The discourse of Americans in Brazilian cookbooks: a proposal for an analysis based on Corpus Linguistics

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Abstract: Corpus Linguistics has played an important role in terminological and lexicographical research. However, this methodology has been underused in Discourse Analysis, for example. In accordance with criteria underlying Corpus Linguistics, the present study aims to propose a methodology for an analysis of American discourse regarding Brazil and its people, having Brazilian culinary books - originally written in English by North-Americans - as its study corpus. Results show that semi-automatic methods of data retrieval are faster and more reliable in identifying patterns than methods based on sequential reading.

Keywords: Corpus Linguistics; Discourse Analysis; Americans; Brazilian cooking.

Resumen: Lingüística de Corpus se ha desempeñado un papel importante en la investigación lexicográfica y terminológica. Sin embargo, esta metodología ha sido poco utilizada en el análisis del discurso, por ejemplo. De conformidad con criterios subyacentes a la Lingüística de Corpus, el presente estudio tiene por objeto proponer una metodología de análisis del discurso del americano sobre Brasil y su gente, con los libros culinarios de Brasil - originalmente escritos en inglés por los norteamericanos - en su corpus de estudio. Los resultados muestran que los métodos semiautomáticos de recuperación de datos son más rápidos y más fiables en la identificación de patrones que los métodos basados en la lectura secuencial.

Palabras clave: Lingüística de Corpus; análisis del discurso; americanos; cocina brasileña.

1   Introduction

If we consider the number of .com domain sites dedicated to Brazilian cooking, it could be claimed that Brazilian culinary appeals a lot to Americans. A search with the expressions 'Brazilian cooking', 'Brazilian culinary' and 'Brazilian cuisine' results in more than 93.000

findings[1], only considering American sites. But a simple investigation of these findings also reveals several mistakes involving the translation and/or definition of vocabulary related to Brazilian cooking written in English: misspellings, lack of standardization and confusion between Portuguese and Spanish are some of them. As a matter of fact, lack of standardization regarding culinary issues is not limited to translation. Rather, it affects culinary in general (cf. Tagnin & Teixeira, 2004).

The strategies involved in the translation of Brazilian culinary terms into English have been addressed by Costa (2006), who calls attention to the effects translation strategies have on the culture being translated and, in relation to Brazilian cultural references, concludes that the image conveyed has been that of "amateurism" and "inefficiency" (p. xiii).

This study aims to find out what Americans *say* about Brazilians in cookbooks and what image of Brazilian people is created by these beliefs. Are the misunderstandings limited to vocabulary translation/definition, or are they also present in the image Americans have of Brazil and Brazilian people, at least when we consider eating habits?

2   Corpus Linguistics and discourse analysis

The methods underlying Corpus Linguistics (hereafter CL) are responsible for the collection and examination of large amounts of texts (Sinclair, 1991). Semi-automatic processing of language enables the access to data that could remain unobserved through an intuitive analysis of fragments of language: "Language should be studied in actual, attested, authentic instances of use, not as intuitive, invented, isolated sentences" (Stubbs, 1996).

CL has played a very important role in terminological and lexicographical studies, as can be seen in Sinclair (1991 and 2004), Mahlberg and O'Donnell (2008) and Stubbs (2002), among many others. Nevertheless, this methodology has not been widely explored in Discourse Analysis (hereafter DA), although studies such as Orpin (2005) and Berber-Sardinha and Barbara (2008) are beginning to change this picture.

At first sight, discourse analysis and Corpus Linguistics seem to have little in common, but Sinclair (2004) understands them as "twin pillars of language research" (p. 10), since modern technology helps find and manipulate evidence, which is essential for formulating new hypotheses. Other than merely demonstrating patterns previously predicted,

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[1] According to searches carried out in February 2010.

computational tools can show linguistic evidence that can serve as the starting point for further investigations by the analyst.

By using the concepts inherent to Corpus Linguistics, this study proposes a methodology of analysis of the American discourse (represented, here, by the authors of the recipe books that make up the corpus) towards Brazil and Brazilians, by means of the introductory texts found in Brazilian culinary books written in English by Americans.

3   The corpus

In order to reveal data worth analyzing, a corpus must be compiled according to well-established criteria:

> The beginning of any corpus study is the creation of the corpus itself. The decisions that are taken about what is to be in the corpus, and how the selection is to be organized, control almost everything that happens subsequently. The results are only as good as the corpus (Sinclair, 1991: 13).

