

A MICROANALYSIS OF *RIO GRANDE DO NORTE OFFICIAL LETTERS*

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- **ABSTRACT:** Between variation and change, as we know, not only language, but also the texts, with their structures, undergo changes over time. This article aims to analyze textual changes observed in letters of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. These documents are part of the *corpus* called “Rio Grande do Norte official letters” connected to the regional project History of Brazilian Portuguese in Rio Grande do Norte (PHPB-RN) and the national one: History of Brazilian Portuguese (PHPB). We perform a micro-analysis of these letters, built upon the ideas of Coseriu and on the studies about discursive traditions (KOCH, 1997; KABATEK, 2006), according to which, texts are shaped to follow their own tradition (COSERIU, 2007). Firstly, we focus on the “letter” genre and its macro-structure; and afterwards, on the micro-structure *clausula* (valediction). This analysis shows some processes of variation and change which these official letters underwent, as well as how textual dynamics can indicate social change.
- **KEYWORDS:** Variation and change. Discursive traditions. Rio Grande do Norte official letters. Diachronic corpus.

Introduction

Mudam-se os tempos, mudam-se as vontades,
Muda-se o ser, muda-se a confiança;
Todo o mundo é composto de mudança,
Tomando sempre novas qualidades.
[...]
(CAMÕES, 2001, p.127)

We begin our study with a fragment of Camoens’sonnet. The word “change” (“mudam-se”, “muda-se”, “mudança”), with different meanings in the Camonian text,

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seems to be a very interesting term for us to outline an essay that intends to point out the linguistic features of handwritten texts from another time – precisely from the first half of the 18th Century to the first one of the 20th – besides presenting the material available to the researchers whose studies are concentrated in the domain of Diachronic Studies. The texts referred to are part of the regional project History of Brazilian Portuguese in Rio Grande do Norte (História do Português Brasileiro no Rio Grande do Norte – PHPB-RN). We offer the reader a micro-analysis derived from a larger work developed more in depth by Melo (2012). We also follow another major national project, Towards the History of Brazilian Portuguese (Para a História do Português Brasileiro – PHPB), coordinated at present by Ataliba de Castilho, from the University of São Paulo (Universidade de São Paulo – USP). The two projects were joined together due to the main goals of each one: establishing a minimum common *corpus* that could be useful for linguistic research elaborated in Rio Grande do Norte (state in Northeast Brazil) as much as for the construction of a national database (formed by data from each region in Brazil).

Therefore, we created a *corpus* to represent the material based on which we would carry out the studies about the process of tradition-innovation, which is especially noticeable from a diachronic point of view, i.e. in the history of the language.

The arrival of a new movement of Diachronic Studies in Brazil took place in the 1980s and more intensively in the mid-1990s, its most important event possibly being the foundation of PHPB. The project originally covered states from the South and the Southeast – as well as Bahia, with its own tradition of very productive studies on Diachrony – and these have since been the ones that have supported the project the most. As Castilho wisely puts it, we are still far from achieving a whole history of Brazilian Portuguese, because “[...] it seems more feasible for researchers to consecrate themselves to diachronic knowledge of its regional varieties and, in a second moment, to get a global view [...]”¹ (CASTILHO, 1998, p.15). Therefore, we trust that by means of the challenge to which we have put ourselves – namely, to select and transcribe the official letters from Rio Grande do Norte – we can somehow contribute to writing some of the regional history of Brazilian Portuguese.

The PHPB decided to put together a database, discriminated according to two types of *corpora* that are common to all teams affiliated to the PHPB project: the “minimum common *corpus* – manuscripts” and the “minimum common *corpus* – print”. To the first group belong the following “clusters” of texts: 1) wills ; 2) criminal cases; 3) council minutes; 4) private letters; 5) private administration letters; 6) official letters. In the second group are: 1) letters from editors / editorials; 2) letters from readers; 3) advertisements. Besides these two *corpora*, there is still a common differential *corpus*, “to be used depending on regional availability and the subject”² (CASTILHO, 2010, p.8),

¹ In the original: “[...] parece mais factível consagrar-se ao conhecimento diacrônico das variedades regionais do português brasileiro para, num segundo momento, obter-se a visão do conjunto [...]”. (CASTILHO, 1998, p.15).

² “a ser usado dependendo da disponibilidade regional e do tema”. (CASTILHO, 2010, p.8).

which may comprise: 1) inventories; 2) memoirs / historical reports and travel journals; 3) interludes and other drama; 4) oral inquiries (NURC) (HORA; SILVA, 2010).

Our research deals with one of the segments of the minimum common *corpus* – the “manuscripts”, the official letters, and goes through the time frame specified by PHPB, ranging from the 18th to the 20th century, each analyzed in its first and second halves separately. We were guided by the demands of PHPB, aiming at obtaining 5,000 words for each half-century, from the first half of the 18th century until the second half of the 20th. However, since we have only found typed texts from the second half of the 20th century and we had limited ourselves to manuscripts only, we decided to abandon the 1951-2000 texts. Our new time frame thus encompasses the first half of the 18th up to the first half of the 20th, totalling five sets of 50 years and at least 25,000 words.

