A comparative analysis of social actors in multimodal texts about civilian armament in Brazil

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ABSTRACT

Understanding language as a social action, Critical Discourse Analysis aims at highlighting linguistic-discursive practices interconnected with sociopolitical structures that support them. Following this assumption, Van Leeuwen (1996; 2008) develops the theory of representations of social actors intending to unveil the ideological foundations of discourse, as well as the relations between objects and subjects in interaction. Since the press has the power to create and maintain ideological constructions that help sustaining certain power relations, it is necessary to investigate how and what participants are included and excluded, given the sociocultural context in which the discourse happens. Therefore, this article proposes a multimodal comparative analysis of the representations of the social actors in two news articles on the same theme: license for the acquisition and possession of firearms.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; social actors; press; multimodal texts.

RESUMO

A Análise Crítica do Discurso busca evidenciar práticas linguístico-discursivas interligadas com estruturas sociopolíticas que as sustentam. Seguindo esse pressuposto, Van Leeuwen (1996; 2008) desenvolve a teoria das representações dos atores sociais com a qual pretende desvelar os fundamentos ideológicos do discurso, assim como as relações entre objetos e sujeitos em interação. Uma vez que a imprensa dispõe de poder para criar e manter construções ideológicas que ajudam a sustentar certas relações de poder, é necessário averiguar como e quais participantes são incluídos e excluídos, tendo em vista o contexto sociocultural no qual o discurso se materializa. Para tanto, neste artigo é realizada uma análise comparativa multimodal das representações dos atores sociais

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presentes em duas reportagens sobre o mesmo tema: permissão para uso e posse de arma de fogo.

Palavras-chave: Análise Crítica do Discurso; atores sociais; imprensa; textos multimodais.

INTRODUCTION

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary field of Language Studies that offers theoretical-methodological resources for the comprehension of the relation between language and society. As supported by authors, notably Halliday (1978, 1994), Fairclough (1992), Kress (1989) and Van Leeuwen (1996), language is not a matter of coding and decoding messages, rather it is considered a kind of social practice. By taking discourse as its main object of study, CDA suggests that language practices are connected to the historical, social, political and economic conditions that generate them. Therefore, linguistic phenomena are socially based because "whenever people speak or listen or write or read, they do so in ways which are determined socially and have social effects" (FAIRCLOUGH, 1989, p. 23). It does not mean, however, that discourse merely reflects and reproduces social order, as it also influences the construction of reality.

News discourse has received much attention from CDA, especially because it is usually accepted as objective, neutral and factual. This kind of discursive construction, combined with the fact that the media in general – TV, radio, newspaper – is embedded in our daily lives, grants it the power to create and maintain ideological constructions. As a consequence, media channels are rarely held responsible for influencing public opinion in this very subtle way. According to Fowler (1991, p. 223):

> News is not a natural phenomenon emerging straight from "reality", but a product. It is produced by an industry, shaped by the relations between the media and other industries, by the bureaucratic and economic structure of that industry, and most importantly by relations with government and with other political organizations.

All in all, we could say that CDA provides resources to analyze discourse given that it is a key for understanding and also challenging power relations helping to maintain a certain version of reality in the story at play. Such resources aim at identifying

ideologies embedded in discourse to tell us, for instance, who says what to whom, from which perspective and with what intentions.

This leads us to the question of the purpose of this research. The objective of this study is to analyze two multimodal texts[iii] by means of the systems developed by Van Leeuwen (1996; 2008), namely those dealing with the representations of social actors, in order to reveal which interests and positionality might be found behind the linguistic choices made by the writers.

A comparative analysis will be carried out as a means of illustrating how different sources produce discourse in accordance with their own standpoint and how it affects meaning in the texts. In relation to the *corpus*, the authors previously defined a genre (news article) and a theme (civilian armament) so as to ensure a level of common ground that allows us to see particularities of each text. Apart from that, it was determined that texts should come from sources that have social relevance and that are considered trustworthy by readers.

From an online search, many eligible texts could be found, but we selected two of them. The first one was selected because it may represent the position of official sources from the government, whereas the second text was chosen because it comes from a massive media conglomerate from South America: Organizações Globo. The selected texts are both online news articles covering the same piece of news (civilian armament) and they were originally written in Portuguese.

As the texts are too long, we will need to limit the analysis to a few paragraphs, which were considered the most relevant according to the authors. The paragraphs selected for analysis were translated into English in order to maintain the readability (free translation made by the authors). The links to the original texts in Portuguese are available in the footnotes where the texts are placed.

