

# DISCURSIVE MODALITY AS ARGUMENTATIVE INDEX IN ACADEMIC GENRES

A MODALIZAÇÃO DISCURSIVA COMO ÍNDICE DE ARGUMENTATIVIDADE NOS  
GÊNEROS ACADÊMICOS

LA MODALIZACIÓN DISCURSIVA COMO ÍNDICE DE ARGUMENTATIVIDAD EN LOS  
GÉNEROS ACADÉMICOS

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**ABSTRACT:** This study aims to show how modality behaves in the academic genres, producing argumentation. In other words, driving utterances to a specific conclusion. This work is composed of reflections about the modality phenomenon in academic genres, deriving from qualitative, descriptive and interpretative scientific investigations. It is also based on the studies about Discursive Modality proposed by Cervoni (1989), Castilho & Castillho (1993), Koch (2012), Nascimento (2009, 2010), and Nascimento & Silva (2012), as well as the study about linguistic argumentation by Ducrot (1987, 1988). Modality was found in all the genres investigated (administrative-academic protocol, abstract, review, undergraduate research project, undergraduate monograph, and academic paper), and is used with different discursive functions: assimilation, detachment and evaluation.

**KEYWORDS:** Modality. Argumentation. Academic Genres.

**RESUMO:** O objetivo deste artigo é mostrar como a modalização discursiva funciona nos gêneros acadêmicos, imprimindo argumentatividade, ou seja, orientando os enunciados em razão de determinadas conclusões. Trata-se de reflexões feitas sobre o fenômeno da modalização nos referidos gêneros, a partir de investigações científicas de natureza qualitativa e de caráter descritivo e interpretativista. Para tal, fundamentamo-nos nos estudos sobre a Modalização Discursiva, a partir de Cervoni (1989), Castilho e Castilho (1993), Koch (2012), Nascimento (2009, 2010) e Nascimento e Silva (2012), além dos estudos sobre a argumentação

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linguística de Ducrot (1987, 1988). A descrição do fenômeno da modalização nos gêneros investigados permitiu-nos verificar que a modalização é uma estratégia presente em todos eles (ata administrativo-acadêmica, resumo, resenha, projeto de pesquisa de TCC, monografia de TCC e artigo científico) e que é utilizada com diferentes funções discursivas, produzindo diversos efeitos de sentido: assimilação, distanciamento e avaliação.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Modalização. Argumentação. Gêneros Acadêmicos.

RESUMEN: Este artículo tiene el objetivo de mostrar como la modalización discursiva funciona en los géneros académicos, imprimiendo argumentación, es decir, direccionando los enunciados a determinadas conclusiones. Se hacen reflexiones sobre el fenómeno de la modalización en dichos géneros, a partir de investigaciones de naturaleza cualitativa, de carácter descriptivo e interpretativo. Está fundamentado en los estudios sobre modalización discursiva de Cervoni (1989), Castilho & Castilho (1993), Koch (2012), Nascimento (2009, 2010) y Nascimento & Silva (2012), además de los estudios sobre la argumentación lingüística en la perspectiva de Ducrot (1987, 1988), entre otros. La descripción de la modalización en los géneros investigados permitió verificar que este fenómeno es una estrategia presente en todos ellos: acta administrativo-académica, resumen, reseña académica, proyecto de investigación, monografía y artículo científico. Además, es utilizada con distintas funciones discursivas, produciendo diferentes efectos de sentido: asimilación, alejamiento y evaluación.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Modalización. Argumentación. Gêneros Acadêmicos.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This article presents a reflection on the presence of discursive modality in different academic genres, and is set to not only reveal how modality works as an argumentative strategy in academic genres, but also to investigate what meaning effects are generated in the utterances and texts in which the phenomenon is used.

This work presents<sup>1</sup> outcomes of scientific investigations conducted in two laboratories at *Universidade Federal da Paraíba* (namely, LAEL - *Laboratório de Estudos Linguísticos*<sup>2</sup>; and, LASPRAT - *Laboratório Semântico-Pragmático de Textos*<sup>3</sup>), coordinated by the author of this paper, who described modality, among other semantic-argumentative and pragmatic strategies in academic genres. The investigations herein are part of Project ESAGD – *Estudos Semânticos Argumentativos de Gêneros do Discurso: gêneros acadêmicos e formulaicos*<sup>4</sup>, and, more recently, of Project ESAELD – *Estudos Semântico-Argumentativos e Enunciativos na Língua e no Discurso: marcas de (inter)subjetividade e de orientação argumentativa*<sup>5</sup>.

The investigations into discursive modality were founded on the studies of different scholars, especially Lyons (1977), Cervoni (1989), Castilho and Castilho (1993), Koch (2012), Nascimento (2009, 2010), and Nascimento and Silva (2012). It is worth mentioning that we consider modality as a phenomenon that allows speakers to produce, in their discourse, marks of subjectivity through specific linguistic elements and, thus, convey the way such discourse must be read; therefore, it works as a semantic-argumentative and pragmatic strategy, as proposed by Nascimento (2010).

<sup>1</sup> Part of the results shown and discussed herein were presented in the *I Seminário do Grupo de Pesquisa Conectivo e Conexões de Orações*, at *Universidade Federal Fluminense*, Niterói-RJ, from November 08 to 10, 2016. At that time, partial results were reported; in this paper, we present the final outcomes of the investigations and their consolidated data.

<sup>2</sup> Meaning Laboratory for Linguistic Studies.

<sup>3</sup> Meaning Laboratory for Investigations on Textual Semantics and Pragmatics.

<sup>4</sup> Meaning Argumentative Semantic Studies of Discourse Genres: academic and formulaic genres.

<sup>5</sup> Meaning Semantic-Argumentative and Enunciative Studies in Language and Discourse: marks of (inter)subjectivity and argumentation.

Since this paper adopts modality from a semantic-argumentative and pragmatic standpoint, argumentation is herein seen as a linguistic-discursive phenomenon, as proposed by Ducrot (1987, 1988) and collaborators. Ducrot states that language is essentially argumentative, and it goes from language to discourse, allowing specific directions and conclusions. Therefore, as Espíndola (2004) adds, both language and its use are argumentative.