The *corpus* is composed of official letters, a textual category³, so named because it consists of several genres, each one with its own functionality and structure: administrative letter (“ofício”), letter (“carta”), letter of registration (“carta de registro”), royal charter (“carta régia”), warning (“aviso”), application (“requerimento”), certificate (“certificado”), consultation (“consulta”) and provision (“provisão”).

Once the letters were described, transcribed and edited, we carried a central search: describing, investigating and analyzing the macro-structure of genres and micro-structures such as “formulaic expressions” both synchronically and diachronically, since we would operate in the temporal thread that generates the dynamics between maintenance (tradition), variation and change. The latter (change) is reflected on the temporal course of official letters and also reveals changes in the social conjuncture of Brazil, significantly perceived in formulaic expressions.

On the constitution of official letters of Rio Grande do Norte

Once the doors are open to working with texts from past synchronies in order to constitute a single *corpus*, the first step to be taken is to find sources from which to get the data to be selected. When browsing through texts from the public administration, the sources are supposed to be the public organs such as chambers, institutes etc. Therefore, the first repository was the Historical and Geographical Institute of Rio Grande do Norte (Instituto Histórico e Geográfico do Rio Grande do Norte – IHGRN), one of the most important collections of historical documents in the State, where we

³ We discriminate “genres” and “textual categories” because there are some PHPB demands that are not configured as genre, as “private administration letters” and “official letters”, the latter concerning the letters that circulated in public administration. Unlike other requests - such as wills, criminal cases, letters from readers and inventories - which are traditionally classified as genres, we consider “private administration letters” and “official letters” textual categories, once these designations act as “umbrella terms”, for the reason that each represents not one, but a certain set of genres. Under the first term, for example, there can be the circular genre (“circular”) or the memorandum (“memorando”), while in the second textual category we can find an administrative letter (“ofício”) and a letter (“carta”). (MARCUSCHI, 2008, p.158; COSTA, 2009, p.27).

began our search, concentrated initially on the 19th century. But resorting to more data became necessary. We discriminate, below, the material that makes up the *corpus* and the means used to obtain them:

- a) Texts from the 18th century were transcribed from the photographs of some manuscripts relating to the Captaincy of Rio Grande found in the Overseas Archives of Lisbon (Arquivo Ultramarino de Lisboa) documents, catalogued by Lopes (2000), professor at the UFRN (University of Rio Grande do Norte) History Department, as part of the Barão do Rio Branco Project.
- b) Texts from the 19th century: again we use the *corpus* organized by Lopes (2000). The other texts, both from the first half as well as all from the second were administrative letters (ofícios) located in the IHGRN, preserved in eight filing boxes, each one with sub-folders organized by date. The oldest administrative letter of our *corpus* dates from 1812, and the latest 1889. These documents had not been photographed, as those from the 18th century. Consequently, field work was needed in order to view the collection, select the letters and photograph them so as to do the proper transcription.
- c) Texts from the 20th century: transcribed from documents photographed in the Administration Department of the Municipal Archives of Currais Novos, during a field trip made by the PHPB-RN team to the city.

Initially, we selected documents and subsequently transcribed them. In the case of texts from the IHGRN, we photographed more letters than required, so we had to make choices. As for the letters from the 18th and 20th centuries, we had access to a large amount of data already photographed, so our task was only to select them according to criteria of readability.

The official letters, once edited, totalled 107 documents. Each letter is represented by C next to its number, ranging from C1, the first letter from the eighteenth century, dated 1713; to C107, the last letter from the first half of the twentieth century, dated 1931. Each half century is symbolized by the century in Roman numerals followed by a period and either the number 1, indicating the first half of the century, or 2, indicating the second half. The letters are thus distributed as follows:

- XVIII.1⁴ – 19 letters, from C1 to C19 ;
- XVIII.2 – 15 letters, from C20 to C34;
- XIX.1 – 23 letters, from C35 to C57;
- XIX.2 – 29 letters, from C58 to C86;
- XX.1 – 21 letters, from C87 to C107.

⁴ We thank professor Carmen Alveal, from the UFRN Department of History, and her research team for having given us a transcript of nearly 2,000 words to our *corpus* from the first half of the 18th century.

For the transcription, we followed the standards proposed by the PHPB. The transcription model is available in Mattos e Silva (2001) and is entitled “Standards for transcription of handwritten documents to the history of Brazilian Portuguese”⁵. In 2010, they were passed on to all regional project teams, among which to the PHPB-RN branch, with some updates, entitled “Standards transcription of manuscripts and printed documents”. The model offers guidelines towards a semi-diplomatic editing of documents, which Spina (1977, p.79) also called interpretive-diplomatic, since

[...] it goes further in the interpretation of the original, as it already represents an attempt to improve the text, with the division of words, the development of abbreviations (bringing the letters, which do not appear in the original, bracketed) and sometimes even punctuating it⁶.

