

From textual type to textual genre. The essay in the university entrance exam / *Do tipo textual ao gênero de texto. A redação no vestibular*

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ABSTRACT

Today's official documents drawn up by the Ministry of Education in Brazil have advocated that textual production should be taught by the concepts of speech genre or textual genre. Following this guideline, the 2011 edition of the entrance exam, vestibular, of one of the most important universities in the state of São Paulo, Brazil, asked its candidates to write three texts, each one belonging to a different genre. In order to verify the theoretical-methodological horizons that motivated the elaboration of that exam, we analyzed the texts of (1) the candidate's guidelines, (2) the examination essay and (3) the expectations set by the examiners. Our theoretical perspective is the concept of discursive genre as developed by the members of the Bakhtin Circle since 1920. Then, we observe how this new proposal aims at evaluating the characteristics that the University expects to find in each one of its students; how the theoretical perspectives are used in the analyzed texts and how the assessment of the candidates' argumentative ability is ensured. Finally, we suggest the possibility of working with the genre "scholar essay".

KEYWORDS: Speech Genre; Text production; Vestibular; Argumentation; Bakhtin

RESUMO

Os atuais documentos oficiais elaborados pelo Ministério da Educação no Brasil têm preconizado o ensino da produção textual por meio do gênero - discursivo ou textual. Seguindo essa linha, o exame vestibular de ingresso a uma das maiores universidades paulistas de 2011 também solicitou dos candidatos a elaboração de três textos, de diferentes gêneros. Com o objetivo de verificar que horizontes teórico-metodológicos fundamentaram a elaboração daquele exame, analisamos os textos do (1) Manual do Candidato, da (2) Prova de redação e da (3) Expectativa da banca. Nosso parâmetro teórico é o conceito de gênero discursivo conforme desenvolvido pelos membros do Círculo de Bakhtin desde 1920. Observamos, então, como essa nova proposta visa avaliar as características que a Universidade espera encontrar em cada um de seus alunos; como utiliza o arsenal teórico nos textos analisados e como garante a avaliação da capacidade argumentativa dos candidatos. Finalmente, sugerimos a possibilidade de trabalho com o gênero "dissertação escolar".

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Gênero discursivo; Produção de texto; Vestibular; Argumentação; Bakhtin*

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In the teaching of the Portuguese language, today's pedagogical discourse has borrowed the notion of *speech genre* or *textual genre*. Regarding high school, which is of interest to us, the work with genres is recommended in the official documents which, since the 1996 Reform, guide and provide the curricular parameters, especially concerning the teaching of language, its system and the concept itself. The “inflated” reception (FARACO, 2009) to the concept has been widespread and its acceptance and publicity are frequently seen as a solution to the problems that we have been facing in teaching/learning, corroborated not only in the Curriculum Parameters and Guidelines, but also in textbooks. This is also a tendency among the big national university entrance exams: for instance, from 2011 on, one of the most important universities in the state of São Paulo has changed the instructions for essay writing, proposing now the production of texts in different genres. Generally speaking, it means that from the essay work done predominantly on textual type – description, narration and dissertation, the school starts working with genres, while confusion in relation to the concept's specificity still remains, including in naming it – *speech or textual genre*.

Bakhtin has taught us that, when learning our mother tongue, “we learn to cast our speech in generic forms and, when hearing others' speech, we guess its genre from the very first words” (1986, p.78); as we can see, this is probably a positive change in curricular guidelines. Thus, we consider important to have several contributions to understand the concept and its pedagogical use, so that its potential in language teaching can be fulfilled, bringing the dynamics of linguistic reality into the classroom, bridging the gap between school and life, and making it possible for the student to “live and understand critically his epoch”, according to the educational aims for the high school (BRASIL, 2006).

Indeed, the notion of speech (or textual) genres¹ is inserted in an enunciative-discursive perspective of language, adopted in official documents: the Curriculum Parameters of the Portuguese Language, of 1999; the Complementary Educational Guidelines that followed them, the National Curriculum Parameters (Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais) – PCN+, BRASIL, 2002); and also the subsequent document

¹ We are not going to elaborate more on this issue. We remind that, in Bakhtin's theory, the focus is speech, “language in its concrete living totality, and not language as the specific object of linguistics, something arrived at through a completely legitimate and necessary abstraction from various aspects of the concrete life of the word” (BAKHTIN, 1999, p.181).

