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Interactive Symposium How Voices Make I-Positions – An Exercise in Collective

Investigation (Livia Simão, Convener)

Analysis of the text “The guerrillero” written by Albalucía Angel

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This exercise is not only devoted to run an analysis of this excerpt in terms of its dialogicality, since I also aim to give some steps forward in terms of the creation of a procedure that could be replicated by other research teams. The intention, of course, is not to proclaim that this is the way of making a dialogical analysis of a text; there always will be different possibilities of analysis of a text – of any phenomena – and its “fitness” will always depend in the articulation and mutual definition of mutual components, such as the purposes of the research, the kind of theoretical background and basic axioms (see Branco & Valsiner). As such, each method carries its own possibilities and constraints.

This method intends to:

- facilitate the establishment of units of analysis and to demonstrate the replicability of its application
- to establish some possible elements of a dialogical analysis of such units.

Note that I do not endorse the idea that replicable methods are better designed or that they are better suited to give us “objective knowledge”. Replication only means to build a set of procedures or rules that lead to some kind of consensus. A consensus, by its turn, tends to be a movement of maintaining a given state, tends to conservation and not innovation . Moreover, in the way I conceive it, “objectivity” is something achieved through the coordination of at least two human agents that intersubjectively create some joint action around an object of knowledge.

Why then this worry about replication?

First of all, because the search for consensual practices is, in itself, a dialogical endeavor. It feeds debate, movements of back and forth, discussion. As such, it dwells within the search of innovation. Secondly, some consensus may be needed as a ground to develop further some specific perspectives. Indeed, if a specific researcher runs a specific form of analysis that cannot be shared at all with others, if it is not replicable, somehow, by someone else, then we would be dealing with some idiosyncrasy with little value to our psychological knowledge. On the contrary, if we are able to develop some basic forms of coordinating our research efforts, we will compromise variety, some stability of the field may be achieved, and allowing new experiments and even innovations based on that (apparently) more solid ground. And finally, consensus does not preclude acceptance of other forms of consensual activity, even if divergent from the one we are using. Thus, the creation of this kind of methods should not be taken as precluding other forms of analysis.

I should add, however, one thing that must always be clear. This kind of analysis is only viable within its specific theoretical and epistemic constraints, as established by Branco & Valsiner. Therefore, I hardly see any possible way of taking this method as a “prêt-a-porter” tool to apply to any theoretical domain of social sciences.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge that this sort of analysis has been inspired in previous works that paved the way to this sort of possibility (see Cunha, 2007, 2008), as well in discussions of our work group of discussion (Grupo de Estudos em Dialógica e Identidade – GEDI/ISMAI). Finally, my students have proven to be an invaluable resource for some of the last steps.

Procedures of analysis

1. Looking for what?

One of the first problems we must come to terms with whenever starting some form of analysis of a given phenomena is – what we should observe? In categorization, even if performed in a loose way, we need to establish boundaries and contrasts. To state “this is...” we also need to contrast with something else. Thus, we may start to ask: what should I observe in this? To perform such action, first we need some background theory and axioms. Given my dialogical background and the main principles of dialogism I have advocating (Salgado & Gonçalves, 2007; Salgado & Valsiner, in press), there are some constraints in the possibilities and, at this moment, I am able to identify the following:

- we need to identify agents and addressees and their respective relational movement about a specific matter or object
- moreover, since we are dealing with agents, it is important to identify not only the content of the discourse but also the purposes and intentions of the speaker/agent involved

Thus, this is first task I am trying to deal with: to find a way of observing agents, addressees and their mutual patterns of relation along time, while dealing with some segment of the

world (an object, some task). Thus, the following elements will be analyzed throughout the text:

- Who is speaking/acting?
- To whom is the person(s) speaking/acting?
- What is being said/done?
- How is this said/done this way?
- Why is it said/done?
- Where does this take place?

Taking these elements into account, the definition of what is going on takes the following shape:

I (narrator) telling Felicidad Mosquera (to whom) the dangers she is facing (what), in an almost threatening way (how) in order to let warn her (why), in a undetermined location, but invoking south American guerrillas (where).

