

Comparative Discourse Analysis in Brazil: A Reflection from the Notion of Category / *A análise de discursos comparativa no Brasil: uma reflexão a partir da noção de categoria*

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ABSTRACT

Comparative discourse analysis emerged in France, more precisely in the CEDISCOR laboratory of the Sorbonne Nouvelle University – Paris 3, around the year 2000. Currently, it is being implemented in Brazil within the *Diálogo* group (CNPq/USP). The purpose of this article is to reflect on the theoretical and methodological possibilities involved in the practise of Bakhtinian-inspired comparative discourse analysis in Brazil. To this end, we start from a theoretical reflection on the notion of category (of analysis). We investigate, on the one hand, how the notion of category was already present in the creation of CEDISCOR and comparative discourse analysis in France, when one sought to determine “comparable categories”; on the other hand, we show how the creation of a science by Bakhtin – metalinguistics – also starts from a revision of the notion of linguistic category, which has implications for the way Bakhtinian-inspired comparative discourse analysis can be practised in Brazil.

KEYWORDS: Comparative discourse analysis; Category of analysis; Linguistic category; Enunciative category; Discursive category.

RESUMO

A análise de discursos comparativa surgiu na França, mais precisamente no laboratório CEDISCOR, da Universidade Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3, por volta dos anos 2000. Atualmente, ela vem sendo implementada no Brasil no âmbito do grupo Diálogo (CNPq/USP). O objetivo do artigo é refletir sobre as possibilidades teóricas e metodológicas implicadas na prática da análise de discursos comparativa no Brasil, de inspiração bakhtiniana. Para tanto, partimos de uma reflexão teórica sobre a noção de categoria (de análise). Investigamos, por um lado, como a noção de categoria esteve presente já na criação do CEDISCOR e da análise de discursos comparativa na França, quando buscava-se determinar “categorias comparáveis” e, por outro lado, mostramos como a criação de uma ciência por Bakhtin – a metalinguística – parte também de uma revisão da noção de categoria linguística, o que tem implicações na maneira como a análise de discursos comparativa de inspiração bakhtiniana pode ser praticada no Brasil.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Análise de discursos comparativa; Categoria de análise; Categoria linguística; Categoria enunciativa; Categoria discursiva*

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Introduction

To compare texts of the same discourse genre in two (or more) different languages-cultures: this is the objective of comparative discourse analysis,¹ a field currently expanding in Brazil. Conceived in France in the years 2000 by researchers from the CEDISCOR group (*Centre de recherche sur les discours ordinaires et spécialisés*), from Sorbonne Nouvelle University – Paris 3, this line of studies has the text “*Des choix méthodologiques pour une linguistique de discours comparative*” as its precursor, published a few years earlier, in 1992, by researcher Sophie Moirand, in the *Langages* journal. During the implementation of this research line in France, much thought was given to how discourse analysis itself would allow for such a comparison. This is how new perspectives of analysis emerged within the field, such as that of Patricia von Münchow, who came to call the line “contrastive discourse analysis” (CDA). A similar challenge is currently being launched by *Diálogo* group (USP/CNPq), in which comparative analysis has been implemented in Brazil from a Bakhtinian perspective. Would there be great methodological differences between the French approach by CEDISCOR (today extended to the CLESTHIA laboratory – *axe sens et discours*) and the Brazilian perspective founded on dialogical discourse analysis? Would we be moving from dialogical discourse analysis to *comparative* discourse analysis? To begin this reflection, we shall use a study on the notion of category of analysis and its role both in the discourse analysis practised by CEDISCOR, of French origin, and in the analyses practised in Brazil by the Bakhtinian-inspired *Diálogo* group (CNPq/USP).

This article, which aims to answer the questions formulated above, is part of a larger project – a post-doctoral research – which aims to contribute to the

¹ We have chosen to call the line “comparative discourse analysis” (as it is called in France), and no longer “comparative analysis of discourses,” a term once used in published articles. This is a decision made after we presented our work at events that brought together discourse analysts from various approaches, who asked us about the discourses underlying (what are they?) the term “comparative discourse analysis.” Moirand (1992), who first called the line “Linguistics of comparative discourse” and then “comparative discourse analysis,” argues that it should be distinguished from the classical conception of the analysis of French discourse, given the interest that such a line manifests in the most diverse discourses, ranging from literary to scientific to media (cf. p.31). This is also the case of the dialogical discourse analysis, which is why we think that the term “comparative discourses analysis” is more appropriate for the work being done by the *Diálogo* group. When the corpus is already made explicit, we think that the term “comparative discourse analysis” does not pose a problem (for example: “comparative discourse analysis of scientific journals”).

implementation of comparative discourse analysis in Brazil. Having carried out our thesis at the Paris Descartes University, in a different perspective from that adopted in the laboratory that hosted this research, we think this is an opportunity to articulate both approaches.

The article presents the following structure: in section 1, we shall discuss the notion of category in discourse analysis, as it is apprehended by the CLESTHIA/CEDISCOR researchers. Then, in section 2, we shall make a brief presentation on dialogical discourse analysis and its theoretical or conceptual categories. We shall also reflect on the consequences of our discussion on the notion of category for the Bakhtinian-inspired comparative discourse analysis. A section with the conclusion and another with the references is at the end of the article.

1 The Notion of Category in the Comparative Discourse Analysis Developed in France

In France, it is very common for researchers from various trends of discourse analysis to use the term *category of analysis*² in their research. Ribeiro (2015, p.75), when describing the work of CEDISCOR in her doctoral thesis, points out that the objective of the research program “*Comparaison, langue et culture dans des perspectives discursives*,” created in 2003, was

to reflect on the “methodological problems posed by the comparison of several languages and cultures: congruence of the chosen theoretical model, relevance of the *categories of analysis* and mode of selection of the *tertium comparationis*, notably at the level of discourse” (excerpt from the group's website: <http://syled.univ-paris3.fr/cediscor-projets.html>; emphasis added).³

Note that, in the excerpt above, the term *category of analysis* is assumed by the researchers of the group, appearing on the presentation page of the program on the

² The term *analysis entry* often appears as a synonym for *category of analysis*, which shows that the analysis itself starts from the establishment of these categories, which serve as the entry for the analysis of a corpus.

³ In the French original: “réfléchir sur les ‘problèmes méthodologiques que pose la mise en regard de plusieurs langues et cultures: congruence du modèle théorique retenu, pertinence des catégories d’analyse et mode de sélection du tertium comparationis, notamment à l’échelle des discours” (extrait de la page du groupe sur le site <http://syled.univ-paris3.fr/cediscor-projets.html>).” Unless otherwise stated, translations in this article are of our responsibility and authorship.

Internet. More than that: it is a central issue for the group, because in Moirand's (1992) precursor text on the Linguistics of comparative discourse, the challenge is the search for "tools that enable to determine *comparable categories*"⁴ [emphasis added]. However, we have observed that the idea of applying categories to the analysis of a corpus causes a certain strangeness on the part of some discourse analysts in Brazil, for giving the impression that the analyst only uses a theoretical concept to apply it mechanically to the analysis of a corpus (cf. Brait, 2018 [2006]), as we shall discuss further in section 2. For the time being, we intend to show that there are several levels of apprehension of these categories of analysis in France, which may vary from in a more or less mechanical use.

