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THE UFSM ENGLISH TESLLE – A STUDY ABOUT KINDS, FOCI AND LINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF THE QUESTIONS AND THE TESTEES' SCORES

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RESUMO

O Teste de Suficiência em Leitura em Língua Estrangeira (TESLLE) da Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM) é aplicado na instituição uma vez por semestre para a comunidade acadêmica que precisa comprovar a competência em leitura acadêmica em língua adicional. O objetivo deste estudo é 1) identificar em que medida é possível relacionar os tipos e enfoques das questões com os índices de acertos e de erros dos examinandos e 2) identificar os aspectos da linguagem que cada questão exige que os examinandos reconheçam em seis edições do TESLLE de inglês. O *corpus* do estudo é composto por seis edições do TESLLE de inglês aplicadas entre o primeiro semestre de 2014 e o último semestre de 2016. Os resultados apontam que as questões mais recorrentes são as do tipo pergunta e resposta, e enfocam aspectos textuais, semânticos e pragmáticos. A relação entre os tipos e os enfoques das questões e os índices de acertos e de erros não é clara. Entretanto, podemos relacionar o tipo de questão associação com altos índices de acertos e o tipo acordo ou desacordo com altos índices de erros. Da mesma forma, as questões que enfocam em funções de partes do texto, gênero e tradução estão relacionadas com altos índices de acertos, enquanto que as questões que enfocam a inferência estão relacionadas com altos índices de erros. A análise mostrou que os examinados estão gradualmente alcançando melhores resultados no TESLLE de inglês.

Palavras-chave: TESLLE. Tipos de Questão. Enfoques de Questão. Linguística Sistêmico-Funcional.

ABSTRACT

The *Teste de Suficiência em Leitura em Língua Estrangeira* (TESLLE) of the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM) is applied in the institution once a semester for the academic community that needs to prove additional language academic reading competence. The objective of this study is 1) to identify to what extend it is possible to relate the kinds and foci of questions with the indexes of successes and errors by the testees and 2) to identify the aspects of language that each question requires that the testees recognize in six editions of the English TESLLE. The *corpus* of the study is composed of six editions of the English TESLLE applied between the first semester of 2014 and the last semester of 2016. The results point that the most recurrent questions are the ones of the kind question and answer, and focus on textual, semantic and pragmatic aspects. The relation among the kinds and foci of questions and the indexes of successes and errors is not clear. However, we can relate the kind of question association with high indexes of successes and the kind agree or disagree with high indexes of errors. Likewise, the questions that focus on speech functions, genre and translation are related to high indexes of successes, while the questions that focus on inference are related to high indexes of errors. The analysis showed that the testees are gradually reaching better scores in the English TESLLE.

Keywords: TESLLE. Kinds of Questions. Foci of Questions. Systemic-Functional Linguistics.

1   INTRODUCTION

The *Teste de Suficiência em Leitura em Língua Estrangeira* (TESLLE) is a test that assesses the testees' academic reading in an additional language. It is offered by the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM) twice a year, usually in five different languages: English, French, German, Portuguese as a foreign language and Spanish. According to the TESLEE resolution (UFSM, 2010), which establishes the regulations to the application of the test at UFSM, Portuguese speaking students can apply to the foreign language test (in English, French, German or Spanish), while the non-Portuguese speaking students can apply to the Portuguese as a foreign language test (MARCUZZO, 2016, p. 2).

The TESLLE is offered in this institution to graduate students, faculty, technical-administrators in education and undergraduate students that will complete their degree in the semester of the test's offer. However, the testees are mainly graduate students who need to prove that they are able to read academic texts in an additional language in order to complete the master's degree or in two additional languages to complete the PhD course.

The English TESLLE is the one that most testees choose in all editions. According to Marcuzzo (2016, p. 2), around 1.200 testees apply for the TESLLE in each edition, and of these, around 700 apply for the English TESLLE. Marcuzzo (2016, p. 2) explains that this probably happens due to the status of English as the "science language", being the language used in most academic publications in different fields. This way, graduate students need to read academic texts in this language, and therefore, choose the English TESLLE (MARCUZZO, 2016, p. 2).

Given the strong demand for the English TESLLE, it is important to analyze its features. The interpretation of the high indexes of errors by the testees, the TESLLE structure, the connection between the indexes of errors and the testees' majors and the foci of questions and competences explored in them were already discussed in other studies about the English TESLLE (WIELEWICKI, 1997; BECKER, 2013; and CUNHA, 2015, respectively). Each of these studies are presented in the literature review of this paper.

