

GRAMMAR, VARIATION AND TEACHING: EXPANDING THE REPERTOIRE IN THE PRODUCTION AND RECEPTION OF TEXTS IN THE CLASSROOM

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The teaching of grammar, both in the mother tongue and in the foreign or additional language context, needs the development of strategies to deal with the complexity of linguistic variation, while addressing the demands for standardization in certain social contexts. Facing this challenge, the Professional Master's Degree in Letters (PROFLETRAS), a program designed exclusively for teachers in the Brazilian public educational system, has presented – especially based on the theoretical-methodological contribution of the Grammar, variation and teaching discipline, entitled “grammar teaching in three axes” (VIEIRA, 2014, 2017, 2018) – linguistic descriptions and pedagogical activities to the treatment of morphosyntactic phenomena in variation. For that, one of the priorities of the developed works has been to contemplate the linguistic uses according to the observation of a diversity of textual genres, distributed in a *continuum* related

to the linguistic modality, configured in diverse spaces of speech and writing (MARCUSCHI, 2001, 2008; BORTONI-RICARDO, 2004).

Based on the description of these phenomena, the development of applied research has allowed (i) to assess the distance between the uses practiced by students and those expected in genres with a high degree of literacy and stylistic monitoring and (ii) to develop strategies that, at the same time, seek to promote a positive view on the various varieties of Portuguese and the expansion of the students' linguistic repertoire, whether for textual production or for the reception (reading) of texts. In this sense, the proposed activities allow us to contemplate expressions not only from contemporary Portuguese, but also from other synchronies, in various textual genres of Brazilian varieties or from other continents where Portuguese is spoken.

The pedagogical work with this complexity of linguistic variation is covered, in general terms, in the content of Brazilian official documents that parameterize the teaching of Portuguese language. The Common National Curriculum Base (BRASIL, 2018), without denying the general direction of the National Curriculum Parameters (BRASIL, 1998), establishes that, in the field of linguistic/semiotic analysis, we must develop “linguistic knowledge – about the writing system, the language system and the standard norm – and textual, discursive knowledge and also knowledge on the modes of organization and elements of other semiosis.” (BRASIL, 2018, p. 71). As can be seen, it is about the development of skills and abilities of various nature, which are subject to a concept of “language” as a discursive activity, which takes the text as a privileged teaching object, in its diversity of genres (oral and written). Within the scope of grammatical reflection, the documents propose a certain emphasis on the themes of linguistic variation and the fight against prejudice. It is in the development of these topics that the challenge to give, at the same time, due attention and value to the set of linguistic varieties that make up the Portuguese language system and promote a certain standard of reference, especially for some genres of the written modality, appears.

Seeking to build a pedagogical work that promotes explicit knowledge of the linguistic system, reconciling heterogeneity and regularity, the PROFLETRAS proposal pays special attention to linguistic variation in one of the three axes formulated for the treatment of grammar. To achieve this goal, in this work we present a synthesis of the proposal of articulation between the teaching of grammar and the use of variable phenomena in textual genres of speech and writing, an illustration of scientific and pedagogical work based on a variable morphosyntactic theme: the alternation of *ter/haver* in existential constructions, followed by a

discussion related to the parameters for school guidelines regarding the approach to linguistic variation.

The proposal of teaching grammar in three axes pays special attention to linguistic variation in the third of the three axes proposed for the treatment of grammar: Axis I – Grammar and reflective/metacognitive approach; Axis II – Grammar and production of meanings; and Axis III – Grammar, variation and norms. It is an interdisciplinary approach to the linguistic component, which presupposes the coexistence of theoretical knowledge from the sub-areas of Linguistic Science for the successful fulfillment of the challenges of the Portuguese Language classroom.

For the treatment of linguistic phenomena, the proposal (in its first axis) shares with various approaches to teaching grammar (cf., for example, BASSO; OLIVEIRA, 2012; GERHARDT, 2016; OLIVEIRA; QUARENZEMIN, 2016; PILATI, 2017; MAIA, 2019; ROEPER; MAIA; PILATI, 2020; among several others) who understand that it is essential to activate the internalized knowledge of students, acquired naturally in daily linguistic activities, in order to build, through epilinguistic and metalinguistic activities (FRANCHI, 2006 [1987]), grammatical knowledge. These are, therefore, practices that allow for the explicit elaboration of what is implicitly known, configuring, in this sense, a metacognitive approach, which reaches its maximum success in the linguistic pattern systematization stage, which, in turn, accommodates categorical and variable rules.

From the above, it can be seen that the first axis of “three axes grammar teaching” is transversal to the others, because it accommodates the methodological guidelines for the approach of any grammatical component – variable or not – and in any discursive context, in reading, textual production, or even out of context. Reflective/metacognitive activity on the grammatical component implies starting from the assumption that every student knows grammar, has linguistic competence and, therefore, develops skills related to the construction of logical reasoning, scientific thinking, which ultimately promote autonomy in the reaching of conclusions, generalizations, and critical thinking.

