



Study of reviews in higher education in light of the perspective of genre style

Estudo de resenhas no ensino superior à luz da perspectiva do estilo dos gêneros

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ABSTRACT: This article starts from the problem of teaching academic genres in higher education, specifically in the review genre approach. We analyze the review genre in the context of media entertainment and in the academic context, based on three examples of each. Next, we show a didactic proposal for approaching reviews in higher education, based on the results of the first analysis and using the experience in an introduction to scientific research course at a federal university, where this genre is included in the syllabus. To analyze the review genre, we applied the methodology of discursive analysis of the genre's style, associating the methodological path of French semiotics with Bakhtin's genre studies. This relationship is considered theoretically useful for studies of the style of the genre, which take into account the recurrence of a way of being of a given genre in its various realizations. The systematization of results shows that studies of genre style can contribute to a better understanding of discursive genres, as they allow us to understand their own way of construction and circulation in each sphere of communication. Comparing the same genre (review) in different contexts – media and academic – can facilitate the approach in the classroom and provide an interaction that ranges from the most informal to the most formal, following the orientation of the genre in both contexts. With this research, we relate results from theoretical research to practical applications, seeking contributions to higher education.

KEYWORDS: Academic genres. Review. Style of the genre.

RESUMO: Este artigo parte da problemática do ensino de gêneros acadêmicos no ensino superior, especificamente na abordagem do gênero resenha. Fazemos uma análise do gênero resenha em contexto de entretenimento midiático e no contexto acadêmico, a partir de três exemplares de cada um. Em seguida, mostramos uma proposta didática de abordagem das resenhas no ensino superior nos apoiando em resultados da primeira análise e utilizando a experiência vivenciada em uma disciplina de introdução à pesquisa científica de uma universidade federal, em que esse gênero integra a ementa. Para a análise do gênero resenha, aplicamos a metodologia de análise discursiva do estilo do gênero, associando o percurso metodológico da semiótica francesa aos estudos de gênero de Bakhtin. Essa relação é considerada proveitosa teoricamente para os estudos do estilo do gênero, que levam em conta a recorrência de um modo de ser de um determinado gênero em suas várias realizações. A sistematização dos resultados mostra que os estudos do estilo do gênero podem contribuir na melhor compreensão dos gêneros discursivos, já que permitem depreender seu modo próprio

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de construção e circulação em cada esfera de comunicação. A comparação de um mesmo gênero (resenha) em contextos diferentes – midiático e acadêmico – pode facilitar a abordagem em sala de aula e propiciar uma interação que vá do mais informal ao mais formal, acompanhando a orientação do gênero nos dois contextos. Com esta pesquisa, relacionamos resultados de pesquisas teóricas a aplicações práticas, buscando contribuições para o ensino superior.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Gêneros acadêmicos. Resenha. Estilo do gênero.

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1 Introduction

Assisting in the development of academic literacies among higher education students through work based on textual/discursive genres has, in recent years, become a focus of university courses, especially in Linguistics. An example of this is the publication and impact of the work *Produção textual na universidade*, by Motta-Roth and Hendges (2010), as well as a collection of works published by Parábola Editorial entitled *Leitura e produção de textos técnicos e acadêmicos*, including: *Resenha*; *Resumo*; and *Planejar gêneros acadêmicos* (Machado; Lousada; Abreu-Tardeli, 2004a, 2004b, 2005), among many other texts aimed at assisting teachers and students in the teaching-learning process of academic genres according to their context of production and circulation.

It is not merely a matter of mastering certain linguistic and compositional resources for writing a scientific article, a project, or a review, for example, the choice of grammatical person to ensure formality, grammatical correctness, and the arrangement of information throughout the pages, but rather of understanding the reasons behind each usage, its effects of meaning, the relations of power and authority involved in the anticipated interaction between author and reader, the role these genres play in academic-scientific communication, and the need for students to learn and practice the writing and reading of these genres.

Within this context of studies on academic genres in higher education, professors are expected to be capable of training students to produce texts critically

and with quality in various academic practices, such as coursework assignments, reading and writing in undergraduate research programs, and participation in graduate-level experiences.

Our experience teaching in higher education with academic literacy converges with the observation made by Araújo and Bezerra (2013, p. 19): “the limited (or nonexistent) familiarity with academic genres – which is entirely natural – creates difficulties in the student’s process of adaptation to the discursive practices of the university”. To address this issue, especially during the early stages of undergraduate studies, we advocate raising awareness through work that begins in a more playful and interactive manner using texts and everyday experiences familiar to students, thereby enabling a smoother introduction to less familiar texts and experiences.

Based on research into the semiotic analysis of digital genres, we intend to present a teaching-learning model for academic genres, taking as an example the comparative study of academic and non-academic reviews. To this end, the model is grounded in discursive stylistics, combining the study of genres from a Bakhtinian perspective with the study of texts through French semiotics.

2 Genre style

In discursive stylistics, it is considered that style emerges from the utterance (genre) through the way in which the subject takes the floor, responding to the other. Identified within a totality, style is a homogeneous body inferred from the regularity of discursive procedures articulated among themselves and is only possible considering the inevitable interdiscursive confrontation (Discini, 2015b), dialogical par excellence, according to Bakhtin’s philosophy. Style, therefore, is “inferred as the enunciation presupposed by a set of utterances” (Discini, 2010, p. 210).