Curriculum Guidelines for the High School (Orientações curriculares para o ensino médio, OCEM, BRASIL, 2006), launched by the Ministry of Education in 2006². By pointing the possibilities of meanings in the interrelation among the linguistic, textual and socio-pragmatic dimensions, this last document states that

the objective was [...] to show the necessity that the study of language uses and the forms language expresses itself are based upon reflection on the relationship among production, reception and circulation of meanings in different social spheres and in different forms of interaction (BRASIL, 2006, p.42).

By all means, the proposal to work with speech/textual genres allows the school not only the contextualization and mobilization of accumulated knowledge – the content to be passed on to the students, but also the visibility of its pertinence in daily life. Besides, we agree with Rojo (2008, p.85) when she states that “differently from the notion of *type*, the notion of *genre*, in principle, favors a more flexible treatment of form and style, and the dialogue between languages and voices in meaning construction. It is more resistant, in principle, to grammaticalization”. And this happens because, especially in the case of the Portuguese language, the documents recommend, as a preferential study unit, the search for meanings of *texts* in their production, circulation and reception. Actually, the official documents broaden the view of text, without restricting them only to the verbal ones, either written or oral, but including those that are expressed by means of other languages³ (a painting, a dance, a match, the hypertext...); they point out that the “text should be seen as a totality that can only reach this *status* in which the producer and the receiver engage themselves to build the meanings together”; and, they emphasize that “this new perspective becomes essential for the ample development of studies on speech genres nowadays” (BRASIL, 2006, p.21). The definition below shows clearly this text and genre interrelation:

Text is a meaningful and articulated whole, verbal or non-verbal.

² According to OCEM (BRASIL, 2006), the language approach adopted in the document is based on interactionism: “the studies developed by this school of thought in Linguistics involve scholars such as Hymes, and in Language Philosophy, such as Bakhtin, in Ethnomethodology and Sociology, such as Goffman, in Psychology, such as Bronckart, and in Education, such as Schneuwly, as well as those in Developmental Psychology, as is the case of Vygostky and his followers” (p.23).

³ In today’s proposals, it is expected that the high school student becomes proficient in several literacies.

The verbal text can have *different forms*, depending on the *thematic approach, the compositional structure, the author's stylistic traits* – a set that constitutes the *concept of textual genre* (BRASIL, 2002, p.60. No italics in the original text.).

Here, there are Bakhtin's known parameters that make us recognize genre: theme, composition and style, resonating the teachings found in the 1951-1953 essay. The problem of speech genres (2006, p.261-306), included in the collection published in Russia in 1979 for the first time and translated in Brazil as *Estética da criação verbal*⁴:

Language is realized in the form of individual concrete utterances (oral and written) by participants in the various areas of human activity. These utterances reflect the specific conditions and goals of each such area not only through their content (thematic) and linguistic style, that is, the selection of the lexical, phraseological, and grammatical resources of the language, but above all through their compositional structure. All three of these aspects – thematic content, style, and compositional structure – are inseparably linked to the *whole* of the utterance and are equally determined by the specific nature of the particular sphere of communication. Each separate utterance is individual, of course, but each sphere in which language is used develops its own *relatively stable types* of these utterances. These we may call *speech genres* (1985, p.60-61).

Later on, the document (BRASIL, 2002) is even more specific when mentioning those Circle concepts: “the texts are materialized in genres, having their *thematic, compositional* and *stylistic* aspects as pillars” (No italics in the original text.), and gives examples of genres in literature, journalism, science, publicity, and law, clearly advocating the advantages to work with the genres approach and leaving aside the

traditional scheme of the textual structures in the teaching of textual production – narration, description, dissertation, to adopt the perspective that the school should incorporate, in its practice, the genres, fictional or non-fictional, that circulate socially (BRASIL, 2002, p.77).

It is known that the concept of genre is essential to the studies in the Bakhtin Circle. Moreover, the essay published in 1979, the most known and many times seen as unique,

⁴ In English, *The Problem of Speech Genres* is one of the essays in *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, translated by Vern W. McGee, edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1986.

can be considered nearly as the resumption and systematization of all of the group's thoughts for five decades, according to, at least, these texts: The Elements of the Artistic Construction, in *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*, signed by P. N. Medvedev, in 1928; the second chapter in Part I and the third chapter in Part II in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, 1929, Concerning the Relation of the Basis and Superstructures and Verbal Interaction; The Problem of Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art, written in 1923-4 and the last chapter in *Art and Answerability, Early Philosophical Essays*; Discourse in the Novel, which is one of the Four Essays published in *The Dialogic Imagination*, 1934-35; the chapter Characteristics of Genre and Plot Composition in Dostoevsky's Works, in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 1929/1963 (cf. BRAIT; PISTORI, 2012).