In the case of the criteria proposed by the PHPB, there is no inclusion of punctuation and words that are joined by linguistic reasons, such as the clitic nature of some of the terms. However, those joined due to the unique morphology of the manuscript letters (because of their usually elongated lines, they reach the next word by their ornaments) must be separated. The transcription of the *corpus* was an exercise of significant importance, especially because, by opening a sort of Pandora’s box, we could discover manuscripts, corroded by dust and by the time that shed light on the roads that language and texts travelled from the 18th to the 20th century.

An analytical microfilm

The main activity which allowed us to profile the official letters of Rio Grande do Norte, regardless of the route taken for their description, was a careful reading of each of them. During this inevitable and fundamental task, we enhanced our perception to understand the letters through two different means: that of the genre (a more generalized viewpoint, because first we had to perceive the genres, and, to a further extent, on a deeper internal level, the macro-structure of those genres), and that of the micro-structures, especially in terms of formulaic expressions. Both, genres with their macro-structures, as well as the micro-structural level, were seen as discursive traditions (henceforth to be named “DT”), and therefore a brief presentation of this theoretical model is necessary before moving on to the analytical microfilm.

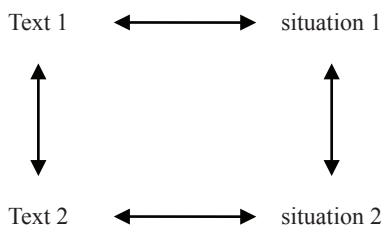
⁵ Mattos e Silva (2001) reports that the criteria were set up in the II Encontro Nacional de Normatização Paleográfica e de Ensino de Paleografia, event that took place in São Paulo on September 16th and 17th of 1993, becoming effective those principle from then. Those criteria can also be found in Berwanger and Leal (2008).

⁶ “[...] vai mais longe na interpretação do original, pois já representa uma tentativa de melhoramento do texto, com a divisão das palavras, o desdobramento das abreviaturas (trazendo as letras, que não figuram no original, colocadas entre parênteses) e às vezes até com pontuação.” Spina (1977, p.79).

The discursive traditions

To Kabatek (2006), the defining feature of DT is the repetition. However, not every repetition is configured as DT, because a DT must possess sign value, i.e. it must represent something that is external to itself, symbolizing it. To develop the notion of repetition, Kabatek (2006) elicits that of evocation, taken from Coseriu (1977). A DT is repeated when it is evoked by the same discourse constellation, according to the following schema (KABATEK, 2006, p.511):

Figure 1 – Kabatek’s schema for the **evocation**



Source: (KABATEK, 2006, p.511).

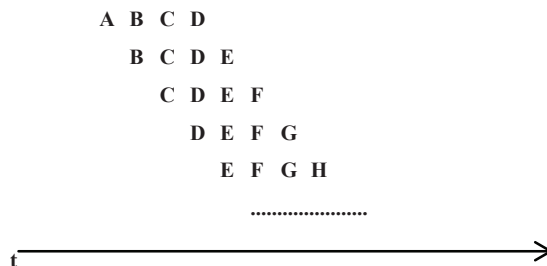
We see, in the schema, that a situation 1 (which is the discursive constellation) evokes the production of a text 1. Using Kabatek’s example (2006, p.511), the situation of an encounter on the street evokes a greeting (the text that is a DT). Every time this discursive constellation occurs again, that is, when this constellation updates itself in another historical moment (a position 2, 3, 4 ...), the same DT will be evoked. We consider important to note that, from the point of view of representation, both conditions (1 and 2) as much as both texts (1 and 2) must be considered the same. They are, however, from the viewpoint of realization, different, since each situation will occur in a chronotopia (that is to say, an inseparable junction of time and space, for that reason, unique and unrepeatable) and each text will be enunciated in that chronotopia. That is why it seems better or clearer to us the use of the term “update” than of “repetition”.

Probably the concept of DT most often referred to in Brazil is that of Kabatek. The author defines the DT as “[...] the repetition of a word or a textual form or a particular way to write or speak that acquires its own sign value”⁷ (KABATEK, 2006, p.512). This shows the broad domain of the DT studies: from a speech act (of a question, for example), through a genre (e.g., an application) to a more abstract level, as the style (e.g., the affectionate style).

⁷ “a repetição de um texto ou de uma forma textual ou de uma maneira particular de escrever ou falar que adquire valor de signo próprio”. (KABATEK, 2006, p.512).

Following Koch’s ideas (1997, p.17), it is important to note that DTs are part of cultural traditions and, consequently, never grow out of nothing – “⁸never arise ex nihilo” – and are always in a dynamic relation between conservatism and innovation. Below we show a representative plan that Koch, quoting from Strube (1989 apud KOCH, 1997, p.16), uses to comment on these other attributes of DT:

Figure 2 – Strube’s diachronic identity schema, revisited by Koch



Source: Strube (1989 apud KOCH, 1997, p.16).

