TWO-DIMENSIONAL SOCIORHETORICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE DIGITAL GENRE HOMEPAGE IN DISCIPLINES OF AN ONLINE COURSE[1]

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▪ ABSTRACT: In this work, we analyze the sociorhetorical organization of homepages in online disciplines within a two-dimensional perspective on genre analysis (ASKEHAVE; NIELSEN, 2004). In Crescitelli and Campos (2015), we analyzed homepages of a distance undergraduate course based on Swales (1990), examining their sociorhetorical organization and the steps and rhetorical moves that constituted them. Now, we examine the same homepages in a two-dimensional perspective, in order to investigate, in the reading and navigating modes, the communicative purposes and the functional units (rhetorical moves and links) and the rhetorical strategies employed to fulfil them. As for the links, we draw on Adam's (1992) textual sequence theory and examine the predominant sequences in the articulation of hypertextual lexies. We focus on studies of genre as social action (MILLER, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; BAZERMAN, 2006, 2009a, 2009b; SWALES, 1990; BHATIA, 1993), digital textual genre (MARCUSCHI, 2010; ASKEHAVE, NIELSEN, 2004), and hypertext (LEMKE, 2002; FINNEMANN, 1999). It is a case study based on the observation and description of a phenomenon in a specific context (MARTINS, 2008; YIN, 2005, 1984; TRIVIÑOS, 1987). The results show that knowing the sociorhetorical organization in the homepage genre enables the organization of the pedagogical content targeted at the interests and needs of users, contributing to students' involvement with the educational process.

▪ KEYWORDS: Sociorhetorical organization. Digital textual genre. Homepage.

Introduction

The present work is part of a broader research about social practices in virtual learning environments and digital textual genres. Our aim is to analyze the sociorhetorical

organization of homepages of online disciplines within a two-dimensional perspective on genre analysis (ASKEHAVE; NIELSEN, 2004), which is grounded on the sociorhetorical analysis proposed by Swales (1990) and considers, in the reading and navigating modes of digital genres, the communicative purposes, the functional units (rhetorical moves and links) that characterize the purposes, and the rhetorical strategies employed to fulfil them. In a previous work (CRESCITELLI; CAMPOS, 2015), we analyzed homepages based on the studies carried out by Swales (1990), examining their sociorhetorical organization and the steps and rhetorical moves that constitute them.

Askehave and Nielsen (2004) argue that the hypertextual feature is the one that most clearly underlines the two-dimensional nature of web genres, as it activates both modes that configure genres in this environment: the *reading mode* and the *navigating mode* (FINNEMANN, 1999). We agree with the authors that a traditional model of genre analysis is not sufficient for the digital context, as it presupposes that the medium is a contextual factor.

The two-dimensional genre analysis model of Askehave and Nielsen (2004) takes into account essential characteristics of virtual texts, like *hypertextuality*, *immateriality* and *global reach*, and focuses on the virtual medium (the World Wide Web) not only as a contextual feature of web genres, but also as an integrated part of them, as it adds unique properties to web genres in terms of production, function and reception. This generates new challenges, demands and perspectives to the production of homepages of courses and disciplines included in this universe.

Genre in the digital context

The fact that many digital genres have the same function and various characteristics of previous genres does not make them identical to these genres in terms of their nature, as new technologies modify the relationships between subjects, between subjects and the actions they perform, and between subjects and the way in which they organize knowledge in textual genres. In other words, when they are produced in the World Wide Web, they present features that distinguish them significantly from their printed counterpart.

The definition and characterization of texts have undergone transformations due to the fluidity and dynamism that define the virtual medium: the intense and very fast advance of Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICT) can invalidate, with astonishing speed, aspects raised in the attempt to define them, or it can generate divergent opinions regarding the way they are characterized. These factors explain why some scholars at first, consider as medium or communication vehicle what they subsequently come to regard as genre, and vice-versa. This is the case of Marcuschi, who, in 2004, defines homepage as medium (MARCUSCHI, 2010) and in 2005 recognizes it as "a well-established genre"[2] (MARCUSCHI, 2008, p.186).

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[2]   Original: "*um gênero bem estabelecido*." (MARCUSCHI, 2008, p.186).

Genres are responses to recurrent situations that are analogous to each other; therefore, they are not constituted as genres if it is not possible to identify their recurrences (see MILLER, 2009a). The question is how can we identify what is recurrent in an environment where transformations occur in a quick and constant way due to intense technological evolution?

The dynamism and fluidity mentioned above make users experiment with different uses of the resources available in the virtual environment. A blog, for example, is used with the functions of a personal journal and a space for the publication of opinions or news, among other possibilities. But each one of these uses constitutes a rhetorical response to a specific requirement and this is what leads Miller (2009c) to consider the blog, nowadays, as a resource that conveys genres and no longer a genre per se.

There is also the case of the e-mail, which, like the blog, can be understood sometimes as a genre and sometimes as a vehicle, as it brings, in itself, texts with very different communicative purposes, like jokes, advertisements, among others.

As we consider that the World Wide Web is an integral part of digital genres, we see it as a set of potentialities and constraints that define cognitive and communicative uses in such a context. Likewise, the nature of the digital genre also involves, obviously, the notion of medium, which influences how the text is organized. In the digital environment, this notion becomes complex due to the peculiar characteristics of the Web, like deterritorialization of information, hypertextuality, hypermodality. In this study, we focus on the intrinsic relationship between medium and genre, marked mainly by hypertextuality, which underlines the two-dimensional nature of web genres, as it is responsible for activating the two modes that configure these texts (*reading* and *navigating*) (FINNEMANN, 1999), as explained in the following section.

Hypertext and construction of meanings

The non-linear form of hypertextual production and comprehension is not new: it occurs in the reading of printed texts, in which we fragment the information, designing reading paths that cannot be translated exactly as a linear route (FINNEMANN, 1999). Thus, we cannot reduce the study of hypertext to the linear/non-linear dichotomy: it is a network constituted of lexies (or chunks of texts), which are units of meaning formed by verbal texts, images, sounds, etc., connected by links (LEMKE, 2002; LÉVY, 1999).

