EVALUATING DISCURSIVE RELATIONS IN BRAZILIANS’ADVICE-GIVING

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Abstract

This paper investigates how some participants of a reality show, which featured on Brazilian television from January to April, 2004, produce and interpret discourse relationships. It will focus on the discursive relations among textual segments as well as on the pragmatic bonds between these segments and implicit information, all of which often signaled by linguistic elements, such as discourse markers. These linguistic elements contribute to the co-construction of text meaning since they point to a specific meaning relation among whatever potential meanings conveyed by the discourse content. This paper will also consider different discourse dimensions (syntactic, semantic and discursive) in order to investigate the properties of such linguistic elements and their function in the production of advisive speech acts.

Keywords: Discursive relations; Discourse markers; Modular approach; Relational organization.

1. Introduction

The studies of discursive relations as well as the studies of discourse markers, which express these relations, have occupied a central place in areas such as discourse analysis and pragmatics. The interest on this subject is due to the fact that discursive relations contribute to the interpretation of one discourse segment relative to another. Besides, approaching discursive relations reveals the necessity to take into consideration the role discourse markers play on discourse.

In order to elucidate the complex process of discourse interpretation involving discursive relations, I adopt a modular and interactionist approach to discourse organization, the Geneva Model of discourse analysis. This model consists of a theoretical and methodological instrument of discourse analysis, which combines information of different dimensions of discourse. Aligning with Bakhtin’s proposals, the linguists working at the University of Geneva conceive discourse as a verbal interaction and propose to describe discourse “with reference to (a) the real situations in which it is used, (b) the textual configurations it gives rise to, and (c) the conventional resources it conveys and draws from” (Filliettaz & Roulet 2002: 374). They postulate that the discourse organization can be analyzed by initially identifying a restricted set of elementary components (modules) and afterwards combining these elementary elements (organization forms).
“Two main requirements are associated with a modular approach to discourse: first, to identify, isolate and define a restricted set of dimensions relating to elementary information; and, second, to describe precisely how these various dimensions of elementary information may be combined in order to account for complex discourse processes”. (Filliettaz & Roulet 2002: 376)

The organization form that deals with discursive relations as well as with the contributions of discourse markers to their interpretation is the Relational Organization Form of Discourse. The study of relational organization leads to the identification of illocutionary and interactive relations between textual segments and implicit information, stored in what Berrendonner (1983) calls discursive memory. These relations are defined relative to the process of negotiation subjacent to all interactions and exposed in a hierarchical structure.

In a hierarchical structure, in which there are at least three levels – exchange, move and act -, the illocutionary relations occur between information in the exchange level. The moves that belong to an exchange can be linked by initiative or reactive illocutionary functions, such as question, request, answer, etc. The discursive constituents that belong to a move, in their turn, can be linked by interactive relations, such as preparation, argument, counter-argument, reformulation, commentary, etc.

These relations, since they permit the description of the hierarchical structure, have been qualified as textual. They can be represented as indicated in figure 1:

![Textual relations](image)

**Figure 1: Textual relations**

Beside these relations, there is another type that has commonly been confounded with semantic and textual relations, according to Roulet (2001). They are called praxeological relations, for they are concerned with the situational dimension of discourse and they are provided by the referential module, and not by the hierarchical one (Roulet 2001, 2003). These relations are important for the analysis of social interactions because they are closely linked to the social activities in which the agents in a discursive negotiation are engaged, such as opening, interrupting, closing, etc.

