BRIEF ANALYSIS OF NONSENSE STOCK WITTICISMS IN BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE

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Abstract:

In this manuscript, I discuss the linguistic traits, the effect, and the function of combinations like "do not confuse X with Y", commonly found in Brazilian Portuguese (*não confunda X com Y*). For that, I touch on issues related to phraseologisms, situational formulae, and stock phrases. Due to their peculiar syntax and semantics, I also discuss the presence of bisociative and absurd humor in such combinations. The study corpus consists of 40 occurrences extracted from the internet, mainly from blogs. My analysis has both reiterated the highly colloquial status of such structures, as a type of stock phrase used in a specific situation (warning someone about a possible confusion) and revealed that they make use of different linguistic mechanisms associated with nonsense, especially, through spoonerisms and wordplays, the result of which are illogical and absurd constructions.

Keywords: absurd humor, Brazilian Portuguese, phraseologism, situational formulae spoonerism, stock phrase

1. Introduction

More than twenty years ago, De Cock (2002) argued that the study of prefabricated multi-word expressions had "*moved to the forefront of linguistic research*" and had "*attracted growing interest from a variety of language-related fields*", and that seemed to continue. However, I also argued that certain formulaic structures, mainly in BP, still lacked research (Brezolin 2006). The situation seems not to have changed, though, since I intend to explore a type of phraseologism that, if I am not mistaken, has received little attention from linguistic studies. One of the reasons, as put by De Cock, is that some phraseologies were, or still are, "*regarded as marginal and rather ′problematic′ phenomena*" (2002: 471). The multi-word expression analyzed in this manuscript refers to combinations in BP like *Não confunda bife à milanesa com bife ali na mesa* (literally translated as "Do not confuse breaded steak with steak on the table", or pragmatically transposed as "Do not confuse shook a tower with took a shower"). When I decided to

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investigate those phraseologies, I felt inclined to also classify them as stock conversational witticisms (Norrick 1984). But, their peculiar syntax and semantics led me to consider them as a subset of stock witticisms, namely: **nonsense stock witticisms**. If, on the one hand, stock witticisms comprise fixed expressions with different structures (*Is the Pope Catholic?*/*Where's the fire?*, for example); on the other hand, nonsense stock witticisms comprise semifixed expressions with similar structures (*Não confunda X com Y*), in general, displaying a predominantly nonsense language

Then, by considering such combinations as a subset of stock witticisms in BP, my inquiry draws on notions related to phraseologisms (Kjellmer 1991; Gries 2008); fixed formulae, semifixed formulae, situational formulae, and stock phrases (Baker 1992; Camargo & Aubert 2006; Tagnin 2005/2013). To explore the linguistic features, the effect, and the function of those combinations, I will resort to the ideas by Koestler (1964); Norrick (1984); Tigges (1988), and Couder (2019), among others. As there is a lack of studies about those phraseologies, I will also rely on my own experience, perception, knowledge and understanding of such phrases. By the way, when these expressions are mentioned (just mentioned), they usually appear in blogs related to "curiosities" or "peculiarities" of BP (Doce 2010; Pase & Cruz 2012; Alves 2017; Freire 2017).

2. **Theoretical framework**

In this section, I present the basic concepts concerning phraseologisms and levels of fixedness, including fixed formulae, semifixed formulae, situational formulae, and stock phrases.

2.1 Phraseologisms and different levels of fixedness

I start my theoretical discussion with Kjellmer (1991: 111), for whom, any native speaker of any natural language can produce and probably use a series of linguistic devices, since he has at his command "*a mint of phrases*", or according to Tagnin (2013: 118, my translation), "*a stock of pre-fabricated expressions*"[ii] in his mind. This is due to the fact that "*(a) large part of our mental lexicon consists of combinations of words that customarily co-occur. The occurrence of one of the words in such a combination can be said to predict the occurrence of the other(s)*" (Kjellmer 1991: 112).