Genres, understood here from a discursive perspective, are “relatively stable types of utterances” (Bakhtin, 1997), which marks their relationship between stability and instability, inherent to enunciative praxis, since they are understood

“in their complexity, considering their unstable, variable, and mutable nature [...], while at the same time observing certain recurrences, a certain invariance that enables discursive interaction to become more effective and immediate, inserting itself into a universe of expectations shared by the enunciator and the addressee, fixed through use and constructing conventions” (Gomes, 2009, p. 576).

Within this discursive stylistics, Bakhtinian components intertwine with semiotic categories in search of recurrences that make it possible to arrive at style. This interweaving may occur after the semiotic analysis, or even in an articulated manner from the very beginning of the analytical procedure (Pereira, 2021).

According to Pereira (2021), based on Discini's studies (2010, 2015b) concerning genre style, the procedure for studying discursive genres may follow the following path:

- Selection, description, and categorization of the utterances of the genre to be analyzed, facilitating the reader's understanding of its content.
- Semiotic analysis of each utterance according to the generative trajectory of meaning and the elements of the plane of expression – in texts where their presence adds new meanings – in an integrated manner and according to the object's specificities.
- Analysis of the genre's components (compositional structure, theme, and style), relating recurrences found in the semiotic analysis.
- Inference of a particular mode of being of the genre based on the previous analyses, ultimately establishing the style of the genre under examination.

In this methodological construction, the relationships between French semiotics and the study of discursive genres from a Bakhtinian perspective have been regarded as advantageous and coherent, since both perspectives converge in their interest in studies related to enunciation and discourse.

French semiotics understands the text as an object of signification, a totality of meaning. It is conceived as the union of a content plan (discourse) and an expression plan (the materiality through which discourse manifests itself). This semiotics is concerned with studying the mechanisms of meaning production within the text, presenting itself as a generative, general, and syntagmatic theory:

It is a syntagmatic theory because its scope is to study the production and interpretation of texts. It is general because it is concerned with any type of text, regardless of its mode of manifestation. It postulates that content can be analyzed separately from expression, since the same content can be conveyed by different planes of expression (for example, a negative can be manifested by the word no or by a gesture of the head or index finger). It is, therefore, a general theory of texts, whether they manifest verbally, visually, through a combination of visual and verbal plans of expression, etc. It is a generative theory because it conceives the text production process as a generative trajectory, which goes from the simplest and most abstract to the most complex and concrete, in a process of semantic enrichment (Fiorin, 1995, pp. 166-167).

In this generative trajectory of meaning, cited by Fiorin (1995), the semiotician finds resources to operationalize the content analysis of texts, since each level (fundamental, narrative, and discursive) presents categories of syntax (mechanisms that order the contents) and semantics (contents that fill the syntactic arrangements) that allow for a detailed study of the text. At the fundamental level, we can analyze the most abstract general oppositions presupposed in the text, such as life vs. death, nature vs. culture, freedom vs. oppression, which are valued as euphoric (positive) or dysphoric (negative) in the discourse. At the narrative level, the transformation of the subject's state in relation to the object guides the beginning of a narrative: from conjunction with the object to disjunction or vice versa. The notion of minimal narrative based on the transformation of states, which we call narrativity, is general enough to be present in a general theory of text, since it can be found in any text and not only in those of the narrative type. The transformations occur in a canonical

narrative schema: manipulation, competence, performance, and sanction. These phases of the sequence have reciprocal implications and not all of them need to occur in a narrative. At the discursive level, the narrative structures are concretized by themes and figures. Being the most superficial level of the text, we have in it the discursivization through the establishment of people, spaces, and times.

This is just a summary that does not intend to exhaust the categories nor the complexity of semiotics theoretical resources, but merely to briefly present what can be better understood in introductory works of semiotics, such as *Discourse theory* by Barros (2001) and *Elements of discourse analysis* by Fiorin (2006). In addition to this Greimassian perspective of semiotics, other more recent developments can complement and enrich the semiotic study, such as the interaction regimes of Sociosemiotics and the regimes of meaning of Tensive Semiotics, for example.

Bakhtin, in turns, identifies three constitutive components of a discourse genre: compositional structure, theme, and style. "All these three elements [...] are inseparably linked within the whole of the utterance and are equally determined by the specificity of a given sphere of communication." (Bakhtin, 1997, p. 261-262) Based on Bakhtin's studies (1997), Fiorin (2008, p. 5) points out that "the theme is not the subject matter of the text, but the sphere of meaning that the genre deals with", or the "semantic-objective considerations", according to Bakhtin himself (1997, p. 282). Besides the theme itself, Pereira (2013, p. 103) states that "genres are also distinguished regarding the way of thematizing within the set of utterances that makes up each totality, mobilized according to the context in which it is inscribed and the addressing of the utterance (to whom it is directed)". The compositional structure is defined as "certain types of construction of the whole, of types of its completion, of types of relationship between the speaker and other participants of discursive communication - with listeners, readers, partners, the discourse of the other, etc." (Bakhtin, 1997, p. 266). Analyzing the compositional structure of a genre depends, therefore, on the careful identification of all its formal constitutive marks. The style, which Bakhtin

treats as "style of language" or "linguistic style", is identified in the "linguistic, phraseological, and grammatical resources of the language" (1997, p. 262). Besides expressive resources of the language, perhaps we can speak of multimodal resources which, in texts that are not only verbal or non-verbal, may manifest themselves stylistically in texts, such as visual and sound resources.