The investigations conducted by projects ESAGD – from 2009 to 2016 –, and ESAELD<sup>6</sup> – from 2017 onwards –, are qualitative, descriptive and interpretative by nature. Although such investigations are qualitative, we studied which modalizers occurred more frequently in specific genres, to verify what types of modality are more common in the academic genres. In the aforementioned period, we investigated modality, among other argumentative strategies, in different discursive genres. From the academic realm, the genres we analyzed included abstract, review, undergraduate research project, undergraduate monograph, and academic paper, all written in Portuguese; and the administrative-academic protocol, in Spanish. Even though in a foreign language, the administrative-academic protocol, in Spanish, was included because the investigated phenomena are the same and we found no significant difference in the functionality of the modalizers, as to the semantic-argumentative aspect, when the two languages were compared. Besides, by using two *corpora* in different languages we could observe the modality phenomenon more thoroughly. Still, it is important to consider that, even though it is not a genre that describes or reports scientific or academic production, the administrative-academic protocol interferes with and echoes the scientific voice, since it reports the actions and decisions of the academic boards.

The procedures adopted during the investigations were as described below:

- a) Reading and discussing the Argumentation Theory, the Studies on Modality, and the genre to be described;
- b) Collecting, storing and selecting the texts to be investigated;
- c) Finding the semantic-argumentative structures in the texts;
- d) Describing and analyzing the semantic-argumentative structures found in the texts;
- e) Conducting a theoretical reflection on the description and analysis of the data obtained and results systematization.

The *corpora* that comprise the ESAGD and ESAELD projects were collected from different public and private higher education and research institutions in Brazil and abroad, from distinct databases. Texts were selected upon the presence of the investigated phenomenon in the genre, and on the representativeness of the sample. However, since the investigation is mainly qualitative, and the objective is to describe and analyze how modality operates, among other phenomena, as an argumentative element in the texts, we did not rely on the quantitative criteria of such occurrences, but rather on the very nature of the phenomenon and how it works.

Although this was a qualitative analysis, in some genres we were able to quantify the occurrences of the modalizers to verify not only which modality stood out for each genre, but also to compare the genres we were analyzing, much of which we report in this paper. In addition to the project coordinator, who is the author of this article, this genre investigation involved three doctoral researchers, one M.Sc. student of Linguistics at Proling/UFPB<sup>7</sup>, and one undergraduate student (Scientific Initiation fellow) of the

<sup>6</sup> The ESAELD project furthers the investigations conducted by the ESAGD project; it enlarges the scope of investigated genres and phenomena. From ESAGD, we investigated the following academic genres: abstract, review, academic paper, academic-administrative protocol, and the undergraduate research project, while the undergraduate monograph was investigated from ESAELD. Both projects share the same research objective, namely, to describe and analyze how different semantic-argumentative and enunciative structures and phenomena operate, in different discursive genres and in different contexts of language use. Both projects also share the same methodological procedures.

<sup>7</sup> Project Coordinator: Erivaldo Pereira do Nascimento, academic-administrative protocol (NASCIMENTO, 2014). Ph.D. researchers: Clécida Maria de Bezerra Bessa, academic paper (BESSA, 2015); Maria Vanice de Lacerda de Melo Barbosa, review (BARBOSA, 2015); Ana Carolina de Vieira Bastos, undergraduate monograph (BASTOS, 2017); M.Sc. student: Aleise Guimarães Carvalho, undergraduate research project (CARVALHO, 2014).

undergraduate program of Bilingual Executive Secretariat, also at UFPB<sup>8</sup>. Each of the researchers worked on a specific genre, and the investigations were conducted under our guidance and supervision.

Then, this article assembles the results for researches conducted in three Ph.D. thesis studies, one M.Sc. thesis study, and two research reports, all of which are interconnected, since they are set to describe and analyze argumentation in academic genres, with focus, among other phenomena, on discursive modality<sup>9</sup>. Although each of such researches deals with argumentation in a specific genre, they contribute to a greater goal of the ESAGD and ESAELD projects, namely, to describe the phenomena of argumentative language. This is why this work correlates the results obtained in those studies, specifically those about modality, as an attempt to discuss such phenomenon in the academic realm, that is, the academic and scientific languages.

To that end, this article is organized in three sections, apart from this introduction. First, we discuss the phenomenon of modality as a semantic-argumentative strategy. We also introduce the classification of modalizers that were adopted for the investigations of the ESAGD and ESAELD projects. In the second section, we produce reflections on the phenomenon of modality in academic genres, on the investigations conducted in the aforementioned project. For this, we sample the works (Ph.D. and M.Sc. theses, and reports) that originated from the researches. In the last section, the one with the final remarks, we summarize our findings and discuss the importance of modality studies for the analysis and description of academic genres.

## 2 MODALITY AS A SEMANTIC-ARGUMENTATIVE STRATEGY

The phenomenon of modality, or modality, has been the object to different areas and strands of linguistic studies. However, the first studies about modality stemmed from logic.

Lyons (1977, p.329) affirms that, in traditional logic, the term is used to describe the quantification of predicate: “In traditional logic (based on a bipartite analysis of propositions into subject and predicate), modality was commonly described as quantification of the predicate” (LYONS, 1977, p.329).

However, Lyons (1977) indicates that, both in linguistics and in logic, the term has generated a series of conflicting interpretations, due to its approximation with the terms *mood* and *modal*. Lyons acknowledges that these three terms are etymologically close, but states his preference to saving the term *mood* for the meaning given by the Traditional Grammar, to refer to grammatical categories denominated *indicative*, *subjunctive*, and *imperative*.

Lyons adds that the only type of modality acknowledged by traditional logic is that which associates the notions of necessity and possibility to the truth and falsehood of propositions, that is, alethic modality. According to Lyons, logicians associate alethic modality to necessity more than possibility. Necessity is defined in terms of truth in each and every possible universe, and possibilities of truth in some possible universes.

Cervoni (1989) affirms that modality implies the idea that a semantic analysis permits distinguishing, in one utterance, one propositional content (the *dictum*) from one viewpoint of the locutor about such content (modality). To Cervoni, modality constitutes the essential meaning of the utterance, which distinguishes it from connotation.

