

A bidirectional English-Portuguese Dictionary of Verbal Collocations

Stella E. O. Tagnin (University of São Paulo, Brazil)

It is by now widely accepted that phraseological units, mainly collocations, are essential for a person's fluency (Pawley & Syder, 1983; Lewis, 1993). By extension, their knowledge is fundamental to translators who should have an excellent command of the pair of languages they work with. However, there are hardly any bilingual reference sources where students or translators can search for unknown collocations in the target language, one exception being Benson & Benson's *A Russian-English Dictionary of Verbal Collocations* (1993). A survey (Tagnin, 1998) of how nine English verbal collocations and their Portuguese equivalents have been treated in nine standard dictionaries, both monolingual English and bilingual English-Portuguese (Sinclair, 1987; Procter, 1995; Longman, 1995; Vallandro & Vallandro, 1976; Houaiss & Avery, 1964; Houaiss, 1982; Macmillan, 2002; Jelin, 2006) (Oxford, 2002), and in three Brazilian dictionaries, two bilingual and one monolingual (Houaiss & Avery, 1964; Taylor, 1982; Ferreira, 1975) showed that these collocations have not received systematic treatment, which makes it very difficult to find the desired collocation.

Table 1: Verbal collocations looked up in various dictionaries

English verbal collocations	Portuguese verbal collocations
make/take a decision	tomar uma decisão
meet/satisfy a need	satisfazer uma necessidade
make one's living	ganhar a vida
put a curse on sb	rogar praga em alg.
dispel/resolve a doubt	dirimir uma dúvida
deliver a speech	proferir um discurso
take an exam	fazer um exame
do battle	travar (uma) batalha
wage war	travar (uma) guerra

First of all, they may be listed under the verb, which is most often the case, or under the noun. It might be appropriate to list a verbal collocation under the verb in a dictionary aimed at the comprehension of language but not in one aimed at production. Usually a speaker or writer knows the noun, the referential lexeme, but might not know the verb that goes with it. For that reason, verbal collocations should come under the noun, as Hausmann (1985) has already claimed, for the noun is the base in a verbal collocation. Besides, only very rarely are verbal collocations listed as an entry in their own right. Mostly, they are either listed as a subentry, or in the definition or still as part of an example, but sometimes not highlighted in any form.

This paper will discuss the compilation of a bidirectional English-Portuguese/Portuguese-English dictionary of verbal collocations, which encompass the following structures:

V (Det) N – *make trouble, make an impression*

V + Prep + N – *come into force, keep in touch*

V + Adj – *get rich, go wrong*

It will report on the early pre-corpus stages of the project, when examples were collected from books, magazines and newspapers to the present time when citations were extracted from corpora, mainly the *Contemporary Corpus of American English* (COCA) (Davies, 2016), the *Corpus do Português* (Davies & Ferreira, 2016) and the *Corpus Brasileiro* (Berber Sardinha, 2016). For some specific collocations the internet was searched. The paper will also discuss decisions that had to be made, such as (1) 'is this a collocation?'; (2) 'is frequency the only criterion for a combination to be considered a collocation?'; (3) 'is this collocation too specialized to be included in a general dictionary?'; (4) 'is this a good example, does it make the meaning clear?'; (5) 'how can we find a good equivalent?'; (6) 'should cognate verbal collocations be included?'; (7) 'how do we account for verbal collocations for which the equivalent is not a collocation?'

These are some of the answers we came up with:

(1) For a combination to be considered a collocation it must present some type of lexical restriction: *give a book* is not a collocation because *give* in this sense means to hand something over to someone and it can combine with any object, such as *give a book, give a pencil, give a present, give a dress* etc. However *give a paper* at a conference has a very specific meaning and is thus considered a collocation.

(2) Frequency is not always the sole criterion, exclusivity (Brezina, McEnery, & Wattam, 2015, p. 140) is equally relevant. The Portuguese word for *doubt*, 'dúvida', collocates with 'esclarecer' (*clarify*) 2730 times in the *Corpus do Português: Web/Dialect* but only 321 with its synonym 'dirimir'. Nevertheless, DÚVIDA is the most common collocate of DIRIMIR, which qualifies the combination as a collocation. The same may be said for FURL which, though not a frequent verb, combines mostly with some type of sail: *Scouts untied lines, furlled sails, dropped anchor. I went aloft to furl the mainsail in a blow.*

(3) This can be a tricky question, but we have decided to only include specialized collocations which are known to the general public or, as the editors of the *Oxford Collocations dictionary for students of English* have put it, to the "educated non-specialist" (Oxford Collocations Dictionary, 2002, p. ix). So, for instance, *score a goal* has been included, while *jump offside* has not. By the same token, everyday legal collocations such as *file/settle/dismiss a lawsuit* are also listed.

(4) We have attempted to use examples that make the meaning clear because the dictionary does not include definitions. For instance, *Tom, you bring up a point that I brought up a few weeks back* does not offer enough

context for the user to infer the meaning of *bring up a point*, whereas *While I doubt this is true, it does bring up a point I want to discuss* does.

(5) Finding a good equivalent can be difficult at times for various reasons: the collocation in language A is not translated by a similar collocation in language B. Whereas *crash a party* is a V + N collocation, its Portuguese equivalent, 'entrar de penetra numa festa' is not actually a collocation as we have defined it. Some collocations are translated by a single verb, like *go sour* whose equivalent is simply 'azedar'. More often than not nouns are quite different across languages: *make arrangements* becomes 'tomar providências' in Portuguese. In such cases one has to rely on one's own knowledge of both languages or resort to searches in monolingual or even bilingual parallel corpora (Tagnin, 2007).