The lexies accommodate themselves in the two modes of reading: the *reading mode* as such and the *navigating mode*. The former enables us to access the text in the familiar way: by guiding ourselves through the generally sequential reading of its parts (FINNEMANN, 1999). The latter allows us to access, through links, other texts interconnected with the text of origin, which makes us build our reading path in the website. Therefore, when consuming digital texts, "[…] the web user employs two different cognitive capacities and demonstrates two different types of behaviour when

s/he shifts from the reading to the navigating mode and vice versa." (ASKEHAVE; NIELSEN, 2004, p.15).

In the hypertextual structure, the links are not *only* a way of organizing the information: more than that, they lead to new forms of interaction between the reader and the text. This differentiates a hypertext from a printed text, mainly because the information, in the former, is presented without the existence of a narrative or argumentative axis that relates, sequentially, the different texts it encompasses (BRAGA, 2010).

Therefore, the articulations between texts are not materialized by means of a pre-established sequence. They depend on the reader's choices, determined by the order in which they access the links. The varied possibilities of access result in different constructions of the global meaning of the text. The system that configures the hypertext enables the production of a text that, today, much more than before, does not inherently bring a linear structure that allows to identify its beginning, middle and end.

Thus, the reader begins to read at any one of its links and, making their choices, determines a new organization of the hypertextual segments, creating relations that attribute a new meaning to the text. And the producer of hypertexts must take these factors into account.

These considerations are particularly relevant to the organization of the virtual didactic material in the homepage genre. Characteristics of the hypertext, like excess of conveyed information, can cause problems for readers when it comes to understanding the text and building knowledge. An excessive amount of texts related by links can be an obstacle for users when filtrating what interests them.

The way the texts are disposed is important to the attainment of a didactic objective; thus, this disposition needs to be adjusted to the learning needs. The articulations between the hypertextual links must guarantee, to the student, the production of a global meaning. In the development of the content, both the designer and the teacher need to know about the nature of the hypertext and the possibilities of meaning production.

In view of the hypertextual structure of web genres, Askehave and Nielsen (2004) have proposed a two-dimensional model for the analysis of digital textual genres, which we explain in the next section.

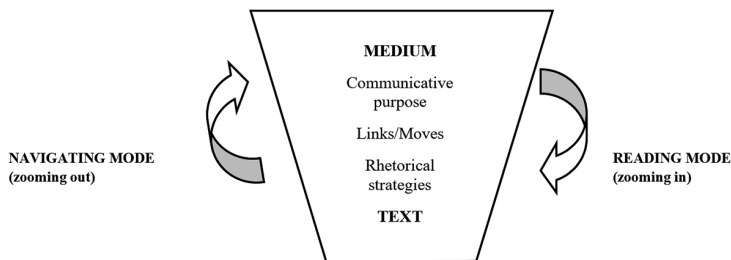**Two-dimensional analysis of digital genres**

According to Askehave and Nielsen (2004), the characteristics of the World Wide Web are:

- *intertextuality* – a web text depends on its relationships with other texts, i.e., the isolated text has no meaning in itself in the overall textual system but must be seen in relation to the texts to which it is linked;

- *global reach* – texts disseminated in a virtual environment are accessed by a significant number of users, located anywhere on the planet;
- *immateriality* – digital texts are not always materialized in a printed version and can be changed at any time, often by any person;
- *lack of distinction between author and reader* – as each web user accesses texts in a particular way, creating their own reading paths, the Web prevents a clear distinction between author and reader;
- *multi-medianess* – web texts associate, simultaneously, sound, image and writing as rhetorical strategies;
- *hipertextuality* – web texts are connected by means of links, which allows the reader to move from one text to the other, relating them to one another in a private path.

Askehave and Nielsen (2004) propose that, in the analysis of web genres, we need to investigate both modes that configure texts in this environment (the *reading* and the *navigating* modes) and, thus, expand the possibilities offered by traditional genre analysis models. They revisit the three categories of analysis proposed by Swales (1990) (*communicative purpose, structural moves* and *rhetorical strategies*) in a two-dimensional perspective: in the reading mode and in the navigating mode. Figure 1 below presents this model:

Figure 1 – The two-dimensional genre analysis model

Source: Askehave and Nielsen (2004, p.17).

In this analysis perspective, in the reading mode the analyst examines the communicative purpose, the structural movements (moves) and the rhetorical strategies. In the navigating mode, however, the moves are replaced by links, which constitute the functional units in this context.

In the *reading mode*, the analyst considers the following elements:

a) *communicative purpose*: it is an essentialcriteria for a communication event to be classified as a genre (SWALES, 1990). It is an aspect shared by a discourse community and it meets a demand generated by a recurrent situation. Thus, it is not determined by one single instance of the genre and, to understand it, we need to study the context in which the genre is produced;

b) *structural moves:* they correspond to the conventionalized structure that genres assume to fulfil the communicative purposes. In other words, the purposes are reflected in these moves, which are the constituent parts of the genre. Although the moves are conventionalized, this does not mean they are fixed. Due to this, the author argues that not all the moves follow a fixed order and not all of them are obligatorily present in all the texts of the same genre;

c) *rhetorical strategies:* they refer to the choices of content and style performed by the users of a genre, configuring regularities or recurrent practices. According to Askehave and Nielsen (2004), there is no one-to-one correlation between move and rhetorical strategy, but texts belonging to the same genre frequently present similar strategies.

In the *navigating mode*, the analyst considers the following elements:

a) *communicative purpose:* it is always the same, i.e., to provide access to pages and sites on the Internet, regardless of the genre that is being analyzed. The links function as means of transportation, enabling the genre user to move from a virtual place to the other;

b) *links:* the communicative purpose is fulfilled by means of related links in a hypertextual web structure. As these elements are an inherent property of the virtual environment and do not refer to a specific genre, their functional value is to organize the information on the site, relating a text A (node) to a text B (anchor), establishing meaning relationships between them. In this perspective, Askehave and Nielsen (2004) propose a functional typology of links (descriptive, narrative, argumentative, explicative, dialogical) based on the sequence typology of texts developed by Jean-Michel Adam[3].

