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

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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

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

Analysis of the Corpus

- Enables the analysis of:
  - function
  - content

- 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Texts</th>
<th>Number of Authors</th>
<th>Number of Tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EN</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>128,452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>128,672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>257,124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Composition of the 'collage' corpus

Collage Corpus

- Tokens per text: ± 2,500
- Tokens per author: ± 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**

  - 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

First proposal: meaning as indicators, approximating expressions, and hedging expressions:
- quantification, negation, purpose, reason, result, collocation, question, condition, ordering - serial order, addition/comparison (likeness and contrast), elaboration and exemplification, information (informational status), frequency, duration, location, restriction, manner, means, instrument

Final proposal:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specification</th>
<th>Preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemplification</td>
<td>Concession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>Restriction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>Enumeration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalization</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correction</td>
<td>Negation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Corpus</th>
<th>Length of n-grams</th>
<th>Case-sensitive</th>
<th>Sort</th>
<th>#tokens</th>
<th>#n-grams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>collage e</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Frequent</td>
<td>126.452</td>
<td>110.343</td>
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<tr>
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<td>collage e</td>
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<td>NO</td>
<td>Frequent</td>
<td>126.452</td>
<td>106.443</td>
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<tr>
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<td>collage pt</td>
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<td>NO</td>
<td>Frequent</td>
<td>128.672</td>
<td>111.948</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>collage pt</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Frequent</td>
<td>128.672</td>
<td>106.954</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n-grams</th>
<th>3_EN</th>
<th>3_PT</th>
<th>4_EN</th>
<th>4_PT</th>
<th>3_EN</th>
<th>3_PT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Results</td>
<td>2 n-grams (one in each of the '3_EN' and '3_PT' files) as 'noise' ('garbage' characters due to formatting)</td>
<td>'4_EN' file: n-grams of 24 to 1 occurrences</td>
<td>1- to 4-occurrence n-grams not to be studied</td>
<td>76 n-grams for analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Results</td>
<td>'4_PT' file: 29 to 1 occurrence n-grams</td>
<td>1- to 4-occurrence n-grams not to be studied</td>
<td>84 n-grams for analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Results</td>
<td>'3_EN' file: n-grams with 47 to 1 occurrences</td>
<td>1- to 8-occurrence n-grams were not to be studied</td>
<td>149 n-grams - 1 noise n-gram = 148 n-grams for analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Results</td>
<td>'3_PT' file: n-grams from 42 to 1 occurrences</td>
<td>1- to 8-occurrence n-grams were not to be studied</td>
<td>165 n-grams - 1 noise n-gram = 164 n-grams for analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First Results

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

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, hesitative 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!

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