To Cervoni, when dealing with the phenomenon of modality in Linguistics – despite its roots in logic, and even though it conserves some of its original meaning –, one must be very careful with morphology, syntax and the lexicon. For this reason, Cervoni turns to the traditional notion that modality only happens when it affects the proposition as a whole, only to affirm that, in contemporary

<sup>8</sup> Geziel de Brito Lima, jointly with the project coordinator; genre: academic abstract (LIMA; NASCIMENTO, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> It is important to mention that other phenomena were also investigated in these corpora, such as enunciative polyphony. On this subject, the work *A polifonia dos gêneros acadêmicos e formulaicos: a evocação da palavra alheia*, by Nascimento (2015). However, this article focuses specifically on the phenomenon of modality.

linguistic theories, based on the analysis of surface structures and deep structures, modality is discussed as affecting part of the proposition, the noun phrase, for example. Cervoni adds that:

According to the traditional definition, only the determinations relative to a proposition will be considered modalities. However, to the linguist, seeing proposition only in sentences that have a canonic form is not a hypothesis (*Socrates runs, educates the young, is a man* [...]). The contemporary linguistic theories have demonstrated the advantage of assuming underlying structures for the surface structure as well as making room for [that which is] the implicit in the analysis of sentences. (CERVONI, 1989, p.62, italics in original)

For this reason, Cervoni introduces a classification according to which what is typically modal can be distinguished from that which is partially modal, and what is possible and beneficial to exclude from the field of modalities. That which is typically modal was named by Cervoni hard modality whereas that which is partially modal was named impure modality.

Within the hard modality, he included the propositional modalities, in sentences of the type “(unipersonal) + is + Adjective + *that* P or Infinitive”, and the mood auxiliaries, since both, to Cervoni (1989, p.63), “have a perfectly-explicit essentially-modal meaning”.

As to the impure modality, Cervoni affirms that it includes “the cases in which modality is implicit or mixed into a lexeme, a single morpheme, a single expression, to other elements of meaning” (ibidem, p.68). In this very group are some evaluative adjectives, such as *useful, pleasant, interesting, grave*, etc., the *verba dicendi* (verbs of utterance), and the verb moods. However, Cervoni affirms that evaluative adjectives will only be modals when the canonic form can be identified.

Castilho and Castilho (1993, p.217) affirm that the term modality expresses the locutor’s judgement on the proposition. However, two terms have been employed in this sense: modality and modalization. Modality is used for when “the locutor presents the propositional content in an assertive mood (affirmative or negative), interrogative (polar or non-polar), and jussive (imperative or optative)”. The term modalization has been used when the “locutor expresses their relationship with the propositional content”. This relationship consists in judging the truth content of the proposition, or passing a judgement on the way chosen to verbalize the content of the proposition.

However, Castilho and Castilho prefer to use the terms without distinction, for “there is always a previous evaluation of the locutor about the content of the proposition that they will convey” (1993, p.217). The authors add that this generates the locutor’s decisions about affirming, denying, interrogating, expressing doubt, certainty, etc.

Based on Dubois (1973), Santos (2000, p.01) affirms that modalization is a category that allows locutors to express an attitude in the utterances they produce. Modality, in turn, is synonymous with mood and indicates the type of communication set by locutors between them and their interlocutor.

By analyzing the aforementioned authors, we have observed that modalization has been seen, in general, as a strategy belonging to the utterance, which, at times, will affect the whole utterance while, at other times, will affect only part of it. Still, we see that the distinction between modalization and modality is not a solved problem. This unsolved problem relies on the distinction between subjectivity and intersubjectivity, and also because of considering that it is possible to separate the subjective from the intersubjective aspect (NASCIMENTO, 2010). Such phenomena are not quite separable in the process of interaction, or in the very language structure, as Ducrot (1988) claims.

Then, by producing an utterance such as “Pedro will surely come”, apart from expressing the certainty regarding Pedro’s future coming, the locutor does so as a function of their interlocutor, either because they want the interlocutor to also believe that such information is true or because they have another intention, which, sometimes, is only identifiable by the enunciation<sup>10</sup>. In this sense, it does not seem productive to separate the locutor’s attitude (expressing certainty, therefore, modalization), from their intention

<sup>10</sup> We use this translation into English for the term enonciation, coined by Ducrot (1988). To that author, the concept of enonciacion is associated with the event generated by the utterance or production of a statement.

(making the interlocutor believe that it is true, therefore, modality). Nor does it seem productive, from the semantic-argumentative point of view, to separate the choice of asseverating (express a certainty = modalization) from the locutor's judgement (I consider this to be true = modality). Such phenomena are not separated, according to Castilho and Castilho (1993), and are an argumentative strategy. This we have found in the studies about modality in several textual/discursive genres (NASCIMENTO, 2009; 2010).

From our investigations we have realized that locutors always evaluate (modality) as a function of the interlocution, to express their intentions (modalization) and, for this reason, it does not seem productive to separate subjective and intersubjective aspects, for they are intrinsically related (one manifests itself in relation to the other). Then, we reaffirm: "Therefore, it is not productive, at first, to separate modality and modalization, at least when we treat such phenomenon as an argumentative strategy" (NASCIMENTO, 2009, p.1376). As stated before, such position is based on Ducrot (1988), who assembles the subjective and intersubjective aspects of the utterances into a single aspect, which he names argumentative value of the utterances.

As Ducrot (1988) himself postulates, the argumentative value is in the meaning of the utterance, which is at once meaning and direction (discursive intention). Thus, the presence of some linguistic modalizer, for example, not only encompasses a specific signification (certainty, possibility, obligation, etc.), but also permits a specific discursive continuum, a specific intention, pointing to specific conclusions and producing specific meaning effects (commitment, detachment, axiological evaluation, etc.). With that, modality is an argumentative index.

According to Lyons (1977), all natural spoken languages provide their users with prosodic resources (stress and intonation) with which to express the several distinguishable kinds of epistemic utterance. Some, but by no means all, are grammaticalized (category of mood), some are lexicalized or semi-lexicalized (modal verbs – must; modal adjectives – possible; modal adverbs – possibly; modal particles – perhaps).

