

## IS THE WORLD THE WAY IT IS? RESISTANCE AND (RE) EXISTENCE THROUGH DISCOURSE STUDIES<sup>1</sup>

Débora de Carvalho FIGUEIREDO\*  
José Augusto Simões de MIRANDA\*\*

*Estudos do discurso: relevância social, interseccionalidade, interdisciplinaridade* [Discourse studies: social relevance, intersectionality, interdisciplinarity], a book organized by Viviane de Melo Resende, is the result of research and reflections, through different genres, presented at the VIII Colloquium of the Latin American Association of Discourse Studies in Brazil (ALED/Brazil), in 2021, a discussion forum organized through different thematic axes. As the organizer states, despite the difficulties experienced during the pandemic, the consistency and relevance of discursive research is evidenced in the significant discussions presented in the book.

The first chapter, written by Gersiney Santos, is titled “*PARA QUE(M) ESTAMOS FALANDO? REDES PRAGMÁTICAS COMO REEXISTÊNCIA EM TEMPOS PANDÊMICOS*” [Who are we talking to (and what for)? Pragmatic networks as reexistence in pandemic times]. This text was prepared during the Covid-19 pandemic, when situations of social vulnerability were aggravated. The author discusses the possibility and the need for discourse studies to go beyond the walls of the university, so that, through the fruitful dialogue between theories and digital technologies (social networks, for example), we have social struggles that emerge in a practical way. He advocates an epistemological rupture that produces less bureaucratic and more integrative spaces, where different social actors participate, question and opine through different genres and proposes the Critical Discourse Analysis, with its transdisciplinary character, as a support for the production of new theoretical and epistemological dialogues. Throughout the chapter, the author introduces the concept of “*Redes Pragmáticas*” (PR) [Pragmatic Networks], in which there are networks of solidarity and cooperation in the search of (re)existences and questioning of unequal societies, so we do not conform and accept that the *world is as it is*. We share the same arguments of the author regarding the expansion of spaces, so that we can dialogue about issues

\* Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC). Florianópolis – SC – Brazil. E-mail: deborafigueiredo@terra.com.br. ORCID: 0000-0002-1937-9394.

\*\* Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC). Florianópolis – SC – Brazil. E-mail: joseaugustosimoedemiranda@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0002-0057-1685.

<sup>1</sup> RESENDE, V. M. (org.). *Estudos do discurso: relevância social, interseccionalidade, interdisciplinaridade*. Campinas, SP: Pontes Editores, 2022. 210 p. (Resenha).

that permeate our existences, beliefs and values. In this regard, Santos (2022, p.20, authors' translation) argues:

[...] the PR are related to an applied-discursive work articulated in four actional vertices of interchangeable order (namely: 1. Exercise of reflexivity, 2. Anti-rhetorical interventions, 3. Strategic visibility, and 4. Social-reflexive production), related to the theme of reflexivity, applied action and not exclusively dependent on theories, with special attention to strategic action diffusion and the productions of genres (understood as) of re-existence.

The author states that the PRs do not have the intention to point out ready-made recipes for the end of social injustices, but rather to provide a more open discussion “[...] which is configured from a patent awareness between the role of theory and practice for the discursive transit — and for the effectiveness of projects of social change” (Santos, 2022, p. 20, authors' translation). Thus, we perceive that the author's proposal goes far beyond conceptual, technical, or theoretical issues, proposing resistance networks, in which different voices participate actively in the search for social transformation.

