



Idiomatic constructions with the verb *pagar* (to pay) in Brazilian Portuguese

Construções idiomáticas com o verbo pagar no português brasileiro

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ABSTRACT: In this paper, with the theoretical support of Cognitive Linguistics, more specifically, Cognitive Grammar, we analyze occurrences, in Brazilian Portuguese, of idiomatic constructions with the verb *pagar* (to pay) collected on different internet sites with the help of the Google search tool. As a result, (i) we demonstrate that such idiomatic constructions result from the schematic construction NP TRANSFER NP TO NP which, in turn, comes from an even more schematic construction NP V NP SPREP; (ii) we explain the peculiarities in the use of these constructions as well as the relationships they maintain among themselves with regard to the chain of meanings and contexts related to the emergence of these constructions; (iii) we formulated the constructional network of the verb *pagar* (to pay) containing referred constructions.

KEYWORDS: Idiomatic constructions. Verb *pagar* (to pay). Cognitive Grammar. Brazilian Portuguese.

RESUMO: Neste artigo, com o suporte teórico da Linguística Cognitiva, mais especificamente, da Gramática Cognitiva, são analisadas ocorrências de construções idiomáticas com o verbo *pagar* levantadas em diferentes *sites* da *internet* com o auxílio da ferramenta de busca *Google*. Como resultados (i) demonstra-se que tais construções idiomáticas decorrem da construção esquemática SN TRANSFERIR SN PARA SN que, por sua vez, provém de construção ainda mais esquemática SN V SN SPREP; (ii) são explicitadas peculiaridades no uso das construções levantadas, relações que mantêm entre si, no que diz respeito ao encadeamento de significados e a contextos de usos relacionados ao surgimento das construções analisadas; (iii) é formulada a rede construcional do verbo *pagar* contendo as construções em questão.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Construções idiomáticas. Verbo *pagar*. Gramática Cognitiva. Português brasileiro.

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1 Introduction: etymology and uses of the verb *pagar*

The origin of the verb *pagar* traces back to the Sanskrit *paçus* (sheep/lamb), *pecus* in Latin, with roots in commercial transactions that were practiced, using the ram, the sheep, and later cattle as a basis, which served as a form of payment. *Pacāre* in vulgar Latin, following the terms *pax* and *pacis*, licensed the meanings of appeasing, calming, and satisfying, adapted to the situation of debt: by paying what is owed, one remains in peace with one's conscience and with creditors (BUENO, 1968).

For Sacconi (2010), the meaning of this verb in Portuguese is related to the idea of giving money in exchange for goods, settling, compensating, rewarding, and spending. Thus, speakers can use it with the sense of transferring monetary value, as in the following example:

(1) Giuliani says that Trump paid for the silence of a porn actress.
<https://www.dw.com/pt-br/giuliani-diz-que-trump-pagou-por-sil%C3%A2ncio-de-atriz-porn%C3%B4/a-43632519>

Sacconi (2010) also lists some popular expressions, among them *pagar sem bufar* (to pay without complaining), *pagar caro* (to pay dearly), *pagar um alto preço* (to pay a high price), *pagar com a vida* (to pay with one's life), which are linked to the idea of bearing severe consequences for a behavior.

Bueno (1968), in turn, referring to the expressions *pagar o pato* (to take the blame) and *pagar promessa* (to fulfill a vow), explains that the first carries the sense of taking the blame for someone else's wrongdoing, while the second is related to fulfilling what was promised to God or to a saint(s).

The cited authors assert that the verb *pagar*, when used in its most basic sense, conveys a judgment value of justice, that is, the settling of debts. However, when distanced from this meaning, it tends to present a sense related to suffering and affliction, as, for example, in *pagar os pecados* (to suffer for one's sins).

Sacconi (2010) also cites two other expressions, likewise, distanced from the basic meaning of the verb *pagar*, widely used in Brazilian Portuguese (BP): *pagar mico* (to embarrass oneself) and *pagar com a (ou na) mesma moeda* (to pay back in the same coin). The first is linked to the notion of finding oneself in an embarrassing or humiliating situation, while the second relates to the idea of retaliating in the same way or in the same proportion: attitudes that are generally not welcome.

In addition to these usages listed in previous studies, we find others such as *Pagar geral*, *pagar pra ver*, *pagar à mão*, *pagar o chão*, *pagar barriguinha*, *pagar de santo*, etc., which indicate the existence of an extensive constructional network linked to the verb *pagar*. However, to arrive at the configuration of this network, it is first necessary to uncover the relationships among the various constructions with *pagar*. Our purpose in this study is precisely this: based on a survey we carried out of idiomatic constructions with the verb *pagar* in Brazilian Portuguese, to explain the characteristics of the constructions identified and the relationships they maintain with one another, in terms of chains of meanings and contexts of use, which may have given rise and shape to the constructional network of the verb *pagar*, with respect to such constructions. To this end, we will base ourselves on the theoretical framework of Cognitive Linguistics and, more specifically, Cognitive Grammar (LANGACKER 1987, 1990, 1991, and 2005), which we will discuss next.

2 Cognitive Grammar and the notion of construction

Langacker, from 1976 onward, began to develop a linguistic theory, the Cognitive Grammar, that departs radically from some assumptions current at the time, such as the idea that language is a self-sufficient system, autonomous enough to be studied in isolation from broader cognitive concerns, and that grammar, especially syntax, is an aspect of linguistic structure independent and distinct from the lexicon and semantics (LANGACKER, 2006).

