



No artist desires to prove anything. Even things that are true can be proved.

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Performance and Act Out in Artistic Discourse

Rui Manuel Sousa Silva
Universidade do Porto

27 October 2006
Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Setting

“Mestrado em Terminologia e Tradução”
Universidade do Porto, Faculdade de Letras

Art and Text

- Language: expresses and reflects social relations and interactions
- Contributes to performing actions, setting points of departure, and attaining objectives.
- Used to establish communication

Art and Text

- Language is not only used for ‘pragmatic’ purposes
- It often assumes the form of art: ‘artistic discourse’
- Like any discourse: it is constructed and shaped by participants
- It constructs and shapes participants

Art and Text

- Image and representation play a specific role in semiotics
- The text absorbs its producer, and the author is dissolved in the text
- Text, like art, tends to assume a central role in promoting and/or demoting ideologies and power relations

Art and Text

- Art and language are not 'distant neighbours', but close relatives
- art is not a different language; it makes a different use of language

Art and Text

- To interpret this relationship - application of principles of:
 - text typology
 - textuality
 - discourse analysis
 - style

Analysis of the Corpus

- Enables the analysis of:
 - function
 - content

Analysis of the Corpus

- NOT: an exercise of formal discourse analysis
- YES: a means of preliminary description of a type of discourse

Aims

- To understand mechanisms underlying the production of artistic discourse
- Ultimately to devise a plan to deconstruct such text production

Contents - Part I

- 1 Picturing Images in Art
- 2 Authorship, Singularity, Autonomy and Authority: Annihilation of the Author in the Production of 'Artistic Discourse'

Contents - Part II

- 3 The Language Art Speaks
- 4 Types of Text
- 5 'Grammars' and 'Ungrammaticalities' of the Aesthetic Text
- 6 Standardization and 'Non-Standardizable' Text

Contents - Part III

- 7 Methodological approach to the subject: perspectives and paths of research
- 8 Layers of Analysis and the Texts
- 9 Descriptive Analysis of the Content

Focus

- Analysis of particular aspects related to theories of text production
- "Semantic functions"

Art of Art Texts

- Texts written for contemporary art catalogues
- High degree of creativity elements
- Open range of possible combinations and associations

Art of Art Texts

- Particular structures
- Unique meanings
- Singular interpretation (viz. almost unlimited range of possible interpretations)

Data Collection

- Corpus of texts published in media/contemporary art catalogues: hardcopy / electronic
- Mid-90's - 2005
- Subject: art - contemporary art - visual arts
- COLLAGE corpus: corpus of art language

Collage Corpus

- Bilingual
- collage::en - English
- collage::pt - Portuguese
- Texts compiled in “Corpógrafo”

Collage Corpus

- Language variants:
 - Portuguese - texts published in Portugal/European Portuguese
 - English - texts published by international museums/galleries
- Access: general public, unrestricted

Collage Corpus

- Data collection:
 - Good enough to draw conclusions
 - Quantitatively enough to enable the statistical analysis/warrant representativeness
 - Focus on type of text / not author

Collage Corpus

	Number of Texts	Number of Authors	Number of Tokens
EN	22	29	128.452
PT	79	39	128.872
Total	101	68	257.324

Table 1: Composition of the 'collage' corpus

Collage Corpus

- Tokens per text: $\pm 2,500$
- Tokens per author: $\pm 3,800$

Preparation for Analysis

- Upload of texts to Corpógrafo
- Extraction of information
- Clean up elements causing confusion and noise

Strategies of Interpretation

- Analysis of recurrent patterns
- Classification of statistically most representative elements according to "semantic" structures
- To obtain quantification of elements and enable identification of patterns/features of the discourse

Analysis of the Content

- ≠ formal "content analysis"
- Study of lexical content extracted from the corpus
- Identification of semantic elaborations
- Commentary on how these features may work within the context

Analysis of the Content

- Analysis of the most recurrent 3- and 4-token n-grams in the corpus
- Manual classification of the n-grams into functional categories of meaning

Ranges of Classes

- Dangers:
 - Too broad a range of categories
 - Too narrow a range of categories
- e.g.: "Barcelona" might be considered as "place/position" or merely as "specification"
- e.g.: sequence of events in time might be classified as "time/sequence", "specification" (of a manner in which events happened) or even "inclusion" (in time)

Ranges of Classes

- Relevance for the "collage": study of particular segments and expressions, not the formal grammatical classification as adverbs or connectives

More relevant to classify an element as pertaining or not to a certain class than considering whether it stands for manner, place or time