Our objective, with this discussion, is to bring out the use(s) of the notion of category made by the discourse analysts who work inside the CLESTHIA/CEDISCOR laboratory, mainly those who work with comparative discourse analysis. In this way, we shall also reflect on our own analytical work, aiming at rethinking our practices and seeking new ways of acting within this domain.

In a recent article published in the *Semiotica* journal, Moirand (2018) presents some of the assumptions of the notion of discursive category. But what is the relationship between linguistic category, discursive category and category of analysis? Garric (2018), in an article also published in issue 223 of *Semiotica*, offers a brief overview of these notions. First, she notes that this problem arises for linguists who work with "transfrastic objects" (p.111). These include speech analysts, but also scholars of Textual Linguistics, for example. Thus, the units addressed in these cases are

diverse and heterogeneous units that may sometimes coincide with categories inherited from tradition, but which often depend on metalinguistic creation, thus responding to the call already made by Benveniste (1966-1974: 45) when he referred to the need for a "new apparatus of concepts and definitions" (GARRIC, 2018, p.111).⁵

⁴ In the French original: "d'outils permettant de déterminer des catégories comparables."

⁵ In the French original: "unités diverses et hétérogènes qui peuvent parfois coïncider avec des catégories héritées de la tradition, mais qui, souvent relèvent de la création métalinguistique, répondant ainsi à l'appel déjà formulé par Benveniste (1966–1974: 45) lorsqu'il faisait référence à la nécessité d'un 'appareil nouveau de concepts et de définitions'."

Tradition, in this case, would be grammatical tradition. Here we have language categories.⁶ However, Garric (2018) points out that the definitions of categories are not consensual, “particularly in the case of discursive categories” (p.113).⁷ For instance, she quotes the work of Ali-Bouacha (1993), one of the linguists who worked on discursive categories in partnership with Moirand and who presents several definitions of this notion: “even by the pen of a single linguist, heterogeneity is imperative, since a category can be a ‘regular, well-ordered arrangement of forms’, a ‘linguistic category’ or even a ‘metadiscursive object’” (GARRIC, 2018, p.113).⁸ We can see, therefore, that the problem lies fundamentally in the definition of discursive category,⁹ and it is on this that Moirand (2018) will discuss in her article.

Both Moirand (2018) and Garric (2018) show that the so-called discursive categories do not come ready: “These units are not a given already there, they become so a posteriori, by the analytical work” (GARRIC, 2018, p.111):¹⁰ “each of these categories is a contextualized and functional or finalized construction of the analyst that requires overcoming the usual grammatical categories” (GARRIC, 2018, p.113).¹¹ In this section, we shall see how Moirand (2018) works on this issue; we shall articulate her reflections with those of other CEDISCOR members, whenever we deem pertinent.

One fact that caught our attention in the recent article published by Moirand (2018) is that she considered the discussion about the categories as decisive for the very

⁶ The *Dictionary of Linguistic Terms* [*Dicionário de Termos Linguísticos*], on the Portuguese Portal [*Portal da Língua Portuguesa*], presents the following definition of category: “Term used in Linguistics at different levels of abstraction. Categorization establishes a set of classification units or properties used for the description of language. These units have a constant basic distribution and occur as structural units in language. In some approaches, the term ‘category’ refers to classes themselves, such as name, verb, subject, noun phrase. More specifically, this term refers to the defining properties of these general units, such as number, gender and case for the category name, time, aspect, voice, etc. for the category verb” [In the original in Portuguese: “Termo usado em linguística em diferentes níveis de abstração. A categorização estabelece um conjunto de unidades classificatórias ou propriedades utilizadas para a descrição da língua. Estas unidades têm uma distribuição básica constante e ocorrem como unidades estruturais na língua. Em algumas abordagens, o termo categoria refere as próprias classes, como nome, verbo, sujeito, sintagma nominal. Mais especificamente, este termo refere as propriedades definidoras destas unidades gerais, como número, gênero e caso para a categoria nome, tempo, aspecto, voz, etc. para a categoria verbo”] (XAVIER & MATEUS, 1992, n.p.).

⁷ In the French original: “tout particulièrement en ce qui concerne les catégories discursives.”

⁸ In the French original: “Même sous la plume d’un seul linguiste, l’hétérogénéité s’impose avec force, puisqu’une catégorie peut être un ‘agencement réglé et régulier de formes’, une ‘catégorie linguistique’ ou encore un ‘objet métadiscursif’.”

⁹ In the case of Textual Linguistics, textual categories.

¹⁰ In the French original: “Ces unités ne sont pas une donnée déjà là, elles le deviennent a posteriori par le travail analytique.”

¹¹ In the French original: “chacune de ces catégories est une construction contextualisée et fonctionnelle ou finalisée de l’analyste qui exige le dépassement des habituelles catégories logico-grammaticales.”

creation of CEDISCOR. Twenty years before founding this centre, she had worked with content analysis; finding linguistic observables to analyse a discourse was therefore a central challenge – including the very discourse analysis that was being developed at the time. Thus, since the beginning of the work in this research centre, “a category was ‘what contributes in a positive way to the determination of objects’, according to Ali Bouacha, who already proposed ‘to seek a minimum basis of what could be a theory and methodology of the observable’” (MOIRAND, 2018, p.50).¹² We see, therefore, that when talking about category, the big issue is this search for observables. Still for Ali-Bouacha (1993, § 17), the problem lies in the fact that “discursive activity is both within and outside the field of Linguistics,” i.e., “in the matter of discourse analysis, the units on which one is used to working in Linguistics become inoperative.”¹³

In the field of enunciative studies, it is with Dubois, in the famous article published in issue 13 of the *Languages journal*, that we shall have “a conception of enunciation and a reflection on the categories that actualise it in the utterance” (MOIRAND, 2018, p.51).¹⁴ But the difficulty for the whole field of enunciation Linguistics is in locating the traces of the “impact of the speaking subject on his or her enunciation” (MOIRAND, 2018, p.51).¹⁵ Each enunciative perspective that emerged at the time will solve this problem in its own way, according to “different conceptions of *discourse*,”¹⁶ elaborating “different discursive categories” (MOIRAND, 2018, p.52).¹⁷ In section 2, we shall see how this problem arises for Bakhtin and the Circle.

It is with the effervescence of discursive studies in the 1980s and 1990s that the problem of categories becomes more complex and gives rise, according to what we have been able to interpret from Moirand's work (2018), to this tendency toward presenting categories *a priori*, which will later be applied by discourse analysts, disconnected from their theories of origin. The linguist even speaks, in the article, of a “category inflation.” The big problem, according to her (2018, p.53), is that “besides being faced with a

¹² In the French original: “Une catégorie, c’était ‘ce qui contribue de façon positive à la détermination des objets’, pour Ali Bouacha qui proposait déjà de ‘chercher une base minimale de ce qui pourrait être une théorie et une méthodologie des observables’.”

¹³ In the French original: “L’activité discursive est à la fois dans le champ et hors du champ de la linguistique”; “en matière d’analyse de discours, les unités sur lesquelles on a l’habitude de travailler en linguistique deviennent inoperantes.”

¹⁴ In the French original: “une conception de l’énonciation et une réflexion sur les catégories qui l’actualisent dans l’énoncé.”