The main research questions guiding this study address the following issues:

● How are the main social actors represented both verbally and visually in the texts?

[iii] Multimodal texts combine two or more modes such as written language, spoken language, visual (still and moving image), audio, gestural, and spatial meaning (The New London Group, 2000; Cope and Kalantzis, 2009).

● How does the representation of social actors differ from the text posted in the government website to the one posted in a private TV station website?

In addition to this introduction, the article is divided into five other sessions. In session two, we will explain the categories from Van Leeuwen's theory and also illustrate them with examples taken from the *corpus*. Session three is dedicated to the description of the *corpus*, which consists of image and verbal text, meaning that we are dealing with a multimodal *corpus*. Session four will focus on the analysis, which will have to be done in two stages: first we will be scrutinizing the verbal part and afterwards we analyze the images that accompany the verbal texts. In the last session, the authors will summarize the main ideas discussed in the article and also indicate which conclusions our findings might suggest.

1 LITERATURE REVIEW

As mentioned above, the literature foundation used as support for the analysis in this study is Van Leeuwen's (1996; 2008), which is known as the representation of social actors (1996) and the visual representation of social actors (2008). In sum, this approach aims at demonstrating how social actors are represented in verbal and visual discourses. As Van Leeuwen's system has many categories, this literature review will focus on the most relevant ones for the analysis of the selected *corpus*. Some categories we will be employing for the analysis are listed on table 1, and we will briefly explain them and show examples from the *corpus* in this section.

Table 1: Categories of analysis.

Exclusion	Not including a specific group of people (by suppression or backgrounding).
Inclusion	Including groups of people.
Activation	The social actor is doing the action.
Passivation	The social actor is suffering the

	action
Personalization	When the social actor is characterized as a human being.
Impersonalization	When the social actor is not characterized as a human being.
Nomination	When we individualize and identify the social actor (by their name, title, etc.),
Categorization	When a social actor is identified by traits that are shared with others.
Specification	When the social actors are represented as individuals or groups fully identifiable.
Assimilation	Not identifying the social actor as an individual by using some kind of homogenization.
Functionalization	Identification of a social actor by means of his activity (e.g., professional activity).

Source: elaborated by the authors

The first categories we would like to introduce from Van Leeuwen's theory are *Inclusion* and *Exclusion* (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 28). The occurrence of these categories is detected by observing which social actors are included and which are excluded in discourse. As explained by Van Leeuwen (1996; 2008), the exclusion of a social actor may not be naïve, this is why the analyst must be attentive to the absence, especially because "representations include or exclude social actors to suit their interests and purposes in relation to the readers" (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 28). There are two types of exclusion: a social actor can be excluded by *Suppression* (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 29)**,** which happens in case the participant is totally erased from the discourse; or he can be excluded by being just *Backgrounded* (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 29)**,** meaning that the social actor is not explicitly mentioned, but it is possible to infer who/what that is by looking at contextual hints. Let us see the examples below:

(1) "new rules about gun ownership are questioned in Court and Council. […]".

(2) 'by editing decrees, the government "restitutes" self-defense rights to citizens, says Onyx […]".

In extract 1, we could ask who is questioning this new rule, since it is not mentioned in the text. We see in this sentence that the author opted for the use of passive voice, which makes it possible to deviate the focus from the actor (the person who is questioning) to a noun (new rule). In the end, this social actor was simply erased or excluded, and we cannot infer who that is, so this is a case of suppression. On the other hand, the exclusion of social actor from extract 2 can be inferred because the government must be the entity responsible for editing decrees. Speakers are likely to have this information as it is knowledge we share socially, so it means that the social actor was not completely erased, it is just backgrounded.

The cases of *Inclusion* (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 29) offer more possibilities. When talking about roles, the social actor can be represented by *Activation* (as agents) or by *Passivation* (as patients) as we can see in the examples:

(3) "Government regulates gun ownership and ensures the right to self-defense […]."

(4) "Federal police gain more objective criteria to grant the gun ownership certificate."

In excerpt 3, the government is portrayed as the agent of regulating licenses for the acquisition and possession of firearms, which means that it is in an active role. This is not the case in example 4 because we notice the social actor is passivated as it is being benefited. In this case, the actor "federal police" gains something from someone else who will be the active part as the giver in this transaction.

