

The Modeling of the Opinion Essay in the Context of University Entrance Exam Writing Assessment

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Abstract:

This study is based on a documentary analysis and aims to present the results of the theoretical modeling of the genre opinion article as a university entrance exam essay. The theoretical and methodological framework is grounded in Socio-Discursive Interactionism, with emphasis on its framework for text/genre analysis and on the concept of genre modeling. The corpus consists of essays written by candidates in the 2020 entrance examination of the State University of Northern Paraná (UENP) that received scores ranging from 8.0 to 8.5. The results reveal the discursive complexity of the opinion article as an entrance exam essay and provide support for the didacticization of the genre.

Keywords:

Opinion article; College entrance exam essay; Theoretical genre model.

Resumo:

Este trabalho tem como base uma análise documental, cujo objetivo é apresentar resultados da modelização teórica do gênero “artigo de opinião como redação de vestibular”. A fundamentação teórico-metodológica pauta-se nos estudos do Interacionismo Sociodiscursivo, com ênfase no seu quadro de análise de textos/gêneros e no conceito de modelização de gêneros. Como *corpus* de análise, foram selecionadas redações de candidatos do vestibular da Universidade Estadual do Norte do Paraná (UENP) do ano de 2020, com nota na faixa de 8 a 8,5. Os resultados revelam a complexidade discursiva do artigo de

opinião como redação de vestibular e fornecem subsídios para a didatização do gênero.

Palavras-chave:

Artigo de opinião; Redação de vestibular; Modelo teórico de gênero.

Signum: Estudos da Linguagem, Londrina, v.28, n.2, p.97-112, August, 2025

Recebido em: 13/05/2025

Aceito em: 21/01/2026

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INTRODUCTION

The National Common Curricular Base (BNCC), an official document within the framework of Brazilian public education policies (Brazil, 2019, p. 7), proposes a (re)organization of the school curriculum, particularly with regard to the specific competencies and essential skills that all students are expected to develop throughout the stages and modalities of Basic Education.

With regard to work on the Portuguese Language curricular component, specifically at the upper secondary education level, the BNCC advocates “a fuller participation of young people in different sociocultural practices involving the use of language(s)” (Brazil, 2019, p. 481). These language practices are always configured through discursive/textual genres, which function as mega-instruments of communication (Schneuwly, 2004). From this perspective, schools need to guide the teaching of the mother tongue within a communicative context so that “students may engage in meaningful experiences with language practices across different media, situated within fields of social activity” (Brazil, 2019, p. 485). In order to foster fuller engagement of young people in diverse sociocultural practices, the BNCC emphasizes that “it is necessary to intensify the development of skills that enable engagement with diversity and the debate of ideas” (Brazil, 2019, p. 498 — emphasis added).

The debate of ideas referred to by the BNCC is enhanced through didactic work with argumentative genres. Engagement with argumentation provides students with cognitive tools that enable them to develop a critical understanding of the world around them. In this sense, we emphasize the importance of working with the reading, analysis, and production of the opinion article genre in the teaching and learning process of the Portuguese language. In addition to serving as both an object and an instrument of language teaching in Basic Education, this genre has also been adopted as a reference in university entrance examination writing tests, functioning as an evaluative instrument, as is the case with the entrance examination of the State University of Northern Paraná (UENP) since 2015.

In line with Striquer and Barros (2020), we understand that the genre required in the UENP entrance examination writing task constitutes a variation of the social reference genre—the journalistic opinion article. This shift, resulting from the hybridization of the real production situation—the entrance examination—and the context simulated by the test—the writing of an article for a newspaper—leads to what the authors have termed the *opinion article as an entrance examination essay*, a position that we also adopt.

Research shows that candidates for university entrance examinations have been experiencing difficulties in producing the opinion article as an entrance examination essay (Gonçalves; Barros; Cristovão, 2024; Striquer; Barros, 2020). This becomes evident when we examine the scores obtained by most candidates in the UENP writing tests. In the 2020 edition, which serves as the reference for this study, for example, only nine candidates achieved scores between 8.0 and 8.5—the highest scores awarded in that edition—thus revealing the complexity involved in writing this genre. Reflecting on this issue, we identified the need to understand how the opinion article functions within the entrance examination context. To this end, this article aims to present the results of a development of a theoretical genre model (Barros, 2012; Barros; Gonçalves, 2023), specifically providing a description and analysis from enunciative, discursive, and linguistic perspectives. The purpose is to support the process of didactic transposition of this genre in the context of Basic Education and/or preparatory courses for the UENP entrance examination or other institutions with similar writing requirements.

The article is structured into theoretical and analytical sections. The theoretical framework presents Sociodiscursive Interactionism (SDI), its framework for the analysis of texts/genres, and the notion of genre modeling, which is the focus of this study. In the analytical phase of the article, we present the results of the theoretical modeling of the opinion article as an entrance examination essay, carried out through documentary research based on the analysis of a constituent corpus of the genre.

SOCIODISCURSIVE INTERACTIONISM (SDI) AND ITS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS OF TEXTS/GENRES

According to Sociodiscursive Interactionism (SDI), a text is “any unit of language production that conveys a linguistically organized message and that tends to produce an effect of coherence on the recipient” (Bronckart, 2003, p. 71). Since our interactions are mediated by language and texts are the means through which language is materialized, they are considered the highest unit of human communication.