¹⁵ In the French original: “l’impact du sujet parlant dans son énoncé.”

¹⁶ In the French original: “conceptions différentes du discours.”

¹⁷ In the French original: “catégories discursives différentes.”

mixture of operative concepts and descriptive notions, we see concepts slipping into categories of description.”¹⁸ A very illustrative example offered by her is the notion of speech act, originating from pragmatics, which “becomes, in Roulet as in Kerbrat-Orecchioni, ‘the smallest unit of communication’ which is exposed and of which combinations are described in broader categories” (MOIRAND, 2018, p.53).¹⁹ From there to the usage of the “speech act” category to a given corpus – disregarding pragmatic theory – there isn’t but a small step. In addition, Moirand (2018) points out another problem posed by the theory of enunciation to discourse analysis:

[...] enunciation becomes a way of describing utterances by means of traces, clues, observables, but at the risk of “losing sight” of discourse discursiveness and meaning, when one or more categories are focused on without studying their *distribution* and their *combination* with other categories in the order of the text [...], and even if one uses, in a second moment, “external” categories borrowed from social psychology, history, philosophy, sociology, etc., the articulation between linguistic and non-linguistic categories is not usually “rethought” (MOIRAND, 2018, p.53).²⁰

Since then, in the French context, both Culioli and Pêcheux did their utmost to propose “a unified theory that would articulate theoretical propositions with categories of description” (MOIRAND, 2018, p.54).²¹ The solution, in the field of discourse analysis, was to articulate descriptive categories with concepts:

the articulation of descriptive categories (which account for operations of referencing, predication, enunciation...) with the concepts, taking into account the conditions of construction and production of discourse (coreferencing, enunciative heterogeneity,

¹⁸ In the French original: “Outre qu’on se trouve face à un mélange de concepts opératoires et de notions descriptives, on assiste aux glissements de concepts vers de catégories de description.”

¹⁹ In the French original: “[...] devient, chez Roulet comme chez Kerbrat-Orecchioni, ‘la plus petite unité de communication’ qu’on met au jour, et dont on décrit les combinaisons dans des catégories plus larges.”

²⁰ In the French original: “[...] l’énonciation devient un moyen de décrire les énoncés au travers de traces, d’indices, d’observables, mais au risque de ‘rater’ la discursivité et le sens du discours lorsqu’on se focalise sur une ou plusieurs catégories sans étudier leur distribution et leur combinaison à d’autres catégories dans l’ordre du texte [...], et même si l’on fait appel, dans un second temps, à des catégories ‘extérieures’ empruntées à la psychologie sociale, à l’histoire, à la philosophie, à la sociologie, etc., on ne ‘re-pense’ pas, généralement, l’articulation entre les catégories langagières et les catégories non langagières.”

²¹ In the French original: “proposer une théorie unifiée qui articule des propositions théoriques à des catégories de description.”

interdiscursiveness...), has imposed itself in discourse analysis (MOIRAND, 2018, p.55).²²

On the concern to combine the categories in order to avoid the problem of the loss of apprehension of discursiveness, we can investigate it in von Münchow's work (2004). In contrastive discourse analysis, moreover, this aspect is even more important, since carrying out a comparative analysis based on a single category can reinforce prejudices and stereotypes about a given culture. Commenting on the work done by Clyne (in the field of contrastive rhetoric) on German and Japanese cultures, von Münchow (2004, p.45) states that the author's conclusion is debatable,

even more so if it was only based on the analysis of textual organisation. Such an interpretative approach would need to be based on a *combination of several analysis entries*. Otherwise, it is very likely that intercultural discourse research will only reinforce prejudices and stereotypes [...] [emphasis added]²³

The linguist makes it clear that her study of French and German TV news programmes was based on “two major analysis entries, allowing to circumvent and relativise the conclusions [...]”(MÜNCHOW, 2004, p.45 [author's emphasis]).²⁴ In an analysis from a Bakhtinian perspective, this study based on more than one category tends to occur naturally, because in order to realise a descriptive or conceptual category of the Circle, several others need to be evoked, since they are intertwined.

We see, therefore, that several procedures have been adopted over time by speech analysts in France, particularly by CEDISCOR, to treat the notion of category of analysis in a way that favours a less “mechanistic” usage. Additionally, it is important to note that Moirand (2018) differentiates notions and concepts from descriptive categories (the latter being more linked to the linguistic-enunciative aspect). At the end of her text, she will address the importance of using “global categories, concepts and/or associated

²² In the French original: “Ainsi, l’articulation de catégories descriptives (qui rendent compte des opérations de référenciation, de prédication, d’énonciation...) à des concepts prenant en compte les conditions de construction et de production du discours (co référenciation, hétérogénéité énonciative, interdiscursivité...) s’est-elle imposée en analyse du discours.”

²³ In the French original: “encore plus si elle n’est fondée que sur l’analyse de l’organisation textuelle. Une approche aussi interprétative nécessiterait d’être fondée sur une combinaison de plusieurs entrées d’analyse. Sinon il est effectivement vraisemblable que la recherche interculturelle de discours ne fera que renforcer des préjugés et des stéréotypes.”

²⁴ In the French original: “deux grandes entrées d’analyse, ce qui permet de cibler et de relativiser les conclusions.”

notions, which are to be articulated with local categories (words, syntactic constructions, shifters, modal operators, etc.)” (p.56).²⁵ This is how she has been working with the concept of dialogism, originally from Bakhtin’s Circle, in her discourse analyses (cf. Moirand, 2018; 2007; 2004). For the linguist, dialogism²⁶ would be an example of a concept to “think with” (*penser avec*) – which would enter into analysis as an operative concept:

Dialogism, provided that it is not reduced to a local category (to describe, for example, certain forms of negation or thematisation), and provided that it is associated with the notions proposed by Vološinov and/or Bakhtin (*the situation, the assessment, the theory of utterance, the supradestinate*), makes it possible to fish and regroup, throughout the studied data and the corpus, different traces of local categories: words with their dialogical dimension; various syntactic constructions that inscribe interdiscourses (close to the preconstructed); different forms of represented discourse (including orality by the particular traces of intonation, pauses, etc.) and marks of enunciative heterogeneity (Authier), but replaced in their textual framework and discursive environment, in the core of the transversal discourses and, therefore, of the memories they convey (MOIRAND, 2018, p.59).²⁷

Claudel (2004), reflecting on her comparisons of French and Japanese, also exposes the limits of the notion of category (mainly that of linguistic categories) and opts to analyse the corpus through the translinguistic notion of figure. In this article, she treats discourse genre as an “extralinguistic” notion necessary for making the comparison. We thus verify that, in the work of the CEDISCOR group, the use of the term “category of analysis” is not mechanical, despite its frequent use, since the theory on which the categories are based is duly examined in the course of the respective

²⁵ In the French original: “catégories globales, concepts et/ou notions associées, qu’il s’agit d’articuler à des catégories locales (mot, construction syntaxique, embrayeurs, modalisateurs, etc.)”

²⁶ We note that Bakhtin and the Circle thinkers rarely use the term “dialogism” (the term “dialogue” is much more usual). Tylkowski (2011, p.58) points out that the term already appears in 1929 in *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Creative Art*, “in the passage in which Bakhtin characterizes Dostoevskian way of philosophising by referring to Leonid Grossman” [In the original: “dans le passage où Bakhtine caractérise la façon dostoïevskienne de philosopher en se référant à Leonid Grossman”].