For Cognitive Grammar, therefore, language is not independent nor describable without essential reference to cognitive processing; grammatical structures do not constitute an autonomous formal system but, rather, are inherently symbolic; and lexicon, morphology, and syntax form a continuum of symbolic units.

From this perspective, as Silva and Batoréo (2010) explain:

Grammar is understood as a system of conceptual structuring, which involves general cognitive capacities such as perception, attention, categorization, and memory; the knowledge we have about the world, thus forming an encyclopedic semantics; imaginative mechanisms such as metaphor, metonymy, conceptual blending, and the evocation of fictitious entities (SILVA; BATOREO, 2010, p. 230).

One of the essential principles in Cognitive Linguistics is that meaning is conceptualization. Conceptualization, in turn, consists of a process of apprehension, in cognitive terms, of a given entity or situation (object of conceptualization) by a conceptualizer (subject of conceptualization). Langacker designates these alternative ways of conceptualizing a certain situation as Construals. Let us see what Silva and Batoréo (2010, p. 233) say about this:

In Cognitive Linguistics, the expression conceptual perspectivization (the translation we propose for the English term “construal”) is commonly used to designate the way and the alternative ways of conceptualizing a certain situation. These alternative ways involve conceptual framing operations (or “construals”, as designated by Langacker) and these operations correspond to general cognitive abilities.

This capacity for conceptual framing has been explored primarily by Langacker (1987, 1991, 1999) and by Talmy (2000), both of whom have highlighted it as the central function of grammar.

The central ideas of Cognitive Grammar, according to Langacker (2005), are the following:

Lexicon, morphology and syntax form a continuum, divided only arbitrarily into discreet “components”. Everything in this continuum can be fully described as assemblages of symbolic structures. A symbolic structure is defined specifically as the pairing of a semantic structure and a phonological one (their semantic and phonological poles). This has some consequences. Firstly, grammar is not distinct from semantics; but it embodies semantics as one of its poles. Secondly, the elements of grammatical description are not special, irreducible primitives; they are reducible to meaning-form pairs. Lastly, every grammatical construct must be meaningful (LANGACKER, 2005, p. 104).

According to Langacker (2005), there are three versions of construction grammar: Cognitive Grammar, Construction Grammar and Radical Construction Grammar, which share “a substantial list of basic ideas”. Let’s look at the list he presents:

(i) Constructions (rather than “rules”) are the primary objects of description. (ii) Structures are not derivational (“monostratal”). (iii) Lexicon and grammar are not distinct components but form a continuum of constructions. (iv) Constructions are pairs of form and meaning (“assemblages of symbolic structures”). (v) The structure of information is known as a facet of constructive meanings. (vi) Constructions are linked in a network of inheritance (“categorization”). (vii) Regularities (rules, patterns) take the form of schematic constructions in relation to the expressions they occupy. (viii) Apart from the degree of specificity or abstractness, expressions and the patterns they embody share the same basic nature. (ix) Linguistic knowledge encompasses many constructions, a significant proportion of which are “idiosyncratic” in relation to “normal” productive grammatical patterns. (x) A structure that accommodates “idiosyncratic” constructions will easily accommodate “regular” patterns as a special case (but not conversely). (xi) Good formation is a matter of simultaneous constraint satisfaction. (xii) Composition is achieved through “unification” (integration) (LANGACKER, 2005, p. 102).

Yet, there are some aspects where the three versions offer different perspectives. All three of them agree, for instance, that “constructions” replace lexicon and grammar and that they can be reduced to pairs of meaning and form. However, as Langacker points out, such similarity masks a fundamental point of “disagreement”:

This point of disagreement concerns on what is meant by “form”. In Cognitive Grammar, as is clearly stated in all published formulations, the form in a meaning-form pairing is specifically a phonological structure. Of course, I would generalize this to include other symbolic media; notably gestures and writing (Langacker, 1987: 81, 2001). Crucially, though, this does not include what might be called “grammatical form”. In both Construction Grammar and Radical Construction Grammar, the “form” component of a meaning-form pairing includes the grammatical form. Thus, Goldberg (1995:51) speaks of “a pairing between a semantic level and a syntactic level of grammatical functions”. More explicitly, Croft (2001:62) affirms that a construction is symbolic by virtue of being “a pairing of a morphosyntactic structure with a semantic structure” (LANGACKER, 2005, p. 104).

Langacker does not consider the issue regarding the pairing of form and meaning to be trivial, since it concerns the nature of grammar and its relationship to meaning. The author emphasizes that, according to Cognitive Grammar, grammar is symbolic in nature. “In this perspective, grammar (or the grammatical form) does not symbolize the semantic structure, but rather embodies it as one of its two poles,” that is “grammar is reduced to something more fundamental and, therefore, does not appear in such diagrams as a separate box” (LANGACKER, 2005, p. 105).