According to a compilation by Pereira (2021), in the intertwining of French semiotics categories with the three Bakhtinian components, one can identify as possibilities for the study of a genre's style:

Compositional structure: Categories of enunciation (person, time, space - I, here, now in relation to he, there, then, operations of actorization, temporalization, and spatialization that compose the syntax of discourse, figurativized according to anthroponyms, chrononyms, and toponyms); recurrences within the scope of sentence syntax (option for subordination or coordination, direct or inverse order), which, related to the aforementioned categories, produce certain effects of meaning that sediment a specific way of composing; mechanisms for citing the discourse of others; textual organization specific to the genre (e.g.: presence of sections, form of the units (verse, paragraph, etc.), their ordering and dimension, and predominant textual types); textualization mechanisms - linearization and elastization - and organization at the expression level.

Theme: Anchoring in a certain domain of meaning, inferred by operations that compose the semantics of discourse.

Style: constitutive expressiveness of the utterance or "standard expressiveness of a genre" (Bakhtin, 1997, p. 314). Tone of voice that manifests itself from the choice of linguistic resources. As an example, we can cite vocabulary choice (typical verb forms, presence or absence of adjectives, chosen pronoun of address, use of jargon, slang, abbreviations, internet slang, among others), use of figures of speech; multimodal resources such as colors, images, figures; punctuation; marks of orality or

of "scripturality", which, as an effect, trigger a more humorous, more formal/informal tone, of personality/impersonality, or more serious, for example.

During analysis, one cannot disregard the interrelation of these components and, also, the conditioning role of the communication spheres in which the genres are inscribed. According to Discini (2015a, p. 22), it is possible to create "anticipations of a style offered by the diverse spheres of communication". If from the academic sphere we can have expectations of direct and formal language, which contributes to the effect of distancing and familiarity with the academic protocols that govern social relations in this environment, from the humorous sphere the expectation is of informality and language games, which also dialogues with its framework of values.

This trajectory of genre study can be done by the teacher, who infers the main characteristics that they need to present to their students, or even by the student, guided by the teacher, when studying in detail the characteristics of some texts they have at hand to gradually construct their knowledge about the genre in question.

3 The Style of the Review Genre

To demonstrate how the genre style study model – based on the trajectory cited in the previous section – works, we selected for analysis three non-academic reviews available on the internet, where they usually circulate:

- Review 1: "Review (08x06) | Game of Thrones delivers a good ending after a season with slip-ups" Review 2: "Review of the LG K51S: cell phone has a low price, but falls short in almost everything";

(1) Review 3: "[Resenha] O Sol na Cabeça"¹.

and the three academic reviews selected are:

- Review A: CAMPOS, Paulo Tiago Cardoso. A review of: WELLS, H. G. *A Short History of the World*. Translated by Rodrigo Breunig. Porto Alegre: L&PM, 2011.

¹Available on: <http://www.achadoselidos.com.br/2018/10/02/resenha-o-sol-na-cabeca/>

- Review B: BRUM, Ceres Karam. A review of: ROCHA, R. P. *Quando ninguém educa*: questionando Paulo Freire. Editora Contexto, São Paulo: 2017. 160 p.
- Review C: COSCARELLI, Carla Viana. GOMES, Luiz Fernando. *Hipertexto no cotidiano escolar*. São Paulo: Cortez, 2011. 120 p.

The criterion for selecting non-academic reviews was the diversity of subjects reviewed and, for academic reviews, the diversity of authors, topics, and online availability.

We would like to clarify that, in this selection, we consider the examples cited to belong to the same genre, the review, adapted to the different spheres in which it circulates, mediatic and academic. This is justified by their similar structure which unites the essential characteristics of the two parts under study - distinguished by style and sphere of activity - into a single whole, as will be seen in the analyses.

3.1 Non-academic Reviews.

Review 1, published on the website *Pop Cultura* by Giullia Gusmão on May 20, 2019, discusses the last episode of the eighth and final season of the American television series *Game of Thrones*, that aired from 2011 to 2019. The episode in question aired the day before, on May 19, 2019. Review 2, by Vitor Grama, published on October 22, 2020, on Globo.com's website TechTudo, presents a smartphone that had recently been released in Brazil at the time. Review 3, by Tainara Machado, was published on October 02, 2018, on the *blog* Achados & Lidos. It is a review of the book *Sol na Cabeça* by Geovana Martins (published by Companhia das Letras).

We can observe in a semiotic analysis of the content of the three reviews presented here, through discourse syntax, a combined use of impersonal markers, such as the third person, and of the first-person by the narrators of each text. "Overall, my feelings regarding the finale of *Game of Thrones* were that of satisfaction" (Review 1); "However, in my opinion, this was a space used unnecessarily in the device." (Review 2); "As I mentioned [here](#), these were the two chosen books for April in a book club I'm

a part of.” (Review 3). The use of the first-person amidst the third person indicates that the genre is not rigidly confined to the strict use of a particular grammatical person; rather, it possesses a certain flexibility that allows the first-person to emerge within the body of statements. The first-person speaker is represented by the names of the authors responsible for publication, which are usually affiliated with a hierarchically superior entity, such as public media outlets like *Globo.com* and *MTV*. Only the blog publication is affiliated with a community called *Achados & Lidos*, of which the author of the review is a member.

