

# TO “MATAR A BOLA NO PEITO” AND “FAZER UM GOLAÇO” IN THE SPEECH: PREDICATE WITH (SEMI-)SUPPORT VERB

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The linguistic object of this chapter is a sample of Brazilian expressions composed by a (semi-)support verb and a nonverbal element that, together, forms a complex predicate indicative of state of affairs that is related to a sportive play, to soccer domain. Some examples of these expressions are exemplars such as “fazer um golaço” (something like “make a great goal”), “dar um carrinho” (more or less in the sense of “disarming the opponent’s ball domain with one-legged play”), “fazer uma defesa” (“make a defense”) and “marcar um gol” (“score a goal”). Some of them are made up of nonverbal elements which contain degree affixes (“fazer um golaço”, “fazer um golzinho”). The complex (verb-noun/verbal-nominal) predicate indicates a (dynamic or non-dynamic) state of affairs and then tends to select one participant role or more, matching, by force of attraction or coercion, to a construction of argument structure (usually a grammatical person structure that

foresees an argument or more) for the configuration of a proposition in relation to the psychobiosocial world.

(1) Carvajal é expulso após **fazer defesa** com a mão e vira piada na web. <https://www.torcedores.com/noticias/2017/12/carvajal-e-expulso-apos-fazer-defesa-com-mao-e-vira-piada-na-web-confira> acesso em: 06 set. 2021

Carvajal is sent off the field after **defending/making a defense** with his hand and becomes a joke on the web.

(2) O curioso caso do time que precisou **marcar um gol contra** para se classificar. <https://super.abril.com.br/cultura/o-curioso-caso-do-time-que-precisou-marcar-um-gol-contra-para-se-classificar/> acesso em: 06 set. 2021

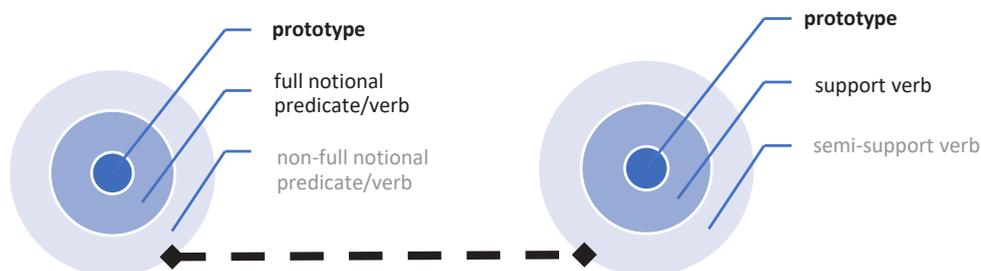
The curious case of the team that needed **to score an against/own goal** to qualify itself.

Example 1 shows a complex predicate exemplar with support verb (“fazer defesa” – “to make a defense”) and example 2 shows an exemplar with semi-support verb (“marcar um gol contra” – “to score a goal”). We aim to map (i) which verbal lexemes can act in this type of construction in Brazilian Portuguese in soccer discursive spaces and outside such spaces; (ii) if there are frequent examples of what we can call semi-support verb, according to MACHADO VIEIRA (2014, 2018), filling the support verb *slot* of the complex predicate construction; (iii) how the form-function pairing of the expressions are configured in our sample; (iv) how they are performed in different contexts (soccer ones and beyond); and (v) if there are cases of variation (near synonyms).

We consider a *support verb*, also called *light verb* in the literature (mainly in the formalist literature), a kind of grammatical/procedural unity that has the role of making a non-verbal element to behave as predicative/predicating unit, forming with it a complex predicate with behavior similar to a simple verb/simple predicate in a predication. The semi-support verb category is related to verbs that occupy more frequently the principal/notional verb *slot* of a predication, but behave, in such complex predicate, as well as a support verb, being responsible for verbalizing a non-verbal element.

The notions of support and semi-support verb capture different degrees of connection to the prototype of the group of verbs with the contour of the support/verbalizer verb of a non-verbal element (more or less evident contour).

**Figure 1** – The relationship between types of functioning of verbal lexemes in Portuguese grammar belonging to the family of constructional patterns of (simple and complex) predicates.