Ranges of Classes

- 'The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language' (Huddleston & Pullum 2002:665-666):

manner, instrument, means, act-related, spatial location, source, goal, path, direction, extent, temporal location, duration, aspectuality, frequency, serial order, degree, purpose, reason, result, concession, condition, domain, modality, evaluation, speech act-related, connective

Ranges of Classes

- This is too broad:
- “structuralist”
- includes “unnecessary” elements and lacks others

Ranges of Classes

- First proposal: meaning as indicators, approximating expressions, and hedging expressions:

quantification, negation, purpose, reason, result, concession, question, condition, ordering - serial order, addition/comparison (likeness and contrast), elaboration and exemplification, information (informational status), frequency, duration, location, restriction, manner, means, instrument

Ranges of Classes

Final proposal:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| Specification | Preparation |
| Explanation | Inclusion |
| Exemplification | Concession |
| Comparison | Restriction |
| Contrast | Enumeration |
| Generalization | Purpose |
| Correction | Negation |

Ranges of Classes

Appendix x	Corpus	Length of n-grams	Case- sensitive Search	Sort	Results	
					#tokens	#n-grams
2	collage::e	4	NO	Frequenc	128.452	110.343
3	collage::e	3	NO	Frequenc	128.452	106.443
4	collage::pt	4	NO	Frequenc	128.872	111.848
5	collage::pt	3	NO	Frequenc	128.872	106.904

Table 2: Analysis of n-grams

Management of Data

- Each “corpógrafo” search = 1 MS Excel sheet
- Final MS Excel file = 5 sheets: 1 sheet/each search, 1 additional sheet final results and data
- No semantic taggers to classify automatically the functional, semantic elaboration, of these strings

Management of Data

- First management issue: n-grams of each search > 100,000 n-grams
- MS Excel only allows management of appr. 65,500 n-grams/search
- But: enables management of data in a very simple form
- And need for this research < 65,500 n-grams allowed

Management of Data

N-gram	Recurrences	Frequency	Semantic Class	Noise
at the same time	240	0.18964221028546	inclusion	
for example	230	0.10120511942204	exemplification	
is one of the	130	0.10120511942204	specification	
pedro cabrita reis' s	130	0.10120511942204	specification	
the end of the	130	0.10120511942204	specification	
the work of art	130	0.07006508267679	specification	
is a good place	90	0.07006508267679	specification	
of the world	90	0.06228007349048	specification	
as a kind of	80	0.06228007349048	exemplification	
at the end of	80	0.06228007349048	specification	
audible in the mouth	80	0.06228007349048	specification	
in the case of	80	0.06228007349048	exemplification	
in the work of	80	0.06228007349048	specification	
the 1920s and 1930s	80	0.06228007349048	specification	
the image of the	80	0.05449506430417	generalization	
audible in the	70	0.05449506430417	specification	
as a species of	70	0.05449506430417	exemplification	
as well as the	70	0.05449506430417	inclusion	
cabrita reis' s work	70	0.05449506430417	specification	
imagine you are walking	70		specification	

First Results

- 2 n-grams (one in each of the '3_EN' and '3_PT' files) as 'noise' ('garbage' characters due to formatting)
- '4_EN' file: n-grams of 24 to 1 occurrences
- 1- to 4-occurrence n-grams not to be studied
- 76 n-grams for analysis

First Results

- '4_PT' file: 29 to 1 occurrence n-grams
- 1- to 4-occurrence n-grams not to be studied
- 84 n-grams for analysis

First Results

4_EN			4_PT		
Class	Total	%	Class	Total	%
comparison	4	5.26	comparison	7	8.33
concession	1	1.32	concession	0	0.00
contrast	3	3.95	contrast	5	5.99
correction	0	0.00	correction	3	3.57
enumeration	1	1.32	enumeration	10	11.90
exemplification	7	8.71	exemplification	6	6.95
explanation	9	11.84	explanation	6	7.14
generalization	5	7.58	generalization	5	5.99
inclusion	10	13.16	inclusion	6	7.14
justification	0	0.00	justification	7	8.33
negation	0	0.00	negation	0	0.00
preparation	0	0.00	preparation	2	2.38
purpose	0	0.00	purpose	0	0.00
restriction	0	0.00	restriction	6	6.95
specification	35	46.05	specification	23	27.35
	76	100.00		84	100.00
noise	0		noise	0	

First Results

- '3_EN' file: n-grams with 47 to 1 occurrences
- 1- to 8-occurrence n-grams were not to be studied
- 149 n-grams - 1 noise n-gram = 148 n-grams for analysis

First Results

- '3_PT' file: n-grams from 42 to 1 occurrences
- 1- to 8-occurrence n-grams were not to be studied
- 165 n-grams - 1 noise n-gram = 164 n-grams for analysis

