LINGUISTIC-DISCURSIVE PROXEMICS: A MECHANISM OF INTERSUBJECTIVE MODALIZATION[1]

PROXÊMICA LINGUÍSTICO-DISCURSIVA: UM MECANISMO DE MODALIZAÇÃO INTERSUBJETIVA

PROXÉMICA LINGUÍSTICO-DISCURSIVA: UN MECANISMO DE MODALIZACIÓN INTERSUBJETIVA

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ABSTRACT: Based on the conceptual contributions of proxemics and verbal proxemics, we aim to construct the concept of linguistic-discursive proxemics. Therefore, we will use three empirical texts, with the purpose of giving visibility to this mechanism in three distinct theoretical fields: the theories of (im)politeness and face; the notion of discourse genres; and the indexicality common to contextualization cues, referencing and social/discursive deixis. In short, we found that the linguistic-discursive proxemics, present in the three theoretical fields, is related to the establishment of more/less (as)symmetric interactions.
KEYWORDS: Linguistic-discursive proxemics. Intersubjective modality. (Im)politeness. Discourse genres. Indexicality.

RESUMO: A partir das contribuições conceituais de proxêmica e de proxêmica verbal, almejamos construir o conceito de proxêmica linguístico-discursiva. Para tanto, utilizaremos três textos empíricos, com a finalidade de dar visibilidade a esse mecanismo em três campos teóricos distintos: as teorias de (im)polidez e de face; a noção de gêneros discursivos; e a indexicalidade

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[1] In a first version, this article was called Linguistic-Discursive Proxemics in Face-to-Face Interactions. However, it was necessary to adjust the title, due to other paths that the manuscript took.

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comum às pistas contextualizadoras, à referenciação e à dêixis social/discursiva. Em suma, constatamos que a proxêmica linguístico-discursiva, presente nos três campos teóricos, se relaciona ao estabelecimento de interações mais/menos (as)simétricas.
PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Proxêmica linguístico-discursiva. Modalização intersubjetiva. (Im)polidez. Gêneros Discursivos. Indexicalidade.

RESUMEN: A partir de los aportes conceptuales de proxémica y proxémica verbal, pretendemos construir el concepto de proxémica lingüístico-discursiva. Por tanto, utilizaremos tres textos empíricos, con el propósito de dar visibilidad a este mecanismo en tres campos teóricos distintos: las teorías de la (des)cortesía y de face; la noción de géneros discursivos; y la indexicalidad común a las pistas de contextualización, la referenciación y la deixis social / discursiva. En definitiva, encontramos que la proxémica lingüístico-discursiva, presente en los tres campos teóricos, está relacionada con el establecimiento de interacciones más / menos (as) simétricas.
PALABRAS CLAVE: Proxémica lingüístico-discursiva. Modalidad intersubjetiva. (Des)cortesía. Géneros Discursivos. Indexicalidad.

1 INITIAL REMARKS

In a *watershed* article for Interactional Sociolinguistics, Goffman (1964) highlights the neglected situation by some currents of language studies: social behaviors accompany speech. Undeniably, when we speak, we act, as Austin (1975 [1962]) points out. Therefore, this (actional) speech is not dissociated from other language manifestations, which summon interactants for the joint construction of meanings. The term *joint* presupposes at the same time that such subjects mutually construct meanings, and that these meanings bring together multiple semioses.

This process of construction of meanings, inherent to interaction[2], encompasses, among other semiotic resources, language mechanisms that can promote interactants' approximation and distance in (non)verbal planes. In this sense, the interlocutory distance is established through (non)verbal modalizations, with a view to promoting greater/lesser approximation or distance, depending on the subjects' interactional purposes. We assume that this regulatory mechanism, called by us linguistic-discursive proxemics, is present in several language manifestations. This mechanism trigger different meanings that concern, for example, (im)politeness, (in)formality, conversational (non)involvement, physical/symbolic/(non)verbal violence, irony/sarcasm, affectivity/indifference, apathy/empathy, interlocutors' (as)symmetry *etc*.

Often confused by common sense with mitigation/attenuation, modalization assumes a hyperonymic character in terms of meaning (ALBUQUERQUE, 2015). Inspired by Koch (1998), we consider that modalization signals the way in which what is enunciated is, in fact, enunciated, so that such uses, according to Turnbull and Saxton (1997), can make way for the interlocutors' judgment. In the scope of linguistic-discursive proxemics, modalization is associated with the approximations and distances marked in the (non)verbal planes, as well as with the effects and the evaluations of such (non)verbal actions.

Given these assumptions, we aim to construct the concept of linguistic-discursive proxemics, from the conceptual contributions of proxemics (HALL, 1965 [1959], 1963, 1986 [1966], 1968) and verbal proxemics (CARREIRA, 1997, 2008, 2014, 2015, 2017b). Through three empirical texts, we will give visibility to this mechanism in three different theoretical fields: (im)politeness theories and notion of face; notion of discourse genres; and indexicality common to contextualization cues, referencing and social/discursive deixis. Inscribed in Interactional Sociolinguistics, Pragmatics and Textual Linguistics, we believe that the theoretical assumptions at the interface and our objective can contribute to highlighting a mechanism that is very present in everyday interactions, with the aim of attributing more meaning to the socio/intercultural practices of which we participate.

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[2] For us, speech and writing, in a continuous way, trigger sociocognitive/interactional subjects, breaking with the dichotomy that the interactional character is only present in face-to-face encounters, as Marcuschi (2008) inspires us. In this light, we support that any texts – originating from graphic/sound media, inscribed in oral/written conception, produced online/off-line – summon interactants, carry negotiable meanings and, therefore, assume interactional properties.

2 LINGUISTIC-DISCURSIVE PROXEMICS: A PROPOSAL

In this section, we propose a conceptual integration between proxemics (HALL, 1965 [1959], 1963, 1986 [1966], 1968) and verbal proxemics (CARREIRA, 1997, 2008, 2014, 2015, 2017b). From a socio-interactional perspective, we admit that verbal and non-verbal semioses work together, and, in particular, they evoke a discursive dimension, which is (re)constructed in intersubjective instances. At the same time, we assume that the proposed integration – *linguistic-discursive proxemics* – aims to highlight the intersubjective and discursive proxemic regulation present in some theoretical propositions, to be explored in the next section.