Because of that fact, in representations of Cognitive Grammar, symbols referring to verbs (V), noun phrases (NP) etc., are merely notations, since the concepts of “verb”, “noun”, “subject”, “object” etc. are semantically definable and inherent to constructs. A noun, for example, instantiates the scheme [[THING] / [X]], and a verb, the scheme [[PROCESS] / [Y]]. It is worth noting that [THING] and [PROCESS] are abstract semantic notions and that [X] and [Y] are highly schematic phonological

structures, which specify little more than the presence of some phonological content (LANGACKER, 2006). The concepts of “subject” and “object”, in turn, are subsumed under those of Trajector and Landmark, proposed by Langacker and inspired by prototypal verbs in action, in which the Trajector is generally the initial of primary agent, while the Landmark can refer to the goal, the target, the patient or another entity related to the Trajector. Thus, the Trajector/Landmark asymmetry underlies the subject/object distinction, although Trajector and Landmark have a considerably broader scope of application. Langacker (2005) attributes this asymmetry to the figure/ground organization: relational predication elevates one of its participants, the Trajector, to the status of figure, while other participants are referred to as ground. In this asymmetry, the Landmark is the secondary focal point.

Considering that a speaker’s linguistic knowledge is procedural rather than declarative, and that internalized grammar represents this knowledge, Langacker states that grammar is a “structured inventory of conventional linguistic UNITS” (Langacker, 2006, p. 44; emphasis added). The author also draws attention to the term “unit”, which is used in a technical sense to refer to a structure that can be activated pre-packaged, without the speaker paying attention to the specifics of its internal composition. The unit then comes from a cognitive routine, with a structured inventory of conventional units, “in the sense that some units function as components of others (i.e., they constitute of subroutines)” (LANGACKER, 2006, p. 44).

According to Langacker (2005), Cognitive Grammar aligns with Construction Grammar in conceiving that symbolic assemblies’ networks (construction hierarchies) comprise both lexicon and grammar, with no essential distinction between them. However, Langacker points out a substantial difference between both approaches, regarding the reasons for recognizing the existence of a construction and its status as a conventional linguistic unit:

In Construction Grammar, a construction is recognized only if any of its aspects can not be predicted from its component parts, or from other independently established constructions (Goldberg 1995: 4). There is no such requirement in cognitive grammar, in which an assembly is accepted as part of “grammar” to the extent that is psychologically rooted and conventional within the speech community.

The author illustrates this difference, using the sentence *I love you* as an example, which is understood as a conventional unit in English, but doesn't exhibit any obvious idiosyncrasies:

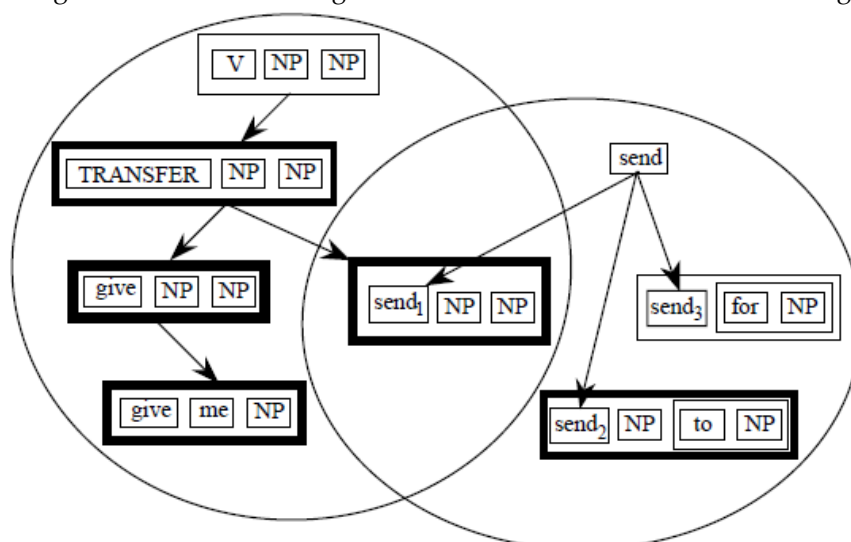
Every single English speaker knows *I love you* as a fixed and colloquial expression. If I use it, I don't have to actively construct it from scratch by retrieving its component lexical items and combining them according to the appropriate construction schemes - it comes as a pre-packaged unit. On the other hand, it is totally analyzable and implements the schemes in question. Furthermore, it lacks any obvious idiosyncrasies that would prevent it from being reconstructed according to the schemes. Therefore, it is not a construction as defined in Construction Grammar. However, it is a conventional linguistic unit, as defined in Cognitive Grammar (LANGACKER, 2005, p. 140-1).

Regarding construction networks, Langacker (2005) clarifies that symbolic assemblies are embedded in networks of categorization.

Therefore, it should be noted that, for Cognitive Grammar and, by extension, for us as well, the meaning of a construction does not need to be partially or totally independent from the words that make it up. All units that are psychologically rooted and conventional within a speech community are recognized as constructions.

Let's look at a schematic configuration presented by Langacker (2005) for bitransitive constructions in English (with ellipsis on the left side):

Figure 1 - schematic configuration of bitransitive constructions in English.



Source: Langacker (2005).

Note that, in this configuration, some meanings are “schematic” regarding others, as indicated by the arrows, and that the most schematic level of the bitransitive construction is V NP NP (V SN SN, in Portuguese). There are even more schematic levels, such as those mentioned here, which refer to nouns ([THING] / [X]) and verbs ([PROCESS] / [Y]), as well as others that refer to larger units, such as phrases and clauses. An NP, for example, is characterized by Langacker as a noun [THING] anchored in a speech event. The same applies to a finite clause. This is because, according to the author, a simple noun, such as “dog”, and a simple verb, such as “jump”, serve only the minimal semantic function of providing an initial type specification, which is then subject to refinements, adjustments, and quantification at higher levels of organization. In contrast, a NP such as “the dog” implies that the speaker and listener share information that justifies the use of the definite article; it also implies that the speaker and listener are likely to succeed in establishing mental contact with the instance of the profiled object (LANGACKER, 2002). Similarly, the distinction between “jump” and “the dog jumped” lies in reference to the speech event, which is established by the verbal tense ending.

