4 Relevance and Genre: Theoretical and Conceptual Interfaces

Fábio José Rauen

INTRODUCTION

Sperber and Wilson's (1986, 1995) relevance theory considers the relation between cognitive efforts and effects in such a way that the greater the benefits and the lower the costs, the more relevant is an input for cognitive mechanisms. A research program to be pursued can be the evaluating of the production and reception roles of specific genres in this equation. Processing effort, for instance, may be minimized by the reiteration of standard genre structures, so that these structures become transparent (automatic) to the user. Thus, in an increasingly more efficient way, relevant ostensive stimuli can be conveyed based on more transparent structures.

The aim of this text is to consider some theoretical and conceptual interfaces between relevance theory and Swales' genre analysis (1990, 1992, 1998) tradition. I argue that if genre structures are derived from something deeper, relevance relations between text and context, in turn genre structures provide a discursive context that cognitively focuses the attention of writer and reader, thereby setting relevance constraints and increasing communicative efficiency.

In order to develop this argument, I selected an example of a query letter from Simoni's (2004) M. Sc. L. dissertation. Section 2 presents this text and the genre moves and steps analyzed in Simoni's work. Section 3 shows a brief précis on relevance theory. Based on Wilson's (2004) Pragmatic Course, with some punctual adaptations of my own, this section argues that the human communication is guided by cognitive and communicative principle of relevance. Section 4 is concerned with Blass' (1990) perspective on textual analysis. The central claim of her work is that relevance relations are crucial to the textual connectiveness. Section 5 analyses the query letter text indicating how both relevance-oriented and genre-based analysts can improve the descriptive and explanatory level of their analysis by combining relevance and genre approaches. Section 6 is dedicated to the journalist's role, the query letter's first utterer, in the linguistic and structural choices of the text. I argue these choices are constrained not only by the genre structure, but also by relevance relations. Finally, section 7 is dedicated to concluding remarks.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2009.2324.2.04

THE QUERY LETTER GENRE: AN EXAMPLE TO GUIDE THE DISCUSSION

To illustrate the discussion, I use as an example a query letter selected from Simoni's (2004) M. Sc. L. dissertation[1]. For her, query letters are a kind of reader's letter (published in newspaper sections), whose answer contains information or a problem resolution from experts.

The genre query letter is particularly interesting for relevance theory, because each of the three major sections is presented by a different utterer who carries out a different series of rhetorical moves. The journalist, the first utterer, is responsible for the text formatting and title assignment; the querier, the second utterer, is responsible for the letter; and the expert, the third utterer, is responsible for the answer. According to Bonini (2007), this fact shows that "the genre is not only a way to convey a message. Rather, it is a unifying principle of a set of actions and social practices." For him, not only the question/answer interaction fits into the query letter text, but also modes of editing and specific ways of reading come into play (to the newspaper reader, to the letter writer, to the section editor, to the specialist responsible for the answer, and so on).

For Simoni (2004), the query letter is composed of three rhetorical actions or moves (Swales, 1990): "identifying the text," "formulating a question" and "providing an answer." Each move presents a number of rhetorical sub-actions or steps. Her research found two standards for query letters: direct and indirect, as the experts' answers were quoted or reported in the third move "providing a response." Chart 1, below, refers to the rhetorical structure of a direct query letter.

MOVE 1: Identifying the text (Produced by U1)

Step 1: Giving the topic of the text—and/or
Step 2: Giving the subtopic of the text

MOVE 2: Formulating a question (Produced by U2)

Step 1: Outlining the scene—and/or
Step 2: Presenting the problem—or
Step 3A: Requesting information—or
Step 3B: Requesting positioning—or
Step 3C: Requesting information
Step 4: Providing data for identification

MOVE 3: Providing a response (Produced by U1 or U3) Step 1: Describing the subject addressed by the letter writer—and/or   Step 2: Positioning him/herself—and/or Step 3: Indicating a procedure—and/or Step 4: Providing general assessment of the problem—and/or Step 5: Providing credentials—or Step 6: Providing data for identification/credential

CHART 1: RHETORICAL STRUCTURE OF A DIRECT QUERY LETTER (TRANSLATED FROM SIMONI, 2004, P. 51)

The text in Chart 2 is a direct query letter example. This text was collected from Simoni's (2004) corpus, and was rediscussed in Bonini (2007).

MOVES	TEXT	STEPS
Identifying the text (Produced by U1)	Drawer	Giving the topic of the text
Formulating a question (Produced by U2)	§ I have a drawer's contract registered in a notary's office in 1985[2]. In mid-1996, I paid off the property with the FGTS[3].	Outlining the scene
	Caixa informed me the owner of the property must now sign the payoff contract. But for years I have had no contact with her.	Presenting the problem
	What should I do?	Requesting solution
	§ Luiz Silva Rio de Janeiro	Providing data for identification