²⁷ In the French original: “Le dialogisme, à condition de ne pas le réduire à une catégorie locale (pour décrire par exemple certaines formes de négation ou de thématization), et à condition de lui associer les notions proposées par Volochinov et/ou Bakhtine (la situation, l’évaluation, la théorie de l’énoncé, le surdestinateur), permet d’aller pêcher et de regrouper, au fil des données étudiées et des corpus, différentes traces de catégories locales: des mots avec leur épaisseur dialogique ; diverses constructions syntaxiques qui inscrivent de l’interdiscours (proches du pré-construit) ; différentes formes de discours représentés (y compris l’oral par des traces particulières d’intonation, de pauses, etc.) et de marques d’hétérogénéités énonciatives (Authier), mais replacées dans leur encadrement textuel et leur environnement discursif, au sein des discours transverses et donc des mémoires qu’ils transportent.”

discourse analyses. We shall see, in the section below, how the work of dialogical discourse analysis with descriptive categories and conceptual categories is carried out.

2 The Notion of Category in a Comparative Discourse Analysis of Bakhtinian Inspiration

As we saw in the previous section, the issue of categories of analysis in discourse analysis poses a problem because it is too polysemic, referring sometimes to a linguistic category, sometimes to an enunciative or discursive category, and often used as a synonym for an operative concept. Such polysemy also occurs in Bakhtinian-inspired discourse analysis. A brief collection of excerpts from papers published by members of the group *Diálogo* shows the varied range of meanings attributed to the notion of category. For example: one of the subchapters of Costa's book (2010) is entitled "The genre category and the place of the editorial in the magazine's discourse";²⁸ Grillo & Ferraz (2009) quote Bakhtinian notions as "key categories" for the analysis they make of a corpus of scientific popularisation: "Among the key categories for analysis, those that are also central objects for this theory stand out: the notions of enunciation, dialogism and discourse genres" (p.136);²⁹ Ferraz (2009) also uses the term "conceptual categories": "conceptual categories formulated within the Bakhtinian Circle theory, such as enunciative process, discursive genres, among others, converge for this dialogical conception of language" (p.232).³⁰ Finally, Grillo (2012), one of the leaders of the *Diálogo* group, speaks of "theoretical categories," highlighting the importance of a dialogue between the researcher and his theory and the object analysed:

The analysis of verb-visual utterances from a Bakhtinian perspective must be based on the one hand, on its real and objective character and on its capacity, as a human manifestation, to determine its model of analysis, and, on the other hand, on the questions and *theoretical categories previously defined by the researcher. It is in the dialogue, on the one hand, of the researcher and his theory with, on the other*

²⁸ In the original in Portuguese: "A categoria gênero e o lugar do editorial no discurso da revista."

²⁹ In the original in Portuguese: "Dentre as categorias-chave para a análise, destacam-se aquelas que também são objetos centrais para esta teoria: as noções de enunciado, dialogismo e gêneros do discurso."

³⁰ In the original in Portuguese: "categorias conceituais formuladas no âmbito da teoria do Círculo bakhtiniano, tais como enunciado, processo enunciativo, gêneros discursivos, entre outros, convergem para esta concepção dialógica da linguagem."

hand, his talking object that the epistemological foundation of Bakhtin's theory and his Circle lies [emphasis added] (p.237).³¹

Grillo (2012) seems to have an interactive view with regard to the employment of categories from the Bakhtin Circle by discourse analysis. In other words, the Bakhtinian theory would provide some previous categories (both concepts and enunciative and discursive categories, as we shall later see), and the analyst, in contact with his or her corpus, would determine which would be the most pertinent to be employed in a given analysis. Brait (2018 [1. ed. 2006]) points out that there are no *a priori* categories from the perspective of dialogical discourse analysis. She explains that the concept of polyphony, for example, is much more “an identity mark of Dostoevsky’s discourse, recognized from Bakhtinian analysis” (p.14),³² than “an abstract concept, created to be applied to any discourse” (p.14).³³ In Brait (2006) we also find criticism of an indiscriminate usage of the Circle’s concepts (cf. p.48).

The issue here seems to involve the use of operative concepts as enunciative categories employed to describe a corpus. The concepts of the Circle have often been misused by researchers from many fields of the human sciences, which justifies this prudence on the part of researchers in the dialogical line of discourse analysis. Paveau (2010) mentions how a “Bakhtin industry,” which applied the notion of dialogue to several areas of knowledge, was severely criticised in the USA. For Tylkowski (2011, p.52), “in the French-speaking world, *the usage of Bakhtin's ideas* is more successful than the analysis of the Bakhtinian conception” [emphasis added],³⁴ this also justifies Moirand’s (2018) prudence in using the concept of dialogism. In a 2004 article, Moirand explains that, in France, the problem lies in the fact that dialogism is employed as an enunciative category (and, for her, it is a theoretical category, an operative concept):

³¹ In the original in Portuguese: “A análise de enunciados verbo-visuais em uma perspectiva bakhtiniana deve se pautar, por um lado, no seu caráter real e objetivo e na sua capacidade, enquanto manifestação humana, de determinar o seu modelo de análise, e, por outro, nas questões e categorias teóricas previamente definidas pelo pesquisador. É no diálogo, por um lado, do pesquisador e sua teoria com, por outro, seu objeto falante que está o fundamento epistemológico da teoria de Bakhtin e seu Círculo.”

³² In the original in Portuguese: “uma marca de identidade do discurso de Dostoiévski, reconhecida a partir da análise bakhtiniana.”

³³ In the original in Portuguese: “um conceito abstrato, criado para ser aplicado a qualquer discurso.”

³⁴ In the original in French: “dans le monde francophone, l’application des idées de Bakhtine a plus de succès que l’analyse de la conception bakhtinienne.”

Dialogism, a notion borrowed from the Bakhtin Circle, is a category currently invoked in numerous works in language sciences, particularly in discourse analysis [...]. But at times dialogism is integrated, and even “phagocytised,” by one of the two enunciative problems dominant in Linguistics [:] [...] the *indicial framework* and the *pragmatic framework* [...]; at times it can be “thought” as an enunciative, and autonomous, problem apart, what I shall call here the *dialogical framework* [...] In this case, dialogism is for me inseparable from the *theory of utterance*, from the elaboration of *translinguistics* and from the reflection on *discourse genres*, as we find them throughout the texts by Bakhtin and Vološinov. *This makes it tilt to the side of theories of discourse and does not confine it to a role of enunciative category, which will contend to articulate with those already repertoried in the indicial and pragmatic frameworks* (MOIRAND, 2004, n.p.; emphasis added).³⁵

We see, therefore, that the focus of Bakhtinian work seems to be on operative concepts, but Bakhtin and the Circle thinkers also proposed enunciative and discursive categories, as we shall see below. However, this was not always evident, since before the discourse analysts in Brazil made explicit the existence of a research program in language sciences in the work of Bakhtin and the Circle, it was common for “descriptive categories” from other approaches to be incorporated into discourse analysis, as Grillo (2006) explains:

