

LETTERS IN A COMMUNITY ORGANISATION: A CASE OF POWERFUL LITERACY*

(Cartas em uma Organização Comunitária:
Um Caso de Letramento Poderoso)

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RESUMO: Neste trabalho examino o discurso em cinco cartas escritas por membros executivos de uma associação de moradores na cidade de Brasília, por meio da integração entre a Análise de Discurso Crítica e os Novos Estudos do Letramento. Essas cartas fizeram parte de uma campanha da associação para impedir que estudantes de uma faculdade próxima estacionassem seus carros na rua residencial, uma vez que o excesso de veículos estacionados tornava difícil o fluxo de veículos. O argumento é que os recursos discursivos e semióticos utilizados nas cartas são eficazes na satisfação dos objetivos comunitários.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Discurso; Letramento; Poder; Comunidade.

ABSTRACT: In this paper I examine discourse in five letters written by executive members of a resident's association in the city of Brasília, by integrating Critical Discourse Analysis and the New Literacy Studies. These letters were part of a campaign from the association to prevent students of a nearby college from parking their car in the residential street, since the overload of parked cars made difficult the flow of vehicles. A case is made on the efficacy of the discursive and semiotic resources drawn on the letters to have community aims met.

KEY-WORDS: Discourse; Literacy; Power; Community.

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Introduction

In this paper I examine discourse in letters written by executive members of a resident's association in the city of Brasilia, using some of the constructs in the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1992; 1995; Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999) and also referring to the concept of literacy as in the New Literacy Studies (Street 1995; Baynham 1995; Barton & Hamilton 2000), which I summarize here as concrete sociocultural acts that are constituted by at least one of the following activities – writing, reading and talking around/about written text.

Letters figure as a written genre that takes part in a myriad of events in social life, and are one of the earliest forms of writing in human history (Barton & Hall 2000). The letters being analysed here circulated in the community in the first semester of 1997. They are part of a single conjuncture (a set of events) related to a specific problem solving in this particular community.

The association and the community

Studies on discourse in organisations have recently been done in the course of development of research on Language in Social Life (Sarangi & Slembrouck 1996; Wodak & Iedema 1999). Under the heading of organisation it is possible to come across different natures of organisations, yet two main types could be traced – community organisations and more complex ones, official or not, which deal with the task of imparting rules to citizens and maintaining their effects, implicitly or not. This classification can be seen in terms of the dichotomies posited by social theorists as Gramsci ('civil and political society'), Habermas ('lifeworld and systems') and Bourdieu ('field of class struggle and field of power')¹.

Drawing upon these two types of organisations I consider this particular residents' association as belonging to the space of community organisations. I define these as entities created by citizens who share a determined social place (such as neighbourhood, workplace, youth or middle age and so on) with aims towards improvements of any sort for the particular group. This

¹ See Chouliaraki & Fairclough (1999) for a full discussion on this.

residents' association (commonly called 'the mayoralty', and its leader is referred to as 'mayor') represents the households of a residential quarter in *Plano Piloto*², the main area of the city of Brasilia, inhabited mostly by federal and district public servants.

During the time I was doing the pilot study fieldwork – June and July of 1999 – I observed a remarkable amount of written materials, some made by the association – signposts, letters received and produced, invitations, leaflets – others by the local government – traffic signs and public notices – and a third type related to the local shops³. I also had the opportunity to talk to some association directors and to join a religious group, whose members met regularly in the association house. In addition, I had authorised access to several documents written by the association staff and took photographs of other written materials around the community. The letters analysed here are part of these documents.

In respect with schooling, the higher socio-economic level of households in *Plano Piloto* accounts for their high rate of schooled literacy. As a mainstream city in the country, in which people from different social backgrounds somehow associate with each other, writing exists in many contexts, ranging from domains such as home and community to more complex ones such as the bureaucracy of the executive, the judiciary and the parliament.

Critical Discourse Analysis

I adopted the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis to interpret the role of linguistic and textual categories in/between the texts and explain these against the backdrop of social resources that the letters entail. Importantly, an account of the hybridity of genres, discourses and styles is made to explore the social and discursive changes that were taking place in this particular organisation at the time of the letter writing

² To protect participants' identity and to preserve the way residential quarters are named in Brasilia I refer to this one through the fictitious '56 residential quarter'.