Proxemics, a term coined by Hall (1963), concerns the subjects' perception regarding the use of space. Originally, the concept was not directly associated with humans, but with a complex behavior of activities related to animal territoriality (HALL, 1968). It was observed that certain animal behaviors, such as sensory stimuli and hierarchies, are similar to the way humans experience physical space (in the organization and control of this space). Rector and Trinta (1986) emphasize that territoriality is related to aggression, which, in the view of ethologists, is a necessary ingredient for life, which motivates animals to establish adequate distance. Therefore, proxemics combines invasion and defense (KNAPP, 1972; KNAPP; HALL, 1992).

Transposing to human relationships, the term applies "[to] the social meaning of space" (RECTOR; TRINTA, 1986, p. 60). According to Hall (1963), the term is related to the daily and unconscious structuring of microspace by interactants, based on postural markings, spatial orientation, kinesic manifestations, physical contact, gaze direction, thermal sensation, olfactory perception and voice volume. These regulations "give a tone to communication, accent it, and at times even override the spoken word", so that "the flow and shift of distance between people as they interact [are] part and parcel of the communication process". (HALL, 1965 [1959], p. 160).

Affiliated with a markedly cultural perspective, Hall (1986 [1966]) investigates the relation between subjects and physical space; in particular, the way in which such subjects negotiate distances and approximations, in accordance with their socio-interactional demands and influenced by cultural conventions. Such association indicates that the concept is not linked only to the subject-environment relationship, since territoriality intervenes in the personal and social spheres, in the construction of the interactants' images, in the hierarchical relationships between these interactants and in the socio/interculturally instituted conventions. Hall (1986 [1966]) admits that it is not possible for us to act or interact dissociated from our culture. Culture, in this sense, frames and perspectives sensory experiences in different interactions.

According to Hall (1986 [1966]), distances are perceived at three levels: infracultural (biological aspects), pre-cultural (physiological aspects) and microcultural (social/intercultural aspects). Even focusing on the cultural character of distances, Hall (1986 [1966]) proposes the following proxemic notation: intimate (0 to 18 inches), personal (18 inches to 4 feet), social (4 to 12 feet) and public (from 12 feet). Far beyond a numerical reference and without any universalist pretension, we believe that Hall (1986 [1966]) brings possibilities of different interpersonal organizations, from discourse genres in which the interactants are inscribed.

Based on the notion of proxemics (HALL, 1965 [1959], 1963, 1986 [1966], 1968) and on the Pottier's trimorphic model (approximation, contact and distancing), Carreira (1997) coined the term *verbal proxemics*. The author (1997) conceives that the regulation of interlocutory distance can occur at the verbal level, through forms of address (or, more generally, through a range of possibilities of self-designation and hetero-designation), forms of interlocution and forms of politeness (CARREIRA, 1997, 2014, 2015). Therefore, the interlocutory space is regulated through three variables: (i) horizontal and vertical axes (KERBRAT-ORECCHIONI, 1992); (ii) acts of elocution, allocution and delocution (CHARAUDEAU, 2008); and (iii) linguistic politeness (BROWN; LEVINSON, 1987).

Even assuming that the transposition of spatial relationships (proxemics) to non-spatial domains (verbal proxemics) is complex, Carreira (1997) considers that extrapolating the anthropological concept, metaphorically framing space within the scope of social, emotional and cognitive distance/proximity, is pertinent. The author (1997) considers that the relationship between proximity and distance in the verbal dimension affects interlocutions. She also adds that the study of spatial architecture, by anthropology, is as

legitimate as the study of linguistic resources in a given language in the regulation of (inter)locutive distance/proximity (CARREIRA, 2017b).

In association with Hall's legacy (1965 [1959], 1963, 1986 [1966], 1968), the Pottier's trimorph model consists of an image representation of the movements of approximation, contact and distancing. Based on the notion of proxemics and the adaptation of the trimorph model, Carreira (1997, 2008, 2014, 2015, 2017b) suggests that the interlocutory space can demarcate symmetrical interactions (interlocutory approach) and asymmetrical interactions (interlocutory removal), among a set of other linguistic-discursive possibilities. Inherent in both contributions, the territorial notion promotes a regulation of the interlocutory space through the three variables mentioned by us at the beginning of this section.

The first variable (horizontal and vertical axes) concerns the relationship that the subjects assume in a given interaction. The horizontal axis is established in symmetrical interactions, in which distance and proximity are negotiated by the social actors/actresses' desire in a more familiar or more distant relationship; while the vertical axis is established in asymmetric interactions, in which the hierarchical planes are responsible for the proxemic configurations (CARREIRA, 1997). As we will mention in the third variable, such axes are associated with the social distance, the relative power and the absolute ranking of impositions in the particular culture (BROWN; LEVINSON, 1987).

Equally present in power relations (especially in asymmetric interactions), the second variable (elocution, allocution and delocution acts) contemplates the projection of the subject in the interactions, which maintains relations with himself/herself (elocutionary act), with his/her interlocutor (allocutionary act) and/or with third parties (delocutionary act). The notion of territoriality is established from the social role of the other, from the social distances expected in the contact with this social actor/actress, and from the social actions culturally conventionalized to oneself, to the interactor and to the third party. The acts of deciding, asking and reporting another discourse are representative, respectively, of elocutive acts (point of view on the world), allocutive (relation of influence) and delocutive (deleting the point of view), as exemplified by Charaudeau (2008).

The third variable (linguistic politeness[3]) takes into account the congruence between language actions and their enunciator in more or less horizontal/vertical interactions. In our reading, the motivations for proxemics configurations are the result of the confluence of the three variables. The notion of face (GOFFMAN, 1967), which consists of the social image claimed in the interaction between the speaker and his/her interlocutors, is undeniably associated with politeness – treated, in particular, by Brown and Levinson (1987). It is assumed that the interactants have needs related to the valorization of their positive face (actions that value the interactant, through positive politeness strategies) and the preservation of their negative face (actions that preserve the territory of the interactor, through negative politeness strategies).

