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The Speech as a Mark of Identify and Social Representation

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Abstract: This article is a bibliographical research, which resulted from discussions held in the discipline: Advanced Topics, offered by the Graduate Program in Communication, Language and Culture - GPCLC, the University of Amazonia - UNAMA, in which I asked myself the following question: Is it possible to see the discourse as a mark of identity and social representation? In view of this question, this paper proposes to verify how the discourse, more specifically, the linguistic variation of the use of pronouns (I / ME) in sentences that begin with verbs in the infinitive can be seen as a mark of identity and social representation at the same time. Therefore, this paper presents an analysis of the three categories: discourse, identity, and social representation based on the theoretical background of: Vasconcellos and Caetano (2014); Resende and Ramalho (2006) and Andrade (1995). Taking as sample, the use of the variation in question within two contexts. The first, in a news item in a local newspaper and the second, in a virtual environment (Facebook and Whatsapp). Thus, it is concluded that discourse can be seen not only as a mark of identity, but also as a social representation. But, both categories, since the discourse is influenced by the social environment in which the individual is inserted, making each individual possess a unique discourse.

Keywords: Discourse, Identity, Social Representation

1. Introduction

Every day, we participate in numerous personal and social interrelationships, which contain several examples of linguistic variation, in particular, the pronominal variation, of the pronouns (I/ME) in infinitive clauses prepositioned by the preposition "to". Where, according to Everett, it is these interrelationships that mold what we call identity [1].

However, when we think of this concept, we immediately think of gender, race, ethnicity, social groups, etc. And consequently, we associate the concept of identity with a social representation, such as: cultural identity, Amazonian identity, indigenous identity, caboclo identity, etc. So, we can see that both concepts are explored by the most diverse areas of knowledge and, for this reason, it is very difficult to define a single concept of both identity and social representation. However, there are few studies that analyze these two concepts, having discourse as the starting point.

In view of this, this paper analyzes the use of pronominal variation in infinitive sentences from two categories: identity and social representation, based on the theoretical concepts of: Vasconcellos and Caetano [2], Resende and Ramalho [3] and

Andrade [4], having the following guiding question: Is it possible to analyze discourse as a mark of identity and social representation?

Thus, it is divided into seven topics: Introduction, From language to discourse, Understanding the linguistic context, Identity: a word with multiple meanings, Social representation: a seven-headed animal, Final considerations, and References.

2. From Language to Discourse

When we talk about speech, we quickly relate it to oratory, to someone saying something. Therefore, we cannot help but remember that speech is a form of language that has been present in our society for quite some time. According to Everett, language has been present in the world since the Homos erectus (about 1.8 million years to 50,000 years ago during the Pleistocene) [1]. Also according to the author, "The erectus were the pioneers of language, culture, human migration, and adventure. Around 750,000 years before Homo erectus metamorphosed into Homo sapiens" [1].

So, it can be said that since the beginning of human history, language has been used in the act of communication. In this way, communication has always been present in interpersonal

relationships (if one can say so). According to Wolton, communication can be understood in 03 (three) different senses: direct communication (speech), technical communication (technicality), and social communication (society) [5].

Thinking about the first sense (direct communication), oral language is present in our daily relationships, after all, it is what characterizes us and differentiates us from other (irrational) animals. This being the interaction between meaning (semantics), conditions of use (pragmatics), physical properties of the inventory of sounds (phonetics), grammar (syntax or sentence structure), phonology (sound structure), morphology (word structure), conversational organizational principles of speech, information and gesture. Language is "gestalt"-the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, that is, the whole is not understood merely as the examination of six individual components, according to Everett [1].

According to Resende and Ramalho, there are two theoretical approaches that underpin discourse analysis studies: the formalist and the functionalist. The first "judges language as an autonomous object" and the second judges language as "a non-sufficient object in itself". This has generated two distinct grammars and at the same time two conceptions of discourse [3].

In relation to grammar there is the formalist approach which "treats language from the point of view of systematic structures" and the functionalist approach which "analyzes the relations between linguistic forms and functions" (According to Resende and Ramalho [3]).

In relation to discourse, the formalist approach defines it "as the unit above the sentence" and the functionalist approach defines it as "language in use".

However, it is known that every discourse presents an enunciation or a message that is intended to be conveyed in the act of communication. As this is passed from an "active speaker to a passive listener" (According to Resende and Ramalho [3].

Thus, the statement or message is nothing more than a linguistic selection that organizes the ideas of the speaker during the speech act. Thus, according to Fairclough (apud Silva, 2019), discourse can be defined as language used to represent social practices from points of view. Thus, for each social relationship and situation it is possible to make use of a type of discourse, considering the intended goals.