³ In addition, there was an informal commerce of homemade goods such as biscuits, sweets and jellies, which was supported by the association and utilised a mobile shelter given by a local enterprise, with its logo and slogan.

activities. Critical Discourse Analysis, as we will see below, is a much broader theoretical and methodological tool, and in this work I will loosely draw on some parts of it.

‘Critical Discourse Analysis’ has been very much associated to Fairclough’s work. In fact this author is for long concerned to help establish a framework in Sociolinguistics which go further in explaining how there is a connection between power relations and language resources drawn upon by people in institutions or as individuals representing social groups (Fairclough 1985, 1989). Within the approach by Fairclough the theoretical framework has undergone much change as we can see in the updated epistemological grounding of CDA in *Discourse in Late Modernity* (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999). In this book CDA is concerned with the study of objective social relations and structures and at the same time is an object of study which can be taken up within the actual researched practices by the participants to construct new relations and, in the longer term, new structures. CDA aims to reflect on contemporary social change, in large-scale global changes, and the possibility of emancipatory practices over ‘ideologically-frozen relations’ (Habermas 1972 in Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999) and structures. Establishing such a broad area of application means that CDA is as much an open theory as a method, which can be drawn on to suit a diverse range of practices in Social Life. In addition, the authors propose that CDA complements and extends Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday 1994), which in its turn presents a multifunctional (or multimeaning) view of language, namely the ideational (the social processes and their circumstances), the interpersonal (participants) and textual (lexicogrammar, modality, thematic structure, cohesion and coherence) functions/meanings. According to Halliday, the ideational and interpersonal meanings are realized through the resources within the textual function.

In the updated analytic framework of CDA (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999) discourse – in the sense of language in use – (which includes language and semiotics and is composed of genres, discourses and voices⁴) is better

⁴ Following the authors, genres are the “sort of language according to the type of activity”, discourses the “sort of language used to construct some aspect of reality from a particular perspective” and voice “the sort of language used by a particular category of people and closely linked to their identity” (p. 63).

conceptualised as an element of social practices (Harvey 1996), which articulates in complex ways with the other elements – material activity, social relations and processes, and mental phenomena. Within a social practice, discourse is both, part of the activity or the reflexive construction (discursive representation) of the practice.

Firstly, at the level of practice, discourse internalises (contains) and is internalised (is contained) by the other elements without being reducible to them, and vice-versa. This irreducibility is due to the fact that each element of a social practice is a particular mechanism (a ‘generative power’, cf. Bhaskar 1986) brought together into a specific practice in a way that there are no pre-determined effects from one upon the others. Discourse contains features of the other elements and these may occur discursively. For instance, a caress can be realised with or without words, but may contain a laugh, which either figures in as a material action and as a semiotic gesture (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999: 51), besides the characteristic of desire (mental phenomena) and interpersonal relation.

At the level of element, the complex articulation between discourse and the other elements of social practice is reflected by the resources within discourse – genres, discourses and voices – which, from historic perspective, correspondingly articulate themselves into relative permanencies and can be transformed. That is to say, texts (originally spoken language or not) encode discourses through selections of language features (styles, voices), and they function in accordance with the purposes of the activity taking place, which configure them as genres. When a discursive activity is started and unfolded in time, each of these discursive resources is realized. They can be combined in more stabilized ways, if the activity is simple and highly imposed (a compulsory filling-in-form activity, for instance). Or they can be articulated in more creative ways depending on the complexity and informality of the activity. In this sense it is significant to think how are the present discourses connected to the genres and voices or styles; what effects can obtain from these connections; how did configurations of these resources use to be in the past in different contexts and how it is in this particular instance. All these questions point to processes of discursive change going alongside sociocultural change (Fairclough 1992). Textually, changes work through the concepts of ‘intertextuality’ and ‘orders of discourse’ (cf.: Fairclough 2000). Intertextuality refers to shifting articulations of genres, discourses and styles in specific texts; orders of

discourses refer to how these articulations relate to relative permanencies of fields (e.g. economy, culture, politics, education and so on). It is important to note that the expression 'relative permanencies' of fields harmonizes with the idea of shifting articulations between different genres, discourses and styles.