Social actors can also take part in categories such as *Personalization* (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 46) and *Impersonalization* (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 46). The first one is the concept of representing social actors as human beings, while the latter do not include the human feature in its representation:

(5) "affirmed the President of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro […["

(6) "the federal government regulated firearm ownership in Brazil."

In excerpt 5, the person is mentioned by his name, and it is also a case of *Nomination* (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 41)*,* as he is also called "the President of Brazil". In example 6, however, there is a case of *Impersonalization*, as it is not used a person's name, but of an institution, without mentioning anyone. Another category we can identify in the same example is *Functionalization* (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 42), which happens when the social actor is referred to by means of his function/role like president, pianist, teacher.

Furthermore, the category *Specification*, in contrast to *Categorization*, refers to "a specific, concrete world, populated with specific, concrete people, places, things, and actions" (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 35). In the use of specification individuals or groups can be identified. There are two types of specification: individualization (when actors are represented as individuals) and assimilation (when actors are represented as groups). *Assimilation* (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 37) refers to a given social group without considering its members' identities as individuals in any way. Members are recognized as being part of a certain group (like one's place of birth). See example below:

(7) "Does a government have the right to withdraw from society a tool that ensures self-defense?"

In 7, there is a case of assimilation because social actors are seen as a group (society) and not as individuals. Van Leeuwen (2008) considers assimilation a key category for the analysis, "given the great value which is placed on individuality in many spheres of our society" (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 37). As we will see in the analysis, this notion is valuable because it allows us to see which actors are considered relevant enough to be individualized and which actors are assimilated as "ordinary people" (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 37) to the point they are not properly identified in discourse.

The second part of the analysis of each news report will scrutinize the images, as "in newspapers, the words tell us what politicians do, while the images, capturing a fleeting moment, show them, for instance, as either vigorous and in control, or slumped back, seemingly defeated" (HALL, 1982 apud VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 136). This idea

summarizes how the visual representation of social actors in images may happen. In order to analyze social actors in images Van Leeuwen has developed categories which are exclusive for this kind of text, however, the categories introduced previously are also used in the analysis. For image analysis three additional dimensions must be considered: *social distance* (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 138), *social relation* (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 139) and *social interaction* (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 140). We will briefly explain them below:

Table 2: Categories for image analysis

Social distance	a) long-shot: distance. b) close-shot: closeness.
Social relation	a) frontal angle: equality in power relation. b) oblique angle: inequality in power relation.
Social interaction	a) Direct eye-contact: there is a demand from the social actor. b) No eye-contact: social actor is offered to our gaze.

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Regarding social distance, long-shot pictures generally indicate a kind of distance, strangeness between the viewer and the depicted people, whereas close-shot pictures indicate more closeness, as if the actor(s) represented were one of us or really close to us, the viewers. The second dimension indicates how the angle may show differences in power. If the social actor is represented in a frontal angle, it may indicate an equality in power and some involvement between the participants. On the other hand, if the social actor is represented in an oblique angle, it may indicate that there is an unequal power relation between the participants. The third and last dimension observes if there is direct eye contact between the viewer and the depicted actors. In case the actors address us directly by looking at us, it implies some demand, it means they want something from us. If there is no eye contact, it may be seen as an offer from the depicted people, as they are free to our gaze.

The categories we have introduced here will be our analytical resource. Now we move on to the next session, which is dedicated to the description of the corpus.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE CORPUS

The first multimodal text to be analyzed was taken from the Brazilian government website[iv]. The communicative purpose of the text is to inform about the signing of a decree which regulates firearm licenses in Brazil. The context of the news happens within a political environment in which the government was recently elected (2019) and the president had promises to make licenses for the acquisition and possession of firearms easier for Brazilian citizens as one of his main electoral campaigns. This text was chosen so as to see how the decree was represented by a government channel in comparison with another website. As mentioned previously, the authors opted for using a translated version in order to facilitate the reading of the article. You will find text 1 below[v]:

Picture 1 - Government website.

Source: BRASIL, 2019.

[iv] Source: www.brasil.gov.br.

[v] You will find the original text in: https://www.gov.br/pt-br.

Table 3 - verbal text 1.