Castilho and Castilho (1993) also affirm that modality moves different linguistic resources, among which they mention prosody, verbal moods, auxiliary verbs such as *must* and *want*, verbs that constitute parenthetical sentences and matrices such as *find*, *think* and *believe*, adjectives, adverbs, prepositional phrases functioning as an adverb, among others. Like modalization, which may be lexicalized in several ways, different types of modality may be conveyed with a single lexical item, according to Koch (2002). This is the case of the verb *must*, which may convey possibility, probability, doubt, certainty, etc.

Koch (2002, p.85) presents a list of several types of lexicalization of modalities, among which are the explicit performatives: I order, I forbid, I allow, etc.; the modal auxiliaries: may, must, want, need, etc.; the crystallized predicates: it is certain, it is needed, it is necessary, it is likely, etc.; the modal adverbs: probably, certainly, necessarily, possibly, etc.; the periphrastic verb forms: must, can, want, etc. + infinitive; the verb moods and tenses: imperative; some uses of subjunctive; use of the perfect tense as a probability, hypothesis, unconfirmed news; use of the imperfect indicative as unreality, etc.; the verbs of propositional attitude: I believe, I know, I doubt, I think, etc.; intonation (which permits, for example: distinguishing an order from a request, in oral language); and the argumentative operators: little, a little, nearly, only, really, etc.

This list, however, is not finite, since each year investigations find other language elements functioning as modalizers, among which are the suffix *-inho*<sup>11</sup> (investigated by Chaves, 2007), the *verba dicendi* (investigated by Nascimento, 2005), and repetition (investigated by Adelino, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> The suffix *-inho*, in Portuguese, is an element that indicates diminutive. However, in some contexts, such suffix loses the diminutive function and takes on a modal value.

Modalizers are linguistic elements that explicitly materialize modality, and are usually classified according to the type of modality they express, in utterances and discourses in which they are used. However, different researchers have come up with different classifications for the types and subtypes of modality. In this work, we use the classification of Nascimento and Silva (2012), who gather the elements of modality into four major groups, based on the investigations conducted by the ESAGD project, and considering the meaning effects they generate in the utterances, or the enunciation itself: epistemic, deontic, evaluative, and hedgers.

The chart below, of said authors, summarizes the types of modality.

Types of Modality	Subtypes	Meaning effect in the utterance or enunciation
Epistemic – expresses evaluation of the truth-conditions or knowledge	Asseverative	Presents the content as something right or true
	Quasi-asseverative	Presents the content as something quasi-right or true
	Habilitating	Expresses the capacity of something or someone to realize the content of the utterance
Deontic – expresses the evaluation of possibility, prohibition, volition or obligation	Obligation	Presents the content as an obligation that needs to happen
	Prohibition	Expresses the content as something prohibited, that must not happen
	Possibility	Expresses the content as something facultative or gives permission for something to happen
	Volition	Expresses desire or wish for something to happen
Evaluative – expresses evaluation or a point of view	---	Expresses an evaluation or point of view about the content, except any deontic or epistemic aspect
Hedging	---	Determines the limits over which one must consider the content of an utterance

**Chart 1:** Types and subtypes of modality

**Source:** Nascimento e Silva (2012, p.93)

It is worth mentioning that one single lexical item may express different modalities, generating different meaning effects. According to Nascimento and Silva (2012), to determine the type of modality, it is necessary to carry out a semantic-discursive analysis of each case.

### 3 MODALITY IN ACADEMIC GENRES

In the investigations conducted by the ESAGD and ESAELD projects on argumentative aspects in academic genres, we identified all the discursive modalizers' types (with some of their subtypes), as proposed by Nascimento and Silva (2012). Although it was not possible to quantify the occurrence of all types and subtypes in all genres, we found that, in general, the asseverative epistemic and quasi-asseverative modalizers prevail in all the genres in the academic realm included in our research. The deontic modalizers and hedgers are not very significant in the analyzed *corpora*, although they were present in some genres, such as the abstract and the administrative-academic protocol.

Below, we present the descriptive-interpretative analysis of some sections of the analyzed *corpora* to demonstrate not only the occurrence of such modalizers present in said genres, but also, above all, the meaning effects they generate in the utterances in which they are used.

### 3.1 ASSEVERATIVE EPISTEMIC MODALIZERS

According to Nascimento and Silva (2012), the asseverative epistemic modality occurs when the content of the utterance (or the enunciation itself) is given as something right or true and, for this reason, the locutors responsible for the discourse commit themselves to said utterance. In this sense, the locutor presents a high level of adhesion to the content of the utterance, as affirmed by Castilho & Castilho (1993).

The asseverative epistemic modalizers were found in all the analyzed genres (abstract, review, paper, undergraduate research project, undergraduate monograph, and administrative-academic protocol). In the abstracts, asseverative epistemic modalizers occurred mainly as modal verbs and adverbs; in the other genres, they occurred as modal *verba dicendi*. Excerpts 01 and 02, below, illustrate such occurrence.

EXCERPT 01 – Abstract (LIMA; NASCIMENTO, 2009)

“Na investigação *constatou-se que* seleção lexical está diretamente relacionada à classe socioeconômica do destinatário e reflete-lhe os anseios, o estilo de vida e os valores ideologicamente consagrados pela classe social a que ele pertence.”<sup>12</sup>

In excerpt 01 of the corpus analyzed by Lima and Nascimento (2009), we see the presence of asseverative epistemic modality: the modalizer “*constatou-se que*” (“we found that”), whose meaning effect affects the content of all the utterance, introducing it as something verified, proven, and, for this reason, right or true. If we consider that the scientific text relies on experiments, data or phenomena that have been tested and verified, therefore, proven, both the use of such expression and the meaning effect that it generates in the utterance – the asseverative effect – are justified. For this reason, in such case, we may consider it an asseverative epistemic modalizer.

In the analyzed corpus, Lima and Nascimento (2009) identified 18 occurrences of asseverative epistemic modalizers and verified that this type of modality was used, above all, to introduce data and results of investigations as something proven, therefore, worthy of certainty. In addition, they were used to introduce information shared in the academic realm that the locutor and their probable interlocutors knew of, which are taken as right, in utterances such as “**É notório** o avanço da tecnologia em nossa sociedade” (“**It is noticeable** that technology has advanced in our society”). The following excerpt, taken from the corpus analyzed by Carvalho (2014), illustrates another occurrence of the asseverative epistemic modality present in the analyzed *corpora*.