“*A ATIVIDADE MATERIAL COMO ELEMENTO DE EXCLUSÃO EM PRÁTICAS SOCIODISCURSIVAS: QUAL A RELAÇÃO ENTRE CORPOS, ÔNIBUS COLETIVO E BANHEIRO?*” [Material activity as an element of exclusion in sociodiscursive practices: what is the relationship among bodies, buses, and restrooms?], written by Maria Carmen Aires Gomes, Alexandra Bittencourt de Carvalho, and Samuel de Sá Ribeiro, is the title of the second chapter. The authors present and discuss a linguistic-discursive analysis with data extracted from research carried out by Carvalho (2018) and Ribeiro (2020), analyzing, in blogs of lesbian, black and fat people, and trans men who are excluded in public spaces — public transportation and two schools' restrooms. They point out that “Bodies occupy different places from the collision of power and subordination axes: gender, race, ethnicity, social class, territoriality, size, intellectual capital, disability, age group [...]” (Gomes; Bittencourt; Ribeiro, 2022, p. 35, authors' translation). In their discussion, the authors use the term intersected body (see Chouliaraki; Fairclough, 1999), which brings the idea of movement, action, change, transformation, and positionality. In other words, according to them, these bodies produce resistances to “the hegemonic matrix of CISTem — cisgender, cisnormativity, cissexism [...]” (Gomes; Bittencourt; Ribeiro, 2022, p. 30, authors' translation). The first text presented by the authors is called *Have you ever sat beside a fat woman on the bus?*, written on the blog *Fat and Dyke*. They argue that there is militancy already related to the esthetical pressure that fat people suffer. However, the producer of this blog points out other problems which go beyond the esthetical issue, such as the limited physical space in turnstiles and bus seats. Therefore, through this text, we perceived an expansion of forms of discrimination and, through a positionality and a

transformational discourse, the producer of the report argues and complains about the suffering experienced.

The other part of those analyses is of transmasculine bodies in school restrooms. According to the authors, in one of the schools, trans students complained about the embarrassment they had experienced in the restrooms, which led school supervision to provide a genderless restroom with the following message in place of any gender identification: “whoever wants to use”. As the authors point out, however, other issues appeared and were reported by trans people — such as hygienic problems, since the restroom was often used by cis men (standing up), causing problems for those who needed to sit in the toilet. In the second school, the authors show us that the trans boys also had their complaints heard by the school supervision, which provided a restroom in the sports court that was upstairs. However, they claim that these students did not like the idea because of the distance and removal — as if transsexuality were a disease, a pathology that deserved isolation — and one of them stated that because of that he did not go to any restroom, even if it was really necessary. Later, there was a conversation between one of the students and the supervision to use the latter’s restroom, which was allowed. The authors see this student as an agent of change and resistance. Nevertheless, despite the change and students feeling safer and more comfortable using the supervision restroom, rather than others at the school, the authors claim that, by attending these spaces, these bodies became more visible for the school community, different from what happens to other students. We perceived that this visibility can be negative and cause embarrassment for students who would like to have their bodies respected in any public spaces. Finally, through these analyses, the authors highlighted different violent practices, such as racism, fatphobia, and transphobia

In the third chapter, entitled “*GÊNERO E SUAS RESSIGNIFICAÇÕES NOS DISCURSOS DE DEPUTADOS/AS FEDERAIS NO BRASIL*”, [Gender and its resignifications in the discourses of congress people in Brazil], Janaína Negreiros Persson discusses how congresspeople distort the feminist notion of gender in their discourses at the House of Representatives, transforming it into a *gender ideology*. The study was carried out between 2017 and 2019, having its focus on the political parties and on the material collected on the open page of the House of Representatives, guided by the word *gender* (having as main results the terms *gender equality* and *gender ideology*). The author carried out an analysis of discourses on gender in the House of Representatives, discourses that sometimes become laws, due to their ability to articulate and legitimize — through a certain authority (see Van Leeuwen, 2008). The theoretical approach is anchored in Critical Discourse Studies, which also uses the *ingroup* versus *outgroup* dimension (see Van Dijk, 1995). In her analysis, the author realizes that although there is a certain consensus between congresspeople from the left and from the right about gender equality being related to equal pay (for men and women), the end of violence against women and femicide, and even the empowerment of women, the left wing goes further and discusses issues such as the rights of the LGBT+ community, racial issues, and abortion. The author also points