First Results

3 EN			3 PT		
Class	Total	%	Class	Total	%
comparison	7	5.70	comparison	11	6.71
concession	1	0.68	concession	3	1.83
contrast	4	2.72	contrast	2	1.22
correction	0	0.00	correction	2	1.22
enumeration	4	2.72	enumeration	8	4.86
exemplification	8	5.44	exemplification	2	1.22
explanation	23	15.05	explanation	22	13.61
generalization	11	7.43	generalization	8	3.05
inclusion	10	6.50	inclusion	27	16.48
justification	0	0.00	justification	7	4.27
negation	6	3.40	negation	4	2.44
preparation	0	0.00	preparation	1	0.61
purpose	7	4.78	purpose	3	1.22
restriction	0	0.00	restriction	4	2.44
specification	87	45.58	specification	64	38.00
total	127	100.00	total	164	100.00

Analysis of Results

- Results may be insufficient to allow the semantic classification of a whole text genre
- But have significant impact on interpretation of 'artistic discourse' studied

Contrastive Analysis

4 EN		4 PT	
- comparison		+ comparison	
+ concession		- concession	
- contrast		+ contrast	
- correction		+ correction	
+ enumeration		+ enumeration	
+ exemplification		- exemplification	
+ explanation		- explanation	
+ generalization		- generalization	
+ inclusion		- inclusion	
- justification		+ justification	
- negation		- negation	
- preparation		+ preparation	
- purpose		- purpose	
- restriction		+ restriction	
+ specification		- specification	

Contrastive Analysis

3 EN		3 PT	
- comparison		+ comparison	
- concession		+ concession	
+ contrast		- contrast	
- correction		+ correction	
- enumeration		+ enumeration	
+ exemplification		- exemplification	
+ explanation		- explanation	
+ generalization		- generalization	
- inclusion		+ inclusion	
- justification		+ justification	
- negation		- negation	
- preparation		+ preparation	
+ purpose		- purpose	
- restriction		+ restriction	
+ specification		- specification	

Dominating Semantic Classes

- English: exemplification, explanation, generalization, negation, purpose, specification
- Portuguese: comparison, correction, enumeration, justification, preparation, restriction, concession, inclusion
- If we take these results to classify the type of text:

Final Conclusions

- English texts rely on general concepts/ abstraction of common specifics
- Mental processes: from detailed facts to general principles (generalization): tend to be linear and clearly defined
- Reasoning: methodological and straightforward; avoid unclear interpretations, unless intended

Final Conclusions

- Uses examples as representational forms and models (exemplification) and accounts to set forth a meaning (explanation)
- Uses clear statements to refuse or deny what is considered 'not to be' (negation)
- Information is clear, either in more general or detailed grounds (specification)
- Text production oriented towards a well-defined and planned outcome (purpose)

Final Conclusions

- Portuguese texts: tend to be more intricate, hesitant and hedging
- Unorganized structuring: a 'strategy' easily taken for 'stream of consciousness' or 'psychological chaos'
- Attempt to set ideas in order in advance (preparation)

Final Conclusions

- Statements often subject to improvements as if to replace a mistake (correction), even where there is nothing to correct
- Attempt to keep ideas within certain boundaries, limiting their extent of interpretation (restriction)
- Tendency to yield, agree and concede (concession), as if to enforce argumentation

Final Conclusions

- Combination of circumstances and attempt to include them in the statement (inclusion)
- Tendency to explain beliefs/ideas: re-describe structures, facts and circumstances already stated before (justification), as if making it apologetically
- Relationships between similarities or differences, abstraction of the particular elements of two parts (comparison)

Final Conclusions

- Use of lists or establishment of a countable, numerical or sequential order (enumeration)
- Texts tend to go back and forth

Final Conclusions

- Both languages: same number of n-grams denoting an opposition/dissimilarity between elements that are compared and conceptually separated (contrast)
- A strategy of argumentation

Final Conclusions

- Contemporary art/artistic discourse:
 - innovative project
 - provided with heterogeneous aesthetic criteria
 - aims to create new aesthetic styles

Final Conclusions

- Contemporary art/contemporary artistic discourse:
 - merge several genres
 - use concepts/ideas of different nature
 - form a 'heterogeneous' discourse

Final Conclusions

- Key issues to understand artistic discourse:
 - intellectual and institutional identity
 - authenticity and authority
 - ideological and power relations established (knowledge = power)
- These influence and interact with the production of discourse

Final Conclusions on Artistic Discourse

- The text production influences the way in which the text is read
- The text producer uses the text to imprint his/her own identity
 - their 'individual act-out'

Moltes Gràcies!

Rui M.S. Silva
Universidade do Porto
rmsilva@mail.telepac.pt