Providing a response (Produced by U1 and U3)	§ It is commonplace, when someone formalizes a drawer's contract, that the seller of the property grants, in the same act, a proxy which permits the buyer to represent him/herself in all actions related to the implementation of the negotiation.	Describing the subject addressed by the consulting
	We believe, in the reader's case, that there should be a proxy, which would solve the problem. Without this proxy, the reader may not even be able to effectuate the sale by public deed. In this case, the only solution would be to file a suit for the compulsory adjudication, in which the reader would use his document to get the final deed. Then, with the court's judgment, granting him the final deed, the reader should get the CEF payoff.	Reporting a procedure
	Luiz Wanis, Lawyer	Providing credentials

CHART 2: EXAMPLE OF A DIRECT QUERY LETTER GENRE (TRANSLATED FROM SIMONI, 2004, P. 93)

RELEVANCE THEORY

The interpretation of each utterance of a query letter results from the interaction of the linguistic properties of the sentences these utterances convey (their phonological, syntactic and semantic structure) with contextual factors of the utterance[4]. The central problem in a cognitive pragmatics is that the meaning handled by the speaker goes well beyond the linguistic meaning assigned by the grammar to the sentence which composes these utterances. Therefore, to comprehend utterances, a set of pragmatic processes must be used by the readers in order to complete, enrich and complement the schematic sentence meaning yielding a hypothesis about the writer's meaning[5].

Relevance theory is strictly concerned with overt intentional communication. In this kind of communication, there are two layers of intention for the reader to discover: the basic writer's intention to inform the readers about something—*informative intention*; and a higher-order intention that the readers should recognize that informative basic intention—*communicative intention* (Sperber & Wilson, 1986, 1995). So, comprehending an utterance is equivalent to obtaining an overtly intended interpretation: the one the writer wants the reader to recover, is actively helping the reader to recover, and would recognize if asked about it.

For relevance theory, human cognition is relevance-oriented. The basic claim is that new (or newly presented) information is relevant in a context when it interacts with the context yielding cognitive effects.

There are, according to Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1995), three cognitive effects of information in a context: (a) strengthening a contextual assumption; (b) contradicting and eliminating a contextual assumption; and (c) combining that information with a contextual assumption to yield contextual implications, that is, conclusions deducible from new information and context together, but neither from new information nor from the isolated context.

For example, take the title and the first utterance of the selected query letter text:

(1) Drawer.
(2) I have a drawer's contract registered in a notary's office in 1985.

Let's imagine a reader who supposes, because of the title, that the text is a query about a manufacturing defect of some purchased furniture. This assumption is contradicted by the first utterance of the text, where the second utterer refers to a drawer's contract. So, when this reader processes the second utterance, this first assumption is eliminated.

In a second version, let's imagine a reader who supposes, when he/she is reading the title, that the text was a query about a drawer's contract. In this second version, the textual processing of the first utterance strengthens this original hypothesis, making it more certain. In this case, there is a strengthening of an assumption.

Finally, let's imagine a reader who knows the Brazilian home mortgage system. In this case, the first utterance of the text combines with his/her memorized encyclopedic assumptions, yielding a conclusion that the querier's property is mortgaged, for example. This is a contextual implication.

Here is a possible chain of assumptions "S" for this inference[6]:

S_1—Drawer's contracts are related to mortgaged properties (implied premise from encyclopedic memory);
S_2—Someone has registered a drawer contract in a notary's office in 1985 (implied premise from linguistic input);
S_3—If S_1 and S_2, then S_5;
S_4—If S_1, then S_5 (by *and-elimination*);
S_5—Someone's property was mortgaged (implied conclusion by *modus ponens*)[7].

Information is relevant in a context if it has cognitive effects in that context, and the greater its cognitive effects the greater its relevance. However, it is crucial to consider the costs to get these cognitive effects. So, the smaller the processing effort required to derive these effects, the greater the relevance of the input. In order to see how this happens, let's compare two versions to the first utterance of the query letter:

(2a) I have a drawer's contract registered in a notary's office in 1985.
(2b) It is not true that I do not have a drawer's contract registered in a notary's office in 1985.

Here, utterance (2a) is easier to process, and other things being equal, by hypothesis, it is more relevant than utterance (2b). This occurs because utterance (2b) includes the logical form of utterance (2a) as a subpart of its own logical form.

According to Wilson (2004), the problem of a theory of human cognition is answering how human beings consciously or automatically select which inputs to deal with, which context in which to process them, and when to stop. If human cognition is relevance-oriented, then systems of perception, memory and inference are organized so that they automatically tend to allocate attention and processing resources to the most relevant accessible inputs, and to process them in a way that tends to maximize their relevance. This is the *Cognitive Principle of Relevance*: human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance (Sperber & Wilson, 1986, 1995).

In overt intentional communication, to communicate is to offer information, and offers create presumptions or expectations that will be justified or not.

Therefore, the act of addressing someone automatically creates a *presumption of relevance*. In turn, as utterances may have a number of linguistically possible and potentially relevant interpretations, the actual interpretation is the one which best satisfies this presumption or expectation.

How much relevance is needed for the writer to satisfy the readers' expectations? According to Sperber and Wilson (1995), the utterance should have at least enough cognitive effects, at a low enough processing cost, to be worth dealing with. So, they have developed a notion of optimal relevance which involves two clauses: (a) the utterance should be at least relevant enough to be worth processing; and (b) the utterance should be the most relevant one compatible with the speaker's abilities and preferences.