However, regarding the TESLLE, the relation between the indexes of successes and errors by the testees and the kinds and foci of questions, and the analysis of the aspects of language that each question requires that the testees recognize supported by a Systemic-Functional Linguistics theory remain unexplored.

The objective of this study is 1) to identify to what extent it is possible to relate the kinds and foci of questions with the indexes of successes and errors by the testees and 2) to identify

the aspects of language that each question requires that the testees recognize in six different editions of the English TESLLE.

The paper is organized into four main sections: 1) Literature Review, 2) Methods, 3) Results and Discussion, and 4) Conclusions.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section is organized according to the concept that is discussed: first, the concept of testing adopted in this study is explained. Then, we review previous studies about TESLLE and its structure. Lastly, we discuss kinds and foci of questions and the stratification of language.

2.1 TESTING

Testing is different from evaluation (MARCHEZAN, 2005, p. 27). According to Marchezan (2005, p. 27), the former is independent from teaching, it has proper objectives, and it does not expect contact between the test makers and the testees: it is the product of learning. On the other hand, the latter is part of teaching: it is the process of teaching and learning (MARCHEZAN, 2005, p. 27). Wiggings (1993, p. 4) confirms this view of testing, stating that there is "a distance between tester and student", considering that the testee cannot "adapt the question to personal style nor question the questioner". This means that a test only aims at testing what the testee knows about the subject.

For these reasons, many language teachers mistrust testing (HUGHES, 1997, p. 4). Testing may not be the best kind of evaluation for teaching purposes; however, it is necessary in many situations, e.g., in the academic context. According to Hughes (1997, p. 4), "information about people's language ability is often very useful and sometimes necessary." The author (1997, p. 4) explains that this kind of information is necessary for universities to accept exchange students, and for leaners' knowledge on "what they have achieved in a second or foreign language." Examples of tests used for academic purposes are the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

In the same way, UFSM offers an institutional test to indicate whether a graduate student is able to read academic texts in an additional language; called TESLLE. Studies that analyzed the TESLLE are presented in the following section.

2.2 TESLLE

At least three other studies analyzed the UFSM TESLLE. Wielewicki (1997) analyzed the proficiency test offered by UFSM in the first semester of 1996, in order to interpret the high indexes of errors by the testees (WIELEWICKI, 1997, p. 9). In order to do that, Wielewicki (1997, p. 9) stablished a connection between the testees' perception about their level in additional language academic reading and the level they achieved in the test.

Wielewicki (1997, p. 104) also explained the structure of the UFSM TESLLE. It adopted the multiple-choice format on April 1996 (WIELEWICKI, 1997, p. 104). According to Wielewicki (1997, p. 104), this choice was made to standardize the correction system and to ensure that TESLLE would only focus on reading skills, considering that there had been questions that focused on other skills until the end of 1995, such as translating parts of the text to Portuguese and writing synthesis of parts of the text.

In 1996 the test was composed by 15 questions related to the reading of a text, and it was divided into five sections (WIELEWICKI, 1997, p. 105-106). After that, the test adopted the discursive and objective formats in different editions, until 2014, when it was standardized to the multiple-choice format again, according to information provided by the organizing committee.

In another perspective of analysis, Becker (2003) analyzed the connection between the testees' majors and their indexes of errors by kinds of questions. The author (2003, p. 12) identified 10 different kinds of questions in the two editions of 2009 and 2011: agree/disagree; reference; logical connectors; rhetorical organization (IMRD); extract information from the text; summary; in-text formation identification; fact/opinion; transcription of definition; and modality. In this study, Becker (2013, p. 17) concluded that reference, logical connectors and modality are related to the highest indexes of errors by the testees.

In the same way, Cunha (2015) analyzed the structure, foci of questions and competences explored in two editions of TESLLE: from the second semester of 2013 and from the first semester of 2014. According to the author, these two editions differ in relation to the number of questions: the 2013 edition presented 10 objective questions, while the 2014 edition presented 16 objective questions (CUNHA, 2015, p. 9). Since the 2014 edition, the test was standardized, as it was previously mentioned.

Based on Becker (2013), the author found 11 different kinds of questions in these editions (CUNHA, 2015, p. 12-13). It is important to highlight here that the author did not differ kinds of questions and foci of questions, and she uses both terms to refer to the same category

of analysis. Clause relation, genre, identification of information in the text, inference, labelling, metaphor, modality, multimodality, reference, summary and translation are the kinds of questions that are presented in the editions (CUNHA, 2015, p. 12-13).

