

ENUNCIATION AND SUBJECTIVITY: ELEMENTS FOR ANALYSIS OF THE
LETTER GENRE

*ENUNCIÇÃO E SUBJETIVIDADE: ELEMENTOS PARA A ANÁLISE DO GÊNERO
CARTA*

*ENUNCIACIÓN Y SUBJETIVIDAD: ELEMENTOS PARA EL ANÁLISIS DEL
GÉNERO CARTA*



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ABSTRACT: In this article, we will work on the notions of enunciation and subjectivity, from the letter genre, produced as a complement to Dalton Trevisan's short story, entitled: "Apelo". For this purpose, we used the responses to the text made by students of the 1st period of the Languages English/Portuguese course at UNEAL (3 responses), which are characterized as an exercise in the discipline of Reading and Text Production. Methodologically, this analysis stands as a way to be worked qualitatively in the classroom, namely: through the use of textual complement exercises for reading literary genres (epics, narratives and lyrical poetry), as well as for discursive genres (letter, short story, string etc.). Thus, this article seeks to theoretically define, within the discursive genre letter, what would be the interaction in language, producing a sense of enunciation. As well as the importance of awareness of the 'I' for the production and reading of the text, constituting the fundamental reality of language.

KEYWORDS: Text production. Reading. Enunciation. Subjectivity.

RESUMO: Neste artigo, vamos trabalhar as noções de enunciação e subjetividade, a partir do gênero carta, produzida como complemento ao conto de Dalton Trevisan intitulado: "Apelo". Para este intuito, usamos as respostas ao texto feitas pelos alunos do 1º período do curso de Letras Inglês/Português da UNEAL (3 respostas), que se caracterizam como exercício da disciplina de Leitura e Produção de Texto. Metodologicamente, esta análise se coloca como um caminho a ser trabalhado qualitativamente em sala de aula, a saber: pelo uso de exercícios de complemento textual para leitura de gêneros literários (epopeias, narrativas e poesias líricas), tanto quanto para gêneros discursivos (carta, conto, cordel etc.). Assim, este artigo busca definir teoricamente, dentro do gênero discursivo carta, o que seria a interação na linguagem, produzindo sentido de enunciação, bem como a importância da consciência do 'eu' para a produção e a leitura do texto, constituindo a realidade fundamental da linguagem.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Produção textual. Leitura. Enunciação. Subjetividade.

RESUMEN: En este artículo trabajaremos las nociones de enunciación y subjetividad, desde el género Carta, producidas como complemento al cuento de Dalton Trevisan titulado: "Apelo" (Súplica). Para ello, se utilizaron las respuestas al texto realizadas por los alumnos del 1er período del curso de Letras Inglés/Portugués de UNEAL (3 respuestas), que se caracterizan como un ejercicio de la disciplina de Lectura y Producción de Textos. Metodológicamente, este análisis se erige como una forma de ser trabajada cualitativamente en el aula, a saber: mediante el uso de ejercicios de complemento textual para la lectura de géneros literarios (epopeyas, narrativas y poesía lírica), así como para géneros discursivos (carta, cuento, cuerda, etc.). Así, este artículo busca definir teóricamente, dentro del género discursivo letra, cuál sería la interacción en el lenguaje, produciendo un sentido de enunciación, así como la importancia de la conciencia del "yo" para la producción y lectura del texto, constituyendo la realidad fundamental del lenguaje.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Producción textual. Lectura. Enunciación. Subjetividad.

Introduction

In this article, we will work on the notions of annunciation and subjectivity, based on the letter genre, produced as a complement to the base text by Dalton Trevisan entitled: “Apelo” (Appeal). This text is part of a book of short stories written by the aforementioned author, published in 1968. These short stories portray everyday characters inserted in small dramas, taking place in the city of Curitiba and the theme of love.

It was then used the short story “Apelo”, adapted in the letter textual genre condition, as proposed by the exercise of the Reading and Text Production discipline for students in the 1st period of the English/Portuguese Literature course, at the State University of Alagoas – UNEAL, in 2021. The result of this exercise is what will be exposed in this article, inserting two important conceptual elements for Linguistics into the analysis of the answers: enunciation, a concept proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin and Valentin Volóchinov (2010), and subjectivity, worked on by Émile Benveniste (2005). The first concept deals with the self/other relationship and sees aspects of ideological enunciation in both written and spoken discourse, while the second concept deals with the expression of the self, which admits having a discursive voice. These elements are highlighted in the production of stories, which can be analyzed contextually as letters in specific interpretative situations.

