Examining the use of lexical bundles in Portuguese as a second language writing

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Formulaic sequences are known to be an important resource in learners' language development (Adel & Erman, 2012; Chen & Baker, 2010). Studies investigating English as a Second Language have thoroughly addressed the use of formulaic sequences across learners' development level, suggesting that more advanced learners use more types of formulaic sequences, while lower level learners use more formulas overall. In Portuguese, however, few studies have investigated the use of formulaic sequences. The goal of this study is to investigate the use of lexical bundles across proficiency levels of Portuguese learners, providing an account of their structural classification and functional use in a learner corpus. In order to achieve this goal, this study examined the use of lexical bundles in texts written for Portuguese as a Second Language classes at five proficiency levels, from beginners (A1) to advanced (C1) as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Sequences of three words were extracted from the corpus using Antconc. These sequences had to occur at a minimum dispersion of 5% in each subcorpora. For the study of function types, the corpus was divided into beginner (A1 and A2) and intermediate students (B1 and B2), while for the study of structure types the corpus was divided in the original five levels. The results show that beginner level learners prefer using bundles associated with concrete references and use more bundle tokens than bundle types. On the other hand, more advanced learners rely more on textual organization and stance bundles, and use clausal and adverb-based bundles more frequently. This study can contribute to the description of written Portuguese at different levels of proficiency. Moreover, the results can inform pedagogical materials that combine both function and structure of lexical bundles.