We can observe some differences in the results of Becker and Cunha: there are five kinds of questions only identified by Becker, and five kinds of questions identified by both, of which two are named differently by the authors. This difference among the kinds of questions can be explained due to the distance in time of the application of the tests: the editions analyzed by Becker were offered before the standardization of TESLLE, as well as the edition of the second semester of 2013 analyzed by Cunha.

Cunha (2015) also analyzed the competences explored in the questions, and she found out that the questions approach linguistic, discursive and pragmatic competences. The author (2015, p. 7) considered the definitions of competences by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) and Littlewood (2004).

According to the authors, the linguistic competence refers to "the sentence patterns and kinds, the constituent structure, the morphological inflections, and the lexical resources, as well as the phonological and orthographic systems needed to realize communication as speech or writing" (CELCE-MURCIA et al, 1995, cited in CUNHA, 2015, p. 7). Moreover, it refers to "knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, semantics and phonology" (LITTLEWOOD, 2004, cited in CUNHA, 2015, p. 7).

The discursive competence refers to the "selection, sequencing and arrangement of words, structures, sentences and utterances to achieve a unified spoken or written text" (CELCE-MURCIA et al, 1995, cited in CUNHA, 2015, p. 7) and "engage in continuous discourse by linking ideas in longer oral/written texts, maintaining longer spoken turns, participating in interaction and opening conversations and closing them" (LITTLEWOOD, 2004, cited in CUNHA, 2015, p. 7).

Finally, the pragmatic competence refers to the "knowledge of communication strategies and how to use them" (CELCE-MURCIA et al, 1995, cited in CUNHA, 2015, p. 7) and to "use the linguistic competence in order to interpret the meaning created by context in oral or written texts and also to convey meanings for it" (LITTLEWOOD, 2004, cited in CUNHA, 2015, p. 7).

In order to continue these studies on the English TESLLE, the present paper has as categories of analysis the kinds and foci of questions, and the stratification of language, whose theoretical frameworks are presented in the next three sections.

2.3 KINDS OF QUESTIONS

Differently from Becker (2013) and Cunha (2015), in this analysis we differentiate kinds and foci of questions. By analyzing the questions of objective evaluations, Medeiros (1997) classifies them in five kinds: completion, right-or-wrong, multiple-choice, association and ordering.

In the completion questions, according to Medeiros (1977, p. 37), the testee must complete the parts that are incomplete, and usually there is only one possible answer to this kind of question. In the right-or-wrong questions, the testee must consider whether the information presented is right or wrong (MEDEIROS, 1977, p. 45). The multiple-choice questions provide possible answers to the questions, and the testee must indicate the correct one (MEDEIROS, 1977, p. 53). Medeiros (1977, p. 79) also explains the association questions, which present two groups of information that must be associated. Lastly, Medeiros (1977, p. 87) shows some examples of ordering questions, which ask the testee to order elements of a group. The foci of questions that support this study are presented in the following section.

2.4 FOCI OF QUESTIONS

The foci of questions that support this study were discussed in section 2.2, on the review of the studies by Becker (2013) and Cunha (2015). Nevertheless, here we explain each focus identified by the authors. The foci of questions that support this study are presented in Chart 1.

Chart 1 – Description of the foci of questions.

(to be continued)

Focus of the question	Description
Clause relations	"*Assinale a alternativa que apresenta ideia de causa-consequência*"
Genre	"*Considere os seguintes propósitos comunicativos de editoriais. Quais desses propósitos estão presentes no editorial* 'of publics and science'?"
Identification of information in the text	"*Considere as afirmações a seguir relacionadas ao primeiro e ao segundo parágrafos do texto. Quais das afirmações anteriores estão em acordo com o texto*?"
Inference	"*Com base no segmento (...) pode-se inferir*"
Labelling	"*Associe as colunas de forma a indicar o que cada segmento está fazendo: (sugerindo, questionando ou exemplificando)*"

Chart 1 – Description of the foci of questions.

Metaphor	"*Considere os seguintes segmentos do texto. São exemplos de linguagem metafórica, ou seja, linguagem figurada, para se referir à progressão dos pesquisadores na carreira científica*"
Multimodality	"*O segmento que melhor resume a imagem do texto é*"
Reference	"*Os referentes de 'it' (linha 6) e de 'they' (linha 13) são, respectivamente*"
Summary	"*Com base nos três últimos parágrafos do texto, assinale a alternativa que sintetiza as duas dimensões que, segundo a editora, demandam maior atenção pelos pesquisadores da área.*"
Translation	"*O segmento (...) pode ser traduzido para o português, sem alteração de sentido, como*"

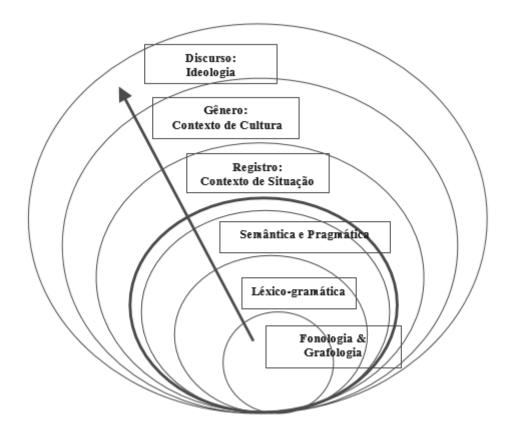Source: (CUNHA, 2015, p. 12-13).