Government regulates gun ownership and ensures the right to self-defense (Title)
Edited this Tuesday (15th), decree clarifies the legislation and complies with the constitutional mechanism of self-defense right. The measure is already valid in the whole country. *(Subtitle)*
The President of Brazil signed a decree which regulates gun ownership during an event in Planalto Palace. Photo by: Alan Santos/PR. *(image's subtitle)*
In a decree issued this Tuesday (15th), the federal government regulated firearm ownership in Brazil. The document seeks to ensure the right to maintain firearms at home or at the workplace and clarifies the gun ownership process.
With the issuing of the document this Tuesday, the process gains in clarity. The demands for gun ownership, such as being more than 25 years old, having a licit occupation, permanent residence, clean records, not responding to criminal prosecutions or having links to criminals, remain unchanged, but federal police gains more objective criteria to grant the gun ownership certificate.
"The big issue we had in the law is the effective proof of necessity. This idea was close to subjectivity" affirmed the President, Jair Bolsonaro, when signing the decree during the ceremony in Planalto Palace.

Source: BRASIL, 2019.

The second multimodal text selected was taken from a website belonging to one of the most powerful media companies in South America, the largest in Brazil: Globo's organization[vi]. The communicative purpose of the text is to inform readers of the new decree signed by the president which will facilitate license for the acquisition and possession of firearms in Brazil; however, it gives certain emphasis to the public figure of Onyx Lorenzoni (former Chief of Staff), whose utterances are mentioned even in the title. The context that is in the background involves a great deal of a political dispute over a controversial matter such as the government facilitating civilian armament or not. The choice for this text was made since Globo, one of the most important media conglomerates in Brazil, may be recognized by its readers as neutral and unbiased, as if it was presenting the news without any ideological views. Given that, it would be interesting to contrast Globo's depiction of social actors with the Government's depiction (which, as it is the government's media channel, would naturally be aligned to the authorities' point of view). You will find text 2 below[vii]:

[vi] Source: https://g1.globo.com.

[vii] You will find the original text in: https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2019/06/18/armas-nao-matam-quem-matam-sao-pessoas-diz-onyx-ao-defender-decreto-de-bolsonaro.ghtml.

Picture 2 - Picture of Onyx presented in the piece of news

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Source: CLAVERY, 2019.

Table 4 - verbal text 2.

By editing decrees, the government "restitutes" self-defense rights to citizens, says Onyx. *(Title)*   The Chief of Staff took part in a hearing in the city council. To Rodrigo Maia, the Government has a weak defense of Bolsonaro's decrees. New rules about gun ownership are questioned in Court and Council.   Chief of Staff, Onyx Lorenzoni, at the hearing at the Constitution Committee of Justice and Citizenship on Tuesday (18). Photograph: Pablo Valadares/ House of Representatives. (Image subtitle)   Chief of Staff, Onyx Lorenzoni, stated this Friday (18) that by issuing gun ownership decrees, the government "restituted" the right of self-defense to its citizens.   Onyx gave a speech when participating in a hearing at the Constitution Committee of Justice and Citizenship (CCJC) at the City Council. He was summoned to explain President Jair Bolsonaro's decree that facilitates gun possession.   The right to carry a gun is the authorization to carry a gun outside your home. It is different from ownership, which only allows you to keep the gun inside the house.   "Does a government have the right to withdraw from society a tool that ensures self-defense? In my opinion, it doesn't", said the minister.   This January, The Chief of Staff had already claimed that having a gun at home is as dangerous as having a blender.

Source: G1

4 IDENTIFICATION OF SOCIAL ACTORS

In this session, tables containing the analysis of both texts are presented in which we have the social actor, how it is realized in the text (with examples) and in the images published together with the piece of news. We categorize them according to Van Leeuwen's theory. Tables numbers three and four are related to the texts themselves (textual analysis) while tables five and six are related to the images (pictorial analysis).

4.1 Results of textual Analysis of social actors

Table 5 - Results of textual Analysis of social actors - text 1.

Social Actor	Realization	Category
Government	"**Government** regulates gun ownership and ensures the right to self-defense"	**Activation:** Active role in the act of regulating something. Material process: actor. **Specification / Impersonalization**
Anyone	"Being more than 25 years old, having a licit occupation, permanent residence, clean records, not responding to criminal prosecutions or having links to criminals remain unchanged [...]"	**Exclusion – Backgrounding** Social actors can be anyone that fits these categories.
President of Brazil	"**The President of Brazil** signed a decree which regulates [...]"	**Nomination - Titulation** **Activation** Active role in the act of signing. Material process: actor.
Federal Government	"**Federal government** regulated firearm ownership in Brazil.	**Activation:** Active role in the act of regulating something. Material process: actor.