Source: The authors.

In order to develop such research, we examined a dataset of 477 data licensed by complex predicate construction with (semi-)support verb that were collected in texts about soccer and also a dataset of 166 data that were collected in texts from diverse other contexts, different from soccer discursive context. Based on the theoretical framework of Functional-Cognitive Linguistics and Usage-Based Constructions Grammar and with a socioconstructionist perspective of language, we explore the concepts of: (i) constructional variation, constructional change and constructionalization (MACHADO VIEIRA, 2016; TRAUGOTT; TROUSDALE, 2013); (ii) the degree of schematicity, productivity, compositionality and contextuality of the verb-noun/verbal-nominal expressions (TRAUGOTT; TROUSDALE, 2013; GOLDBERG, 2016); and (iii) the support and semi-support verbs, among others, that combine in the complex predicate construction.

The main hypotheses underlying such investigation are the following ones:

- (i) There is a variety of verbs that can collocate in these constructions's verbal *slot*, since this type of verb-noun/verbal-nominal structure is quite recurrent in the language; this makes verbs that normally do not have grammatical status act just like those that have (support verbs, the verbalizers of non-verbal elements); such grammatical status is frequently activated due to the coercive force of the construction with the support verb. Among such variety, there are examples of semi-support verbs: conditions of interaction between speakers can give rise to the use, in an expression in common use, of verbs that are not always usually found as behaving the support function, in order to the speaker obtain gains in terms of discursive expressiveness.

- (ii) The soccer language goes beyond the discursive domain of soccer, not only because there is the potential to use typical expression from another area for some expressive gain, but also because many expressions in this domain are associated with plays in a team dispute/negotiation and the communication (especially that of an argumentative nature) involves a dispute between the interlocutors' points of view, places of speech.
- (iii) There is a possibility of difference in functional attribute(s) when a football expression is activated in text/speech outside this domain. Contextuality (GOLDBERG, 2016) is a parameter that can impact the relationship of data to (sub)schemas or micro-constructions and then can cause constructional change or even, if it reaches the formal face, may serve as a trigger for constructionalization (formation of a new constructional pairing – new form associated with new function).

In terms of a synthesis of the main results from the empirical research, we confirm the hypothesis that there are semi-support verbs, as well as support verbs, forming the *corpus* of complex predicates, since sports expressions with (semi-) support verbs are very recurrent in Brazilian Portuguese in use, both in soccer contexts and outside, and, precisely because of this productivity, they are constantly being target of innovation, and are subject to other filling alternatives, given the representation of a complex verbal predicate rooted in the speaker's mind.

In the dataset, there are exemplars as: (i) in texts about soccer, *fazer gol, dar passe, marcar gol, cobrar falta, sofrer gol, tomar gol, levar gol, bater bola*; (ii) in texts about other tematics, *fazer pedalada, dar cartão vermelho, bater pênalti, bater bolão, marcar gol de placa, levar carrinho* and *tomar cartão vermelho*.

*Dar* (to give) and *fazer* (to do/make), as we already expected (according to RAPOSO *et al.* 2013 and MACHADO VIEIRA, 2018), are the most frequent and the more commonly attracted to the support verb slot. These verbs are the ones that reveal themselves to be the most devoid of semantic specificity, not to mention the fact that they are the ones that operate, in other constructions, also with other grammatical profiles (such as the (semi-)auxiliary verb in structuring periphrasis such as “dar de Vinfinitive” or “make Vinfinitive”, with aspectual and causative profile respectively). They are, so to speak, the verbs most in line with the support verb status. On the other hand, verbs like *bater, cobrar e sofrer* (to hit, to demand, and to suffer/undergo<sup>1</sup>) proved to be much less frequent and, therefore, although

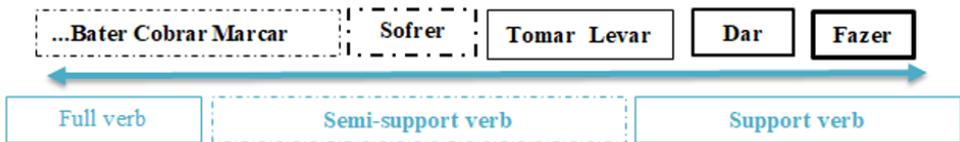
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<sup>1</sup> In order to know more about passive predication with the (semi-)support *sofrer*, see: MACHADO VIEIRA, 2021, slides can be accessed via <https://osf.io/kwt2c/>. Access: Sept.03, 2021.