Two reviews (2 and 3) are written in the present tense, a trait of the more descriptive type, which focuses on the description and evaluation of the smartphone and of the literary work. In contrast, Review 1, of the final episode of the TV show, makes liberal use of verbs in the past tense in its narration and overall evaluation of the work. Thus, we can say that the choice of tense depends on the work/product being reviewed: the present tense is proper for reviews of products and works that are at hand and intend to describe and evaluate; the past tense, which refers to a time prior to the moment of the event and reference point, is typical of reviews that focus on a specific event - in this case, the screening of a particular episode on a previous date. Both cases are in an indicative mood, since the reference point is the present, the moment when the object in question is being discussed. On websites, the enunciative situation is usually shared: it is to identify the site where the text was published, the URL (link) and how the distribution of information is laid out on a page. All the selected reviews are digital; therefore, their location information is very clear. The linguistic space is that of the self, which situates itself in a here and now. Several relations are established in relation to it, such as: “Below, are *spoilers* for the episode” (Review 1). One can see, in this case, the point of reference inscribed in the sentence from which the adverb is inscribed within a category of directionality, specifically verticality. Furthermore, there is a topical space to indicate the location of the objects being described and evaluated, as in the following examples: “The button located

bellow the volume controls cannot be personalized with other functions.” (Review 2) and “Not all short stories from the book, however, are as strong as the first two.” (Review 3).

In discursive semantics, we find a variety of themes and figures we seek to organize into broader thematic and figurative tiers. The speaker is represented figuratively with proper nouns. In some cases, this figurative representation is exacerbated and made iconic by including a photograph and biographical profile of the author, written in an academic, philosophical and humoristic tone:

“XXXX². Beatlemaniac. Journalist with a degree from Faculdade Cásper Líbero and founder of *Pop Cultural*! Trying to turn my life into an American sitcom” (Review 1).

“XXXX. Believing inner peace can only be achieved after breakfast, is a sucker for books with beautiful covers and can’t stand translated menus. Graduated with a degree in journalism from ECA-USP” (Review 3).

The iconization of the speaker results in a sense of accountability for what is said, which is generally viewed positively by society.

In the thematic journey of goods consumption, we have, for instance, themes like “satisfaction”, “possibilities”, “potential” (Review 1); “price”, “costs”, “discount”, “price range of more attractive competitors” (Review 2); “advertising” (Review 3). Figures that illustrate this thematic tier are: “spin-off series” (Review 1); “suggested price of R\$1,499”, “buy the *LG K51S*”, “scale”, “in the range of R\$1,090”, “consumer”, “time to buy” (Review 2); “rights sold”, “worth reading” (Review 3). We can also mention in this figurative tier figures that manifest appear in advertising images that fill the pages of all non-academic reviews.

On the narrative level, we have a speaker positioned as a sender endowed with the skills necessary for the reviewer to assume the role of an authority in the subject

² We replaced their names with a series of “X” to protect their identities.

matter and be accepted by the institution that publishes their work (POP/Cultura/MTV, TechTudo/Globo.com and Achados & Lidos) and the potential to reach the target audience the related to the subject and topic addressed. In participatory communication³, the objects it possesses and offers in manipulation through temptation to its recipients are material and cultural goods that embody the value of social integration. In the non-academic reviews analyzed, it is evident that the items discussed possess both modal values: through the *power* and *knowledge* that having an opinion about a television show, a phone or a book can provide the individual cognitively and socially, as well as descriptive values in some cases: a phone is a utilitarian and consumable good ("The *LG K51S* is an *LG* cell phone featuring a standout quad camera with up to 32MP."), as well as social ("meeting the expectations of Hollywood fans who like watching movies and TV shows on their phones", "surfing the internet and browsing social media").

An analysis of these texts reveals that the sender does not always persuade the receiver to simply want the object in question, instead they might lead the receiver to want to know its negative or more critical aspects. In other words, rather than coming into conjunction with the object, the subject is driven to develop critical thinking to get an understanding of it. Most receivers may already possess the subject matter being discussed - semantically framed as a TV series, a smartphone, or a book - so the review offers them a more abstract object instead - with a distinct, expert perspective. However, in the case of smartphones, the primary function of the review is to help the receiver decide whether is worthwhile purchasing the item. This is evident in the following excerpt: 'the smartphone is unlikely to satisfy users seeking excellent user experience' (Review 2) - this aligns with the overwhelmingly negative evaluation throughout the review, deterring the reader from choosing the device. Finally, the

³ This occurs when the sender's transfer of an object does not imply relinquishment of it, since the object is shared; An example, is the knowledge shared between a teacher and their students without any party being deprived of it, as happens with material objects (Greimas, 2014);

importance of the sanction phase within these narratives stands out, as the sender-adjudicator frequently manifests through the evaluation of the performance of the subjects involved in the production of the reviewed objects.