		Specification / Impersonalization
Federal Police	"**Federal police** gains more objective criteria to grant the gun ownership certificate."	**Impersonalization** **Categorization – Functionalization.** **Passivation – Beneficialization:** Gaining something from another social actor.
Jair Bolsonaro	"Affirmed the President **Jair Bolsonaro**…"	**Activation** Grammatical role in the process of affirming. Verbal Process: Sayer. **Personalization – Semi-formal Nomination** Use of proper nouns. **Personalization - Categorization - Functionalization** (president)

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Table 6 - Results of textual Analysis of social actors - text 2.

Social actor	Realization	Category
Government (inference)	"By editing decrees […]"	**Exclusion:** backgrounding (we can infer government is the one that issues the decree)
Government	"**The government** 'restitutes' self-defense right […]"	**Activation:** Active role in the action of restitution of self-defense rights. **Categorization / Functionalization.**

Citizens	"[…] 'restitutes' self-defense right to **citizens**…"	**Passivation – Beneficialization:** Citizens as a beneficiary. **General / assimilation: collectivization:** Citizens representing a homogenous group of people.
Onyx	"Says **Onyx**"	**Activation:** Sayer in the verbal process. **Specification / nomination** informal
Minister	"**The Chief of Staff** took part in a hearing […]"	**Activation:** Active role in the material process. **Determination / functionalization**
Rodrigo Maia	"To **Rodrigo Maia** […]"	**Nomination:** semiformal
government	"**Government** has a weak defense […]"	**Activation:** Active role in the material process. **Categorization / functionalization**.
Anyone. It cannot be found anywhere in the text.	"New rule about gun ownership is questioned […]"	**Exclusion:** suppression (questioned by whom?)
Staff minister	"**Chief of Staff, Onyx Lorenzoni**, stated this Friday […]"	**Activation:** Active role in the verbal process. **Nomination:** semiformal, proper noun. **Categorization:** functionalization.
Onyx	"**Onyx** gave a speech […]"	**Activation**: Active role in the verbal process.

		Nomination: Surname, Formal.
Onyx (inference)	"When participating in a hearing […]"	**Activation:** Active role in the material process. **Exclusion:** backgrounding
He (Onyx)	"**He** was summoned to explain [...]"	**Passivation:** Subjected.
Government, Police (?)	"[…] is the authorization to carry a gun outside your home […]"	**Exclusion:** suppression (Who authorizes people to carry a gun?)
You	"Only allows **you** to keep the gun inside the house […]"	**Indetermination:** We don't know who it refers to. **Passivation:** beneficiary
A Government	"Does **a government** have the right to withdraw […]"	**Activation:** Active role in the material process. **Categorization/ -Functionalization**
Society	"To withdraw from **society**"	**Passivation:** beneficialised actor. **Assimilation:** collectivization (noun denoting a group)
The Chief of Staff	"**The Chief of Staff** had already claimed that having a gun at home is as dangerous as having a blender"	**Activation:** Active role in the verbal process. **Nomination/categorization functionalization**

Source: elaborate by the authors.

4.2 Results of visual analysis of social actors

Table 7 - Pictorial analysis of social actors - text 1.

Number of participants	There are four participants.
Social interaction	There is no visual contact, which means an offer to the viewer's gaze.
Social distance	There is a close shot. The oblique angle means detachment, Bolsonaro is in the center, he is separated from the other participants, he stands out.
Social relation	From a horizontal point of view, eye level denotes equality. Equality among participants.
Inclusion	Specified and Group – Differentiation (focus on the president, while the others are blurred).
Involved in the action	The president is an agent of speaking. The others are agents of looking/observing.

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Table 8 - Pictorial analysis of social actors - text 2.

Number of participants	There are three participants.
Social distance	Close-up depicted as if he is "one of us".
Social relation	From a horizontal point of view, eye level angle denotes equality. This choice could be seen as a confrontation, as both the observed and observing participants are at the same level. The oblique angle also means detachment, Onyx is in the center, he is

	separated from other participants, he stands out.
Social interaction	There is no eye contact - objectivation. He is "offered to our gaze as a spectacle for our dispassionate scrutiny" (LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 40). So, the observing participant is not interacting.
Activation	(Onyx) Active – agent is involved in the action of arguing, defending his point of view, attacking opponents. Other participants in the image are not taking part in the activity, one of them is just listening, the others cannot be seen entirely.
Specification	The social actor (Onyx) is depicted as someone specific; the observing participant can even get to know his name by reading image subtitles; he is in the center of the picture.
Individualization	Onyx is individualized, he is seen in the center of the picture. Onyx is the only one performing an action, the headline as well as the additional information about the image refer only to him and exclude other participants.