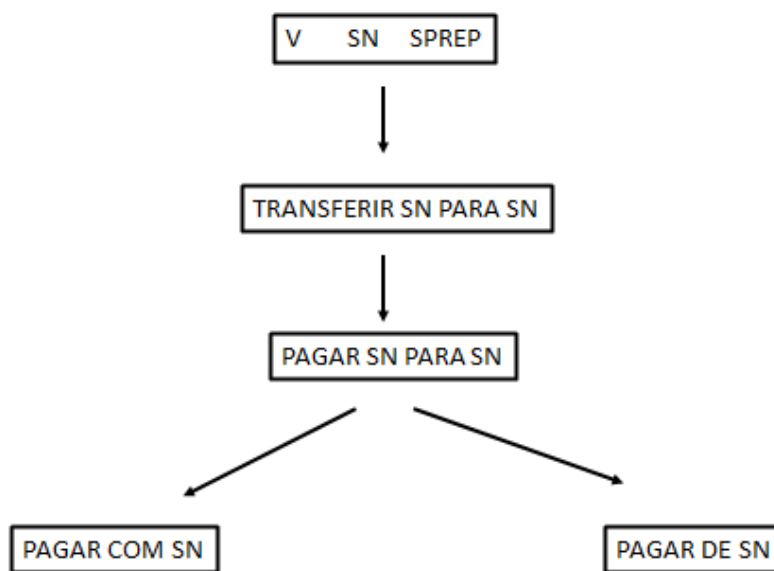
Another detail worth noting in the presented configuration is the thicker outlines, which correspond to more conventional constructions. It is, however, necessary to clarify that, for Langacker, the exact configuration of a network is less important than recognizing the inadequacy of any reductionist description of the meaning of a linguistic unit. A speaker's knowledge of the conventional value of a linguistic unit cannot, the author argues, be reduced to a single structure, such as a prototype or a higher-level scheme, since there is no way to predict with precision which of the conceivable and linguistically plausible variations in extensions and elaborations has, in fact, attained the status of a conventional unit. Furthermore, semantic structures are characterized in relation to "cognitive domains." A cognitive domain can be any type of conceptualization: perceptual experience, concept, conceptual complex, elaborate knowledge system, etc. Certain conceptualizations require others for their characterization; that is, they involve hierarchies of conceptual complexity, in which structures at a given level emerge through cognitive operations performed on structures at lower levels. The cognitive domains required by linguistic predications can occur at any level within such hierarchies (LANGACKER 2002).

In light of the above, and therefore without focusing on the conventionality of constructions, we conclude that the most schematic level of a construction with the verb "pagar" refers to the construction scheme of bitransitive sentences in Portuguese (X TRANSFERS Y TO Z), although there is, not always explicitly stated, the involvement of a commodity/debt for which payment is made (X TRANSFERS Y TO Z (for K)), as illustrated by the following example:

- (2) TV Brasil paid Record R\$3.2 million for a soap opera
<https://oglobo.globo.com/epoca/guilherme-amado/tv-brasil-pagou-32-milhoes-record-por-novela-24952255>

Based on Figure 1, we have formulated a basic framework for idiomatic constructions with the verb “pagar” in Brazilian Portuguese (including left-hand ellipsis), which we present below.

Figure 2 — Schematic configuration of the verb “pagar” in PB.



This framework will be revisited later and slightly modified to accommodate the idiomatic constructions with the verb “pagar” that we identified in our survey.

3 Idiomatic constructions: frequency and routine usage

In this study, we will not focus on the bitransitive construction itself, since our interest lies in other constructions that stem from it, namely the idiomatic constructions involving the verb “pagar”.

Idiomatic constructions have gained prominence in research within the field of Cognitive Linguistics, since this theoretical approach rejects the notion of syntactic autonomy (in which there is no place for idiomatic constructions) and views linguistic and cultural diversity as shared resources whose features reflect universal aspects of the human body, mind, and experience. Cognitive linguistics takes into account the

influence of social, interactional, and cultural factors, since, from this perspective, individual minds are not autonomous entities, and language and cognition are outcomes of socially mediated, culturally influenced interaction. Therefore, it is posited that language proficiency arises from language use; consequently, the pragmatic aspects involved in language production serve as a means for linking thought, speech, and linguistic constructions.

Many studies have been conducted based on this insight, and there is a growing interest in the study of idiomatic constructions (NUNBERG; SAG; WASOW, 1994; FILLMORE et al., 1988; CROFT; CRUSE, 2004), given that, for a long time, such constructions were rejected because they were considered exceptions in the field of syntax.

Based on these studies, we know that: (i) new linguistic uses emerge in interactive situations, since each instance of verbal interaction creates the conditions for new uses to arise; (ii) even if the speaker opts for older constructions, each time a given construction is used, it becomes slightly different from what it was.

Furthermore, both older and newer constructions coexist in speech communities, and over time, one of them may become more frequently used and thus become conventional. One of the criteria considered for an idiomatic expression to become established is precisely its routine use. Routinization results from frequent use, which, in turn, requires less cognitive effort.