Concerning the third variable, we assess that the notorious territorial relationship present in the notion of proxemics, in the trimorph model, in the horizontal-vertical axis and in the social actors/actresses' actions invariably brings consequences for the demands related to the negative face. Returning to the two previous variables, there are also developments for the intersubjective instances – the social actors/actresses present in the interaction –, since approximations and distances can occur in response to the social distance, the relative power and the absolute ranking of impositions in the particular culture. (BROWN; LEVINSON, 1987). However, the positive face, inseparable from the negative face, can also suffer repercussions, as actions aimed at social approval can, to some extent, affect territoriality – praise, for example, can either reinforce positive face (appreciation) and threatening the negative face (territorial infringement). We also emphasize the relation between the third variable and the forms of designation of oneself and of the other (CARREIRA, 1997, 2014, 2017a), since such forms, combined with other modalizing resources, build and regulate the interactions and the interactors' social image (CARREIRA, 2017a), whether in terms of territoriality (negative face), or in terms of social approval/appreciation (positive face).

In the Carreira's contributions (1997, 2014, 2015), the proximity between (im)politeness and verbal proxemics is noticeable. In our view, this convergence occurs due to the needs of the negative face and the recommendation of negative politeness strategies, with

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[3] We will discuss this topic in more detail in the next section.

a view to regulating the interlocutory distance. However, (im)politeness, on the one hand, seems to encompass verbal proxemics, by predicting, for example, the needs of the negative face and a set of other strategies (indirectivity and positive politeness); and, on the other hand, (im)politeness seems to be encompassed by verbal proxemics, as (im)politeness constitutes one of the theoretical fields that make use of this mechanism. The forms of treatment/self-designation/hetero-designation, forms of interlocution and forms of politeness can be framed as "a set of linguistic means particularly suited to the regulation of interlocutory distance" (CARREIRA, 1997, p. 18).

In short, the author's proposal consists of "proposing a semantic-pragmatic model for the study of courtesy[4] from the perspective of verbal proxemics in Portuguese", in order to reveal the linguistic resources and the discursive manifestations "that regulate the interpersonal relationship and the social relationship" (CARREIRA, 2014, p. 32). The author understands that "linguistic resources and discursive realizations can be situated in the trimorphic architecture of proxemics, with its multiple variants" (CARREIRA, 2014, p. 35).

In general, Carreira's theoretical projections (1997, 2014, 2017b), instantiated in the semantic-pragmatic domain, include verbal manifestations in the establishment of distances and in the configuration of the interlocutory space, linked to the three linguistic forms already mentioned by us: forms of treatment, forms of interlocution and forms of politeness (CARREIRA, 1997, 2014, 2015). In reading the author's works (1997, 2008, 2014, 2015, 2017a, 2017b), we found that (i) her contributions advance to interactional and discursive instances, which would transcend the assumed domain; (ii) the three linguistic forms (for us, linguistic-discursive) are the focus of her investigations, which means verifying that the construct is not restrictive to such forms, but applied to the author's object of study; and (iii) the three forms do not overlap, but are related in a conceptual composition, given that verbal proxemics is not equivalent to the notion of (im)politeness, but a mechanism that can regulate more or less (im)polite interactions, through modalizations carried out in the pragmatic-discursive plane.

In short, the emphasis on Carreira's work (1997, 2008, 2014, 2015, 2017a), marked even in the title of her first work (CARREIRA, 1997), focuses on the linguistic modalization in a situation of interlocution. When using verbal means of modalization to regulate the interlocutive distance/proximity, it is considered that the interlocutors use proxemic resources in the verbal scope. The interlocutive space to which Carreira (1997, 2008, 2014, 2015, 2017b) refers brings together linguistic and discursive points of view, by combining a system of virtualities that provides expressions ready to designate (and designate third parties) and linguistics realizations negotiated (and modalized) contextually by the enunciator's and the interpreter's perspectives. All this debate contributes to our proposition, which is based on the linguistic-discursive domain.

Next, we highlight a very relevant contribution to the outcome of the considerations related to verbal proxemics: the projections (of the construct) for a cultural perspective (CARREIRA, 2015). Although the author, in 1997, had already called attention to the need to "develop an intersemiotic and intercultural exploration of the field" (CARREIRA, 2015, p. 7), she seeks, in 2015, "a path to semiotic complexity of the enunciative and interlocutory expression in the gradation of approach and distance in cultural contexts" (CARREIRA, 2015, p. 2). Likewise, Carreira (2015) considers verbal proxemics from four points of view: anthropological (by the intercultural notion of proximity/distance); semiotic (by the congregation of verbal and non-verbal semiosis in the establishment of proximity/distance); semantic-conceptual (by the negotiation of meanings inherent to the interactants' proximity/distance: speaker's conceptualization, semiotization and enunciation, and interlocutor's identification, understanding and reactions); and cultural (by the combination of the previous three, from a cultural perspective). In summary, "verbal proxemics, therefore, builds the architecture of the interlocutory space, due to a verbal and para-verbal semiotization linguistically and culturally contextualized" (CARREIRA, 2015, p. 8).

Faced with so many advances by Carreira (1997, 2008, 2014, 2015, 2017a, 2017b), we conclude that our proposal is centered on the proposition of another term – *linguistic-discursive proxemics* –, which seems to better encompass the conceptual positions and assumptions. The author (2015, p. 8) already opens a path more instantiated in linguistic-discursive domains, by conceiving that her semantic model is centered "in the construction of meanings, from an enunciative, interpretive and interactive point of view".

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[4] We kept the term used by the author (2014).

As the author focused, with notorious dedication, on the study of the designations of the self and the other, in a semantic-pragmatic scope, we evaluate that the contributions of the theory advance to other perspectives: they bring together verbal and non-verbal semiosis, in (more) pragmatic (than semantic), sociointeractional, sociodiscursive and sociocognitive instances. Such advances motivate us to emphasize not only the linguistic domain (micro), but also the social/discursive domain (macro) manifested in an interactional dimension (meso).

These instances invite us to think about linguistic-discursive proxemics as a mechanism that regulates the distances established/constructed by the interactors both in the material dimensions (cotext) and in the subjective dimensions (context), which encompasses verbal and non-verbal domains. Next, we illustrate a mother-daughter interaction that represents a culturally possible situation between Brazilians, although it is not an empirical data.