For the Bakhtin Circle, genre organizes the utterance, tensely, from interior and exterior discourse, establishing an inseparable nexus and interrelation between the verbal and non-verbal of the utterance. Culture, historicity and tradition of genre promote its relationship with social life, space and time. This is expressed in the *thematic* content, as each theme group is related to certain activities spheres⁵. Among the structural characteristics of the utterance, the compositional form serves, in the first place, to the necessary alternation of the speakers; in the second place, to the specific *completion* of the utterance, determined by the possibility of an answer by the other speaker and presumably the exhaustive treatment of the meaning, what is meant to be said by the interlocutor and the typical structuring forms of genre completion; and, in the third place, to the constitutive particularity⁶ of the utterance, i.e., the way in which the utterance relates to the interlocutor himself and the other partners of the verbal communication (this relationship is always the basis for a responsive and active understanding of the utterance). Genre gives form to the work, and its structural elements can only be understood altogether and in relation to the genre. Regarding *style*, it is important to remember that, according to the Circle, in the

⁵ It is important to remember that theme transcends language: it is inferred from the totality of the utterance. Each genre can only comprise determined aspects of reality, from which a very particular view is provided. Therefore, there is an organic unit between the theme and that which is exterior to it (MEDVEDEV, p.211-212), the specific conditions of the utterance, the discursive activities, and the social practices. And each theme group is linked to certain "speech performances", to communication forms pertaining to the same genre (VOLOŠINOV, 1986, p.17-24).

⁶ "While teaching tools, most of the textbooks emphasize just form instead of working with genres as a whole", criticizes Roxane Rojo. <<http://www.ufmg.br/online/arquivos/016359.shtml>> Access: June, 2011.

individual's own style, the genre style can be recognized. Style – of the genre and individual - is responsible for the selection of lexical, phraseological and grammatical elements of the language, organizing them in a compositional structure. It means that the linguistic forms are organically and inseparably linked to the genres style.

Nevertheless, it is not the aim of this article to elaborate on the Bakhtinian concept of genre, nor track down the one present in the official documents, which has already been aptly done by other authors (cf. ROJO, 2008; ROCHA, 2012, among others). However, we were able to observe in the bibliography and in the concepts on which the official documents were drawn up on that the Bakhtinian view of genre is just one among the presented concepts. In Rojo's words (2008, p.86), the documents “revoice the textual theories, as well as Bakhtin's work and the didactic approach to textual genres of the Language Didactics team of Geneva University (SCHNEUWLY & DOLZ), followers of socio-discursive interactionism, among other schools of thought...”.

It is in this broader context, which involves the dialogue between the official documents on teaching and the Bakhtinian theoretical perceptions, and others (not always cohesive – it is worth acknowledging that OCEM (BRASIL, 2006) mentions “possible conflicts and misunderstandings among the interlocutors”), that this article is inserted: we aim at observing the functioning and application of the genre concept in the 2011 edition⁷ of the *vestibular* of the Universidade Estadual Paulista/Unicamp, one of the first among the important national entrance exams for the university to specify the genre to which the textual productions should belong to. We analyzed three texts, all available to the candidates and also to the general public: (1) the candidate's guidelines; (2) the examination essay proposals of the 2011 edition of the *vestibular*; and (3) the examiners' expectations towards the exam.

First, our objective is to verify the theoretical-methodological dialogue of these texts with the Bakhtinian texts, especially what is asked in relation to: (i) the proposition of

⁷ The 2012 edition of the Unicamp National Entrance Exam followed the same line, asking again three texts: a comment to be posted at a discussion forum on the Internet; a manifest written in formal oral modality, with the theme related to social networks, and an entry explaining the meaning of “cloud computing”. According to the coordinator of Comvest – Comissão Permanente para os Vestibulares, Maurício Kleinke, “The essays were contextualized in the candidates' universe; this is a very positive aspect of the Unicamp National Entrance Exam”. <<http://www.unicamp.br/unicamp/divulgacao/2011/11/14/vestibular-2012-prova-da-primeira-fase-resgata-universo-do-candidato>> Access: February, 2012.