In this paper, I intend to investigate how some participants of a reality show (BBB4), which was transmitted by Rede Globo, a Brazilian telecommunication network, from January to April 2004, produce and interpret discourse relationships. I intend to focus one interaction in this reality show, aiming at capturing the complexity of discourse organization, considering information from the situational, textual and linguistic levels.
With regard to the data, so as to avoid using contrived or fabricated examples, interactions in this reality show have been recorded, aiming at obtaining data with top technical quality in terms of image and sound. For this paper, I chose an interaction in which one participant (Marcela) is trying to advise another (Dourado) not to express himself the way he does, while a third participant (Juliana) introduces herself in the conversation and starts talking at the same time, causing some disturbance in the conversation¹.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>(1) you’re an extremely intelligent guy and learned (2) you read a lot (3) I admire that in you (4) = you have only one fault (5) you’re irreverent, (6) there are times you say (7) and and many times you can even think (8) but in certain moments (9) under certain circumstances (10) sometimes we should avoid certain comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>(11) I’m authentic (12) cause I say what I am (13) I don’t stop (14) and I don’t think about what I’m going to say or not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>(15) there are millions of people watching you (16) you can’t set a bad example=</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>(17) =that’s ego=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>(18) =can I tell you something (19) what has Caetano Veloso² done to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>(20) = what did I say about Caetano? (21) remind me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>(22) {+} that you gonna &lt;puke on his face&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>(23) &lt;that you gonna puke on his face&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>(24) if you don’t like him (25) just say (26) “it’s not my kind of music”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>(27) &lt; that’s all, (28) that’s what I think you should change (29) just that &gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>(30) &lt;now get there (31) and “I’m gonna puke on his face” (32) it’s a matter of politeness&gt; and common sense politeness (33) &lt; politeness &gt; = come on!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>(34) &lt;look I’m not &gt; judging ok, (35) = it’s just my opinion, (36) the only thing, (37) put out your thoughts (38) whoever you dislike don’t “look do you like Caetano (39) &lt; it’s a kind of music I don’t like (40) I prefer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>(41) &lt; politely man you think</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>(42) hey shush shush (43) hey stop stop hey Ju &gt;³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>(44) I’m gonna disagree with you (45) if you don’t like Caetano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>(46) hold it Ju (47) you are too aggressive Ju (48) hold it, (49) that’s the way I think &gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>(50) your problem is the way you say it &gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>(51) look “I don’t like his music, (52) you’re talking about Caetano (53) I don’t like his music but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>(54) {+} or just don’t say anything</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Valério recorded and translated this interaction. It is divided into acts, following the criterions discussed in Marinho (2002). The transcription notations followed here are: : lengthened vowel; <…> overlapping talk; {+} increasing volume; = no pause; M= Marcela; D= Dourado; J= Juliana.

² Caetano Veloso is a famous Brazilian singer and composer.

³ Ju is Juliana’s nickname.
In order to analyze this interaction, trying to elucidate the complex process of discourse interpretation involving discourse relationships, I will (1) focus on the subjacent negotiation process, (2) analyze the interactional frame, which deals with the material dimension of the interaction to, finally, (3) describe specific sequences of joint actions as praxeological structures. Afterwards, I will consider the Relational Organization Form in order to investigate the textual relations and the properties of discourse markers that can signal these relations and I will also try to describe their function in the production of advisive speech acts, even when they are not explicit, in order to show how the participants construct their discourse using maneuvers to express their points of view.

2. The subjacent discursive negotiation in Brazilians’ interaction

The Geneva Model assumes that “dialogue structures reflect a process of negotiation in which speakers recursively initiate propositions, react to them and ultimately ratify them” (Filliettaz & Roulet 2002). In other words, it is assumed that through this negotiation, the interactants present information, formulate questions, request elucidations /clarifications, present answers and so on.

A proposition, like a question, for instance, can be formulated in such a way that it will cause a reaction as simple as an answer, but it can also force the participants to open a secondary negotiation in order to clarify what was in fact proposed. The reaction, in its turn, can be a complete answer so that it leads the participants to the ratification phase, or a partial as well as a confusing answer. In this case, it will trigger the opening of another negotiation and so successively.

With the intention of carrying out these negotiations, interactants produce communicative constituents on three hierarchical levels: Exchanges, moves and acts. Exchanges, which function as a maximal dialogical textual projection of a negotiation process, are composed of moves. Each phase of the negotiation process corresponds to a move, which can either be restricted to a main act or be formed by a more complex configuration: Other moves or acts and exchanges that are subordinated to it.

The development and the ending of a negotiation process are associated with two distinct completion principles: (1) the principle of dialogical completion, which states that an exchange comes to an end when a double accord is achieved; (2) the principle of monological completion, which states that each constituent of an exchange should be formulated in order to be sufficiently clear so as to function as an adequate contribution to this process (Roulet, Filliettaz & Grobet 2001).

The textual structure in figure 2 can illustrate, in general lines, part of the negotiation process subjacent to the interaction between Marcela and Dourado, considering the meddles of Juliana.
Evaluating discursive relations in Brazilians’ advice-giving

This configuration corresponds to an interpretation of a section of interaction 146. The principle of monological completion is illustrated in this example, where the move verbalizing Marcela’s request, composed by (18)-(19), is not sufficiently clear to Dourado, and then it gives rise to the opening of a subordinate exchange.

A description of the interactional frame, which deals with the material dimension of this interaction, can be correlated to the interpretation of this process. The interactional frame defines the material properties of an interaction along three parameters: Channel (written or oral), interactional manner (spatial-temporal co-presence or distance) and interactional link (reciprocity or no reciprocity). It exposes the identities of each participant, defined by the interactional position, and also the level of the interaction, composed by two positions. Each level contains one kind of materiality, which specifies interactional positions shared by two participants.