EXCERPT 02 – Undergraduate Research Project (CARVALHO, 2014)

“A respeito dessas transformações, Marcuschi (2012, p. 36) *afirma que* há dois momentos significativos no contexto sócio-histórico do LD “o marco inicial está diretamente relacionado à época em que os livros de uso no espaço escolar começam a ser nomeados como *livros didáticos* (...)” e o segundo marco provém da preocupação de se “compreender o momento atual vivenciado pelas coleções didáticas no contexto social brasileiro”, pois a concepção de língua no LDPB sofreu alterações no transcórrer das últimas oito décadas.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> “In the investigation, we found that the lexical selection is directly related to the socioeconomic class of the addressee, and reflects their wishes, lifestyle and values ideologically celebrated by the social class to which they belong.”

<sup>13</sup> “About such transformations, Marcuschi (2012, p.36) affirms there are two significant moments in the socio-historical context of the DB: “the initial milestone is directly related to the moment in which the books used in school start to be named didactic books [...]”; and the second milestone derives from the concern of “understanding the current moment experienced by the didactic collections in the Brazilian social context”, because the concept of language in the BPDB has faced alterations over the last eight decades.”



Excerpt 02 illustrates the occurrence of modality not only in the genre investigated by Carvalho, but also in the other genres analyzed by the ESAGD project, in which this phenomenon occurs together with polyphony of locutors and through the modalizer *verba dicendi*. According to Nascimento (2005), the modal *verba dicendi* are used by the locutor responsible for the discourse (L1) to report other locutors (L2, L3, etc.) in his/her utterance and, at the same time, introduce the reported content as something right or true; therefore, L1 commits to someone else's utterance.

When analyzing excerpt 02, Carvalho (2014)<sup>14</sup> notes the presence of two different locutors: L1 introduces the content of the utterance and, in order to make this utterance valid in academic terms, inserts another locutor's voice, L2: Marcuschi. To introduce L2's voice, L1 uses the asseverative modal *verbum dicendi* "afirma" ([Marcuschi] *affirms*), which synthesizes the lexeme *say* + *certainty* (*to say with certainty*), as stated by Cervoni (1989). By introducing L2's report as something right or true, L1 not only indicates how such discourse must be read, but also engages in and admits L2's discourse, who – in such discourse – is presented as an authority on the subject, an argument by authority, as named by Ducrot (1987). L2's report is incorporated into L1's discourse, who takes L2's utterance as right and replicates it.

This type of strategy, present in all the investigated genres, illustrates one of the principal uses of asseverative epistemic modalizers in the academic genres, namely: to convey an analysis of someone else's discourse, allowing the locutor responsible for the *dictum* to engage in someone else's voice. This type of strategy not only generates the effect of credibility to what has been said, but also allows L1 to use another locutor's *dire*<sup>15</sup> to found his/her investigations, his/her testing and his/her results, that is, his/her academic work. Then, the meaning effects generated in the utterances are: certainty, credibility and assimilation or engagement.

### 3.2 QUASI-ASSEVERATIVE EPISTEMIC MODALIZERS

Quasi-asseverative epistemic modality occurs when locutors consider the content of the utterance or discourse quasi-right or as a hypothesis to be confirmed and, for this reason, do not take responsibility for the truthness or rightness of the utterance, nor do they commit to the veracity of what they state, according to Nascimento and Silva (2012).

We identified the quasi-asseverative epistemic modalizers in all the analyzed *corpora*, rather frequently and with different meaning effects, as can be seen in excerpts 03 and 04, analyzed below.

EXCERPT 03 – Abstract (LIMA; NASCIMENTO, 2009)

"Esse aumento na demanda de estudantes de E/LE se deve, *provavelmente*, às relações do Brasil com o MERCOSUL."<sup>16</sup>

In excerpt 03, taken from an academic abstract published in the annals of a scientific event, the locutor responsible for the discourse introduces the content of the *dictum* as likely to happen, as a hypothesis that needs confirmation. This status of possibility or probability is expressed in the content of the utterance by the presence of the quasi-asseverative epistemic modalizer "provavelmente" ("probably"). By using such modalizer, the locutor does not commit to the content of the *dictum* (The rise in the demand of student of S/FL is due to Brazil's relations with MERCOSUR), and is clear of responsibility regarding the rightness or truth or what has been stated.

<sup>14</sup> In the corpus investigated by Carvalho, 55 occurrences of asseverative epistemic modalizers were found, all as modal *verba dicendi*, and in statements involving argument by authority. The argument by authority, according to Ducrot (1987), occurs in situations in which the locutor, by introducing the voice of another locutor into their own discourse, presents this other locutor as an authority in the subject that founds their *dire*.

<sup>15</sup> Argumentative Semantics separates *le dire* (term originally coined in French) from *le dit* (the *dictum*) The first term regards the expression of the speaker or that that which was expressively stated (presented) in the utterance, while the second term addresses the content of the expression, the meaning of the utterance.

<sup>16</sup> "The rise in the demand of student of S/FL is *probably* due to Brazil's relations with MERCOSUR."

Lima and Nascimento (2009) identified 52 quasi-asseverative epistemic modalizers in their corpus, which is a greater number than that for the asseverative modalizers (18 occurrences), always indicating that they did not commit to the *dictum*. According to the researchers, this occurred, mostly, in abstracts of researches that were still ongoing, that is, the authors had not reached the final results and, consequently, could not commit to that which they were stating: “It is for this reason that we can frequently notice the use of expressions such as ‘we seek to find out’, ‘we intend to discuss’, ‘we intend to reveal’, among others, which convey the idea that the research is still in progress” (p.08). The authors also identified quasi-asseverative epistemic modalizers in utterances that dealt with controversial issues, from the scientific standpoint, or those that introduced hypotheses yet to be confirmed.

