

condições observadas na prática) e ainda encaminhar soluções de superação dos limites apontados nessas questões ou problemas com que se inicia a trajetória de pesquisa aplicada.

É preciso prever uma agenda de prioridades nacionais e regionais e nela ir buscando constituir os projetos individuais e projetos integrados coletivos (os laboratórios de equipes de pesquisadores e seus alunos – formandos). A escolha da qualidade distintiva da pesquisa aplicada, promissora na nossa longa história brasileira de ciência des aplicada, já é um acerto inicial neste programa nacional de

pós-graduação em Linguística Aplicada da qual a nova Revista Horizontes faz parte integrante. Ela confirma nossa expectativa de que a ciência aplicada no âmbito da linguagem, especificamente no que tange o ensino de línguas no país, busca pela via impressa deste veículo vaziar o espírito disseminador de conhecimentos e idéias fecundantes de que carecemos para vislumbrar cenários ainda mais promissores para a área da linguagem e ensino neste Brasil linguísticamente tão diverso. Que alegria para todos nós contar com essa nova tribuna no coração do Brasil.

José Carlos P. Almeida Filho

Adjective-noun collocation problems: a corpus based study

Neide Cesar Cruz
UFSC/UFPB

Resumo:

É inegável que com o desenvolvimento da informática, estudos na área de linguística através da utilização de um corpus desenvolveram-se muito rapidamente. Através de uma linguagem autêntica, fornecendo dados reais do discurso falado e escrito, um grande número de corpus tem sido aplicado em pesquisas relacionadas ao uso da linguagem. O estudo de colocações em inglês é bastante explorado. Colocações entre adjetivos e substantivos são apresentadas pelo livro didático em língua inglesa 'Headway', no nível avançado. Minha experiência de ensino com colocações utilizando o referido livro levou-me a questionar se o critério utilizado para apresentar essas colocações tinha sido o da frequência de ocorrência em fala autêntica ou a intuição do autor. Este estudo descreve uma investigação em que a versão completa do corpus 'Collins CobuildDirect' da Universidade de Birmingham foi utilizada.

O objetivo foi investigar a frequência de ocorrência das colocações apresentadas no 'Headway'. Os resultados revelam que a intuição do autor, ao invés de dados empíricos, foi o critério utilizado. Colocações entre adjetivos e substantivos que têm uma frequência de ocorrência mais significativa, segundo os dados do Cobuild, são sugeridas.

Palavras-chave: corpus, colocações, frequência.

Abstract:

It is undeniable that with the development of computer technology, linguistic corpora have developed very rapidly. Due to the use of real language, providing databases of naturally occurring spoken and written discourse, corpora have been applied to various levels of language study. Concerning the lexicon, collocations have received a lot of attention in corpus-based research, which led to substantive improvement in reliability as to choice of collocations for teaching materials. Adjective-noun collocations are explicitly taught in the Headway Advanced textbook. My teaching experience with such textbook led me to question whether the criterion used for presenting them had been either the frequency of occurrence in real language or the authors' intuition. This paper describes a corpus-based study, using the full version of Collins CobuildDirect from the University of Birmingham, in which the frequency of occurrence of the adjective-noun collocations presented in the course book mentioned are investigated. The findings reveal that intuition, rather than empirical evidence, was the criterion used. Assuming that frequency should be given priority in learning and teaching because they are generally required, adjective-noun collocations, which have a more significant frequency of occurrence on the basis of the Cobuild Direct database, are suggested.

Keywords: corpus, collocation, frequency of occurrence

Introduction

Corpus, according to Sinclair (1991: 171), "... is a collection of naturally-occurring language text, chosen to characterise a state or variety of a language." Although important corpora of English already existed before the invention of computer (Francis, 1992: 17), it is undeniable that with the development of computer technology, linguistic corpora have developed very rapidly. As Leech (1992: 106) points out: "... the computer's ability to search, retrieve, sort, and calculate the contents of vast corpora of text, ... gives us the ability to comprehend, and to account for, the contents of such corpora in a way which was not dreamed of in the pre-computational era of corpus linguistics".

The advantage of using corpora is that they provide databases of naturally-occurring spoken and written discourse, allowing analyses to be carried out on the basis of real structures rather than intuitions. Due to the use of real language, it is not surprising that corpora have been applied to various levels of language study. Some of them are lexicon, syntax, phonetics, translation, stylistics, among others.