Two cautious notes about this:

a) I am not claiming that this is the only way of performing an analysis coherent with dialogical principles – but I admit that I have difficulties in understanding how could we do such an analysis without, at least, the notion of one addressed other.

b) These movements do not take place in the social vacuum and, therefore, to identify and analyze what is going on, one should be at least partially familiar with the overall context involved in the situation

In the analysis I am referring, I do not deal explicitly with this overall socio-cultural context. I take it for granted that the researcher has a grasp of what is the relevant material involved – something that, of course, is not always the case and may result in a blind spot to this form of analysis.

2. Looking where? Unitizing

The next step is to establish some sort of unit of analysis. In the previous section I present what we should try to capture. However, those elements of analysis do not establish exactly where exactly should we start or stop the identification of the elements. For example, in this text, the audience or addressee remains almost the same, while the tone and content is constantly changing.

There is no absolute answer to this question, but since I am interested in microanalysis of the moment-by-moment movements that are taking place, the choice has been the notion of “utterance” (see Bakhtin; Leiman).

The notion of utterance is consensually paramount in Bakhtin’s work, and, as such, it seems a logical and admissible unit of analysis within a dialogically-grounded work:

“Because he [Bakhtin] is concerned with how different embodied beings interact and not just with the relations between words and concepts, Bakhtin takes actual spoken utterances rather than grammatically well-formed sentences as his basic linguistic unit.” (Shotter, 1993, p. 381)

However, there are also resistances to use the notion of utterance as the basic unit of analysis (see Leiman, 2002, who advocates that Bakhtin took utterances simultaneously as the main unit of analysis and the subject of study, therefore creating a conceptual difficulty.)

Thus, taking utterance as the unit, it also implies to define what a utterance exactly is and how we define their contours. In order to perform this task of “unitizing” the text, I have created and followed an adaptation to Portuguese (which has a very similar structure to the Spanish language) of Clara Hill’s procedures of unitizing transcripts of interviews, inspired in the original work from Auld and White (quoted by Hill). That procedure does not use the notion of utterance, but the one of “response units” that are generally equivalent to what I intend.

Note: I preferred to use this procedure since (1) I am trying to develop a method suitable for Portuguese language and grammar; (2) the original text in Spanish is closer to the Portuguese than the English translation; (3) I was willing to perform an analysis of the original text in order to create an additional element of comparison between the different “procedures” the several participants in the interactive symposium were using (the translation, even if it is rather close to the original meanings expressed loses some potentialities, and I wondered if it would make a difference).

Generally, this procedure establishes that a response unit is a grammatical sentence or, in more complex grammatical cases, independent or main clauses. Thus, I divided the general text in accordance with this set of criteria.

This procedure may be analyzed by different judges and a reliability index of the process may be obtained (see Hill), something that can be useful to those interested in supporting their empirical findings in a more consensually-based way or that want to acceptability of the analysis by their scientific communities...

3. Applying the elements of analysis to the units

The following step was to establish, for each of the units, the described elements established before, trying to capture that in the form of a sentence. Whenever possible, the same terminology will remain from unit to unit.

This procedure may also be performed in a discussion between pairs or groups or an auditing process (e.g. using the consensual qualitative procedures, Hill, Thompson, & Nutt-Williams, 1997), something that some researchers like to entertain as a “more valid procedure” than individual analysis... It is far beyond the scope of this exercise to fully discuss what kinds of constraints (or “biases” in the objectivist tradition) are implicit in such form of thinking, but those tools may be important to circumvent some traditional difficulties and suspicions created around qualitative methodologies.

4. Hierarchy and organization of the units

Inspired by the procedures of establishing codification of data generally applied in grounded theory analysis (DTA), each of the units was systematically compared with all others, looking for similarities and differences. Following this procedure, I identified emergent categories. However, in contrast with DTA, these categories were also created taking into account a unit of I/Other/Object; by other words, each category was based in a dialogical relationship between an agent and an addressee around a specific topic. Then, these initial dialogical categories were grouped into more abstract or higher-order categories, based on their commonalities, producing a hierarchy of units I/Other/Object.

The analysis

The spanish version of text was divided in 79 units of analysis and each of the units was described with the parameters described before: who, to whom, what, how, and why. Generally, the narrator stands as the author of all these units (who). To whom, generally is Felicidad Mosquera. In a later stage of the text, it becomes obvious that the author and the addressee are the same; this is a dialogical monologue, in which the narrator moves from position to position addressing, judging and even changing her own fears of the future and her own memories of the past. Thus, generally, the “who” will be coded as the “narrator” and to whom “Felicidad Mosquera”.

