Presentation[1]

Comics: Linguistic Interfaces

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The amount of research on comics has increased substantially in Brazil. Up until June 2014, the postgraduate programs of the country had published 1,763 studies on the theme. Most of the studies, 1,704 (96,7%), were conducted in the present century. Only 59 (3,3%) were carried out during the 1980s and 90s.

The data arise when looking up the keyword "quadrinhos" in the search system of the Capes (Coordination for the Improvementof Higher Education Personnel) theses and dissertations database, webpage that serves as an aggregator platform for master's and doctoral studies developed in the country (Brasil, 2024). Even though a critical analysis of the result can be made — which does not register, for instance, the master's dissertations from the 1970s, including Cagnin's (1975[6]) — the figures remain revealing.

The figures are revealing because they prove that the matter has made its voice heard within the Brazilian academic scenario. As the survey shows, there has been a gradual increase, decade by decade, until its major expansion in recent years. From just one work in the 1980s, the number rose to 58 in the 1990s, 321 in the first decade of the current century, and 876 in the second. From 2020 to 2024 alone, 507 master's dissertations and doctoral theses have already been published.

The data generated by the Capes webpage also provide an overall picture regarding where the studies have been undertaken. The same survey registers that the area of Languages e Literature tops the list of master's and doctoral studies on the theme, accounting for 245 studies. Perhaps this high number may be attributed to the breadth of interests within Languages and Literature, which encompasses linguistic and literary aspects, applied to education or otherwise.

The educational perspective may be the root cause of another possible approach to comics. These have been recorded in official educational documents since the end of the 20th century (Vergueiro; Ramos, 2009). They are included in the PCN (National Curricular Parameters), OCEM (Curricular Orientations for High School), and more recently, in the BNCC (National Common Curricular Base). They also appear in reading edicts, such as the extinct PNBE (National School Library Program) and the PNLD literary program (National Program for Books and Didactic Material).

How to address this type of production in the classroom is a current research focus whose approach is difficult to be exhausted. It is expected that it has also had an impact on the scientific production generated by the ProfLetras programs (Professional Master's Degree in Languages and

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[6] In 1975, it was published by "Ática" publishing house for the first time. In 2014, it was republished by Criativo publishing house, featuring a new graphic design and comments from scholars who were acquainted with the author.

Literature), specifically focused on the study of language and literature in education. Of the 1,763 studies mentioned earlier, the majority, 1,074, are master's dissertations.

Another piece of data reinforces this perception: 82 studies were carried out specifically in the area of the Portuguese language. It is the fifth largest macro area of research on comics. It follows Languages and Literature (245), Communication (112), History (111), and Education (85).

What can be concluded based on all these figures?

Firstly, there is an increase in the amount of research on comics in the country, as mentioned earlier. Secondly, there is also a tendency for members of the field of Languages and Literature (and Portuguese Language) to study the topic. And thirdly, it is unavoidable that other theoretical fields are turning their attention to the same subject.

Therefore, the dedication of a thematic issue to address comics within the periodicals linked to the area of Linguistics and Literature is more than justified. The guiding line adopted by the "Revista Signum: Languages Studies" to encourage analyses aiming at the strengthening of interdisciplinary dialogues is also justified, since the Capes data underscores that different areas of knowledge show interest in the matter.

In this sense, an epistemological model is constructed regarding comics. They represent a specific field and sociocultural activity, as postulated by authors such as Alves-Costa (2021) and Carvalho (2017, p. 163), for whom the "acceptance and understanding of comics as a legitimate field of cultural production ended up transforming this 'process' into something cyclical: the valorization of the object valued the field, which consequently valued the object".

In conjunction with the establishment of a field, comics have become the subject of interest of other theoretical fields, establishing a fruitful dialogue with them. It is a dialogue that operates as a "two-way street". Just as comics are seen from an external perspective, they demand to be seen through their constituent singularities, such as the mode of publication/circulation, authorship, and resources specific to their language (speech balloon, frame, onomatopoeia, visual metaphor, among others).