The integration of Axis I (Grammar and reflexive/metacognitive activity) to Axis II (Grammar and production of meanings) allows for a dialogue between the teaching of grammar and the practice of linguistic analysis in the development of reading and textual production. It is in the construction of meanings in texts – in any of its portions, in the macro and micro textual structure – that the privileged *locus* of action of the expressive resources materialized in grammar is identified. Phenomena of different grammatical levels act in the construction of the meanings of texts (of different modes of discursive organization and of different textual genres),

ensuring related effects – as Neves (2006) well summarizes –, for example, to the fields of modalization, referencing, predication, connection, ensuring cohesion and coherence in the micro and macrotextual planes.

Finally, it naturally results from the interface between axes I and II the identification of productive variable rules, within the scope of the so-called Axis III (Grammar, norm and variation). In this axis, it is challenging to propose that the work with grammar articulates linguistic variability and standardization; this is because the idea of a standard norm conceptually presupposes uniformity. It is understood, however, that, since the pedagogical work cannot deny the wide spectrum of textual genres with quite different stylistic-discursive configurations, circulating socially in the various speech communities, including those considered “cultured” (with high access to education), linguistic standardization will only have the desired efficiency if it accommodates flexibility (VIEIRA, 2019a, 2019b).

Based on these reflections and considering the variability of norms that coexist in Brazil, including the plurality of the cultured norm, to illustrate our reflections, we selected some possible strategies to be carried out in Portuguese language classes. Such pedagogical proposals seek to promote a positive view on the various varieties of Brazilian Portuguese and the expansion of the students’ linguistic repertoire, whether for textual production, or for the reception (reading) of texts in contemporary Portuguese or other synchronies, in various textual genres of Brazilian varieties or from other continents where Portuguese is spoken.

Therefore, we start from the recognition of the alternation of impersonal *ter-haver*, a variable phenomenon in Brazilian Portuguese that has already been described by many linguists (CALLOU; AVELAR, 2000, 2005, 2013; DUTRA, 2000; AVELAR, 2006; VITÓRIO, 2007, 2015; BARBOSA, 2015; MOREIRA, 2016; OLIVEIRA; BARBOSA, 2020, among others) in different samples of writing and speech. Investigations such as Callou and Duarte (2005, 2013), Avelar (2006) and Vitória (2015), for example, evidenced the implementation of impersonal “*haver*” in the most monitored writing, and the researches of Vitória (2007) and Barbosa (2015) pointed out that in school productions we can find both uses of impersonal “*ter*” and “*haver*”.

Investigations such as those mentioned above allow us to state, in general, that the two forms have their spaces of productivity and are present in the set of cultured norms of BP, varying the choice of one form or another according to different factors, among which we can highlight the discursive modality and textual genres, in association with the degree of stylistic monitoring. Although the media, national exams and advertising campaigns present the subject or productively

use the impersonal “ter” form, we still have a debate about which norm to teach at school, which is expressed in the choice of only one of the alternating forms: the taken variant as the pattern “haver”, which is preferred in cultivated uses in genres with greater conception of literacy and monitoring, OR the innovative form “ter”, which is preferred even in educated uses in genres with greater conception of orality and less monitoring?

We understand, then, that it is urgent to develop pedagogical activities that, from the proposal of teaching grammar in three axes, allow reflections on the uses of such forms in Brazilian Portuguese, even in cultured varieties and in more monitored situations. In order to demonstrate that it is possible to promote fruitful linguistic (and metalinguistic) activities and empirically based normative guidelines, based on the notions of continuous stylistic monitoring and orality/literacy, we report and discuss a set of three tasks, proposed by Barbosa (2021), specifically aimed at alternating ter-haver.

Thus, after illustrating the phenomenon in social circulation texts and presenting a set of specific pedagogical activities for the teaching/learning of ter/haver forms, we seek to show that it is possible to apply the teaching of grammar in three axes, (i) adopting – in Axis I – a reflexive (metacognitive) approach, in which the student gradually builds their knowledge (with linguistic, epilinguistic activities until reaching the metalinguistic systematization), (ii) exploring – in Axis III – issues related to linguistic variation in the set of plural norms of use and, also, (iii) associating this variable rule with the production of meaning(s) in textual activities, within the scope of Axis II.

Furthermore, we add that the reflections and suggestions here can be made, adapted according to accommodations, to other pedagogical contexts. In this sense, we emphasize that – as pointed out by Scherre (2020) in his lecture on the application of descriptive studies of Brazilian Portuguese (BP) to the teaching of Portuguese for foreigners (PE) – the proposals can also be adapted to the context of teaching PE, as it is necessary that the teacher of BP as a non-native language to provide language teaching/learning anchored in real communicative situations of speech and writing and explores the characteristic phenomena of BP.

Finally, as can be seen, we seek to show that it is possible to combine scientific knowledge, from the results of research carried out on spoken and written Brazilian Portuguese, to the promotion of linguistic reflections in the classroom and the organization of normative guidelines that respect the plurality of rules of use.

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