What counts as "relevant enough," clause (a), varies individually and circumstantially. A query letter on drawer's contracts, for instance, can be more or less relevant. The query letter text as a whole will be interesting to readers who are experiencing or have experienced a similar problem recounted by the second utterer. The title and some passages of the query letter are sufficient to readers who haven't experienced those problems to understand them. Thus, relevance expectations differ in predictable ways from situation to situation, and it is expected that the utterances reach relevance in more or less specific ways on different circumstances.

Clause (b), in turn, is very important to describe and explain textual comprehension, because it rules out the readers' need to go on and consider other less accessible interpretations, after having recognized an acceptable interpretation. This suggests a concrete comprehension procedure which readers may use to discover the best hypothesis about the writers' meaning. The procedure predicts that the reader must follow a path of least effort in computing cognitive effects: (a) considering interpretations (e.g., reference assignments, contexts, etc.) in order of accessibility; and (b) stopping when his expectation of relevance is satisfied (or abandoned) (Wilson, 2004).

RELEVANCE AND TEXTUALITY

Blass (1990), in *Relevance relations in discourse*, proposes that the basis for judgments of textuality must be founded on relevance relations and not on traditional notions such as cohesion and coherence[8]. According to her, textual connectiveness is derived from something deeper, i.e., from relevance relations between text and context. Such relations are precisely what every reader automatically looks for while interpreting a text or every analyst automatically looks for when explaining and describing this text. Blass' central hypothesis is that relevance relations, based on the balance between contextual effects and processing efforts, are behind the judgments of good text formation.

Based on Blakemore (1987), Blass disagrees with the view according to which traditional cohesive mechanisms are markers of coherence. For her, these mechanisms function as restriction markers on semantic relevance. These restrictions are very important, because the writer indicates through these marks the direction which should be pursued to achieve relevance. This way, the reader's interpretation task is made easier.

It is worth mentioning that if the meaning of a sentence underdetermines the meaning of the utterance conveyed by this sentence, it is reasonable to generalize that the meaning of a text underdetermines the meaning of the discourse conveyed by the text. That is, the linguistic structure of the text underdetermines what is communicated. Precisely on the basis of the gap between the content of texts and discourses, and considering that the reader's task is interpreting the writer's intention through inferential strategies during the process of understanding, the role of context is crucial to this task.

Blass then highlights the importance of considering cognitive factors which are necessary for a discourse analysis. For her, if the concept of discourse is not primarily linguistic, under an approach to textuality with claims for plausibility and consistency, this concept cannot be dealt with in a purely linguistic way, as foreseen in a semiotic approach based on encoding and decoding.

For relevance theory, the reader's role is important in the processing of textual elaboration, because the writer's verbal behavior is limited by the reader's expectation of relevance. As part of the relation between writer and reader, these expectations of relevance should be considered as the basis for the analysis of the relation between text and discourse[9].

For Blass, the criterion of consistency with the principle of relevance selects and restricts the set of assumptions to be used by the reader in textual interpretation. Having said that, "textuality, as judgment of good textual formation and, *a fortiori*, as a condition for interpretation, is constructed in the course of verbal processing with contextual information, rather than with formal or semantic connectivity of linguistic-textual structures" (Silveira & Feltes, 1999, p. 78)[10].

GENRE AND RELEVANCE

Genre analysis is closely connected to the concept of language as social action. According to Bazerman (2004), much of this task is concerned with the analysis of how production, circulation and ordered use of these texts partially constitute the activity itself and the organization of the social groups. In other words, the task is to understand how, by using texts, human beings create realities of meaning, social relations and knowledge.

Insofar as texts become successful, they create social facts. They are significant social actions mediated by language—in fact, speech acts. These acts are carried out by means of standardized, typical and intelligible textual forms—genres. These genres, in turn, establish networks of relations with other neighborhood genres. As Bazerman (2004) said: "Together the text types fit together as genre sets within genre systems, which are part of systems of human activity" (p. 311).

Austin (1962), in *How to do things with words*, defended the idea that words do not only mean, but do things. His pioneering study progressed on the understanding of what he called performative verbs, opposed to constative verbs. Performative verbs could only be evaluated in terms of felicity, instead of truth conditions[11].

Even more important was Austin's speech acts classification as locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. A locutionary act consists of a set of linguistic elements which can be subsumed by a proposition: what was literally said. An illocutionary act is what the writer wanted to say with what he/she said: his/her intentional or desired act. Finally, a perlocutionary act is the set of effects the speech acts causes in the reader, or its actual effects.

So, if speech acts are at the essence of social functioning, a deeper understanding of how someone comprehends these acts must be very important to genre analysts. Accordingly, it is worth noting that Austin's trichotomy can be reconsidered in a relevance-theoretical context. Taking account of how this happens, I must review how pragmatic interpretation is processed in terms of logical form, explicature and implicature concepts[12].