The notions developed by Bakhtin and his circle have been incorporated, in a subsidiary way, by several tendencies of speech, text and utterance studies, especially in the form of a set of operative concepts, to which descriptive categories produced in other disciplines are articulated (p.121).³⁶

That is: on the one hand, researchers from various lines of the language sciences and the humanities employed operative concepts from the Circle, without taking into

³⁵ In the French original: “Le dialogisme, notion empruntée au Cercle de Bakhtine, est une catégorie actuellement convoquée dans de nombreux travaux en sciences du langage, en particulier en analyse du discours [...]. Mais soit le dialogisme est intégré, voire ‘phagocyté’, par l’une des deux problématiques énonciatives dominantes en linguistique [:] [...] le cadre indicial et le cadre pragmatique [...]; soit on peut le ‘penser’ en tant que problématique énonciative à part entière, et autonome, ce que j’appellerai ici le cadre dialogique [...]. Dans ce cas, le dialogisme est pour moi indissociable de la théorie de l’énoncé, de l’élaboration d’une translinguistique et de la réflexion sur les genres du discours, telles qu’on les rencontre au fil des textes de Bakhtine et de Volochinov. Ce qui le fait basculer du côté des théories du discours et ne le confine pas à un rôle de catégorie énonciative, que l’on se contenterait d’articuler à celles déjà répertoriées dans les cadres indicial et pragmatique.”

³⁶ In the original in Portuguese: “As noções desenvolvidas por Bakhtin e seu círculo têm sido incorporadas, de forma subsidiária, por diversas tendências de estudo do discurso, do texto e do enunciado, sobretudo sob a forma de um conjunto de conceitos operatórios, às quais se articulam categorias descritivas produzidas em outras disciplinas.”

account the specificity of the Bakhtinian theory, as Brait (2006) explains; and, on the other hand, within the discourse analysis itself practised in Brazil, in a Bakhtinian tendency, operative concepts from the Circle were used, although descriptive categories from other lines of Linguistics were resorted to (as if the work of the Circle did not also offer descriptive categories of analysis). This problem thus raised, our aim from now on is to show the path that goes from the recognition of metalinguistics in Bakhtin's work, focusing on the issue of categories and showing that all Bakhtinian reflection on metalinguistics goes back to a reflection that starts from the notion of linguistic category.

* * *

The dialogical discourse analysis (henceforth DDA) arose from the observation that there was, in Bakhtin and in the Circle, the outline of a research program: this program “goes by the name of metalinguistics and [...] has the dialogical relations and the bivocal word as object of study” (GRILLO; FERRAZ, 2009, p.135).³⁷ In Brait's words (2018), “no one, in good conscience, could say that Bakhtin *formally* proposed a theory and/or a discourse analysis, in the sense that we use the expression to refer, for example, to the French discourse analysis” (p.9).³⁸ However, what we have is that “Bakhtin formulated, in the texts of his last phase, a discipline for the study of language with its own object, method of analysis, and the *outline of a set of phenomena to be researched*” (GRILLO, 2006, p.121; emphasis added).³⁹

It is important, therefore, to further investigate how Bakhtinian metalinguistics is constituted as a methodology of analysis. The question we ask ourselves is this: if for French-inspired comparative discourse analysis the big question was to define comparable categories, how would this question be formulated in a Bakhtinian-inspired comparative discourse analysis?

³⁷ In the original in Portuguese: “designado com o nome de metalinguística e [...] tem por objeto de estudo as relações dialógicas e a palavra bivocal.”

³⁸ In the original in Portuguese: “Ninguém, em sã consciência, poderia dizer que Bakhtin tenha proposto formalmente uma teoria e/ou análise do discurso, no sentido em que usamos a expressão para fazer referência, por exemplo, à Análise do Discurso Francesa.”

³⁹ In the original in Portuguese: “Bakhtin formulou, nos textos de sua última fase, uma disciplina de estudo da linguagem com objeto próprio, método de análise e o esboço de um conjunto de fenômenos a pesquisar.”

Through the investigation of *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (2018 [1963]) and its first version, published in 1929 (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Creative Art* (1997 [1929])), by Mikhail Bakhtin, as well as Valentin Vološinov's *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (2018 [1929]), we mapped out an interpretative path about the role of linguistic categories in the creation of Bakhtinian metalinguistics. We chose these works because both Vološinov's *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (henceforth MPL) and Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (henceforth PDP) "build a very similar place by presenting questions of theory and method" (BRAIT, 2006, p.49).⁴⁰ These works are also part of the main corpus of Souza's thesis (2002), which investigated the construction of metalinguistics in the work of Bakhtin and the Circle.

Page 124 of the Brazilian translation of *MPL*⁴¹ is often cited as an example of the existence of a concrete methodology for analysing utterances in the work by the Circle (cf. Brait, 2006). Let's see this excerpt already translated into Portuguese (Brazilian) directly from Russian:

*Disso decorre que a ordem metodologicamente fundamentada para o estudo da língua deve ser a seguinte: 1) formas e tipos de interação discursiva em sua relação com as condições concretas; 2) formas dos enunciados ou discursos verbais singulares em relação estreita com a interação da qual são parte, isto é, os gêneros dos discursos verbais determinados pela interação discursiva na vida e na criação ideológica; 3) partindo disso, revisão das formas da língua em sua concepção linguística habitual (VOLÓCHINOV, 2018 [1929], p.220; emphasis added).*⁴²

⁴⁰ In the original in Portuguese: "constroem um lugar muito parecido ao apresentar questões de teoria e método."

⁴¹ Will shall exceptionally quote the following passage in Portuguese because it was on it that our analysis was originally based. Nevertheless, here is the English version of it: "From what has been established, it follows that the methodologically-based order of study of language ought to be: (1) the forms and types of verbal interaction in connection with their concrete conditions; (2) the forms of particular utterances, of particular speech performances, as elements of a closely linked interaction – i.e., the genres of speech performance in human behavior and ideological creativity as determined by verbal interaction; (3) a reexamination, on this new basis, of language forms in their usual linguistic presentation." (VOLOŠINOV, 1973 [1929], pp.95-96).

⁴² In the English translation: "From this it results that the methodologically grounded order for the study of language should be as follows: 1) forms and types of discursive interaction in their relation to concrete conditions; 2) forms of the singular utterances or verbal discourses in close relation to the interaction of which they are a part, i.e. the verbal discourse genres determined by discursive interaction in life and ideological creation; 3) on this basis, review of the forms of language in their usual linguistic conception." It is remarkable that in the previous translation, published by Hucitec, the term category is present to designate "speech acts," probably due to the influence of the French version from which it was translated: "Disso decorre que a ordem metodológica para o estudo da língua deve ser: 1. As formas e os

Here, Vološinov already suggests a revision of the forms of language, that is to say, to go beyond the limits of language Linguistics. We note that, in *MPL*, the issue of overcoming language categories is essential. In just two pages of the third part of this work, the term “category” appears thirteen times:

A linguist feels most sure of himself when operating at the center of a phrase unit. The further he approaches the peripheries of speech and thus the problem of the utterance as a whole, the more insecure his position becomes. He has no way at all of coping with the whole. Not a single one of the *categories* of Linguistics is of any value for defining a whole linguistic entity.

