LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF INTRODUCTORY TEXTS FROM LETRAS PROGRAMS' WEBSITES

Análise Linguística de Textos Introdutórios de Websites de Cursos de Letras

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ABSTRACT*:* This research aimed at analyzing the Universities' discourse used to describe the undergraduate program of *Letras* in their websites. To pursue this objective, the analysis delved into three textual descriptions of the *Letras* program from three private universities and focused on Fairclough's CDA and on Halliday' SFL. The results indicated that the most recurrent processes are Material, placing the students in a powerful position in text 1 and the institution in text 3, and Relational, identifying the institution in a more influential place. Furthermore, there is a tendency from all texts to present a less academic and more marketized discourse in the presentation of their *Letras* program.
KEYWORDS*:* University discourse; Critical Discourse Analysis; Systemic Functional Linguistics; *Letras* program.

RESUMO*:* Esta pesquisa objetivou analisar o discurso das Universidades para descrever o curso de graduação em Letras em seus websites. Para atingir esse objetivo, a análise se aprofundou em três descrições textuais do curso de Letras de três universidades privadas e baseou-se na ACD de Fairclough e na LSF de Halliday. Os resultados indicaram que os processos mais recorrentes são o Material, colocando os alunos em posição de poder no texto 1 e a instituição no texto 3, e o Relacional, identificando a instituição em um lugar mais influente. Ademais, há uma tendência de todos os textos apresentarem um discurso menos

acadêmico e mais mercadológico na apresentação do curso de Letras.
PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Discurso da universidade; Análise Crítica do Discurso; Linguística Sistêmica Funcional; Curso de letras.

INTRODUCTION

In our current society, with the constant evolution of technology and the means of communication, information reaches us through many ways, and, consequently, Universities need to find new ways to propagate their discourse using modern resources. One channel for communicating specific institutional features is the Internet, through institutional websites (SAICHAIE, 2011). Using this medium, Universities may quickly (re)produce and spread discourses to a potentially large audience. Due to this fact, one major concern is that Universities, as institutional enterprises in 'new capitalist' societies, aim at legitimizing "their own interests and existence through discourses through which they seek to transform or recontextualize social practices" (MAYR, 2008, p. 2). Thus, the investigation of these messages through a critical perspective may help us understand and reveal the power relations and social structures that shape universities' official discourse.

In the context of institutional discourse, more specifically those from universities, Han (2014) analyzed several texts, from ceremonial speeches to regulatory documents of Chinese universities, while Edu-Buandoh (2011) investigated documents related to the strategic plan, visions, goals, and objectives of four public universities in Ghana. Both authors concluded that there has been a great change in discourse shifting from the traditional academic discourse to a market discourse, prompting great institutional restructuring and transformation of the universities.

On a closer look, studies that have been conducted within CDA and university discourse interconnected to education itself seem to be much more related to the analysis of the teachers' discourse (DELLAGNELO, 2003; DELLAGNELO, MEURER, 2006; YOUWEN, 2018; HINOSTROZA-PAREDES, 2020), revealing that teachers ascribe themselves as social participants whose practices are still shaped by traditional conceptions of teaching as the transmission of knowledge. These results, according to the authors, may help to improve the search for the understanding of the differences between new views of language teaching/learning and conventional perceptions that were perceived in the teachers' discourses.

In spite of the studies reviewed above, to the best of our knowledge, a linguistic analysis of university discourse used in the presentation of *Letras* programs has not been carried out so far. Hence, building on the given context, the main objective of this study is

to investigate how websites of Brazilian Universities describe the undergraduate program of *Letras* in terms of lexicogrammatical choices and sociocultural practices.

Nourished by this, the present research is organized into five sections, including this introduction. The second section explains the theoretical background which encompasses the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (FAIRCLOUGH, 1992, 1995; CHOULIARAKI & FAIRCLOUGH, 1999), Systemic Functional Linguistics framework (HALLIDAY, 1985; HALLIDAY & HASAN, 1989; HALLIDAY & MATTHIESSEN, 2014) and Sociocultural Theory (VYGOTSKY, 1978, 1986). The third section describes the method used in this study, followed by the fourth section, which presents the analysis of the data and the results. Finally, the final remarks are brought in the last section.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough (1992) considers discourse as a practice of signifying the world, constituting and creating the world in meaning. Discourse is seen as "language use as a form of social practice" (FAIRCLOUGH, 1992, p.63), which helps to constitute social relationships between individuals, and it is intimately related to the construction of systems of knowledge and beliefs. Discourse presents a dialectical relationship with social structure, in a manner that it is able to reproduce society as it is, but also contribute to its transformation (FAIRCLOUGH, 1992).