Still in theoretical terms, we have the issue of analyzing the text as a genre. In this debate, we bring the arguments of Elias and Koch (2006), mainly regarding discursive genre. As in a revisionist perspective, the authors help us to understand the possibilities of joining the dialogical and ideological aspects and the dialogical and subjective aspects, without confusing objectivity and subjectivity.

In methodological and technical terms, we will use three responses to the short story adapted as a letter by Dalton Trevisan, which were written by the students who did the exercise described above. Thus, it is possible to define the construction of a discursive genre that still has contours of a literary genre (mainly as a narrative), having at the same time the possibility, through the responses made, of analyzing the dialogical and subjective condition of textual production in this specific case.

In addition to this introduction and conclusion, in this article we will have a first section that will descriptively address the text used in the exercise: “Apelo”, by Dalton Trevisan, identifying its literary and discursive aspects, in addition to showing the responses that were produced by students as a complement to the aforementioned text. In the second section, we will analyze the responses, in relation to the concepts of enunciation and subjectivity, isolating

aspects of writing and identifying the dialogical conditions of the texts, at the same time as we reveal aspects of their subjectivity, through morphological and semantic characteristics.

The letter genre from the short story “Apelo”, by Dalton Trevisan

Using the concept of textual genre within the possibilities of written communication and reading is to say that this is one of the dimensions of the production of communicative meaning. According to Van Dijk (2010), this concerns verbal activity (which shows situations, world views and results of agency), as a kind of “discursive demonstration of actions”.

For Marcuschi (2002), the textual genre is expressed by narrations of actions and operations (psychophysiological) that demonstrate: needs, purposes, planning and dependence on the situation. That is why textual activity within the process of written communication is seen as having a triple meaning: philosophical, social and communicative.

This is the short story entitled “Apelo”, by Dalton Trevisan. A text that, by the title itself, already insinuates the discursive demonstration of an action (appeal), within a masculinized monologue that imposes, through the narration, aspects of needs and situational dependence. For a better understanding of these issues, follow the text:

Appeal

Tomorrow marks a month since the Lady has been away from home. The first few days, to tell the truth, I didn't miss it, it's good to be late, forgotten in the corner conversation. It wasn't an absence for a week: the lipstick still on the handkerchief, the plate on the table by mistake, the image glimpsed in the mirror.

As the days went by, Madam, the milk curdled for the first time. The news of his loss came little by little: the pile of newspapers there on the floor, no one kept them under the stairs. The whole house was a deserted corridor, and even the canary was silent. To avoid appearing weak, oh, Madam, I went drinking with friends. One o'clock at night and they were gone and I was left alone, without the forgiveness of their presence for all the afflictions of the day, like the last light on the porch.

And I started to miss the little fights over the seasoning in the salad – my way of wanting good. Is it longing, Madam? I spared no water for your violets, in the window, and they wither. I don't have a button on my shirt, I'm wearing socks with holes in them. What happened to the corkscrew? None of us knows, without the Lady, how to talk to others: angry mouths chewing. Come home, Madam, please (TREVISAN, 1996, p. 94, our translation).

The story in question presents, as usual, a short narrative, with the issue of conflict as its key element. However, this imbroglio has two spaces in terms of literary narrative and textual construction: the dimensional – verticalized and located in the house environment – and the non-dimensional – subjective, located in the narrator's consciousness (CANDIDO, 1980). It is

possible to see these two dimensions in parts of the narrative: “The whole house was a deserted corridor, and even the canary was silent” and “It wasn't an absence for a week: the lipstick still on the handkerchief, the plate on the table by mistake, the image glimpsed in the mirror.”.

Here, the linguistic signs that, according to the objectivist tradition (SAUSSURE, 2002), were “sound mental nuances”, are now positioned as ideological elements of enunciation (BAKHTIN; VOLÓCHINOV, 2010), carrying the dialogical relationship: 'I'/other'. In this relationship, this 'other' is to be expressed by the noun 'Lady', while the 'I' is identified as the person inside a house narrating her situation of abandonment². This 'self' is not identified in relation to its gender (it could be another woman or even a man). What is identified relationally is the 'other', a 'Lady', who suggests herself in the sense of companion, wife, caregiver³. Although the text presents itself as a monologue, the textual/discursive arrangement allows the 'I' narrator to displace the 'other' of the text and put me in the mood to take his place, giving the text itself a subjective touch.