At the fundamental, deeper and profound level lies the core semantic categories, which have been actualized at the narrative and discursive levels. The semantic opposition of identity versus alterity is noteworthy here, as all three reviews are grounded in the enunciators' personal choices - based on an identification with their own generation, on prior readings that foster a critical perspective, on specific expertise, and on the objects of their criticism. Likewise, readers who engage with these texts are drawn in by an identification - not only with the subject of the review, but also with a distinct way of perceiving it. It is important to note that the identity manifest, not merely in relation to the reviewed object itself, but also towards the other objects linked to it within the argumentation - this can be observed in the following two reviews: '2019 smartphones in the same category can shoot in 4K, such as the *Moto G8 Plus* and *Motorola One Vision*' (Review 2) and 'Attempting to curb consumption through police repression has, as we have seen, failed, a reality depicted even more evidently in *O Dono do Morro*, by English journalist Misha Gleeny. [...] Therefore, even though the viewpoints, approaches and styles are completely different, it is worth reading *O Dono do Morro* firstly, and then *O Sol na Cabeça*.' (Review 3). While identity is generally glorified, that which deviates from it, alterity, is disparaged, fueling the very core of a review: the critical evaluation of a subject, culminating in a final recommendation on whether consuming 'X' is 'worth it' or 'not worthy'.

In tensive terms, we can observe an asymmetrical relationship between affectivity (intensity) and informativity (extensiveness). Affectivity manifests moderately throughout the use of the first person, as previously shown, along with the interactive devices, namely, the use of more informal evaluative expressions, such as: 'Even the case of **Bran Stark**, who didn't want to be king, made perfect sense' (Review 1) and 'The size can be seen as a plus by people who like large displays, like

me' (Review 2). Although these features make these reviews more personal than genres like synopses or product descriptions, the recurring trait that we noticed across all the three texts was an objectivity and a containment of affectivity - which typically characterizes the digital genres. Informativity proliferates in the description of the object and in the arguments supporting its evaluation, which is crucial for gaining the audience's adherence. Like other digital genres, the regime of the universal (the participation of all) prevails over the regime of the absolute (the participation of a few). Thus, the production text is expected to be widely disseminated, with the comment section serving to open a space that goes beyond mere reading, fostering interaction with the author and other readers regarding the review's subject matter.

Considering this brief analysis, which could certainly incorporate additional semiotic concepts, we turn our focus to the components of the genre, seeking to correlate the finding of the semiotic analysis with aspects of this genre's compositional structure, themes, and style.

Regarding the compositional structure, following an initial image of the reviewed object, we identified its **introductory presentation** as key features:

- 'On Sunday night (19), HBO broadcast the final episode of the eight and last season of *Game of Thrones* worldwide. Below, are *spoilers for the episode:*' (Review 1),
- 'The LG K51S is an LG smartphonewhose standout feature is a quad-camera setup of up to 32 [MP](#).' (Review 2),
- 'Geovani Martins is only 26 years old, but his debut novel, *O Sol na Cabeça* (Companhia das Letras, 119 pages), was heavily promoted by his publisher, received praise from Chico Buarque, and has already had its rights sold to [more than nine countries](#).' (Review 3).

As seen in these examples, the text is characterized by the presence of links, making it an essentially hypertextual piece. Following the presentation, a **description of the object** is provided alongside its pros and cons, with this **evaluation** occurring iteratively throughout the description. Finally, it concludes with an explicit or implicit

recommendation in the closing remarks. Is important to highlight the **comment section** as a compositional feature, although it is not always widely used: only Review 3 contains three comments, whereas Review 2 had this feature disabled. Review 2 also includes a concluding table listing the pros and cons of the evaluated smartphone across technical aspects (design, performance, screen, camera, and battery), alongside a numerical score derived from the sum points across these aspects. All reviews hosted on websites, with the exception of Review 3, which was published on a blog, feature **dedicated advertising spaces**. Generally, these ads are targeted based on the reader's consumption behaviors.

Also integral to the compositional structure are the operations of enunciative disengagement, which stablish the *I-here-now*, along with references to the enunciatee that are occasionally implicit, such as using third person instead of the second person (you): 'For those who still prefer to choose the LG K51S, it can be found in the R\$ 1.090 (US\$ 218.00) price range. At this price point, consumers can expect a long-lasting battery and military-grade certification.' (Review 2), or it can be explicit: 'We hope you enjoy the reading!' (Review 3).

This compositional structure underpins the thematic core of the written evaluation (whether accompanied by images or not) of diverse objects, typically a single object per utterance of this genre. This evaluation stems from either a visual demonstration of its use (in the case of physical objects) or the referencing and/or explicit citation of excerpts (in the case of works), from which the recommendation, or lack thereof, the reviewed object emerges. The thematization of consumption, grounded in the figures of this object, serves as a mean to either encourage or discourage its access and use by the target audience.

The evaluative discussion in non-academic reviews tends toward a more informal style borrowed from the media sphere, nonetheless, it succeeds in creating an effect of responsibility, credibility, and creativity due to themastery the author aims to demonstrate over what they present, describe, evaluate, and recommend (or not). A

simple vocabulary, expressions of personal assessment, and a few terms specific to the subject matter—all of which are important for the speaker's credibility—are balanced to make the text more accessible while, at the same time, ensuring a tone that reflects the subject's specialized nature and the context in which it is discussed.

We can thus conclude that the style of the media review (as opposed to the academic review) serves to enhance understanding of a subject through its description and evaluation by a writer who presents themselves as an expert, or at least as someone with a keen interest, in the subject. Its structure and subject matter lend it an informative yet informal tone, with its informative nature serving as a key asset for the long-awaited release, in addition to fostering interactivity in the dialogue with the audience.