Figure 3: Interactional frame
The interactional frame presented above shows the format I propose to this part of the interaction. As the interaction takes place in a television program, there are two levels of interaction and in consequence four interactional positions. Since Juliana meddles in the conversation between Marcela and Dourado, and since she talks mainly to him, sometimes overlapping Marcela’s voice, I assume that she shares with Marcela one interactional position. As this television program is exhibited live or can be videotaped, I consider that the interactional manner can be temporal co-presence as well as temporal distance.

The three participants in this interaction speak to be heard not only by the participants of the show, but also by the televiewers. They are totally aware of the presence of a camera through which everything they say is registered and will be evaluated by the spectators. And they also know that the audience will interfere in the choice of the winner in this show, voting for him. So, when they argue or when they friendly give advices to one another, they are constantly negotiating their public self-image, or their face wants\(^4\), besides attempting to respect the face wants of others.

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\(^4\) Defined by Yule (1996: 130) as "a person's expectations that their public self-image will be respected".
Thus, a complex discursive practice of advice-giving takes place in this interactive, praxeological configuration. In order to capture the complexity of this negotiation process where the participants must coordinate their participatory actions, specific sequences of joint actions can be described as praxeological structures.

This structure shows that, in order for a complex discursive practice of advice-giving to take place, the participants go through a variety of structured episodes: Before entering into the territory of the interlocutor, criticizing him so as to give him an advice, looking forward to changing his behavior, Marcela makes a compliment in order to lessen the possible threat. And, in the face of the interlocutor’s defensive action, the speaker reorients her speech producing a request followed by a question. As evident, it takes the interactants many actions to deal with advisive speech-acts without threatening themselves/their integrity.

The joint actions of advice-giving leads to the construction of complex textual organization. In the next section, I will focus on an aspect of textual organization aiming at investigating the relations concerned with the textual constituents belonging to this part of the interaction. I will also call attention to the discourse markers that can signal these relations and try to describe (through hierarchical-relational structures) their function in the production of advisive speech acts.

3. The description of the relational organization form of discourse

The description of the relational organization form of discourse is important to the study of discourse organization because it contributes to the elucidation of its interpretation. According to Roulet (2001), the relational organization form allows the description of a relational profile of the discourse, which turns evident the dominant relations inside its organization.

The segments of the interaction analyzed so far are connected in textual relations which, in a generic list, can be classified as: (a) interrogation, intimidation and assertion, for the initiative illocutionary relations, answer and ratification, for the reactive ones; and (b) argument, counter-argument, reformulation, topicalization, preparation, commentary, succession and clarification, for the interactive relations.

The first type of these relations can be identified by the use of a paraphrase with a syntactic transformation (affirmative, interrogative, imperative) or with the introduction of some markers such as potentially performative verbs, like say that, ask if, answer that, ratify that (Roulet 2001).

The second type can be identified by the presence of a connective or by the possibility of an insertion of a connective in the sequence, so as to turn explicit the interactive relation. According to Rossari (1999), the connectives that are present in a text function as guides to the reader, since they turn relations explicit between the different units of the text and also signal its structure. The interactive relation can also be marked by a syntactic construction, like the left dislocation, which often occurs in topic constructions. And in regard to the relations to which there are no specific markers, like interactive relations of preparation or commentary, their determination

5 The interactive relation of commentary can be marked by the relative pronouns that are used in an act frontier (Marinho 2002).
shall be made considering the position of the subordinate constituent, before or after the main constituent respectively.

Using these categories, it’s possible to describe the generic textual relations between textual constituents and implicit information, stored in discursive memory.

**Figure 5: Hierarchical-relational structure**

In figure 5, the hierarchical-relational structure shows that the sequence composed by textual units (15) to (17) is analyzed as an exchange in which an initiative move is followed by a reactive one.

In figure 6, I present a much more complex structure that can describe an interpretation of the sequence composed by textual units (1) to (17).

Two great and complex moves compose this move. The first move, in which an advisive action takes place, is composed by other two moves that are connected by a counter-argument relation. In sM-(1)-(3), Marcela introduces her speech making a compliment to Dourado. This compliment is followed by a weakened criticism, expressed in sM-(4)-(7), and then by an advice, expressed in mM-(8)-(10). She constructs her speech without marking every textual relation. The single connective she uses is *but*, which marks a counter-argument relation. But, since discourse markers select and then display a relationship between units of talk rather than create it (Schiffrin 1987), I adopt a heuristic instrument that consists of inserting connectives into the sequences in order to turn the relations explicit. Thus I interpret the interactive relations present in this move mainly by means of the insertion of connectives, as the ones inserted in parenthesis. Besides, it’s interesting to remark on the use of *but*, leading mM-(8)-(10) as a whole. With this counter-argument connective, Marcela turns explicit a contrast between Dourado’s attitude of speaking irreverently and her advice: “in certain moments, in certain circumstances, one should sometimes save some commentaries”.