The fact of the matter is that all linguistic *categories*, per se, are applicable only on the inside territory of an utterance. All morphological *categories*, for instance, are of value exclusively as regards the constituents of an utterance and cease being serviceable when it comes to defining the whole. The same is true of syntactic *categories*, the *category* of “sentence,” for example: the *category* of sentence is merely a definition of the sentence as a unit-element within an utterance, and not by any means as a whole entity.

For proof of this “elementariness” in principle of all linguistic *categories*, one need only take any finished utterance (relatively speaking, of course, since any utterance is part of a verbal process) consisting of a single word. If we apply all the *categories* used by Linguistics to this word, it will immediately become apparent that these *categories* define the word exclusively in terms of a potential element of speech and that none encompasses the whole utterance. That extra something that converts this word into a whole utterance remains outside the scope of the entire set of linguistic *categories* and definitions. Were we to develop this word into a full-fledged sentence by filling in all the basic constituents (following the prescription: “not stated, but understood”), we would obtain a simple sentence and not at all an utterance. No matter which of the linguistic *categories* we would try to apply to this sentence, we would never find just what it is that converts it into a whole utterance. Thus if we remain within the confines of the grammatical *categories* with which contemporary Linguistics supplies us, the verbal whole will be forever elusive and beyond our grasp. The effect of these linguistic *categories* is to draw us relentlessly away from the utterance and its concrete structure into the abstract system of language. (VOLOŠINOV, 1973 [1929], pp.110-111; emphasis added).

tipos de interação verbal em ligação com as condições concretas em que se realiza. 2. As formas das distintas enunciações, dos atos de fala isolados, em ligação estreita com a interação de que constituem os elementos, isto é, as categorias de atos de fala na vida e na criação ideológica que se prestam a uma determinação pela interação verbal. 3. A partir daí, exame das formas da língua na sua interpretação linguística habitual” (BAKHTIN/VVOLÓCHINOV, 1979, p.124 [emphasis added]). As we show in section 1, “speech act” has become a descriptive category in the French context, often applied a priori (according to Brait’s criticism (2006)).

What we have, in *MPL*, is the expression of the need to build a theory of enunciation. Flores & Teixeira (2009) “will base the inclusion of Bakhtin in the field of Enunciation Linguistics, considering that the existence of a theory of enunciation is imposed not only in *MPL*, but in the whole of his work, whether under the signature of Bakhtin, Bakhtin/Vološinov or Medvedev” (p.146).⁴³ In the words of these linguists, “the principle underpinning Bakhtin’s theory of enunciation is the dialogical conception of language”⁴⁴ (p.146). Dahlet (2005/2020) also argues that the observance of dialogism⁴⁵ leads Bakhtin and the Circle thinkers to claim a theory of enunciation:

By questioning the classical transcendental framework of Linguistics, the explicitness of a constitutive dialogue has a decisive theoretical effect, in that it leads Bakhtin [Vološinov, in this case]⁴⁶ to claim the “elaboration of a theory of enunciation,” which would by itself assume a “scrupulous revision of all fundamental linguistic categories” (1977, p.159) (DAHLET, 2005/2020, pp.55-56).⁴⁷

Both Dahlet (2005/2020) and Flores & Teixeira (2009) compare Bakhtin with Benveniste (and with other enunciation theorists). In this comparison, we find questions about the role of language categories in Bakhtinian theory. For Dahlet (2005/2020), Bakhtin's own reflection on the subject and dialogue implies a field whose categories are not given. Thus Vološinov, in *MPL*, would ask for a future theory of enunciation, but “he himself would not organise, so to speak, a descriptive matrix” (p.66).⁴⁸ In another passage of the same text, Dahlet (2005/2020) will reinforce this idea:

⁴³ In the original in Portuguese: “fundamentar[ão] a inclusão de Bakhtin no campo da Linguística da Enunciação, por considerar[em] que a existência de uma teoria da enunciação se impõe não só em *MFL*, mas no conjunto de sua obra, seja sob a assinatura de Bakhtin, Bakhtin/Volóchinov ou Medvedev.”

⁴⁴ In the original Portuguese: “princípio que sustenta a teoria da enunciação de Bakhtin [é] a concepção dialógica da linguagem.”

⁴⁵ According to Costa (2017), dialogue is “one of the fundamental postulates of the Circle which, present mainly in Vološinov’s formulations, was incorporated into Bakhtin’s analysis and transformed into one of the main elements of his own theorisation” (p.138).

⁴⁶ The authors mention Bakhtin’s name in these excerpts, but in fact they refer to Vološinov (which is due to the oscillation in the authorship of this work).

⁴⁷ In the original in Portuguese: “Questionando o quadro transcendental clássico da linguística, a explicitação de um dialogismo constitutivo tem um efeito teórico decisivo, na medida em que leva Bakhtin [Volóchinov, neste caso] a reivindicar a ‘elaboração de uma teoria da enunciação’, que assumiria por si própria uma ‘revisão escrupulosa de todas as categorias linguísticas fundamentais’ (1977, p.159).”

⁴⁸ In the original in Portuguese: “ele [próprio] não organiza[ria], por assim dizer, uma matriz descritiva.”

Bakhtinian dialogue undoubtedly undermines the classic conception of the subject. [...] The problem is that this conceptual change clashes with the limits of Bakhtin's [Vološinov] descriptive framework. Thus, to conceive the discourse in dialogical terms is incontestably to formulate a topical question: if there is an exterior, then this exterior is necessarily constructed on the interior. Bakhtin's philosophically and sociologically oriented descriptive references weigh heavily in favour of an ultimate explanation of the subject's new heterogeneous resonances by factors external to the materiality of discourse [...] *Without absolutely denying the pertinence of these factors [...], it is necessary to recognise that they minimise the role of linguistic elaboration itself* (DAHLET, 2005/2020, pp.81-82; emphasis added).⁴⁹

In the indicial and operative framework, this linguistic elaboration would be more marked: “considering that everything that can be said of another is conditioned by an unavoidable deictic requirement, since it is inscribed in language, the works of Benveniste and Culioli impose a strictly linguistic subject [...]” (DAHLET, 2005/2020, p.82).⁵⁰ It is known that in the work of the Circle, the linguistic and the extralinguistic are intertwined. Proof of this is that Vološinov criticises the definition of paragraph as a “complete idea” precisely because this definition is purely ideological and not linguistic at all:

This failure of linguistic definition applies not only to the utterance as a whole entity, but even to units within a monologic utterance that have some claim to being regarded as complete units. A case in point involves units set off from one another in writing by indentation that we call *paragraphs*. The syntactic composition of paragraphs is extremely diverse. Paragraphs may contain anything from a single word to a whole array of complex sentences. *To say that a paragraph is supposed to consist of a complete thought amounts to saying absolutely nothing*. What is needed, after all, is definition from the standpoint of language, and under no circumstances can the notion of “complete thought” be regarded as a linguistic definition. *Even if it is true, as we believe, that linguistic definitions cannot be completely*

⁴⁹ In the original in Portuguese: “O dialogismo bakhtiniano abala, sem dúvida, a concepção clássica do sujeito. [...] O problema é que essa mudança conceitual se choca com os limites do quadro descritivo de Bakhtin [Volóchinov]. Assim, conceber o discurso em termos dialógicos é incontestavelmente formular uma questão tópica: se houver exterior, então esse exterior é necessariamente construído no interior. Ora, as referências descritivas de Bakhtin, de orientação filosófica e sociológica, pesam muito em favor de uma explicitação última das novas ressonâncias heterogêneas do sujeito por fatores exteriores à materialidade do discurso [...] Sem absolutamente negar a pertinência desses fatores [...], é preciso reconhecer que eles minorizam o papel da própria elaboração linguística.”