a situation, in its broader and more immediate context – a sphere of human/ideological/discursive activity, related to the objective of the text that will be produced; (ii) the identification of the verbal communication partners; (iii) the presentation of the theme/composition/style elements (selection of the lexical, phraseological and grammatical resources of the language) – *expected, required* and *to be evaluated* – all, according to the Bakhtinian view, inseparably linked. Next, we analyze the proposal, mainly taking into account the most recognized Bakhtin's parameters that define genre: theme, composition and style. Finally, we make some considerations and suggestions on the argumentativity of the required productions and the skills required by the university. We will examine the texts.

1 Presenting the material

1.1 Candidate's Guidelines

Objectives and Characteristics – the 2011 Edition of the *Vestibular*⁸

Unicamp seeks students who can organize their ideas and express themselves with clarity.

The Unicamp National Entrance Exam classifies and selects candidates for the initial enrollment at the Campinas State University (Universidade Estadual de Campinas – Unicamp) and at the Medical and Nursing courses of the Medical College of São José do Rio Preto (Faculdade de Medicina de São José do Rio Preto – Famerp).

The Unicamp National Entrance Exam evaluates the candidates' aptitude and potential for the course they intend to take and their ability to

- express themselves with clarity;
- organize their ideas;
- establish relationships;
- interpret data and facts;
- come up with hypotheses;
- master the contents of the knowledge areas developed in high school.

On the following pages, you will find all the necessary information to know how the Unicamp National Entrance Exam evaluates its candidates.

We observed that the Guidelines start presenting the objectives and characteristics of the 2011 edition of the *vestibular* and, right on the first paragraph, it emphasizes that the

⁸ <<http://www.comvest.unicamp.br/vest2011/manual/objetivos.html>> Access: June, 2011.

candidate needs to ‘organize his/her ideas and express himself/herself with clarity’, reflecting the importance given to textual production in the exam. Next, when dealing with aptitude and potential required from the candidates, it emphasizes again those same abilities, “to express himself/herself with clarity; to organize his/her ideas”, adding others: “establish relationships; interpret data and facts; come up with hypotheses; master the contents of the knowledge areas developed in high school”. As we can verify, except for the last item, all the others are related to the skill and ability for textual production.

In the Guidelines, there are still instructions regarding the essay test, as transcribed below:

The essay test, composed of three obligatory tasks, takes into consideration much more than the knowledge of the standard language. It is an evaluation tool of how people write about a specific topic, and to write involves reading processes and elaborating arguments from *a given situation*. Each proposal has specific instructions that outline the purpose and genre of the text to be written, with indications of the interlocutors at stake. These instructions must be followed rigorously. Each proposal also comes with reading texts that serve as subsidy for its elaboration.

For a text to be considered good, the author needs reading experience; he/she has to outline a text *project* bearing in mind a specific objective and has to formulate it in written form. In this sense, the essay evaluation parameters are the production conditions themselves that are given to the candidate: the genre and the interlocution that is proper to it (the theme, the writing motivation, the instructions that slice this theme in a specific way), the reading, and the written articulation (modality/cohesion).

Thus, the candidate, regarding:

- 1) *reading*: must elaborate on contact points with the reading of the text(s) presented. He/She must show how relevant these points are for his/her text *project*, and not simply reproduce the text(s) or parts of it/them in collage form, without elaborating on the selected elements.
- 2) *purpose*: must elaborate a text according to the required purpose.
- 3) *genre* and *interlocution*: must elaborate his/her text project with the characteristics of the required genre and of the interlocutors involved.
- 4) *written articulation*: must elaborate a text that allows for its reading to be fluid and involving, resulting from a well-articulated by cohesive devices syntactic-semantic structuring. He/She should also demonstrate mastery of an ample lexical set and of the standard norm for the rules of accent, spelling, verb-noun agreement, among others. (No italics in the original text.)