For relevance theory, an utterance is a structured set of concepts in a propositional or logical form. As Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1995) said, concepts are species of labels or addresses. By hypothesis, for each concept which makes up the logical form of the proposition conveyed by the utterance, it is possible to access logical, encyclopedic and lexical information[13]. In the case of an utterance to be processed (including by a genre analyst), the content assigned to the sentence consists of a proposition, or logical form, usually an incomplete representation, which is determined, according to Kempson (1988), by the concepts the individual expressions name and by the logical configuration associated with the syntactic structure of the sentence.

In order to understand the utterance, readers look for an interpretation that matches their expectation of relevance. Therefore, based on encoded language and following a path of least effort, they enrich the inputs of the logical form to get the explicit meaning and complete it in an implicit level until their interpretation is consistent with their expectation of relevance. In this case, the logical form is usually enriched by logical inferences to get the explicature, here understood as a semantically complete propositional logical form. According to Sperber and Wilson, "an assumption communicated by an utterance U is explicit if and only if it is a development of a logical form encoded by U" (1995, p. 182).

In relevance-theoretical terms, inferential understanding processes are installed as outputs of the decoding process. Inferential processes, which correspond to the development of the logical form communicated by the utterance, are an explicature of this utterance. In an explicature, many pragmatic operations happen, including reference assignment, indeterminacies resolution, disambiguation, metaphoric interpretation or ellipses enrichment. In this case, one can include high-level descriptions, containing, for example, the writer's attitude about the utterance, in other words, the subjacent speech act.

In addition, there are inferences which exceed the logical form development and constitute utterance implicatures. In such cases, the propositional logical form compounds an implied premise to deductively generate an implied conclusion, possibly the writer's intended last interpretation.

Take these representational levels in the excerpt below which compounds the first and second rhetorical actions or moves of the query letter example: "identifying the text" and "formulating a question," respectively.

(1) Drawer
(2) I have a drawer's contract registered in a notary's office in 1985.
(3) In mid-1996, I paid off the property with the FGTS.
(4) Caixa informed me the owner of the property must now sign the payoff contract.
(5) But for years I have had no more contact with her.
(6) What should I do?
(7) Luiz Silva
(8) Rio de Janeiro

In the excerpt, utterance (6), now (6a), contains, by hypothesis, the logical form (6b):

(6a) What should I do?
(6b) should do, someone, something.

The logical form (6b) is semantically incomplete, because two logical constituents are open: the noun phrases which perform subject and object function of "should do." This logical form must be developed to become a complete proposition likely to be true or false.

According to Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1995), there are two relations to be considered in an utterance: the relation between propositional form and the speaker's thought, and the relation between the speaker's thought and what the speaker's thought represents. Thus, utterances can be used descriptively and interpretively. They can be descriptions of states of affairs of the actual or fictional world, or descriptions of desirable states of affairs; or they can be interpretations of thoughts or attributed utterances, or interpretations of desirable thoughts[14].

In written questions, the propositional form of the utterance corresponds to an interpretation of the writer's thought, which may be an interpretation of a desirable thought. By hypothesis, the reader of an interrogative utterance recovers its logical form and integrates it into a high-level description, including the illocutionary act, with the logical form *The writer is asking Wh-P*, where *Wh-P* is an indirect question.

Sperber and Wilson distinguish *yes-no questions,* which have a logical form and a fully propositional form (e.g., "Do you like orange juice for breakfast?"), from *Wh-questions*, which have a logical form, but no fully propositional form (e.g., "What kind of juice do you like for breakfast?"). Utterance (6) is a *Wh-question*. It cannot constitute a fully propositional form, just because the second utterer, the querier, does not know what he should do to register the property. In this case, the reader is authorized to interpret that the answer will be relevant if it tells the querier what should be done.

In the excerpt of the query letter, according to Simoni (2004), the rhetorical move "formulating a question" has four rhetorical steps: "outlining the scene," "presenting the problem," "requesting a solution," and "providing data for identification." Among the steps, "requesting a solution" is high-ordered, since it mobilizes the rhetorical move "providing a response." This mobilization follows relevance relations.

For the second utterer, the answer to his query is the relevant dimension. Because of this, he produces a writing ostensive stimulus which, by explaining his doubt, reduces the reader's cognitive effort as best as possible, according to his preferences and abilities. At this point, his knowledge includes that the most economical way to get a solution is to ask a question. So he proceeds. However, this is part of the answer. Why did he send this question to the newspaper? Supposedly, it is because assumptions about the functioning of the genre in this hyper-genre come into play[15]. Accordingly, if the need for an answer is the most essential relevant dimension which catalyzes the text, the existence of the social practice of providing answers to questions in newspapers enables the interaction. The journalist, based on the background of the genre, processes the mediation.

The explicature of the relevant question is immersed in this interaction mediated by the first utterer, and configured by the standard structures of the genre. In this case, it is crucial to define the syntactic subject of "should do." This definition is gotten by the sender of the query, whose identification is the fourth rhetorical step of the second move, according to Simoni (2004). This is "Luiz Silva." Moreover, another requirement is to define the syntactic object of "should do."