EXCERPT 04 – Review (BARBOSA, 2015)

“A traição, *como já ficara sugerido* décadas atrás na peça de Chico Buarque e Rui Guerra sobre Calabar, não pode ser vista sob a perspectiva meramente moral, que tendemos a lhe imputar. Muitos outros contemporâneos desse homem “alto, magro, preto, e feio”, traíram. Uns, como João Fernandes Vieira, grande herói do panteão pernambucano, se deram bem. Manoel se deu mal, talvez porque, além de traidor, foi herege. As peripécias e indecisões desse mestiço cabotino e inteligentíssimo parecem metáfora do que era a colonização no século 17, quando a política europeia se redefinia com as tintas de outros mundos, das Américas, da Índia, da África, da China, e quando o poderio marítimo ibérico minguava mais e mais ante a pujança holandesa, antes que a Inglaterra entrasse de vez em cena, e para acabar com a festa.”<sup>17</sup> (R3)

By analyzing excerpt 04, taken from an academic review, Barbosa (2015) identifies a polyphony of locutors. To analyze the work of the reviewed author, the reviewer locutor (L1) introduces, in indirect speech, the discourse of a second locutor (L2 – by Chico Buarque and Rui Guerra’s play), according to which betrayal cannot be taken from a merely moral perspective. This is reported by using the expression “como já ficara sugerido” (“as was already suggested”). According to Barbosa, the *verbum dicendi* “sugerido” (“suggested”) is a quasi-asseverative modalizer, because it expresses something that is deemed possible: “In the context it was used, it indicates the way L2’s discourse must be read: as a suggestion” (BARBOSA, 2015, p.131).

However, the researcher notes that, although L2’s discourse is introduced as something that may be right (suggested), L1 assimilates it through the use of the argumentative operators “como” and “já” (“as” and “already”)<sup>18</sup>.

Therefore, the fact of presenting the account as something possible of being right did not imply that L1 detached themselves from L2’s discourse; it only implied judging someone else’s discourse as something possibly right or true, though admissible. This means that, as the quasi-asseverative epistemic modality purports the discourse as possibly right or true, it may eventually annul the sense of non-commitment or detachment, depending on the discursive context in which it occurs.

The meaning effects identified by the use of quasi-asseverative epistemic modalizers in the investigated *corpora* were: the notion of possibility or probability, non-commitment, detachment, non-engagement.

### 3.3 DEONTIC MODALIZERS

Deontic modality is associated with the instructional or guiding nature of the language and, in this sense, may imply obligation, permission, volition and prohibition, as postulated by Nascimento and Silva (2012).

<sup>17</sup> “Betrayal, *as was already suggested* decades ago in Chico Buarque and Rui Guerra’s play about Calabar, may not be seen from a merely moral perspective, with which we tend to address it. Many people contemporary to this “tall, thin, black, and ugly” man, did betray. Some, like João Fernandes Vieira, a great hero of the pantheon of Pernambuco, got away with it. Manoel did not, perhaps because, besides being a traitor, he was a heretic. The adventures and indecisions of this very intelligent half-bred booster seem like a metaphor of what colonization was about in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the European policy was being redefined due to the influence of other worlds, Americas, India, Africa, China, and when the Iberian maritime power decreased progressively to the puissance of Holland, before England stepped onto the stage to put an end to it.”

<sup>18</sup> Barbosa (2015, p.131) highlights that the linguistic element “as”, used with verbs of utterance, normally indicates conformity with the introduced point of view, which can be seen in the analyzed example. Meanwhile, the operator “already”, indicates, in the context in which it was used, a done action, that is, it indicates something already said, a done deal, for this reason, something that can be admitted. In this sense, Barbosa affirms that “[...] the *verbum dicendi* and the linguistic resources “as” and “already” convey the idea that L1 assimilates what L2 said, by presenting this account in indirect style”.

In the analyzed *corpora*, their frequency is very low, and they were identified in two genres only:

a) in abstracts, deontic modalizers of obligation were found, indicating, much more than instruction, rather a subjective and axiological attitude of the locutor responsible for the abstract regarding the content of the *dictum*, in utterances such as “Sendo assim os cuidados com as influências trazidas por essa tecnologias *devem* ser redobradas”<sup>19</sup> (LIMA; NASCIMENTO, 2009);

b) in administrative-academic protocols, in Spanish language, at times indicating obligation, at other times, volition, as in the excerpt below.

EXCERPT 05 – administrative-academic protocol (NASCIMENTO, 2014)

“Solicitud aula Dra. Pizarro: se acuerda otorgar el aula siempre que no perjudique el dictado de alguna materia del Departamento. *Se requerirá* que dicha solicitud sea refrendada por el Departamento en el cual ejercen los docentes.”<sup>20</sup>

In excerpt 05, taken from an administrative-academic protocol in Spanish, we identify the voice of one *SE*-locutor, which refers to the collective voice of a departmental board<sup>21</sup>, introduced by the verb forms “se acuerda” and “se requerirá”. The utterance is Dr. Pizarro’s request to an academic board for using a classroom; permission was granted, as long as there was no inconvenience to other professors of the department. The *verbi dicendi* forms “se requerirá” (“needs”) shows the point of view of the *SE*-locutor, as a request of the board itself, of deontic nature: with such verb expression, the locutor responsible for the discourse as a whole (the one that signs the protocol) introduces the *SE*-locutor’s point of view (the request confirmed by the Department of which the professors who use the classroom are members) as a request that shall be granted; indicating, consequently, how such point of view must be read. For this reason, the *dicendi* expression “se requerirá” (“needs”) is a volitive deontic modalizer<sup>22</sup>, through which the locutor responsible for the protocol introduces the discourse of the *SE*-locutor as a desire or wish of deontic nature.

The low frequency of deontic modalizers in academic texts is perfectly justifiable, if we consider that this realm of human activity, first and foremost, has no function of normalizing actions and social facts, but rather describing and explaining them, according to scientific knowledge. It is, perhaps, due to this that their occurrences were noticeable in administrative-academic protocols, which, even though are produced and circulate within the academic setting, are much more related to the administrative sector, especially boards, where decisions and instructions need to be recorded, be their nature academic-pedagogical or purely administrative.

### 3.4 EVALUATIVE MODALIZERS

According to Nascimento and Silva (2012), evaluative modality passes a value judgement of the locutor responsible for the discourse on the content of the utterance, except any evaluation of deontic or epistemic nature. We found evaluative modalizers in all the investigated genres fairly frequently: in undergraduate research projects, abstracts and administrative-academic protocols, for example, they were the second most frequent modalizers.