To Adam (2011), textual types are units constituted of structured sequences in a semantic relational network. Because they are autonomous, the units can be decomposed and analyzed, and one of their characteristics is that they perform the pragmatic functions of describing, narrating, arguing, explaining, dialoguing. The theoretician focuses on the relationships that are established between the parts of a sequence, attempting to understand how these articulations contribute to the expression of meaning, guaranteeing textual continuity. According to him, the sequences are "[…] memorized by cultural

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[3] Askehave and Nielsen (2004) draw on the author's work published in 1992 for Adam. To better understand the authors' proposal, we resorted to a work published in 2005 (ADAM, 2011). In it, Adam partially reviews the sequence typology model, mainly the *description* sequence (see ADAM, 2011, p.205).

impregnation (by reading, hearing and producing texts) and transformed into a scheme of information recognition and structuring."[4];

c) *rhetorical strategies:* they are either verbal or visual. *Verbal* strategies are, for example, the type of link used: narrative, argumentative, descriptive etc., or a link presented as an invitation, a recommendation, a question etc.; for example: *[12] Read more; Don't forget to access the discipline's program.* *Visual* strategies, in turn, can be implicit or explicit. *Implicit* ones are revealed only by the mouse cursor; for example, the underline that appears when we move the cursor over a link, or the color change of a link, or when we hover the cursor over it. *Explicit visual* strategies can be, among others, an icon, like an envelope indicating the link that gives access to the support team, or a house indicating the link that takes the user to the initial page of the site.

Gathering the pieces of information above in another disposition, we propose the following chart, which reflects the organization used in the analysis:

Chart 1 – Corpus analysis

Section 1 COMMUNICATIVE PURPOSE	in the *reading mode,* in which the homepage is a text
	in the *navigating mode,* in which it is a means of transportation from one page to the other
Section 2 FUNCTIONAL UNITS used to realize the communicative purpose	in the *reading mode,* they consist of the rhetorical structural moves that configure the genre
	in the *navigating mode,* they are composed of links that allow the user's motion from one page to the other
Section 3 RHETORICAL STRATEGIES employed to realize moves and links	in the *reading mode,* they are the rhetorical steps
	in the *navigating mode,* they are the resources employed in the links

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Corpus analysis

For the analysis, we selected 10 homepages of 10 different disciplines of the undergraduate Mathematics course - Teaching Degree -, distance modality, of the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo – PUC-SP, taught in the second semester

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[4]   In the Brazilian version of Adam's work (2011), "[…] *memorizadas por impregnação cultural (pela leitura, escuta e produção de textos) e transformadas em esquema de reconhecimento e de estruturação da informação.*"

of 2012. Out of these, 6 homepages were organized by the Information Technology Division (DTI) of PUC-SP (the teacher sent the content to DTI and the employees/ technicians created the homepage) and 4 were organized by the teachers themselves.

We analyzed in each homepage:

- section 1 – communicative purposes in the reading and navigating modes;
- section 2 – functional units in the reading (rhetorical moves) and navigating (links) modes;
- section 3 – rhetorical strategies employed in the reading and navigating modes to fulfil the communicative purpose.

We assume that a digital textual genre, within the sociorhetorical theoretical framework, consists in the typification of social actions – translated into moves, links and rhetorical strategies – that configure the discourse in a specific communication situation. Thus, language users employ it in a similar way when they experience analogous communicative situations that have the same social demands. The analysis of genres in the digital context is grounded on the typical two-dimensional nature of web documents, and this dual dimensionality allows us to understand the homepage both as text and as medium.

SECTION 1 – Communicative Purpose

Reading Mode

To understand the communicative purpose of the homepage in the reading mode, we took into account the social practices that involve its production and reception: on one side, there are students who attend an online discipline and access the homepage to search for information on the functioning of this discipline and to learn about the content they will study; on the other side, there are teachers whose objective is to teach the discipline and who attempt to organize the content and the activities so that the established learning goals can be met.

In view of these aspects and of the content conveyed in the homepages organized by DTI, data analysis showed that, in the reading mode, the *primary communicative purpose* is to introduce the discipline to the student, helping them to obtain information on the functioning of the activities and on the content that will be taught.

However, similarly to what occurs in non-digital genres, in addition to the primary purposes, other purposes can emerge in an implicit or explicit way (ASKEHAVE; NIELSEN, 2004). Indeed, they are not the main purposes, but emerge in the relationships established between the person responsible for the site and the users. In this perspective, the analysis revealed that there is also the purpose of consolidating the image of PUC-SP

by means of the following procedures: (i) identification of the Institution as the entity responsible for the site, by means of the logotype placed in a prominent position; (ii) presentation of the information in a clear and objective way; (iii) production of an appealing site layout; (iv) suggestion, by means of a link, of access to the University's main website.

It is necessary to emphasize that there is also the purpose of engaging the users in the homepage, stimulating their interest or enabling their greater involvement with the available information. The procedures that converge to this purpose are, among others: (i) the attempt to organize the information in a clear and objective way, using columns to facilitate visualization; (ii) the utilization of graphic and visual resources, like expressions in bold and icons; (iii) the use of generic links, which enable a global visualization of the site.

Therefore, in addition to the primary purpose mentioned above, we consider that in the analyzed homepages there are the following *secondary purposes*: (i) to consolidate the image of the institution PUC-SP and (ii) to motivate the student to interact with the teaching and learning process.

Navigating Mode

In the navigating mode, the communicative purpose found in the analyzed homepages is to provide access to the site, allowing the user to move from one page to the other.

SECTION 2 – Functional Units: Steps (reading) and Links (navigating)

In this section, we will examine the constitution of the functional units of the homepages, represented by moves, rhetorical steps (in the reading mode) and links (in the navigating mode). Concerning the rhetorical moves and steps, we present them numbered (move 1, step 1 and so on) to understand the persuasive path (CAMPOS, 2014) deriving from this sociorhetorical organization. The moves were numbered according to our reading path but, obviously, there are other paths that can be considered in future studies.