3.2 Academic Review

When it comes to academic reviews, we have some excellent resources that not only outline their general structure but also provide practical exercises for writing reviews, such as Andrade (2006) and Motta-Roth and Hendges (2010). So, we already have valuable information about your organization, such as its structure, which consists of the main steps of presenting, describing, evaluating, and recommending, for example. Nevertheless, in the following section we will analyze three selected academic reviews in order to apply the methodology we have presented as an alternative approach to studying the genre, and also to draw a parallel with the results of the analysis already conducted on non-academic reviews.

Among the selected academic reviews, Review A, by Campos (2013), deals with a work in the field of history: “Uma breve história do mundo”. Review B, by Brum (2018), focuses on a work in the field of education: “Quando ninguém educa: questionando Paulo Freire”. Finally, Review C, by Coscarelli (2012), focuses on the book

"Hipertexto no cotidiano escolar", which explores the relationship between language and technology.

Given the discursive nature of French semiotics, it is worth noting that these texts are predominantly thematic, as is characteristic of many academic texts, whose function is to explain observable facts in the world (Fiorin, 2006). Examples of topics that appear in the reviews include reading, language, history, ideas, thought, publishing, education, the web of meanings, research, theories, and knowledge, among others. However, there are also, though in smaller numbers, figures that embody these themes, such as: reader, student, teacher, school, book, Brazil, hypertext, readers, links, among others. Taken together, the themes seem to follow the thematic trajectory of scientific inquiry, as embodied by the actors participating in the scientific community (the authors of the works) and by specific actors within the field of activity in question (e.g., in the educational sphere, teachers and students appear). The first-person speaker is represented by the names of the authors responsible for the publication, which is overseen by an entity that also lends legitimacy and credibility to the speaker's text: the scientific journals (Fronteiras, Revista Contemporânea de Educação, and RBLA), whose names appear in the page footers.

These texts are written primarily in the third person to convey the objectivity and detachment typical of academic writing, but here and there we see the narrator speaking in the first person, as in these excerpts: "As for the modern period, the book's content deserves, **in our view**, two points of note [...]" (Review A) and "**When I describe** this work as interdisciplinary, I do so in the positive sense of the term" (Review B). This slight departure from the third-person narrative style can be explained by the evaluative nature of the review, which, although written in the third person, features a narrator who is strongly present in evaluative terms such as: "strong appeal for readers," "H. G. Wells presents the text in a smooth and pleasant manner, maintaining a courteous attitude toward the reader" (Review A); "a valuable contribution," "an accurate philosophical perspective" (Review B); "simple and

accessible language,” “it was a good choice by those responsible for the publication,” “With great clarity and didacticism, the author begins the text” (Review C). Regarding the temporal category, the *now* of the utterance stands out, characterized as being temporally close to the time of the utterance in the work under review. This is because there is a gap of one or two years between the publication of the book and the review (the book reviewed in Review A was first published in 1922, but the book referenced is from 2011). This temporal gap can be explained by the historical nature of the subject under discussion in the review. Spatially, the speaker projects himself into the implied *here*, but it is the book and its spatial organization that take center stage in the review: “The book has 67 chapters, most of which are short and written in a style reminiscent of journalism.” (Review A); “The second part of the book presents various ways to use hypertext in the classroom.” (Review C).

On a narrative level, the figure of the manipulative sender stands out as someone who presents himself as a discerning reader and expert on the work he introduces, describes, and evaluates. Just as the author of a non-academic review, here too he possesses a certain personal poise and expertise, which lends credibility to the text. It aims to instill in the reader a sense of quality, relevance, and appropriateness (the three reviews recommend the works positively, though this is not always the case), while also serving as a guide that highlights what should be noted when reading the work in question. The object, which is always presented as something positive, is offered to its recipients as a tempting lure, such as books that embody the value of culture and specialized knowledge—qualities that are highly desirable. In this context, the consumer is expected to purchase and read the item to integrate it into their knowledge value inherent in the item. The sender-handler also acts as a judge of the published work, generally giving a positive assessment of the creator’s work.

At a fundamental level, academic reviews also seem to be built on the opposition between identity and otherness, the former being an abstract term referring to identification with the work under review and the field of knowledge to which it

belongs, as we can see, for example, in this excerpt from Review B, which highlights the relationship between the work and the experiences of those who read and evaluate it: “The author’s response to disciplinary crises and **our concerns as teacher educators in these fields** is encouraging.” In Review A, the relationship between the work under review and other types of materials is examined; these materials are presented as “other” (different) and are viewed negatively: “[...] the reader perceives the historical process in the text in a fluid manner, rather than in the fragmented way found in many textbooks.” Thus, identity is generally glorified, while that which falls outside of it — otherness — is disparaged, shaping the critical assessment of the work, with final judgments such as “it’s worth reading” or “it’s not worth reading” regarding X.

From a critical perspective, we can say that academic reviews, like non-academic reviews, are shaped by a balance between emotional engagement — as reflected in the evaluations — and informativeness, as evidenced by the objective and concise information about the content of the work in question.