Taking into consideration the variety of semiotic resources used in our society to convey specific meanings, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) define discourse as the:

> [...] semiotic elements of social practices. Discourse therefore includes language (written and spoken and in combination with other semiotics, for example, with music in singing), nonverbal communication (facial expressions, body movements, gestures, etc.) and visual images (for instance, photographs, film). The concept of discourse can be understood as a particular perspective on these various forms of semiosis - it sees them as moments of social practices in their articulation with other non-discursive moments (p. 38)

Furthermore, it is important to mention that the discursive constitution of society emerge from social practice, which is solidly embedded and determined by social structures (FAIRCLOUGH, 1992). Therefore, as discourse may contribute to maintain, reproduce or modify traditional power relations and hegemonies, CDA is a type of

discourse analytical framework/approach/alternative that examines the way social power abuse, inequality, and dominance are executed, reproduced, and preserved by text and talk in the social and political context (VAN DIJK, 2001).

To carry out critical social investigation, Fairclough (2010) conceived a three-dimensional conception to analyze the three dimensions of discourse: text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice. Through this approach, it is possible to examine discursive changes in their connection to social and cultural transformation. It is of utmost importance to consider that these levels of analysis are intimately connected and are only separated for investigation.

The "text" level refers to "both the text meaning and its form" (FAIRCLOUGH, 1995, p. 57). It is connected to the occurrence of language use and consists of the analysis of the grammar, vocabulary, semantics and structure of the text beyond the sentence level (FAIRCLOUGH, 1995). The "discourse practice" level involves the production, distribution and consumption of the texts. Fairclough (2003, p. 13) states "we can measure the influence of […] texts by looking at their wide international and national distribution, their extensive and diverse readership, and the extent to which they are 'intertextually' incorporated in other texts." Considering processes as socially dependent, the discourse practice is investigated in terms of interdiscursivity, intertextuality and coherence (FAIRCLOUGH, 1992).

The third level is "sociocultural practice", which refers to the procedures and practices connected to the discourse which are formed and shaped by social structures and power relations. According to Fairclough (1992), at this level, discourse is examined regarding the ideologies and hegemonic conflicts embedded in the social practice. In this research, for practical purposes, we will consider the textual analysis and the sociocultural practices in order to analyze how the texts are constituted concerning power relations and ideologies.

One important field of investigation analyzed by CDA is institutional discourse. According to Mayr (2008), the analysis of institutional discourses may demonstrate how institutions are shaped by discourse and how they have the power to produce and enforce discourses. In this manner, they present significant control over the shaping of individual experiences of the world and have power to promote particular types of identities to conform their own purposes. The author explains that institutions, such as universities, aim at the legitimization of their own interests and existence through discourses through which they intend to change or recontextualize social practices (MAYR, 2008).

In the next section, we will briefly introduce Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (1985), which is commonly used by CDA researchers to carry out the linguistic description (micro analysis) of texts.

Systemic Functional Linguistics

Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a linguistic theory and method which understands language as meaning-oriented (HALLIDAY, 1985). As stated in Halliday's theory (1985), language is considered a semiotic system composed by sets of choices among finite options, used to communicate a specific meaning. In this research, we will rely on Halliday's concept of context of situation and on the transitivity system.

The context of situation consists of the environment of the text in which "meanings are being exchanged" (HALLIDAY & HASAN, 1989, p. 12). Halliday proposes the division of the context of situation into three situational variables: field, tenor and mode. According to Unsworth (2001, p. 32), SFL theory "is based on the view of the complete interconnectedness between the grammatical structures people select in using language and key variables of the situation in which they are using the language."

Field is connected to the issue; the activity or topic of which language is taking part. It is linked to ideational meanings, which refer to the relationship between entities, events and circumstances they are involved with. The grammatical system concerned with ideational meanings is called the transitivity system, which is constituted by participants, processes and circumstances involved in the communication (UNSWORTH, 2001).

Tenor is related to the participants involved in the communicative act and the nature of their relationships, their roles as givers or demanders of information, as well as providers or demanders of goods and services. It is linked to the interpersonal metafunction, which is the dimension of meanings grammatically performed by the systems of mood and modality (UNSWORTH, 2001).

Lastly, the variable of Mode in concerned with the communication channel used by the participants. It analyses the differences between face-to-face communication and communication in writing or distance communication, for example. Mode is related to textual meaning, which is concerned with "how the information value of the elements of the communication" act is determined (UNSWORTH, 2001, p. 35).

This study will rely on ideational meanings, applying the transitivity system from Halliday's theory to analyze the verbal text of the selected data. The system of transitivity or process type belongs to the experiential metafunction and refers to the representations and ideational meanings in the texts. "Processes are construed into a

manageable set of PROCESS TYPES. Each process type constitutes a distinct model or schema for construing a particular domain of experience as a figure of a particular kind." (HALLIDAY & MATTHIESSEN, 2014, p. 213) These different types of processes are: material (doings), mental (feeling, thinking, and seeing), verbal (saying), relational (being), existential (existing) and behavioral (related to physiological and psychological behavior). Furthermore, each process might present circumstances as well as participants connected to it (UNSWORTH, 2001).