These 79 units of response were then aggregated in the following categories. Each category can understood as an I-position, composed by the triad I/Other/Object:

1. The narrator warning Felicidad Mosquera (FM) of the danger (I as warning)
 - 1.1. The narrator (N) describing FM “them” as an unavoidable and terrible threaten
 - 1.2. N describing what they’ll do to her (FM)
 - 1.3. N describing FM’s fate as a fatality

2. N reproaching FM, contrasting what she did in the past and what she might have done (I as reproaching)
 - 2.1 N telling FM what she might have done
 - 2.1.1. Running way with him
 - 2.1.2. Refusing to help him
 - 2.2. N describing what would not be happening if she had done differently
 - 2.3. N showing FM what would be happening if she had done differently
 - 2.4. N regretting and reproaching FM about what she did in the past
 - 2.4.1. Regretting

2.4.2. Recriminating and cursing

2.5. Manifesting to FM inability to understand her

3. N recalling FM the story with him (I as the narrator of the love story)
 - 3.1. N recalling her of how she helped him when he was injured
 - 3.2. N affirming FM as enamored of him
 - 3.3. N recalling his courtship
 - 3.4 N recalling their meeting on the river bank

4. N blaming on her inability to read properly the situation (I judging her as not if herself)
 - 4.1. N describing FM as blind
 - 4.2. N affirming FM “possessed” by a different identity (“you were not you”)
 - 4.2.1. “how you were” before (implying that “you were no longer that way”)
 - 4.2.2. FM as different, upside-down, changing quickly
 - 4.3. FM possessed by something external and threatening

5. N accepting FM’s love story (stating to FM that only god and herself can judge and understand what happened between them) (I as accepting the passion)

6. N encouraging FM to surpass her fear and to accept her fate (I as encouraging)

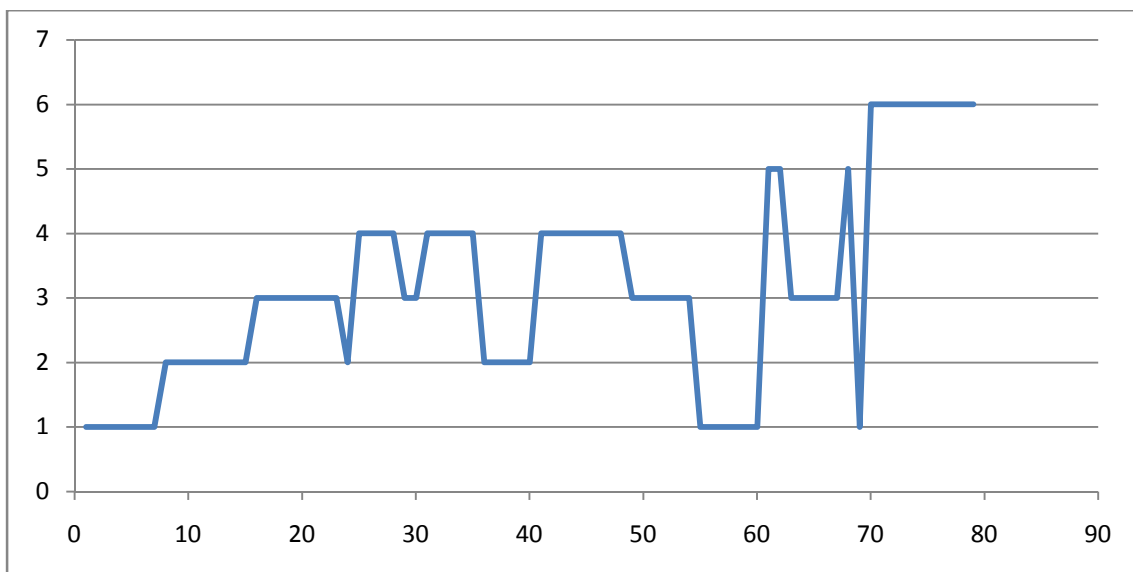
The sequence of these positions is described in the following table (only including the main categories or positions):

Sequence	type of position
1	I as warning (1)
2	I as warning (1)
3	I as warning (1)
4	I as warning (1)
5	I as warning (1)
6	I as warning (1)
7	I as warning (1)
8	I as reproaching (2)
9	I as reproaching (2)
10	I as reproaching (2)
11	I as reproaching (2)
12	I as reproaching (2)
13	I as reproaching (2)
14	I as reproaching (2)
15	I as reproaching (2)
16	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
17	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
18	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
19	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
20	I as the narrator of the love story (3)