When we consider the translation/definition mistakes mentioned in the introduction, it could be argued that anything can be found in the internet, including misspellings, untrue statements, texts whose authorship and origin are unknown etc. Therefore, in order to investigate what Americans *say* about Brazilian cooking, it was decided to compile a study corpus in which only published books would be included, because, in relation to published texts, it is expected that:

    a.   the author should have researched the subject in depth;

    b.   before being published, the book must have been carefully revised;

    c.   books serve as reference for correct use of language.

The study corpus is constituted of eight cookbooks of Brazilian recipes written in English which were available for sale at *Amazon.com* between 2007 and 2008. A quick analysis of these cookbooks showed that problems regarding the translation of Brazilian cooking into English are not restricted to internet sites. The books also contain problems such as incorrect definitions, substitutions of ingredients that result in erasure of cultural references, translation of a term by a word whose spelling cannot be found in dictionaries in the target language, misspelling and confusion between terms in Portuguese and in Spanish.

These findings show that even the authors of these books, people who, in general, lived in Brazil and wanted to share their experience with their fellow countrymen, sometimes are unaware of aspects they are willing to talk about, and end up spreading wrong information about Brazil and its culinary:

> The study of recurrent wordings is […] of central importance in the study of language and ideology, and can provide empirical evidence of how the culture is expressed in lexical patterns. The cultural assumptions connoted by such patterns, especially when they are repeated and become habits, are an important component of socialization (Stubbs, 1996: 169).

It is well known that the availability of bilingual (English-Portuguese and Portuguese-English) dictionaries in the area of culinary is scarce, which makes things very difficult for the translator and/or the writer who deal with this subject (cf. Teixeira, 2004). Nevertheless, a simple search using the internet would help avoid some of the problems mentioned above. Besides, why would a writer, willing to spread Brazilian cooking, substitute ingredients that are essentially Brazilian?

Those findings in relation to Brazilian recipes written in English led us to analyze what these authors *say* about Brazil and Brazilian people in the introductions to the books and/or to the recipes, and find out what these comments have in common. In these texts the writers include: curiosities about Brazil and Brazilian people, their experience in the country, historic facts, curiosities about the recipe they are about to describe etc. So, much more than simply providing recipes, these books intend to provide their countrymen with *facts* of the Brazilian culture. And it is these texts, introductions to the books and recipes, which are used in this analysis.

The texts were scanned and saved in TXT format to be explored semi-automatically with the help of the computational tool *WordSmith Tools 5.0* (hereafter WST5) (Scott, 2007). The word lists of the texts of each book were generated and saved as follows:

WordList	Cookbook	Nr of tokens
WLatbINF	*A Taste of Brazil* (Neeleman & Neeleman, 2007)	8.339
WLbcINF	*Brazilian Cooking* (Leroux, 1980)	1.475
WLbcjINF	*Brazil: A Culinary Journey* (Hamilton, 2005)	7.390
WLbctINF	*Brazil: A Cook's Tour* (Idone, 1995)	32.732

WLctbwINF	*Cooking the Brazilian Way* (Behnke & Duro, 2004)	5.879
WLdbcINF	*Delightful Brazilian Cooking* (Ang, 1993)	650
WLesbINF	*Eat Smart in Brazil* (Peterson & Peterson, 1995)	16.309
WLtcobINF	*The Cooking of Brazil* (Locricchio, 2005)	3.884
Total words		**76.657**

Table 1. Number of words of the texts in the corpus.

As can be seen, the number of words of the introductory texts varies a lot from book to book and the total number of words (tokens) would be considered insufficient, for example, if this study had terminological or lexicographical aims. But the criterion of size must be directly linked to the criterion of representativeness of the corpus (Aijmer & Altenberg, 1991). This study aims to find what the eight books have in common in relation to what is mentioned about Brazil and Brazilian people. That is why the corpus is considered representative for this study.

4   Analysis of the corpus

In order to find out what is characteristic of the corpus studied, the keywords, defined by Hunston (2002) as "words which are significantly more frequent in one corpus than another" (p. 68), were generated for each word list, using as reference the word list of the BNC[2].

Indeed, the list of keywords reveals many content words of the corpus. Among words related to Brazilian culinary and culture there are words that are specific to each book, though. And since the aim of this study is to analyze what is recurrent in different books, written by different authors, in order to, possibly, identify characteristics that are common to most of them, the lists of keywords were compared among themselves by using the function *database* of WST5, resulting in key-keywords, that is, words that are key in a certain number of files (for this study, it was set that for it to be considered a key-keyword, the word should be key in at least five keyword lists:

N	KW	Text	%	Overall	N	KW	Text	%	Overall

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[2] The British National Corpus (BNC) comprises texts of both written and spoken general English. It can be consulted from http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/.