Sociocultural Perspective on Teacher Education

Grounded on the idea that higher-level human cognition has its origins in social life, a sociocultural perspective on teacher education derives from the seminal work of Lev Vygotsky (1978, 1986), which defines learning as a dynamic social activity, situated in both physical and social contexts. In other words, from the viewpoint of the Vygotskian theory, human cognition is formed through engagement in social activities, and that it is the social relationships and the culturally constructed physical and psychological artifacts that mediate those relationships, creating unique forms of higher-level thinking (JOHNSON, 2009).

Hence, learning to become a teacher within a sociocultural perspective entails engagement in various forms of social activities, mediated by culture, context, language, and social interaction, such as the places where these teachers work, their past experiences as students, and most importantly and prolific of all, the practices of teacher education programs.

From this perspective, it is assumed that learning to teach is based on the assumption that knowing, thinking, and understanding the profession comes from participating in the social practices and the activities of teaching that take place in specific classroom and school situations. These activities are understood as "emerging out of participation in external forms of social interaction that become internalized psychological tools for thinking (*internalization*)" (JOHNSON; GOLOMBEK, 2016, p. 4). To put it in other words, they come from taking part in the social practices in the classroom; and what teachers know and how they use that knowledge in classrooms is related to the knowledge they have of themselves, the setting, students, curriculum, and community they are emerged in.

A number of interconnected aspects of teacher education can also be informed by a sociocultural perspective. As proposed by Johnson (2009), a sociocultural perspective on teacher education is able to elucidate the cognitive processes that take place in teacher

learning, recognizing the interconnectedness of the cognitive and the social, providing the possibility of tracing how teachers learn, and how their participation in goal-oriented activities of learning to teach transforms their understanding of themselves as teachers, of their students, and of their own practice and activities of teaching.

A second aspect brought by Johnson (2009) is that within this perspective, teacher education is also seen as a dynamic process that is capable of both transforming and reconstructing the social practices teachers are involved with, allowing them to be responsive not only to the local needs but also the needs of the individuals taking part in this process. Hence, human agency becomes a major aspect since "teachers are seen as individuals responsible for appropriating and reconstructing the resources available to them, while at the same time readapting those resources to overcome new challenges". Thus, a sociocultural perspective on teacher education involves changing, and not simply reproducing, teachers' instructional activities.

The third point made by Johnson (2009) is that a sociocultural perspective shed light not only on the processes of learning to teach but also on the content. Learners of teaching usually enter university programs with preconceived ideas and notions about how to teach based on their histories as learners, and more often than not, they are largely unarticulated and deeply rooted. In Vygotsky's theory such notions and ideas are defined as spontaneous concepts, formed while participating in concrete practical activities (VYGOTSKY, 1963). Contrary to that are the scientific concepts, which "represent the generalizations of the experience of humankind that is fixed in science" (KARPOV, 2003, p. 66). Scientific concepts can be opened to inspection, systematized and generalized, allowing learners to move beyond their everyday experiences and reapplying the scientific concepts appropriately in the various setting they might encounter.

Finally, learning to teach from a Vygotskian perspective is a long-term process of constructing and reconstructing teacher's everyday knowledge about language, language learning, and language teaching, allowing them to transform their spontaneous concepts into scientific concepts. That being said, a sociocultural perspective in learning to teach serves as the lens through which teacher learning can be conceptualized, informing teacher educators the ways in which they can understand and support the professional development of future teachers.

METHOD

This paper, of a qualitative nature, consists of the analysis of the introductory presentation texts of the *Letras* program of three private universities located in the

northern part of Santa Catarina, Brazil, namely FURB (*Fundação Universidade Regional de Blumenau*), Univali (*Universidade do Vale do Itajaí*), and Univille (*Universidade da Região de Joinville*). The criterion for the selection of the *Letras* program was the personal interest of the authors, since both of us are language teachers. As for the selection of the universities, the criteria is twofold: (1) the webpages of the *Letras* program in the university's website should present at least one of the following aspects: (a) description of the program, (b) student profile, (c) area of professional activity, (d) curricular information; and (2) the universities should be located in the northern part of the state of Santa Catarina, which is an industrial and technological center of great importance in the state, and concentrates the highest population density of the state, according to a report from SEBRAE/SC (*Serviço de Apoio às Micro e Pequenas Empresas de Santa Catarina*) (SEBRAE, 2013)[1].

Considering the context presented above, the main objective of this study is to investigate how the websites of the aforementioned universities describe the undergraduate program of *Letras* in terms of the lexicogrammatical choices and sociocultural practices. Within this purpose, this article poses the following research questions: (1) What ideational choices in verbal language are used by the institutions to describe the *Letras* program? Are there any differences and/or similarities in relation to them?; and (2) What social values, attitudes, and power relations are revealed in the verbal choices made by the institutions? Are there any differences and/or similarities in relation to them?

In order to pursue the answers to the aforesaid questions, for research question 1, the textual analysis of the selected corpus was conducted based on Systemic Functional Linguistics. The texts were analyzed through the transitivity system, which described the ideational meanings present in each of them, more specifically the participants, processes and circumstances involved. As for research question 2, a linguistic analysis based on Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis was conducted. The corpus was analyzed considering the level of sociocultural practices in order to reveal the procedures and practices associated to the university discourses.