Since Cunha (2015) based her analysis on the foci of questions presented by Becker (2013), we use the foci identified by Cunha (2015) as a support. The author (2015, p. 12) explains that the analysis was carried out "considering the linguistic exponents that gave clues of what the questions are demanding"; however, there is no explanation on each focus. Chart 1 presents the information provided by Cunha (2015, p. 12-13) on the foci of questions. The language aspects in terms of the stratification of language that support this study are presented in the following section.

2.5 STRATIFICATION OF LANGUAGE

Halliday (1978) introduced a different description of the grammar from the traditional one: the systemic functional linguistics, which proposes an analysis of language that focuses on "the text's rhetorical and linguistic elements (…) combining with (…) the context's ideological elements" (MOTTA-ROTH, 2008, p. 370). This way, according to the author (2008, p. 370), language analysis is "detailed, because it explains and locates the linguistic elements in time and space", and at the same time "problematizing, because it denaturalizes the values that are presented".

In order to analyze these different elements in the same text, Martin (1992) proposed the stratification of language, adapted by Hendges (2005) and Motta-Roth (2008). Figure 1 was retrieved from Motta-Roth (2008, p. 352).

Figure 1 – The stratification of language.

Source: (MOTTA-ROTH, 2008, p. 352).

According to Nascimento (2017, p. 129), the Discourse[1] stratum deals with "the ideology(ies), that is, the views of how 'things' work or should work". The Genre stratum focuses on "the uses of language in discursive practices relatively stable and recognized in a culture" (NASCIMENTO, 2017, p. 130). According to Halliday (1978) and Martin (1992) cited in Nascimento (2017, p. 130), in the Register stratum we observe how the situational context gives specific features to the genres, giving details about the content of the text, the social relations involved and its organization. The Semantics and Pragmatics stratum observes the "configuration of the linguistic elements", answering the questions: "Which aspect of human experience is being construed in the text? How is the relation between author and audience

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[1] According to Nascimento (2017), the use of capital letters in Discourse, Genre, Register, Semantics and Pragmatics, Lexicogrammar, Phonology and Graphology is a convention from the Systemic Functional Linguistics (HALLIDAY, 1978; MARTIN, 1992) when they refer to categories of language analysis.

negotiated? Which are the values attributed to the information according to its distribution in the text?" (NASCIMENTO, 2017, p. 131). According to Nascimento (2017, p. 131), in order to answer these questions, the analysis of the Lexicogrammar (in the form of nominal groups, for example) and Phonology and Graphology strata is necessary. This way, language uses tools of all of these aspects and all of them should be considered in a language analysis.

The five topics discussed in the subsections of the Literature Review (testing, TESLLE, kinds and foci of questions and stratification of language) are needed in order to support the data analysis of the present study, as well as to interpret them. The following section explains how the analysis was carried out.

3   METHODS

We analyzed six editions of the English TESLLE offered between the 1st semester of 2014 and the 2nd semester of 2016 and their indexes of successes and errors. Each edition is composed by 16 questions, totaling a *corpus* of 96 questions.

In the first moment, the questions were classified according to their kinds and foci. Then, we analyzed what kind of relation is established between these data and the index of successes and errors. Lastly, we classified the questions according to the stratification of language.

The samples of TESLLE were requested to the organizing committee and granted by them for confidential academic research purposes. Medeiros (1997) supported the study in order to classify the kinds of questions, and Becker (2003) and Cunha (2015), the foci of questions. The index of successes and errors by the testees was provided by the *Comissão Permanente do Vestibular* (COPERVES), which is responsible for the reading of the answer cards. Halliday (1978), Halliday and Hasan (1989) and Nascimento (2017) supported the analysis of the aspects of language in terms of the stratification that each question requires that the testees recognize.