1	BRAZIL	8	100.00	314	21	MEAL	6	75.00	99
2	BRAZILIAN	8	100.00	342	22	MEAT	6	75.00	125
3	COOKING	8	100.00	142	23	MEATS	6	75.00	39
4	AND	7	87.00	3,113	24	NATIVE	6	75.00	60
5	DISHES	7	87.00	177	25	OIL	6	75.00	121
6	FOOD	7	87.00	204	26	PORTUGUES	6	75.00	173
7	RECIPES	7	87.00	91	27	RICE	6	75.00	85
8	AFRICAN	6	75.00	99	28	SHRIMP	6	75.00	90
9	AMAZON	6	75.00	55	29	BAHIA	5	62.00	59
10	BEANS	6	75.00	79	30	COCONUT	5	62.00	83
11	BEEF	6	75.00	57	31	COOKED	5	62.00	40
12	BRAZILIANS	6	75.00	76	32	CORN	5	62.00	64
13	BRAZIL'S	6	75.00	52	33	CUISINE	5	62.00	88
14	CHEESE	6	75.00	51	34	DE	5	62.00	174
15	CHICKEN	6	75.00	57	35	DELICIOUS	5	62.00	73
16	CULINARY	6	75.00	46	36	DESSERTS	5	62.00	33
17	DISH	6	75.00	100	37	DRIED	5	62.00	78
18	FISH	6	75.00	179	38	FAVORITE	5	62.00	33
19	FRUITS	6	75.00	103	39	FEIJOADA	5	62.00	31
20	INGREDIENT	6	75.00	68	40	FLAVOR	5	62.00	24

Table 2. First 40 key-keywords in descending order of key-keyness.

Despite the fact that the words *Brazil*, *Brazilian* and *cooking* have the highest keyness, as they are key in the eight books analyzed, if we consider that it is possible to refer to *brasileiros* (Brazilians) as *the Brazilian people*, *the Brazilian*, besides *the Brazilians*, it could be argued that *Brazilians* is a very meaningful word in the list. Therefore, it was chosen to exemplify this methodology of analysis.

The following step of this study was to run concordance lines for the word *Brazilians*. By using the function *Concord* of *WST5*, it is possible to analyze the word in the context it appears:

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N Concordance
 1      many believe originated in Minas Gerais. Brazilians call their chicken soup, canja, and
 2    a festive atmosphere is it any wonder that Brazilians call their hometown Cidade
 3   It is the state of Bahia, however, that many Brazilians associate with outstanding
 4       and once you taste it you'll know why Brazilians love it. As you travel across the
 5    types can be an overwhelming experience. Brazilians use fruits in many ways. They are
 6     we know as guava is called goiaba by the Brazilians, and in the form of a sweet paste
 7      from the dorsal hump of the zebu steer. Brazilians have been known to walk out of a
 8    City, which has the largest population of Brazilians in the United States. Stores and
 9   $20 and include a monthly newsletter, The Brazilians, which contains articles about
10      will be plenty of items to identify. While Brazilians eat a light breakfast, the
11   served from 7-11 PM. In metropolitan areas Brazilians dine late. If you arrive much
12        they quickly learned from the native Brazilians how to make manioc meal and
13    mandioca, which is as basic to the diet of Brazilians today as it was to the early
14          diet. To this day the diet of many Brazilians includes few leafy green
15      became the beverage of choice for most Brazilians, replacing long-established drinks
16       that a recent guide book says that Brazilians do not do very much with meat,
17   (p. 65). The vendors, and many of the other Brazilians around you, will be happy to
18   are associated with particular celebrations, Brazilians also enjoy them throughout the
19      Ever since the arrival of the Portuguese, Brazilians have loved sweets. The colonists'
20          are popular on hot summer days. Brazilians enjoy thick fruit shakes and drinks
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Figure 1. First twenty concordance lines with search word *Brazilians*.