out that the use of legitimation semantic resources, such as statistical and scientific data, is made by both left-wing and right-wing congresspeople. On the other hand, she argues that, when congresspeople from the (extreme) right and center-right discusses gender, they soon associate it with the *gender ideology* — a negative, poorly developed and distorted notion that sees social movement in favor of human rights and social inclusion as a threat to the traditional family, the church, morals, and good manners, in addition to relating it to diseases, pejorative terms (such as the *gay kit*), sexualized children and crimes (such as pedophilia) — while left and center-left party congresspeople argue that *gender ideology* does not exist. In the discourse of conservative parliamentarians, the author still notices that there is a strong articulation with other distortions — for example, instead of directly attacking the LGBT+ community, the (extreme) right and center-right congresspeople use strategies of self-representations and claim to be victims of *heterophobia*, *christianphobia*, *familyphobia* etc. Finally, given the results of the research, the author does not seem so hopeful about the future related to gender issues when she states: “In this sense, I would say that this study shows the political trends of how the feminist concept of gender can come to be interpreted in Brazilian society in the future” (Persson, 2022, p. 74, authors’ translation). We sympathize with the author in the face of this chaotic scenario in which Brazil finds itself, but like her, we resist, because “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1978, p. 95).

“*MAIS MULHERES SÃO ASSASSINADAS NA PANDEMIA*’: *CONSTRUÇÃO DISCURSIVA JORNALÍSTICA SOBRE VIOLÊNCIA CONTRA MULHERES NO ISOLAMENTO SOCIAL*” [“More women are murdered in the pandemic”: journalistic discursive construction on violence against women during social isolation] is the title of the fourth chapter of the book, written by Micheline Mattedi Tomazi and Viviane de Melo Resende. In this research, the authors analyze 14 texts from the newspaper *A Tribuna*, in the city of Vitória — ES, between March 2020 and February 2021, which report violence against women. The theoretical framework used in the research was multidisciplinary and is based both on the socio-cognitive approach of Critical Discourse Studies (see Van Dijk, 1990, 2010, 2012, 2016, 2017), as well as the theories that discuss the topic within the journalistic media. According to the authors:

The interface between discourse, cognition, and society allows engagement for the analysts to understand social injustices, inequalities, discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion present in society and discursively produced by the power and the control exerted by hegemonic groups, not always in a clearly declared and perceived way. By representing, in news and other journalistic genres, the violence of men against women in affective-marital relationships, newspapers can identify themselves with symbolic elites that have control over public discourse by controlling the way the theme will be treated: the topics, the lexicon, arguments, metaphors, and other discourse structures that

can affect, maintain, or transform prejudiced, sexist, and misogynistic ways of socially understanding the problem (Tomazi; Resende, 2022, p. 90, authors' translation).

Although the journalistic texts were published during the pandemic, when there was significant social isolation, the authors argue that this was not emphasized in the news, nor was the increase in violence against women connected to isolation. Another factor raised by the authors in their results is the focus on individualized cases in the news, rather than a social problem involving gender issues. In this regard, we perceive the prevalence of the neoliberal logic, in which social agents become individually responsible for solving structural/systemic issues that affect everyone. This logic exempts the State from responsibility with regard to public policies, not only in the aggravation of laws (making them more severe), but mainly public policies that involve educational and psychosocial guidelines. As the authors argued, the focus of journalistic texts is not to discuss the flaws of the State, which should guarantee effective assistance, protection, and reparation to women, but rather to justify the aggressions and maintain an order of discourse that blames and disqualifies women — who are victims of daily violence, who have their bodies (physical or symbolic) torn apart and their lives reduced to martyrdom, calvary, and death (in life).