As all communicative interactions are mediated by texts, textual composition is inherently and directly influenced by the properties of the communication situation in which it occurs. In this sense, it is impossible to analyze a text without taking into account its context of production and reception. Based on this principle, SDI postulates that it is within interaction that the individual is constructed as an active, critical, and reflective being. To analyze these interactions, it is necessary to consider texts as the objects that materialize language practices and their generic configurations, namely, text genres, which are regarded as “objects of the internalization of the human psyche, since it is through them that individuals interact and, consequently, construct their social and cultural repertoire” (Barros; Rios-Registro, 2014, p. 7).

In all interactional situations, we draw on pre-constructed text models; that is, as participants in various social spheres, we daily mobilize a variety of genres—written, oral, and multimodal—to interact socially, whether as producers or as recipients. We report everyday events to our friends, engage in dialogue with our family members, exchange virtual messages in the workplace, produce professional texts, read news or jokes, and watch soap operas, films, and so on.

Genres are, therefore, fundamental tools, as they organize and stabilize communicative activities. They fulfill social functions within the language practices in which they are employed as mediators of communication. According to Bronckart (2006), the production of any text requires, consciously or unconsciously, the selection of a genre from the social architext—a kind of repertoire of genres inherited from previous generations and available to individuals when engaging in a language activity.

Bronckart (2003), aiming to investigate the language actions performed by individuals, developed an analytical framework. As the author adopts a top-down method (Bronckart, 2006), his analytical model begins with the examination of the conditions of production and subsequently focuses on the analysis of the internal architecture of texts.

Regarding the conditions of production, these, according to SDI, organize the classes of subsets that influence text production. They can be studied from two formal worlds (sets of social representations): the physical world and the socio-subjective world. The physical world refers to the empirical realm of language activity and, according to Bronckart (2003), can be analyzed through the following contextual parameters: place of production, time of production, producer, and recipient. Concerning the socio-subjective world, the author addresses it through the following parameters: social setting, social position of the producer, social position of the recipient, and the purpose of the interaction. Unlike the physical world, which is a real representation, the socio-subjective world exhibits characteristics of socio-subjective representations, such as the social roles individuals assume in a language activity.

According to SDI, the internal architecture of texts is subdivided into three levels: 1) the general infrastructure of the text, 2) textualization mechanisms, and 3) enunciative mechanisms. The general infrastructure of the text, in turn, comprises the overall text plan, the types of discourse, and the sequences that appear within it. The overall plan “refers to the organization of the thematic content

as a whole; it becomes visible during the reading process and can be encoded in a summary, that is, it consists of the organization of the text” (Bronckart, 2003, p. 120). The types of discourse refer to the discursive models observable in texts. For SDI, these are classified as: interactive discourse, theoretical discourse, interactive report, and narration—the first two correspond to the world of exposition, and the latter two to the world of narration. Finally, textual sequences are modes of language planning “that develop within the overall plan of the text (narrative, explanatory, argumentative sequences, etc.)” (Bronckart, 2003, p. 121).

The second component of the internal architecture of texts is formed by textualization mechanisms, which are linked to textual progression and are responsible for establishing the thematic coherence of the text. “Fundamentally connected to the linearity of the text, they make explicit, for the recipient, the major hierarchical, logical, and/or temporal articulations of the text” (Bronckart, 2003, p. 122). These mechanisms are divided into three subcategories: 1) connection, 2) nominal cohesion, and 3) verbal cohesion.

The final component of the internal architecture of texts, the enunciative mechanisms, contributes “to the maintenance of the pragmatic (interactive) coherence of the text” (Bronckart, 2003, p. 130), that is, to clarifying the enunciative stances that convey various evaluations of aspects of the thematic content, which aim to guide the interpretation of the text. They are subdivided into: 1) enunciative voices and 2) modalizations.

GENRE MODELING: A TOOL OF ISD DIDACTIC ENGINEERING

The didactic model is a tool created by the Geneva Group to make possible the process of didactic transposition of genres. According to Machado and Cristovão (2006), this model works as a collaborative mechanism for the understanding and, therefore, the learning of a specific genre. In general terms, the objective of the didactic model is to explicitly define the teachable dimensions of the genre, taking into account a specific didactic context.

According to the Geneva researchers affiliated with SDI (Schneuwly; Dolz, 2004), the process of didactic modeling of a genre includes some stages. In the first stage, there is a search for genre specialists. These specialists can be people who use the texts of the genre, such as producers or recipients; in this case, interviews can be carried out. They can also be researchers who study the genre; in this case, a bibliographic study of the genre is conducted. The second stage involves the selection and analysis of a representative corpus of the genre, in order to describe it. Finally, the third stage involves the observation of the didactic intervention context, so that the genre model can be adapted to the learners.

According to Schneuwly and Dolz (2004), for the modeling process to take place, it must be based on three principles: legitimacy, relevance, and solidarity. Regarding the first principle, it refers to legitimized knowledge. Therefore, genre models must be based on the functioning of the genre as a social object. The second principle addresses relevance: “the choice, from available knowledge, of that which is relevant, according to school purposes and objectives and the students’ abilities” (Schneuwly; Dolz, 2004, p. 181). In other words, the model must be relevant to the didactic intervention context. Thus, it is necessary to evaluate who the students are, what they already know about the genre, and related aspects, in order to adapt the genre to the reality of the classroom. Finally, the last principle, solidarity, refers to the harmony between the two previous principles. The didactic model must therefore represent a balance between the genre as a social object and the genre as an object of teaching.