Combining these two levels in relation to social structures, social events within social practices⁵ can be reproductive or creative according to the resources drawn upon. Consequently, discursive resources depend on permanent social resources (structures), yet they can take part in transformation of elements of social practice (action). In the long run, this process ends up in the constitution of social structures. The important thing is that there is a dialectical relation between permanencies and instances, or structure and agency, in the way the discursive element intersects with the other elements; and this process contributes to the reproduction or creation in social practices. It is at this point that social change becomes an issue.

Obviously, in the analysis of the letters below I will not reach this far, since my present account covers the discursive element of this literacy activity and a reconstruction of the practices from the texts. Nevertheless, some speculation can be made on the broader role of community letter writing within social struggles.

The conjuncture of the letters

The letter-writing activity is part of a campaign to avoid students of *FAUD*, a nearby private college, from parking in the street of the 56 residential quarter. The reason is that an overload of cars parked could mean risk of life if a household needs to exit in emergence and the street is barred, according to the third paragraph of text 5 (see all the letters in the appendix).

Each letter is considered as part of a social event and practice that in turn forms a conjuncture altogether, which could be called "The parking

⁵ Events are the concrete instances of interaction, and practices the analytical abstraction from events.

campaign". In addition, the letters are in chronological sequence on the events related to this conjuncture.

In order to solve the problem mentioned above people in the association are faced with some obstacles that need to be surmounted such as getting the attention of the people in the community, of the local authority on Security and the college managers. I will start with the two firsts of these – participation of community people in the actions within the organisation and its influence on local authority, assuming that they are very interconnected, as we see below.

The terms 'community participation' have a useful ambiguity. They mean participation of the people from the community and participation of the community organisation in other networks of practices in society. Community participation and participation of people in the community organisation are so interwoven that cannot be separated. Yet they should be examined distinctively because the former is related to a set of internal and external interactions such as among households, authorities, other organisations and residents from other places, whereas the latter are specifically the internal interactions that make possible community participation. In the present letter-writing activity it is assumed from the first letter that there were preparatory meetings of the association's executive board to decide what actions to take in order to involve people in the community, for instance the arrangement of an assembly to discuss what should be done to restrict the entry of college students. And these activities were followed by others among which there was a solicitation to Local Authorities (text 2), and subsequent letters for people to catch up with what had been going on (texts 3 and 4). Further, it is possible to understand a privilege position for the mayor, who signed half of the letters. Lastly, the work of getting along with the college managers does not seem a significant problem, as it can be seen in the text 5 – the leaflet produced by the college for its students.

The discursive element

I assume discourse as having multiple occurrences other than the texts that will be analysed below. So there are discourse instances such as notices on boards, talk during assembly, writing of minutes and letter

practice of all sorts. In respect with resources that compose discourse, it is possible to identify voices or styles (authority or formal, ordinary people or informal and hybridity between both), genres (letter and its subgenres such as official letter and hybrid features between 'official' and 'community', and advertisement) and discourses (quality of life, which is underpinned by other discourses).

The order of discourse

The social resources drawn upon in the textual processes are the concern in the concept of order of discourse, as we saw above. Basically there are three sources of social structure that pervade in this conjuncture: the local community – in texts 1, 3, and 4; the local government – in text 2; and the education and marketing enterprise – text 5. The way they relate to each other tends to make the local community stand out from the others. There is a strong sense of agency by the association's executive board, since are the people in it that produce the letters, except the text 5, but even in this the advertisement is produced on behalf of the community.

Interdiscursive analysis

Here it matters how these social resources are interactively worked in language and other semiotics, that is, in genres, discourses and styles, as seen above. I will comment on the two firsts in this section and spread the third throughout the next section. The genre that prevails in all the texts is letter, but there are distinct features in each that point to a more complex categorisation in subgenres of letter. In this sense texts 1 and 3 below have a public and non-official characteristic, although text 3, and particularly text 4, carries the voice of official letters, as it can be seen in the analysis below. Text 4 can be classified as 'quasi-official' letter for its proximity to the genre of official letter. The texts 2 and 5 are remarkable in that they respectively articulate two distinct voices in a systematic way. Text 2 is very much associated with the official voice to the extent that the mayor is addressing to the Local Security Authority and text 5 is likely to be written by the private college and produced by a marketing enterprise, although representing the interest of the residents' association.