ANALYSIS

For practical purposes, the analysis of the data was divided into two subsections: Textual analysis, which was conducted using Halliday's transitivity system; and Sociocultural Practices, which discloses the hidden beliefs and ideologies present in the

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[1] Santa Catarina em Números: Santa Catarina / Sebrae/SC. Florianópolis: Sebrae/SC, 2013. 150p.

data, based on Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis. Next, the texts extracted from each website are presented followed by their textual analysis.

Textual analysis

The first text analyzed was the one from UNIVALI (*Universidade do Vale do Itajaí*). The text is structured as follows:

Fig. 1 Introductory text of *Letras* program from UNIVALI.

O Curso

Objetivo do Curso

Formar professores críticos e éticos, com conhecimento teórico-metodológico relativo à estrutura, funcionamento e manifestações culturais da língua portuguesa e respectivas literaturas, capacitando-os para uma atuação competente nos diferentes espaços educacionais da Educação Básica, exercendo a capacidade de produção e socialização do conhecimento na sua área de formação.

Perfil do Egresso

O licenciado em Letras – Língua Portuguesa e Respectivas Literaturas deverá ter competência para articular teoria e prática no ensino da língua e da literatura na educação básica, capacidade de reflexão crítica sobre temas e questões relativas aos fenômenos linguísticos, literários e interculturais, com domínio dos conhecimentos relacionados à linguagem e habilidades para a compreensão dos contextos nos quais a língua se produz.

Campo de atuação do profissional

O licenciado em Letras atua, em grande parte, como professor de Língua Portuguesa e Literatura em escolas públicas ou particulares de Ensino Fundamental e Médio, planejando, executando, avaliando as ações educacionais e promovendo atividades que visem ao aprimoramento social e cultural dos educandos. Pode, também, atuar como profissional liberal, ministrando cursos em empresas industriais e comerciais e em outras instituições, ou ainda como secretário executivo, revisor, redator ou professor particular. Docentes e acadêmicos do Curso de Letras participam do projeto de extensão Proler, proposta de incentivo à cultura com enfoque na leitura

Source: UNIVALI (Universidade do Vale do Itajaí). Available at <https://www.univali.br/graduacao/letras-itajai/Paginas/default.aspx>. Accessed on: 21 jan. 2020.

Initially, the text presents the program as the entity responsible for instructing and capacitating the *Letras'* students to work in the field. The students, as a result, would then exercise their abilities to produce and transmit their knowledge. Later on, the abilities and competences of the student are introduced through a medial modal operator (*deverá [should]*). The licentiate is presented as a possessor, the one who has to possess a particular competence. Finally, the field in which the professional predominantly works is presented, as well as the possibility of working in other fields within the area. Furthermore, the extension project *Proler*, which the undergraduate students participate in, in also mentioned.

Concerning the transitivity system, the most frequent process was Material (10), followed by Relational (3) and Mental (2) processes. The Material processes mainly occur when the institution is explaining the role of the program in forming and capacitating the students (***Formar*** *professores críticos e éticos, com conhecimento teórico-metodológico relativo à estrutura, funcionamento e manifestações culturais da língua portuguesa e respectivas literaturas,* ***capacitando****-os para uma atuação competente nos diferentes espaços educacionais da Educação Básica [To* ***form*** *critical and ethical teachers, with theoretical-methodological knowledge regarding the structure, functioning and cultural manifestations of the Portuguese language and literature,* ***capacitating*** *them to perform proficiently in the various educational fields of Basic Education]*) and when it is describing the several attributions the *Letras* professional may have as a teacher (***exercendo*** *a capacidade de produção e socialização do conhecimento na sua área de formação. [****exercising*** *the capacity of production and socialization of knowledge in the teacher training area.]/ para* ***articular*** *teoria e prática no ensino da língua e da literatura na educação básica [to* ***articulate*** *theory and practice in the teaching of language and literature in basic education] /* ***planejando, executando, avaliando*** *as ações educacionais e* ***promovendo*** *atividades que* ***visem*** *ao aprimoramento social e cultural dos educandos. [****planning, executing, evaluating*** *educational actions and* ***promoting*** *activities* ***aimed at*** *the social and cultural improvement of students.] /* ***ministrando*** *cursos em empresas industriais e comerciais e em outras instituições [****teaching*** *courses in industrial and commercial companies and in other institutions]*). The majority of the sentences in which the students are presented as Actors are the ones which indicate the abilities they must show and the functions they must perform as language teachers. They are also presented as Goals and as the Beneficiaries of actions, as Possessors of a specific attribute and as Tokens, presenting their value (*Formar* ***professors críticos e éticos****…/ …capacitando****-os para uma atuação competente…/* ***O licenciado em Letras*** *[...] deverá ter competência para articular teoria e prática no ensino da língua e da literatura na educação básica.../* ***O licenciado em Letras*** *auta, em grande parte, como professor de Língua Portuguesa e Literatura...[To form* ***critical and ethical teachers****…/... capacitating* ***them*** *to perform proficiently…/* ***The graduate in Letras*** *[…]should have the ability to articulate theory and practice in the teaching of language and literature in basic education…/* ***The graduate in Letras*** *works, mostly, as a teacher of Portuguese Language and Literature in public or private elementary and high schools]*). The Relational processes occur when the institution is describing which competencies the undergraduate student should have and which positions they can occupy in the work market (*O licenciado em Letras*