Givón (1995) had already drawn attention to the relationship between cognitive complexity and frequency when explaining the concept of marking and arguing that the greater the cognitive complexity of a term or expression, the lower its frequency of use and the greater its structural complexity. Going in the opposite direction, the lower the cognitive complexity of a term or expression, the more frequently it is used and the lower its structural complexity.

Another important aspect to highlight regarding idiomatic expressions concerns their degree of opacity: some idiomatic expressions are more transparent, with meanings that can be inferred from the meaning of their individual components, as in “pagar caro,” meaning “to pay a high price,” while others are more opaque, with a holistic rather than compositional meaning, as in “pagar mico,” that means “to make a fool.” Regarding idiomatic constructions involving the verb “pagar,” or “to pay,” as we will demonstrate, there is a continuum between transparency and opacity.

4 The data

The data for this study were collected from websites between January 2018 and January 2020 using the Google search engine. Data collection and analysis methods of this kind, which have come to be known as the “web as a corpus,” have gained many supporters. According to Gatto (2014, p. 36), the use of web as a corpus emerges as an innovative tool and opens a myriad of new avenues of research for comparing different types of texts in the fields of sociolinguistics, language teaching, lexicography, and others.

Various researchers agree that the use of this methodological approach provides access to a collection of authentic texts produced in spontaneous situations, where the goal is not to demonstrate linguistic proficiency but rather to achieve a legitimate communicative purpose through language. Among these researchers is Gatto (2014), who supports this view because he believes there would be no reason to use the web as a subject of linguistic study were it not for the fact that it consists of authentic texts resulting from genuine communicative events, produced by people who are negotiating shared interests.

It is worth noting that the data available for analysis comes from a rich corpus that encompasses various text genres, including journalistic texts, memes, blogs, and social media posts, among others.

For us to access this rich framework and increase the breadth of data collection on virtual environments, we used the search Google engine, with no search filters. The searches were queried using different tenses and conjugations of the verb pagar (to pay), those being pagar, paguei, pagou, pagará, pagaram, pagariam, among others. This allowed us to put together a body of data built from different genres, with the verb employed in different contexts and by different communities. Although quite interesting, this aspect of our corpus won't be receiving any special attention here. In this study, we focus on researching constructions made using the verb pagar, seeking a better understanding of the specifics in each construction, the relations between each other, better yet, the unfolding that is observed between each one, specifically about how its meaning and contexts of use are extended, and the position each occupy on the verb's constructional network. To that end, we cannot overlook the circumstances related to the act of paying that might serve as a contextual trigger for new uses and the emergence of new constructions. There, we need to take the fact that pagar refers to commercial transactions into consideration, an interaction in which payment is made to obtain a product, as well as financial transactions such as loans and debts. In other words, we need to consider the essentially submissive relationship of debtor to its creditor, both judicially and socially (which may, in some cases, lead to embarrassment and vexation), and contexts that may involve debts, transfers (monetary or otherwise), forms of payment, defaulting on a debt etc.

5 Data analysis

We begin by making it clear that our analysis is essentially a qualitative nature. Thus, even though we present, in the table below, the total number of occurrences and its respective ratios compared to the total number of constructions gathered, we do not perform a quantitative analysis. Such percents, therefore, are useful only as a rough estimate of the relative use frequency of any given construction used during the

research period. That being said, we present, in table 1, the constructions utilizing the verb *pagar* found on the web. Each construction present in table 1 is sorted by ascending degree of opacity, as will be explained on example constructions selected.

Table 1 — Idiomatic construction with the verb *pagar*.

CONSTRUÇÕES	OCORRÊNCIAS	%			
Pagar a mão	5	1%	Pagar com a mesma moeda/Pagar na mesma moeda;	17	3%
Pagar o chão	3	1%	Pagar esporro	14	2%
Pagar sem bufar	9	2%	Pagar geral	22	4%
Pagar pra ver	9	2%	Pagar o pato	61	11%
Pagar promessa	80	14%	Pagar pau	10	2%
Pagar pecado	35	6%	Pagar mico	84	15%
Pagar a língua	24	4%	Pagar boquete / Pagar chupeta	37	6%
Pagar alto preço/Pagar preço alto	27	5%	Pagar calcinha/Pagar cofrinho/ Pagar barriguinha/ etc.	85	15%
Pagar caro	14	2%	Pagar de santo; pagar de louco; pagar de rica etc.	26	5%
Pagar com juros	3	1%	TOTAL	573	100
Pagar com a vida	8	1%			

As we can see in table 1, there are constructions that occur more frequently, while some occur very rarely. Those, as we will go into detail later, are constructions that happen in very specific contexts. Table 1 also shows that the verb *pagar* occurs in various constructions, with different use cases and with a variable number of slots to be filled. Let us examine some examples of constructions and the circumstances in which each one is employed. We will start with those in which the meaning of transfer of monetary value is preserved. From there, according to the order of constructions in table 1, we will slowly progress through more opaque constructions, with uses and meaning more distant from the transactional meaning of the word.

(3) *Pagar o chão*:

(...) Then, it all started to be dominated by the ambition of easy money, when the *lei de salva* (payment made to Candomblé) starts to be overwhelming, with the excuse that money is needed for your guardian angel, the *cambono*, or for *pagar o chão* (paying the leader).