That was precisely what was proposed for the exercise. Students should read Dalton Trevisan's text, “Apelo”, and respond to the story, assumed here as a letter, developing a response authored by each student as an individual textual production. With this, the objective character of the 'other' assumes, according to Benveniste (2005), the position of a 'you', or, of an 'other self' within the dialogical process. The interesting thing is that the answers assume, in this sense, the character of a discursive exercise.

It is worth remembering that we are dealing with a 1st period undergraduate task in English/Portuguese Literature in the subject of Reading and Text Production, showing how dialogued and contextualized textual production works operationally.

The use of so-called linguistic signs, reread as ideological elements and as an expression of subjectivity, is configured as a stimulus to action and interaction through the use of written language. As Austin (1990) expresses: word selection, grammatical design, as well as fixation and reproduction. Because it is, above all, a human activity that requires:

- a) Verbal realization and verbal intention;
- b) Enunciation and subjectivity;
- c) Mastery of the language;
- d) Functional and stylistic factors;
- e) Affective-expressive factors;

²Here the position of reader of the text is characterized.

³Here the position of subjectivity in relation to the 'fissures' of the text is characterized.

- f) Differences in context and verbal experiences;
- g) Communicative situation.

For this reason (ELIAS; KOCH, 2006), they speak of a 'textual model', which is configured as a textual genre (it can be in the form of a letter, short story, cordel, etc.), highlighting a communicative action that has legitimacy, functionality, semanticity, reference, intentionality, composition and grammaticality.

These elements help to understand how textual genres are formed and act. We could also add to these elements the parameters of textual cohesion and coherence worked by Antunes (2009), but these would be the steps for another article. We will then focus on the nuances of enunciation and subjectivity, making it clear that this is an initial discussion, the result of what has already been covered, shedding new light on the themes and text in question.

Interventions were then made to the text by Dalton Trevisan (1996), through responses to his story, in the form of letters. The letter is a textual genre that aims to be a direct communication, in a denotative sense, intrinsic to the message sent in the condition of interlocution, that is, the condition of 'other' or 'you' in the dialogical process.

It can be done personally or formally, and given the context of the response to Dalton Trevisan's story, we can see, firstly, the degree of informality of the answers given and, secondly, the level of subjectivity and gender. As a way of illustrating our arguments, below are the 3 response texts within the letter textual genre:

First answer:

O lazy one! How many nights did I have to wait for you worried about your departures. Without saying what time, he would return, where or who you were with, arriving in the early hours of the morning irresponsible and drunk, talking loudly and wanting food, after having drunk his doses. I don't feel touched by the vile words of those who, deep down, have no consideration for those who love them, disdaining the concern and affection offered.

As for the newspapers, the old news that you must be tired of hearing every day is my dissatisfaction with this relationship of loving subservience that I live in. Everything is out of place. First your foolish heart, then the socks, then the shoes, then the newspapers, then everything in this house, including the displacement that is thinking that I do everything and you do nothing.

Finally, I can come back, but I won't renew another straw to adjust your behavior, I will live in the same house, but not your life of comfort, I will live in the same house, but not subject and live your life, in the face of the that it is less comfortable.

Signed,

Mother.

(Answer – Student A).

Second answer:

Little son,

These first few days were just like it was a silent day inside the house and you couldn't believe that this would ever happen. But you grew, and grew, and will grow even more, life doesn't let any detail pass, time passes, don't forget, take care of everything, the new time has arrived.

And what is longing? It is the absence of the powerful experiences we had together, flooding our lives with such simple coincidences, with a storm of love. These experiences had their power to conquer me in every detail.

I'm sorry to say that this is just the beginning of what you call nostalgia, and you will want to relive these same experiences, but now it's your turn to create moments and situations, it's your turn to live.

Longing.

From your Lady.

(Answer – Student B).

Third answer:

My dear, don't worry. That after a month away I'm arriving, in my luggage I'm bringing new hopes, love and a lot of understanding.