The analysis used both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative approach was used to quantify how many questions approach each kind and focus and each stratum of language; and the qualitative approach was used to classify the questions in their kinds, foci, stratification, and to relate the data with the index of successes and errors.
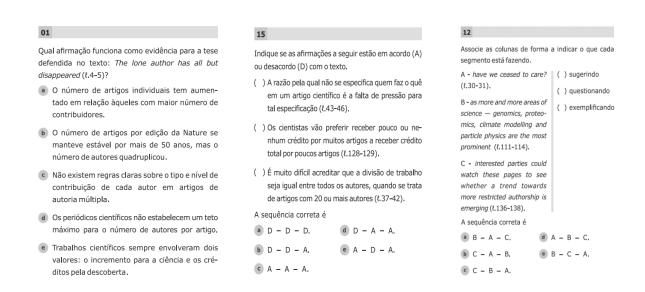
The following section presents the results obtained through these procedures and their interpretation.

4   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The editions analyzed in this study and the TESLLE program show that the test is composed by 16 multiple-choice questions related to an academic text. The theme of the text is not specific to any field, since it refers to common knowledge in the academic context.

In the 96 questions that were analyzed, we identified three kinds of questions: 1) question and answer, 2) agree or disagree and 3) association. Figures 2, 3 and 4 exemplify each kind of question.

Figure 2 - Question and answer   Figure 3 - Agree or Disagree   Figure 4 – Association

All of the questions in the *corpus* present an instruction and five alternatives of answers. The most common kind of question in TESLLE is the question and answer kind (Figure 2), which presents a question (ending with a question mark) and five options of answers, and the testee must choose the correct one. This question definition is very similar to Medeiros' (1977) definition of the multiple-choice questions; however, we named it question and answer because the analysis showed that all of the questions are multiple-choice questions.

Medeiros (1977, p. 45) also defines the right or wrong questions as the ones that require that the testee identify the alternatives that are right and wrong. We classified it as agree or disagree (Figure 3), considering that they expect that the testee identifies whether the excerpts

are agreeing or disagreeing with the information presented in the text. Then, the testee must choose the correct alternative of answer.

The association questions (Figure 4) were defined by Medeiros (1977, p. 79) as providing two categories of information that have to be associated. In this study, we used the same name and definition to this kind of question. To answer these questions, the testee also needs to choose the correct alternative of answer.

The results point that 74% of the questions are of the kind question and answer, followed by 15% of the kind agree or disagree and 11% of the kind association. All editions of the *corpus* present these three kinds of questions.

Besides the kinds, we found 12 different foci on the *corpus*, based on the previous study on TESLLE by Cunha (2015). Chart 2 shows all of the foci, the occurrence of these foci by edition and one excerpt of the wording of questions of each focus. The editions are named according to the years that they were offered (14 refers to 2014, 15 to 2015 and 16 to 2016).

Chart 2 – Foci of questions.

Focus	Number of questions							Excerpt
	14-1	14-2	15-1	15-2	16-1	16-2	Total %	
1- Textual evidence	4	9	9	9	10	8	51	"*Em relação à lei de Lotka, considere as afirmações a seguir (...) Está(ão) correta(s)*" 2014-1 Q#11
2- Modality	3	2	2	1	1	2	12	"*Assinale a alternativa cuja afirmação revela alto grau de certeza dos autores em relação ao que dizem*" 2014-2 Q#12
3- Clause relation	2	1	1	2	1	3	11	"*Assinale o segmento que inclui uma relação lógica de CAUSA-CONSEQUÊNCIA entre as ideias*" 2015-1 Q#07
4- Reference	1	1	1	2	2	1	8	"*Os segmentos destacados em (...) referem-se, respectivamente, a*" 2015-2 Q#09
5- Translation	2	1	1	1	0	1	6	"*O segmento (...) pode ser traduzido para o português, sem alteração de sentido, como*" 2014-1 Q#04

Chart 2 – Foci of questions.

6- Genre	0	1	2	1	0	0	4	*"O texto está organizado, em termos de conteúdo, em diferentes partes, as quais são"* 2014-2 Q#13
7- Inference	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	*"Com base no segmento (...), pode-se inferir:"* 2014-1 Q#05
8- Speech Functions	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	*"Associe as colunas de modo a indicar o que cada segmento está fazendo (...) A sequência correta é"* 2014-1 Q#12
9- Multimodality	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	*"O segmento que melhor resume a imagem do texto é"* 2014-1 Q#16
10- Figure of speech	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	*"Considere os seguintes segmentos do texto: (...) É(São) exemplo(s) de linguagem metafórica, ou seja, linguagem figurada, para se referir à progressão dos pesquisadores na carreira científica"* 2014-1 Q#09
11- Verbal tenses and voices	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	*"Os segmentos sublinhados em (...) (§ 9) estão, respectivamente, nos seguintes tempos e vozes verbais:"* 2016-1 Q#07
12- Adverbs	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	*"Considere os trechos a seguir (...) Os segmentos sublinhados em I e II apresentam ideia de, respectivamente"* 2016-1 Q#08