The analysis is performed according to Chart 2:

Chart 2 – Analysis of the functional units (moves and links)

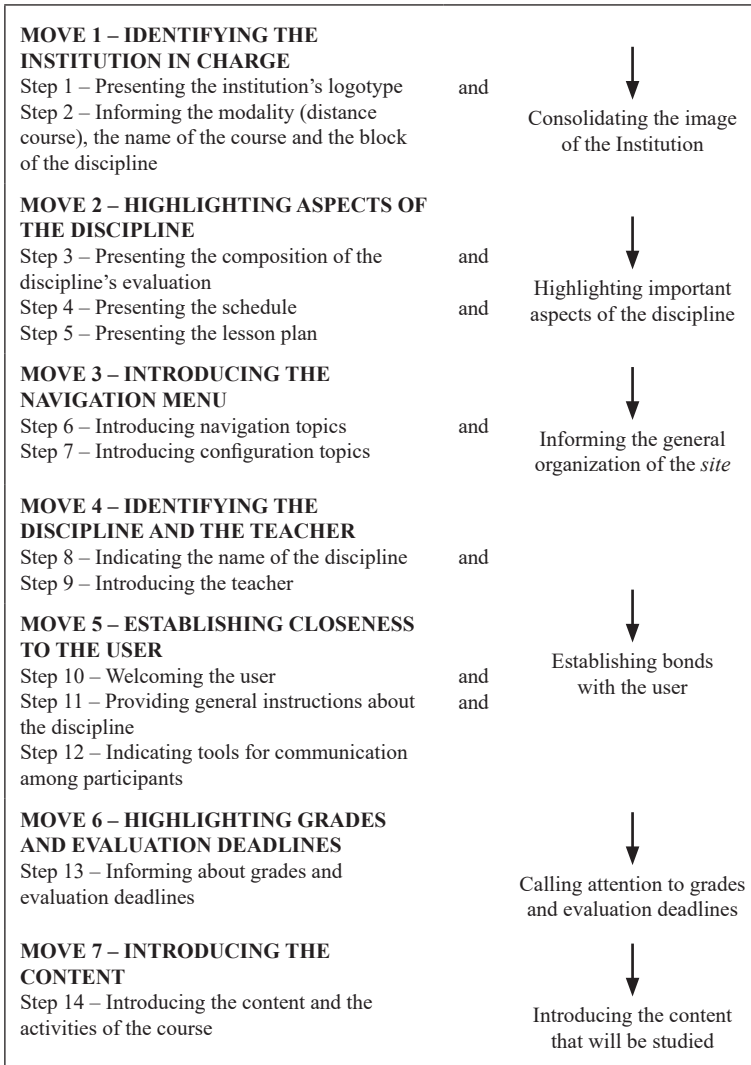| READING MODE	ANALYSIS OF MOVES	Study of recurrent information in the genre (moves)
NAVIGATING MODE	ANALYSIS OF LINKS	Study of the way in which information is organized, involving the textual typology that configures the sequences established in the relation between texts A (node) and B (anchor).

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Regarding the links, we highlight that they are more than mere navigation guides that take users from a place to another, as they add meaning to the connection established between texts. Therefore, they are functional units "[…] that allow us to regard links as equivalent to 'moves' in printed text." (ASKEHAVE; NIELSEN, 2004, p.25).

Reading Mode

The information is distributed in two columns in the analyzed homepages. Its distribution and position are regular; for this reason, they are recurrences that lead to the configuration of a rhetorical pattern. In this case, the pattern is composed of 7 moves and 14 steps (Box 3) and functions as a map of the information organization: in the pattern, each move realizes a particular communicative purpose that is articulated to the communicative purpose of the genre: to introduce the discipline to the students:

Chart 3 – Rhetorical moves and steps in the analyzed homepages

MOVE 1 – IDENTIFYING THE INSTITUTION IN CHARGE
Step 1 – Presenting the institution's logotype   and
Step 2 – Informing the modality (distance course), the name of the course and the block of the discipline

↓ Consolidating the image of the Institution

MOVE 2 – HIGHLIGHTING ASPECTS OF THE DISCIPLINE
Step 3 – Presenting the composition of the discipline's evaluation   and
Step 4 – Presenting the schedule   and
Step 5 – Presenting the lesson plan

↓ Highlighting important aspects of the discipline

MOVE 3 – INTRODUCING THE NAVIGATION MENU
Step 6 – Introducing navigation topics   and
Step 7 – Introducing configuration topics

↓ Informing the general organization of the *site*

MOVE 4 – IDENTIFYING THE DISCIPLINE AND THE TEACHER
Step 8 – Indicating the name of the discipline   and
Step 9 – Introducing the teacher

MOVE 5 – ESTABLISHING CLOSENESS TO THE USER
Step 10 – Welcoming the user   and
Step 11 – Providing general instructions about the discipline   and
Step 12 – Indicating tools for communication among participants

↓ Establishing bonds with the user

MOVE 6 – HIGHLIGHTING GRADES AND EVALUATION DEADLINES
Step 13 – Informing about grades and evaluation deadlines

↓ Calling attention to grades and evaluation deadlines

MOVE 7 – INTRODUCING THE CONTENT
Step 14 – Introducing the content and the activities of the course

↓ Introducing the content that will be studied

Source: Authors' elaboration.

This realization configures a persuasive path that begins with *Consolidating the image of the Institution* and ends with *Introducing the content that will be studied* (see the column on the right side of the Box). Move 1 aims to consolidate the image of the institution with the purpose of attributing credibility to the textual production; move 2 highlights important aspects of the discipline and so on. These purposes converge to the genre's purpose: to introduce the discipline to the students.

Navigating Mode

The communicative purpose of *providing access to the discipline's site* is realized, as explained in previous sections, by links that relate texts in a hypertextual structure, establishing meaning relationships between text A (node) and text B (anchor).

There are links that are placed in prominent positions, in the first and in the second columns of the page, and give access to the topics of the site (Figure 2):
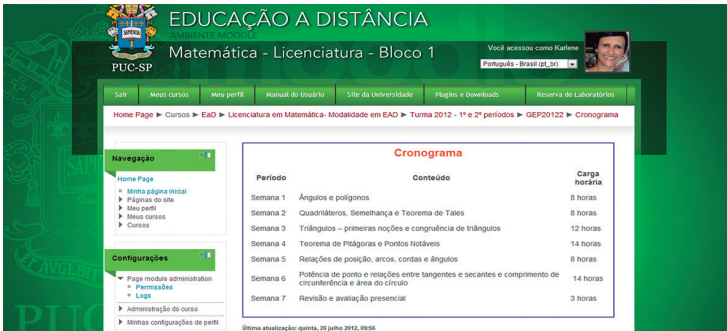
Figure 2 – Descriptive explorative sequence by aspectualization

Source: Moodle (http://moodle2012.pucsp.br/course/view.php?id=948. Access on: 20 ago. 2013 -restricted access to course participants).