<http://temploumbandacabocloopenabranca.blogspot.com/2013/06/fracasso-do-medium.html>

Pagar o chão is a construction used by the spiritism community, specifically *Umbanda* and *Candomblé*, to refer to a sum paid to the terreiro's leader.

(4) *Pagar a mão*:

(...) most... if not all rituals must be paid for. At least that's what they told me... you must *pagar a mão* (pay the leader), the *chão*, the materials, etc...

<https://ocandomble.com/2010/06/15/magia-para-venda/>

Just like the previous construction, *Pagar a mão* is also used by the *Umbanda* and *Candomblé* communities as a sum paid for religious services.

(5) *Pagar sem bufar*:

It's an old tale: where to get the money, or how to pay for a right recognized by the law, that the government, blind, deaf and mute, has ordered to *pagar sem bufar* (pay without complaining)?

<https://www.tribunapr.com.br/noticias/a-galinha-dos-ovos-de-ouro/>

The construction *Pagar sem bufar*, as illustrated in (5), refers to a monetary value to be paid without complaint or protest.

(6) *Pagar pra ver*:

I knew how this story was going to end, but a lot of people like to call my bluff in the hope that I was wrong.

<https://www.tumblr.com/search/pagar%20pra%20ver>

Pagar pra ver, which is commonly used in games that involve gambling, such as poker. Outside of this context, this construction is also used for bets of a non-monetary nature. It is most commonly used in situations where one decides to act or defend a position, while risking being wrong or making a mistake.

(7) *Pagar promessa*:

Pagando promessa (fulfilling a promise), believer treks for 280 kilometers by

foot, from Teresina to Oeiras

<https://maioeiras.com.br/noticias/pagando-promessa-fiel-percorre-280-km-a-pe-de-teresina-a-oeiras/>

The construction *Pagar promessa*, rooted in religion, is commonly used in reference to an act that a believer has promised God or saints that he would do, in exchange for a wish granted. In this structure, the concept of payment is not necessarily tied to monetary value, but rather to some form of sacrifice or penance. However, fulfilling a vow (*pagar promessa*) is often equated with a settling debt. There is even a popular proverb, another idiomatic expression, that states "*promessa é dívida*" (like the English saying "a promise made is a debt unpaid"). Settling this kind of debt, however, usually occurs through some form of atonement.

(8) *Pagar pecado* (To pay for one's sins):

"The taxpayers are the ones paying for the sins of the PT administration," a columnist claims.

<http://www.folhapolitica.org/2015/07/quem-esta-pagando-os-pecados-do-governo.html>

Sharing the same religious undertones as *Pagar promessa*, the expression *Pagar pecado* is used in contexts where individuals find themselves in a state of expiation, enduring a hardship they believe to be the consequence of past mistakes (or sins). In this structure, it is quite clear that the verb "to pay" is used in the sense of enduring suffering to atone for guilt, a meaning that is also present in the following seven expressions.

(9) *Pagar a língua* (To eat one's word / To have one's word come back to bite you):

"Motherhood is basically having to eat your words"

Let me tell you guys something, before becoming a mom, I had the terrible habit of judging other mothers

Now, looking back at the old Keila, I realize I've done so many of the things

I used to criticize."

<https://keilamota.wordpress.com/2019/06/24/maternidade-e-pagar-a-lingua/>

Pagar a língua is an idiomatic structure used in contexts where someone ends up acting in a way they previously deemed unacceptable and used to criticize in others.

(10) *Pagar alto preço / Pagar preço alto* (To pay a high price / To pay a heavy price:

"He will pay a heavy price,' says Bolsonaro regarding the military officer caught with cocaine."

<https://renovamidia.com.br/vai-pagar-um-preco-alto-diz-bolsonaro-sobre-militar-com-cocaina/>

The idiomatic construction *Pagar alto preço / Pagar preço alto* profiles an aspect of the verb *pagar* (to pay) - inherent to the commercial transaction frame¹ to which the verb belongs - that is not accounted for in the schematic configuration of the ditransitive construction. This aspect pertains to price and, therefore, involves a value judgement regarding what is being paid (whether is expensive, cheap, fair, etc.). This construction is widely used in reference to the consequences of a given behavior, frequently expressing regret for past mistakes or to pass judgment on the behavior of others.

(11) *Pagar caro* (To pay dearly):

"G7 countries 'take advantage of us' and Canada 'will pay dearly,' says trump."

<https://epocanegocios.globo.com/Mundo/noticia/2018/06/epoca-negocios-paises-do-g-7-tiram-vantagem-de-nos-e-canada-pagara-carro-diz-trump.html>

¹For further reading see Filmore et al. (1972) and Moreira and Salomão (2012), among others.

The construction *Pagar caro* shares the same characteristics as the previous one. However, it is frequently used in reference to the behavior of the speaker or third parties, conveying not just a value judgment, but also a kind of threat.

There are other construction with the verb *pagar* that refer to the price to be exacted and similarly involve a value judgment, typically directed at someone else's behavior, that also carry a threatening tone, as is the case of *Pagar com juros* (to pay back with interest), *Pagar com a vida* (to pay with one's life) and *Pagar com a / na mesma moeda* (to give someone a taste of their own medicine / to pay someone back in their own coin).

(12) *Pagar com juros* (To pay back with interest):

"The only thing missing from Dilma's letter were excerpts from 'Apesar de Você' (a famous Brazilian protest song), the best message for those who will pay with interest for an impeachment without a crime.