The analysis made in the present study and by Cunha (2015) have some differences: Cunha (2015) found 11 different kinds of questions, which we consider foci, in the two editions that were analyzed: clause relations, genre, identification of information in the text, inference, labelling, metaphor, modality, multimodality, reference, summary and translation. The only focus of question that was not identified in this *corpus* is summary. Moreover, we identified some foci not discussed by Cunha (2015): verbal tenses and voices and adverbs.

The questions in the 2014 to 2016 editions of TESLLE focus on: 1) *Textual evidence* – that is the same as "identification of information in the text" by Cunha (2015, p. 12) - in these questions, it is mainly expected that the testee identifies textual evidences to answer what is being asked. 2) *Modality* – it is expected that the testee identifies the different levels of modality in specific parts of the text. 3) *Clause relation* – it is expected that the testee identifies the kind of relation between clauses. 4) *Reference* – it is expected that the testee identify exophoric, anaphoric or cataphoric referents of specific proper nouns, noun phrases and pronouns, such as "it", "we", "you", "this", "the last of these", etc. 5) *Translation* – it is expected that the testee translates a phrase from English to Portuguese. 6) *Genre* – it is expected that the testee identifies the function of different parts of the text and the communicative purpose of the genre. 7) *Inference* – it is expected that the testee infers and evaluates the meaning of specific phrases. 8) *Speech functions* – "labelling" by Cunha (2015, p. 12) - it is expected that the testee labels some segments, considering whether they are suggesting, questioning or exemplifying. 9) *Multimodality* – it is expected that the testee identifies the relation of the information in the images with the information in the written text. 10) *Figure of speech* – "metaphor" by Cunha (2015, p. 12) - it is expected that the testee identifies metaphoric language, that is, when the authors use a word, expression or sentence to mean something else. 11) *Verbal tenses and voices* – it is expected that the testee identifies different verbal tenses and voices in English in specific phrases. 12) *Adverbs* – it is expected that the testee identifies different adverbs of time, manner and place. In the *corpus*, two questions evolve two foci. One mixes together textual evidence and modality and the other, textual evidence and multimodality.

These 12 foci differentiate in what they expect from the testee. Most of them expect that the testee identify the answer in the text (foci 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11 and 12), while others expect that the testee do something, e.g., translate, infer, evaluate, label (foci 5, 7 and 8), in order to answer the question.

It is interesting to observe that the TESLLE structure may be changing from the firsts to the lasts editions analyzed. As it is presented in Chart 2, some foci of questions were only identified in the first edition analyzed: inference, speech functions, multimodality and figure of speech. Likewise, there are two foci that were only identified in the 2016-1 edition: verbal tenses and voices and adverbs.

Chart 3 presents the kinds and foci of questions associated with the index of successes and errors by the testees in each edition. The percentage together with the code of the question represents how many testees succeeded and failed in each question.

Chart 3 – Kinds and foci of questions and indexes of successes and errors

Edition	HIGHEST INDEXES OF **SUCCESSES**		HIGHEST INDEXES OF **ERRORS**	
2014-1	Q#12 (91%)		Q#05 (82%)	
	Kind: **Association**	Focus: **Speech functions**	Kind: **Question and answer**	Focus: **Inference**
2014-2	Q#13 (95%)		Q#11 (88%)	
	Kind: **Question and answer**	Focus: **Genre**	Kind: **Question and answer**	Focus: **Textual evidence + Modality**
2015-1	Q#12 (100%)		Q#9 (84%)	
	Kind: **Question and answer**	Focus: **Translation**	Kind: **Agree or Disagree**	Focus: **Textual evidence**
2015-2	Q#4 (97%)		Q#11 (76%)	
	Kind: **Association**	Focus: **Textual evidence**	Kind: **Question and answer**	Focus: **Clause relation**
2016-1	Q#3 (98%)		Q#11 (79%)	
	Kind: **Association**	Focus: **Textual evidence**	Kind: **Question and answer**	Focus: **Clause relation**
2016-2	Q#7 (100%)		Q#3 (74%)	
	Kind: **Question and answer**	Focus: **Clause relation**	Kind: **Question and answer**	Focus: **Reference**

The most recurrent kinds and foci of questions (question and answer/textual evidence) were both identified in questions with high indexes of successes and errors by the testees, which was expected, considering that they represent the majority of questions (71% of the kind question and answer and 51% of the focus textual evidence).