With things messed up, there's no need to worry, I'm coming back to put everything in its right place, including our lives. Because I miss you so much, our nights on the balcony, with the moonlight, make our moments unforgettable. I come back because I love you!

I also miss your smell, your wicked smile, your thick lips and even our little fights. Although your suffering is great, I also suffer a lot. You, with your disorganized way, I don't care, I just want to be by your side. I'm coming back, my love, my life, my eternal beloved!

Sincerely, your beloved.

Maria Heloisa

(Answer – Student C).

The 3 texts mentioned above, in addition to expressing dialogical conditions of enunciation, show that this is not displaced from the objective/subjective gender situation. Here we have the response to a monologue through the speech of a mother (first response), a Lady (second response) and the beloved woman (third response). All responses were feminized, which indicates, within the objective propositions of the dialogue, the textual creation of

responses via female characters, regardless of the gender location of the writers of the responses. This question raises some interesting points: why does the construction of responses indicate a defined gender position here? How is this the result of the writer's subjectivity, in addition to the objectivity of the discursive genre in question (letter)? And how this reverberates in a textual and social response, simultaneously. These will be questions to be debated in the following section.

Enunciation and subjectivity in textual production: responses to an exercise

The beginning of Dalton Trevisan's text is short and direct in stating the case: "Tomorrow it will be a month since you have been away from home. The first few days, to tell the truth, I didn't miss it, it's good to be late, forgotten in the corner conversation." And in the statement of the dilemma: "The news of his loss came little by little: the pile of newspapers there on the floor, no one kept them under the stairs. The whole house was a deserted corridor, and even the canary was silent. To avoid appearing weak, oh, Madam, I went drinking with friends" (TREVISAN, 1996, our translation).

Thus, the context is constructed and, despite the 'certainty' of the reference to a masculine discourse, the author leaves a 'fissure' in the text for us to think, perhaps, of a feminine discourse. So, beforehand, some interesting statements follow: the man is the one who makes the mess, the woman is the one who cleans up; The man is the one who goes out with his friends, the woman is the one who waits for him after the "night out" at the bar. In this way, signs seem to establish meaning through objectivity, but they may well provide new possibilities for interpretation. And this would not be a question of gender, but of enunciation and ideology, about the way we receive the speech of others:

But these schemes and their variants can only have emerged and taken shape in accordance with the dominant tendencies of the apprehension of other people's speech; Furthermore, to the extent that these schemes have assumed a form and a function in the language, they exert a regulating, stimulating or inhibiting influence on the development of the tendencies of appreciative apprehension, the field of action of which is precisely defined by these forms. [...] this then testifies in favor of the fact that the dominant tendencies of understanding and appreciating the enunciation of others have difficulty in manifesting themselves in these forms, as the latter hold them back, not leaving them sufficient scope (BAKHTIN; VOLÓCHINOV, 2010, p. 150, our translation).

The interpretative field of action is a field of tension within textual production, where a series of 'social brakes' occur that inhibit alternative or subjective interpretations outside the

standard. The interesting thing is that, in the proposed exercise itself, for reasons of morphological construction, it is not possible to change the gender composition of the 'other' - Lady, which cannot be said of the figure of the 'self'. However, none of the people who did the exercise changed the composition of the 'I', from male to female, with only the male option as the default form in the proposed relationship. Thus, the 'other' who responds by the hand of the students who issued the response is always a female other who responds to a male, subjectively to the exercise:

O lazy one! How many nights did I have to wait for you worried about your departures. Without saying what time, he would return, where or who you were with, arriving in the early hours of the morning irresponsible and drunk, talking loudly and wanting food, after having drunk his doses. I don't feel touched by the vile words of someone who, deep down, has no consideration whatsoever for those who love them, drawing on the concern and affection offered.

[...] Signed,
Mother.

(Answer – Student A).

Little son,

These first few days were just like it was a silent day inside the house and you couldn't believe that this would ever happen. But you grew, and grew, and will grow even more, life doesn't let any detail pass, time passes, don't forget, take care of everything, the new time has arrived.

And what is longing? It is the absence of the powerful experiences we had together, flooding our lives with such simple coincidences, with a storm of love. These experiences exercised their power to conquer me in every detail.

[...] From your Lady.

(Answer – Student B).

My dear, don't worry. That after a month away I'm arriving, in my luggage I'm bringing new hopes, love and a lot of understanding.