In these excerpts, the theoretical-methodological dialogue with the Bakhtinian texts is especially present according to what will be required on the exam regarding: (i) the

proposition in a specific sphere of human activity (the “situation” from which the text will be elaborated), but there is no reference to a more ample context, only to the most immediate one, and its relationships with the aim of the text (the “reason why” the textual production is required); (ii) the identification of the verbal communication partners according to the genre; (iii) the theme/composition/style elements (selection of the lexical, phraseological and grammatical resources of the language, that can be inferred from the item “written articulation”). However, this item brings us a question: would it be possible to think about a “well-articulated by cohesive devices syntactic-semantic structuring” that could be proposed generally, with no regards to genre, for each text’s aim? The same question can be asked in relation to “master an ample lexical set and the standard norm for the rules of accent, spelling, verb-noun agreement”, which definitely differ from one genre to another. Wouldn’t it be the moment to clarify that the lexicon as well as the grammatical set of rules, in the produced texts, should be adjusted to the interlocution situation? By all means, the presence of cohesive devices in an opinion article, in a speech delivered orally or on a discussion forum on the web are quite different, as well as the necessity to follow the rules of accent, spelling, agreement...

1.2 The examination essay

As stated in the Guidelines, the textual production of three obligatory tasks, three different genres⁹, was required. The first was a comment on a site; the second, a speech delivered in a school event; the third, an opinion article:

TEXT 1

Imagine yourself as a young person who, while browsing MTV’s site, comes across the graph “The values of a generation” from the research *Dossiê MTV Universo Jovem*, and decides to comment on the data presented, via the network’s “Talk to us”. In this comment, you necessarily should:

- a) compare the three years researched, indicating two (2) relatively stable values and two (2) relatively significant changes in values;
- b) position yourself whether you recognize yourself in the profile the research has portrayed. Here is the graph.

TEXT 2

⁹ <http://www.comvest.unicamp.br/vest_antiores/2012/download/comentadas/redacao.pdf> Access: June, 2011.

Place yourself as a students' union leader who has received complaints from your classmates about the teaching of science in your school, and who, after reading Tatiana Nahas' interview on the scientific magazine *Ciência Hoje*, decides to invite her to give a lecture to the students and teachers of the school. Write a speech to present the event, suitable to the formal oral modality. You necessarily should:

- a) present a diagnosis of three (3) problems regarding the teaching of science in your school; and
- b) justify the guest's presence, by pointing out how her ideas expressed in the interview can offer subsidy to overcome the diagnosed problems. Here is the interview.

TEXT 3

Place yourself as a columnist who, while doing research on recent catastrophes that occurred due to the rains in Brazil from the end of 2009 on, finds Drummond's short story published in 1966, and decides to dialogue with it on an opinionative journalistic article for a special series on cities, which will be published in a large circulation magazine. In this article, you necessarily should:

- a) relate three (3) problems faced by Brazilian cities due to the rains with those presented in the short story;
- b) show to what extent you agree with the writer's opinion on the matter.

Here is Drummond's short story: *The dark days*, published in *Correio da Manhã*, 01/14/1966.

For the three tasks, the texts presented indicated the “most immediate” situation in which the required genre should insert itself and its aim; the interlocutors in the text production in general terms; the theme and the need for an axiological positioning towards it. In none of the instructions there are indications of the compositional form of the text, but we can say that the structure of “opinion articles” is the most known, considering that this genre has been worked by the school for a longer period of time and its argumentative structure can be closer to the known textual type “dissertation”. As far as style is concerned, in the second task, it was made clear that the discourse should be written in the “formal oral modality”. Actually, there is no articulation between the coercive characteristics of the situations in which the required genres insert themselves and the style in which the candidate should write his/her text. Thus, if in the Guidelines we questioned the last item that dealt with “written articulation”, now we verify that the needed relationship between the interlocution situation – the human activities spheres (also the discursive and ideological ones), the (several) interlocutors and the text to be produced, one

that requires a fluid and involving reading, resulting from a well-articulated by cohesive devices syntactic-semantic structuring, is not elucidated. Or, still, the need to “master an ample lexical set and of the standard norm for the rules of accent, spelling, verb-noun agreement, among others” in relation to the proposed genres. Besides, if a “speech to be delivered at an event, suitable to the formal oral modality” is prepared, the expected text could, for example, be structured only by the topics that would be dealt with orally... But let us see the examiners’ expectations.