In 100% of the questions of the kind association the testees succeeded more than failed. In the same way, the foci of questions speech functions, genre and translation occur only in questions with high indexes of successes, and the focus inference appears only in questions with high indexes of errors. The focus reference is identified in some editions in the questions with high indexes of successes and in other editions, in the questions with high indexes of errors. However, we can observe that in the high indexes of errors, the question that focus on reference is not identified in the biggest percentages of errors by the testees (it is among the three questions that have the smallest percentages of errors). Similarly, the focus clause relation has 100% of successes in one edition, and in two others it is among the questions that have the highest percentages of errors by the testees. The question with the biggest percentage of errors by the testees focus on modality.

In relation to the foci that appear only in the 2014-1 edition, the question that focused on inference had a big number of errors (82% of the testees failed in this question). Likewise,

in the questions that focused on multimodality and figure of speech more testees failed than succeeded (57% of the testees failed in the multimodality question and 67% in the figure of speech question). On the other hand, the question that focused on speech functions had a big number of successes (91% of the testees succeeded in this question).

Since Becker (2013) analyzed the indexes of errors by the testees in four editions of the test, we can establish a comparison: her results showed that reference, logical connectors (clause relation) and modality were the foci related to the high indexes of errors. Similarly, our results point to the same direction: all these three foci are found among the high indexes of errors presented in Chart 3.

The kinds and foci of questions are not the only aspects to be analyzed in the questions of an additional language reading test. Our analysis showed that the level of language that the questions require from the testees could also explain the indexes of successes and errors.

We understand that there cannot be a clear identification of the strata in the questions, i.e., language is the set of all the levels together, this way, to understand the text, the testee would activate the knowledge of all of them. However, we considered which language stratum is more highlighted in each question. The questions of the six editions analyzed in this study require from the testees the knowledge of the Lexicogrammar, Semantics and Pragmatics, Genre and Ideology strata. Figures 5, 6, 7 and 8 are examples of each stratum in the questions.

Figure 5 – Lexicogrammar

Figure 6 - Semantics and Pragmatics

06

A alternativa cujo segmento destacado tem a mesma relação de sentido de *however* (ℓ.27) é a seguinte:

a) <u>If</u> they could, and could spare the time and effort to do so, their funding agencies and home institutions would not permit it (ℓ.7-10).

b) This symmetry was breached in the 1920s, diminished in the 1950s, <u>and</u> largely abandoned by the 1980s (ℓ.19-22).

c) Collaboration in multidisciplinary research is now universal <u>as well as</u> essential (ℓ.22-24).

d) Any issue of *Nature* today has nearly the same number of Articles and Letters as one from 1950, <u>but</u> about four times as many authors (ℓ.1-4).

e) Any observed statistical regularity will tend to collapse <u>once</u> pressure is placed upon it for control purposes (ℓ.80-83).

02

No segmento *If they could, and could spare the time and effort to do <u>so</u>, their funding agencies and home institutions would not permit <u>it</u>* (ℓ.7-10), os termos destacados referem-se, respectivamente, a

a) to work and write alone; to work and write alone.

b) to work and write alone; know enough.

c) know enough; to work and write alone.

d) spare the time and effort; know enough.

e) spare the time and effort; spare the time and effort.
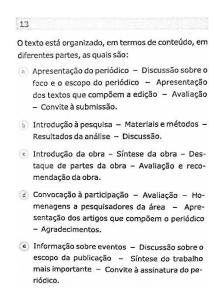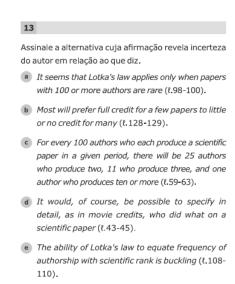
Figure 7 – Genre

Figure 8 - Ideology

In order to get this result, we considered which aspects of language were demanded by the questions; i.e., which aspects of language testees should recognize. We considered that the questions that approach the Lexicogrammar stratum (Figure 5) are the ones that refer to the clause and the clause complexes, and to grammatical aspects as adverbs and verbal tenses and voices. The questions inside the Semantics and Pragmatics stratum (Figure 6) refer to the meaning, thus, they approach textual evidence, reference, inference, figure of speech, speech functions, translation and multimodality. The questions that approach genre aspects were classified inside the Genre stratum (Figure 7). In the Ideology stratum (Figure 8), we considered the questions that approach the levels of commitment of the author in relation to what he/she is stating.