Still about the utterance, it is valid to point out that every utterance can be classified, according to Antonie Culioli, in 04 (four) modalities that indicate the type of act that the enunciation intends to perform. These modalities are:

Modality 1: This modality can occur through assertion (validation of the content through affirmation or denial), interrogation (the enunciator interrogates the co-enunciator), injunction (the enunciator resorts to supplication, request or suggestion to expound his enunciation), or through hypothesis (the enunciator poses the hypothesis in an absolute manner or else by issuing a positive hypothesis).

Modality 2: The epistemic modality refers to the enunciator's uncertainty about the validation of the predicative relation. It oscillates between probable and improbable.

Modality 3: Called appreciative, this modality corresponds to the analysis of the content character of the predicative relation (good, bad, happy, unhappy, etc.). It reveals the enunciator's judgment about the subject-predicate relation.

Modality 4: Intersubjective or radical modality refers to relations between subjects (enunciating subject and enunciated subject and enunciating subject and co-enunciator) [6].

Once elucidated the four types of utterances that can be produced in a discourse, let us move on to the next topic that will address the linguistic context in question.

3. Understanding the Linguistic Context

As stated before, the present paper analyzes discourse as a mark of identity and social representation from a specific linguistic context, the pronominal variation present in infinitive clauses prepositioned by the preposition "to". This presents itself unconsciously during a moment of spontaneous speech (discourse). This, in turn, presents a pragmatic and syntagmatic selection, guided by rules of syntax (grammar), which is within a larger structure, the Portuguese language. Thus, it can be stated that discourse, in general, is present in all moments of our daily lives.

According to Fairclough in Resende and Ramalho:

"In using the term 'discourse', I propose to consider language use as a form of social practice and not as a purely individual activity or a reflection of institutional variables. This has several implications. First, it implies that discourse is a mode of action, a way in which people can act on the world and especially on others, as well as a mode of representation. [...] Second, it implies a dialectical relationship between discourse and social structure, there being more generally such a relationship between social practice and social structure: the latter is both a condition and an effect of the former [3].

Regarding pronominal usage, descriptive grammar itself states that the pronoun "I" and the pronoun "me" are considered variants of the same pronoun, as can be seen in the words of Perini:

Personal pronoun are the items I, you, you he (she), we, you, they (they), besides if. Some of these words have oblique forms, that is, forms used when the item is in a particular syntactic function. Thus, we say I arrived, but Eliana called me; the forms I and me are considered variants of the same pronoun; I is called the straight form, and me the oblique form [7].

Based on Perini's words, one can state that linguistic variation is any "possibility of representation" [7] of certain linguistic elements (phonetic, morphological, syntactic, etc.) by different modes of expression" [8]. However, when both forms (straight and oblique) are used in infinitive sentences, the straight form "I" has the subject function and the oblique form "me" has the object function.

Based on this, the following question arises: How can the use of a particular pronoun in the mentioned linguistic context be seen as a mark of identity?

4. Identity: A Word with Multiple Meanings

As already mentioned, the word identity has several definitions. Among them, we chose to highlight the definition given by the minidictionary Aurélio, which shows the word identity as a feminine noun with two different definitions, the first: "quality of identical"; and the second: "a person's own and exclusive characteristics: name, age, state, profession, sex, etc." [9].

As can be seen, the first definition given by Aurélio, consists in an adjective and the second is related to people, which is closer to the discussion here.

However, Andrade states that studies on identity adopt two distinct perspectives: the individualistic and the French school. According to the author, the individualist perspective considers only the individual, a unique being that can be understood by three aspects: biological, psychological and psychoanalytic. The first adopts identity as the "expression of an organic structure, containing a system of traits and dispositions" [4]. The second adopts identity as "an organization of attitudes" and the third as the product forged "essentially in the psychological dramas and conflicts of childhood" [4].

The second perspective, on the other hand, studies the phenomenon of identity based on the social, seeing it as the result of a process. Thus, identity is shaped by the interaction of the individual with the social environment.

According to Vasconcellos and Caetano:

Identity is the result of a social construction and the complexity of the social. The identity process is structured through an individual and social interrelationship, where we can verify psychological and sociological factors that are articulated. Therefore, the identity of each one of us is always under construction, since it interacts with the transformations experienced in the social context, responsible for the infinite production of culture(s) [2].

Thus, it can be said that the construction of identity is directly influenced by the culture in which the individual is inserted. For, this culture is a form, a model, a standard to be followed. It is worth pointing out that it is in it that we find "practices, values, knowledge, principles with which we identify ourselves, we feel as belonging or not, to a group. In this sense, the identity of each one of us is always under construction, since it interacts with the changes experienced in the social context" [2].