1.3 Essay examiners’ expectations

TEXT 1¹⁰

It is expected that the candidate puts himself/herself in the position of a young person who is motivated to make comments on the graph “The values of a generation” via the “Talk to us” channel of the MTV network site. This comment enunciator is, thus, a young person who has the person responsible for the research, in this case, the MTV network, as an interlocutor. Whether there is identification with the profile portrayed in the research has to be made explicit, once that is the comment’s motivation. This comment should necessarily compare the three years of the research Dossiê MTV Universo Jovem (1999, 2005 and 2008), taking into account two relatively stable values and two significant changes. The relatively stable values that are most evident in the graph are those indicated by K (to have a career, a profession, a job) and D (physical beauty/be beautiful/handsome). Values I, A, H, C, G, and E can also be considered relatively stable. Regarding significant changes, the following stands out: the decrease in the values indicated by B (to have fun, to enjoy life) and J (to have friends); and the increase in the value indicated by F (to be financially independent/to have more money than he/she already has). Besides these elements, to compose the profile of the 2008 young person, it can be considered that value K is highly recognized (more than 50% of the interviewees), as opposed to value D (much less than 50% of the interviewees).

TEXT 2

It is expected that the candidate puts himself/herself in the position of a students’ union leader who has received complaints from his/her classmates about the teaching of science in his/her school and, for that reason, invites the biologist, teacher, twitter user and blogger Tatiana Nahas to give a lecture to his/her classmates and teachers. This motivation should guide the text that presents the event, being a justification for its realization. The text enunciator is, therefore, a student representative and the interlocutors are the students and teachers of his/her school. This presentation, marked necessarily by the formal oral modality, should

¹⁰ <http://www.comvest.unicamp.br/vest2011/F1/redacao_expectativas.pdf> Access: June, 2011.

describe the problems related to the teaching of science that can be inferred from the interview itself, a basis for this proposal. Besides, the lecturer's presence should be justified, showing how her ideas expressed in the interview can point out to solutions to overcome the diagnosed problems. Examples of solutions are: to stimulate the skills to relate, interpret, extrapolate, create; to use new technological resources (like the Internet) in the classes; to value the science history in the classroom; to emphasize the collective dimension of scientific production, and to explicit the controversies and drawbacks that are part of its history.

TEXT 3

It is expected that the candidate puts himself/herself in the position of a columnist who writes an opinionative journalistic article for a special series on cities, which will be published in a large circulation magazine. This article deals with the recent catastrophes that occurred due to the rains in Brazil from the end of 2009 on, and dialogues with Drummond's chronicle, published in 1966. This article's enunciator is, therefore, a journalist who has the magazine's readers as his/her interlocutors. This journalistic text must identify the problems that the Brazilian cities face nowadays due to the rains, relating them to the ones mentioned in the short story. As examples of similar problems, the following can be identified: deaths, material and symbolic losses, helplessness feeling of the unsheltered, lack of safety in the houses, interruption of essential services, lack of infrastructure, insufficient social care services, government's omission, counterbalanced by people's solidarity, etc. In general terms, Drummond's short story can be considered updated, in spite of the fact that it was written 44 years ago. Besides, the columnist should show to what extent he/she shares Drummond's point of view. This point of view is characterized, on the one hand, by the feeling of discomfort and blame of those who were not affected by the rains and, on the other hand, by a mixture of critic and disenchantment with the persistence of these tragedies, as a consequence of government omission and social contradictions that symbolize emblematically the city of Rio de Janeiro, "so rich in pomp and superfluous goods and so miserable in its infrastructure". This reflection should include the Brazilian cities in general but it can still focus on a specific city as an example.

In the examiners' expectations regarding the three tasks, there is always reference to the most immediate interlocution situation, to the interlocutors, to the aim of the text, and to the necessary justification of the candidate's axiologic position. Most of the expectations, however, refer to the content expected in the texts: in the first task, the different forms of graph reading and the positioning possibilities towards them are present in both paragraphs; in the second task, the only one in which there is some guidance in relation to style and its relation to genre, this aspect is merely touched: "This presentation, marked necessarily by the formal oral modality...". Once more the expectations are concentrated mainly on

content: “... should report the problems related to the teaching of science...” [...] are examples of solutions...”. In relation to the production of text 3, there are also several examples of what ideas can be expressed from Drummond’s short story, and how they can be organized, related, which interpretations are valid in relation to the facts, which hypotheses can be drawn up. In general terms, the question of the compositional structure of the text is not mentioned, nor even style – the variety of the language accepted on the site, for instance.

2 Briefly analyzing the material

In this item, our analysis will be restricted to two questions: the known parameters that define genre – theme, composition and style, without worrying about the other coercive elements in the production of the proposed texts, all of them inseparably linked to the social spheres in which they circulate, according to the theory of the Bakhtin Circle¹¹; and the relationship between the argumentativity required in the texts and the candidate’s profile that the university expects, as described in the Guidelines.