Precisely, this constituent is what "Luiz Silva" does not know—the relevant logical constituent, replaced by "WH" from now on.

This explicature can be developed, possibly, as follows:

(6b) should do, someone, something.
(6c) should do, Luiz Silva, WH.

As can be seen, utterance (6c) is still far from clear.

As argued before, we must fit this logical form into a high-level description which gives account of the speech act in scene. This is something very close to the rhetorical step "requesting a solution": *The second utterer is asking Wh-P*.

Here it is:

(6d) The second utterer is asking (should do, someone, something).
(6e) Luiz Silva is asking (should do, Luiz Silva, WH).

Supposedly, the logical form (6e) is closer to that which is at stake in this rhetorical step. However, this logical form does not capture the querier's doubt. This is only possible if the reader's cognitive context is rich enough with assumptions to complete the writer's meaning.

The first utterer, the journalist, does not give the query letter a title just to carry out the standard scheme of the genre. The lexical item "drawer" provides the assumption that this is a query about a drawer. The same happens with the rhetorical steps "outlining the scene" and "presenting the problem." Furthermore, the reading of these utterances triggers a set of assumptions from the reader's encyclopedic memory. Many of these assumptions are strange to readers who do not know the Brazilian home mortgage system. Whatever these assumptions, all of them are in service to the explicitness of the relevant logical constituent of Luiz Silva's query.

Take, by hypothesis, a set of assumptions for this event:

S_1—The text is a query (derived from the encyclopedic memory and the knowledge, even if intuitive, of the query letter genre);
S_2—The query is about a drawer's contract (derived from textual input);
S_3—Luiz Silva has a drawer's contract registered in a notary's office in 1985 (from textual input);
S_4—Luiz Silva's drawer's contract refers to some property (implied conclusion from the ambiance of S_3 in the reader's cognitive context);

S_5—Luiz Silva paid off the property with his FGTS (Fundo de Garantia por Tempo de Serviço) in 1996 (from textual input);
S_6—The FGTS (Fundo de Garantia por Tempo de Serviço) can be used for paying off properties (implied conclusion from the ambiance of S_5 in the reader's cognitive context);
S_7—Caixa [Econômica Federal] informed Luiz Silva that the owner of the property must now sign the payoff contract from 1996 (from textual input);
S_8—The mortgage of the property was made by CEF [Caixa Econômica Federal] (implied conclusion from the ambiance of S_7 in the reader's cognitive context);
S_9—For CEF [Caixa Econômica Federal], the owner of the property is not the owner of the drawer's contract (derived from encyclopedic memory, or implied conclusion from antecedent assumption).

Then, utterance (5) comes into the scene. It expresses the querier's problem, and serves as evidence to infer the reason for his query.

S_{10}—Luiz Silva has had no contact with the owner of the property for years (from textual input).
S_{11}—Drawer's contracts must be formalized (derived from encyclopedic memory);
S_{12}—If S_{10} and S_{11}, then S_{14};
S_{13}—If S_{11}, then S_{14} (implied conclusion by *and-elimination*);
S_{14}—Luiz Silva probably doesn't know how to formalize Luiz Silva's drawer's contract with the owner of the property (implied conclusion by *modus ponens*).

With this set of assumptions and inferences, it is possible to establish, by hypothesis, a complete proposition for utterance (6). This proposition is probably relevant enough to be worth processing by all readers of the text.

Here it is:

(6f) The second utterer is asking something (should do, someone, something, for any purpose).
(6g) Luiz Silva is asking (should do, Luiz Silva, WH, to formalize Luiz Silva's drawer's contract with the owner of the property).

Let's see now the third utterer's answer:

(9) It is commonplace, when someone formalizes a drawer's contract, that the seller of the property grants, in the same act, a proxy which allows the buyer to represent him/her in all actions related to the implementation of the negotiation.
(10)We believe, in the reader's case, that there should be a proxy, which would solve the problem.
(11) Without this proxy, the reader may not even effectuate the sale by public deed.
(12) In this case, the only solution would be to file a suit for the compulsory adjudication, in which the reader would use his document to get the final deed.
(13) Then, with the court's judgment, which grants him the final deed, the reader should get the CEF payoff.
(14) Luiz Wanis, Lawyer.

Luiz Wanis' answer turns around the relevant logical constituent of utterance (6): possibly, something like (15a). The lawyer sees two possible solutions: Luiz Silva has or has not a proxy to represent the owner of the property in all actions related to the implementation of the negotiation, in (15b) and (15c), respectively.

(15a) Luiz Silva should do something to formalize Luiz Silva's drawer's contract with the owner of the property.
(15b) Luiz Silva should do something to formalize Luiz Silva's drawer's contract with the owner of the property, if Luiz Silva has a proxy to represent the owner of the property in all actions related to the implementation of the negotiation.
(15c) Luiz Silva should do something to formalize Luiz Silva's drawer's contract with the owner of the property, if Luiz Silva doesn't have a proxy to represent the owner of the property in all actions related to the implementation of the negotiation.