Daughter: ((walking towards the door))
Mother: may I know where are you[5] going?

In an analysis that transcends the semantic domains, we could infer that the mother's utterance does not denote respect for the daughter's authority, given that the relationship between them, with regard to the hierarchical plane, is favorable to the mother be treated by madam. In Brazilian culture, it is common the association of this term to a younger person (generally, child) to show an irony, which is constructed by the context in question, from the integration of the verbal content with extraverbal (intonation) and non-verbal resources that configure a censorship of the daughter's desire. In a linguistic-discursive domain, this composition indicates that the interaction itself does not reveal a detachment: when called *madam*, the mother uses irony to signal that her daughter does not have the autonomy to decide where she goes.

In the following section, we will bring together several themes which can contemplate this regulatory mechanism of distances in the linguistic-discursive scope. Such theoretical debates, with the exception of the politeness theory, do not mention this mechanism, which encourages us to make this proposition: linguistic-discursive proxemics works as a mechanism that governs interlocutory experiences. Finally, we add that we do not dare to place these themes in a single theoretical domain, given the interdisciplinary nature of such themes.

3 PROXEMIC MECHANISMS IN THE LINGUISTIC-DISCURSIVE SCOPE

The term *linguistic-discursive proxemics* could be born from two semiotic-discursive transpositions: the first of them (from proxemics to verbal proxemics) with the (metaphorical) displacement of spatial relationships to non-spatial domains (CARREIRA, 1997, 2008, 2014, 2015, 2017b); and the second (from verbal proxemics to linguistic-discursive proxemics) with the migration from the semantic-pragmatic domain to the sociointeractional, sociodiscursive and sociocognitive domains. However, the term *transposition*, "the act or effect of putting in a different place" (FERREIRA, 2008), inspires a paradigm shift not intended by us, although there is undoubtedly a certain displacement. Thus, we conceive it to be a conceptual reconfiguration, resulting from the composition of convergent concepts, given our interest (i) in a spatial relationship, which undeniably encompasses socio/intercultural motivations; (ii) in a non-spatial domain instantiated in the cotext (in terms of materialized or inferred meaning in the text); and (iii) in an intersubjective and discursive domain triggered by the emerging context of interaction (which encompasses the users' knowledge of the world).

In view of this conceptual composition, we find in different themes, inscribed in theoretical domains that combine language and society, linguistic-discursive mechanisms that promote different effects, which encompass the desire of such social actors/actresses in be more/less polite, more/less formal, more/less asymmetrical, more/less sarcastic, among other possibilities, from the intersubjective distance and proximity. As we assume that linguistic-discursive proxemics is a mechanism present in language

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[5] In this context, *you* would be equivalent to *madam*. In Brazilian Portuguese, this usage would be ironic, since the daughter would not be literally called a madam by her mother.

activity, we grouped, in this section, related themes that gave rise to three (integrated) theoretical fields: (i) (im)politeness, as already noted by Carreira (1997, 2014, 2015), and face; (ii) discourse genres; and (iii) contextualization cues (triggered by frames and footings), referencing, and social and discursive deixis

Before delving into these fields, two clarifications should be made. The first is that we do not aim to give a theoretical treatment to the mentioned themes, nor to verticalize the theoretical debate itself, but to focus on the linguistic-discursive mechanisms present in such constructs and to illustrate them in empirical texts. In this sense, such texts fulfill the role of demonstrating/illustrating the proxemic mechanism. Strongly related to the first, the second clarification consists of highlighting that, as we proceed with an exclusively qualitative analysis, we do not aim to bring any generalizations or deterministic relationships such as "formal e-mail will always promote an increase in interlocutory distance", but we want to give visibility to this mechanism in the three theoretical fields discussed below, as a possibility of proxemic configuration, as we announced in our objective (in the introductory section).

Finally, we emphasize that the long theoretical path taken in the previous section aimed to enable in this section the application of the construct in three theoretical fields already consolidated in language studies. The following theoretical fields were approached through a very brief literature review to envision the proxemic mechanisms, which is our research objective. Carried out in Google Images, the choice of empirical texts was based on the keywords "impolidez e comic strip", "formal e-mail", and "charge and pejorative term", given our interest in short texts (strip, e-mail and cartoon) and social actions (impoliteness, formal registration and pejorative term) that would probably evoke a reduction/increase in the interlocutory distance.

3.1 (IM)POLITENESS AND VIOLATION/PRESERVATION OF THE FACE

Politeness carries, in rescuing the etymology of the word, "the function of rounding the angles and 'polishing' the gears of the conversational machine, in order to preserve its users from serious injuries" (KERBRAT-ORECCHIONI, 2006 [1996], p. 101). It was from the 1970s, with the Lakoff's (1973), Leech's (1983), and Brown and Levinson's (1987) studies, that the debate gained centrality in the academic environment, "awakening interest in systematically examining how we maintain good relationships and we avoid interpersonal conflicts through the use of different linguistic forms and strategies" (CULPEPER *et al.*, 2017, p. 2).

As we mentioned, the concept of face is strongly related to the (im)politeness theory. Goffman (1967) associates the face both with the neutralization of incidents and with the interactors' desire to gain mutual approval from their faces, which means that the construct, as mentioned in Albuquerque and Muniz (2020), does not encompass a subjective domain, but an intersubjective domain. The need to manage faces (respecting or violating their needs) is what motivates the interactors to use (im)politeness strategies. Explicitly drawing on the Goffman's legacy (1967), Brown and Levinson (1987) propose that face threatening acts can be repaired through positive politeness super-strategies (valorization) and negative politeness super-strategies (territorial preservation), in response to the positive (being liked, approved) and negative (being free of impositions) needs of faces. In addition to these two super-strategies, the authors (1987) also contemplate three more super-strategies, related to the desire: to do the face threatening act on record without redressive action; to do the face threatening act off record; or simply to do not do the face threatening act.