Source: Moodle (http://moodle2012.pucsp.br/mod/page/view.php?id=19281. Access on: 20 ago. 2013 - restricted access to course participants).

These links are merely descriptive and most of them appear in the form of noun phrases (*My courses*, *Didactic material*, *Navigation* etc.)[5]. They can also come in text form, providing information about navigation in a meta-discoursal structure (*Click here to download the material, Talk to the teacher*)[6]. They identify general topics and are the "point of entry" to text B, which gives them meaning (ASKEHAVE; NIELSEN, 2004, p.32).

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[5]   Original: "*Meus cursos, Material didático, Navegação* etc."

[6]   Original: "*Clique aqui para baixar o material, Fale com o professor*."

The links in the homepages provide access to: *Schedule*, *Lesson plan*, *Didactic material*, *Navigation links*, *Discussion Forums*, *Content introduction links*[7]. In the hypertextual relationships that they constitute, *explorative* and *expository* descriptive textual sequences are formed, as shown by Chart 4:

Chart 4 – *Links*

LINK	TEXTUAL SEQUENCE
SCHEDULE	Explorative description by aspectualization (qualification or attribution of properties)
LESSON PLAN	Explorative description by aspectualization (qualification or attribution of properties)
DIDACTIC MATERIAL	Explorative description by aspectualization (qualification or attribution of properties)
NAVIGATION LINK	Explorative description by aspectualization (qualification or attribution of properties)
NEWS FORUM	Explorative description by aspectualization (qualification or attribution of properties)
TALK TO THE TEACHER FORUM	Expository description
CONTENT INTRODUCTION LINK	Explorative description by aspectualization (qualification or attribution of properties) Expository description

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Explorative description sequences describe an object, person, or event by going into a detailed account of its properties and parts and contains two macro-propositions: *thematization* and *aspectualization*. *Thematization* anchors the topic of the text and informs the reader what the text is about, and *aspectualization* informs the properties and parts of this topic. *Expository description sequences*, in turn, describe procedures. This occurs, for example, in instruction manuals. It also contains two macro-propositions: *introduction* and *procedural steps*. The introduction presents an object; the procedural steps inform the steps adopted in questions of the type "how to proceed" or "how to go about doing something" (ASKEHAVE; NIELSEN, 2004, p.28).

We exemplified, in Figure 2 in the theoretical foundation section of this paper, these two textual sequences. We see that text A, *Schedule*[8], and text B form an explorative descriptive sequence by aspectualization, in which text B describes the aspects that
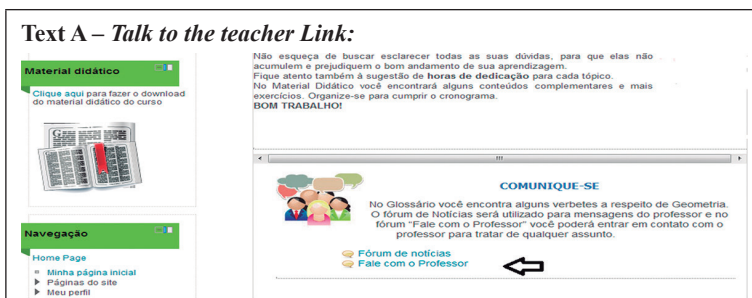
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[7] Original: "*Cronograma, Plano de ensino, Material didático, Links de navegação, Fóruns de discussão, Links de introdução ao conteúdo.*"

[8] Original: "*Cronograma*"

qualify the schedule of the course. In Figure 3, text A, *Talk to the teacher*[9], composes, with text B, an expository descriptive sequence, as B provides the procedures the student must follow to communicate with the course's teacher:
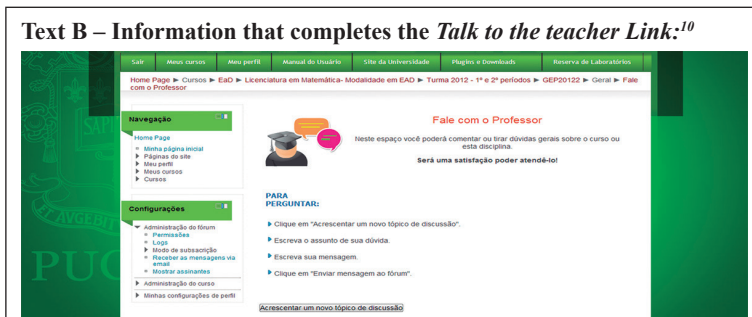
Figure 3 – Expository descriptive sequence

Text A – *Talk to the teacher Link:*

Source: Moodle (http://moodle2012.pucsp.br/course/view.php?id=948. Access on 20 ago. 2013 -restricted access to course participants).

Text B – Information that completes the *Talk to the teacher Link:*[10]

Source: Moodle (http://moodle2012.pucsp.br/mod/forum/view.php?id=16346. Access on 20 ago. 2013 - restricted access to course participants).

The analysis revealed that explorative descriptive sequences by aspectualization predominate in the homepages (see Chart 4). However, specifically in the content introduction links, we found that teachers tend to imprint their own style on the meaning relationships established between texts A and B. The four disciplines whose homepages were organized by DTI are taught by three teachers, here named *teacher A*, *teacher B* and *teacher C*, who resort to the same technological resource to introduce the content: the **Book resource**. In Chart 5, we present the preferences of each of these teachers in the moment of articulating lexies in the access to the didactic content.

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9   Original: "*Fale com o professor*"

10   Text B – *Talk to the teacher. Here you can comment on or ask general questions about the course or about this discipline. I will be pleased to help you! To ask: Click on "Add a new discussion topic". Write the subject of your question. Write your message. Click on "Send message to the forum". Add a new discussion topic* (our translation).

Chart 5 – Textual sequences in content introduction links

TEACHER IN CHARGE	SEQUENCE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEXTS A AND B
A	Expository description
B	Explorative description by aspectualization (qualification or attribution of properties)
C	Explorative description by aspectualization (qualification or attribution of properties)

Source: Authors' elaboration.

The hypertextual relationships established by teacher A are presented in Figures 4:

Figure 4 – Expository descriptive sequence in
content introduction links – Teacher A

Text A – *Link* that introduces the topic that will be studied:

Source: Moodle (http://moodle2012.pucsp.br/course/view.php?id=948. Access on: 20 ago. 2013 -restricted access to course participants).