Such combinations can also be understood as phraseologism, defined here as "*... the co-occurrence of a form or a lemma of a lexical item and one or more additional linguistic elements of various kinds which functions as one semantic unit in a clause or sentence and whose frequency of co-occurrence is larger than expected on the basis of chance*" (Gries 2008: 5)

In this sense, the combinations "*não confunda X com Y*" in BP fit in those definitions since they: 1. function as a semantic unit, normally referring to an alert to someone who may be confusing two items, and 2. one of their frames [*NÃO CONFUNDA*] predicts the occurrence of the other [*X COM Y*]. This type of phraseologism, like many others, occurs or has become "crystallized" following different levels of fixedness. To explore the combinations "*não confunda X com Y*" in more detail and their formulaic aspect, I present how Kjellmer (1991) and Baker (1992) discuss different levels of fixedness.

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ii Original: "*... um estoque de expressões pré-fabricadas ...*" (Tagnin 2013: 118)

Both authors discuss the different types of combinations following a continuum from the most to the least fixed: *fossilized phrases*; *semi-fossilized phrases* and *variable phrases*, according to Kjellmer (1991) and *idioms*, *fixed expression*, *collocation*, and *semi-fixed expression*, according to Baker (1992).

Kjellmer classifies fossilized phrases, those in which the occurrence of one element will suggest the occurrence of the other(s) with great consistency. His examples include unassimilated loans such as *Anno Domini*, *aurora borealis* and *nouveau riche*, as well as more genuinely English phrases such as *bubonic plague* and *Cocker Spaniel*. In such cases, the first word is as "predictive" as the last: *aurora* suggests *borealis* just as *borealis* suggests *aurora*. In other instances, like in *pineal gland*, *Gordian knot*, *arms akimbo*, *open sesame*, only one of the constituents, either the right or the left is predictive of the other. Variability in such groups is extremely low, normally represented by inflexional endings, indicating plural, as in *Cocker Spaniels*, for example (Kjellmer 1991: 112). According to Baker (1992), idioms represent the highest level of fixedness, like *bury the hatchet*, a combination that allows no variability in form, and is highly opaque, since its meaning cannot be deduced from their individual components. For her, other structures displaying a considerably high level of fixedness are fixed expressions, such as *Merry Christmas* and *Yours sincerely*, allowing no variation in form, but, different from idioms, are highly transparent.

Semi-fossilized phrases refer to those in which one of the components predicts a very limited number of words. Kjellmer (1991) illustrates such cases with *Achilles heel/Achilles tendon*, *billy can/billy goat*, *caesarian operation/caesarian section*, *go bail/grant bail/ jump bail/stand bail*, *inferiority complex/Oedipus complex*, just to mention a few. Though normally considered fossilized phrases, idioms, for Kjellmer (1991: 113), "*characteristically belong to the semi-fossilized type*". His examples include: *have a weak/soft spot for*, *getting off on the right/wrong foot*, *do badly/well for*. In this respect, Baker (1992) holds a slightly different perception of idioms, as being more fixed and less transparent phrases.

Variable phrases consist of "*sequences of words that co-occur more often than their individual frequencies would lead us to expect*", in such cases, the prediction must be interpreted more loosely, and "*tendency*" becomes "*a key concept*" (Kjellmer 1991: 113). Some combinations are established due to real-world circumstances. For example, *a glass of water* is just more common than *a mug of water*, for instance, since "*water is normally served in glasses rather than in mugs, cups, cans, goblets, beakers or tumblers in English-speaking countries*"; however, for other combinations, such as *loud and clear*, "there is no real-world reason". It seems that there is no objective reason for these words to co-occur; according to Kjellmer, they simply seem to be more common or preferred by speakers. Variable phrases can display two types of structure: 1. two or more lexical items combined with one functional item, like in *a glass of water* e *loud and clear* and 2. one lexical item combined with one or more functional item, like in *a number of* e *for a change*, for instance. Under this category of phrases with the least level of fixedness, Baker (1992) includes collocations, such as *run a business*, which is transparent, but allows very few variations by means of a highly restricted set of words, *company* and *institution*, for instance, and semi-fixed expressions, like *Further to your letter of ...*, the least fixed, for they prompt several possible combinations.