In the definition of the didactic model of a genre by the Geneva researchers, we see that an important stage is the adaptation of the genre to a specific teaching context. In other words, these models are developed for specific didactic purposes. From a broader perspective, Barros (2012) and Barros and Gonçalves (2023) describe a process called preliminary modeling, which they term the theoretical model of the genre. This model refers to the description of the genre as a social object of reference, from a theoretical perspective. It constitutes the first stage of didactic modeling: a) consultation with specialists; b) description of the corpus from a theoretical perspective. Thus, a

theoretical model can be expanded and transformed into a didactic model, adapted to a specific context of teaching and learning. According to Barros (2012), genre modeling can be carried out a priori, without considering a specific didactic context. Therefore, this tool is developed to understand the functioning of language practices configured in text genres.

Theoretical modeling is, therefore, the focus of this research, since we do not target our genre model at a specific didactic context.

METHODOLOGY: DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH FOR GENRE MODELING

This study, based on the documentary analysis method (Gil, 2014), presents one of the stages of theoretical modeling of the opinion article as a university entrance exam essay: the analysis of a representative corpus of the genre to describe its contextual, discursive, and linguistic dimensions. To this end, nine essays written by candidates for the 2020 UENP entrance exam were selected. The task required the candidates to produce an opinion article based on the following instructions:

Write an opinion article, taking the social role of a newspaper reader who intends to publish their point of view on the following controversial question: should advertising campaigns include racial and gender diversity in their commercial ads as a form of social commitment? Remember that an opinion article is an argumentative text. Therefore, besides taking a position on the question, it is necessary to select strong arguments to support your thesis. The texts address the presented question, but remember that they can only be used as support for your argumentation and must never be deliberately copied. You will be evaluated on the degree of authorship in your text! (UENP, 2020, p. 16).

For the analysis, we selected essays that received the highest grades (between 8.0 and 8.5), since we understand that these best represent the “model” to be achieved. Although these are high grades, no candidate reached the maximum score of 10.0. To guide the modeling process, we used the didactic tool developed by Barros (2012), based on the text/genre analysis categories of SDI. This tool is guided by questions aimed at facilitating the creation of theoretical models, which can later be transformed into didactic models.

ANALYSIS: DESCRIPTION OF THE OPINION ARTICLE AS A UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE EXAM ESSAY

In Bronckart’s (2003) textual analysis model, the description of a genre is based on the analysis of a corpus of texts, guided, a priori, by representations of the production context. These are based on hypotheses raised by the researcher from knowledge about the functioning of the language practice from which the studied genre emerges. In Table 1, we present the production context of the genre “opinion article as a university entrance exam essay” from the 2020 UENP exam—the object of this investigation—based on the situational parameters proposed by the SDI analysis model.

Table 1 – Analysis of the Production Context Parameters

Physical World	Sociosubjective World
Place of Production: University Classrooms	Social Place: Public Higher Education Institution. Academic Sphere.
Time of Production: The 2020 UENP entrance exam was conducted in two sessions. The essay test took place on November 24, 2020, Tuesday, together with the Portuguese, Brazilian Literature, and Foreign Language (English or Spanish) exams. Candidates had a total of four hours to complete the tests on that day.	Social Position of the Sender (Enunciator): The candidate, interested in a place at the public university (real enunciator), must simulate being a newspaper reader willing to publish their viewpoint on the controversial question: “Should advertising campaigns include racial and gender diversity in their commercial ads as a form of social commitment?” They must assume the role of a newspaper columnist (virtual enunciator).

Producer: An individual writing the essay: young people who recently graduated from public or private high schools; adults who completed high school some time ago; adults seeking a second university degree.	Social Position of the Receiver (Addressee): The evaluation board assessing the candidate’s writing, responsible for assigning a score from 0 to 10 for the essay, based on a grading rubric that considers both the characteristics of the genre “opinion article” and transversal aspects of writing (not disclosed by the entrance exam) ¹ .
Recipient: An individual person who receives and reads the text: teachers specialized in teaching the Portuguese language.	Interaction objective: To produce a college entrance examination essay, using the journalistic opinion article as the reference genre, in accordance with the examination instructions, with the purpose of obtaining a grade that allows admission to the university.
Support: The essay answer sheet of the college entrance examination.	
Thematic content	
The thematic content of the UENP college entrance exam in 2020 is part of the debate about racial and gender diversity in advertising campaigns. This is a controversial topic that requires the candidate to have background knowledge in order to take a position and defend a point of view.	

Source: Based on Bronckart (2003).

The opinion article used as a university entrance exam essay is a genre that results from a conflict between two production contexts: a virtual one and a real one. The virtual context is based on the journalistic sphere, which is the social field of the opinion article, as shown in the exam instructions. The real context is related to the evaluative situation of the entrance exam. In this context, the text producer, acting as a candidate for a university place, writes a text to be evaluated by a specialized examination board. Therefore, this genre is used in communication situations in which the candidate must produce a text with the communicative purpose of demonstrating mastery of the reference genre (the journalistic opinion article), of writing conventions, and of the rules established by the entrance exam, such as the minimum and maximum number of lines. In conclusion, the opinion article in the entrance exam context is a combination of the evaluative purposes of the exam and the social practice of defending a point of view, typical of newspaper columnists.

After presenting an analysis of the contextual parameters of the production of opinion articles as entrance exam essays by candidates of the 2020 UENP examination, we present Table 2, which summarizes the action capacities required from a candidate for the production of this genre, that is, the representations that should guide their writing.