⁵⁰ In the original in Portuguese: “Considerando que tudo o que de outro se possa dizer está condicionado a uma exigência dêitica incontornável, já que inscrita na língua, os trabalhos de Benveniste e de Culioli (im)põem um sujeito estritamente linguístico [...]”

divorced from ideological definitions, still, neither can they be used to substitute for one another. (VOLOŠINOV, 1973 [1929], p.111; emphasis added).

Flores & Teixeira (2009) show the presence of a linguistic description in the work of the Circle. Like this,

in the third part of MPL, there is a kind of demonstration of how its enunciative analysis is operated: from the usage of what he [Vološinov] calls the “sociological method” to syntactic mechanisms [...]. By proposing a study of the cited discourse (direct speech, indirect speech, free indirect speech) – traditionally described as a problem of syntax – from an enunciative perspective and not through the bias of grammatical or stylistic approaches, the author shows that the analysis of the facts of language is not done through a division of labour between two sciences – linguistic and metalinguistic –, since form only has meaning in enunciation (FLORES & TEIXEIRA, 2009, p.152).⁵¹

In other words, since the 1920s, the linguistic reflection of the Circle’s thinkers has come up against the need to consider the social as well, but without losing sight of the language issue. In fact, Bakhtin knew the Linguistics of his time very well, and precisely because he knew it, he realized that a series of new linguistic phenomena were not “affordable” by it. Brait (2012) presents a distinction, made by Jean Peytard, about the difference between being “anti” or “against” a certain theory and/or author. For Peytard, Bakhtin’s position in relation to Saussure is “counter-Saussurean,” but not an “anti-Saussurean” one. For the prefix “anti-” presupposes denial, a destructive vision, and what Bakhtin proposes to us is a vision that does not deny the Linguistics of language, but that goes beyond it.

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Creative Art* (henceforth PDCA), Bakhtin shows that abstract language categories account for only “one-voiced phenomena”:

All these verbal glances, reserves, innuendo derivatives, impulses, do not escape our hearing, and are not unrelated to our own use. And this

⁵¹ In the original in Portuguese: “Na terceira parte de MFL, encontra-se uma espécie de demonstração de como se operacionaliza sua análise enunciativa: a partir da aplicação do que ele [Volóchinov] chama de ‘método sociológico’ a mecanismos sintáticos [...]. Ao propor um estudo do discurso citado (discurso direto, discurso indireto, discurso indireto livre) – tradicionalmente descrito como um problema de sintaxe – sob uma perspectiva enunciativa e não pelo viés de abordagens gramaticais ou estilísticas, o autor evidencia que a análise dos fatos de língua não se faz por uma divisão de trabalho entre duas ciências – linguística e metalinguística –, pois a forma só tem sentido na enunciação.”

makes it all the more surprising that, so far, this whole situation has not found a well-determined theoretical knowledge, a proper assessment. *In theory, we analyse only the stylistic relation of elements within a closed message, against a background of abstract linguistic categories. Only these phenomena of one voice are within reach of that superficial linguistic stylistics* that until now, in spite of all its linguistic value, has been able to register in literary creation only the traces and deposits left in the verbal periphery of works by literary objectives that it ignores (BAKHTIN, 2002 [1929]. p.508; emphasis added).⁵²

In *The problem of the text* (1986 [1959-1961], shortly before the publication of the re-edition of *PDP*, Bakhtin “refers to free indirect discourse, stating that admitting its existence implies admitting the bivocality of the verb (1992, p.349)”⁵³ (FLORES; TEIXEIRA, 2009, p.153). According to Souza (2002), this is the first text in which Bakhtin will mention metalinguistics. It seems to us, here, that when dealing specifically with free indirect discourse and all bivocal phenomena, an even greater challenge is posed to Bakhtin. It is not enough to go beyond the language categories, treating them enunciatively, but we must create a place for their study. So much so that in *The problem of the text*, Bakhtin says that his analysis is philosophical precisely because it is situated in a boundary field between several disciplines: it is neither

⁵² In the original Portuguese: “Todos esses relances verbais, reservas, derivativos, insinuações, impulsos, não escapam à nossa audição, e não são alheios ao nosso próprio uso. E isso ainda torna mais surpreendente o fato de que, até agora, toda esta situação não tenha encontrado um conhecimento teórico bem determinado, uma avaliação devida. Em teoria, analisamos apenas a relação estilística de elementos dentro de uma mensagem fechada, de encontro a um fundo de categorias linguísticas abstratas. Apenas estes fenômenos de uma só voz estão ao alcance daquela estilística linguística superficial que até agora, a despeito de todo o seu valor linguístico, foi capaz de registrar na criação literária apenas os traços e os depósitos deixados na periferia verbal das obras por objetivos literários que ela ignora.” This excerpt is a translation into Portuguese of a part of *PDP*, made by Luiza Lobo for the book *Teoria da literatura em suas fontes* (BAKHTIN, 2002). Although the translator mentions having done the translation from a 1925 work, we can see, by comparing it with the Italian translation of the work, that it is an excerpt from the 1929 work: In Italian: “Nessun accenno, nessuna riserva o scappatoia, nessuna allusione, nessuna uscita verbale sfugge al nostro orecchio, né è estranea alle nostre stesse labbra. Tanto più sorprendente è che ciò non abbia finora trovato un chiaro riconoscimento teorico e la dovuta valutazione! Teoreticamente noi riusciamo a muoverci solo nelle interrelazioni stilistiche tra gli elementi nei confini di un’enunciazione chiusa sullo sfondo di categorie astrattamente linguistiche. Solo simili fenomeni a una voce sono accessibili a quella stilistica linguistica superficiale che a tutt’oggi con tutto il suo valore linguistico è capace soltanto di registrare nella creazione artistica le tracce e i sedimenti di compiti artistici ad essa ignoti alla periferia linguistica delle opere” (BAKHTIN, 1997 [1929], p.209).

⁵³ In the original in Portuguese: “faz referência ao discurso indireto livre, afirmando que admitir sua existência implica admitir a bivocalidade do verbo” (1992, p.349).

linguistic, nor philological, nor literary-critical (BAKHTIN, 1986 [1959-1961], p.103).⁵⁴

The whole typology of discourses already made in PDP appears, in *The problem of the text* (1986 [1959-1961]), as a way to highlight the scientificity of this discipline that Bakhtin is proposing to create – metalinguistics:

The question arises as to whether science can deal with such absolutely unrepeatable individualities as utterances, or whether they extend beyond the bounds of generalizing scientific cognition. And the answer is, of course, it *can*. In the first place, every science begins with unrepeatable single phenomena, and science continues to be linked with them throughout. In the second place, science, and above all philosophy, can and should study the specific form and function of this individuality. *The need to be clearly aware of a constant corrective to the claim that abstract analysis (Linguistics, for example) has completely exhausted the concrete utterance. The study of kinds and forms of dialogic relations among utterances and their typological forms (factors of utterances)* (BAKHTIN, 1986 [1959-1961], p.108; emphasis added).