Although the politeness theory gained notoriety with Brown and Levinson's (1987) publication, Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1983), their predecessors, bring very relevant contributions to the literature. The notion of face, even not being mentioned by Lakoff (1973) and by Leech (1983), is, somehow, contemplated in their writings, since the relationship between the two constructs is undeniable. By proposing the politeness rules (don't impose, give options and make a feel good – be friendly), Lakoff (1973) aligns herself with the needs of the negative face (the first two strategies) and the positive face (the last strategy). Leech (1983) describes six politeness maxims (The Tact, The Generosity, The Approbation, The Modesty, The Agreement and The Sympathy Maxims). From such maxims, Leech (1983) recommends both minimizing costs and maximizing benefits to the other, as well as maximization of costs and minimization of benefits for the locutor, contemplating the needs of the negative face (minimization of costs to the other) and the positive face (maximization of benefits to the other).

Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983), and Brown and Levinson (1987), located in the first wave of politeness studies, privileged the analysis of utterance (micro), with minimal projection to enunciation (macro), as well as the perspectives ethics (focus on the researcher) and universalist of the construct (BLITVICH; SIFIANOU, 2019). In the second wave of politeness studies, a discursive approach emerges with the Eelen's (2001), Mills's (2003), and Locher and Watts' (2005) contributions, through which the analysis of empirical data, the conjugation of micro and macro levels (predominantly for the macro level) and the emic view of the construct (focus on study collaborators) (BLITVICH; SIFIANOU, 2019) were valued. Then, the third wave arises which, by establishing the meso level of analysis – the text –, is situated between the more classical (first wave) and more discursive (second wave) approaches (HAUGH; CULPEPER, 2018), which, in our view, privileges studies situated socio/interculturally and generically inscribed (in a given discursive genre). By recognizing that politeness, despite being a universal phenomenon, manifests itself differently across cultures (KERBRAT-ORECCHIONI, 2004), we are conjugating the micro, macro and meso domains, especially due to the undeniable contributions of a universalist theory (first wave) designed for discursive and cultural instances (second wave) and, even more, for interactants enrolled in a given culture and discursive genre (third wave). As we are situated at the meso level, we will assess the proxemic mechanisms that underlie (im)politeness in the following text[6].

Image 1: The (im)politeness in the comic strip

Source: Souza (2012)

In the first part, the lady keeps her distance from the boy, with her eyes and body projected forward. The boy, unlike her, oscillates between actions of greater/lesser distance. At the same time, he approaches her, warning her, touching her back and projecting her body forward, and, minimally, distances himself, with the verbal use of *Madam*, which is common in vocatives that indicate ceremonial treatment, according to Neves (2011). Perhaps, this set of actions was initially due to the young man's desire to warn (given his discomfort) and not to be impolite, respecting the needs of the lady's face, which, being older and unknown, would compete with a lower degree of imposition. In the second part, the lady, due to the discomfort of being addressed, keeps her back, in a clear sign of impoliteness, but, probably due to the age difference, reduces this distance with an impolite response, in which she makes a pejorative use of the diminutive (*little boy*). The boy, motivated by the aggressive response of the interlocutor, uses irony in the third part, approaching without any mitigating factor the lady, who sketches a reaction of astonishment.

For the purposes of analysis, we consider that (im)politeness is constructed by the convergence between linguistic expressions and the context (CULPEPER, 2011), but that its judgment does not derive from the expressions themselves. In other words, "no sentence is inherently polite or impolite", but the conditions under which these expressions are used (FRASER; NOLEN, 1981, p. 96). In a very close incursion into the verbal proxemics debate, using the idea of space metaphorically transposed from non-verbal domains (CARREIRA, 1997, 2008, 2014, 2015, 2017b), Culpeper (1996) assumes that the invasion of both literal (an excessive approximation) and metaphorical (a request or a very intimate question) are negative impoliteness strategies, according to our analysis.

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[6] Text translation: Okra Class. Fast cashier: Maximum 10 volumes. **1.** Madam, this cashier is for up to ten volumes. **2.** I can read very well, little boy! **3.** Excellent! So just learn to count and you can come to the market without the help of an adult. Now, excuse me from the queue.

3.2 DISCOURSE GENRES

The notion of discourse genres comes from an unfinished manuscript by Bakhtin, called *The problem of discourse genres*, between 1952 and 1953 (FARACO, 2009). Since that time, the current inflated and epidemic use of the term has been common (FARACO, 2009) both in academic forums and in the pedagogical field. Bakhtin (2010 [1992]) conceptualizes genres as "relatively stable types of utterances" arising from numerous human activities. Based on this concept, the Bakhtinian construct, whose tonic should "focus on the term relatively" (FIORIN, 2016, p. 71), contemplates the compositional plan, thematic content and style (the selection of lexical, phraseological and grammatical resources). The notions of linguistic-discursive proxemics and discourse genres converge to enunciation, which, in Bakhtinian words, is the real unit of verbal communication, which contributes to our thinking that genres, in some way, enable different language actions to subjects inscribed in such genres, including proxemic negotiation.

Albuquerque and Araújo (2021) assume that stylistic manifestation and relative stability, as dynamic properties of the Bakhtinian construct, make way to think about the diversity of the constitution of the genre, considering that the activities of the subject's enunciating adjust to socio/intercultural demands. In other words, singularity "will necessarily be in dialogue with the collective" (BRAIT, 2012, p. 98), which means that style is manifested in intersubjective (and not individual) instances. When entering a given sociocultural practice, inscribed in a given genre, subjects must "adapt the model of the genre to their particular values, adopting their own style, or even contributing to the constant transformation of the models" (KOCH, 2015, p. 65). By bringing together what is cognitively predictable (compositional plan and thematic content – static properties) and what is cognitively possible (style – dynamic property) (ALBUQUERQUE, 2017), we assume that discourse genres summon interlocutors to adjust to the anticipated interlocutive spaces and, even more, negotiate possible interlocutive spaces.