The schema shows that the ABCD tradition bequeathed three of its traits to the next one, BCD. That is, BCDE underwent a process of innovation, bringing a new unknown element from its earlier tradition, E, but kept other three that reveal its conservatism. With the passage of time (t), we arrive at an EFGH tradition that, after several successive innovations, preserves not a single element that was found in its original tradition, ABCD. We realize, apart from that, the traditions were not born from nothing, but always came from a previous one. In the case of the first expression, if it did not come from another discursive tradition, it emerged certainly from some pre-existent cultural tradition.

Criteria for the identification of genres and their macro-structures

In order to operate the identification of genres that shape the official letters, we elected – from the three dimensions identified by Bakhtin (2010, p.261-262), by which the genre reflects its purpose (“the thematic content, style and compositional construction”⁹) – the compositional construction, i.e., an inner macro-structural organization. We added another criterion to this formal one, which is its communicative function/intention, usually taken as a definitive principle to distinguish one genre from another.

⁸ “nunca surgem ex nihilo”. Koch (1997, p.17).

⁹ “o conteúdo temático, o estilo e a construção composicional” (BAKHTIN, 2010, p.261-262).

In this sense, we matched communicative intention and structure, attributing to them extra-linguistic features, namely, the nature of the sender and the addressee, and on a secondary level, the relationship established between them. This was done also because we decided to preserve certain limits which are presupposed in the field of textual genres and Diplomats. In practical terms, the effects of such a choice can be explained in the following situation. Basically, the letter genre, the administrative letter (*ofício*) and royal charter have the same communicative intention, which is to obtain facts – in the case of our official letters, facts relating to Rio Grande do Norte – that need to be known to the public administration. Their functional specificities (ordering, sending, asking, etc.) notwithstanding, possibly there was that common denominator. However, the fact of being addressed to the king, being written between members of the government other than the royal authority and being sent by the king, is what makes these documents what they are, respectively: letter, administrative letter (*ofício*) and royal charter.

Despite the fact that there is no record of the term “royal charter” (“*carta régia*”) in any document from our *corpus*, and, instead, an expression akin to “letter of His Majesty” is always used, we wanted to keep the distinctive label of “royal charter” as determining a category in Diplomats (BELLOTO, 2002, p.54), and even to follow a symmetry in discriminating letters, in line with the distinction “letter” and “administrative letter (*ofício*)”: nature of the sender and/or addressee.

As for the structure, we were based on the study of the form made in Diplomats, a science which has as its object “the formal structure of the document” (BELLOTO, 2002, p.18) and presents, thus, among other functions, the function of classifying “[...] classes or documentary groups, based on the relationship of producer and external and internal structures of the document [...]”¹⁰ (BERWANGER; LEAL, 2008, p. 27).

As for the macro-structure of the official texts, Spina (1977, p.53) summarizes it as two parts that intrinsically organize a document: an internal one, called “text” that “constitutes the body of the document and contains the fact registered”; and an exterior part, the “protocol”, formed by a *exordium* (opening), also called “protocol”, and a *peroration* (conclusion), the “*eschatocol*”. Belloto (2002) introduces the same idea, systematized, however, in a three-part classification: the initial protocol or just “protocol” (Spina’s (1977) “*exordium*”), the text, and the “*eschatocol*” or final protocol (Spina’s (1977) *peroration*). For the analysis of macro-structures of the genres of our official letters, we chose the word “protocol” for this pre-textual section; “Text” to the main part of the document; and “*eschatocol*” for the post-textual fragment.

¹⁰ “[...] classes ou grupos documentais, baseada na relação da entidade produtora e estruturas externa e interna do documento [...]” (BERWANGER; LEAL, 2008, p. 27).

Each of these parts has a number of components. In a complete model there would be *invocatio*, *intitulatio*, *inscriptio* and *salutatio* in the protocol; *prologus* or *exordium*, *notificatio* or *promulgatio*, *narratio*, *dispositio*, *sanctio* or *minatio* and *valoratio* or *corroboratio* in the text section; and *subscriptio*, *datatio* and *apprecatio* in the “eschatocol”¹¹. Not all these components appear in official letters of Rio Grande do Norte and do not include the “valediction” which we will also name in Latin as *clausula*. It is important to remember that, for better visualization, tables were created in Melo (2012), that record all possibilities of realization of each of these three analytical partitions of the document, as Spina called (1977). Below, we reproduce one of these tables (Table 1), where the possibilities of arrangement of one of the parts of the official letters in study, the protocol, are registered, without taking into account the nature of *inscriptio* and *subscriptio* or the order in which they have their elements:

Table 1 – Kinds of protocols in the *official letters*

Inscriptio	C 1, C 3, C 5, C 16, C 22, C 9, C 10, C 20, C 24, C 15, C 11, C 13, C 19, C 26, C 31, C 33, C 34, C36, C45, C 46, C 47, C 48, C 49, C 50, C 51, C 52, C 53, C 55, C 56, C 57, C 58, C 59, C 60, C 61, C 62, C 63, C 65, C 66, C 76, C 81, C 88, C 89, C 90, C 91
datatio + subscriptio	C 2, C 4, C 6, C 12, C 13
subscriptio + intitulatio	C 7, C 21, C 29
inscriptio + subscriptio + intitulatio	C 17, C 18, C 27, C 28 (we could not find the <i>inscriptio</i>), C 30
inscriptio + salutatio	C 23, C 32
inscriptio + subscriptio	C 25, C 54, C 74, C87
Intitulatio	C 35
<i>datatio + inscriptio</i>	C 64, C 67, C 69, C 70, C 71, C 72, C 73, C 75, C 80, C 83, C 85, C 92, C 93, C 94, C 95, C 96, C 97, C 98, C 99, C 100, C 101, C 102, C 103, C 104C, 106, C 107
<i>Datatio</i>	C 68, C 77, C 78, C 79, C 82, C 84, C 86

Source: Melo (2012, p. 226).

¹¹ We are based on the ordering of Belloto (2002) and we preferred, for stylistic reasons, the Latin terms used by the author rather than the vernacular ones. Spina (1977, p.55) names these components solely in Portuguese and differs only in grouping *narratio* and *dispositio* as one single section, not forgetting to warn, however, that the narrative part “may often be missing”. Each of these terms and their semantic specificity are widely exploited in Melo (2012).

Analytical sampling

The case of the “letter”

The tradition of the letter is formally very similar to that of the administrative letter (*ofício*), but it is evoked by another discursive constellation, which is the need to communicate to the King any matter relating to public administration, and therefore they all have as *inscriptio* only the appellation “Senhor”. Such an appellation, as stated by Fonseca (2003), is addressed exclusively to the royal authority. Due to the fixity of its address, the King, it is always an official letter directed upwards, that is to say, written by someone hierarchically inferior to the person to whom the document is addressed. The letter is responsible for 9.3% of the *corpus*¹² and, like the administrative letter (*ofício*), it presents a plurality of communicative functions represented, in the documents in question, by communicating any subject (C1), committing to the fulfillment of any royal order (C3), submitting a document (C5), arguing in the defense of someone and proposing an attitude (C15), and requesting (C16). Thus, their common denominator lies in socio-functional elements: the context of production and the nature of the person to whom the document is addressed.

The macro-structure present in 90% of letters (9 out of 10 letters) is illustrated below by the C3 model.

MODEL

Protocol (*inscriptio*) - Text (*narratio + dispositio*) – Eschatocol (*clausula + datatio + subscriptio*).

¹² “Official letters” is the general term we borrowed from Fonseca’s work (2003) to describe our *corpus*, consisting of nine textual genres, namely: 10 letters (9.3% of the *corpus*), one royal charter (0.9 %), 2 certificates (“certificado”) (1.8 %), 3 consultations (3.8%), 5 letters of registration (4.6%), 9 applications (“requerimento”) (8.4%), 1 provision (“provisão”) (0.9 %), 75 administrative letters (“ofício”) (70 %) and 1 warning (“aviso”) (0.9 %). In this analytical sampling, “The case of the letter”, we treat that particular genre (quite similar to the royal charter and administrative letter [“ofício”] from the viewpoint of its structural organization, but different, however, because of the role of its partners: the royal charter is drawn up by the king, the letter is addressed to the king and the “ofício” does not involve the king as addresser nor addressee).

Chart 1 – Macrostructure of the genre “letter”, illustrated by the C3 model

Extra -textual element, written on the upper left margin.	<Para por vista segue. 8 de Mayo de 1713. [<i>inint.</i>]> ¹
ESCHATOCOL (1) <i>Inscriptio</i>	(1) Senhor
TEXT (2) <i>Narratio</i>	(2) V. Magestade foi servido ordenarme em carta de 9 de Fevereiro deste Anno, por queixa que fizeram a VMagestade os oficiais da camara da Villa do <i>Principe</i> , que os Capitans mores desta Cappitania costumavaõ dar de seismarias os Re- gongos, sendo estes do uzo commundo spo vos, e VMagestade me ordena naõ dê terras de sismaria sem nova hordem de VMagestade,
(3) <i>Dispositio</i>	(3) eu asnaõ tenho dado tocante aos Regongos athe o prezente e fiquo adevirtido para asnaõ dar,
ESCHATOCOL (4) Fecho	(4) A Real Pesoa de VMagestade Guarde Deos como todos seus vassallos avemos mister.
(5) <i>Datatio</i>	(5) Cidade do Natal 3 de Agosto de <u>1713.</u>
(6) <i>Subscriptio</i>	(6) Salvador Alvares da Silva

Fonte: Melo (2012, p. 129-30).¹³

The other letter C15 (the remaining 10%), diverges from this model because it presents, in the text section, a *prologus* before the *narratio*, and its *datatio* is composed only by the topical date. Unlike the most common models of the administrative letter (“ofício”), the letter does not reveal a *inscriptio* in *eschatocol*, certainly because of the important character of the King, who is one and unique. Neither *Manual* (BRAZIL, 2002) or Medeiros (2006) point out the letter as a genre of official writing anymore. Medeiros (2006) defines it only by the terms found in Brazilian dictionaries, that is to say, this species is starting to be generally conceptualized, losing thereby the particularity it had in the 18th century, the only period when it occurs in the *corpus*.