According to Grillo (2006), “the explanation of the metalinguistics project appears only in the texts of the 50s, 60s and 70s, but [...] it represents the synthesis of a set of works initiated in the 20s”⁵⁵ (p.124). By focusing on the question of categories, it becomes clear that it is in the typology of discourses, proposed by Bakhtin already in *PDP*, added to Vološinov’s work (2018 [1929]) in the third part of *MPL* and resystematised in PDP, that the enunciative and discursive (or descriptive) categories, important for an analysis of Bakhtinian-inspired discourse (whether comparative or not), are found.

Although the French have used, in a decontextualized way, Bakhtinian operative concepts as categories of corpora analysis in the field of enunciation, many of them have continued the enunciative program initiated by the Bakhtin Circle. That is, the Bakhtinian theory not only provides descriptive categories for the analysis of corpora,

⁵⁴ Incidentally, “Bakhtin never called himself a ‘philologist’, Bocharov reminds the reader. He was proud to be a philosopher. Indeed, Bakhtin winced at the very word ‘literary scholarship’, which he considered a ‘parasitical profession’. Bakhtin did not ‘write books about Dostoevsky and Rabelais’, Bocharov insisted, but books ‘based on material provided by Dostoevsky and Rabelais’, that is, books ‘about his own special Bakhtinian thing, making use of those writers as his material’” (EMERSON, 2016, p.47).

⁵⁵ In the original in Portuguese: “explicitação do projeto da metalinguística aparece somente nos textos das décadas de 50, 60 e 70, porém [...] ele representa a síntese de um conjunto de trabalhos iniciados nos anos 20.”

but – because it is scientific, as announced by the author in *The Problem of the Text* – allows other linguists to continue this enunciative program. Thus, according to Barros (2005/2020), several authors “explicitly or implicitly followed up Bakhtin’s reflections, such as J. Authier-Revuz (1982) and D. Maingueneau, in the theoretical framework of the analysis of French discourse, or O. Ducrot, from the perspective of enunciation semantics or of interactional Linguistics.”⁵⁶ We hold, with Barros (2005/2020), that

this must be one of the tasks of the scholar of the text and discourse today, because there is still much to be done, many possibilities of discursive polyphony to be examined, numerous and diverse procedures and strategies for producing effects of polyphony and discursive monophony to be described and explained (pp.34-35).⁵⁷

With this, we come to an answer about another question that we ask ourselves when we think about the construction of a comparative discourse analysis of Bakhtinian inspiration: that of whether these categories of analysis should, in their totality, come from the work of Bakhtin and the Circle, or whether other theories can serve this purpose.

In a recent editorial published in the *Linha D'Água* journal, Grillo, Machado & Campos (2018) define the comparative analysis carried out by the group *Diálogo* (CNPq/USP) as follows: “The characteristic trait of this group is to develop a comparative analysis based on concepts and methodological procedures of Bakhtin and his Circle, articulating them to the results of CLESTHIA – *axe sens et discours*” (pp.2-3).⁵⁸ What we notice about CLESTHIA is that the notions employed in most of the comparative works were notions that specifically concerned comparison, such as the notion of *tertium comparationis* (i.e. the invariant that allows the comparison of discourses). Regarding the categories of analysis of the corpora in two or more distinct languages-cultures, the comparative work of the group *Diálogo* also prioritises

⁵⁶ In the original in Portuguese: “explícita ou implicitamente deram seguimento às reflexões de Bakhtin, tais como J. Authier-Revuz (1982) e D. Maingueneau, no quadro teórico da análise do discurso francesa, ou O. Ducrot, na perspectiva da semântica da enunciação ou da linguística interacional.”

⁵⁷ In the original in Portuguese: “Essa deve ser hoje uma das tarefas do estudioso do texto e do discurso, pois há muito ainda a ser feito, muitas possibilidades de polifonia discursiva a serem examinadas, inúmeros e diversificados procedimentos e estratégias de produção de efeitos de polifonia e de monofonia discursiva a serem descritos e explicados.”

⁵⁸ In the original in Portuguese: “O traço característico desse grupo é desenvolver uma análise comparativa com base em conceitos e procedimentos metodológicos de Bakhtin e seu Círculo, articulando-os aos resultados do CLESTHIA – *axe sens et discours*.”

descriptive categories from the Circle, such as the forms of transmission of alien discourse (GRILLO; GLUSHKOVA, 2016; AZEVEDO E SILVA; GRILLO, 2019) and the inscription of the addressee in the utterances (HIGASHI, 2019), to cite two examples.

As we have seen in this article, the work of the Circle offers a varied panorama not only of theoretical categories or operative concepts, but also of descriptive categories (enunciative and discursive). As a matter of fact, we recall that since its beginnings, the French DA has borrowed the reported speech category from the work of the Circle, among other concepts present in MPL, as Narzetti (2012) points out. However, we maintain that the analysis of Bakhtinian-inspired comparative discourses can also evoke descriptive categories stemming from other strands (it is the mixture of operative concepts that seems to us more problematic, as seen in this article), without forgetting, as Paula (2013) warns us, that “no matter how enriching the dialogue between approaches may be, it asks that we be cautious and respect the peculiarities of each perspective [...]” (p.242).⁵⁹

Conclusion

In Vološinov’s words (1973 [1929]), “It is sometimes extremely important to expose some familiar and seemingly already well-studied phenomenon to fresh illumination by reformulating it as a problem, i.e., to illuminate new aspects of it with the aid of a set of questions that have a special bearing upon it” (p.112).

In a very modest way and within the limits of the reflection raised in the writing of a scientific article, we tried to “shed new light” on the works in comparative discourse analysis, with the aim of understanding 1) what the methodologies of comparison adopted in France were, the country where this type of analysis appeared; 2) how, in Brazil, in the framework of a Bakhtinian-inspired discourse analysis, this comparative analysis can (and may) be undertaken. From the notion of *category of analysis*, we investigate how, in France, comparative discourse analysis stemmed from the search for comparable categories (being therefore an essential aspect for the

⁵⁹ In the original in Portuguese: “por mais que o diálogo entre abordagens seja enriquecedor, ele pede que sejamos cuidadosos e respeitemos as peculiaridades de cada perspectiva [...]”

consolidation of comparative analysis in that country), while in Brazil, from a Bakhtinian perspective, the research on a metalinguistics in the work of Bakhtin and the Circle allowed us to observe how much this science also stemmed from an enquiry on linguistic categories.

We conclude that, although different, the comparative perspective adopted by CEDISCOR/CLESTHIA – *axe sens et discours* and the perspective adopted in Brazil, based on a dialogical discourse analysis, can be complementary, as long as we pay attention to a non-displacement of operative concepts from Bakhtinian theory as categories of analysis.

The question of whether we are moving from dialogical discourse analysis to *comparative* dialogical discourse analysis will have a suitable response to the next steps that comparative discourse analysis itself will take in Brazil. We emphasize the scientific aspect of this issue; like every science, its evolution will depend on the greater or lesser commitment of Brazilian researchers to it, which promises to increase in the coming years.

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