In the level of lexicon, collocation, defined as being "... the habitual occurrence of words" (Stubbs, 1997: 245), is assumed to be one area of study which gained a great deal from the language contained in a corpus. As a teacher of English, I take the view that collocation is an important feature in teaching, since it enables us to evaluate learners' competence in using the target language. Learners, who lack the competence in the area of collocation, clearly show grammatical mistakes and lack of fluency in their speech or writing.

I had the experience of teaching collocations by using the textbook *Headway Advanced* (John & Soars, 1995). One type of collocation explicitly taught in this textbook is the adjective-noun collocation. Through a written activity learners are asked to collocate a number of adjectives with various nouns. (John & Soars, 1995: 34)

During my experience, various questions and doubts were raised by learners and also by myself, in relation to the frequency of occurrence, in written and spoken language, of the adjective-noun collocations offered by the textbook. The collocations provided by the *Headway Advanced* teacher's book as an answer to the written activity offered to teach them are listed in Table 1.

One of the doubts raised by learners was whether native speakers really used some of the collocations listed in the table above. Some learners claimed that they had never found in books or magazines some of these collocations.

Mindt (1996: 232) observes that a comparison between authentic language data and textbooks for teaching English as a foreign language has shown that grammatical structures used in textbooks are considerably different from the ones used in authentic English. Mindt's observation, together with the problems I experienced when teaching the adjective-noun collocations, led me to question whether the criterion used for presenting collocations in the *Headway Advanced* had been either the frequency of occurrence in real language or the authors' intuition. I then adopted the principle that frequency is an indicator of importance and that frequent collocations should deserve explicit learning and teaching because they are generally required.

Table 1 - Adjective-noun collocations presented in the Headway:

ADJECTIVE	NOUN
weird / fantastic	dream
weird/deviant/eccentric/freak	behaviour/idiosyncratic accident
weird/eerie	experience
weird/idiosyncratic	style of painting
weird/eerie	feeling
weird/eccentric	person
weird/fantastic	fashion
weird	effect
eerie	sound
weird/freakish	appearance
weird/fantastic	clothes
weird/eerie/fantastic	place

The possibility of carrying out a corpus-based study, linked to the wish to offer a possible solution to the teaching problem I experienced with collocations, motivated me to investigate, in linguistic corpora, the frequency of occurrence in authentic data of the adjective-noun collocations provided for teaching in the *Headway Advanced*.

1. Method

The corpus used was the full version of Collins CobuildDirect, which is a monitor corpus with new texts constantly being added to it. The findings are based on the 57,717,489 words included in the corpus, which comprises samples of books from many different genres, spoken language, British newspapers and the BBC. The specified corpora which comprise the Cobuild Corpus and the number of words in each one are presented in Table 2.

The investigation focused on the following issues:

1. Observe the highest and lowest absolute frequencies of each adjective provided by the course book, relative to the complete Cobuild corpus size.
2. Find out the first eight most frequent nouns, which collocate with each of these adjectives. According to my teaching experience, eight is considered a satisfactory number for exemplification when new vocabulary is taught.
3. Identify whether the eight most frequent adjective-noun collocations found in the corpora coincide with the ones offered by the course book.
4. Verify whether the collocations provided by the course book appear in each of the corpora, in case they do not coincide with the eight most frequent.

Table 2-CobuildDirect corpora:

CORPORA	NUMBER OF WORDS
UK spoken (UK spok)	9,272,579
UK books	5,354,262
US books	5,626,436
UK ephemera (UK ephem)	3,124,354
US ephemera (US ephem)	1,224,710
Times newspaper	5,763,761
UK magazines	4,901,990
BBC	2,609,869
Today newspaper	5,248,302
National Public Radio (NPR)	3,129,222
Sunday newspaper Sunnow	5,824,476
Australian news (oznews)	5,337,528

The criterion used to establish the significant frequency of occurrence of the adjective-noun collocations was the t-score. According to Collins Cobuild-Direct instructions, t-score is a statistical test that assigns a particular score to each collocates of the node word. The node word in a collocation is the word which is under examination. The higher the t-score of a word, the higher the probability that this word collocates with the node word.