As it could be noticed, Kjellmer (1991) and Baker (1992) include certain linguistic events within different categories, since their decision, naturally, is based on their perception and

interpretation. This however does not reject the idea that all these different types of phrases move along a scale with different degrees of fixedness and transparency. Fixedness and transparency, though, are not directly proportional. For example, *bury the hatchet* is extremely fixed and opaque, whereas *Merry Christmas* is extremely fixed, but transparent. Yet, it is possible to note that, unlike Baker (1992), Kjellmer (1991) makes no clear allusions to fixed phrases, like *Merry Christmas*. After all, both authors call attention to the fact that, although most fixed phrases resist to variations in form, they can somehow be manipulated for a surprise effect or for humorous purposes (Kjellmer 1991) or for making a joke or producing a play on words (Baker 1992).

Next, I discuss situational formulae, drawing on Tagnin's (2005/2013) ideas of fixedness and transparency that echo the ideas by Kjellmer (1991) and Baker (1992).

2.2 Situational formulae: main features

Situational formulae are associated with certain occasions and serve to provide our conversational interactions with fluency and efficiency. According to Tagnin, "*if we observe our everyday language, we will notice that great part of it follows beaten tracks. We will also notice that, on several occasions, our conversational moves need content, flowing according to pre-established patterns of thought and verbal expression*" (2013: 118, my translation)[iii]

One of these pre-fabricated patterns of thought and verbal expression refers to situational formulae that can be mandatory, as is the case of "routine formulae", required in ritualized situations, such as greetings and gratitude, for example. Not uttering them implies a breach of social conventions, and those who do not employ them properly may be called rude (Tagnin 2013). There are, however, others that are optional, such as "syntactic situational formulae" and "fixed formulae", both of great interest in my discussion.

2.2.1 Syntactic situational formulae

Syntactic situational formulae refer to combinations in which one part of the structure is fixed and the other is variable (Tagnin 2013), such as *in How about ...?*. From the situational point of view, this structure clearly refers to an occasion in which the interlocutor, after completing the phrase as he pleases, is making a suggestion. Such structures, also called semi-fixed expressions according to Baker (1992) and Camargo & Aubert (2006), represent combinations that encompass, on the one hand, the flexibility of patterns and, on the other, the transparency of meaning. Tagnin (2013) considers the formulae of politeness and distancing as subgroups of syntactic situational formulae.

2.2.2 Fixed formulae

Fixed formulae, in turn, according to Tagnin (2013), are those uttered as a comment within a given situation, such as *Chin up!*, for instance. According to her, fixed formulae include stock phrases, quotations, and proverbs.

[iii] Original: "*(s)e observarmos nossa fala nas conversas que mantemos diariamente, notaremos que grande parte delas segue caminhos já trilhados. Observaremos também, que, em muitas situações, nossas conversas carecem de conteúdo, desenvolvendo-se de acordo com padrões pré-moldados de pensamento e de expressão verbal*". (Tagnin 2013: 118)

Classifying phrases like "*não confunda X com Y*" as stock phrases may, at first, seem contradictory, since this category of situational formulae is generally considered as highly fixed, that is, those that allow little or almost no variability in form, such as, for example, *Is the Pope (a) Catholic?*. In this expression, the main constituents remain, with the difference that an "a" may appear in some occurrences. Even with such variation, this stock phrase shows a high degree of fixedness. In combinations *não confunda X com Y*, which consists of two frames[iv], [*NÃO CONFUNDA*] + [*X COM Y*], the degree of fixedness may be considered as hybrid, conferring to these combinations, on the one hand, the characteristics of a fixed formula and, on the other, those of a semi-fixed formula.

Before I discuss the combinations "*não confunda X com Y*", as a subgroup of stock phrases, I will go over Methodology.

3. Methodology

My corpus of analysis was compiled from October 2022 to January 2023. The occurrences were retrieved from the internet by using the Google search engine. Aware that the expression "*não confunda bife à milanesa com bife ali na mesa*" is well-known, I typed *"não confunda" + "bife"* into the search box. As we know, the use of quotation marks makes more accurate searches, bringing back relevant results. As expected, my searches produced several results, from a simple citation of the expression in a chat, for example, from lists containing similar combinations with "*não confunda X com Y*". I gave priority to results that showed lists and so I selected four (4) significant sources: (Doce 2010; Pase & Cruz 2012; Alves 2017, and Freire 2017). After removing redundancies and noise, I produced a list with forty (40) occurrences for further analysis (Appendix 1 – occurrences have been numbered for easy reference).