21	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
22	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
23	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
24	I as reproaching (2)
25	I judging her as not in herself (4)
26	I judging her as not in herself (4)
27	I judging her as not in herself (4)
28	I judging her as not in herself (4)
29	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
30	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
31	I judging her as not in herself (4)
32	I judging her as not in herself (4)
33	I judging her as not in herself (4)
34	I judging her as not in herself (4)
35	I judging her as not in herself (4)
36	I as reproaching (2)
37	I as reproaching (2)
38	I as reproaching (2)
39	I as reproaching (2)
40	I as reproaching (2)
41	I judging her as not in herself (4)
42	I judging her as not in herself (4)
43	I judging her as not in herself (4)
44	I judging her as not in herself (4)
45	I judging her as not in herself (4)
46	I judging her as not in herself (4)
47	I judging her as not in herself (4)
48	I judging her as not in herself (4)
49	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
50	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
51	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
52	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
53	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
54	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
55	I as warning (1)
56	I as warning (1)
57	I as warning (1)
58	I as warning (1)
59	I as warning (1)
60	I as warning (1)
61	I as accepting the passion (5)
62	I as accepting the passion (5)
63	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
64	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
65	I as the narrator of the love story (3)

66	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
67	I as the narrator of the love story (3)
68	I as accepting the passion (5)
69	I as warning (1)
70	I as encouraging (6)
71	I as encouraging (6)
72	I as encouraging (6)
73	I as encouraging (6)
74	I as encouraging (6)
75	I as encouraging (6)
76	I as encouraging (6)
77	I as encouraging (6)
78	I as encouraging (6)
79	I as encouraging (6)

The development throughout time of these several positions can also be described in the following graphic:



Thus, the overall movement can be described as follows:

- a) Initially emerges a voice warning Felicidad Mosquera of the several dangers she will need to face, so overwhelming that she will be powerless to face them (position 1).
- b) This position feeds a critical voice that starts to regret past choices and imagine different futures (position 2)
- c) This critical voice starts a cycle in which recursively the position of storyteller emerges (with some important variations in itself – position 3 with several subpositions) and the narrator starts to assume that Felicidad Mosquera “was not in herself” (position 4 with several subpositions). We assist to a recursive cycle between 2-3-4. Different parts of the story feed also different responses, but the exploration of how Felicidad Mosquera was moved and

transformed by his touch – still appreciated as a kind of “possession”, something external or a madness which dissociated that woman from her regular detached and firm way of being – seems to suddenly precipitate a rupture or brusque change. Indeed, the strengthening of the position describing Felicidad Mosquera as “upside-down”, almost mad, possessed or dissociated, brought to the foreground the position of the narrator of Felicidad Mosquera as deeply in love. Thus, here, it seems that a change takes place. She returns to the first position: they will come, they will kill you. But immediately she jumps to a completely different position, in which she declares the complete acceptance of the passion and, for a moment, it seems to address God as the only possible judge of what happened. Here, we have the emergence of a new completely different position (the position 5) in which she finally accepts the passionate love, while describing the meeting on the river banks. Here, the storyteller is no longer a simple storyteller, since she starts to describe what only God and Felicidad Mosquera were able to know: how she felt while making love to him. Here, she is disclosing also her identity she is, after all, Felicidad Mosquera, and finally the inner division stops. She accepts and surrenders to the experience of being in love. Thus, returning to the problem at hands – position 1 – she becomes able of finding a new future – and an encouraging voice (position 6) is heard, setting the ground to a fearless position and acceptance of her own fate and death.

Thus, this rich literary text is a rich ground for the analysis of emergence of different voices. Moreover, it also describes two points that should take in serious consideration:

- First, the inner space or inner monologues are spaces of alterity. This means that the discontinuity between the agent and the addressee is vital to create the space of dialogical negotiation that may bring some novelty to the situation.
- Secondly, some positions may act as ways of rejecting experiences of the self, that become criticized or even unarticulated, creating a feeling of inner division within the self (the point in which the text starts)
- Third, the full articulation of the dialogical dynamics may act as a catalyst of change, creating some kind of rupture to which one may try to deal in a different way than the simple avoidance or defensive maneuvers.