Still within the scope of the Bakhtinian legacy, we emphasize that the heterogeneity of the socially present genres contributes to the reflection on the interactants' approximations and distances. In this sense, the primary and secondary genres, conceived, respectively, by Bakhtin (2010 [1992]), as simple and complex, are located in different spheres. While the primary ones encompass genres belonging to the most immediate communication; the secondary ones are associated with a "more complex and relatively highly developed and organized cultural coexistence" (BAKHTIN, 2010 [1992], p. 263). In our view, the distinction is also established by the proxemics mechanisms, when we consider that the primary genres, by integrating more everyday sociocultural practices, can be congruent with a more intimate proxemics, as in the case of a conversation between friends, in which distance would tend to be smaller. In this light, secondary genres, as they encompass less everyday sociocultural practices, can bring a more distancing proxemics, as in the case of an academic article, in which proximity would tend to be smaller.

In addition to the socio-historical and dialogic character (BAKHTIN, 2010 [1992]), we are also interested in considering other dimensions in line with the Bakhtinian postulate. In a sociocultural and sociocognitive dimension, we situate that genres, especially their dynamic properties, function as a cultural and cognitive form of social action (MILLER, 1984) "embodied in a particular way in language" (MARCUSCHI, 2010, p. 19). In short, genres, as cultural artifacts (MILLER, 1984, 1994) emerging from social processes (BAZERMAN, 2014 [2004]), enable their social actors/actresses to signal typical ways of acting, which includes the signaling of greater/lesser interpersonal distance, in response to generic demands. In a sociointeractional dimension, we assume, in line with the notion of Bakhtinian style, that the interactants make use of "specific forms of semiotization" (BRONCKART, 2007 [1999]), mobilizing such forms to establish the regulation of the interlocutory distance, depending on their enunciative goals, and on their alignment with forecasts and generic possibilities. Let's see how this set of theoretical assumptions is manifested in the following text[7].

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[7] Text translation: **Subject**: Meeting for process alignment. **E-mail body message**: Dear friends. Good afternoon! I need to talk to you personally to define some points that need to be clear to align the responsibility of each one in the Project we are currently involved in. **Meeting data**: Meeting to align processes. Process alignment. When: Tuesday, September 6 – 18:00 – 20:00. Where: Meeting Room. Who. **Buttons**: send, save, discard. Draft automatically saved at 13:52 (0 minutes ago).
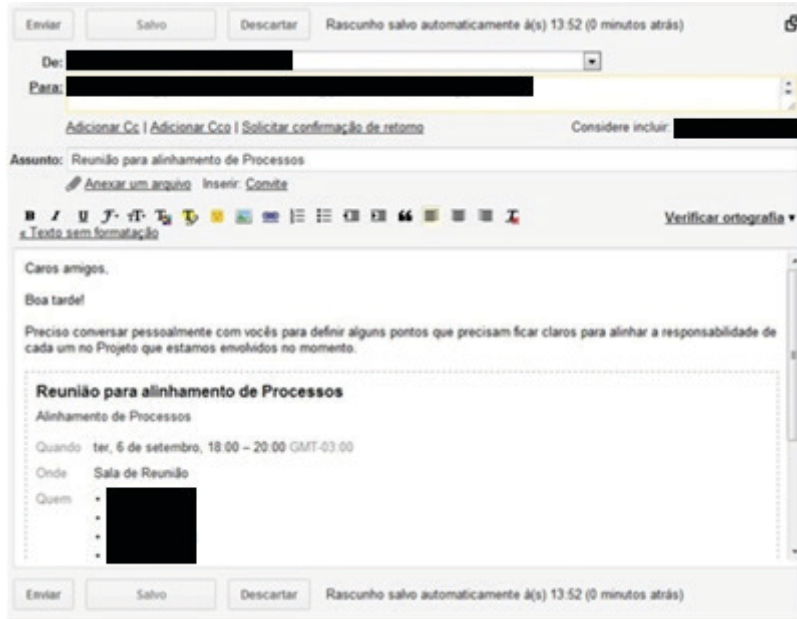
Image 2: Email as a discursive genre
Source: Rocha (2011)

There is a controversy, still present in the academy, related to e-mail: a genre or a genre support? In fact, it can be an electronic mail type support, like the *Outlook* program and at the same time a related genre of personal letters (MARCUSCHI, 2008). We agree with Paiva (2005, p. 77-78), when considering that the means of transmission of electronic messages generated "an electronic written genre with typical characteristics of memo, note, letter, face-to-face conversation and telephone conversation, whose representation acquires sometimes the form of a monologue, sometimes [the form of] a dialogue". Given the hybridity present in the genre, based on the notorious *continuum* between speech and writing (MARCUSCHI, 2008), which ranges from a memo to a conversation, we assess that the genre predicts (and enables) a vast proxemic gradient, in accordance with the relationship that the interactors maintain with each other, concurrent with interlocutory demands: greater/lesser (as)symmetry between the subjects.

We are not referring to stereotyped, fixed and formulaic relationships, such as employee x employer, teacher x student, co-worker x co-worker, but the relationship between subjects, without neglecting their social roles. We cannot imagine, for example, that every employee of a given company marks an equal distance (or proximity) with his/her boss. We also imagine that an employee who has a closer relationship with the boss outside the work environment can project some approximations, even in a formal email. There are bosses who opt for a more informal style (and for a consequent approximation of their employees), which would summon a reduction of the intersubjective distance.

In the field of work, there is a taboo that electronic communications must be strictly formal, without, in most cases, a more discursive explanation. We can see this assessment, for example, in Gold (2005, p. 100), when she states that, in the e-mail, "the formality required by the situation is maintained". Far from criticizing these writing manuals, we assume that Textual Linguistics can open dialogues with such materials, aimed at instrumentalizing the writing of texts in this modality (writing in companies). In e-mails, we believe it is possible to clearly notice that the interlocutory distance is associated with the interactants summoned by the text and with the author's stylistic choices. Although the text under analysis is a business communication, the vocative *Dear friends* seeks a certain reduction in the interlocutive distance, perhaps with the aim of promoting a more affective interaction and seeking greater adhesion of the team to what is requested.