The purpose of the t-score test is to exclude apparent collocational effects, which are due to word frequency. For example, in the UK spoken corpus the word 'that', which is the seventh most significant collocate immediately to the left of the node word 'information', is actually twice more frequent (occurs 77 times) than the word 'some', which is the sixth most significant to collocate with 'information' (occurs 32 times). Thus, simply by chance one would expect 'that' to collocate with 'information' more frequently than

'some' does. This is actually the case, since 'that' occurs 77 times, while 'some' occurs 32 times. The t-score statistic weighs these absolute frequencies of co-occurrence against the relative frequencies of the words in question in the corpus as a whole, and assigns a score to them accordingly. In the case of the node word 'information', the t-score decides that the 32 occurrences of 'some information' are statistically more noteworthy than the 77 occurrences of 'that information.' The t-score of 'some', 5.107473, is then higher than the one of 'that', 5.069197.

By the explanation above it is possible to conclude that t-score values are relevant to establish significant frequencies of occurrences of collocations. This is why it was used as a criterion in the present study.

In order to find out the eight most frequent nouns, which collocate with each of the adjectives presented in the Headway, I compared the t-scores of the col-

locations in all the corpora and selected the eight highest values. Thus, the eight most frequent nouns, which collocate, with each of the adjectives discussed in this study are those that have the highest t-scores in each of the corpus, which comprise the Cobuild.

2. Results

The findings for the issues proposed in this study will be presented and discussed considering each adjective separately.

Weird

The highest absolute frequency of the adjective 'weird' is 206 in the UK spoken corpus, and the lowest frequency is 1 in the Today newspaper.

The eight most frequent nouns found collocating with 'weird' are enumerated below. The corpus in which each one appears and their highest t-scores are mentioned.

Nouns	Corpora	t-scores
1. Thing	UK mags	2.980459
2. Sense	UK spok	1.977384
3. Way	UK mags	1.932848
4. Dictionary	Oznews	1.413896
5. Characters	Sunnow	1.412388
6. Humour	Sunnow	1.411963
7. Shit	US books	1.407612
8. Stuff	Oznews	1.406929

The Headway Advanced provides the following nouns to collocate with 'weird': 'dream', 'behaviour', 'experience', 'style of painting', 'feeling', 'person', 'fashion', 'effect', 'appearance', 'clothes' and 'place.'

As can be seen from the results above, these nouns are not among the

most significant to collocate with 'weird.' However, some of them appear collocating with 'weird', having, most of them, lower t-scores. Others do not collocate with 'weird' in any corpus. The results found were:

Weird dream - No occurrence.
Weird behaviour - UK books, 0.999866.

Weird experience - UK mags, 0.999794; UK spok, 0.999837; sunnow, 1.400548.

Weird style of painting - No occurrence.
Weird feeling - UK books, 0.999781; US books, 0.999673; UK spok, 0.999893; Oznews, 0.999921; Sunnow, 0.999863.

Weird person - US ephem, 0.999728; US books, 0.999673.

Weird fashion - No occurrence.

Weird effect - UK books, 0.999813.

Weird appearance - No occurrence.

Weird clothes - No occurrence.

Weird place - UK mags, 1.348919; UK books, 0.999462.

The results presented above enables me to conclude that, although it is taught in the Headway that we can say 'weird dream', 'weird style of painting', 'weird fashion', 'weird appearance' and 'weird clothes', these collocations do not seem to exist in authentic spoken and written language, since none of them was found among the 57,717,489 words included in the Cobuild corpus.

Fantastic

The highest absolute frequency of occurrence of the adjective 'fantastic' is 559 times in the Sunnow corpus, whereas the lowest frequency is 10 times in the BBC.

The eight nouns, which frequently collocate with 'fantastic', were found in the Sunnow corpus. They are as follows:

Nouns	Corpora	t-score
Day	Sunnow	3.309367
News	Sunnow	3.103035
Job	Sunnow	3.098179
Season	Sunnow	2.979299
Prize	Sunnow	2.969896
Achievement	Sunnow	2.442241
Result	Sunnow	2.416068
Dream	Sunnow	2.221046

The textbook provides the following nouns to collocate with 'fantastic': 'dream', 'fashion', 'clothes' and 'place'. As can be seen from the results above, 'dream' is the only one, which appears among the eight most frequent collocations. 'Place', 'fashion' and 'clothes' also appear in some corpora, with t-scores lower than the ones shown above:

Fantastic fashion – UK spok, 0.999977; Sunnow, 0.999996.
Fantastic clothes – Times, 0.999948.
Fantastic place – UK mags, 1.73107; UK spok, 1.412684; Today, 1.41365; oznews, 0.999611; Sunnow, 0.999497.