So, the relevant logical constituent, in italics, can be completed in two versions, by hypothesis, as the logical forms (15d) and (15e):

(15d) Luiz Silva should *use a proxy from the owner to represent her in all actions related to the implementation of the negotiation* to formalize Luiz Silva's drawer's contract with the owner of the property, if Luiz Silva has a proxy to represent the owner of the property in all actions related to the implementation of the negotiation.

(15e) Luiz Silva should *file a suit for the compulsory adjudication by Luiz Silva using the document that Luiz Silva has in hand to get the final deed of the property, and then Luiz Silva must obtain the CEF payoff, and then Luiz Silva must register the property* to formalize Luiz Silva's drawer's contract with the owner of the property, if Luiz Silva doesn't have a proxy to represent the owner of the property in all actions related to the implementation of the negotiation.

It should be noticed that, to achieve these logical forms several assumptions have to be mobilized in the participants' minds, including, for example, the potential acts to formalize a drawer's contract, which include obtaining the deed, paying off the mortgage and registering the property. Here, it is worth mentioning Blass' argument that texts are only pieces of evidence or clues which constitute the input of the understanding processes, providing part of the data of logical and conceptual nature for the stage of inferential interpretation. That is, textuality is not a phenomenon necessarily and sufficiently explained in terms of the relations between linguistic and textual structures, but a processing phenomenon which is operated in the mind. In other words, textual interpretation does not solely derive from textual elements, but from a whole range of encyclopedic knowledge about the operational ways of property registration and mortgages, in addition, of course, to the knowledge, even if intuitive, of the genre operation in which the utterance (6) occurs.

THE ROLE OF THE QUERY LETTER'S FIRST UTTERER

Luiz Silva had to elaborate his query in such a way that the journalist would consider it relevant enough to be included in the newspaper. The journalist had to, constrained by newspaper production conditions or by his own expertise on the query letter genre, to format the query in such a way to make it relevant enough to get a specialist's answer, and for the readers to consider the question and the answer relevant enough to be worth reading. After all, as relevance theory argues, the journalist makes his/her best, according to his/her preferences and abilities.

The journalist has two objectives in producing an utterance: creating some change in the interlocutor's cognitive environment and reducing the processing cost of such change. As mentioned, an utterance is processed step by step. So the reader reaches some of its constituents, with its associated logical and encyclopedic inputs, before others. According to Sperber and Wilson (1995), exploring efficiently this temporal sequence is essential. The earlier disambiguation and the assigned references to lexical items are arrived at, the lower the processing effort. Conversely, the greater the number of possible interpretations which the reader has to pay attention to while processing the utterance, the greater the processing effort will be. Consequently, a writer who aims at optimal relevance should structure his/her utterance so as to make the reader's processing easier.

To interpret an utterance, individuals form top-down anticipatory hypotheses about the general logical structure, and solve ambiguities and ambivalences based on these assumptions. At a sentential level, anticipatory assumptions to be confirmed are logically related to one another. One hypothesis is implied by the other, forming a focal scale. In this scale, "each member analytically implies the immediately preceding member and is analytically implicated by the immediately succeeding member" (Sperber & Wilson, 1995, p. 208). Thus, in a successful communication, the reader confirms his/her anticipatory hypotheses during the interpretation process of the utterance.

If genres are relatively stable structures of ways of saying, which make up social activities, such stabilization should follow from arrangements which, following the principle of relevance, enlarge cognitive effects and reduce processing efforts. Thus, if the focal scale allows describing how the structural organization of a sentence reduces processing effort and enlarges cognitive effects, the same thing applies to syntactic arrangements which make up genre structures.

Accordingly, in the rhetorical move "formulating a question," the rhetorical steps "outlining the scene," "presenting the problem" and "providing data for identifying" present clues to the relevant dimension of the query. I argue that this occurs because the clues function as anticipatory assumptions to the matter which will be treated in the course of the query letter, precisely because they provide evidence of where relevance rests: the query of the second utterer.

Two questions can be highlighted based on this hypothesis. Firstly, a counter-argument for including the rhetorical step "providing data for identification" as an anticipatory hypothesis (and thus defining "Luiz Silva" as a logical constituent of the utterance) is that this step succeeds utterance (6), which textualizes the rhetorical step "requesting a solution."

I believe this is an interesting example to discuss cognition and social practices. Signing letters is an established social practice as the signature gives credibility to the interaction. Even in indirect query letters, where the specialist's answer is reported, the query respects the standards of a signed letter (Simoni, 2004)[16].

This practice constrains the anticipated presentation of the second utterer. The identification has a standard place in these cases. Moreover, it is crucial to think about hyper-genre constraints. Journalists are constantly struggling with the amount of space, always limited in newspapers. I argue that not only knowledge of the Brazilian home mortgage system operates in the construction of the explicature of the utterance (6), but knowledge of genre. The reader knows where to look for the logical constituent which defines the second utterer, because he/she also knows, even if intuitively, the genre. This suggests that the knowledge of genre theories can assist relevance-based researches, because such knowledge enables questions of social interfaces in the description and explanation of pragmatic interpretation processes.