Subsequently, the greeting (*good afternoon*) and the body of the text bring, for the most part, greater distance, mitigated with some uses that indicate greater proximity, such as the first person plural, which involves the author of the e-mail in the actions to be performed in the project, and the form of address *you*[8]. The persons of speech (the designations of the other) mark the

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[8] It is common that, in Brazilian Portuguese, the pronoun *you*, as opposed to *sir* and *madam*, marks informal interlocutory relationships.

responsibilities for the actions: the first person singular and the second person plural mark greater distance (the boss needs and the employees, interlocutors of the boss, assume the responsibilities); while the first person plural marks greater proximity (the boss, when including himself/herself, shows himself/herself to be co-responsible for the project, since he/she is also involved).

Thus, the analyzed text does not seem excessively distant (formal), as can be claimed by some manuals dedicated to the instrumentalization of writing in the genre, even though it is a secondary genre (BAKHTIN, 2010 [1992]). In this way, the author's style, which oscillates between the formal/distance and the informal/proximity, is coherent with the sociocultural practices of the genre, as well as with the probable and possible spaces interlocutors. The stylistic alternation (from formal to informal), as a typical way of acting and mobilizing semiotization tools, can promote greater adherence to the request made.

3.3 INDEXICALITY: LEXICON, TEXT, DISCOURSE AND INTERACTION

With an interest in the indexical character that governs interactions, we propose, in this section, an integrated debate between (i) contextualization cues (GUMPERZ, 1982, 2001; ADENDORFF, 1996; STREECK, 2010), frames (BATESON, 1987 [1972]; GOFFMAN , 1986 [1974]; TANNEN; WALLAT, 1987) and footing (GOFFMAN, 2002 [1979]); (ii) referencing (MONDADA; DUBOIS, 1995; MARCUSCHI, 2007; KOCH; ELIAS, 2008, 2012); and (iii) social and discursive deixis (LEVINSON, 2007 [1983]; ARCHER *et al.*, 2012). Such theoretical domains combine at the same time an inferential character to be negotiated by the interactants in a given frame, and a construction instantiated in the co-text and in the context. In common, we emphasize that an intersubjective indexicality which permeates all theoretical fields is contextually situated and focused on the subjects' actions in interactional activity, whose projection is also given to the interlocutive distances.

Composing a theoretical construct dedicated to conversational inference and the establishment of contextualization cues in face-to-face interaction, Gumperz (1982) refers to a multilevel system of meanings, among which we highlight proxemic regulation, which inspires negotiation between the enunciated signals and the resulting interpretations of the enunciation. In the course of this activity, the cues are unveiled from our conversational expectations, arising from previous interactive experiences, which align "what the activity is, how semantic content is to be understood and *how* each sentence relates to what precedes or follows" (GUMPERZ, 1982, p. 131). Gumperz (1982) advances when considering that the interpretative weight of the enunciated cues is much greater than the linguistic meaning, which makes us think that the interaction is constituted as a territory of language negotiation, which extends to the scope of linguistic-discursive proxemics.

In this sense, the cues affect the interpretation, make evident the role that indexicality plays in the conversation (GUMPERZ, 2001), delineate the context, provide information about the interactors' actions (ADENDORFF, 1996) and give meaning to their social relationship (STREECK, 2010). By recognizing the dialectical relationship between language and society, sociointeractional studies assume the task of analyzing the uses and repercussions of utterances in specific contexts (set of actions that surround an event and evoke interpretation). Interaction is guided by sociocultural conventions; it is not disordered, since cultural rules organize the actions of its participants.

The cues also provide contextual frameworks and enable alignments between the interacting subjects, so that they jointly negotiate shared meanings. For that, we will bring a brief synthesis of the concepts of frames and footing, considering the harmony between both concepts with the notion of contextualization cues. In analogy to a frame of a painting and a mathematical set, Bateson (1987 [1972]) refers that (psychological) frames, explicitly or implicitly, delimit messages (or significant actions), that is, they include certain significant actions and exclude others. From the Goffman's (1986 [1974]) and Tannen and Wallat's (1987) perspectives, the notion transcends a linguistic-conceptual knowledge, insofar as it relates "to the speakers' social framing in the interaction and to the social regimes and practices that qualify [the interaction]" (MORATO, 2010, p. 94).

Therefore, frames are activated, (re)updated and negotiated in the course of the interaction: the interactants are framed by cotextual and contextual instances, which lead the participants to achieve their intentions. In the absence of activation of meanings for a given utterance (non-understanding) or in the activation of meanings not intended by the interactor (misunderstanding), there is misalignment of frames.

Goffman (1986 [1974]) invites us to think that frames, as interpretation schemes, can be (i) natural and linked to *purely physical*/determined occurrences (without orientation, without animation), as is the case of information related to meteorology in a report; or (ii) social, related to prior knowledge of events, agency, volitivity and intentionality, whose description is aligned with *guided actions*. The notion of footing, anchored to the social notion of frames, contemplates the participants' alignment in the events and the intersubjective negotiation of meanings. Goffman (2002 [1979], p. 113) refers to "[t]he alignment, or bearing, or positioning, or posture, or personal projection of the participant", predicting that such subjects may change footing, depending on their purposes in the ongoing interaction. It seems to be central to Goffman's (1986 [1974], 2002 [1979]) debate that senses, triggered by cues that promote given frames (framing) from certain footings (alignments), are constructed in interactional encounters.

Tannen and Wallat (1987) refer to the concepts of *interactive framing*, highlighting both Goffman's (1986 [1974], 2002 [1979]) contributions – frames and footing – and *knowledge schema*. In the authors' view (1987, p. 207), this scheme is related to "participants' expectations about people, objects, events and settings in the world, as distinguished from alignments being negotiated in a particular interaction". When investigating the establishment of frames in a pediatric consultation, Tannen and Wallat (1987) found that the use of different records by the doctor to interact with the child (maternal language), with the child's mother (conventional) and with the residents (report) resulted from the particularities of the three audiences (three distinct social encounters). The three alignments and consequently the three registers used also provided three frames. That is, each frame summoned a different footing and registration.

Although Tannen and Wallat (1987) have undeniably contributed to the construct, we agree with Morato (2010) that the split between interactive frames (interactional notion) and knowledge schemes (semantic/conceptual notion) is not appropriate. We conceive its integration in a dialectical continuum, under the argument that there is no cognition entirely outside language, nor language outside interaction (MORATO, 1996).