¹³ The angles indicate insertions by another hand. In this case of C3, that insertion was written in the upper left margin of the document. This convention, like all other notations used throughout this work, is according to the rules of transcription mentioned above (MATTOS E SILVA, 2001).

Criteria for identification of micro-structures such as “textual formulae”

For the analysis of textual formulae - which are the micro-structures dealt with by Melo (2012) -, we departed from the same starting point of the study of textual genres: the reading of the texts. As we were reading them, we charted the textual components that seemed to possess characteristics of a new sign, that is, expressions that received a new stratum over the “one signifier - one meaning” denotative layer, a significant meaning to a new layer in which the signifier started to gain a new meaning; in other words, we listed the possible DTs. The following examples illustrate the procedure: in the first of the letters that were read, C1, an expression appeared, shortly after the *inscriptio*: “Foi VMagestade servido ordernarme por carta | de coatro de fevereiro deste anno, de [inint.] a rezão | que tinha”; and in C77, starting the *narratio*, there is “Inteirado pelo officio de V. Ex.^a de | hoje datado”. Both the expressions “Foi VMagestade servido ordernarme” and “Inteirado pelo officio de V. Ex.^a de | hoje datado” looked like possible DTs to us. In the first case, we thought of a possible textual tradition evoked as a mention of the King’s prior order starting the *narratio* and, in the second case, as a strategy to start the *narratio* with a participle, from which the information of *dispositio* derives.

To some of these achievements, as we were reading the *corpus*, other forms were gathered, identical, similar or different, but responsible for the expression of a particular meaning (evoked by the same discursive constellation, according to the terms of the DT). This happened with the expression “Foi VMagestade servido ordernarme”, which reappears in the same way in C5; and by the “V. Magestade foi servido ordenarme” and “foy V. Magestade servido determi= | nar” in C3 and C19 respectively. Some impressions, however, were not matched to others from our official letters and were therefore excluded from the chart, such as the use of the participle of C77. We also counted as DTs only the elements that were repeated (i.e., which appeared in more than one letter), for they were the only ones allowed – empirically (not speculative) and based on an examination limited to our *corpus* (without resorting to other texts to check the likelihood of repetition by the evocation of the same discursive constellation) – to prove the value of a new sign.

The case of *clausula*

One of the most recurrent formulaic expressions in the letters is represented by the notation “Deus guarde (muitos anos) + nome do beneficiário (+ ‘para amparo dos vassallos’ or a similar idea, in some letters from the 18th century)”. It is evoked by the opening of the final protocol of the letters and acts as *clausula*. This pattern occurs in 57 (65.5%) of 87 letters that have *clausula* or 53.2% of the total of the official letters. The update of that fixed expression changes with the passage of time. The first time it occurs is in C1 as “A Real Pessoae | VMagestade guarde Deos como todos seus

vassallos avemos mister”, which is updated in C3 by the recurrence of the exact same construction. The arrangement of the elements of this DT varies, sometimes the verb coming before, as in “Guarde Deos aVMagestade | muitos annos”, in C5, or by adding vows to God’s care, as in C15: “Deus a VMagestade guarde pormuitos efelises | annos, para bem, econsolaçã de seus vassa- | los fieis”.

In these instances, as noted, they are “letters” because they are being sent to the King. That same DT, however, is also actualized in administrative letters (“ofícios”), for which the DT works almost as a badge throughout the 19th century. It still appears as *clausula* in the only warning (“aviso”) of the *corpus*, always evoked by the discursive constellation of completion, marked diplomatically by the “eschatocol” section. The almost Baroque strategies of the first occurrences will give way to simpler variants, up to culminating in the laconic “Deus guarde aVossa Excelência”, the variant most often actualized the DT in question, representing 43 of the 57 appearances (75.4%). This formula that had already been performed by four elements - “Deus Guarde”, as element A; “muitos anos”, B; the name of the benefitted person, C; and “para amparo dos vassalos” or a similar expression as D – generating therefore an ABCD discursive tradition – it is actualized throughout the 19th century as concisely as AC.