Although 'fantastic place' is not included among the eight most frequent collocations, it has a relevant t-score in three corpora.

Deviant

The highest absolute frequency of the adjective 'deviant' is 30 times in the US books corpus, while the lowest is 1 in the NPR. 'Deviant' does not occur in the BBC and US ephem corpora.

The eight nouns which most frequently collocate with 'deviant' are:

Nouns	Corpora	t-score
1. Behaviour	US books	2.825771
2. Offender	UK books	1.414191
3. Form	US books	1.412159
4. Pattern	US books	1.411107
5. Family	UK books	1.409681
6. Development	US book	1.408087
7. Nihilism	NPR	1.0
8. Sexuality	Times	0.999979

'Behaviour' is the only noun presented by the Headway to collocate with 'deviant'. As can be seen from the results above, this noun is the most significant collocate of 'deviant', since it appears in the US books corpus with the highest t-score. 'Deviant behaviour' also appears in some other corpora: Oz news, 1.414103; UK ephem, 0.999904; UK books, 0.998389. However, in the UK mags, UK spok, US ephem, BBC, NPR, Times, Today and Sunnow corpora 'deviant behaviour' did not have any occurrence. These results demonstrate that 'deviant behaviour' is more likely to occur in written English, since there was no occurrence of such collocation in the NPR, BBC and UK spok corpora.

Eccentric

The highest absolute frequency of 'eccentric' is 74 times in the UK mags corpus, while the lowest is 4 times in the BBC and US ephem corpora.

The eight nouns, which most frequently collocate with 'eccentric', are:

Nouns	Corpora	t-scores
1. Bearing	US ephem	1.414121
2. Style	Sunnow	1.411713
3. Behaviour	UK books	1.410795
4. Family	Times	1.396761
5. Orator	UK ephem	0.999997
6. Toy maker	UK ephem	0.999995
7. Aristocrat	Sunnow	0.999963
8. Dancer	NPR	0.999951

Freak

The highest frequency of 'freak' is 71 in the Sunnow, and the lowest is 2 in the NPR corpus. The eight most significant nouns, which collocate with 'freak', are:

Nouns	Corpora	t-scores
1. Accident	Sunnow	3.461462
2. Wave	Sunnow	2.23519
3. Result	Sunnow	2.231418
4. Show	Oznews	2.231418
5. Gust	oday	1.731999
6. Collision	Sunnow	1.413558
7. Storm	Today	1.41229
8. Goal	Times	1.411089

The Headway Advanced presents one noun to collocate with 'freak': 'accident'. The results above demonstrate that 'accident' has the highest t-score in relation to the other nouns and is, thus, the most significant to collocate with 'freak.' 'Freak accident' also appears with relatively high t-scores in 6 other corpora: UK ephem, UK spok, US ephem, Times, Today and Oznews. However, this collocation does not appear any time in 3 corpora: UK books, BBC and NPR.

Eerie

The highest absolute frequency of eerie is 31 in the UK books corpus, and the lowest is 4 in the UK ephem.

'Eerie' does not occur in the BBC corpus. The eight most frequent nouns to collocate with 'eerie' are:

Nouns	Corpora	t-scores
1. Silence	UK books	1.998535
2. Moonscope	US books	1.414203
3. Chill	Oznews	1.414157
4. Feeling	UK books	1.409403
5. Catacomb	Today	0.999997
6. Cheerfulness	Oznews	0.999996
7. Timelessness	Times	0.999995
8. Expectant	UK ephem	0.999991

The nouns, which the course book illustrates to collocate with 'eccentric', are 'behaviour' and 'person.' As can be observed from the results above, 'behaviour' is the third most significant collocate. 'Eccentric behaviour' also appears in the Oznews with t-score 0.999922. 'Eccentric person,' however, occurs only in the US books corpus with t-score 0.999673.