Isolated words serve as starting points, but collocations create denotations (Stubbs, 2005). Therefore, from the concordance lines, the following step of this study was to identify the main collocates of the search word, that is, words that occur in the neighborhood of the search word (Brazilians):

N	Word	With	Relation	Texts	Total
1	BRAZILIANS	brazilians	0	25	77
2	THE	brazilians	0	21	47
3	OF	brazilians	0	14	18
4	AND	brazilians	0	11	16
5	TO	brazilians	0	8	14
6	A	brazilians	0	10	14
7	IN	brazilians	0	9	11
8	IS	brazilians	0	8	10
9	THAT	brazilians	0	7	9
10	FOR	brazilians	0	7	8
11	MANY	brazilians	0	7	8

12	IT	brazilians	0	6	8
13	ALL	brazilians	0	5	7
14	HAVE	brazilians	0	6	7
15	ENJOY	brazilians	0	5	6
16	THEIR	brazilians	0	4	6
17	AS	brazilians	0	5	6
18	NOT	brazilians	0	5	5
19	WHO	brazilians	0	4	5
20	DO	brazilians	0	4	5
21	LOVE	brazilians	0	3	4
22	ARE	brazilians	0	4	4
23	USE	brazilians	0	4	4
24	WITH	brazilians	0	4	4
25	BY	brazilians	0	4	4
26	CALL	brazilians	0	3	4
27	WERE	brazilians	0	3	3
28	WHAT	brazilians	0	3	3
29	BASIC	brazilians	0	3	3
30	BUT	brazilians	0	3	3
31	ALSO	brazilians	0	3	3
32	ALWAYS	brazilians	0	3	3
33	DAY	brazilians	0	3	3
34	FROM	brazilians	0	3	3
35	LIKE	brazilians	0	3	3
36	DIET	brazilians	0	2	3
37	EAT	brazilians	0	3	3

Table 3. Collocates with search word *Brazilians*.

This search considers only the frequency in which a certain word occurs near a search word, but not the relation strength between the search word and its collocate (fourth column). Table 3 above shows, for example, *the* as the most frequent collocate of the search word *Brazilians*. Nevertheless, grammatical items, such as articles, prepositions etc., do not always provide meaningful information when the main interest is finding characteristics that are more associated to Brazilians. So, this search underwent changes.

In order to generate a list of meaningful collocates with the search word *Brazilians*, the settings of the concordance lines were rearranged. It was established that a collocate should occur at least three times with the search word, within a window of four words to its right and four to its left. The measure of significance chosen was Mutual Information (MI) score,

which "[…] measures the amount of non-randomness present when two words co-occur" (Hunston, 2002: 71):

N	Word	With	Relation	Texts	Total
1	BRAZILIANS	brazilians	9,959	25	77
2	ENJOY	brazilians	7,9	5	6
3	BASIC	brazilians	7,844	3	3
4	LOVE	brazilians	7,204	3	4
5	CALL	brazilians	6,915	3	4
6	DIET	brazilians	6,335	2	3
7	USE	brazilians	6,178	4	4
8	ALWAYS	brazilians	6,052	3	3
9	EAT	brazilians	6,021	3	3
10	ALL	brazilians	5,587	5	7
11	DO	brazilians	5,513	4	5
12	MANY	brazilians	5,337	7	8
13	WHAT	brazilians	5,315	3	3
14	WHO	brazilians	5,237	4	5
15	DAY	brazilians	5,118	3	3
16	HAVE	brazilians	5,108	6	7
17	NOT	brazilians	5,052	5	5
18	THEIR	brazilians	4,425	4	6
19	BUT	brazilians	4,415	3	3
20	LIKE	brazilians	4,364	3	3
21	THAT	brazilians	4,358	7	9
22	IT	brazilians	4,235	6	8
23	WERE	brazilians	4,101	3	3
24	ALSO	brazilians	4,085	3	3
25	FOR	brazilians	3,716	7	8
26	BY	brazilians	3,66	4	4
27	AS	brazilians	3,446	5	6
28	IS	brazilians	3,267	8	10
29	THE	brazilians	3,213	21	47
30	TO	brazilians	3,168	8	14
31	IN	brazilians	2,888	9	11
32	A	brazilians	2,818	10	14
33	ARE	brazilians	2,767	4	4
34	OF	brazilians	2,759	14	18
35	FROM	brazilians	2,693	3	3
36	AND	brazilians	2,34	11	16

37	WITH	brazilians	2,252	4	4

Tabela 4. Collocates with search word *Brazilians*, using MI-score to measure the strength relation.

Table 4 shows the collocates of the search word *Brazilians* in descending order in relation to the strength of their association (fourth column). Church and Hanks (1990) suggest a minimum MI of 3 to identify meaningful lexical patterns. This study does not aim to identify lexical patterns, although we believe that lexical items provide more relevant data for the continuity of the analysis. If we establish 3 as cut-off point, the grammatical words *in*, *a*, *of*, *from*, *and* and *with*, besides the verb *are*, will be eliminated from the list of collocates of *Brazilians*. However, the word *are* can be a lexical or a grammatical item. It is considered a grammatical item when it is an auxiliary verb, but it is lexical when it functions as main verb. In this case, it can provide interesting data for the analysis. This choice is intuitive, but, as Stubbs (1995) reminds us, "[…] no procedures can ever be entirely automatic. We always start with intuitions about what is interesting to study" (p. 19). Therefore, we decided to include *are* in the analysis of collocates.