There is yet another strategy, in the 18th century, that can act as *clausula*, expressed by the notation “reference to God + verb + benefitted person recipient of divine grace + good wishes + for subject’s and, in particular, sender’s protection”. It shows in the *disposition* of C32, as “o alticimo comceda aV. Ex.^a e juntamente acom | panhada de todas as felicidades dignas de sua | bem conhecida ver tude p.^a meu emparo e detodos | os que vivem debaixo da portecam deV. Ex.^a”, with the *clausula* filled by “aVEx.^a q’ Deus guarde muitos annos”. The letter C26, however, does not require this valediction, so that we can understand “DEUS comceda a V.Ex.^a aquelas felecidades que todos | os seus humildes subditos lhedesejaõ, e[cu] muito emparticular p.^a meu amparo” as a new closing strategy, especially for its location, the typical place of this introductory of eschatocol component: at the end of the letter, immediately before *datatio*.

Hence we see how even inside a synchronic stage a discursive constellation can evoke different DTs or, to be more exact, DT of different expressions, formally different, but functionally equivalent; and how the same expression can accumulate signifying layers in a given text, representing a DT, as it happens in C26, or be merely an expression of its denotative sense, as in C32.

Mainly from XX.1 (the first half of 20th century), the same discursive constellation that evoked “Deus guarde a” and its variants, besides of “DEUS comceda a V.Ex.^a aquelas felicidades [...]” in C26, begins to evoke other DTs. One of them is the textual formula “Saúde e Fraternidade”, representing 5.7% of the *clausulae* of official letters and 4.6% of the total of these letters; the other is noted by “(modifier+) + the expression ‘saudauções’”, recurrent in 18.3% of *clausulae* and present in 14.9% of the *corpus*. With these new DT all other elements disappear, AC, and there are new features, conforming a new DT: an E, “Saúde e Fraternidade”, representing a DT; an F, the possibility of

a modifier prefixing “Saudações”, and G, “Saudações”, resulting, for example, in a tradition of the FG sort, like “Cordeaes saudações” in C88, or just G, “Saudações”, in C89. This no longer reveals the dynamic variation through which the DT goes, but the process of change.

Discussing the *clausulae*, the Manual de Redação da Presidência da República (style handbook of the Presidency) (BRAZIL, 2002, p.11, emphasis added) narrates and recommends:

The closing of the official communication has, besides the obvious purpose of ending the text, to welcome the addressee. The models for closure that had been used were regulated by Ordinance No. 1 of the Ministry of Justice, 1937, which established fifteen standards. Aimed at simplifying and standardizing them, this book establishes the employment of only two different closures of official communication:

a) to higher authorities, including the President of the Republic:

Respeitosamente (Respectfully),

b) to authorities of the same hierarchy or lower hierarchy:

Atenciosamente (Sincerely).¹⁴

Two considerations can be drawn from that excerpt. The first concerns a fortunate find in the last letters of the *corpus*. We relied on chance, because our *corpus* was randomly composed from the point of view of its content, since it was readability that conducted the selection of documents. For the DT we represented as “(modifier+) the expression ‘Saudações’”, emerged as the *clausula* of C102, the form “Respeitosas saudações” and occasionally of C107, the official letter that finishes our *corpus*, updates the same DT by the formula “Atenciosas saudações”. It is inevitable to compare these two *clausulae* appearing in 1930 and 1931, respectively, with the recommended valedictions “Respeitosamente” and “Atenciosamente” established by the Style Handbook of the Presidency. The element F, as we claim above, i.e. the possibility of a modifier prefixing “Saudações”, can be seen as a source-feature, from which the present famous and familiar “respeitosamente” e “atenciosamente” emanated. We could even suppose the process of this change: “cordial” and “atenciosas” lost their dependence as adjectival satellites of the *clausula*, acquired adverbial status on a certain moment in the 20th century and became an autonomous fixed formula, emancipated, in official letters until it was valued in a specific Brazilian social-political situation, as the ideal forms to fill out the closing component in the letters of public administration.

¹⁴ O fecho das comunicações oficiais possui, além da finalidade óbvia de arrematar o texto, a de saudar o destinatário. Os modelos para fecho que vinham sendo utilizados foram regulados pela Portaria nº 1 do Ministério da Justiça, de 1937, que estabelecia quinze padrões. Com o fito de simplificá-los e uniformizá-los, este Manual estabelece o emprego de somente dois fechos diferentes de comunicação oficial: a) para autoridades superiores, inclusive o Presidente da República: Respeitosamente, b) para autoridades de mesma hierarquia ou de hierarquia inferior: Atenciosamente.