Text B – Text that expands text A, providing the study procedures:

Source: Moodle (http://moodle2012.pucsp.br/mod/book/view.php?id=16364. Access on: 20 ago. 2013 - restricted access to course participants).

We notice that teacher A constructs an expository descriptive sequence, in which text A (*Angles and polygons*)[11] is expanded by text B, which focuses, predominantly, on the study procedures:

> *Welcome to the first topic of our discipline. This section is divided into 4 parts in which we will study angles, polygons, perimeter and area. Each part corresponds to one lesson.* **In the first week, <u>we will study</u> angles (GEP1.1), polygons (GEP1.2) and quadrilaterals (GEP1.3). <u>Organize</u> your time and <u>do</u> the activities, exercises and evaluation carefully**[12].
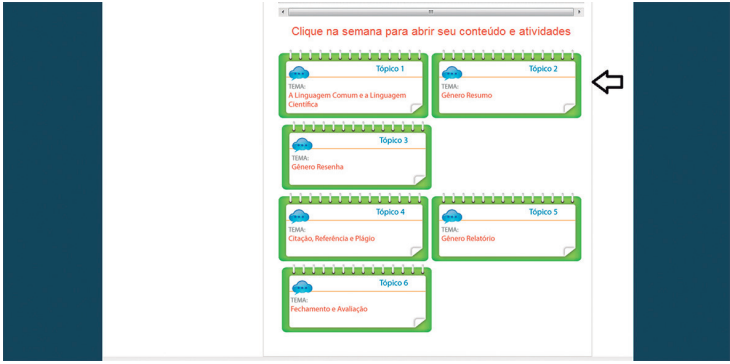
Figure 5 shows how teachers B and C construct relationships between texts:

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[11] Original: "*Ângulos* e *polígonos*"

[12] Original: "*Seja bem-vindo ao primeiro tópico de nossa disciplina. Esta seção encontra-se dividida em 4 partes e nelas estudaremos ângulos, polígonos e área. Cada parte corresponde a uma aula.* **Na primeira semana, <u>estudaremos</u> os ângulos (GEP 1.1), os polígonos (GEP 1.2) e os quadriláteros (GEP 1.3). <u>Organize</u> seu horário <u>e realize</u> as atividades, exercícios e a avaliação diligentemente**"
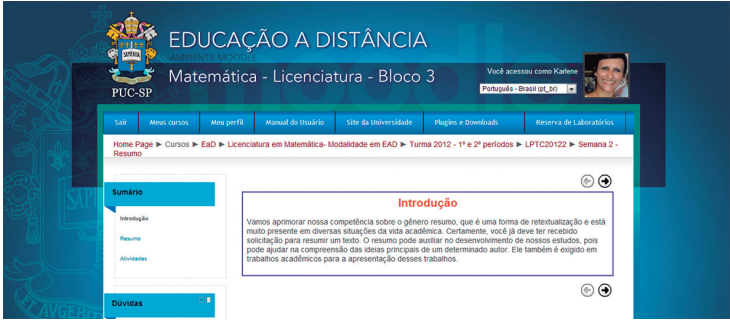
Figure 5 – Explorative descriptive sequence by aspectualization
in *content introduction links – Teachers B and C*

Text A – *Link* that introduces the topic that will be studied:

Source: Moodle (http://moodle2012.pucsp.br/course/view.php?id=951. Access on: 20 ago. 2013 - restricted access to course participants).

Text B – Text that expands text A, qualifying its object:

Source: Moodle (http://moodle2012.pucsp.br/mod/book/view.php?id=27820. Access on: 20 ago. 2013 - restricted access to course participants).

In Figure 5, text A (*Summary*)[13] and text B form an explorative descriptive sequence by aspectualization, in which text B expands text A, qualifying its object (summary):

> *Let's improve our competence to summarize texts, which <u>is a form of retextualization frequently present in different situations of academic life.</u> Certainly, you have already been asked to summarize a text. <u>The summary can help the development of our studies, as it can contribute to</u>*

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13 Original: "*Resumo*. In English, there are *summary* and *abstract*, that may have a different purpose and rhetorical organization. Although it is relevant, we do not consider this difference as it is not the focus in this paper."

the understanding of the main ideas of a given author. It is also required in academic works for the presentation of these works[14].

SECTION 3 – Rhetorical Strategies

Rhetorical strategies are the choices of content and style performed to materialize moves and links in a digital textual genre and, consequently, to fulfil its communicative purposes. In the reading mode, they are "[…] mechanisms used by the producer in the selection and distribution of contents and also in the linguistic arrangements to compose the text."[15] (HEMAIS; BIASI-RODRIGUES, 2007, p.122). The rhetorical steps employed to realize the moves are considered strategies. In general, there is no one-to-one correlation between one move and one strategy, but, to Swales (1990), texts belonging to a given genre frequently use similar rhetorical strategies. In the navigating mode, these strategies are the verbal and visual elements used to make a link become persuasive. We present below the rhetorical strategies found in the analysis.

Reading mode

The analyzed homepages are structured in 7 moves and 14 rhetorical steps, as shown in Chart 3. These steps are minor discourse units that constitute tactical acts for the realization of the moves (SWALES, 1990), together with other choices employed to generate certain meaning effects. The following strategies were used in the corpus.

Move 1 – Identifying the institution in charge:

This move (see Figure 6) is realized by means of the following strategies (steps): *presenting the institution's logotype; informing the name of the course, the modality (distance course), and the module that includes the discipline:*

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[14] Original: "*Vamos aprimorar nossa competência sobre o gênero resumo, que é uma forma de retextualização e está muito presente em diversas situações da vida acadêmica. Certamente, você já deve ter recebido solicitação para resumir um texto. O resumo pode auxiliar no desenvolvimento de nossos estudos, pois pode ajudar na compreensão das ideias principais de um determinado autor. Ele também é exigido em trabalhos acadêmicos para a apresentação desses trabalhos.*"

[15] Original: "[…] *mecanismos usados pelo produtor tanto na seleção e distribuição dos conteúdos quanto nos arranjos linguísticos para compor o texto.*" (HEMAIS; BIASI-RODRIGUES, 2007, p.122).