<https://www.brasil247.com/blog/na-carta-de-dilma-so-faltou-trechos-de-apesar-de-voce-melhor-recado-a-quem-vai-pagar-com-juros-pelo-impeachment-sem-crime>

(13) *Pagar com a vida* (To pay with one's life):

"some make mistakes and others pay pay for them. She paid with her life,' says the husband of the deceased student."

<https://ultimosegundo.ig.com.br/brasil/sp/2012-08-24/uns-erram-e-outros-pagam-ela-pagou-com-a-vida-diz-marido-de-aluna-morta.html>

(14) *Pagar na mesma moeda* (To retaliate in kind / To give a taste of their own medicine):

"Obama orders the expulsion of Russian agents, Putin refuses to retaliate in kind and puts his trust in Trump's policies."

<http://novojornal.co.ao/internacional/interior/obama-ordena-expulsao-de-agentes-russos-putin-recusa-pagar-na-mesma-moeda-e-confia-na-politica-de-trump-36344.html>

It is worth noticing, however, that in these constructions, the method of payment is explicitly specified. Furthermore, while *Pagar com juros* and *Pagar com a*

vida emphasize the heavy toll being exacted, *Pagar com a mesma moeda* (or *na mesma moeda*) makes a clear allusion to an act of vengeance or retaliation.

(15) *Pagar esporro* (To chew someone out / To get scolded):

(...) "The teacher, obviously, didn't want to hear any explanations. Declaring me guilt on the spot, after all, I was caught red-handed, he chewed me out big time in front of the class."

<https://medium.com/@simoneavellar/quando-um-telefone-que-n%C3%A3o-era-meu-tocou-de-dentro-da-minha-mochila-durante-uma-aula-dd0a22da66cc>

In (15) and subsequent constructions, we can observe that the compositionality of the expressions is compromised. In (15), the transfer inherent to the ditransitive construction takes place on a verbal level. Just as one metaphorically "gives" advice or a sermon, one also metaphorically "pays" (delivers) a scolding.

(16) *Pagar geral* (To lash out at everyone):

"Journalist catches Palmeiras' full-back lashing out at everyone after a draw, complete with swear words.

<https://www.90min.com/pt-BR/posts/6435958-jornalista-flagra-lateral-do-palmeiras-pagando-geral-apos-empate-com-direito-a-palavroes>

Following this same line of metaphorical transfer is *Pagar geral*, whose holistic meaning, which cannot be deduced from its individual components, is to reprimand or scold people indiscriminately.

(17) *Pagar o pato* (To take the fall / To foot the bill):

"'The national team cannot take the fall for the crisis in Brazil,' says Daniel Alves."

<https://www.metropoles.com/esportes/futebol/selecao-nao-pode-pagar-o-pato-por-crise-no-brasil-diz-daniel-alves/amp>

Pagar o pato, like all the constructions we will look at next, is characterized by complete semantic opacity. Its most common usage refers to situations where someone unjustly endures punishment or undue pressure for something they did not do.

(18) *Pagar pau* (To fawn over / To be a simp for / To kiss up to):

"A lot of people here are fawning over Atlético Madrid's fanbase. Their team lost 3 knockout stages against their biggest rival, can you imagine Corinthians losing 3 times in a row to Palmares?"

<https://www.meutimao.com.br/forum-do-corinthians/bate-papo-da-torcida/396978/pra-que-pagar-pau>

Pagar pau is used across different regions of Brazil with slight variations in meaning. Its most frequent usage, however, occurs in the context of flattery or adulation, where someone publicly and conspicuously displays intense admiration for someone or something else.

(19) *Pagar mico* (To make a fool of oneself / To embarrass oneself):

"William Bonner 'makes a fool of himself' without realizing he was live and makes it to the Trending Topics."

<https://extra.globo.com/noticias/viral/william-bonner-paga-mico-sem-saber-que-estava-ao-vivo-entra-nos-tts-19863325.html>

The construction *Pagar mico* refers to an embarrassing or humiliating action, judged by the social and/or contextual standards, that may or may not occur involuntarily and is generally associated with comical situations.

(20) *Pagar calcinha* (To flash panties)

Oops! As she spins around, Ana Hickman shows off a clever trick to avoid flashing her panties.

<http://entretenimento.r7.com/carnaval-2013/fotos/opa-ana-hickmann-gira-e-mostra-truque-esperto-para-nao-pagar-calcinha-02022013#!/foto/1>

In line with embarrassing situations, yet carrying a sexual connotation, this construction refers to the exposure, voluntary or not, of body parts or items of intimate clothing. In this construction, in addition to the left “slot”, there is also a right “slot” to be filled. Thus, we have *pagar peitinho* (“to flash one’s breasts”), *pagar cofrinho* (“to show one’s butt crack”), *pagar calcinha* (“to flash one’s panties”), *pagar barriguinha* (“to show one’s belly”), etc., as possible instantiations of this construction.

(21) *Pagar boquete* (give a blow job)

Direct and without mincing words, Tessália said: “I gave him a blow job under the bed sheet.” The confession, of course, surprised everyone, since she had said she had only kissed her colleague Michel.

<https://rd1.com.br/ex-bbb-surpreende-e-confessa-que-fez-sexo-oral-no-confinamento/>

With a clear sexual connotation, and therefore used in contexts related to sexual practices, the constructions *pagar boquete* (and *pagar chupeta*) refer to the act of performing oral sex.