Table 2 – Description of Action Capacities

ACTION CAPACITIES
a) The candidate of a college entrance exam, who is asked to write an opinion article, must keep in mind both the objectives and rules of the examination essay and the objectives and characteristics of the reference genre – the journalistic opinion article – because the ultimate goal is to achieve a good grade to pass the exam and enter the university.
b) The text producer is a combination of two speakers: the college entrance exam candidate and the newspaper columnist. This dual representation should guide the writing of the text.
c) The candidate must meet both the institutional demands of conventional writing, as regulated by the exam, and the specific demands of the reference genre, keeping in mind that a specialized examination board (the recipient, belonging to the academic field) will evaluate the text based on these parameters.
d) The candidate must have good knowledge of the thematic content implied by the controversial question in the entrance exam. This knowledge should go beyond what is presented in the exam’s supporting texts, because in this context the candidate is expected to show a high level of authorship, not just reproduce common opinions or the exam texts. Moreover, the candidate must show that their value judgment about the topic is coherent with their argumentation. In other words, the candidate should understand that the thematic content deals with controversial issues in society and must take a position on them, presenting arguments that support their point of view.

Source: The authors.

¹Information collected informally from members of the examination board.

For the analysis of discursive and linguistic-discursive capacities, we utilized, at several points, excerpts from the essays in our corpus, identified by the codes T1, T2, etc.

Discursive capacities refer to the skills related to the discursive aspects required for text production. The analysis is guided by Bronckart's model (2003), which divides the internal structure of the text into three categories: general text infrastructure (overall textual plan, types of discourse, sequence types), textualization mechanisms (connections, nominal and verbal cohesion), and enunciative mechanisms (voices and modalizations). Regarding the overall textual plan, we developed some topics that 'summarize' the genre.

- ✓ The essay comes with a title, since 'the absence of a title implies loss of points, but does not nullify the essay' (UENP, 2020, p. 14–17). Most of the time, the title contains an initial provocation. In the analysis, we identified three main discursive strategies: 1) narrowing the general theme (T1: 'Advertising Hand in Hand with Diversity'); 2) presenting a premise, that is, signs of the position to be defended in the text (T7: 'For a Multiple Media'); 3) generic texts, which do not address the essay theme directly and could be used in different contexts (T4: 'Reality only becomes real when seen or represented'). In the analyzed corpus, the most common strategy is the last one – titles that address the theme in a broad way.
- ✓ It is based on the reference genre "journalistic opinion article".
- ✓ It must be written with a specific number of lines, following the rules of the entrance exam. It is not allowed to write fewer than 15 lines or more than 30 lines (UENP, 2020, p. 14). If the candidate does not follow this rule, the candidate is disqualified and receives a score of zero.
- ✓ It must be written according to the standard rules of the Portuguese language. However, candidates do not always follow this rule, which affects their evaluation.
- ✓ The writer must not leave signs of authorship, because the text is part of an evaluation process. For this reason, the writer must not sign the text, or the exam may receive a score of zero.
- ✓ The text must respect the proposed theme and genre. If the candidate does not follow this rule, the candidate is disqualified from the exam.
- ✓ In the *introduction*, in general, candidates present a context about the theme. They often include research data, historical facts, or voices of authority, such as philosophers, sociologists, and writers. At this stage, the writer usually presents a premise. This means signs of the position that will be defended, or the thesis itself, which is later reinforced or expanded in the conclusion. In T2 (see Table 3), we observe that the candidate begins the text by presenting a voice of authority, a play by Oswald de Andrade, one of the main names of Brazilian Modernism. This reference is used to introduce the theme of racial and gender diversity, although the cited play addresses only the issue of gender. After this introduction, the candidate presents a premise that helps the reader identify the author's point of view on the controversial issue: that advertising companies do not value racial and gender diversity in their campaigns (see Table 3).
- ✓ In the *development*, the candidate usually takes a position on the controversial issue and builds arguments, and sometimes counterarguments, based on knowledge gained during school life and social interactions. Each argument is usually presented in a single paragraph. Because of the line limit of the exam, it is common for the candidate to use only two paragraphs for the development of the text, as in our example (see Table 3).
- ✓ In the *conclusion*, the candidate usually closes the ideas presented in the text. The candidate presents the thesis, which may or may not have appeared at the beginning as a premise, or expands the initial premise. In T2 (see Table 3), we observe that the candidate expands the point of view presented as a premise at the beginning of the essay. The candidate assigns to

the State the duty to encourage advertising diversity. In this way, the conclusion presents, in some measure, a solution to the problem, as required in the ENEM essay².

Generally, the analyzed texts have four paragraphs: 1) introduction; 2) argument 1; 3) argument 2; 4) conclusion. We understand that many texts, regardless of the genre, are organized into introduction, development, and conclusion. However, it is important to point out that this basic structure should not be seen as the textual plan of the genre. What we need to understand is what each part presents and how they are organized from a discursive point of view. This is exactly what we intend to show through the analysis of T2 (Table 3).