Among the 26 collocates with an MI score higher than three, besides *are*, ten (38,4%) are verbs (*enjoy*, *love*, *call*, *use*, *eat*, *do*, *have*, *like, were* and *are*). So, this study followed with the retrieval of the lines in which *Brazilians* occurs with each of those verbs:

N	Concordance
1	ssociated with particular celebrations, Brazilians also enjoy them throughout th
2	verages are popular on hot summer days. Brazilians enjoy thick fruit shakes and
3	s. With a day off from work and school, Brazilians enjoy picnics during pleasant
4	nd dinner. Nowadays, the upper class Brazilians enjoy going out to dinner in
5	y continue late into the evening as the Brazilians enjoy their tasty food and li
6	il and vinegar and chopped cilantro. Brazilians traditionally enjoy beef tong

Figura 2. Concordance lines in which the search word *Brazilians* occurs with the collocate *enjoy*.

Next, the whole context in which the search word *Brazilians* occurs with each of the collocates (the verbs) was analyzed. This analysis enabled us to group some characteristics attributed to Brazilian people in the corpus (due to limitation of size of this paper, only two examples of each characteristic are shown):

→ Party-lovers:

> ➤ All **Brazilians love** a party. If no reason can be found for a celebration, Brazilians will manage to invent one.

> ➤ With a day off from work and school, **Brazilians enjoy** picnics during pleasant weather, or they may join friends and family for meals at restaurants.

→ Unaware of healthy eating habits:

> ➤ Generally, **Brazilians are** not great salad eaters, and this display of simply prepared salads is a nice surprise.

> ➤ The **Brazilians**, who **have** never heard of caffeine-free coffee and who still manage to sleep eight hours per night, drink numerous small cups of coffee during the day, either in the office or in the botequim on the corner: "Um cafezinho por favor!"

→ Mystic:

> ➤ **Brazilians are** above all people with a belief in the supernatural; every so often one feels the touch of strange influences, and I occasionally hear stories of apparitions, ghosts, and other enchantments.

→ Amateurs, in relation to culinary issues:

> ➤ I learned to cook by feel like the **Brazilians do**.

> ➤ It is incredible that a recent guide book says that **Brazilians** do not **do** very much with meat, other than just cooking it!

Regardless of having lived in Brazil for some time, and willing to share their experience with their fellow countrymen, the cookbook writers convey an image of Brazilians that does not differ a lot from that found in other genres of writing. The stereotype of happy, party lovers, mystic etc. is recurrent. Faria (2005) analyzed the discourse of Americans in textbooks of Portuguese as a foreign language published in the United States and concluded that the most recurring themes are those related to soccer, beach, parties etc.

Identity and difference exist through representation (Silva, 2000). The one who is in a privileged position usually takes for himself the normal identity and classifies the *Other* as *different*. By means of the statements retrieved from the books, it could be inferred that north-Americans have healthy eating habits, have more important things to do than going out etc.

As we have stated before, a deep analysis of American discourse in relation to Brazilians is not the focus of this study. Rather, we wanted to demonstrate a methodology through which data can be retrieved and used as a starting point for this type of analysis.

Moreover, the analysis of a single key-keyword is not conclusive to make generalizations about what is said about Brazilians, but we believe that the methodology demonstrated here can serve as a starting point for the analyst.

5   Final remarks

With the help of the computational tool WST5, the retrieval of the contexts in which a key-keyword and its main collocates appear in the corpus enabled us to group some characteristics attributed to Brazilian people by Americans in eight Brazilian cookbooks originally written in English. In spite of not being conclusive, the methodology proposed in this study can serve as a *kick-off* for a deeper analysis of discourse.

The traditional methodology of discourse analysis may lead the researcher to seek evidence in the text to prove his/her previous hypotheses. Intuition is present in various moments of a search, but semi-automatic methods help with the identification of patterns in a more reliable way than that based on an intuitive reading of individual texts.

Analyses based on Corpus Linguistics demonstrate that individual texts can only be explained when compared to what is expected in relation to the general use of language. Computational tools provide several techniques to investigate characteristics of texts and corpora (Stubbs, 2005), and we do not need to know an author's intention in order to interpret his/her text. The text is autonomous and the author is irrelevant for its interpretation (Stubbs, 1996).

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