In this way, it is possible to affirm that the production of a certain discourse, in this case, the pronominal use in sentences initiated by verbs in the infinitive, can be seen as an identity mark or a form of identity. Since this discourse has been transformed into knowledge, into cultural capital by means of a social interaction in which the subject is inserted. That is, at the same time that the subject hears this discourse, he also reproduces it. But is this phenomenon something purely individual or does it occur in a group of people being recognized as a form of social representation?

According to Bourdieu, cultural capital is "all forms of knowledge that a person acquires during his or her life. The author divides this capital into three forms: embodied, institutionalized, and objectified" [10].

5. Social Representation: A Seven-headed Monster

According to Vasconcellos and Caetano, the concept of social representation is explored by two fields of knowledge: "the psychological or psychosociological field and the sociological or anthropological field" [2].

In the former, social representation is seen as a set of identities that are used by an individual and at the same time by a group of people. According to Moscovici *apud* Vasconcellos and Caetano, social representation is "a set of concepts, statements, and explanations originating from everyday life in the course of intergroup communication." [2].

In the second, social representation, According to Jodelet *apud* Vasconcellos and Caetano, is "a form of knowledge, socially further developed and shared with practical projects and contributing to the construction of a common reality for the social group" [2].

Based on Jodelet's concept, it is clear that it is possible to relate the concept of social representation to discourse. Or rather, to accept any form of discourse with a mark of social representation.

Trying to make this relationship clearer, let's take as an example, the case of George Floyd, a forty-year-old black man who ended up dying asphyxiated during an approach made by a white police officer in Minnesota City, United States [11]. Where a video of this action was posted on the internet, making it very clear that the police officer, when arresting George, positioned himself on his knees over George's neck and George communicated, during the whole operation, to the police officer that he could not breathe. Causing his death. This ended up generating a worldwide commotion and, as a consequence, an anti-fascism discourse took over the social networks, as can be seen in a post made on Facebook (See figure 1).

The post in question shows a logo in the form of a flag with the phrase: "I do not support fascism! Being that this ideology, of not being fascist, was so accepted by people, who identified with this discourse, that the logo was shared or reposted with some kind of editing by several users of Facebook and other social networks, and even by educational institutions that also identified with the discourse.

Therefore, the discourse in this example became an identity (individual) and at the same time a social representation (collective). After all, "representations are obviously not created by an individual in isolation. Once created, however, they take on a life of their own, circulate, meet, attract and repel, and give opportunity to the birth of new representations, while old ones die [2].

The same phenomenon also occurs with the linguistic context studied here, as can be seen in figures 2 and 3.
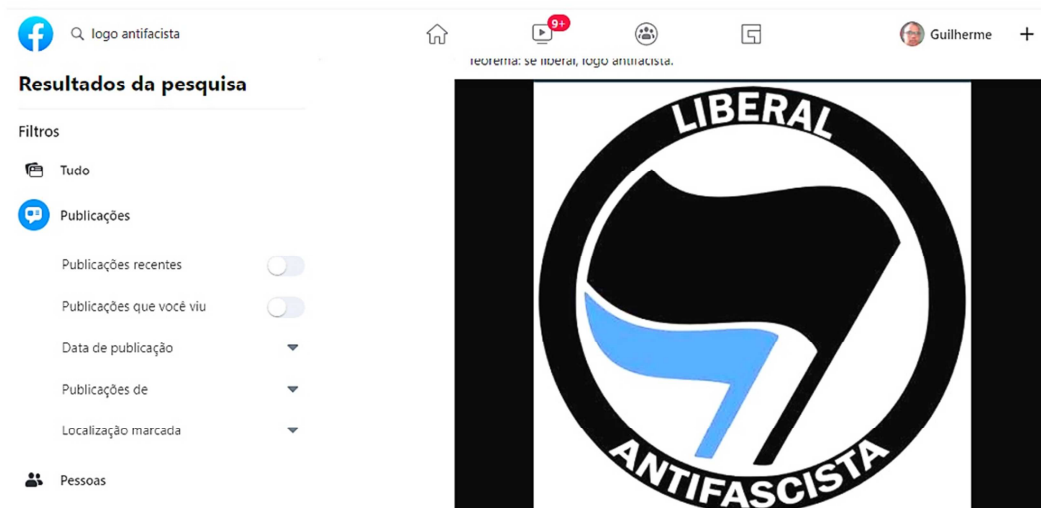
Figure 1. Logo antifascism.

Figure 2. Local Newspaper.

The image above is a photograph of a newspaper report, in which the title of the story and the speech of the person interviewed contain exactly the use of the pronominal variation prepositioned by the preposition "to" with a verb in the infinitive: "In Brazil, it would be very difficult for me to take a medical course".

It is noticeable that even though it is a newspaper, a means of communication that, theoretically, prevails the use of the polite standard of the Portuguese language, what predominated was the use of the pronoun MIM followed by the verb in the infinitive do, which according to the normative grammar is wrong, since the pronoun MIM has the function of objective and not subject as it is being used in the sentence in question.