*– Língua Portuguesa e Respectivas Literaturas deverá **ter** competência para articular teoria e prática no ensino da língua e da literatura na educação básica [The graduate in Letras - Portuguese Language and Literatures should **have** the ability to articulate theory and practice in the teaching of language and literature in basic education] / O licenciado em Letras **atua**, em grande parte, como professor de Língua Portuguesa e Literatura [The graduate in Letras **works**, mostly, as a teacher of Portuguese Language and Literature] / Pode, também, **atuar** como profissional liberal [You can also **act** as a liberal professional]*). In this text, the students/teachers[2] are the Actors of most of the Material processes, which indicates high level of agency and, therefore, power. However, these processes are introduced by finite modals (*O licenciado em Letras – Língua Portuguesa e Respectivas Literaturas **deverá** ter competência [The graduate in Letras - Portuguese Language and Literatures **should** have the ability] / **Pode**, também, atuar como profissional liberal [You **can** also act as a liberal professional]*) and a mood adjunct (*O licenciado em Letras atua, **em grande parte**, como professor de Língua Portuguesa e Literatura [The graduate in Letras works, **mostly**, as a teacher of Portuguese Language and Literature]*), which represent degrees of probability and possibility, making the propositions arguable. Therefore, the agency and power of the students/teachers can be questioned in the sentences.

The second website analyzed was from FURB (*Fundação Universidade Regional de Blumenau*). The text is structured as follows:

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2   The authors use the term students/teachers in the analysis of the texts to refer to both the undergraduate students from the program as well as the professionals from the area of *Letras* referred in the texts as *profissional*.

REVISTA X

Fig. 2 Introductory text of *Letras* program from FURB.

Source: FURB (Fundação Universidade Regional de Blumenau). Available at <http://www.furb.br/web/1788/cursos/graduacao/cursos/letras/apresentacao>. Accessed on: 21 jan. 2020.

Differently from the first excerpt, the second text initially highlights the importance of speaking and writing properly, and the need of speaking a second language to succeed in the work market. Furthermore, it mentions the great opportunity for language teachers to teach languages considering our globalized world and affirms that the *Letras* program encompasses a variety of topics, such as grammar, linguistics and literature. Next, the differentials of the program and the options for working in the field are presented.

Regarding the transitivity system, the most recurrent process was the Relational one (7), followed by Verbal (3), Material (2) and, lastly, Mental process (1). The Relational processes appeared in the sentences in which the institution is identifying the social context we currently live in and attributing value to language teaching in this context (*Falar e escrever bem **é** fundamental para o sucesso no mercado de trabalho. Melhor que **ter** facilidade de expressão, **é** expressar-se adequadamente. Além disso, falar um segundo idioma **é** requisito básico para muitos profissionais. [Speaking and writing well **is** critical to success in the job market. Better than **having** ease of expression, it's expressing yourself properly. Besides, speaking a second language **is** a basic requirement*

for many professionals.] / ...o ensino de idiomas **é** uma excelente oportunidade [...
language teaching **is** an excellent opportunity]). These processes also appeared in
sentences in which the program is the Carrier or the Possessor of an attribute, ascribing
characteristics that identify and distinguish the program (*o curso não **trata** somente
de gramática dos idiomas escolhidos, mas **conta** com muito estudo de linguística [the
program does not only **deal with** the grammar of the chosen languages, but **has** a lot of
linguistics study]*). Concerning the sentences which presented Material processes, the
program is portrayed as the Actor in one of the sentences (*o curso **oferece** as habilitações
Inglês/Português e Língua Alemã [the program **offers** English/Portuguese and German
Language qualifications]*), while the other did not present an Actor. The differentials
and field of work are presented by nominal groups (nominal syntagma in SFL). These
lexicogrammatical items contribute to the readers' understanding of the introductory
text, providing further information on the relevance and characteristics of the program.
Therefore, the ideational choices place the institution in a more powerful position, since
it is presented as the Actor, the Possessor and the Carrier in the clauses, displaying more
agency than the teachers/students.

Finally, the third website analyzed was from UNIVILLE (*Universidade da Região
de Joinville*). The text is presented below:

Fig. 3. Introductory text of *Letras* program from UNIVILLE.

O que vou estudar?

Desde o primeiro ano, você será inserido nas disciplinas específicas para a formação em Português e Inglês, e, também, introduzido à linguística aplicada e literatura.
A segunda e terceira série seguem se aprofundando nas regras ortográficas de ambas as línguas, sendo alternado com matérias complementares como Crítica literária, Literatura infanto-juvenil, Análise do discurso, Didática e Produção textual e novas mídias.
Entendendo os estágios como peças fundamentais para a prática acadêmica, o quarto e quinto ano demanda dedicação ao Estágio curricular supervisionado em Língua Inglesa e Estágio curricular supervisionado em Língua Portuguesa.