In light of this brief semiotic analysis, we turn our attention to the components of the genre, seeking to relate the results of the semiotic analysis to aspects of the genre’s compositional structure, themes, and style.

In terms of structure, we observe: an **introduction** to the scientific text under review and its author, an **iterative critical evaluation** throughout the discussion, and an **explicit recommendation**, usually at the end of the review. The predominant operation is declarative disengagement - *I/he, here, now*, focusing on evaluation of the content of the work, resulting in a sense of relative personal connection and closeness to the work and its context, which guarantees interactivity and credibility for the addressees. Nevertheless, there is a formality characteristic of the academic sphere, including in the achievement of the genre’s established defining features. It is also worth noting the awareness of the synthetic nature of the review genre, as we observe in: “Below, are some highlights from the book, given that the number of chapters makes it impractical to describe each one within the scope of a review” (Review A). It

is important to note, in this regard, that all the reviews analyzed have three pages, and are therefore very short academic texts.

In terms of subject matter, an academic review provides a written evaluation of scientific texts (usually recently published books) that are of interest to the reviewer and relevant to their field of expertise. The thematization of scientific knowledge is observed through a narrator established by authority and expertise on the subject and the text being read, as illustrated by various images specific to the field of knowledge covered in the reviewed text, can either encourage or discourage the target audience from reading.

In the style, the use of adverbs and adjectives that convey evaluation are predominant: “highly recommended” (Review A). Uses such as “the author [...] weaves a rich web of meaning” (Review B) exemplify the less objective vocabulary and phrasing found in reviews, which gives this genre more freedom compared to other academic genres, such as articles and research proposals. The prevailing tone is a formal one, drawn from the academic sphere, but softened by the reviewer’s ability to engage with the subject both intellectually and emotionally.

We can thus conclude that the purpose of an academic review is to enhance understanding of a scientific text through its description and evaluation by a narrator who positions themselves as an expert in the field. Its structure and subject matter lend it a tone that is both informative and formal, while allowing the narrator some flexibility and creativity in crafting the text.

4 Proposal for working with reviews

Based on our experiences teaching an introductory course on scientific research at a federal university, we describe below a pedagogical approach we have adopted in addressing genres of the academic sphere. This course syllabus includes assignments such as abstracts, reviews and research proposals, as well as an introduction to issues specific to the academic publishing context, such as plagiarism and citation.

Regarding reviews specifically, we focus on non-academic reviews, which are closer to students' everyday lives, to spark their interest and draw their attention to certain characteristics of genre. Students are engaged by being presented with reviews of content they typically "enjoy", such as a review of the TV series *Game of Thrones*, shortly after it ended.

Students always begin by reading published works in the genre in question. Next, through question-and-answer exercises, they are guided to identify recurring themes in the texts under analysis. Even if they are familiar with the genres, they can become aware of the formal characteristics that studying them provides. Some questions proposed to guide the discussion on non-academic reviews are:

1. Read the two reviews received carefully. Using the arrows on the sides, mark the characteristics you observe that are common to both texts.
2. Extract from the review you found sections that are an example of:
 - a. The level of certainty, or lack thereof, of the reviewer. (Is he certain that the product or work is good or bad? Does he have any doubts? How is this reflected in his word choices?)
 - b. a review of the product/work in question. (Is it positive? Is it negative? Which words or expressions indicate the reviewer's critique?)
 - c. the importance of the product/work. (Does the reviewer believe this is relevant to the target audience? Which words and expressions demonstrate that outlook?)
3. Extract from the review idioms that indicate:
 - a. when the reviewer is describing something.
 - b. when the reviewer is evaluating something.
4. Now watch the video review of the movie *Bird Box* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EaIPtbfPI>) and answer:
 - a. Which similarities did you identify between the two written reviews you analyzed?

- b. Which differences did you identify between the two written reviews you analyzed?
 - c. To what extent do these differences affect the reader's or viewer's level of engagement with the text they are reading or watching?
5. In what kinds of communication contexts do these reviews typically appear and who are the typical authors and readers of these texts?
6. Do you believe these texts undergo any kind of review before being published?
7. Observe the websites where reviews are usually posted. Are the readers allowed to comment or rate in these spaces? What are the implications of this for the context in which these texts circulate?

Once these questions have been answered, a class discussion can be held so that students can share their answers and reflect on their classmates' different perspectives. The teacher can mediate this discussion by raising new questions and examples when students have questions. To conclude this initial approach of gender, the teacher can present the "stabilities" and "instabilities" of genre in a more specific and structured way, based on the exercise and analysis conducted earlier (we will outline a method for doing so below). Since the students have recently been exposed to the genre and have done exercises on it, participation tends to be higher during this stage of discussion and presentation.

Here are the results of the semiotic analysis of the genre's style, which can help teachers understand the genre and determine what is relevant for guiding students. Examples of questions to show students include:

- the alternation between the first and third person and the resulting flexibility in the genre;
- the predominant use of the present tense to create a sense of closeness between the author and the reader;

- the thematization of consumption through terms such as “price”, “value” and “discount”, for example, which are frequently used in product reviews;
- strategies used by the author to make readers believe that he knows what he is talking about and is therefore credible;
- the importance of the reviewer’s evaluative role, as viewers rely on their reviews to decide whether or not to purchase the item;
- the relationship between emotional appeal and informational content in the presentation and evaluation of the object/product;
- overall structure of the presentation, description of the item, iterative evaluation throughout the description, explicit or implicit recommendation at the end of the text and the inclusion of a comments section and advertisements.