Secondly, could the title of the query letter be a step of the rhetorical move "formulating a question"? Simoni (2004) classified the title "Drawer" as the rhetorical move "identifying the text" and also as the rhetorical step "giving the topic of the text." The fact that this move is standard in query letters is one of the arguments in her favor. Moreover, Luiz Silva's letter to the editorial staff supposedly did not have a title. Because of this, this move is solely the journalist's responsibility. However, which of the three rhetorical moves of the letter would not be mediated by the journalist? The title would be the only textual constituent where the journalist's authorship is more evident. Probably, other textual parts referring to both query and answer are, in certain degrees, paraphrases from the querier and the lawyer's original texts.

Fulfilling the function of the rhetorical step "giving the topic of the text," the title decreases the reader's cognitive effort, when it helps to contextualize the relevant question to Luiz Silva's query. If this perception is correct, a query letter could be formed by two main rhetorical moves: query and answer, something closer to a projection of the question/answer interaction in the newspaper medium. In this case, relevance theory could help genre analysts because this knowledge provides questions from a cognitive point of view to the description and explanation of the procedures of rhetorical moves and steps assignment.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this work, based on Simoni's (2004) query letter analysis, I discussed a possible application of the genre concept to a text comprehension theory, considering Sperber and Wilson's (1986, 1995) relevance approach, and, in the genre field, the works from Swales' (1990, 1992, 1998) tradition.

Based on the query letter analysis, I demonstrated how contextual cognitive processes intervene. Some of the essential elements to understanding come from the reader's encyclopedic knowledge about the way of mortgaging and registering properties in Brazil. The query letter is built from the completion of one of the logical constituents of the second utterer's question in utterance (6). Around this logical constituent, the series of rhetorical moves and steps of the text are arranged. As I discussed above, the generic structures which occur in texts are, I believe, at the service of something deeper and essential: relevance relations.

On the other hand, these generic structures set relevance restrictions and enlarge communicative efficiency, providing a discursive context that cognitively focuses the attention of writer and reader. As I argued above, the formatting of the text by the journalist was constrained not only by relevance relations but also by newspaper production conditions, including the query letter genre constraints. So, his relevance-oriented competence and abilities must include his expertise on the query letter genre. Relevance relations guide the generic structures; and generic structures, in turn, guide relevance relations. I think this two-way influence justifies a collaborative approach.

NOTES

[1] Simoni's (2004) work is part of the Newspaper Genres Project (Projeto Gêneros do Jornal) of the Graduate Program in Language Sciences of the University of Southern Santa Catarina.

[2] "Drawer's Contract" is an agreement between a person who is paying a mortgage, the seller, and another person, the buyer, who takes up the payment through a verbal combination or a particular contract. It is an agreement where the risk depends on the participants' confidence, because the contract belongs to the seller. The buyer is exposed to a risk in case the seller acts in bad faith, dies or moves to an ignored place (as in Luiz Silva's query). The seller is exposed to a risk when the buyer fails to pay off the mortgage or fails to pay condominium taxes. Brazilian jurisprudence considers that the buyer is entitled to claim the property possession when there is a contract or commitment of sale, even if this document is not registered. Contracts of this type should be kept in a drawer (hence the expression) until the mortgage is fully paid and officially formalized.

[3] FGTS (Fundo de Garantia por Tempo de Serviço/Assurance Fund for Period of Work) consists of the total of monthly payments employers deposit in accounts opened at the public bank Caixa Econômica Federal (CEF or Caixa) on behalf of their employees. CEF is the main agent for the Brazilian federal government's public policies, and so the major national agent for home financing programmes. The main purpose of FGTS is giving financial support to workers, in the event of dismissal without just cause. The resources of the FGTS can be used also for paying off mortgages, as is the case in Luiz Silva's query.

[4] This section is a summary of Wilson's (2004) Pragmatic Course with some adaptations of my own. For instance, I respectively used the lexical items "writer" and "reader," instead of Wilson's choices of "speaker" and "hearer."

[5] Here, context is understood as a range of mentally-represented assumptions the reader is capable of retrieving or deriving from memory, perception or inference (isolated, or in combination) in order to identify the writer's meaning. Thus, context is the set of assumptions (apart from the assumption that the utterance has been produced) which is applied in the interpretation, including

assumptions achieved from the interpretation of preceding text(s) and physical circumstances.

[6] "S" designates "supposition."

[7] To know more about the relevance-theoretic deductive mechanism used in this chain of assumptions, see Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1995).

[8] According to Blass (1990), discourse is all acts of verbal communication, whether linguistic or not; text, in turn, is what is recorded from the discourses, i.e., it is a purely linguistic and formal object.

[9] According to Blass (1990), the way the language is interpreted is largely universal, so people of the most diverse cultures operate within a similar logic. For her, although background assumptions vary, the innate principle of relevance seems to be crucial in explaining the universality of the inferential processes characterizing human communication.

[10] In other words, Blass (1990) follows Sperber and Wilson's argument premises that the semantic representation of a sentence is recovered by a process of linguistic decoding, in general automatic and unconscious, and enriched through contextually accessible information, by the criterion of consistency with the principle of relevance. The nature of this operation explains, for example, why someone tries to build textual coherence before he/she immediately considers the text inconsistent.