Conheça mais sobre o curso

O profissional formado em Letras tem a oportunidade de trabalhar na área de ensino, tradução e versão em línguas estrangeiras, revisão de textos e editoração.
O curso da Univille é focado em capacitar o acadêmico para a docência, levando em consideração as regras ortográficas em Português e Inglês, literatura e metodologias de ensino. Com forte atuação na sociedade, a Universidade permite ao estudante atuar em projetos e programas de extensão e eventos, que proporcionam atividades práticas dos assuntos aprendidos em sala de aula e interação com a comunidade. Além disso, organiza eventos acadêmicos com o intuito de integrar os estudantes em atividades dinâmicas de aprendizagem, como o Sarau de Letras e o English Night.

Source: UNIVILLE (Universidade da região de Joinville). Available at <https://universo.
univille.br/letras>. Accessed on: 21 jan. 2020.

At the beginning, the text brings general information about the working field for a language teacher, followed by specificities related to the objective of the *Letras* program and the services provided by the institution, aimed at fostering teacher development. Next, the text presents the structure of the program, describing the disciplines and mandatory activities separated by year.

Concerning the transitivity system, similar to the first text, the Material processes were the most frequent ones (15), followed by Mental processes (3) and one Relational process. Most of the sentences with Material processes portrayed the institution/program as the Actor (*O curso da Univille **é focado** em capacitar o acadêmico para a docência [The Univille program **is focused** on capacitating the academic for teaching] / a Universidade **permite** ao estudante atuar em projetos e programas de extensão e eventos [the University **allows** the student to act in projects and extension programs and events] / Além disso, **organiza** eventos acadêmicos… [Besides, it **organizes** academic events] / A segunda e terceira série **seguem** se aprofundando nas regras ortográficas [The second and third series **continue** to delve deeper into the orthographic rules] / o quarto e quinto ano **demanda** dedicação ao Estágio curricular supervisionado em Língua Inglesa e Estágio curricular supervisionado em Língua Portuguesa [the fourth and fifth years **demand** dedication to the supervised curricular internship in English and the supervised curricular internship in Portuguese]*), while the students/teachers are in the Actor position in only one sentence (*O que vou **estudar**? [What am I going to **study**?]*), appearing mostly as Recipients/Beneficiaries. This indicates that the institution holds the powerful position, as the one who is more active in the text. Furthermore, the students appear in the position of Possessor in only one sentence, which is related to the opportunity they hold to work in different areas.

Sociocultural Practices

Based on Fairclough´s (2010) definition of sociocultural practices, in this section we explore in our data issues concerning teacher education. The analysis is conducted in light of the Sociocultural perspective on teacher education (JOHNSON, 2009; JOHNSON; GOLOMBEK, 2016), as well as the cultural issues raised in the analysis of the verbal texts of the Universities' websites, that could help us to understand how these Universities describe the *Letras* program. Therefore, we revisit some of the findings of the textual section in order to explore the potential meanings of the program description.

The websites are open to public access and utilize verbal and visual resources to establish a connection with the readers. In this study, the visual resources were not

presented, since they were not the focus of our analysis; however, we must acknowledge the importance of multimodal resources to produce and convey meanings. According to Saichaie (2011, p. 73), "an institution Home Page functions as a billboard for its current achievements and to establish its identity". These institutions seek to introduce an environment where the students can engage with the campus facilities and participate in significant academic activities which are closely supervised by faculty members, features that distinguish them from other similar institutions (SAICHAIE, 2011).

The introductory texts can be accessed without difficulty, the reader must enter in the undergraduation programs hyperlink and *Letras* is one of the options. In general lines, the texts introduce a welcoming environment where the student encounters a range of subjects, from the undergraduate curriculum subjects and extracurricular opportunities to future prospects for the career and intellectual development of the individual.

In the first text, from Univali, it is possible to observe that in the beginning, when stating the objectives of the program (*Objetivo do Curso [Aim of the Program]*), teachers are depicted as people who are able to produce and communicate the knowledge learned in university, as seen in the extract from the original text below: "*[...] exercendo a capacidade de produção e socialização do conhecimento na sua área de formação.*" From this passage, it is also possible to infer that there is reference to the role of the teacher as someone who is responsible for transforming knowledge as stated by Johnson (2009), "a sociocultural perspective on teacher education involves changing, and not simply reproducing teachers' instructional activities".

Another relevant aspect from the first part of the text is that it mentions social engagement and the importance of promoting activities that foster cultural and social engagement, as Sociocultural theory preconizes. On the other hand, the text does not discuss the fact that teachers' background knowledge on teaching needs to be taken into account when educating future teachers. It seems, from what the text brings, that learning how to become a teacher will only begin after the moment future teachers enter the university. This goes against a Sociocultural perspective on teacher education, since the theory emphasizes the importance of teachers' previous experiences as learners and what it entails to their process of becoming a teacher.