4. "*Não confunda X com Y*": a subset of stock phrases

In this section, I discuss the linguistic traits, the effect, and the function of combinations like "*não confunda X com Y*", considering that they represent a subset of stock phrases, or, as I decided to call them: **nonsense stock witticisms**.

4.1 The linguistic traits of *não confunda X com Y* phrases
The hybrid degree of fixedness of these combinations is therefore due to their peculiar structure, as already mentioned, which consists of two frames: [*NÃO CONFUNDA*] + [*X COM Y*]. If, on the one hand, the conjunction of the two frames acts as a unit of meaning, an alert or a warning; on the other hand, each frame behaves differently as to fixedness. It is clear, then, that [*NÃO CONFUNDA*] represents the most fixed phraseological trait of these combinations, in general, predicting [*X COM Y*], the most variable phraseological trait. Thus, owing to its nature, the second frame, [*X COM Y*], is the part that requires the most attention because of the various types of combinations it allows.

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iv Frame "[...] *refers to a combination of words that is more or less fixed conventionally in the minds of a group of language users*." (Leppihalme 1996: 200).

The various types of combinations found in the second frame, [*X COM Y*], may, however, be grouped into two main mechanisms: spoonerism and wordplay, discussed next. As we will see, other concepts, closely related to the notion of spoonerism, such as metaphasis, metathesis, and antistrophe, will be introduced.

The word spoonerism was derived from the name of William Archibald Spooner (1844–1930), a distinguished Anglican clergyman and warden of New College, Oxford, who used to make repeated slips of the tongue (or "spoonerisms). The scientific name for spoonerism is metaphasis: "*the reversal of the initial letters or syllables of two or more words, such as 'I have a half-warmed fish in my mind' (for 'half-formed wish') and 'a blushing crow' (for 'a crushing blow')*".[v] According to Pediaa (2016), spoonerism or metaphasis "*refers to the practice of interchanging the corresponding consonants, vowels, or morphemes between two words in a phrase*". If spoonerisms were first considered slips of the tongue, committed unintentionally, now, mainly used in literature, they are made intentionally to add a humorous effect to a piece of writing, for instance. An important characteristic of spoonerisms, and of great interest in this paper, is that their results are usually "*whimsical or nonsensical words and phrases*".[vi] Other two linguistic mechanisms are also important for my discussion and analysis: metathesis, "*the transposition within a word of letters, sounds, or syllables, as in the change from Old English* brid *to Modern English* bird *or in the confusion of modern for* modern"[vii], and antistrophe, "*the repetition of words in reversed order*".[viii]

Wordplay, widely studied over the years (Delabastitta 1997; Giorgadze 2014, among others), is here defined as "*any clever and creative manipulation through the confrontation of meaning and forms of one or two words, or of multi-word combinations, capable of causing, in readers/listeners/viewers, a primary reaction of surprise; subsequently, bringing about amusing, comic, critical, dramatic, humorous, satirical, and other effects*" (Brezolin 2020: 214).

Considering the type of confrontation that occurs with words within the frame [*X com Y*], word games can be obtained according to several linguistic resources, such as: homonymy (identical spellings and sounds, e. g. *rock* (stone)/*rock* (verb – to sway); homophony (identical sounds, but different spellings, e.g., *rain/rein*; homography (different sounds, but identical spellings, e.g., *bow* (verb *to bend*) \ ˈbau̇\, and *bow* (arc) \ ˈbō\]; paronymy (spellings and similar sounds, with small differences in both, e.g. *affect/effect*), polysemy (same spellings, different, but related meanings, e. g. *bed* (piece of furniture)/*bed* (ground for plants)] (Delabastitta 1996; Giorgadze 2014), and synonymy (the same or nearly the same meaning in some or all senses, e.g. *body/corpus*) (Brezolin 2020).