With things messed up, there's no need to worry, I'm coming back to put everything in its right place, including our lives. Because I miss you so much, our nights on the balcony, with the moonlight, make our moments unforgettable. I come back because I love you!

[...] Maria Heloísa

(Answer – Student C).

The condition of mother is repeated twice (in the first response as mother and in the second as Madam and mother). In the third, she appears as a woman (companion in a loving sense). The curious thing is that these discursive situations do not only highlight the use of nouns: mother; lady and mother and woman, but roles conditioned to the female figure, always disposed to a male (GIDDENS, 1993; FOUCAULT, 2012). It is also necessary to emphasize

that, according to Benveniste (2005, p. 286, our translation), the points of subjectivity that guide these textual constructions are anchored in the very language that makes the subject:

In language and through language, man constitutes himself as a subject; because only language grounds reality, in its reality which is that of being, the concept of "ego" [...].

The "subjectivity" we are dealing with here is the speaker's ability to propose himself as a "subject" [...].

[...] I do not use I unless addressing someone, who in my address will be a you. This condition of dialogue is what is constitutive of the person, as it reciprocally implies that I become you in the speech of the one who in turn is called me. We see here a principle whose consequences must be developed in all directions.

Even following the traditional path of the relationship: man (me), women (other/you), Benveniste emphasizes the fact that language is a constructive element of the subject. It does not matter whether in this fact the objective relations of subservience are exposed by the statements, as can be seen in the construction of the text and its responses, but what is important is the evidence that the textual construction is a construction of subjectivity.

If student A puts himself in the situation of a mother who responds to her child in a forceful way, complaining about behavioral neglect, this is due to the use of morphological (of grammatical classes) and semantic (of expression of meaning) characteristics, of a reality objective and subjective that is constructed from the impressions left by Dalton Trevisan in his story, expressed in relation to the interlocutor who responds to him.

In the same way, student B, who uses the expression 'little son', to categorize at the beginning of her answer the figure of a mother who now leaves her son 'to fend for himself', since he will have to learn on his own acts such as managing your life, instead of relying on your mother's care.

It is no different with student C. However, a caveat must be made. Subjectively, it uses expressions such as: love, longing, suffering, my life and eternal, to give a conciliatory air, being the only one to respond to Dalton Trevisan's 'I' with a subjectively happy ending.

This evidence (shown through the answers listed here) are expressions of the use of enunciation and subjectivity as elements of construction of an 'other' and a 'you', through the textual genre known as letter. This construction is the result not only of structural correspondences between historical reality and the text, but also involves the subjective reading that is done by the interlocutors who, at first, are readers, but when they start to respond as students to a text, presenting their impressions, place themselves in the condition of authors

with subjective readings of the world, who express structural characteristics differently, using discursive, stylistic, morphological and semantic resources as tools of expression.

Final remarks

The article in question analyzed the production of three letters based on an academic exercise, based on the short story by Dalton Trevisan entitled: “Apelo” or “Appeal”, in English. The latter was placed in the form of a letter and the teacher asked the students in the Reading and Text Production discipline to prepare 'responses' to the narrative in question.

Of these answers, we separated three and placed them as an object of analysis, describing not only the short story “Apelo”, in full, but also the answers given by the 3 students to the short story. This choice is made due to the comparative possibility, which, if very extensive, would require a greater volume of data and analysis, something unfeasible for a more analytical-conceptual and short article.

As a theoretical and methodological basis for analyzing these responses, we list two theories: that of enunciation, by Bakhtin and Volóshinov (2010), and that of subjectivity before textual genres, by Émile Benveniste (2005).

The responses analyzed have, in methodological and conceptual terms, both enunciative characteristics (which evoke dialogism and ideological elements in their productive context) and subjective characteristics (to the extent that the unfolding of the story as a complement pass through the sieve of the ending that each author desires, within the dialogue). In this sense, it is not just an exercise, but the management and implementation of textual production, in addition to mastering a series of subjective, social and grammatical characteristics.

Therefore, it is worth highlighting the experience as valid and productive, and can also be considered as a qualitative method and a textual production technique to be used in a dialogical and playful way not only in the context of higher education, but also at other levels and teaching modalities, such as practical exercise in Portuguese Language, Linguistics and Literature.

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