Table 3 – Analysis of the overall textual plan of T2

Title: Empathy and Representation [TITLE WITH A GENERIC THEME]		
<p>Introduction <i>Since the 1930s, Oswald de Andrade – an author of the first phase of Modernism – shocked readers and audiences of the time (1967) with his play “O Rei da Vela.” In it, he fearlessly portrayed the homosexual relationships of the characters and challenged the idea of the “perfect family” [INTRODUCTION OF THE THEME].</i> <i>Unfortunately, regarding the current Brazilian context, structural prejudice can be noticed in advertising campaigns, when they do not pay attention to ethnic and gender diversity [PREMISE].</i></p>	<p>Development <i>IN MY VIEW, a country that has the positivist ideal “Order and Progress” on its flag should make progress regarding media diversity. THIS IS BECAUSE the number of advertisements addressing LGBT issues and Afro-descendant families is very small compared to the many ads that have always promoted the ideology of the “traditional Brazilian family” – white and heterosexual [ARGUMENT].</i> <i>MOREOVER, people forget the importance of representation for minorities. For a Black child, being represented on television opens doors for them to recognize their identity and see their beauty as unique, outside the aesthetic standards imposed by society. For someone discovering their sexuality, it is essential to understand that it is okay if two men want to have a relationship, because “love is love,” regardless of gender [ARGUMENT].</i></p>	<p>Conclusion I UNDERSTAND, THEREFORE, THAT THE STATE SHOULD ENCOURAGE ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS THAT REPRESENT THESE MINORITIES, SO THAT PEOPLE BECOME MORE AWARE AND ELIMINATE THIS INSTITUTIONALIZED PREJUDICE FROM THEIR MINDS. IN THIS WAY, THE COUNTRY WOULD BECOME MORE RESPECTFUL AND EMPATHETIC, FINALLY ACCEPTING THE DIVERSITY THAT HAS EXISTED HERE SINCE THE PORTUGUESE DISCOVERY OF THE LAND [CONCLUSION/EXPANSION OF THE PREMISE/THESIS].</p>

Source: The authors, based on essay T2.

Regarding textual sequences, we can say that the argumentative sequence is the basis of all the texts analyzed. According to Bronckart (2003), the argumentative sequence, from the point of view of logical reasoning, involves the existence of a thesis about a controversial issue, from which new data (arguments) are proposed that lead to a conclusion (or a new thesis). Regarding its textual planning, the argumentative sequence, in a typical form, can have four stages: premise, arguments, counterarguments, conclusion/thesis.

The university applicant, when presenting themselves as a newspaper reader interested in sharing their point of view on the controversial topic, interacts consciously or unconsciously with the audience (whether real or virtual). In this way, there is a simulation of interaction. In the texts analyzed, it is most common for the candidate to organize their argumentation by presenting a premise, developing two main arguments, and giving a conclusion in which they either reinforce or expand the premise (see Table 3). In the texts of our corpus, we did not find counterarguments, which does not mean that the candidate cannot use this argumentative strategy.

Regarding the discourse worlds, the opinion article as a university entrance exam essay belongs to the world of exposition. This classification as an exposition discourse is due to the fact

² Brasil, ([2025]).

that the thematic content of the essays is linked to the contextual parameters of the language action. Concerning the implication or autonomy of this exposition, in the analyzed examples, there are linguistic features that show both characteristics of implied exposition (interactive discourse) and autonomous exposition (theoretical discourse). In the latter case, the text has an autonomous relationship with the parameters of the language action and its interpretation: “it does not require any knowledge of the parameters of the situation of language action from which it originates” (Bronckart, 2003, p. 160). Thus, we can consider “that the two types are present, fused, thus constituting a true mixed interactive-theoretical type” (Bronckart, 2003, p. 192).

Initially, the interactive discourse can be justified in the analyzed essays by the interaction that the writer tries to establish with the reader. This interaction can be expressed in different ways. The main way is through deictic markers of person, place, and time (Bronckart, 2003). In general, one of the most frequent aspects in the analyzed essays that characterizes interactive discourse is the involvement of the writer, which is expressed in the texts by the use of the first person singular or plural (see excerpts 1, 2, and 3). By placing themselves explicitly in the text, the writer presents their point of view on the thematic content and, when arguing, seeks the reader’s agreement, involving them either through the use of “we” (see excerpts 1 and 2) or through discursive strategies that seem to simulate face-to-face interaction (see excerpt 2 – what is in parentheses seems to represent a break from the theoretical discourse so that the writer speaks directly to the reader, “*I believe that the term...*”). However, perhaps due to the influence of the “rules” imposed for writing *school essays* or the *ENEM* exam (Striquer; Barros, 2020), we also find texts in which the writer “hides” discursively, using the third person in sentences with verbs expressing opinions (see excerpt 4). According to Striquer (2014, p. 326), “The use of these resources gives a universal tone in dealing with the proposed topic”.

Another strategy that gives interactivity to the text is the use of temporal deictics. In the analyzed texts, we only found what we are calling *generic temporal deictics*. Through them, the exact time of production is not identified, but it is possible to locate the language action in a certain time frame. The use of these three adverbs illustrates the analysis: *currently* (T3), *in recent years* (T3), *nowadays* (T6 – excerpt 2),

[excerpt 1] “And as people, **we must** all be protected to **achieve** equity. However, Black people, members of the LGBT community, and others have been in dangerous situations for centuries” (T1).

[excerpt 2] “From observing the changes that have occurred in our society **nowadays**, **we can see**, besides great advances in technology and knowledge, a sad regression in the representation of minorities and respect for differences. This can be noticed in the advertising industry: how many television commercials show gender or color diversity (**I believe the term** ‘race’ is universal, since we all share the same one) or even people with physical disabilities?” (T6).

[excerpt 3] On the other hand, **I see** that this issue has hierarchical levels to be overcome, the main one being intolerance towards minorities [...] (T9).