In the investigated *corpora*, the evaluative modalizers were employed by the locutor responsible for the discourse in one of two ways:

a) evaluating their own *dire*, passing a value judgement on the content of their own *dictum*, in utterances such as “*Felizmente* os estudos direcionados aos gêneros textuais a cada dia que passa ganha mais espaço nas aulas de língua

<sup>19</sup> “Thus, the care taken with the influences brought along by such technologies must be doubled.”

<sup>20</sup> “Classroom request Dr. Pizarro: agreed to grant the classroom provided no inconvenience is brought onto other classes of this Department. This request needs to be confirmed by the professors’ Department of origin.”

<sup>21</sup> *SE*-locutor (*omnilocutor*, in Spanish, or *on-locutuer*, in French), in the studies of Anscombe (2005; 2010), is defined as a voice brought onto the stage by the locutor responsible for the discourse and generally introduced by markers of generic citation (according, is said, etc.), which may be associated, in some context, to the voice of popular knowledge (in proverbs, for example) or a collective voice, in which the locutor – as a being in the world ( $\lambda$ ) may or may not be included.

<sup>22</sup> Volitive deontic modalizers express, in the statement, a desire or wish of deontic nature, according to Nascimento and Silva (2012). Neves (2010), in turn, affirms that volitive or bouloamic modality is, deep inside, a deontic need.

portuguesa”<sup>23</sup> (Abstract – LIMA; NASCIMENTO; 2009), where the adverb *Felizmente (Happily)* conveys a positive personal and axiological position of the locutor about the content of the utterance, for which s/he is responsible;

b) evaluating the discourse of a second locutor introduced in the discourse, taking a stand about the content of the other person’s voice and, at the same time, indicating how the other person’s discourse must be read. The second occurrence was identified, above all, in modal *verbi dicenci*, as in excerpts 06 and 07, below:

EXCERPT 06 – Scientific paper (BESSA, 2015)

“Frade e Maciel (2006) *ressaltam* que as cartilhas são os primeiros livros de leitura, têm um ideal pedagógico e se constituem como a primeira via de acesso no processo de escolarização, ou seja, objetos de implementação da pedagogia da alfabetização.”<sup>24</sup> (CACHIONI *et. al.*, 2015)

In excerpt 06, taken from the corpus investigated by Bessa, with scientific papers, the locutor responsible for the discourse as a whole (L1 = paper author), introduces the account of another locutor into their discourse (L2 = Frade and Maciel), to found what s/he is saying. Such account is introduced in indirect speech and introduced by the evaluative modal *verbum dicendi ressaltam (highlight)*. By using such verb, L1 not only takes a stand regarding L2’s discourse, but also indicates how such discourse must be read: as something that deserves to be underscored, which is important and worthy of consideration. With that, L1 evaluates the other person’s discourse as positive and incorporates it into their speech. In other words, we could say that the meaning effect generated in the discourse is that the reader is aware that L2 is responsible for the discourse introduced in indirect style, and L1 agrees with it, since s/he introduces it as something worthy of being highlighted.

EXCERPT 07 – Undergraduate research paper (BASTOS, 2017)

“Reconhecer um direito fundamental também exige do intérprete a observação dos limites expressos ao seu exercício. Todavia, a ideia de estabelecimento de restrição a direitos suscita uma problemática, pois, como bem adverte Friedrich Klein<sup>46</sup>, usando das leis da lógica, **não pode existir restrição a direito individual, mas tão somente o conceito do que seja a mesma.**”<sup>25</sup>

In excerpt 07, taken from the corpus investigated by Bastos (2007), there are occurrences of evaluative modality, used to issue a point of view about the discourse of another locutor introduced in the discourse. According to the researcher, the excerpt above, taken from an undergraduate research paper, opens a section of the said monograph, discussing the restriction of individual rights.

As it can be noticed, in said excerpt the locutor responsible for the monograph (L1), starts the text with a point of view according to which “Recognizing a fundamental right also requires that the interpreter observes the limits set to his/her exercise”. Next, L1, through the opposing operator “however”, introduces a change in the discursive intention, introduced by a point of view according to which restricting rights causes a problem.

To found the point of view introduced by the operator “todavia” (“however”), L1 brings into the discourse the voice of a second locutor (Friedrich Klein), through the evaluative modal *verbum dicendi* “adverte” (“adverts”), followed by elements such as “como” and “bem” (“as” and “well”), composing the expression “como bem adverte” (“as [...] well adverts”).

Bastos (2017) notes that the adverb “como” (“as”) normally indicates conformity with the point of view introduced, that is, L1 engages in L2’s discourse. The notion of conformity expressed by said adverb, as mentioned by Garcia Negroni (2008), may be reinforced by the use of the adverb “bem” (“well”), in expressions such as “como bem disse x” (“as X well said”). In excerpt 07, it is possible to see the occurrence of such phenomenon. Bastos affirms that the adverb “bem” (“well”) must be considered as a positive

<sup>23</sup> “*Happily*, more and more the studies about textual genres occupy the Portuguese language classes.”

<sup>24</sup> “Frade and Maciel (2006) *highlight* that the spelling books are the first readers, they have a pedagogical ideal and are the first path in the process of schooling, that is, objects to implement the pedagogy of literacy.”

<sup>25</sup> “Recognizing a fundamental right also requires that the interpreter observe the limits set to his/her exercise. However, the idea of establishing a restriction to rights raises a problem, for, as Friedrich Klein<sup>46</sup> well adverts, by using the laws of logic, *there cannot be a restriction to the individual rights, only the concept that it is the same.*”

evaluative modalizer, which, in the analyzed excerpt, is followed by a *verbum dicendi* that is also an evaluative modalizer: “advert” (“advert”).

According to Bastos (2017), by using such combination, L1 conveys a positive evaluative nature to the presented point of view, showing that this content must be read as a warning. Such positive character is expressed by the use of the adverb “bem” (“well”), which indicates approval, something that was already indicated by the adverb “como” (“as”), which indicates engagement. Thus, L1 conveys the way how L2’s discourse must be read, passing a value judgment on the reported discourse, and assimilates such discourse at the same time.