This was the proposal that the "Revista Signum: Languages Studies" aimed to address in this thematic issue entitled "Comics: Linguistic Interfaces". As a periodical linked to the area of Linguistics and Literature, the editors expected more studies aligned with this scope. Although such studies were received, they were not exclusive, as evidenced by the twelve manuscripts that were accepted for publication. The common thread shared by these articles was the concern on how to approach comics from an interdisciplinary perspective.

In "Afrofuturism in the sequential adaptation of Kindred (2017)" (Carlos E. de A. Placido and Nataniel dos S. Gomes, pp. 14-26) and "The limits of the figuration of death and the being-rhizome existence in the Swamp Thing, by Alan Moore" (Norival Bottos Júnior and Matheus F. M. dos Santos, pp. 27-39), a philosophical perspective guides the theoretical-analytical reflections on two comic book stories: *Kindred* (Jennings; Duffy, 2017[7]) and *Swamp Thing* (Moore et al., 1986[8]), respectively, always engaging in a dialogue with other perspectives, such as psychoanalysis, sociology, and history. For Placido and Gomes (2024), Afrofuturism configures a movement that proposes to rethink, as the term itself suggests, the role of representations of African culture in the future. The idea is to distance oneself from Eurocentric views, giving voice and visibility to aspects of Black culture. As the authors highlight, there are few comic book productions that place Black people as protagonists. Simultaneously with their analysis of such works, studies on the matter help to value these productions in the academic environment as well.

In respect of the construction of Swamp Thing as a character, Bottos Júnior and Santos (2024) outline its complexity based on two anthropological conceptions of death: death-rebirth and the double. The character perceives itself as a plant, being distanced from the idea of what it could be as a man. "Therefore, the monster is a plant with no humanity to preserve, at least without humanity in the sense in which it was thought to have and which Woodrue's anatomy lesson proved

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[7] JENNINGS, Jennings; DUFFY, Damian. **Kindred**: a graphic novel adaptation. Abrams Comicarts, 2017.
[8] The first publications began in 1986, with Alan Moore as the scriptwriter, in collaboration with others (colorist, art directors etc.). Currently, Panini Books publishes the various issues in Brazil.

did not exist" (Bottos Júnior and Santos, 2024, pp. 38). Memories establish relationships with the already dead and the living, directly contributing to the complex construction of this character. In addition, the scholars include the idea of rhizome, thus making it impossible to delimit a beginning and an end to the construction of the Swamp Thing character, emphasizing that what matters is the ever-moving middle.

In "Family ties: the identity construction of Marjane's grandmother in the graphic novel *Embroideries*" (Célia D. dos Santos, pp. 40-52) and "Tradition and rupture: the representation of women in Mafalda comics from a materialist discourse analysis perspective" (Vanessa A. de Araújo e Alan L. de Souza, pp. 53-63), there is a discussion about the identity construction of women. In the first article, starting from the grandmother's protagonism, "Marjane Satrapi stands out among contemporary comic artists who have emerged from obscurity to cultural prominence" (Santos, 2024, p. 41), well-known for the graphic novel *Persepolis*[9] (2007). Araújo and Souza (2024), conversely, highlight the conflict among three characters (two children and an adult) who represent different positions held by women: the resistance of Mafalda, the resignation of Susanita, and the discovery of Raquel, who is also the mother of the first little girl. The French Discourse Analysis guides the reflections on the comic strips. This approach also contributes to the reflection on the construction of Marjane Satrapi's grandmother in *Embroideries*[10], according to the ideas of Bakhtin/Volóchinov[11] on the ideological values of words, and Stuart Hall's[12] ideas about how the identity of the postmodern subject is fragmented, but always open to transformations brought by culture and history. Biological characteristics are insufficient for the understanding of the contemporary subject.