[excerpt 4] “[...] **it can be seen that** Brazilian society is mostly heteronormative and racist. That is, any changes to include individuals such as Black people and members of the LGBTQ+ community in advertisements and advertising in general are seen as something bad, triggering a series of negative comments about this inclusion” (T6).

The analyzed texts, while attempting to establish a dialogue with the reader—since they are discursively structured by argumentation and, consequently, by the search for the reader’s agreement—also maintain some autonomy from the contextual parameters. As a result, there is a certain distance between the writer and the reader, which is why the text is classified as a theoretical-interactive discourse. In excerpt 5, we observe this discursive mix: while the writer places themselves explicitly in the text (“in my view”), a feature of interactive discourse, they also use an autonomous discourse, presenting the thematic content independently of the language action.

[excerpt 5] **In my view**, a country that has the positivist ideal “Order and Progress” on its flag should make progress regarding media diversity. [...] **Moreover, people forget** the importance of representation for minorities. For a Black child, being represented on television opens doors for them to recognize their identity and see their beauty as unique, outside the aesthetic standards imposed by society. For someone discovering their sexuality, it is essential to understand that it is okay if two men want to have a relationship, because “love is love,” regardless of gender (T2).

In Table 4, a summary of the discursive skills required for writing an opinion article as a university entrance exam essay is presented, based on the analyses carried out with the research corpus.

Table 4 – Description of the discursive skills

DISCURSIVE SKILLS
a) The candidate should know that the opinion article, as a university entrance exam essay used by the exam board, is based on the social reference genre “journalistic opinion article.”
b) When composing the text, the candidate must keep in mind the objectives and rules of the essay exam. It is necessary to present a title that attracts the reader’s attention and is coherent with the text, using different discursive strategies, such as the thematic focus or even the controversial issue itself. In addition, the text must be written in standard Portuguese, and the candidate cannot stray from the topic, since this is one of the grading requirements.
c) The candidate must not leave any personal identification marks, as the text is part of a blind evaluation process.
d) To write their text, the candidate needs to master the discursive strategies of the mixed interactive-theoretical discourse. They must interact with the reader, maintaining some interactivity to defend a point of view, but at the same time present the thematic content independently, especially to support their thesis with theoretical foundations.
e) To effectively defend a point of view, the candidate must know how to plan the typical stages of an argumentative sequence: premise, arguments/counterarguments, conclusion/thesis.
f) It is also necessary to plan the text within the page limit required by the exam (15 to 30 lines). Due to this restriction, candidates usually structure their texts in four paragraphs: 1) introduction (context and premise); 2) development (argument 1); 3) development (argument 2); and 4) conclusion (thesis, reinforcement, or expansion of the premise).

Source: The authors.

Regarding *linguistic-discursive skills*, we analyzed the textualization and enunciative mechanisms. Concerning *cohesion*, the first subset of textualization mechanisms, this category works as an organizer of the overall text plan, the types of discourse, and the sentences in a sequence. In the analyzed examples, we observed that, in general, candidates use various ways to connect their ideas with the help of connectors, especially logical connectors, since the sequence that structures the text, as we saw, is argumentative. Recurring types of connectors include: explanation, conclusion of reasoning, contrast of ideas, condition (e.g., *because, if, in addition, although, finally, in the end, therefore, and, consequently, since, moreover, however, given that, in this way*).

Nominal cohesion aims to introduce topics and ensure reference and textual progression. In general, the writer uses strategies to refer back to discourse objects already mentioned in the text, coherently, according to their argumentative goals. In this genre, the most important anaphoric chains are introduced by textual references related to the main theme of the essay, which are usually composed of abstract discourse objects (*such as advertising, racial diversity, etc.*). Therefore, besides mastering the use of pronominal anaphoras (*he, she, it, him, her, his, hers, etc.*), the candidate needs to have a good lexical repertoire to refer back to a reference, replacing it, according to their argumentative line, with: periphrasis, hyponym/hypernym, synonym, metaphor, nominalization, etc. In this genre, textual reference should not be seen simply as a strategy to “avoid repeating terms.” It is one of the discursive tools for “value manipulation” of the thematic content. This is the case in the example presented in Table 5 (essay T1), in which the candidate uses several strategies to refer back to terms already introduced in the text (*the research “everyone,” the Black, Indigenous, LGBT communities, and others, and advertising campaigns*).

Table 5 – Analysis of nominal cohesion

Title: Advertising Hand in Hand with Diversity		
Introduction <i><u>THE RESEARCH “TODXS”</u> is responsible for analyzing representation in Brazilian advertising. <u>IT</u> revealed that, although there has been significant</i>	Development <i>First of all, it is crucial that gender and racial diversity be addressed because Brazil is one of the most heterogeneous countries in the world. In other words, it makes no sense to exclude <u>ENTIRE GROUPS</u> from TV advertisements when we all know how present <u>THEY</u> are in</i>	Conclusion <i>Therefore, <u>[ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS]</u> should show racial and gender diversity in <u>[THEIR]</u> commercials. They help not only to show the reality of the country, but also to value and respect different</i>