they are also used to fill the construction of a complex verbal predicate, they do so in a different condition: as semi-supports. They are not normally associated, at least not immediately, to some degree in the continuum predicate/content verb–support/procedural verb, but, when they occur in this construction, they are aligned to that, as a type of contour feature less sharply instrumental.

We estimate the following continuum of association of the verbal lexemes to the support verb slot:

**Figure 2** – Gradual design of verbal categorization based on the token frequency of verbal item activation for the construction of a complex predicate.

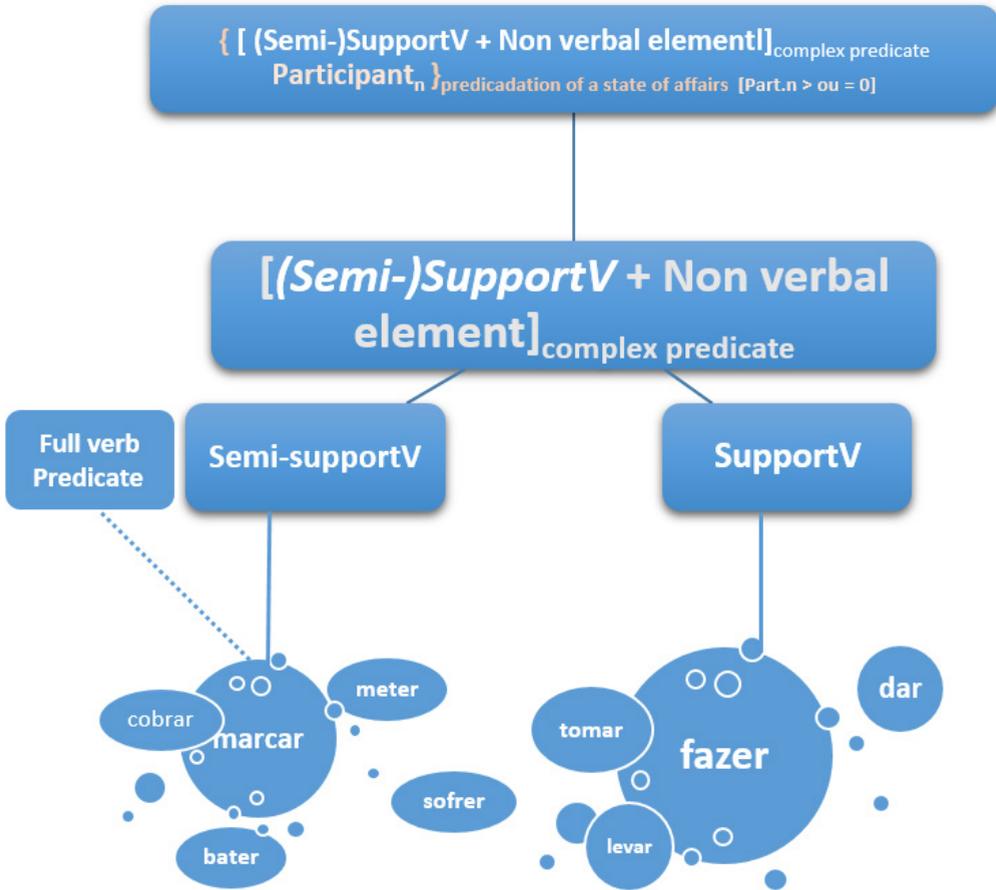


Source: The authors.

The complex predicates can indicate a dynamic or non-dynamic state of affairs, are usually personal (in)transitive or intransitive unities and, thus, they select a participant role or more than one (subject and prepositioned complement), they are made compatible, by force of attraction or coercion, to a construction of an argumental structure in order to configure a proposition in the soccer discourse and also outside this domain. In both they are quite activated and frequently involve the support verbs *fazer* (to do/make) and *dar* (to give), or the semi-support *marcar* (to score).

