy   GEN.PREP   PERS.PRON-1st
                             SSO   GC
       'This guy is terribly jealousy of me.'

Given the amount of use in the theoretical and analytical model adopted, a corpus-based approach was chosen as the methodological approach due to the possibility of dealing with data of real, situated language and for allowing the understanding of the productivity and the conventionalization of the constructional pattern being investigated. The corpus used for this research is the Corpus do Português (http://www.corpusdoportugues.org/), composed of forty-five million words, distributed in texts that pervade the XIV-XX centuries.

Relevant points in the analytical and descriptive framework of the study are: (i) the productivity (delineated by the presence of 19 different types of the construction in the corpus data) and the conventionalization (outlined by the presence of 1,726 tokens of the construction in the corpus, which represent 43.9 of the use of the 19 verbs encountered followed by the genitive preposition "de" in the corpus) of the analyzed construction; (ii) the mismatch (cf. Francis & Michaelis 2003) in the semantics of the terms which occupy the slot X_V of the construction – verbs that evoke the Physical_impact frame (*cair* "to fall down", *contorcer* "to writhe", *rasgar* "to tear", etc.) or Physiological_impact frame; (iii) the coreness of metaphor in establishing grammatical patterns; (iv) the articulation of different structures, processes and products of human cognition as conceptual bases of the construction.

The analytical findings, revealing the specifics of the constructional pattern named Superlative Construction of Body Expression, justify the postulation of investigated construction as a construction of the Portuguese, with its own form, meaning, usage and conceptual bases. Thus, it is expected that this research contributes mainly with the description of the network of Portuguese constructions and translation between languages.

Key words: Cognitive Construction Grammar. Degree Modifier Constructions of Portuguese. Mismatch. Metaphor.

References
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