Constructed from the interactants' alignment and their framing in the interaction, contextualization cues, by virtue of their inferential character, are related to the referencing, which, as a dynamic and subjective process, concerns the "construction and reconstruction of objects-of-discourse" (KOCH; ELIAS, 2008, p. 123). The allusion to objects-of-the-discourse (and not to objects-of-the-world), to which we are affiliated, is based, from a sociocognitive and sociointeractional perspective, on the inexistence of a specular relationship between language/sign/reference, considering that language, as it is "a system of syntactic-semantic indeterminations" (MARCUSCHI, 2007, p. 70), "it is not a portrait, but a deal of the world" (MARCUSCHI, 2007, p. 108). The referencing activity is one of the regulators of interlocutory distances, as lexical choices are motivated by the degree of distance/familiarity, by ideologies, by the hierarchical relationships assumed by the subjects, by the context and by socio/intercultural conventions. It is in the interaction that we (re)construct, cooperatively with our interlocutor, the objects-of-discourse (the representations of reality, the designations of the other and ourselves, the evaluations of proxemic movements), which pass through cultural, ideological, social and individual filters.

Therefore, referencing is a category through which subjects, from their intersubjective experiences, take the world in the course of interaction. This activation of objects-of-discourse, among other actions, guides the interactors not only temporally and spatially, but socially and discursively. In this sense, the notion of deixis, associated with the context of enunciation (LEVINSON, 2007 [1983]), encompasses both "social identities of and/or relationships between speakers, addressees and others" and "parts of a text or a discourse which occurred prior to or occur following the speaker's current utterance" (ARCHER *et al.*, 2012, p. 27), which are associated, respectively, with social deixis and discursive deixis. When exemplifying the social deixis with the statement *Nice to meet you, professor Ajimer*, Archer *et al.* (2012) clarify that the possible references to the teacher depend on who the interlocutor is and on the desired degree of (in)formality, choosing to focus (or not) on occupational status. According to Archer *et al.* (2012), the discursive deixis encompass endophoric (anaphoric and cataphoric) and exophoric references, which inspires us to place deixis, respectively, in the co-text and context instances. In the analysis of the following text[9], we will contemplate the discussion of the themes undertaken so far.

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[9] Text Translation: Hey, Auntie! Speak down, I'm on the phone!

Image 3: The charge in the indexicalization of the interaction

Source: Formolo Júnior (2015)

The cartoon addresses a criticism not only of the use of cell phones in the classroom, but also of students' lack of interest in learning. The cues that converge to this analysis are given in the verbal (boy's utterance) and non-verbal (boy's facial expression and body positioning, and girl's gaze direction) levels. The teacher reacts with a disappointed facial expression, signaling her discomfort with the student's actions. In addition to this configuration (of disinterest and disappointment), we note cues that signal an ambivalence in the proxemic field: there are some semiosis of distancing (school furniture, directing the girl's gaze, boy's body posture projected backwards and teacher on a platform) and others of proximity (alignment of the gaze between the teacher and the boy, and the boy's statement).

We emphasize that the referent *Auntie* [*Tia*][10], unlike other uses of the term in Brazilian Portuguese, constructs a pejorative/derogatory sense related to the teacher's age. Such use marks a social and discursive deixis that, associated with the use of unmitigated imperative (*Speak down*), depreciates/violates the teacher's image.

In addition, we did a brief survey in a WhatsApp group, in order to consult the impressions of two people about the linguistic-discursive use in the text in question, especially the use of *Auntie* [*Tia*]. Both Brazilian adults (30 and 39 years old) and non-linguists (one historian and the other anthropologist) revealed that the expression was commonly used by young people to refer, in a derogatory way, to older people. In common, the two collaborators agreed that the use was associated with the actions of defying, mocking, provoking, disavowing, breaking the presupposed hierarchies in the relationship, depersonalizing (the use of a generic term to suppress the teacher's identity) and depriving the person of their place of speech. Both the appreciative and the derogatory use of *Auntie* [*Tia*] mark a reduced interlocutory distance, given that they convoke a relationship marked by greater intimacy, with the exception that the use in the analyzed text triggers a threatening/violent proximity.

In line with the demands of the genre itself (promoting criticism around a given theme), the cartoon summons a frame and footing that transgress the prototypical functioning of the classroom (teacher teaching classes and students involved in pedagogical activities). The distinct interlocutors' framing (frame) and projection (footing) in the represented interaction also have repercussions for the interlocutive distances. The text in question highlights the incongruous student's proximity in relation to the teacher, revealing a highly defiant and violent posture, in dissonance of what is expected in interactions involving students and teachers.

4 FINAL REMARKS

Linguistic-discursive proxemics emerges as an invitation to reflect about the amalgamation between indexicality and socially constructed meanings in (non)verbal semiosis. We assume that the interlocutory distance is more than textually marked; it is

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[10] In addition to referring to a family member, the term *Auntie*, in Brazilian Portuguese, can be used for children's teachers and friends' mothers (affective use) and to imply that the interlocutor is old/outdated (derogatory use).

ideologically inferable, which places the construct in a sphere from the particular to the collective (from the subject to social encounters). It is only through the set of language actions (verbal and non-verbal), which summon certain contexts, frames and alignments, that we are able to establish the relationships of meaning (approaches/distances) in the interaction. Therefore, indexations in language are not fixed, nor established a priori, but are summoned by the interactants' relationship, enrolled in a given genre, in a given ideological formation, in a given (as)symmetry with the other, and are motivated by a given intentionality (from the most affective to the most violent). Due to this set of factors, we confirm that the empirical texts had an exclusive character of illustrating possible proxemic mechanisms, with no intention of proposing generalizations.

Alluding to the three themes presented, we associate the term with the establishment of (a)symmetric interactions, motivated by the desire to (i) break with or respect the (in)formality of the ongoing interlocution; (ii) direct (im)polite actions to the other, in line with or in dissonance with his/her expectations; and (iii) violent linguistically, symbolically and discursively the other, in symmetrical or asymmetrical relationships. In some way, we hope that this text motivates other researches to unveil, in the expansion of these theoretical domains and in the discovery of other domains, linguistic-discursive mechanisms of approximation/distancing, in order to give visibility to what may be culturally hidden.

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