Figure 6 – Rhetorical strategies in move 1

This organization produces a hierarchization effect of what must be presented: first, the Institution (PUC-SP); then, the modality of the course (Distance Education[16]); finally, the name of the course (Teaching Degree in Mathematics[17]) and the module in which the discipline is included. The Institution is highlighted through the University's logo, which is on the upper left corner; the course's modality, through the use of large font size and capital letters in the expression *Distance Education*; the name of the course and the module of the discipline, through the employment of large font size and separation by graphic signs (-) that enhance the highlight. As we can see, the genre producer used graphic resources to achieve the purpose of consolidating the Institution's image.

Move 2 – Highlighting aspects of the discipline:

Move 2 (Figure 7) is realized by means of the strategies of *presenting how evaluation is carried out in the discipline, presenting the schedule* and *the lesson plan*:

Figure 7 – Rhetorical strategies in move 2

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[16] Original: "*Educação a Distância*"

[17] Original: "*Matemática – Licenciatura*"

These strategies are realized by the use of verbal resources (noun phrases in the expressions *Teacher's message*, *Evaluation*, *On-site test* and *Activities*[18], calling the student's attention), visual resources (the colors green, orange, blue, gray and white employed to highlight the area in which the student has access to evaluation information) and graphic resources (utilization of bold font in the noun phrases cited above, to highlight the information).

Move 3 – Introducing the navigation menu

Move 3 (Figure 8) is realized by means of the *introduction of navigation and configuration topics*.

Figure 8 – Rhetorical strategies in move 3

Source: Moodle (http://moodle2012.pucsp.br/course/view.php?id=1398. Access on: 20 ago. 2013 - restricted access to course participants).

The *navigation menu* appears in the upper part and also on the left side of the computer screen, being highlighted by the use of visual strategies (green and white colors on the upper part; use of arrows on the left side) and verbal strategies (noun phrases highlighting the information: My initial page, Website pages, My profile, My courses)[19], allowing the user to easily visualize the map of access to the discipline's site. These strategies converge to the fulfilment of the move's purpose: to inform about the general organization of the site.

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18 Original: "*Palavra do professor, Avaliação, Prova Presencial e Atividades*"

19 Original: "*Minha página inicial, Páginas do site, Meu perfil, Meus cursos*"

Moves 4 and 5 – Identifying the discipline and the teacher and Establishing closeness to the user

Move 4 (Figure 9) is realized by means of the strategies *Indicating the name of the discipline* (Reading and Production of Scientific Texts – RPST)[20] and *Introducing the teacher* (Teacher ☺)[21]. Move 5, in turn (Figure 9), is realized by the presentation of a *welcoming expression* (Welcome!)[22], by *general instructions about the functioning of the discipline* (e.g.: Open your e-mail systematically to check if there are messages from the course, Check the notifications and instructions in Moodle preferably once a day)[23] and by the *indication of tools for communication among participants* (e.g.: Interact. Go to the News forum to visualize the news and messages from the course)[24]. The *indication of the discipline name* is in the second column and is realized with the utilization of a visual (blue color) and graphic (bold font) resource, standing out in the homepage. The teacher's name is presented in blue, on the right side of the column, and the teacher's introduction is emphasized by her photograph (represented here by the emoticon ☺, with the aim of making the environment more "personal").

Figure 9 – Rhetorical strategies in moves 4 and 5

Source: Moodle (http://moodle2012.pucsp.br/course/view.php?id=951. Access on: 20 ago. 2013 -restricted access to course participants).

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[20] Original: "*Leitura e Prod. de Textos Científicos - LPTC*"

[21] Original: "*Professora ☺*"

[22] Original: "*Seja bem-vindo!*"

[23] Original: "*Abra o e-mail sistematicamente para ver se há mensagem do curso, Veja os avisos e instruções no Moodle, preferencialmente, uma vez por dia.*"

[24] Original: "*Comunique-se. Vá ao Fórum de notícias para visualizar as notícias e recados do curso.*"

The *welcoming expression*, centralized in the column, is followed by an exclamation mark that strengthens an affective environment. It can produces a positive interaction between teacher and student by means of the didactic material, contributing to learning.

The *general instructions about the functioning of the discipline* are realized right below the welcoming expression and consist in the presentation of the discipline objectives and functioning, lesson plan, schedule, among others. In the selected example, we verified the occurrence of **interactional strategies,** like:

- recommendations: *Before we begin the activities, read the tips below* […][25];
- use of the first person plural to create greater closeness between the student and the teacher: *I'm teacher A.* **We'll be** *together, in this module, building knowledge about academic textual genres[26]*.

The *indication of tools for communication* is realized by means of visual (image, color) and graphic (bold font) resources. Verbal resources are also used and consist of interaction strategies, such as:

- invitation: *Interact[27]*
- recommendations: *Go to the News forum to visualize the news and messages from the course[28]*.

Move 6 – Highlighting important aspects

Move 6 (Figure 10) is realized by means of the strategy *informing about grades and evaluation deadlines:*

Figure 10 – Rhetorical strategies in move 6

Source: Moodle (http://moodle2012.pucsp.br/course/view.php?id=953. Access on: 20 ago. 2013 - restricted access to course participants).

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[25] Original: "*Antes de começarmos as atividades, vamos atentar para algumas dicas* [...]"

[26] Original: "*Sou a professora A. Estaremos juntos, neste bloco, construindo conhecimento acerca dos gêneros textuais acadêmicos*"

[27] Original: "*Comunique-se*"

[28] Original: "*Vá ao fórum de notícias para visualizar as notícias e recados do curso*"

The expression *Attention*[29] appears centralized in the second column, in orange, standing out in the homepage. The bold font is also used in this expression, and in the expressions *On-site evaluation* and *Distance activities,*[30] which are highlighted in blue. Considering that the purpose of this move is to call attention to important aspects, the use of these resources stresses the information, contributing to the fulfilment of the objective.

Move 7 – Introducing the content

Move 7 (Figure 11) is fulfilled by means of the strategy *introducing the content*, realized by visual resources (colors, icons, borders that resemble a notebook page) and verbal resources (noun phrases that introduce topics of the content. E.g: Ordinary Language and Scientific Language, The Review Genre)[31]:

Figure 11 – Rhetorical strategies of move 7

Source: Moodle (http://moodle2012.pucsp.br/course/view.php?id=951. Access on: 20 ago. 2013 - restricted access to course participants).