As said above, the discourse of life quality for community people is underpinned by different discourses. For instance the discourse of belonging and allegiance to the organisation in texts 1 and 3, the discourse of order and control in text 2 and 5 and a mix of these two in text 4.

There is a crucial intertextual dimension in this conjuncture, since each text is the discursive element of a sequence of actions. These actions start with the mobilisation of people from the community, go on with the material organisation to prevent the college students from parking inside the community. Further continue with the leaflet arranged by the college administration. Comparing the texts, it is possible to see how they exist in a textual chain and how parts of some texts are quoted and transformed in others (see Fairclough 1992: Ch. 4). For instance, text 4 renders the problem referred in text 1 (college students parking on the community street) as the most important amongst others faced by the community and reiterates the issue of household's contribution appealing for their allegiance. However, these points are recontextualised in an official-like letter rather than a letter resembling a notice as in text 1. This could be recognised as a contextual metaphor (Martin 1997: 33), in which the metaphorical genre (official letter) exerts a power effect on the households that is less sensed in the non-metaphorical letter (non-official letter).

Linguistic and semiotic analysis

Text 1: Letter for the households written on January 1997 (The whole text of the letters are in the appendix)

This letter is about a report of a previous assembly of the households in which the author says that an agreement was made to hire a guard in order to prevent the college students from entering into the street of the residential quarter. Thus, an increase in the households' contribution would be necessary for coping with the social assistance to the employee. In addition, there is an explanation about the charging in advance and an indirect request to pay the contribution and update the overdue others.

In the first line, the speaker reports a verbal process (the acceptance of the majority of the households to the idea) in a hypotactical (Halliday 1994) way: the projecting clause

Tendo em vista/ In view of

and the projected nominal group

a adesão da maioria dos moradores dos Blocos H, I, J e K à idéia da contratação de um empregado/ the acceptance of the majority of the households from the Blocks H, I, J & K to the idea of hiring an employee

form an inseparable unity, since both are interdependent. Wording in this way, the speaker briefly summarizes the households' speech, drawing on a nominalized reported speech, one of the forms of manifest intertextuality.

The verbal process being reported is nominalized, not a projected clause, so that there is no a 'we' and the finite verbal form that could be originally said. According to Fairclough (1992), nominalizations omit the agents and the participants and background the process. For Hodge & Kress (1993) it makes complex actions seem simple, and sometimes portray them in a positive and optimistic instance. And for Lemke (1995), nominalization is the most obvious element of technical discourse.

In the second clause

a partir deste mês de janeiro está sendo acrescentado .../from this month of January is being added ...,

the use of passive hides the agent of the action – the association's executive board, perhaps because the charge of contributions is something that is so vulnerable to resistance that should be mitigated.

Looking at modalization (cf.: Halliday 1994), there is an absence of modal elements (verbs, adjuncts and pronouns), and the majority of the finite verbs are in the present tense. These features indicate, on the one hand, certainty – a high commitment – from the writer towards their utterances, and impersonality or objectivity on the other. This suppression of the person, as the interpersonal meaning, works textually to produce the authority that the writer has to speak on behalf of the households, an authority that socially exists in the community association as an institution (see also Iedema 1997).

With respect to the ideational meaning, these linguistic choices in the reported speech render the issue of the households' acceptance as a reliable and legitimate action taken, which leads to the meaning of unanimity of the association members.

Text 2: Letter to the Secretary of Security of *Distrito Federal* on 17/02/97

This letter is a request to the Secretary of Security of *Distrito Federal* for a service to prevent the college students from parking in the street of the residential quarter.