Now, considering the concepts discussed above, I present the most common patterns found in the frame [*X com Y*]. I must point out here that, due to the difficulty in classifying some of the occurrences, the concepts just cited must be interpreted more loosely. For example, my

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[v] Spoonerism. Encyclopedia Britannica (2015). Retrieved: September 14, 2022. Available at: https://www.britannica.com/art/spoonerism

[vi] What does spoonerism mean. Pediaa (2016). Retrieved: January 26, 2023. Available at: https://pediaa.com/what-does-spoonerism-mean/

[vii] Metathesis. The Free Dictionary. (2023). Retrieved: January 26, 2023. Available at: https://www.thefreedictionary.com/metathesis

[viii] Antistrophe. Merriam-Webster. (2023). Retrieved: January 26, 2023. Available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/antistrophe

conception of spoonerism comprises instances of repetition, interchange, interposition, inversion, reversal of letters, syllables and/or words; word games, in turn, comprise instances of homonymy, paronymy, and synonymy. Additionally, all these kinds of "manipulation" have resulted in combinations containing rhyme and/or alliteration and/ or assonance.

The main patterns found include:
- repetition of words and interchanged letters, as in "*bife à milanesa e bife ali na mesa*";
- repetition of words and interchanged syllables, as in "*bisteca boa de porco com biscate boa de corpo*";
- repetition of portion of the word(s) with alternation or interposition of syllables, as in "*chiclete de caixinha com chacrete do Chacrinha*"; "*cocô de grilo com crocodilo*": *pouquinho de macarrão com porrão de macaquinho*"; "*rouxinol da Galileia com urinol da Vanderleia*", and "*Tratado de Tordesilhas com tarado atrás das ilhas*";
- repetition of words and homonymy, or quase-homonymy, as in "*abóbada celeste com a boba da Celeste*"; "*vinho branco com vinha um branco*"; "*papelada em cima da mesa com pai pelado em cima da Teresa*", and "*pastor Vilarindo com pastor virá rindo*"
- presence of homonymy or quase-homonymy, as in "*abacaxi com abaixa aqui*"; "*academia com aqui Dé mia*"; "*álcool atrás com alcatraz*"; "*Ana Teresa com a natureza*"; "*Ary Valadão com ali vai ladrão*"; "*bife de caçarolinha com rifle de caçar rolinha*"; "*centavos novos com sentar nos ovos*"; "*corrimão com, corre irmão*"; "*espinafre de caçarolinha com espingarda de caçar rolinha*"; "*Matusalém com mato o Salém*"; "*paxá dançante com passa o adoçante*"; "*Sebastião com ser bastião*"; "*Severino com se ver o hino*", and "*viaduto com veado adulto*".
- repetition of words and paronymy, as in "*idiossincracia com índio sem casinha*"; "*salsicha da Perdigão com salsicha do Negão*", and "*tênis grande com pênis grande*";
- repetition of words and synonymy, as in "*obra do grande Mestre Picasso, com a grande pica de aço do mestre de obra*";
- presence of paronymy, as in "*alça da barra funda com calça rasgada na bunda*"; "*a banda dos fuzileiros com a bunda dos funileiros*"; "*capitão de fragata com cafetão de gravata*"; "*Faculdade de Botucatu com dificuldade de botar no cu*"; "*freio de caminhão com Frei Damião*"; "*melancolia profunda com melancia na bunda*"; "*o pico da Tijuca com a pica do Tio Juca*"; "*Os Canhões de Navarone com os culhões do Carone*" and "*piscina funda com piça na bunda*", and "*tristeza profunda com pau na sua bunda*".

As it could be noticed, the semi-fixed part, [*X COM Y*], allows several combinations, showing that this type of expression is highly productive given a large number of alternative or analogous forms (considering the two frames) found on the web. Analogous form here is understood as a possible alternative that displays elements that are similar or comparable to one or more components of other forms. Thus, due to their characteristics, these constructions can be used interchangeably from a pragmatic point of view (Brezolin 2021).

The confrontation of words within the frame [*X com Y*] is usually unexpected, absurd, and humorous. The peculiarity of these combinations is, in my view, closely linked to a creative, unusual, and sometimes ridiculous use of language, or, as I prefer to say, to nonsense language, which in turn is associated with nonsense literature. The nonsensical and humorous aspects of such combinations will be explored next.