Discourse Analysis is present in two more articles: "Spider-Verse: an encompassing chronotope of Spider-Man's discursive productions" (Ive M. de Domiciano, Pollyanne B. Ribeiro and Francisco R. da Silva, pp. 75-91) and "Dengue in numbers in cartoons: effects of meaning of quantification from the semiolinguistic perspective" (Eveline C. Cardoso, Glayci K. R. da S. Xavier and Nadja P. de S. e Silva, pp. 92-108). In the first, the dialogic studies of Mikhail Bakhtin and the Circle — the Dialogical Discourse Theory (DDT), as used by the authors — are applied to the understanding of the "[...] role of the chronotope in Spider-Man's discursive productions", placing "[...] the spider-verse as a chronotope, in which, through the different multisemiotic productions in which the arachnid character is the protagonist, small times dialogue with each other to build this chronotope, which, in turn, allows ways of constructing visions of man and the world that are enunciatively responsible in the face of the great cultural time" (Domiciano; Ribeiro; da Silva, 2024, p. 76). In the second article, the main reference regarding Discourse Analysis is Patrick Charaudeau — the Semiolinguistic Theory of Discourse Analysis, according to the authors. There are also contributions from Dominique Maingueneau. Grounded in their theoretical and methodological framework, Cardoso, Xavier and Silva (2024, p. 93) analyze three cartoons published this year that explore how the dengue epidemic has not ceased to be a typical Brazilian health problem in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic: "[...] an *old* enemy that had been at the center of health news in Brazil for *a long time* was waiting to return to the scene as the protagonist: the dengue virus, with its transmitter, the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito".

In "Webtoons: from the digital support to the multimedia hypergenre on comics" (Celbi V. M Pegoraro, 2024, pp. 65-74), the concept of webtoon is the focus of the discussion, which needs to be differentiated from comic book productions in webcomic format. Understood as a platform for reading comics, it is also "[...] is a hybrid genre of work even if we consider the matter of digital material preservation", argues Pegoraro (2024, p. 72). Searching for the possible influences of cultural hybridization, the reflection of Pegoraro (2024) explores the impact of South Korean

[9] SATRAPI, Marjane. **Persépolis**. Tradução de Paulo Werneck. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2007.
[10] SATRAPI, Marjane. **Bordados**. Tradução de x. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2010.
[11] BAKHTIN, Mikhail (V. N. Volochínov). **Marxismo e filosofia da linguagem**. Problemas fundamentais do método sociológico na ciência da linguagem. Tradução de Michel Lahud e Yara Frateschi Vieira com a colaboração de Lúcia Teixeira Wisnik e Carlos Henrique D. Chagas Cruz. São Paulo: Hucitec, 1997.
[12] HALL, Stuart. **A identidade cultural na pós-modernidade**. Tradução de Tomaz Tadeu da Silva e Guaracira Lopes Louro. 11. ed. Rio de Janeiro: DP&A, 2006.

culture in the creation of webtoons, while that carried out by Domiciano, Ribeiro and Silva (2024, pp. 75-91) shows the different ways of seeing the man (the Spider-Man) and the world (the multiverse). This occurs because comics are open to socio-historical and especially cultural and technological influences (internet). Regardless of the format (printed or digital), comics are transposed to the cinema and to serial or non-serial productions, and distributed on streaming platforms, for example. Indeed, comics are clearly open to socio-historical changes and are in tune with the needs of the target audience.

This, to a certain extent, reiterates Bakhtinian principles (Bakhtin, 2016) regarding the characteristics of discursive genres, for instance: a) the influences of human activities and social interactions on the constitution of genres, characterizing certain fields of discursive communication; b) the history of language accompanies the transformations of the history of society; c) discursive genres are permeated by flexibility and historicity.

Humor is also understood as a discursive field, according to Possenti (2013). In various genres belonging to the field of comics, intertextual and dialogic relations are established with the field of humor. In "Humor and labor world: an analysis of the conflicts on labor relations in the 'Ócios do Ofício' comics" (Rozinaldo Antonio Miani, pp. 109-124), fifteen comic strips produced by Gilmar Barbosa, first published in the late 1990s and early 2000s, in a newspaper from São Paulo, the *Diário de São Paulo*, and later in several other newspapers and magazines, are analyzed. Afterwards, part of the strips was compiled into "Ócios do Ofício", published by Escala (Barbosa[13], 2002). From this analysis, it is understood that the comic effect occurs in a dual and interdependent manner, both at the linguistic and graphic levels (drawing). Moreover, a particularity of comic strips is observed: publication in print newspapers for later publication in book format, a selection of texts (Borges, 2022; Ramos, 2010, 2011, 2017).