The fifth chapter of the book, entitled “*O DISCURSO DO MOVIMENTO NEGRO UNIFICADO NO BRASIL*” [The discourse of the Unified Black Movement in Brazil], was written by Teun A. van Dijk, one of the founders of Critical Discourse Studies. In this article, he analyzes different texts from the Unified Black Movement against Racial Discrimination (UBMARD), later called the Unified Black Movement (UBM). According to the author, the movement started in 1978 — the period of the military dictatorship — in São Paulo, with important black activists, such as Lélia González and Abdias do Nascimento. The theoretical framework used in the article is multidisciplinary — in which Critical Discourse Analysis interacts with theories about (anti)racism, concepts of Social and Cognitive Psychology and theories about social movements from Social Sciences. In his analyses, the author perceived that after too much violence against the black movement, activists had enough and, through UBM, started to resist different forms of discrimination, which permeate unemployment, police violence, among others. Van Dijk states that the UBM texts (which vary in genre, such as the letter and the manifesto, and in style, sometimes more informal and others with arguments from academic texts) aggregate all the factors of a movement against violence — name, foundations, objectives, methods, relevant recent events etc. Violence seen both before 1888 (abolition of slavery) and after that date: “[...] there was nothing to be celebrated, since the black community was not released from racism, discrimination, prejudice and many forms of oppression [...] For the white people, 1888 means the transition between an economy of slavery to a capitalist economy [...]” (van Dijk, 2022, p. 129 and 131, authors' translation). For the author, the UBM resistance discourse discusses the sociopolitical situation and is aimed first at the black community — in

order to strengthen the community —, then at the population in general, as well as at violent and racist opponents. Regarding the content of the discourses materialized in the UBM texts (within more than 40 years of history), the author states that it has hardly changed — police violence remains and different forms of discrimination and precariousness at work, in housing, health, and education are still strongly perceived. One of the few changes the author noticed was a greater participation of women in the movements and the growing appeal to these movements, on the one hand — other black organizations emerged in Brazil, dialoguing with international movements, such as Black Lives Matter in the USA —, and on the other hand, a neglect of a large part of society that is interested in maintaining racism.

In the sixth chapter, entitled “*DEUS, PÁTRIA, FAMÍLIA, E PROPRIEDADE: IDEOLOGIA E DISCURSO NA LIGA MUNDIAL ANTICOMUNISTA (WACL) E DA CONFEDERAÇÃO ANTICOMUNISTA LATINO-AMERICANA (CAL) (1975-1979)*”, [God, homeland, family, and property: ideology and discourse in the World Anti-Communist League (WACL) and the Latin American Anti-Communist Confederation (LAC) (1975-1979)], André Kaysel discusses the documents of the II and III Congresses of LAC, which took place in Rio de Janeiro (1975) and in Asunción (1977), as well as editions of the newspaper *Patria*, in 1979, which were dedicated to the coverage of the XII WACL in Asunción. The ideology and the political discourse of these organizations, with different social actors, were analyzed, using Ernesto Laclau’s political theory on fascist discourse (see Laclau, 1977). The author’s hypothesis, confirmed in his analyses, is that anti-communism is the product of a heterogeneous discourse formation — and interpellation — of the extreme right, such as the defense of the Christian faith, nationalism, and economic freedom. The author identified, in the discourses investigated, the presence of the following elements: religious conservatism, supranationalism, and neoliberalism, which are associated with *noble* values (of *justice, dignity, humanity*). In addition, the author also emphasizes the attachment to the family and the land of origin. Through the analyses, we could see that these families are exclusively cisheteronormative and, evidently, do not open room for other possibilities. The *us versus them* is also evidenced by the author’s examination, through pejorative expressions in the discourses, such as *terrorists* and *Marxist murderers*, as well as *conspiracy theories*, which claim that communists are dangerous enemies, since they are *infiltrated* everywhere to destroy the *good* and all the values that come from *it*. Finally, the author also cites a Brazilian parliamentarian, who was the Chief Executive, arguing that the discourses given by Jair Bolsonaro are similar to anti-communist discourses, as well as others of the same ideological content that, according to Ernesto Laclau’s proposal, are related to fascism.