4.2 The nonsensical aspect and the humorous effect of *não confunda X com Y* phrases

According to Tigges (1988), literary nonsense refers to a genre of literary narrative characterized simultaneously by multiplicity and absence of meaning. This dichotomous situation occurs by playing with the rules of language, logic, and prosody, individually or jointly. According to the author, literary nonsense creates an unresolved tension between the presence and absence of meaning, through one of its essential characteristics, that is, its predominantly verbal nature. Thus, for him, the greater the distance or tension between reality and the words or images that represent it, the higher the expectations evoked and the greater the frustration that comes from these expectations, so, the more nonsensical the effect will be. The author compares nonsense with the absurd, in the former, language creates a reality, in the latter, language represents a meaningless reality. Thus, a successful occurrence of nonsense is one that, at the same time, leads the reader to an interpretation and prevents him from inferring that there is a deeper meaning to be unraveled through connotations or associations. According to Baldwin (2022), nonsense language, in general, is exactly what it seems to be: simply nonsense.

It is important to recall that nonsense language has been created and used by authors such as Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, and Spike Milligan, whose literary texts are marked by the presence of neologisms and nonsense words, inventions created with the explicit purpose of producing interesting sounds and images in a piece of literary work.

These ideas are useful for my analyses, since *não confunda X com Y* phrases, through their nonsense character, create a reality and, at the same time, part of these combinations, the frame [*X with Y*], represents a meaningless reality. Thus, it is possible to understand, from the pragmatic point of view, that the combination in its entirety denotes an alert or a warning and that part of it denotes a confrontation of words (X with Y), which are reasonably unusual, nonsensical, and absurd. According to Couder (2019: 13), "*nonsense seems to primarily operate on a linguistic level highlighting the creative power of language, whereas the absurd operates on the conceptual level*". This conjunction of levels reveals a world that is, at the same time, familiar and unfamiliar, eventually leading to the production of humor.

This familiar/unfamiliar relationship can be seen as a type of incongruity, which, according to Morreall, is a factor that may trigger humor. For him, "*(w)herever there is a principle to be violated or regularity to be upset, there is room for incongruity and so for humor*" (1983: 82). Nothing is incongruous *per se*; however, but in relation to the way people see, understand, and interact with the world. Incongruity thus refers to a situation in which a pattern has been broken, which no longer is consistent with an individual's view of things. Morreall (1983) adds that, on the linguistic level, the incongruous character comes from unexpected, illogical and/or inappropriate contexts, in which speakers of a language, for example, make involuntary mistakes, such as slips of the tongue, or make deliberate constructions such as imitations of dialects, word games or jokes. In these cases, the results are considered incongruous, because, in general, they involve the violation or manipulation of some pattern associated with phonology, graphology, syntax and/or semantics. These unusual results, then, may be considered humorous, because, according to Koestler (1964: 95), "*(t)he sudden bisociation of a mental event with two habitually incompatible matrices results in an abrupt transfer of the train of thought from one associative context to another*". The perception of this sudden bisociation is, for him, the pattern underlying all varieties of humor, since "*(t)he emotive charge which the narrative*

carried cannot be so transferred owing to its greater inertia and persistence; discarded by reason, the tension finds its outlet in laughter" (Koestler 1964: 95).

However, as I have already hinted at, the type of humor found in "*não confunda X com Y*" phrases may be considered as "absurd" humor. For Couder, this type of humor, like any other, also originates from some kind of incompatibility or incongruity, "*an experience where certain objects, events, or actions do not conform to our expectations of them*" (2019: 4). Thus, absurd humor, by playing with similarity and difference, defies the expectations that readers/listeners have of certain expressions constructed from pre-established standards in a consistent and customary manner. Absurd humor arises when there are, for example, unintentional or deliberate violations of phonological rules, and uncommon lexical confrontations, like those in "*não confunda X com Y*" phrases. It is important to make it clear that the production of absurd humor, in these expressions, does not come from the words in isolation, but from the confrontation between them, resulting in a nonsense unit, properly inserted in a conversational context.