The contents are organized in topics and introduced by an interactional strategy in the form of an invitation (*Click on the week to open its content and activities*[32]). The resources to the realization of the move contribute to bring the student closer to the didactic material, as they facilitate the visualization of the discipline contents.

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[29] Original: "*Atenção*

[30] Original: "*Avaliação presencial, Atividades a distância*"

[31] Original: "*A Linguagem Comum e a Linguagem Científica, Gênero Resenha*"
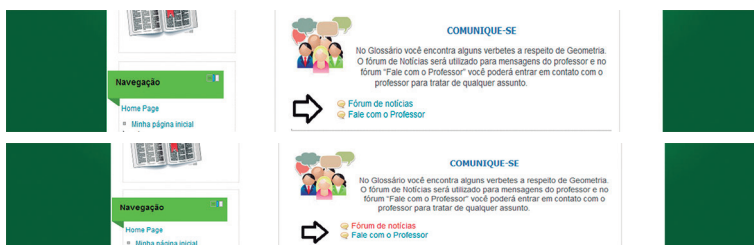
[32] Original: "*Clique na semana para abrir seu conteúdo e atividades*"

Navigating mode

The external realization of the links, in the analyzed homepages, occurs by means of implicit and explicit visual rhetorical strategies, and, also, by means of verbal strategies. As *implicit visual strategies*, we highlight:

- change in color when the mouse cursor moves over the link, in the News forum link (Figure 12):

Figure 12 – Implicit rhetorical strategy: color change in *links*

Source: Moodle (http://moodle2012.pucsp.br/course/view.php?id=948. Access on: 20 ago. 2013 - restricted access to course participants).

- opening of a submenu when the cursor moves over the link, in the *Laboratory Booking[33]* link (Figure 13):

Figure 13 – Implicit rhetorical strategy: opening of a submenu

Source: Moodle (http://moodle2012.pucsp.br/course/view.php?id=948. Access on: 20 ago. 2013 - restricted access to course participants).

In addition to the implicit strategies, we found the presence of an *arrow* or *hand* when the user hovers the mouse cursor over any link.

Regarding the *explicit visual strategies*, we foundicons indicating links like *Schedule*, *Lesson plan* and *Download of didactic material[34]* (Figure 14):

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[33] Original: "*Reserva de Laboratórios*"

[34] Original: "*Cronograma, Plano de ensino, Clique aqui para fazer o download do material do didático do curso.*"

Figure 14 – Explicit rhetorical strategy: icon

Source: Moodle (http://moodle2012.pucsp.br/course/view.php?id=948. Access on: 20 ago. 2013 - restricted access to course participants).

We found the same strategies in all the analyzed homepages. We believe they converge to the fulfilment of the communicative purpose of the genre in the navigating mode (to provide access to web pages and sites) because They improve the visualization of the access links and, therefore, help to promote user-friendly navigation.

Conclusion

To understand the sociorhetorical organization of information in the homepages of the disciplines in our corpus, we performed a two-dimensional analysis of homepages grounded on the studies carried out by Askehave and Nielsen (2004), considering the reading and navigating modes that constitute web genres.

In this perspective, in the *reading mode*, the homepage is considered as text and, based on the sociorhetorical approach to genre proposed by Swales (1990), we examined the communicative purposes, structural moves and rhetorical strategies.

In the *navigating mode*, the homepage is regarded as medium and we analyzed the communicative purpose, links and rhetorical strategies. To characterize the links, our analysis was based on Adam's (1992) textual sequence theory and examined the textual sequences that are most frequent in the articulation of the hypertextual lexies.

Because a genre is constituted of conventional features that reflect the form of organizing information in the text, understanding how its functional units (moves and links, in the case of web genres) are configured is of paramount importance, as they are responsible for the fulfilment of the communicative purpose. These units comprise the conventionalized structure of the genre and, simultaneously, reflect the author's particular communicative intention, which meets socially recognized purposes.

The sociorhetorical organization of information in the homepages of the selected disciplines reveals the social practice adopted by their users. Learning about this can enhance the development of an efficient instructional design, as understanding how

the genre functions in the circumstances in which it is produced helps to meet the situational needs of the teaching and learning context, so that the organization of the contents and of the pedagogical activities is comprehensible and corresponds to the learners' expectations.

We recognize, however, that our considerations do not end in this study. As we know, new challenges emerge all the time and interfere in teaching and learning processes, demanding that educators and instructional designers expand their knowledge about the context of online education.

CRESCITELLI, M.; CAMPOS, K. Organização sociorretórica bidimensional do gênero digital *homepage* em disciplinas de curso *online*. **Alfa**, São Paulo, v.64, 2020.

- *RESUMO: Neste trabalho, analisamos como se constitui a organização sociorretórica das homepages de disciplinas online na perspectiva da análise bidimensional de gêneros (ASKEHAVE; NIELSEN, 2004). Em Crescitelli e Campos (2015), analisamos homepages de disciplinas de curso de graduação a distância com base em Swales (1990), examinando sua organização sociorretórica e levantando passos e movimentos retóricos que as constituíam. Aqui, examinamos as mesmas homepages na perspectiva bidimensional, verificando, nos modos de leitura e navegação, propósitos comunicativos, unidades funcionais (movimentos retóricos e links) e estratégias retóricas empregadas para o alcance deles. No caso dos links, fundamentamo-nos na teoria de sequências textuais de Adam (1992) e examinamos as sequências predominantes na articulação das lexias hipertextuais. Pautamo-nos em estudos de gênero como ação social (MILLER, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; BAZERMAN, 2006, 2009a, 2009b; SWALES, 1990; BHATIA, 1993); gênero textual digital (MARCUSCHI, 2010; ASKEHAVE; NIELSEN, 2004) e hipertexto (LEMKE, 2002; FINNEMANN, 1999). Trata-se de estudo de caso, com observação e descrição de um fenômeno em contexto específico (MARTINS, 2008; YIN, 2005, 1984; TRIVIÑOS, 1987). Os resultados obtidos demonstram que conhecer a organização sociorretórica do gênero homepage propicia a organização de conteúdo pedagógico mais voltada aos interesses e às necessidades dos usuários, contribuindo para o envolvimento do aluno com o processo educacional.*

- *PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Organização sociorretórica. Gênero textual digital. Homepage.*

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