Initially, let us remember that theme transcends language; it is inferred from the totality of the utterance. Therefore, there is an organic unit between the theme and what is exterior to it (MEDVEDEV, p.211-212), the specific conditions of the utterance, the discursive activities, and the social practices. The essay in the *vestibular* deals with the challenge of its own production condition: how is it possible to recover/retrieve the “real” conditions for the production/circulation/reception of the texts it proposes? To what extent is it really possible to supply the exterior of the discourse that organizes the interior of the utterance – the requested essay? How is it possible to escape from the artificiality of the proposed textual production, when the intention is to evaluate the capacity for clear and organized verbal expression, the capacity to establish relationships and come up with hypotheses, and the capacity to interpret data and facts while preparing a text? In the examiners’ expectations, several reading possibilities and data interpretation given in the

¹¹ For instance, according to the Circle’s theory, we could mention the lack of a broader contextualization for the text production proposed for the *vestibular*/Unicamp 2011, or a more accurate definition of the network’s site, with the types of comments usually posted, or still the characteristics of the reading audience...

exam are listed; this would be the content of the utterances produced. But these possibilities do not constitute the theme of the site comment, of the oral discourse or of the opinion article produced by the candidates, because, in the *vestibular*, the expected axiological positioning is subordinated not only to the proof of those qualities, but also to the exam's reader/examiner, anticipated by the candidate; it is the exterior that organizes the interior.

Regarding *compositional structure* and *style*. Style selects the lexical, phraseological and grammatical elements of the language, organizing them in a compositional structure. Even if there is a narrow bond among style, thematic units and ideological spheres, which generate the social values expressed in the appreciative intonation of the utterance, we can state that the stylistic requirements, those related to genre, as well as the individual ones, are also referred predominantly in the Candidate's Guidelines, especially on the item that deals with "written articulation": "He/She should also demonstrate mastery of an ample lexical set and of the standard norm for the rules of accent, spelling, verb-noun agreement, among others".

According to Bakhtin's theory, the individual style is organically and inseparably linked to the genre style. And, according to the Circle, the "poor and not distinguished" classification of language styles is due to the lack of understanding of the unit among language, genre and fields of human activity¹². Considering the importance of this issue, the exam should make it clear to the candidate that the "standard norm", even in writing, is not always the same: after all, it is easily verified that the norm to write on a site, of an "oral" discourse and of an opinion article is different, and it shows language varieties intrinsically linked to each one of these utterances.

Genre gives form to the work, and its structural elements can only be understood altogether and in relation to genre. There is no reference to the compositional form of the required texts in the Unicamp *vestibular* whatsoever. Nor there is any reference to the compositional structure of the texts in the examiners' expectations (it was also absent from previous exams). We could possibly declare that the Guidelines demand that they be well structured, as the written articulation must demonstrate a "well-articulated by cohesive

¹² Bakhtin (2008, p.289-290) says that genres, as well as the professions and social stratification, determine the "generic stratification of language", which impose "specific semantic nuances and specific axiological overtones" to the language.

devices synthetic-semantic structure”. Still, this is a big change regarding previous *essays* and *narratives*, in which a fixed structure, or fixed in teaching, was taught/learned to/by the students. At the same time, there is the assumption that the compositional form of these new required genres is known to the students...

Just as an example, there is another issue that can be raised: one of the requested genres is a *comment* on a *site*. By observing some sites and discussion forums, it is possible to acknowledge the heterogeneity of its “compositional forms” and “styles”. Is it possible to assume that, by the seriousness of the research presented in the graph, that the surfer who is going to comment on it will express himself/herself in an “articulated” way, obeying the “standard norm for the rules of accent, spelling, verb-noun agreement, among others”? Or will the candidate obey the coercion of the “vestibular” social practice, historically settled in our social traditions, regardless of the required genre? Besides, a quick look at the site¹³ discloses that the research (“studies”) is addressed to “all those who develop projects or work with Brazilian young people”; in order to access it, or to know more about the “Dossiê MTV Universo Jovem”, a form must be filled in so that the team can get in touch with the interested person; there is no room for free comments on the part of the interlocutor. We find again the difficult problem of artificiality in essay proposals when genres are requested.