(22) *Pagar de* (act as)

“Young man who recorded a video with a gun acting like a criminal is found dead with multiple gunshot wounds.”

<https://portalc7.com/noticias/policia/jovem-que-fez-video-com-arma-pagando-de-bandido-e-encontrado-morto-com-varios-tiros-veja-video/>

In the construction *pagar de*, used in the sense of “to pretend to be” or “to act as,” one observes a transfer, in the speaker’s evaluation, of characteristics or attributes from one entity to another. In *pagar de*, there are two slots to be filled: one on the left and one on the right. In *pagar de*, there are two slots to be filled: one on the left and one on the right.

As can be observed, the idiomatic constructions with the verb *pagar* discussed here are associated with different trigger contexts, that is contexts conducive to the

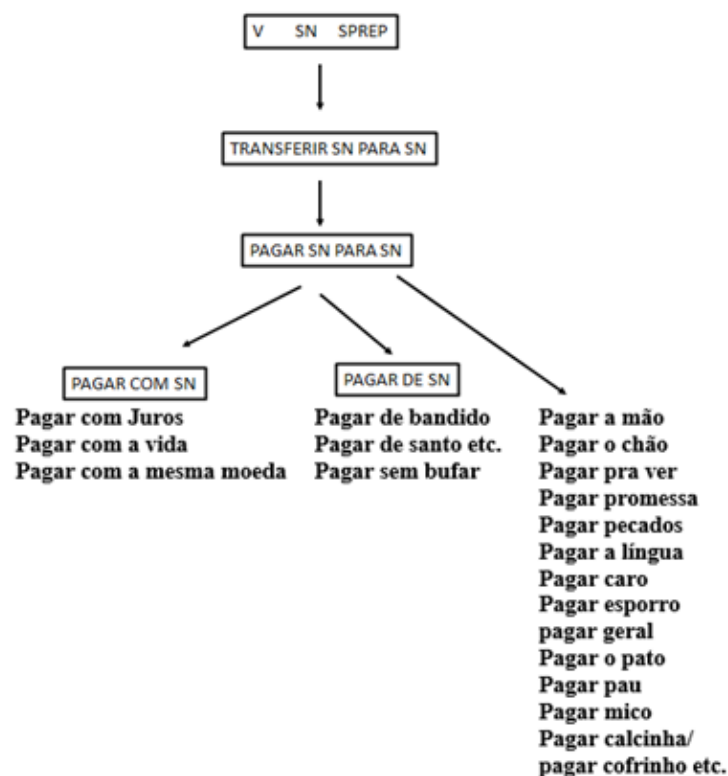
emergence of new uses and, consequently, to the development of new constructions. We summarize these relationships, already discussed in the analysis of each construction, in the table below.

Table 2 — Relationships between trigger contexts and idiomatic constructions with the verb *pagar*

TRIGGER CONTEXTS	IDIOMATIC CONSTRUCTIONS
Transfer of monetary value	<i>pagar a mão; pagar o chão; pagar sem bufar.</i>
Transfer in metaphorical terms	<i>pagar esporro; pagar geral; pagar de santo</i>
Payment through actions, sacrifices, or expiation	<i>pagar pra ver; pagar promessa; pagar pecados</i>
Price to be paid as punishment or retaliation	<i>pagar a língua; pagar caro; pagar com juro;</i> <i>pagar com a vida; pagar com/na mesma moeda</i>
Situations involving inferiority, submission, or subordination	<i>pagar pau; pagar boquete; pagar chupeta</i>
Exposure to embarrassing situations	<i>pagar o pato; pagar mico; pagar calcinha / pagar cofrinho, etc.</i>

Having discussed the constructions identified, we now return to the schematic configuration presented in Figure 2 and introduce minor modifications to accommodate the constructions addressed here.

Figure 3 — Constructional network of the verb pagar in Brazilian Portuguese.



It is important to emphasize that this network does not establish etymological relationships and is naturally open and receptive to new incorporations. This is because, as noted, extensions of meaning, and consequently, new constructions, may emerge at any point in the network, serving as links for further semantic extensions and, thus, for the emergence of additional constructions.

6 Final Considerations

Having completed the analysis, we turn to the conclusions. As demonstrated in our discussion, idiomatic constructions, as well as the ditransitive construction with the verb pagar (PAGAR NP TO NP), derive from the schematic construction TRANSFER NP TO NP, which, in turn, originates from an even more schematic construction V NP PP.

According to the etymological and basic meaning of the verb pagar, the construction, now without ellipsis on the left, NP PAY NP TO NP refers to the transfer of a given monetary value as payment for a product or the settlement of a debt. However, considering the circumstances surrounding commercial transactions, the incurrance of debts, the condition of a debtor (who is, in legal and social terms, in a position of submission or obligation in relation to the creditor), as well as the broader contexts involving debts in general, transfers (monetary or otherwise), amounts to be paid, forms of payment, non-payment of debts, etc. We observe the existence of a wide range of trigger contexts implicated in its emergence. As previously noted, new linguistic uses arise in real interactional situations, since each instance of verbal interaction generates conditions for the occurrence of new uses. To conclude, we emphasize that the trigger contexts listed in Table 2, together with the configuration of the constructional network of the verb pagar in Figure 3, demonstrate that certain conceptualizations presuppose others for their characterization.

In other words, they presuppose hierarchies of conceptual complexity, in which structures at a given level emerge through cognitive operations performed on structures at lower levels (LANGACKER, 2002).

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