The second move, through which Dourado responds to Marcela, contains chained exchange. As Juliana meddles in the conversation between Marcela and Dourado before he finishes his response, she triggers a subordinate exchange. While he is trying to defend his face wants uttering that he is an authentic guy who does not measure his words, as in mM-(11)-(14), she interrupts him confronting authoritatively his opinion, causing his reaction in M-(17). In regard to interactive relations in this move, the reformulation relation is dominant. It’s present between sA-(12) and mM-(13)-(14) and also between sA-(13) and mA-(14) although no connective is used to make it explicit. This relation can be interpreted due to the fact that one segment recapitulates the other, and thus there is a possibility of the insertion of a reformulative marker. The argument relation is also present in this sequence, between mA-(11) and
sM –(12)-(14), where it is marked by the connective (be)cause. This relation is present between sA-(15) and mA-(16) as well, and since it is unmarked, it can be calculated with the contribution of an information coming from referential nature: if there are millions of people watching you, so you can not give them a bad example.
The following sequence, composed by textual units (18) to (23), can be analyzed as it’s described in figure 7.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{sA - (18) = can I tell you something?} \\
\text{prep} \\
\text{mA - (19) what has Caetano Veloso done to you? >} \\
\text{M} \\
\text{A - (20) = what did I say about Caetano?} \\
\text{M} \\
\text{In} \\
\text{A - (21) remind me} \\
\text{M} \\
\text{A - (22) {+} that you gonna puke on his face} \\
\text{M} \\
\text{Re} \\
\text{A - (23) that you gonna puke on his face} \\
\text{prep = preparation} \\
\text{clarf = clarification}
\end{array}
\]

**Figure 7**

The complexity of this internal structure is due to the delayed agreement on the monological completion principle. The question formulated by Marcela, after a preparation for it expressed in sA-(18), gives rise to the chained exchange meant to clarify this question. An initiative move and a reactive one compose this subordinate exchange. The initiative move M-(20)-(21) introduces a question and a request made by Dourado. A coordinate relation links these two acts since they are hierarchically independent from each other. The reactive move M-(22)-(23) brings the answers enunciated by Juliana and Marcela practically at the same time. A coordinate relation links these two acts as well.

### 4. Conclusions

To conclude this paper, I shall now try to couple sources of information gathered from the descriptions of both praxeological and hierarchical-relational structures presented here.

The textual configuration presented in figure 2 shows the complexity of the negotiation process that takes place among the three participants of BBB4. Although I described only part of interaction 146, this description is sufficient for me to elucidate how the interactants manage discursive relationships in practicing advice-giving.

The complex moves described in figure 6 show in detail the maneuvers that are necessary in communicative action in order to express one’s point of view without threatening the interlocutor’s face wants. As pointed out previously, before giving
Dourado an advice, in order not to take the risk of being unkind or impolite, Marcela gives him a compliment followed by a censure weakened by some linguistic elements, such as the argumentative item only, a marker of modality can still or even a directive marker shall. As these previous actions contrast with an advisive act, she chooses to employ the connective but, whose property is related to the connection of segments that are oriented to different directions. Dourado, in his turn, defends his face wants with the utterance I'm authentic, followed by an enunciative justification. It's interesting to remark that his acts of justification are reformulated for two times, revealing an attempt to reinforce his utterance. But Juliana, on the other hand, does not show the same concern to him as Marcela does. She interrupts him saying authoritatively what she thinks he cannot do; in other words, she happens to threaten his face wants. Since she interferes in the course of the conversation between Marcela and Dourado, the move she introduces does not link syntactically or hierarchically with the following one, and therefore no connectives are used.

In order to recover her turn-taking and to continue the conversation with Dourado, persisting in the same theme, Marcela reorients her talk starting a new move in which she introduces a request which prepares the interlocutor to receive her question. This question, as already pointed out, will provoke the opening of a new exchange through which Dourado demands a clarification. This demand can be interpreted as a strategy he uses to maintain his integrity. At this time, Juliana and Marcela respond in consonance, with, inclusive, some overlapping, although Juliana increases her voice facing Dourado as well as Marcela, trying to assume control of the situation.

The systematic study presented here aims at contributing not only to an enrichment of the interpretation of this interaction but also to an overture to alternative interpretations that go far away from here. The adoption of the Geneva Model of discourse analysis permits the analyst to go beyond a naïve approach, and to try to reach a consistent representation of discourse organization.

References