(6) We have opted to include cognate verbal collocations because they may differ in their inclusion or not of a determiner, for instance. *Make a difference* requires some kind of determiner, while in the Portuguese translation, 'fazer (uma) diferença', the determiner is not compulsory.

(7) Because this is a bidirectional dictionary, the verbal collocation will only be listed in the source language, that is, if it is a verbal collocation in English but not in Portuguese, there will be an entry for it in the English-Portuguese direction, but not in the reverse direction. For example, *go sour* will have an entry in the English-Portuguese direction with its equivalent 'azedar', but 'azedar' will not be an entry in the other direction as it is not a verbal collocation.

Here are two sample entries, one in each direction. Please note that the example for the equivalent in the target language is not a translation of the example in the source language; it is always an authentic rendition in its own right.

English-Portuguese

advance [progress]

- **advance, make an**

*Residents have reported seeing Mr. Taylor's forces, which had **made a swift advance** into the city centre on Wednesday, now withdraw from the area.*

*... and that in the essential things she had **made no advance**. British Lung Foundation research is **making dramatic advances**...*

- progresso, fazer

*... A China **fez progressos** significativos quanto a direitos humanos ...*

- avanços, fazer

*O jogador, além de marcar, também deverá **fazer avanços** periódicos pela ponta-direita. Precisamos **fazer avanços** significativos no sentido de torná-los mais fáceis de usar.*

- **advances, make ~ to**

*I'd be glad if you'd stop **making advances to** my daughter. Her husband heard about the **advances** Simon **had made to** his wife.*

- cantada, passar uma

*As mulheres ... em geral acabam percebendo que não precisam de homens nem para lhes **passar uma cantada**.*

- **advances, rebuff/ reject / resist sb.'s ~**

*...Jacobs, the slave who lived in the 1830s, described being so desperate to **resist** the unwanted sexual **advances** of her white enslaver, that...*

- investidas, barrar/repudiar as; resistir às

*Apesar de ter se mantido virgem ... **resistindo** firmemente **às investidas** de vários pretendentes... ... para **barrar as investidas** de um concorrente mais ou menos anônimo ...*

Portuguese-English

avanço

- **avanços, fazer**

*O jogador, além de marcar, também deverá **fazer avanços** periódicos pela ponta-direita. Precisamos **fazer avanços** significativos no sentido de torná-los mais fáceis de usar.*

- advance, make an

*Residents have reported seeing Mr. Taylor's forces, which had **made a** swift **advance** into the city centre on Wednesday, now withdraw from the area. ... and that in the essential things she had **made no advance**. British Lung Foundation research is **making dramatic advances**...*

References

- Benson, M., & Evelyn Benson. (1993). *A Russian-English Dictionary of Verbal Collocations*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Berber Sardinha, T. (2016). *Projeto AC/DC: corpo Corpus Brasileiro*. Fonte: Corpus Brasileiro: <http://www.linguateca.pt/aceso/corpus.php?corpus=CBRAS>
- Brezina, V., McEnery, T., & Wattam, S. (2015). Collocations in context - a new perspective on collocation networks. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 20:2, pp. 139-173.
- Davies, M. (2016). Fonte: Corpus of Contemporary American English: <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>
- Davies, M., & Ferreira, M. J. (2016). *Corpus do Português: Web/Dialects*. Fonte: <http://www.corpusdoportugues.org/web-dial/>
- Ferreira, A. B. (1975). *Novo Dicionário Aurélio*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira.
- Hausmann, F. J. (1985). Kollokationen im deutschen Wörterbuch - ein Beitrag zur Theorie des lexikographischen Beispiels. In: H. Bergenholtz, & J. Mugdan (Eds.), *Lexikographie und Grammatik. Akten des Essener Kolloquiums zur Grammatik im Wörterbuch* (pp. 118-129). Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Houaiss, A. (Ed.). (1982). *Webster's Dicionário Inglês-Português*. Rio de Janeiro: Record.
- Houaiss, A., & Avery, C. B. (Eds.). (1964). *Novo Dicionário Balsa das Línguas Inglesa e Portuguesa* (Vol. I e II). New York: Appleton-Century Crofts.

- Jelin, I. (2006). *Dicionário Inglês - Português*. São Paulo: FTD.
- Lewis, M. (1993). *The Lexical Approach*. LTP.
- Longman. (1995). *Longman Language Activator*. Essex: Longman.
- Macmillan. (2002). *Macmillan English Dictionary*. Oxford: Macmillan.
- Oxford. (2002). *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Oxford Collocations Dictionary. (2002). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pawley, A., & Syder, F. H. (1983). Two puzzles for linguistic theory: nativelike selection and nativelike fluency. In: J. C. SCHMIDT, & R. W. Richards (Eds.), *Language and communication* (pp. 191-226). London: Longman.
- Procter, P. (Ed.). (1995). *Cambridge International Dictionary of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sinclair, J. (Ed.). (1987). *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*. London / Glasgow: Collins.
- Sinclair, John M. (ed.). (1987). *Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary*. (J. M. Sinclair, Ed.) London: Collins.
- Tagnin, S. E. (1998). Convencionalidade e Produção de Texto: um dicionário de colocações verbais inglês-português / português-inglês. *Tese de Livre Docência - USP-FFLCH - Departamento de Letras Modernas*. São Paulo, São Paulo, Brasil.
- Tagnin, S. E. (2007). A identificação de equivalentes tradutórios em corpora corporáveis. *Anais do I Congresso Internacional da ABRAPUI*. Belo Horizonte: UFMG.
- Taylor, J. L. (1982). *Webster's Portuguese-English Dictionary*. Rio de Janeiro: Record.
- Vallandro, L., & Vallandro, L. (1976). *Dicionário Inglês-Português*. Porto Alegre: Globo.