4.3 The function of *não confunda X com Y* phrases

The function of nonsense stock witticisms is closely related to their highly informal nature since they are mainly found in spoken language. This inference is somewhat expected since, like other stock phrases, they are used in ongoing conversational interactions, with no discourse marker or gambit, announcing their use. Speakers of BP simply use them when they wish to call the attention of some of the interlocutors who may be confusing two items. In some cases, being warned in public may be embarrassing and some tension may build up. However, if the warning remark is addressed through unusual words in a playful way, their function also serves to minimize the possible tension created. Additionally, as some "*não confunda X com Y*" phrases contain colloquial words, they may serve to reveal attitudes of empathy and generosity among speakers; in other cases, as some phrases use four-letter or vulgar words [for example, *bunda*/butt (1, 5, 23, 30, 38); *cocô*/shit (15); *cu*/ass (19, *pica*/dick (24, 25); *culhões*/balls (26); *pênis*/penis (36)], they may also serve to reinforce bonds of friendship and intimacy, particularly before a supposedly uncomfortable situation (Norrick 1984; Brezolin 2006). It is worth noting that phrases containing some kinds of vulgarity are usually more used among male peers.

Owing to my experience as a translation teacher and a freelance translator, I also thought of how to transpose such phrases into another language.

4.4 The translation of "*não confunda X com Y*" phrases

As it happens with other types of phraseologisms, which need to be transposed into other languages, a common (expected or recommended) practice is to use corresponding crystallized expressions in the target language — whenever possible —, or to resort to other strategies, since a literal rendering of the entire phrase is not often effective.

Thus, considering the rendition of "*não confunda X com Y*" phrases into English, the first obstacle a translator encounters is that, as far as I am concerned, the frames [*DO NOT CONFUSE*] + [*X WITH Y*] do not correspond to a frozen phraseology in English, as the frames [*NÃO CONFUNDA*] + [*X COM Y*] do in BP, for example. Consequently, the translator cannot resort to corresponding existing recognized expressions in English. In this case, my suggestion (far from being original) is to use two different translating procedures: the first frame can be transposed

via calque or loan translation, "*the process whereby the individual elements of a source language item … are translated literally to produce a target language equivalent*" (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997: 18), and the second frame, via equivalence, a process that represents the replacement of a source text segment for a pragmatic correspondent in the target language (Barbosa 1990). As spoonerisms are the most common devices used in the second frame in BP, a way to remedy the lack of crystallized "*do not confuse X with Y*" phrases in English is adapt the expressions with examples of spoonerisms extracted from apocryphal quotations or from popular use/culture such literature, music, radio, among others, as the ones I present below [ix].

> *Do not confuse …*
> *the Lord is a shoving leopard with the Lord is a loving shepherd.*
> *the weight of rages with the rate of wages.*
> *a blushing crow with a crushing blow*
> *a well-boiled icicle with a well-oiled bicycle*
> *you were fighting a liar in the quadrangle with you were lighting a fire in the quadrangle.*
> *is the bean dizzy or the dean busy?*
> *you have hissed all my mystery lectures with you have missed all my history lectures.*
> *a nosey little cook with a cosy little nook.*
> *Resident Pagan with President Reagan.*
> *dash the wishes with wash the dishes.*
> *shook a tower with took a shower.*
> *belly jeans with jelly beans.*

The phrases above, like their possible correspondents in BP, may be considered as analogous or alternative forms of one another, and as such, can be used interchangeably from a pragmatic point of view, and so can be used when translating them from BP into English is necessary.

5. Concluding remarks

The main objective, in this manuscript, was to analyze the linguistic traits, the effect, and the function of "*não confunda X com Y*" phrases in BP. The occurrences of these expressions were collected on the web following the basic search methods provided by the Google Search Engine. As these phrases contain two frames with different characteristics, I classified them as having a hybrid feature of fixedness. The two frames act as a semantic unit, displaying a transparent meaning, namely: a type of warning to someone who may be confusing two things, and each of them behaves in different manners. The first frame [*NÃO CONFUNDA*] represents the invariable phraseological unit, and [*X COM Y*], the variable portion, allowing several combinations. The second frame is characterized by using unusual and absurd lexical confrontations, through spoonerisms and word games, revealing the recurrent presence of

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[ix] Spoonerism. In: Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia. 2020. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spoonerism. Accessed 14 September 2022.

repetition, alternation, interposition of letters, words, and syllables, as well as of mechanisms such as homonym, paronymy, synonymy, for example, which endow the phrases with rhyme, assonance, and alliteration.