Thus, we emphasize that teachers do not necessarily need to use the metalanguage of semiotics and genre conventions, as in our analysis, but rather the findings of this study regarding the interpretation of textual meanings and the recurring patterns and variations characteristic of the genre.

In the following sessions, we will discuss the academic review, which, in terms of structure, retains and builds upon the characteristics of the non-academic review already presented. Having prior experience with media reviews will provide a sense of safety to the students, who should start to create connections between genres, their spheres and social practices.

As in the treatment given to media reviews, we start with an initial contact with other a number of texts in the genre that exist in concrete social contexts. In a group activity, each responsible for a different academic review, the students can perform the following assignment, based on a theoretical text, such as “Review”, by motta-Roth and Hendges (2010).

Perform the following activities based on the text:

1. Read the review carefully. Highlights, in the text, the four stages of a review: **presentation, description, evaluation e recommendation**. Please note if these four steps are mixed in different parts of the text, or if they're separated.
2. extract from the review sections that are an example of:
 - a. The level of certainty, or lack thereof, of the reviewer. (Is he certain that the book reviewed is good or bad? Does he have any doubts? How is this reflected in his word choices?)
 - b. The critique of book. (Is it positive? Is it negative? Which words or expressions indicate the reviewer's critique?)
 - c. the importance of the work (Does the reviewer believe that the work is relevant to that field of study? Which words and expressions demonstrate that outlook?)
3. Extract from the review idioms that indicate:
 - a. when the reviewer is describing something.
 - b. when the reviewer is evaluating something.
4. Compare the review that you found to the schematic structure below. Which steps are contemplated? Based on that observation, do you consider this to be a good review? Why?

Theoretical structure of a review:

1 Presenting the book

Step 1 describe the book's topic.

Step 2 define the target audience.

Step 3 cites the author's references.

Step 4 make generalizations.

Step 5 contextualize the book in its field of knowledge

2 Describe the book

Step 6 provides an overall idea about how the book's organized.

Step 7 establish each chapter's topic.

Step 8 cite extratextual material.

3 Evaluate parts of the book

Step 9 highlight specific points.

4 Recommend the book (or don't)

Step 10(a) disqualify/recommend the book.
Step 10(b) recommend the book, despite its flaws.
(Motta-Roth; Hendges, 2010, p. 43).

A new discussing based on the answers can be organized and serve as a formative evaluation of the students. Beyond systematizing the genre's features, the comparison between the previous, media review, and this academic one might contribute to the student's critical evaluations of different contexts – media and academia. The teacher might highlight some similarities and differences, such as the structure is similar, but in the academic review, there's usually no room for comments and publicity, due to the limitations of the mediums in which these reviews are published, that is, academic journals.

It's even possible to bring about discussion regarding contexts that go from informal (media review) to formal (academic review), comparing its context to the subjectivity vs. objectivity and flexibility vs greater control dichotomies.

A review writing assignment about a recent work might help students to practice the genre. In our case, we proposed a reading and review of the work “Multimodalidade e leituras”, edited by Dionisio (2014)⁴. After writing the review, a peer review system was organized in the computer lab, in which each student had criteria to evaluate topics that guide writing, to train their critical skills. Thus, they observed what was written and how, and left suggestions for what needs to be worked on the text where needed. The teacher's final evaluation presented even more suggestions for rewrites and final versions.

5 Final Considerations

This article had two goals: demonstrate a methodological proposition for studying genre styles, utilizing the review genre as an example, and presenting its

⁴ In previous years, we proposed reviewing the works *Mídia* (Chomsky, 2014) and *Língua, linguagem, linguística* (Bagno, 2014), for example.

possible contribution for supporting higher education. In the teaching proposal presented, we defended the importance of relating the informal to the formal utilizing media reviews, such as movies, a genre in which the students are well read, and going from there to academic reviews, a more formal style, in a way that eases the transition into a more academic and articulate form of review utilizing the student's former experiences.

To reach these goals, we united our research about a semiotic analysis of genres from the perspective of their style, our teaching practices in university, which involves, among its courses, introduction to scientific research and academic skills. It is certainly not the only way of approaching genre conventions in the classroom, but it's an alternative that has a horizon of detailed analysis to serve as a guidepost to the teacher's formative and didactic work.

As a result, we achieved comparative analysis from reviews of three media works and three academic works. We started with a French semiotic analysis and then consolidated the genre's components (Bakhtin): compositional structure, themes and style, reinforcing identifies styles.

Media reviews serve to enhance understanding of a subject through its description and evaluation by a writer who presents themselves as an expert, or at least as someone with a keen interest, in the subject. Its composition and themes guide towards an informative and informal tone, promoting a bigger dissemination of the subject and interactivity with the writer.

Academic reviews work for better scientific knowledge, through is description and evaluation through a writer that positions himself as a specialist in its field of knowledge. Its structure and subject matter lend it a tone that is both informative and formal, while allowing the narrator some flexibility and creativity in crafting the text.

As we noted, since they are variations of the same genre, they are more similar than they are different, especially considering their composition and themes. Through

this analysis and comparison exercise, we hope that students develop their critical skills, becoming more genre aware in their social practices.

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