<p>progress in commercials, brands still do not address the true racial and gender diversity. <u>The neglect of BLACK, INDIGENOUS, LGBT, AND OTHER COMMUNITIES</u> in advertising campaigns is a nationwide issue. After all, if <u>THESE GROUPS</u> are not represented, they suffer not only psychologically but also physically from prejudice.</p>	<p>contemporary society. Moreover, it is very important for the psychological development of <u>THESE COMMUNITIES</u> that they see themselves represented. In this way, <u>THEIR</u> history, culture, and struggle for inclusion are more widely recognized and valued by others and by <u>THEMSELVES</u>. By not hiding diversity and by supporting their fight, we are indirectly promoting respect, equity, and compassion.</p> <p>In addition, the representation of races and genders is a social commitment in <u>[ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS]</u> because it helps the safety of <u>THESE GROUPS</u>. Through <u>[THESE]</u> campaigns – but not only through <u>[THEM]</u> – our society starts to understand that, regardless of skin color or sexual orientation, we are all people. As people, we should all be protected to achieve equality. However, <u>BLACK PEOPLE, MEMBERS OF THE LGBT COMMUNITY, AND OTHERS</u> have been in dangerous situations for centuries. <u>THEIR</u> exclusion from programs only makes them seem less “worthy” of help to overcome vulnerability.</p>	<p>cultures and struggles. As a result, <u>[THEY]</u> help <u>VULNERABLE GROUPS</u> receive more support for their safety. It is also a social responsibility of brands to reduce prejudice and racism so that equality for <u>EVERYONE</u> can be achieved.</p>
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Source: The authors, based on T1.

Verbal cohesion ensures, according to Bronckart (2003), the temporal organization of events. Because this is a genre of the exposition type, the anchoring time that guides verbal cohesion in the main discourse is always the moment of production. Thus, the writer uses the present tense to establish relationships of simultaneity with the moment of writing. However, as we can see in the analyzed essays, there are cases in which the candidate uses the past tense to express an anteriority in relation to the moment of production, and also, in some cases, verbs in the future tense to express a posteriority to the present of writing. Clearly, due to the argumentative nature of the text, the present indicative is the most frequently used.

Enunciative mechanisms contribute “to clarifying the enunciative positioning [...] and reflect the various evaluations [...] about some aspects of the thematic content” (Bronckart, 2003, p. 130). They include two elements: enunciative voices and modalizations. Regarding enunciative voices, Bronckart (2003) divides them into: social voices, character voices, and the author’s voice. The author’s voice is related to the person producing the text; social voices refer to institutions or people outside the thematic content of the text; and character voices refer to people or institutions directly involved as agents in the text.

We observed that *the author’s voice* frequently appears in the analyzed texts through the use of either the first person singular or plural. This gives the text, as we have seen, an interactive perspective, since the writer positions themselves discursively, as in the example in excerpt 8:

[excerpt 8] “From observing the changes that have occurred in our society nowadays, **we can see**, besides great advances in technology and knowledge, a sad regression in the representation of minorities and respect for differences. This can be noticed in the advertising industry: how many television commercials portray gender and color diversity (**I believe the term ‘race’ is universal, since we all share the same one) or even people with physical disabilities?**” (T6).

Because it is an argumentative text, it is common in the opinion article as a university entrance exam essay to use social voices to support the defense of a point of view. In essay T2, for example, the candidate invokes a social voice representing Brazilian nationality—the national flag—to give credibility to their argumentation: “In my view, a country that has the positivist ideal ‘Order and Progress’ on its flag should make progress regarding media diversity” (T2).

We also observed that it is common for candidates to use character voices as an argumentative resource, that is, as authoritative voices, through indirect citations. It is typical of the genre to invoke the voices of philosophers, sociologists, and major writers, probably studied during high school or in preparatory courses, as shown in excerpt 9.

[excerpt 9] “According to Durkheim, the sociologist who developed the theory of social facts, this narrative of integration in advertisements and the media would represent a threat to society, since in a heteronormative environment inclusive actions would be seen as an affront. However, their inclusion would act as a break in the vicious cycle of segregation and stigma, because the individual would not only feel represented but also part of that environment” (T6).

Regarding modalizations, Bronckart (2003) categorizes them into four groups: logical, deontic, appreciative, and pragmatic. Logical modalizations consist of “judgments about the truth value of the propositions stated, which are presented as certain, possible, probable, improbable, etc.” (Bronckart, 2003, p. 132). It is common for candidates to use logical modalizers to support their argumentative discourse. In excerpt 10, for example, the writer uses a logical modalizer (“it is evident”) to give veracity to the argumentation.

Deontic modalizations, in turn, evaluate certain elements of the thematic content by presenting them as socially permitted, forbidden, necessary, desirable, etc. These are generally used by candidates in the conclusion phase to suggest some kind of “solution” to the addressed issue, as required by the ENEM essay (see excerpt 11). A recurring deontic modalizer in the investigated genre is the auxiliary verb “should.” In the analyzed corpus, it is used to express the social obligation to do something important for minorities. As an example, we present fragment 12.

[excerpt 10] “From this perspective, it is evident that since the time of world colonizations, the white man and Eurocentrism have always been models to be followed, given that white people were characterized as the ‘superior race’” (T5).

[excerto 11] “Thus, it is necessary that the breaking of stereotypes and prejudices be effective, so that, subsequently, the representation of genders and races becomes frequent in an equitable way, ensuring that advertising campaigns fulfill their social commitment to breaking standards” (T5).

[excerto 12] “Therefore, advertising campaigns should indeed show racial and gender diversity in their commercials. They help not only to reflect the reality of the country but also to value and respect different cultures and struggles. Consequently, they contribute to ensuring that the most vulnerable groups receive more support for their safety. It is also a social responsibility of brands to help reduce prejudice and racism so that equality for all can be achieved” (T1).

According to Bronckart (2003, p. 132), *appreciative modalizations* “show a more subjective judgment. They present the enunciative facts as good, bad, or strange, from the point of view of the evaluating instance.” However, these modalizations are infrequent in our *corpus*.