The second consideration concerns society and it is an overview of all the other *clausula*. We have observed that the change from the DT “Deus guarde a” to “saudações” or “saúde e fraternidade” has a parallel development with the history of Brazil, even if strictly referential. This change happens in the *corpus* for the first time in C84, in 1891, with “Saúde e Fraternidade”. These are the first official letters after 1889, since its antecessor, C83, dates from 1887. This means such a change occurs immediately after the proclamation of the Republic, when a secular state is imposed, to the detriment of the monarchy, a form of government which had affinities with Catholicism in across Europe and therefore with Portugal, from which Brazil inherits it. And the reduction of possibilities suggested (by the Style Handbook of the Presidency) harmonizes with an increasingly objective and impartial culture, especially, at least in theory, on a governmental level. These changes let us see another facet of DT, which relates to its connection with cultural traditions. According to Koch (1997), the discursive traditions are never born *ex nihilo*, always arising from another DT or from a cultural tradition. In this case, we have a new DT, “Saudações” and “Saúde e Fraternidade”, that derived not only from a discursive constellation of a textual nature, namely the need for a *clausula* introducing the eschatocol, but also from new social and political traditions that had been emerging in Brazil.

Other changes in traditional ways of writing letters in the public administration, in that sense are evidenced by the abolition of certain expressions in official letters today, like the expressions “cumpre-me”, actualized in 9.3% of the letters, or “tenho a honra de”, written in 8.4% of them. Both forms are evoked to introduce *dispositio*, just after the *prologus*, if it occurs. These expressions represent one of the diplomatic components, *notificatio* or *promulgatio*, which were obliterated in the analytic partition we proceed to. The Presidency’s Handbook, on those terms, state the following: “Avoid the use of: ‘Tenho a honra de’, ‘Tenho o prazer de’, ‘Cumpre-me informar que’, use the direct form” (BRAZIL, 2002, p.12).

Final considerations

Look in thy glass, and tell the face thou viewest,
Now is the time that face should form another;
[...]
(SHAKESPEARE, 1970, p.1043).

At the end of our presentation, we believe we have elicited the dynamic interaction between tradition and innovation, verified by studying the preservations-variations-changes that some genres and some formulaic expressions, the sort of DT that integrates letters, went through in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

We see in the texts (genres) and in their textual forms (the micro-structures, especially the formulaic expressions), or better yet, we see in the DTs that make up

the official letters of Rio Grande do Norte, we see them as their common denominator, because these DTs weave a large network of structural, formal possibilities, whose achievements, repeated over time, end up functioning as a defining characteristic of the letters. The existence – although, in some cases, potential, given, for example, the formulae do not appear in all genres – of letters, administrative letters (“ofícios”), *clausulae* such as “Deus salve a” or “Saudações” and other structures, all this represents linguistic criteria, textual criteria, which, along with extra-linguistic criteria, allow for the categorization of such heterogeneous texts under a single term: “official letters”. Moreover, by this reasoning we find it less risky to think about a form of bureaucratic language or, more accurately speaking, a virtual set of forms of bureaucratic language.

The textual changes may reflect or allow us to see changes which society goes through. If this was evident in the change of valediction from “Deus guarde a” to “Saúde e Fraternidade” in the documents of our post-Proclamation of the Republic *corpus*, we suspect that perhaps changes beyond the lexical level, such as those in the macro-structure of genres, might also reveal, under closer scrutiny, that social influence.

Our analyses and the constitution of our *corpus* - now belonging to the PHPB -RN - can contribute to the study of a category (official documents) about which Silveira (2007) says studies are almost inexistent. The author states that “[...] this kind of written production has been marginalized both in primary school and in university” (SILVEIRA, 2007, p. 1) and only mentions two academic papers dealing with administrative genres, one of which, she claims, does not exactly deal with these genres, but only discusses the “bureaucratic lingo”. So our work, with its textual character and from a diachronic perspective, contributes to this not-so-prolific investigative field, namely, the study of bureaucratic texts, more precisely the ones from public administration. We therefore hope that our study may serve in some way to usher forthcoming research.

MELO, F. LIMA, M. Uma microanálise de Cartas Oficiais Norte Rio Grandenses. *Alfa*, São Paulo, v.60, n.1, p.61-78, 2016.

- *RESUMO: Entre variação e mudança, como sabemos, não só as línguas, mas os textos, com suas estruturas, também sofrem mudanças ao longo do tempo. Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar mudanças textuais observadas em cartas dos séculos XVIII, XIX e XX. Esses documentos integram o corpus denominado cartas oficiais norte-rio-grandenses, ligado ao projeto regional História do Português Brasileiro no Rio Grande do Norte (PHPB-RN) e ao projeto nacional Para a História do Português Brasileiro – PHPB. Realizamos uma microanálise sobre essas cartas, partindo das ideias de base coseriana advindas dos estudos sobre as Tradições Discursivas (KOCH, 1997; KABATEK, 2006), dentre as quais a de que os textos se configuram de modo a seguirem suas próprias tradições (COSERIU, 2007). Após uma breve incursão sobre a natureza do gênero “carta”, no que respeita à sua*

macroestrutura, concentramos nossa atenção na microestrutura clausula (fecho). Em nosso percurso, observamos que as dinâmicas textuais constituídas nos documentos analisados refletiam, de modo significativo, processos de mudança nas dinâmicas sociais.

- **PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Variação e mudança. Tradições discursivas. Cartas oficiais norte-riograndenses. Corpus diacrônico.*

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