In Sociocultural Theory, Vygotsky (1986, p.148) emphasizes that for true concepts to emerge, there must be a dialectical interplay between academic concepts and everyday concepts, where the academic concept "gradually comes down to concrete phenomena" and an everyday concept "gradually goes from the phenomenon upward towards generalization". For teacher education, it means that teachers' everyday experiences and

previous experiences as learners and the scientific knowledge from the *Letras* program must be in a dialectical relationship, with each shaping and transforming the other through mediated engagement in the activities of teaching.

That being said, in the second part of the text, which discusses the profile of former students for that program (*Perfil do Egresso [Former Student Profile]*), the analysis reveals that although the university considers practical knowledge as something important, they place great emphasis on scientific/academic knowledge, as seen in the extract presented below.

> O licenciado em Letras [...] deverá ter competência para articular teoria e prática no ensino da língua e da literatura na educação básica, **capacidade de reflexão crítica sobre temas e questões relativas aos fenômenos linguísticos, literários e interculturais,** com **domínio dos conhecimentos relacionados à linguagem** e habilidades para a compreensão dos contextos nos quais a língua se produz. (UNIVALI, 2020, p. 1) (emphasis added).

Such finding is corroborated by the linguistic analysis of the text previously presented, which shows that most of the sentences in which students/teachers are presented as Actors are the ones which indicate the abilities and functions, they must have/perform in order to become language teachers.

The final part of the text, *Campo de atuação do profissional [Professional work field]*, presents the social contexts in which teachers might work after graduating. An important point that can be noticed in this passage is the fact that schools are the first social context presented as a possible place of work, meaning that teacher education in this institution might be closely connected to schools, which is later reinforced when the text mentions the extension project *Proler*, dedicated to promoting culture through reading. From a sociocultural perspective, taking part of an extension project within an academic setting is a prolific social practice that might foster teacher development and provide students/teachers with opportunities to develop concepts related to the practice of teaching.

Generally, from the introductory text for *Letras* program from Univali, it seems that the university reproduces a traditional, positivist learning environment, focusing on developing scientific concepts (academic knowledge) with little space for practice, being *Proler* the only extension project mentioned in the webpage. In addition, the discourse for introducing the *Letras* program seems less academic and more marketized.

The second text analyzed is from FURB. Overall, in their presentation of the *Letras* program the importance of social context and culture for learning is emphasized, which

goes hand in hand with a Sociocultural perspective on teacher education. On a closer look, we noticed that the text initiates by establishing a relationship between becoming a language teacher/learning a second language and the importance it has for the job market. The first paragraph seems to set up a broad relationship, placing the importance of knowing languages - either a first or a second one - as something imperative of any profession. It is in the second paragraph that a closer relationship between learning/ knowing languages and teaching is shown. In addition, the text makes reference to the activity of teaching as something attractive and fruitful. Such finding is even more evident in the third paragraph, where the text attempts to break down the long-established stereotype that places grammar as the core content of *Letras* programs by focusing on other aspects such as the study of literature and linguistics.

That being considered, it seems that up to this point the goal of this introductory text is to distance the *Letras* program from the academic, more structured and rigorous setting, and portray the program as a relaxed environment - very common nowadays in less traditional workplaces where speaking other languages is necessary.

After this brief presentation, the text points out its differentials (*Diferenciais*) and the professional work field (*Campo Profissional*). The first section highlights the various instructional practices developed at the university and which students/teachers are able to take part in, such as research and extension projects, exchange programs, study groups, besides other events which seem to connect the scientific knowledge learned at university with students/teachers' everyday knowledge. From a Sociocultural standpoint, such practices are important since the dialogic interactions that unfold from these external forms of social interaction and activities will become internalized psychological tools for teacher thinking, enabling students/teachers to construct and enact theoretically and pedagogically sound instructional practices (JOHNSON; GOLOMBEK, 2016, p. 4).

As for the final section from FURB's text (*Campo Profissional)*, it seems that like the Univali's text, their discourse is directed towards a marketization of academic discourse and an attempt to broaden the work field for teachers, suggesting that teachers could work not only in schools, but also in companies, newspapers, magazines, and so on, as seen in Edu-Buandoh (2011) and Han (2014).

A final important aspect to be mentioned in relation to FURB's text is that, like the one from Univali, the introductory text does not take into consideration students'/ teachers' previous experiences as learners, which, from a sociocultural perspective, is paramount when developing concepts.

Regarding the third text, which is from Univille, its introduction to the program begins by presenting the possible places where graduates can work - from schools to translation to editing. In the second paragraph, the central point is showing Univille's focus on the program, where the emphasis on orthographic rules and teaching methodologies is highlighted. In addition, they cite other practices which students/teachers might get involved with during the program, such as extension projects and events aimed at putting into practice the contents learned in the classroom targeting the non-academic community, as well as other activities aimed at promoting interaction among students/teachers.