In Table 6, a summary of the linguistic-discursive capacities required for the production of the opinion article as an entrance exam essay is presented. This summary is the result of analyses based on the samples analyzed from the UENP 2020 entrance exam.

Table 6 – Description of the linguistic-discursive capacities

LINGUISTIC-DISCURSIVE CAPACITIES	
a)	To produce an opinion article as an entrance exam essay, the candidate must use standard Portuguese, since they are taking part in an evaluative process.
b)	Regarding connection, the candidate needs to know the function, especially, of logical connectors, which express relations such as explanation, conclusion of reasoning, contrast of ideas, and condition (<i>because, if, in addition, although, in the end, therefore, and, consequently, since, moreover, however, given that, in this way...</i>). When well used, these connectors help the argumentative process of the text.
c)	With regard to <i>nominal cohesion</i> , the candidate must master different strategies to introduce discourse objects and to refer back to them throughout the text in a coherent manner, according to their argumentative objectives. In this genre, the most expressive anaphoric chain(s) are introduced by textual referents related to the main theme of the essay, which are usually composed of abstract discourse objects (<i>advertising, racial diversity, etc.</i>). Therefore, in addition to mastering the use of pronominal anaphora (<i>he, she, it, him, her, his, etc.</i>), the candidate needs a solid lexical repertoire to resume the referent by replacing it, in line with their argumentative stance, through paraphrase, hyponym or hyperonym, synonym, metaphor, nominalization, and others. In this genre, textual reference should

not be understood in a simplistic way as merely a strategy of “non-repetition of terms.” Rather, it is one of the discursive tools for the “evaluative manipulation” of thematic content.

- d) Regarding *verbal cohesion*, since this is an expository genre, the candidate needs to understand that temporal anchoring is always the moment of production. Thus, they should use the present tense to establish relations that occur simultaneously with this moment of writing; use the past tense to express anteriority in relation to this moment of production; and use the future tense to express a relation of posteriority with respect to the present moment of writing. Evidently, due to the nature of argumentative texts, the present indicative tense is the one most frequently employed.
- e) With regard to *enunciative voices*, the candidate should preferably allow the author’s voice to appear through the use of the first grammatical person (singular or plural – the “majestic we”), since the objective is to defend a personal point of view, although this does not always occur (influence of school essays and the ENEM writing exam). It should be clear that social voices (from entities, institutions, etc.) and voices of characters (usually philosophers, sociologists, and writers studied in high school) should be mobilized to support the ongoing argumentation as voices of authority, and never merely as a way to impress the evaluators.
- f) With regard to *modalizations*, the candidate must master enunciative strategies to modalize their discourse and achieve their argumentative objectives. In this genre, logical modalization is normally used to convey the truthfulness of the propositions presented (*it is clear, it is crucial...*). Deontic modalization is generally employed to express the social necessity of “solving” the problems raised (*it is necessary, it is required, must, may...*). Appreciative modalization is not frequently used in this genre. The candidate should be aware that adverbs of manner, such as *fortunately* or *unfortunately*, reveal the subjective evaluation of the discourse object and may not be well received by the evaluators.

Source: The authors.

Based on the results of the analysis, we can observe the complexity of the theoretical modeling presented. This can provide a foundation for the development of different teaching models and, consequently, of different teaching sequences.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article aimed to present the results of a study focused on the theoretical modeling of the opinion article as a university entrance exam essay, based on the analysis of written productions by candidates from the State University of Northern Paraná (UENP). Grounded in Sociodiscursive Interactionism, the research sought to understand how this genre functions in a specific context of written assessment, marked by the tension between the real context of the university entrance exam and the virtual context of the opinion article circulating in the journalistic sphere.

The analyses demonstrate that the opinion article, when used as an assessment tool, is a discursively complex genre, whose production requires the candidate to mobilize different skills in an articulated manner. In terms of action skills, there is a need to manage simultaneously the institutional objectives of the exam and the communicative purposes of the reference genre, assuming a dual enunciative role: that of a university entrance exam candidate and that of a newspaper columnist. In terms of discursive skills, there is a predominance of a mixed interactive-theoretical discourse, as well as the recurrence of a planned argumentative sequence, generally structured in an introduction, two arguments, and a conclusion, conditioned by the formal restrictions imposed by the exam. In terms of linguistic-discursive skills, the strategic use of logical connectors, the construction of dense and value-oriented anaphoric chains, and the recurring use of logical and deontic modalizations to support the defense of a point of view stand out.

These results allow us to question teaching practices that treat the opinion article only as a stabilized school genre, disregarding the specificities it assumes in evaluative contexts. At the same time, they align directly with the guidelines of the BNCC, which emphasizes the development of argumentation, authorship, and the critical participation of students in social language practices, especially in high school. The BNCC highlights the importance of students being able to take a stance on socially relevant issues, using consistent arguments and discursive strategies appropriate to different fields of action—requirements that are central to producing an opinion article as a university entrance exam essay.

In this sense, the results of this study reinforce the need for schools and preparatory courses to promote pedagogical practices that make students aware of the hybrid nature of this genre, highlighting both its function as a social reference object and its particularities as an evaluative genre. The theoretical modeling presented, by systematically describing the contextual, discursive, and linguistic-discursive dimensions of the genre, can support the development of teaching models and instructional sequences aligned with the BNCC, contributing to the teaching of argumentative writing that fosters more conscious, authorial, and contextually situated textual production.

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