Idiosyncratic

The highest absolute frequency of 'idiosyncratic' is 29 in the UK mags, and the lowest is 1 in the Today newspaper. This adjective has no occurrence in three corpora: US ephem, NPR and Sunnow. The eight nouns collocating with idiosyncratic, which have the highest t-scores, are listed below:

Nouns	Corpora	t-scores
1. Adventurousness	Times	0.999996
2. Quirk	US books	0.999979
3. Auteur	US books	0.999974
4. Regime	BBC	0.999972
5. Salad	Oznews	0.999958
6. Affair	UK spok	0.999944
7. Edifice	Times	0.999935
8. Pianist	Times	0.999935

According to the Headway Advanced, 'behaviour' and 'style of painting' collocate with 'idiosyncratic.' The results above show that these two nouns are not included among the eight most frequent which collocate with the adjective investigated. 'Idiosyncratic behaviour' occurs only in the Times corpus, with t-score of 0.999933; it is, thus, part of written English. 'Idiosyncratic style of painting' does not occur in the whole Cobuild corpus.

'Eerie experience,' 'eerie feeling,' 'eerie sound' and 'eerie place' are the collocations offered by the Headway. The only one, which is among the eight most frequent, is 'eerie feeling.' 'Eerie experience' occurs in the UK books UK ephem, and Times. 'Eerie place' occurs only in the UK ephem. 'Eerie sound' does not appear in the whole Cobuild corpus.

Freakish

The highest frequency of 'freakish' is 10 times in the Oznews; the lowest is 1 in the NPR and UK spok. This adjective does not occur any time in 5 corpora: UK books, US books, UK ephem, US ephem and BBC.

The eight nouns, which most frequently collocate with 'freakish', are:

Nouns	Corpora	t-scores
1. Goal	Oznews	1.413629
2. Distribution	UK mags	0.999999
3. Distortion	Times	0.999989
4. Fellow	NPR	0.999981
5. Reverse	Oznews	0.999826
6. Imagination	Times	0.999787
7. Programme	Times	0.999624
8. Condition	Today	0.999601

'Appearance' is the only noun the Headway presents to collocate with 'freakish.' The results show that it is not among the eight most frequent. 'Freakish appearance' does not occur in the whole Cobuild corpus. Thus, although it is taught in the Headway that we can say 'freakish appearance,' this collocation does not take part in the 57,717,489 words, which comprise the Cobuild corpus.

3. Discussion

The Headway course book presents 8 different adjectives to collocate with 13 different nouns. As it was demonstrated in the results above, half of these adjectives, 'weird,' 'fantastic,' 'eccentric' and 'freak,' occur in all the corpora which comprise the Cobuild corpus. 'Freakish,' 'deviant,' 'idiosyncratic' and 'eerie' appear in some, but not all of the Cobuild corpora. Among the nouns, only one 'style of painting' does not occur in all the corpora. In fact, it appears only in the UK books. Due to this very low frequency, 'painting style' was also investigated. The result obtained was 1 occurrence in two corpora: UK mags and Times.

The total number of adjective-noun collocations provided by the Headway is 26. 18 occur in some or all the corpora in the Cobuild corpus. 8 collocations, nevertheless, do not occur any time among the 57,717,489 words of the whole corpus used in this study. Among these absent collocations, the only two with the noun 'style of painting' are included. In relation to 'painting style,' none of the adjectives proposed collocate with such noun. The presence and absence of the collocations are summarised below:

Collocations present:

- weird behaviour
- weird experience
- weird feeling
- weird person
- weird effect
- weird place
- fantastic dream
- fantastic fashion
- fantastic clothes
- fantastic place
- deviant behaviour

(Cont.)

eccentric behaviour
eccentric person
idiosyncratic behaviour
freak accident
freak experience
eerie place
eerie feeling

Collocations absent:

weird dream
weird style of painting
weird fashion
weird appearance
weird clothes
idiosyncratic style of painting
eerie sound
freakish appearance

Among the 18 collocations, which occur in the Cobuild corpus, only 6 have t-scores higher or similar to 1.0. This value can be considered to be the minimum, which characterises a significant frequency of occurrence. They are: 'weird experience,' 'weird place,' 'fantastic dream,' 'fantastic place,' 'deviant behaviour,' 'freak accident' and 'eerie feeling.' This means that these 6, out of 18, are the only ones, which have a significant frequency of occurrence in the Cobuild corpus. They are, then, more worthy of attention in teaching, since they are more used in authentic, real language. If learners are taught the 12 less significant and the 8 absent, they will be using collocations, which are rarely or never used by native speakers of English.