[11] This is the case of "I baptize," whose analysis cannot be done in terms of truth-conditions, but in terms of felicity, if certain felicity conditions are appropriate (ritualistic words, actors and social circumstances).

[12] On representational levels, see Carston (1988), Silveira (1997), Silveira & Feltes (1999), and Sperber & Wilson (1986, 1995).

[13] Lexical information, of representational nature, has to do with the language counterpart of the concept. The encyclopedic information, also of representational nature, is the extension or denotation of the concept. The logic information, of computational nature, consists of a finite, small and constant set of deductive rules applied to the logical forms of which they are part. So, building the contents of an utterance simultaneously implies identifying the words that constitute this utterance, recovering their denotation and extension and applying deductive rules to their logic entries.

[14] According to Sperber and Wilson (1995, p. 231), the basic relation may be summarized as follows: "metaphor involves an interpretive relation between the propositional form of an utterance and the thought it represents; irony involves an interpretive relation between the speaker's thought and attributed thoughts or utterances; assertion involves a descriptive relation between the speaker's thought and a state of affairs in the world; requesting or advising involves a descriptive relation between the speaker's thought and a desirable state of af-

fairs; interrogatives and exclamatives involve an interpretive relation between the speaker's thought and a desirable thought."

[15] On hyper-genre notion, see Bonini (2004).

[16] In requirements, this does not occur because the signature that follows the request for deferral does not identify the petitioner. That is why the sentence showing the relevant dimension explains the utterer: "Someone requires . . ."

REFERENCES

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Bazerman, C. (2004). Speech acts, genres, and activity systems: How texts organize activity and people. In C. Bazerman & P. Prior (Eds.), *What writing does and how it does it: An introduction to analyzing texts and textual practices* (pp. 309-339). Mahwah, New Jersey: Erlbaum.

Blakemore, D. (1987). *Semantic constraints on relevance*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Blass, R. (1990). *Relevance relations in discourse: A study with special reference to Sissala.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bonini, A. (2004). Em busca de um modelo integrado para os gêneros do jornal. In M. M. Cavalcante & M. A. P. Brito (Orgs.), *Gêneros textuais e referenciação*. Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil: PPGL/UFC.

Bonini, A. (2005). Os gêneros do jornal: Questões de pesquisa e ensino. In A. M. Karwoski, B. Gaideczka, & K. S. Brito (Orgs.), *Gêneros textuais: Reflexões e ensino*. União da Vitória, Paraná, Brazil: Kaygangue.

Bonini, A. (2007). A relação entre prática social e gênero textual: Questão de pesquisa e ensino. *Veredas (UFJF), 11*(2), 1-21.

Campos da Costa, J. (2005). A teoria da relevância e as irrelevâncias da vida cotidiana. [Special issue]. *Linguagem em (Dis)curso*, *5,* 161-169.

Carston, R. (1988). Implicature, explicature, and truth-theoretic semantics. In R. Kempson (Ed.), *Mental representations: The interface between language and reality* (pp. 155-181). Cambridge: Cambrige University Press.

Karwoski, A. M., Gaideczka, B., & Brito, K. S. (Orgs.). *Gêneros textuais: Reflexões e ensino*. União da Vitória, Paraná, Brazil: Kaygangue.

Kempson, R. (Ed.). (1988). *Mental representations: The interface between language and reality.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kinderman, C. A. (2003). *A reportagem jornalística: Desvendando as variantes de gênero.* Unpublished master's thesis, University of Southern Santa Catarina, Tubarão, Santa Catarina, Brazil.

Rauen, F. J. (2008). Sobre relevâncias e irrelevâncias. In Campos, J., & Rauen, F. J. (Eds.), *Tópicos em teoria da relevância.* Porto Alegre: Edipucrs. Retrieved December 15, 2005 from http://www.pucrs.br/edipucrs/teoriadarelevancia.pdf.

Silveira, J. R. C. (1997). *Teoria da Relevância: Uma resposta pragmático-cognitiva à comunicação inferencial humana.* Unpublished doctoral thesis, Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

Silveira, J. R. C., & Feltes, H. P. M. (1999). *Pragmática e cognição: A textualidade pela relevância e outros ensaios* (2nd ed.). Porto Alegre, Brazil: Edipucrs.

Simoni, R. M. S. (2004). *Uma caracterização do gênero carta-consulta nos jornais O Globo e Folha de S. Paulo.* Unpublished master's thesis, University of Southern Santa Catarina, Tubarão, Santa Catarina, Brazil.

Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1986). *Relevance: Communication & cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1995). *Relevance: Communication & cognition* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.

Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Swales, J. M. (1992). Re-thinking genre: Another look at discourse community effects. In J. M. Swales, *Re-thinking genre colloquium.* Ottawa, Ontario, Canada: Carleton University.

Swales, J. M. (1998). *Other floors, other voices: A textography of a small university building*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Erlbaum.

Wilson, D. (2004). *Pragmatic Theory.* Retrieved March 15, 2005, from University College London, Linguistics Department: http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/nick/pragtheory/