Source: elaborated by the authors.

5 INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

The findings indicate that both texts deal with the same issue and have similar contexts, but the social actors present in both are represented differently, mainly because the most often mentioned social actor in the first one is the president, whereas in the second, it is the Chief of Staff, Onyx Lorenzoni. Texts 1 and 2 come from different channels and differ significantly, as one was published by a governmental channel and the other, by a private media company. Therefore, they might have divergent ideas over the same issue.

In the results shown in Table 1, both the president and the government have a very active role by doing the actions of signing and saying as well as regulating the decree. As this news was published in the Brazilian Government website, it was expected to represent them as active participants, to "sell" to readers they are doing something good for the country and its citizens. It is also notable that the Federal Government and police (even though they do not specify any person, that is, they are impersonalized) are presented to share an image of institutions that make part of this process. The image chosen confirms this tentativeness of depicting the president as a vigorous participant, as he is in the foreground and detached, especially because other important members are set in the background, suggesting their supportive role.

The second text, on the other hand, does not mention the president as a social actor, and mostly all references to someone responsible for such decisions is expressed with the word "government", which is present in four active roles and excluded in another. This choice for the use of categorization/functionalization seems to be a way to not directly mention the main figure of power in the country at the moment: the president Jair Bolsonaro.

The second multimodal text has an outstanding presence of the former Chief of Staff, Onyx Lorenzoni, both in the text and image. In Table 2, we can see there are five cases in which Lorenzoni is sometimes nominated and sometimes referred to with the use of categorization. He is portrayed as an active social actor such as in "The Chief Staff had already claimed that having a gun at home is as dangerous as having a blender". Nevertheless, this activation does not mean the writer or the media corporation represented by her is supportive to the chief's speech, since there seems to be a strong

opposition to his point of view. The opposition becomes clear when the author decides to expose that the "new rule about gun ownership is questioned in Court and Council", even though it is unclear who is questioning and who asked for an explanation when "he was summoned to explain President Jair Bolsonaro's decrees that facilitates gun possession". The reasons why social actors were excluded in the last two sentences mentioned above may not be naïve, even though it may be clear at first sight.

We can confirm the opposition by contrasting the written part of text 2 to the image that was chosen to accompany it. Onyx Lorenzoni is the main presence in the picture, he is given prominence as he is in the center of the frame and performing the activity of arguing, he seems to be defending his views or attacking the opponents. He is not portrayed in an elevated position, so the angle puts him and us at the same level, which could be interpreted as a sign of confrontation.

As Van Leeuwen, we could notice that social actors that have a strong interest in this matter – the Brazilian citizens – are given only passivated roles and are always represented as collectives in Globo's text (e.g., citizens, society). They are not even mentioned in the governmental text, though. This could mean that these social actors are not seen as relevant or important enough to be given active roles or to be mentioned in the first text.

FINAL COMMENTS

The results show that both texts represent their main social actors as both verbally and visually active. The choice of words and images try to portray them as participants who know what they are doing. The difference lies, however, in how those different channels where the pieces of news were published to their representation.

The first multimodal text seems to be adequate to the communicative purpose it serves because it delivers a message of an active government which is keeping an electoral promise and its main representative (the president) who did it as one of his first actions in power. Concerning the effects produced on the viewer, it can be said that both the president and his allies support the decree and the new rules to facilitate acquisition and possession of firearms. The image of Jair Bolsonaro giving a speech shows him as a man with attitude toward that "important" signing.

The second multimodal text brings other social actors, but gives certain emphasis to the former Chief of Staff, Onyx Lorenzoni. One of the forms in which it differs significantly from the news in the government website is that it does not mention the president as a social actor. Another difference to be mentioned relates to the presence of certain opposition to the government decree, which is not found in the first multimodal text.

As demonstrated by this application of Van Leeuwen's theoretical and methodological framework, the investigation of how social actors are represented proves to be a valuable strategy to analyze media discourse in order to observe how the choice of words and images represent social actors and convey the appropriate idea depending on the context/situation and channel it is published on. The theoretical basis chosen helps to build a linguistic analysis that shows how these relationships of power are portrayed, and thus, reinforce the role of discourse analysis of fighting and resisting these patterns. It is important, therefore, to be aware of how analyzing texts and images may help us understand the way news are designed and delivered to its readers, showing the point of views of each media source; point of views that readers might not grasp, especially in case they are completely unaware of the intentions behind the writers' (or speaker's) choices.

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