Following these considerations, the results point that 71% of the questions approach the Semantics and Pragmatics stratum. The Ideology stratum represents 13% of the questions. Twelve per cent of the questions approach the Lexicogrammar stratum and 4% approach the Genre stratum. Thus, we can observe that TESLLE presents Semantics and Pragmatics as the the most used aspect of language in the process of reading, followed by Ideology, Lexicogrammar and Genre.

As we observed in the analysis of the foci of questions, the first edition that we analyzed (2014-1) approaches some foci that do not appear in the other editions (inference, speech functions, multimodality and figure of speech), in which they were replaced by the focus textual evidence. In this case, the foci of the questions changed, but the stratification of language continues the same: Semantics and Pragmatics.

Interestingly, in four editions the Semantics and Pragmatics stratum approaches the same number of questions, and only in the 2014-2 and 2015-2 editions there is one more question that approaches this stratum. In four editions, it represents 68% of the questions, and in the 2014-2 and 2015-2 editions, 75%. Considering this majority of questions approaching the Semantics and Pragmatics stratum, we can confirm that TESLLE actually tests if the testee understands the meaning of the text that must be read, and if he/she is competent in the reading skill in an additional language.

Comparing the competences explored in TESLLE, identified by Cunha (2015), and the stratification of language, the Lexicogrammar stratum can be related to the linguistic competence discussed by Cunha (2015, p. 7), and the Semantics and Pragmatics stratum can be related to the pragmatic competence. The Genre and Ideology strata can be related to the discursive competence discussed by the author (2015, p. 7). Chart 4 relates the competences found by Cunha (2015) and the stratification of language and the foci found in this *corpus*.

Chart 4 – Relation among the competences, stratification of language and foci of questions

Competence	Stratification	Focus of questions
Linguistic	Lexicogrammar	Clause relation
		Verbal tenses and voices
		Adverbs
Discursive	Genre	Genre
	Ideology	Modality
Pragmatic	Semantics and Pragmatics	Textual evidence
		Reference
		Inference
		Figure of speech
		Speech functions
		Multimodality
		Translation

Among the questions with the highest indexes of successes and errors (Chart 3), two of the three questions that approach the Lexicogrammar stratum had the highest indexes of errors by the testees. In one, 76% of the testees did not answer it correctly, and in the other, 79%. However, the other question that approaches this stratum and is among the highest indexes of successes and errors was answered correctly by all the testees, in the 2016-2 edition. The question that approaches the Genre stratum among the highest indexes of successes and errors was answered correctly by 95% of the testees.

In relation to these indexes, another interesting result can be observed: the question of the 2014-2 edition that had the biggest index of errors was the question that the testees failed the most among all (88% of the testees did not succeeded in this question). It mixes two foci, as it is presented in Chart 3. Moreover, in this question the testee must deal with two language strata: Semantics and Pragmatics and Ideology, which can explain the high index of errors. The testees succeeded more in four questions and failed more in three questions among the questions that approach only the Semantics and Pragmatics stratum and are among the questions with the highest indexes of successes and errors.

Therefore, we cannot directly connect the high indexes of successes and errors with the strata of language. The connection that is possible to establish, is with the kinds of questions: in combination to the Semantics and Pragmatics stratum, the kind of question association is related to the high indexes of successes and the kind of question agree or disagree is related to the high indexes of errors.

5   CONCLUSIONS

From the first to the last edition analyzed in this paper (2014-1 to 2016-2), testees are getting better results in their performance at the English TESLLE. In the 2014-1 edition, nine of the 16 questions had higher indexes of errors than successes by the testees. In the 2016-2 edition there is a considerable change: only two of the 16 questions had higher indexes of errors than successes. This number has changed little by little during the editions.

It may be that testees are more informed about the test, are studying more, are having more contact with the English language, or the test is more accessible. The successfulness of the testees may be connected with more questions focusing on clause relations and translation, from the Semantics and Pragmatics and Lexicogrammar strata, which are questions that had 100% of successes in these editions.

Testees should understand the text as a whole and be able to clearly identify its meaning, achieving this way a better score in the questions that focus on textual evidence and deal with aspects of language related to Semantics and Pragmatics, considering that they are the majority of the questions. Consequently, they may improve their performance in the test, and therefore in the academic reading skill in an additional language. Moreover, considering the questions that had approximately 80% of errors in the six editions, testees should be able to recognize the levels of modality that the author brings into the text, related to the Ideology stratum of language.

The high level of successes in the test and the analysis showed that TESLLE is a reliable additional language-reading test, testing the skill of reading an academic text and the understanding of its meanings. It has an extreme importance in the academic context, in which graduate students must increasingly read in English language and to prove that they can do so, since many studies are published only in this language.

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