The findings of this study, thus, enable me to deduce that the criterion used to choose the adjective-noun col-

locations in the Headway did not seem to be empirical evidence, but the authors' intuition.

It is important to add that not only the adjective-noun collocations have a low frequency of occurrence in Cobuild corpus, but also the adjectives themselves. Their frequency is very low relative to the complete Cobuild corpus size.

Table 3 summarises the eight most frequent nouns, which collocate with the adjectives investigated and discussed in this study. These adjective-noun collocations can be incorporated to the ones already present in the Headway, and are suggested as an alternative to teaching.

Table 3-Significant adjective-noun collocations

Adjectives	Nouns
weird	thing, sense, way, dictionary, characters, humour, shit, stuff.
fantastic	day, news, job, season, prize, achievement, result, dream.
deviant	behaviour, offender, form, pattern, family, development, nihilism, sexuality.
eccentric	bearing, style, behaviour, family, orator, toymaker, aristocrat, dancer.
idiosyncratic	adventurousness, quirk, auteur, regime, salad, affair, edifice, pianist.

(Cont. tabela 3)

Adjectives	Nouns
freak	accident, wave, result, show, gust, collision, storm, goal.
eerie	silence, moonscape, chill, feeling, catacomb, cheerfulness, timelessness, expectant.

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Conclusion

Despite the limited scope of the study described in this article, it was possible to observe that decisions made on the basis of a corpus study would help foreign language teaching to take lexicon, and collocation in particular, to closer correspondences with authentic English. A corpus-based study would also bring solutions to teachers of English who cast doubts on the type of language presented by textbooks, since these doubts are hardly ever explained by dictionaries. For further research, other types of collocation presented by textbooks, such as adverb-verb and adverb-adjective, should be investigated on the basis of a corpus.

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Compreensão de Linguagem Oral no Ensino de Língua Estrangeira

José Carlos Paes de Almeida Filho
UNICAMP

Linda Gentry El Dash
UNICAMP

1. Quadro geral

Compreender linguagem é o processo de (re) construir sentidos a partir do discurso falado ou escrito. Através desse processo o ouvinte e o leitor geralmente vêm a adquirir informação ou conhecimento mediante linguagem ouvida e lida, respectivamente. Mas há também muita comunicação oral e escrita com a finalidade principal de estabelecer e/ou manter relações sociais, de instaurar interação com o intuito de entretenimento, sedução, prazer ou até de confundir ou ludibriar o outro, forjando uma dada compreensão. Os múltiplos propósitos pelos quais se ouvem ou lêem textos têm merecido relativamente pouca atenção nas pesquisas aplicadas sobre o uso e o ensino de línguas.

Com respeito à língua materna, a compreensão da língua oral se desenvolve informalmente através da interação social, verbalizada e paraverbalizada, enquanto a compreensão da língua escrita é formalmente ensinada na escola. Na aprendizagem de outra língua em ambiente formal, tanto a compreensão oral, quanto a leitura se desenvolverão, via de regra, a partir de instrução, pelo menos nos

seus estágios iniciais. No ambiente da instrução formal, a habilidade de entender textos (falados ou escritos) tende a ser "ensinada" através de uma contínua aferição da compreensão dos mesmos em salas de aula. Podemos então fazer uma primeira generalização sobre o ensino da compreensão de outras línguas que não a materna: elas são muito mais testadas do que ensinadas. É verdade que, de certo modo, a compreensão não pode ser ensinada, uma vez que dependem, entre outras coisas, de processos cognitivos internos ao indivíduo, ainda pouco conhecidos, de reações afetivas e de conhecimento de mundo, aspectos basicamente fora do controle do professor. No entanto, vamos pressupor aqui que, apesar da sua natureza complexa, tais processos são passíveis de serem facilitados por intervenção pedagógica, o que pode resultar numa aquisição da habilidade de compreensão mais satisfatória e mais rapidamente desenvolvida. A escassez de conhecimentos aprofundados sobre os processos de compreensão é parte da justificativa da prática de se testar continuamente essa habilidade em vez