Making an analysis of this speech based on the rules of syntax of the Portuguese language, it can be said that in relation to the phrasal aesthetic, the speaker in question chose the reverse order (CSV - Complement, subject and verb) starting the sentence by (No Brazil) which is not common in the Portuguese language, since most of the time what we see is the use of direct order (SVC - Subject, verb and complement).

Therefore, it is clear that the newspaper kept the speech of the person interviewed in order to demonstrate the opinion of the person and not of the newspaper. Since the speech contains two identity marks: the use of the pronoun me and the use of the reverse order.

The following image was taken from a WhatsApp conversation, where one can notice a conversation between very close people, because they are relatives, therefore, without concern for the level of language, use of norm or any other specificity of the Portuguese language (see figure 3).
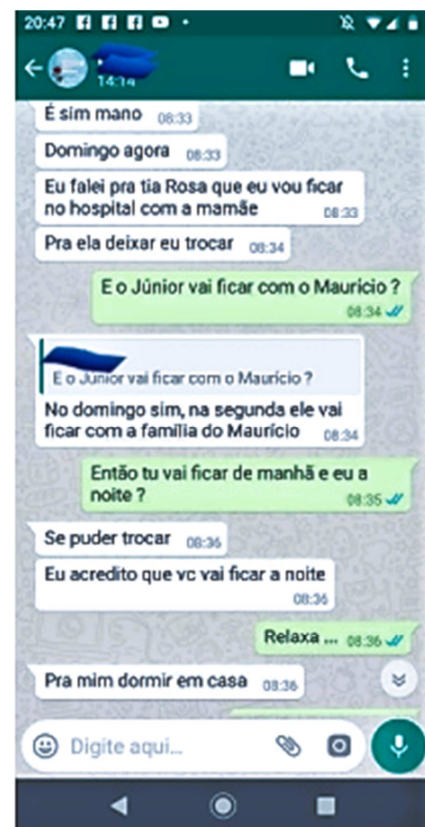

Figure 3. WhatsApp chat.

Based on figure 3, it can be seen that the person identified by the messages highlighted in white, when writing the sentence: "For me sleep at home" ("Pra mim dormir em casa" in Portuguesa) also used the oblique pronoun ME in place of the straight personal pronoun I, in an infinitive prepositional sentence with "for". In addition, he has replaced the preposition "for" with "fo" (pra), which can also be considered a variation. That is, this sentence contains two variations: the first in the use of "fo" instead of "for", and the second using "me" instead of "I".

Regarding the syntax and semantics of the conversation, it is observed that the sentence: " Fo me sleep at home" (Pra mim dormir em casa) complements the meaning of the sentence above "I believe that you will stay at night" (Eu acredito que vc vai ficar a noite). That is, it is necessary that the receiver identified by the green messages performs the action of staying the night somewhere so that the speaker can sleep at home. Therefore, the pronominal use "me" does not match the meaning of the sentence, since the speaker will perform the action of sleeping at home if the condition imposed by the sentence "I believe that you will stay the night" is obeyed. And as we have seen before, the pronoun that performs the subject action is the straight pronoun I and not the oblique pronoun me. Showing once again a personal syntagmatic choice. That is, an identity mark of this subject.

6. Conclusion

Thus, identity is directly influenced by the culture and the social interrelationship in which the individual is inserted. Being that this identity is not something ready and finished, it is in constant transformation as we can see in the movie "The Joker" that in the beginning we have the presentation of the main character "Arthur Fleck", a comedian who earns his living working in the streets and animating parties, and who suffers bullying for having a disease known as "gelastic epilepsy" causing him to have uncontrollable laughter attacks besides being socially excluded. These factors contributed to the creation of a new identity (The Joker). In other words, the identity we have today may or may not change in the future.

This identity change is very present in the discourse. The way we speak today is not the same as the way we spoke in childhood, because throughout this process we were hearing and learning new words and ways of using them in certain contexts. Such influences shape the speech of a person in such a way that it becomes unique, an identity mark that allows us to differentiate each speaker as it occurred in the speech present in figure 2, in which the speaker uses sentences in reverse order and the use of the pronoun "me" in sentences prepositioned by the preposition para with a verb in the infinitive, and in figure 3, the speaker uses two markings: "fo" and "me" in the same linguistic context. In some situations, people identify so much with the announced speech that it becomes a social representation as it happened with the anti-fascist speech shared worldwide on social networks due to the death of George Floyd (see figure 1).

Therefore, we conclude that the discourse can be seen not only as an identity mark, but also as a social representation. But, both categories, since the speech is influenced by the social environment in which the individual is inserted, making each individual possess a unique speech.

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