Most certainly, this is something usually worked on in the schools, the textbooks usually separate the contents from their more immediate contexts, oftentimes giving only the information of their whereabouts...¹⁴ These are artifices that, unfortunately, alienate the school from life. However, in our opinion, this is not the proposal of the official documents when they propose the work with genres; or, at least, it would not be the most productive proposal...

As far as the candidates’ argumentative skills are concerned, inferred from the candidate’s characteristics listed in the Guidelines, as it states that “to write implies reading processes and elaborating arguments”, we should note the adequacy of the texts that subsidize each of the tasks: the graph, the interview and Drummond’s short story. Its proficient reading can really provide text “elaboration subsidy” and indicate - without

¹³ <<http://mtv.uol.com.br/dossie/programa>> Access: June, 2011 and February, 2012.

¹⁴ Cf. Rocha, 2011.

restrictions – argumentative possibilities for its elaboration, demanding on the part of the candidates its organization, establishing relationships, data and facts interpretation, and hypotheses elaboration. However, this is not new; the Candidate’s Guidelines from the previous year, 2010¹⁵, looked for a student with exactly the same skills, and asked for the production of a textual type: an *essay* text, or a *narrative* text, or a *letter*, in which the need for a solid interlocution to build an *argumentation* was emphasized:

The writing exam, composed of three proposals, is an evaluative instrument of your writing form on a determined subject, and to write implies reading processes and to come up with arguments from a given situation. Each proposal presents specific instructions that outline the thematic excerpts and indicate the *type of text* that must be produced (No italics in the original text).

In terms of evaluation, reading the selection was equally valued, as we observed comparing both Guidelines: the 2010 and 2011 edition. In 2010, the evaluation parameters were basically: (1) reading the selection, (2) the thematic excerpt, (3) the text type, and (4) the written articulation; in 2011, (1) the act of reading, (2) the purpose, (3) the genre and its interlocution, and (4) the written articulation. We observed that the first and last items are similarly written and that, in 2011, the intermediary items (3 and 4) attend to the change toward what is being required. However, elements that clarify the “production conditions” lack, such as the broader social, historical and cultural context, the reader’s profile..., even if it is mentioned in the 2011 edition of the Guidelines: “the essay evaluation parameters are the production conditions in themselves that are provided”; and more troublesome, the expectations regarding the style – the written articulation, are the same.

Concluding

As seen previously, genre organizes utterance, tensely, from the interior to the exterior of the discourse, establishing a nexus and an inseparable interrelation between the verbal and the non-verbal of the utterance. Thus, the pedagogical activities with genres

¹⁵ <<http://www.comvest.unicamp.br/vest2010/download/manual2010.pdf>> Access: June, 2011.

have the potential to provide elementary and high school students with the understanding of the relationship between language and life, as they provide the opportunity to work with extensive and different spheres of human activity, and to recollect genre culture, historicity and tradition, in connection with the organization of social life, time and space.

In high school, the Portuguese language subject has as one of its tasks the student's preparation for the scientific and academic studies he/she will do at the university, especially related to the multi-semiotic literacy in the different genres; in this sense, it plays a major role among the other subjects. Regarding the academic activity the candidate wants to join, he/she will be evaluated by means of genres such as term papers, abstracts, monographs, dissertations, book reviews, among others. Science he/she will probably produce (or repeat...) will be humanity patrimony, but his/her first interlocutors will be the professors. There will necessarily be nexus and interrelation between the verbal and the extra-verbal of the utterances produced, echoing the culture, the historicity and the tradition of the genres that belong to the university world, the more relevant, the more they are related to the organization of the social life, space and present time.

Taking this into account, wouldn't it be the case to recapture the "scholar essay" genre, found in the school activities done in high school and an embryo of those that the student will do throughout his/her academic life? To recapture it as *genre*, with all the implications arising there from, would mean to anchor teaching in the social practices of real life – scholar and academic. Wouldn't it help answer the Bakhtinian concern (and ours, as educators) of student's real language development, the alive language and expressing real life, filled with value intonations? (BAKHTIN, 2004).

By all means, we must reflect on this matter. The concept of genre cannot become commonplace; if it does, it will only serve to replace one artificial teaching proposal by another. If applied well, it will contribute for the student to understand critically the intimate correlation between language and life, and the dialogue between the ideological and discursive spheres in the different fields of human activity.

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Received March 15, 2012

Accepted May 17, 2012