Up to this point of the description of the program, two different interpretations can be made: first, because the university conveys the impression that learning the traditional aspects of the language and teaching is crucial, it seems that their view of teacher education is closely tied to a positivist epistemological perspective. Such paradigm on teacher education defines learning as an internal process, preoccupied with identifying patterns of good teaching and what effective teachers do, in other words, learning to teach is understood as reproducing "good" teaching behavior.

Second, the text states that the program "allows" (*permite*) students/teachers to engage in several socially and culturally constructed practices, which creates the impression that there is a true concern in fostering professional development through building on teachers' everyday knowledge about language, language learning, and language teaching.

Next, the text presents one final section which briefly describes what students/ teacher will do in each year of the program (example: *Desde o primeiro ano, você será inserido nas disciplinas específicas para a formação em Português e Inglês, e, também, introduzido à linguística aplicada e literatura. [From the first year, you will be introduced to specific subjects for training in Portuguese and English, and also introduced to applied linguistics and literature.]*). The content presented in this section corroborated the previous finding, that the university seems to follow a positivist perspective on teacher education by first presenting students/teachers with scientific knowledge based on good teaching practices so as to later allow them to implement such knowledge within the practicum.

This positivist epistemology goes against a sociocultural perspective on teacher education, which believes that the activity of learning how to teach is constructed through the dialogic interactions that arise from the interplay between scientific and everyday knowledge, at the very moment it occurs. In other words, the education of teachers in a sociocultural perspective takes into consideration their past experiences as learners, as

well as creates an environment that is open to the dynamic process of reconstructing and transforming the activity of teaching in order for it to be responsive to both the individual and local needs.

FINAL REMARKS

This study had the objective of investigating how Universities describe the undergraduate program of *Letras* in their websites in terms the lexicogrammatical choices and sociocultural practices. With this purpose, this research addressed two research questions: (1) What ideational choices in verbal language are used by the institutions to describe the *Letras* program? Are there any differences and/or similarities in relation to them?; and (2) What social values, attitudes, and power relations are revealed in the verbal choices made by the institutions? Are there any differences and/or similarities in relation to them? To answer these questions, the analysis delved into three textual descriptions of the *Letras* program presented on website pages from three private universities: UNIVALI, FURB and UNIVILLE, and focused on Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis to analyze the sociocultural practices and on Halliday' Systemic Functional Linguistics (1985) to analyze the lexicogrammatical structure of the texts through the transitivity system.

In terms of the ideational choices, the first research question, we observed the predominance of Material processes in text 1, in which the students are presented as Actors in most of these sentences that indicate the abilities and functions they must perform as language teachers. Although they hold a more powerful position in the text, being the agents of most Material sentences, this agency may be questioned, since the Material processes are introduced by finite modals and a mood adjunct, which indicate degrees of possibility or probability. In text 2 the most frequent process was the Relational one, which appeared in the sentences in which the institution is identifying the current social context, attributing value to language teaching in this context, and also in sentences in which the program is the Carrier or the Possessor of an attribute, ascribing characteristics that identify and distinguish it. Thus, text 2 places the institution in a more powerful position, displaying more agency than the teachers/students. Finally, in text 3 the Material processes reappear as the most recurrent ones; however, in this text the institution holds the powerful position, as it is the one who appears in the Actor position in most of the sentences, presenting, therefore, more agency than the students/teachers.

Concerning the social values, attitudes, and power relations that are revealed in the verbal choices, the second research question, based on a Sociocultural perspective on

teacher education, the results indicated that there is a tendency from all texts to present a less academic and more marketized discourse in the presentation of their *Letras* program, as already signaled by previous studies (EDU-BUANDOH, 2011; HAN, 2014). This can be seen from the texts' description of the possible places where teachers can work, as well as from the fact that the social actors of the profession are identified as *profissional* instead of *professor.* Another finding that is worth mentioning is the fact that students/teachers' previous experiences as language learners seem to have little to no importance in the complex process of learning to teach, as opposed to what a sociocultural perspective on teacher education advocate. On the other hand, it is necessary to point out that all three universities state that they provide students with instructional activities other than classroom-based ones - research and extension projects, events, exchange programs, to name a few -, this aspect is extremely relevant from a sociocultural perspective, since the theory believes that it is through active engagement in socially and culturally constructed practices that teacher cognition will emerge.

By investigating both the lexicogrammatical structure and the sociocultural practices of introductory texts produced by Universities in websites, this study brings some important findings concerning teacher education. The awareness that the University places itself in a more powerful position than the students in most of the texts, demonstrates that the institution is concerned with the propagation of its own agenda, placing the student as a low priority. Furthermore, under the light of a Sociocultural perspective, it is possible to understand how the institutions perceive the process of teacher education as instructionally based rather than as a dynamic (re)construction and transformation of the existing social practices associated with students/learners' past experiences. Thus, the analysis of these discourses using a critical discourse perspective may foster the awareness and help us to unveil embedded social values and power relations that are carried out and propagated through different types of media in our society.

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