The unexpected and incompatible use of words within the second frame is responsible for the creation of nonsense associations and absurd humor. The specific humor present in these expressions is justified by the common nature of other varieties of humor in which two habitually incongruous or incompatible situations or events are perceived. One can, naturally, state that some of the occurrences are more humorous than others or that some are not humorous at all. In any case, the mere fact that the word confrontations within the second frame is unusual and absurd is enough to classify them as humorous.

In conclusion, I believe that I have brought for discussion a type of multi-word expression in BP that, like other peculiar phrases, should receive more attention from linguists. Apart from that, my investigation also opens room for other studies about nonsense stock witticisms in BP, considering the frequency of use, the preference among speakers, for example, and further research into their use in other Portuguese-speaking communities.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

Adauri Brezolin holds a doctoral degree in English Language from the University of São Paulo, Brazil. He taught in several translation undergraduate programs for more than 30 years. He is the co-author of the following dictionaries: *Pequeno Dicionário de Expressões Idiomáticas e Coloquialismos* (Fiuza, 2001), *Whatchamacallit? Novo dicionário português-inglês de idiomatismos e coloquialismos* (Disal, 2006), *Happy Couples - dicionário de colocações lexicais adjetivas* (Disal, 2010) e *The word is the thing*: *dicionário português-inglês de fórmulas situacionais, frases feitas e provérbios* (Lexikos, 2019). He has also published articles on the translation of wordplays, and other subjects (https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4990-0224). His research interests are the teaching of translation, idiomaticity, conventionality, terminology, and Corpus Linguistics. He is also a freelance translator.

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Appendix 1: List of occurrences retrieved from the internet using the Google search engine

Não confunda

1. a banda dos fuzileiros com a bunda dos funileiros.
2. abacaxi com abaixa aqui.
3. abóboda celeste com a boba da Celeste.
4. academia com aqui Dé mia.
5. alça da barra funda com calça rasgada na bunda.
6. álcool atrás com alcatraz.
7. Ana Teresa com a natureza.
8. Ary Valadão com ali vai ladrão.
9. bife à milanesa com bife ali na mesa.
10. bife de caçarolinha com rifle de caçar rolinha.
11. bisteca boa de porco com biscate boa de corpo.
12. capitão de fragata com cafetão de gravata.
13. centavos novos com sentar nos ovos.
14. chiclete de caixinha com chacrete do Chacrinha.
15. cocô de grilo com crocodilo.
16. conhaque de alcatrão com catraca de canhão.
17. corrimão com corre, irmão.
18. espinafre de caçarolinha com espingarda de caçar rolinha.
19. Faculdade de Botucatu com dificuldade de botar no cu.
20. freio de caminhão com Frei Damião.
21. idiossincrasia com índio sem casinha.
22. Matusalém com mato o Salém.
23. melancolia profunda com melancia na bunda.
24. o pico da tijuca com pica do Tio Juca.
25. obra do grande Mestre Picasso com a grande pica de aço do mestre de obra.
26. Os Canhões de Navarone com os culhões do Carone.
27. papelada em cima da mesa com pai pelado em cima da Teresa.
28. pastor Vilarindo com pastor virá rindo.
29. paxá dançante com passa o adoçante.
30. piscina funda com piça na bunda.
31. pouquinho de macarrão com porrão de macaquinho.
32. rouxinol da galileia com o urinol da Vanderleia.
33. salsicha da Perdigão com salsicha do Negão.
34. Sebastião com ser bastião.
35. Severino com se ver hino.
36. tênis grande com pênis grande.
37. Tratado de Tordesilhas com tarado atrás das ilhas.
38. tristeza profunda com pau na sua bunda.
39. viaduto com veado adulto.
40. vinho branco com vinha um branco.