The approximation between the fields of comics and humor also occurs with the field of journalism. Comic strips are published in the entertainment sections, while cartoons are published in the opinion columns. Cardoso, Xavier and Silva (2024, pp. 92-108), in the aforementioned article that focused on semiotic-linguistic reflection on dengue, analyzed three cartoons published in newspapers whose tradition began with the printed version, currently also available in the digital version: *Jornal Notícias* (Florianópolis, Santa Catarina), *Tribuna* (Ribeirão Preto, São Paulo), and *Zero Hora* (Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul). Another example of a publication that started in the newspaper is the Mafalda's comic strip[14], analyzed in "Tradition and rupture: the representation of women in Mafalda comics from a materialist discourse analysis perspective" (Araújo; Souza, 2024, pp. 53-64). Subsequently, these strips were compiled into a book. In Brazil, the best-known compilation was made by Martins Fontes, entitled *Toda Mafalda*[15].

There is still a third example, the comic strips of Armandinho, created by Alexandre Beck. Initially, the blue-haired boy won over the audience of the *Diário Catarinense* newspaper in 2009. Back then, the little boy did not have blue hair and was not named Armandinho. He was named Armando by the public, then became Armandinho, and today is affectionately called Dinho. Not even the Frog was his companion. There was an experimentation with cockroaches, but they were not well received by the public. Armandinho comic strips are also a success on social media, mainly on Instagram and Facebook, the two sources used in "A sociocognitive approach to the text in the implicit construction of the referent identified by the pronouns 'he/him/it/they/them' in *Armandinho* comic strips" (Maria Verônica M. Lima, Janaica G. Matos and Mário J. Muniz, pp. 140-156), for the choice of four strips created by Beck, in addition to a strip produced by Nando Motta (Instagram). The authors based their work mainly on Koch (2004; 2018), Koch and Cunha-Lina (2011) regarding the study of the text from the perspective of sociocognition. In terms of referenciation, thought of as

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[13] BARBOSA, Gilmar. *Cartuns & Humor: Ócios do Ofício*. São Paulo: Editora Escala, 2002.

[14] The first comic strips were published in *Primera Plana* in 1964, and then in *El Mundo* from 1965 to 1967. From 1967 onwards, the comic strips were exclusively published in *Siete Días*.

[15] QUINO. **Toda a Mafalda**: da primeira à última. Tradução de Andréa Stahel M. da Silva *et al*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1993.

a "notion of referential networks" (p. 142), the authors relied incorporated the ideas of Matos (2018), Cavalcante et al. (2020; 2022), including the multisemiotic perspective of Custódio Filho (2011). From the analysis, they showed a network of referents concerning the use of the pronouns "he/him/it/they/them", with emphasis on the use of implicit referents.

The perspective of Textual Linguistics guides not only the article "A sociocognitive approach to the text in the implicit construction of the referent identified by the pronouns 'he/him/it/they/them' in *Armandinho* comic strips" (Lima; Matos; Muniz, 2024, pp. 140-156), but also "The discursive topic at the service of reading comprehension in comics" (Kleiane B. de Sá, Sâmia A. dos Santos and Suelene S. Oliveira, 2024, pp. 125-139). The discursive topic in *The Diary of Anne Frank: The Graphic Adaptation* (Folman; Polonsky, 2017) was the object of analysis, to de articulated with the reader's comprehension required for the understanding of a comic book. According to the scholars, the topic organization, demonstrated through the analysis, is based on two properties: centrality and organicity.

Variationist Sociolinguistics, from the Labovian perspective, provides the theoretical and methodological orientation for the article "The real-time construct in Turma da Mônica comics: an analysis of the anaphoric third-person direct object phenomenon from the 1970s to the 2010s" (Carolina A. Zanellato and Leila M. Tesch, pp. 157-168). The anaphoric third-person direct object in Brazilian Portuguese was observed in the uses made from the 1970s to the mid-2010s by four characters from "Turma da Mônica" comics by Maurício de Sousa. The authors highlight that, in Brazilian Portuguese, the linguistic phenomenon in question can occur in four ways:

> 1) clitic accusative as in: "Opa! Esse *homem* parece que está ferido! Vou socorrê-**lo**!" (Mônica, 1970, n. 01, p. 5);
> 2) lexical pronoun as in: "Tem mais um *gato* nesta casa! Mas eu pego **ele**!" (Magali, 1994, n. 123, p. 27);
> 3) nominal phrase as in: "Pergunte ao *Cascão*!... Cascão? Bem que eu queria achar **aquele moleque**!" (Cascão, 1985, n. 87, p. 8);
> 4) null object as in: "Eu encontrei *o Sansão* perdido no campinho e guardei *ø* pra você!" (Cebolinha, 2013, n. 74, p. 31) (Zanellato; Tesch, 2024, p. 158)

Over time, a decline in the use of the third-person pronouns as direct objectives has been observed, an influence of normative grammars: "[...] while in the 1970s, at the beginning of the magazine's publications, this form obtained 54.5% of the total occurrences, in the following decade, it obtained only 10.9%, a decrease of more than 43 percentage points. In the last analyzed decade, the 2010s, the clitic occupies only 2.5% of the total anaphoric direct object retrievals" (Zanellato; Tesch, 2024, p. 165). The transformations experienced in Brazilian society, with the end of the military dictatorship, for example, may have contributed to the increased use of lexical pronouns. Among the preferences observed from the 1970s to the 2010s, the anaphoric nominal phrase (44.4%) and the null object (24.1%) were the most common alternatives.

In "An experience report with comics in a state school of Carpina, Pernambuco" (Eronildo da S. Biondinni e Jonathas de P. Chaguri, 2024, pp. 169-182), the main results related to the development of a teaching-learning approach with 9th-grade students are presented. Studies linked to the Bakhtin Circle constitute part of the theoretical basis, along with the methodological principles from the action research. Twenty-four Portuguese classes were taught in a public state school located in Pernambuco. The authors highlight that, through working with comic books, it was possible to influence students' development in terms of reading and writing skills. They also emphasize the change in students' perception of the functions of humor, including a shift from "making people laugh" to problematizing society and the people who live in it. In school contexts and in the position of Portuguese language teachers and teachers of other subjects, comics are often transformed into teaching and learning objects, shifting them from one discursive field to another - that is, from the comics to the school context. Consequently, these stories are resignified, particularly regarding their functions.

> The telling of a story lies deep in the social behavior of human groups — ancient and modern. Stories are used to teach behavior within the community, to discuss morals and values, or to satisfy curiosity. They dramatize social relations and the problems of living, convey ideas or act out fantasies. The telling of a story requires skill (Eisner, 2013, p. 11).

The articles within the dossier "Comics: Linguistic Interfaces", volume 27, number 2 (2024), show that comics, as the name suggests to some extent, are constantly being renewed in different forms, strategies, and genres, because, once stablished as a field, heterogeneity represents its defining characteristic, as Possenti (2013, p. 173) underscores when characterizing the field of humor.

> All fields are internally heterogenous. […] However, despite this heterogeneity, each field[16] possesses its own relatively clear, albeit unstable, procedures. [...] While forms may be multiple, they are distinct from those in fields like philosophy, science, or religion. Thus, it is possible, to some extent, to delineate their boundaries, avoiding confusions.

The heterogeneity characteristic of the field of comics allows for the clustering of the articles while also defining boundaries with other fields and theoretical-methodological perspectives. "Fields are organized in different ways: philosophers do not act like scientists, who do not act like writers. Also, the typical academic background of the members of each field is different" (Possenti, 2013, p. 172). Thus, the interfaces established between comics and other fields, approaches, and perspectives strengthen the construction of comics as a field.

Finally, as organizers of the dossier "Comics: Linguistic Interfaces" ("Revista Signum: Languages Studies", volume 27, number 2), we would like to thank the authors, members of the scientific editorial board, and *ad hoc* reviewers who, together, made it possible to disseminate theoretical-methodological reflections on comics.

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[16] "The concept of field, proposed by Bourdieu (2004) and reformulated by Maingueneau (2005), is characterized within a discursive universe, in which it is possible to isolate discursive spaces that maintain a relationship with certain discourses" (Carmelino; Possenti, 2019, p. 32).

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