“*UMA ABORDAGEM HOLÍSTICA DA DINÂMICA CONFLITUOSA DAS CATEGORIZAÇÕES NO MESMO ESPAÇO SOCIAL*” [A holistic approach to the conflicting dynamics of categorizations in the same social space] is the title of the seventh and last chapter of this book. The text was written by Stéphanie Cassilde, who aims at contributing, through a holistic approach, to the field of categorization analysis.

The author defends an expansion in these analyses, which often reduce possibilities, since people are plural and their identity traits may not fit into a simplistic binarism. For example, many times when we fill out a form, in the gender category there are two options: male or female. In the last few years, this has extended to other *gender identities*. And a similar situation can happen in categorizations of research analysis — which was offered as an analytical category by a certain theoretical approach in the past and may have been modified, enlarged, and expanded to include new demands. In this text, the author presents concepts of *social rapport* — which imply binary combined with immutability, rigidity, a definite attempt. She argues that as analytical categories become more fluid, without a mandatory fixity, there is a whole repercussion in social spaces and a plasticity of choices in favor of diversity. For her:

The intersectionality of the theories proposed by the holistic approach to the conflicting dynamics of categorizations in the same social space constitutes a global structure to analyze social issues through the categorizations and categories involved. [...] this approach is here generalized and allows that the actors' ability to use several categories and categorizations simultaneously is taken into account, [...] It is about taking into account several positions simultaneously in terms of categorization [...] Our holistic approach allows us to leave a single theoretical structure, inviting us to maintain several at the same time, in order to approach the categorical reality lived by the actors (Cassilde, 2022, p. 198-200, authors' translation).

All the seven chapters discussed in this review are anchored in critical approaches, mostly from Critical Discourse Studies, a transdisciplinary field of research. Thus, through these texts, we perceived a dialogue with other areas of knowledge, which vary according to the necessity of the research object. We also observed that the analyzes encompass discourses located in contemporary times, involving discussions of gender, race, and class, which affect socially disadvantaged actors — such as marginalized groups.

By reading this book, we experienced a rescue from different forms of resistance in the struggle for social transformations. Transformations that break (vulnerable) social structures that cause human suffering, in order to other possibilities do not stay only in the field of utopia or a lazy and/or self-serving conformism that states: the world is the way it is. Thus, we recommend this work both for activists and researchers, as well as for anyone interested in paths that never cease to encourage the creation of resistance and other forms of (re)existence.

## REFERENCES

CHOULIARAKI, L.; FAIRCLOUGH, N. **Discourse in late modernity**: rethinking critical discourse analysis. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.

FOUCAULT, M. **History of sexuality I**: an introduction. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon, 1978.

LACLAU, E. **Ideology and politics in Marxist theory**: capitalism, fascism and populism. London: New Left Review Books, 1977.

VAN DIJK, T. **Discurso, notícia e ideologia**: estudos na análise crítica do discurso. Tradução de Zara Pinto-Coelho. Portugal: Humus, 2017.

VAN DIJK, T. **Discurso y conocimiento**: una aproximación sociocognitiva. Traducción de Flavia Limone Reina. Barcelona: Gedisa, 2016.

VAN DIJK, T. **Discurso e contexto**: uma abordagem sociocognitiva. Tradução de Rodolfo Ilari. São Paulo: Contexto, 2012.

VAN DIJK, T. **Discurso e poder**. Tradução de Judith Hoffnagel *et al.* São Paulo: Contexto, 2010.

VAN DIJK, T. Discourse analysis as ideology analysis. *In*: SCHÄFFNER, C.; WENDEN, A. L. **Language & peace**. London: Routledge: 1995. p. 17-34.

VAN DIJK, T. **La noticia como discurso**. Comprensión, estructura y producción de la información. Traducción de Guillermo Gal. Barcelona: Ediciones Paidós, 1990.

VAN LEEUWEN, T. The discursive construction of legitimation. *In*: VAN LEEUWEN, T. **Discourse and practice**: new tools for critical discourse analysis. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. p. 105-123.

Received on October 5, 2022

Approved on June 07, 2023