We observed some instances that occur as alternative predicates, near synonyms: *sofrer/tomar/levar gol* (“to take a goal”), *fazer/marcar gol* (“to score a goal”), *levar/tomar cartão* (“to get a (red/yellow) card”), including variants to simple verb forms (*fazer defesa/defender*, “to make a defense/defender, to defend, dar um chute/chutar, to give a kick”). And we designed a schematization that allows us to visualize the most abstract level that licenses microconstructions such as “marcar gol”, “fazer uma defesa”, “sofrer/tomar cartão vermelho” (“score a goal”, “make a defense/save”, “get a red card”), from combinations of lexemes (only the verbal ones are represented below) to verb-noun/verbal-nominal predicates and from these to the macroconstruction of predication with a complex predicate that is formed by a support verb linked to non-verbal element.

**Figure 3** – Network of verbal lexemes and constructional patterns of complex predicate and predication.



Source: The authors.

The description brings out evidence of the semi-support verb category, an intermediate space in the instrumental/grammatical verb functionality typology that is usually not considered in the support verb literature, as well as proves that expressions that seem to be from soccer have much more/broad scope, and, mainly, appear in enunciative (inter)actions in which roles, points of view, scenes (events or situations) are negotiated. Furthermore, it deals with *chunks*, resulting from lexical constructionalization, a subject that, although it served as a trigger for the Grammar of Constructions framework, remains little explored in the literature. One example of *chunk* is “pendurar as chuteiras” (to retire).

The empirical observation of occurrences of the construction involving lexical items in Portuguese that are linked to the category of semi-support verb is, without a doubt, a contribution to the literature. Auxiliary verbs are usually viewed based on a categorization that takes into account examples of the prototype and examples outside of it (peripheral members). We no longer see a similar perspective when the subject is the support verb category, in studies normally carried out on expressions that involve it. In line with what Machado Vieira (2018) proposes, our research reinforces the link of certain lexemes to an intermediate category between the full notional predicate/verb and the support verb, considering even a certain repetition in the activation of verbs that usually act in the slot of the main verb of a predication, but which, by combination with the (semi-)support slot of a complex predicate (by attraction or coercion), come to have a functional verbalizer attribute when they bind/incorporate so strongly to the non-verbal element that a compositional reading of verb and verbal complement is no longer prominent (as in the case of full verb).

As there is, in our language, a metaphorical relationship between politics and competition, the discursive domain in which these expressions most occurred; after the sporting context, it is the political one. And this observation leads us to project the possibility of future investigation that sticks to texts of a political nature, materialized in different genres and expressive modalities. The fact that the data were found mainly on newspaper, magazine and blog sites suggests that such expressions are more associated with a more informal language. Therefore, we consider that texts produced in oral communicative contexts should also be the object of observation.

Another prominent aspect in this chapter is the grammatical/linguistic capture of idioms, verb-noun/verbal-nominal expressions that already manifest themselves, even due to their frequency of use, as *chunks*. They are (almost) always repeated with the same form and the same meaning, they are non-compositional, they have an idiosyncratic sense. With this, we move away, to some extent, from the general tendency to focus attention on constructions that result from the grammatical constructionalization process. We tried to examine all the data, considering both possibilities: constructional types resulting from the grammatical construction of predicate with (semi-)support verb and constructional types entrenched in the mind and fully repeated by virtue of a lexical constructionalization process that allows for the expansion of the network of complex predicates to account for idiosyncrasies. With this, we reach a network of constructions of complex predicates, with construction patterns of different levels of schematization, including the

prediction of a metaconstruction for potential cases of predicates with different attributes, but related by similarity in the expression of a state of affairs (*fazer cobrança (de falta), meter cobrança (de falta); bater falta, cobrar falta; sofrer gol, levar gol, tomar gol*).

We present here a mapping of predications used in Brazilian Portuguese and typical of a language used in the best known sport in the country. We show that lexemes and expressions formed in the soccer sports space gain other territorialities in new discursive experiences, as they are metaphorically re-elaborated in function of new cognitive and socio-pragmatic conditions.

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