### 3.5 HEDGERS AS MODALIZERS

Hedging is the type of modality which sets the limits within which the content of one utterance must be considered and, for this reason, identifies levels of tension or negotiation in the interlocution, as shown by Nascimento and Silva (2012).

In the academic genres, this type of modality is not very usual, at least not in the investigated *corpora*. Their greatest recurrence was found in abstracts, investigated by Lima & Nascimento (2009), as can be seen in the following utterance.

EXCERPT 08 – Abstract (LIMA; NASCIMENTO, 2009)

“*Teoricamente*, esperamos que os livros apresentem atividades que contemplem orientações atualizadas e surgiram formas de encaminhamento didático.”<sup>26</sup>

In excerpt 08, taken from an academic abstract, with the use of the adverb *teoricamente* (*theoretically*), the locutor sets limits for the content announced, that is, s/he specifies that the content of the *dictum* (we expect the books to contain activities that follow updated guidelines and that they suggest didactic instructions) must be understood from a theoretical point of view.

This may imply, for example, that, from a practical point of view, perhaps the books will not contain activities that follow updated guidelines, but this is what is expected from the theoretical point of view. For this reason, *teoricamente* (*theoretically*) works as a hedger.

In academic genres, in addition to setting the limits within which the content must be considered – acting as meaning makers – hedgers very often specify fields of knowledge or aspects that must be observed regarding the *dictum*, lending a relative aspect to it. This is done by terms and expressions such as: *particularly, from the pragmatic point of view, as to the studies of Cognitive Psychology*, among others.

## 4 CONSIDERATIONS ON THE FINDINGS

The investigation conducted with the analyzed academic genres (abstracts, academic review, undergraduate research projects, undergraduate researches, academic papers and administrative-academic protocols) identified the presence of all types of modalizers as proposed by Nascimento and Silva (2012): epistemic, deontic, evaluative, and hedgers. However, only the epistemic and evaluative modalizers are recurrent. The others (deontic and hedgers) are infrequent and present only in a few genres, especially abstracts and academic protocols.

As to the epistemic modality, we found, in our *corpora*, the asseverative and quasi-asseverative modalizers; there was no occurrence of habilitating epistemic modalizers. The asseverative modalizers were used to convey asseveration or a notion of certainty, or to introduce an idea of credibility to the *dictum*; the locutor always commits to the content of the utterance/discourse. The quasi-

<sup>26</sup> “**Theoretically**, we expect the books to contain activities that follow updated guidelines, and that they suggest didactic instructions.”

asseverative epistemic modalizers were used to express possibility or probability. In most cases, but not always, the use of such type of modalizers generated detachment, non-engagement or non-commitment of the locutor to the content of the utterance.

The presence of epistemic modalizers in the academic genres is perfectly justifiable if we consider that such genres are used to convey the voice of science, said to be proven, certain, objective. Thus, the great presence of asseverative epistemic modalizers, which introduce the discourse as something right or true, in all researched genres, including the administrative-academic genre. The quasi-asseverative modalizers, in turn, allow the locutor of academic genres to distance themselves from the *dictum*, detaching from that which they state, or yet introduce investigations and data not yet proven, which, therefore, still need more testing or analysis.

The evaluative modalizers, frequent in all investigated genres, were used to pass a value judgment, axiological evaluation, almost always in a positive light. With this type of modalizer, the locutors of genres of the academic realm put themselves in the position of someone who analyzes, commits to and judges their *dire* or the voice of science. Besides, they may signal “engagement” of the locutor responsible for the discourse in the *dire* of other locutors introduced in their text.

It is interesting to observe that the evaluative modalizers and the asseverative epistemic modalizers occur quite frequently in the form of expressions or *verba dicendi*, which allow the locutor to introduce other person’s voices into their own discourse – normally, as an argument by authority; to incorporate such voices; or, still, pass judgment on the voices introduced. In this sense, the allegedly objective and neutral discourse becomes a place for crisscrossing voices, expressing subjectivities. This means, among other things, that the locutors responsible for the discourse allow themselves to pass judgment on the scientific production (theirs and another person’s) and take a stand, as a subject, about the voice of science.

Deontic modality has returned low frequency in the investigated corpora, and was used with two major meaning effects: conveying obligation or instruction + axiological value, through obligation deontic modalizers; and, expressing wishes or requests (volition), through volitive deontic modalizers.

We believe that such low frequency is, as a matter of fact, due to the very functionality of the academic genres. They are not used to normalize, guide or instruct, since this is not what science is about but in a few exceptional cases, as is that of the administrative-academic protocol, which records decisions made in academic boards. In other words, academic genres describe, analyze and explain facts and phenomena, in light of the scientific knowledge, without necessarily worrying about regulating them but in some exceptional cases. For this reason, this is not a fertile ground for deontic modalizers, neither is it favorable for hedgers, which also have a strong regulating nature, since it sets the limits within which the content of one *dictum* must be considered. Perhaps for this reason, the occurrence of hedgers was found, in the analyzed *corpora*, mainly in situations in which it was necessary to set the limits of the field or area of knowledge, to indicate the reach of science, in each case, specifically.

The analyses conducted in several genres of the academic realm showed that the discursive modality, as a phenomenon of subjectivity and intersubjectivity (thus, argumentative discourse), in this universe of human activity, allows the locutor responsible for the discourse to present science making as something right or true, which contributes to keep the *status quo* of such human activity; at times, detach from the *dictum*; but also to take a stand about the very scientific process, passing value judgment and guiding their interlocutor.

In this sense, the investigations also make us reflect about impersonality and the objectivity preached by scientific writing manuals. The use of different types of modality, materializing different semantic-argumentative strategies in the texts, proves that the fact that scientific texts are usually written in the third person singular does not imply objectivity or neutrality, that is, impersonality is “neutralized” by other strategies, such as modality.

Therefore, we may affirm that argumentative discourse (thus, subjectivity) is materialized, in academic genres, amid other strategies, by the use of modality. This means that, through modalizers, locutors leave marks of their subjectivity, evaluate the *dictum* and try to guide their interlocutor, indicating how the voice of science must be read.

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