The letter has the layout of an official letter, with the logo and headings of the association in which there is the mayor's name, the slogan, address and telephone numbers, registration numbers at official bodies such as the Revenues and Justice. Below these there are specific contents of an official letter, despite the residential quarter mayor is not an official. Anyway, he addresses to an official and the residents' association is legally registered, so that it can be considered as an official letter, drawing on several nominal groups, some of them linked to prepositional phrases:

a atenção da Secretaria de Segurança/ the attention of the Secretary of Security;

uma operação conjunta do DETRAN e da Polícia Militar nas vias W4 e W5 Norte, nos trechos em torno do FAUD/ an integrated operation of *DETRAN* and the Military Police in the avenues *W4 and W5* North, in the parts around the *FAUD*;

o estacionamento desordenado sobre calçadas, gramados, em locais proibidos e em frente de garagens de moradores/ the disordered parking over the footpath, Greenfield, in forbidden sites and in front of the households' garage.

No less importance should be given to the initials and numbers, which are present in restrict codes, as the bureaucratic language. Lastly, the letter is signed by the mayor, under the subscription 'mayor of 56 North residential quarter') and he uses as closure term *Atenciosamente*/ Yours sincerely, which is the formal convention of use by public servants in higher level than their addressee.

Text 3: Letter to the households on 16/03/97

This letter is about the information to the households of the operation of "closing the street to the *FAUD* students", a justification for the delay in doing it and a request for collaboration to the households.

This letter has a 'public and non-official' characteristic, as said above, with a formal style and some special wordings such as the long nominal group

operação de fechamento da rua, aos estudantes da Faud/ operation of closing the street, to the Faud students.

Like the letter in the text 1, its introduction is a direct information about the process, without background information, which leads to the inference that the author presumes a shared knowledge among the households. And the use of the nominal group above presupposes the feature of shared knowledge. In its turn, this presupposition corroborates the ideational meaning of a harmonious process and, consequently, favours the idea of a united and cohesive organisation. In addition, the letter is closed with the slogan

Por uma comunidade mais feliz e solidária/ Towards more happiness and solidarity in the community,

which seems to forward this meaning.

Text 4: Letter to the head of a block of flats on 30/05/97

This letter is about the request of the residents' association mayor to the head of a block of flats in the same residential quarter in order to reiterate a contribution for the operation of preventing college students parking. The block of flats has a pre-existent organisation among the flat-holders, which is responsible for collecting taxes to settle the bills of water and electricity, maintenance of a porter and so on. All these services are managed by the head of the block of flats, who is in charge of collecting the building taxes. As the flat-holders already pay the block tax, they have been resisting to the payment of contribution to the residents' association.

This letter stands in between the genres of texts 2 and 3, since it has some contrastive features that come out from both texts. There is the logo and headings of the association as in text 2, similar to an official letter, yet some of the traditional contents miss such as the formal address to an

authority. In fact, the mayor does not address to an authority, but the way the letter is written embodies the ethos of executive officers, by using a formal style and the voice of a public authority. For instance, the agent in the representation of the processes in the association is an abstract noun – the association itself:

A Associação dos Moradores da Quadra 56 – Prefeitura da 56, vem desempenhando trabalhos que visam ao bem estar e à melhoria da qualidade de vida de seus moradores e familiares (...)

The residents' association of the 56 Residential Quarter – Mayoralty of the 56 – has been developing works that envisage the well-being and the improvement of residents and relations' life quality (...)

Another feature is the long nominal group 'the well-being and the improvement of residents and relatives' life quality'.

Basically, what the author intends is to show his/her addressee that the reasons for doing the contribution are more relevant than the ones that "make it difficult". We can see this analysing the thematic structure/ given and new in the fifth paragraph:

A iniciativa, acordada por todos, gera despesas que ultrapassam as receitas para o cumprimento das obrigações salariais com o guarda, em razão, assim se atribui, das dificuldades que os moradores, beneficiados com a cômoda situação de chegarem as suas residências e terem as vagas dos seus veículos, têm em recolher as importâncias destinadas à prefeitura.

The initiative, agreed by everyone, generates expenses that overtake the revenues for the accomplishment of the obligations with the guard's wage, because of, it is attributed so, the difficulties that the households, benefited with the comfortable situation of arriving at home and having their car park lots, have in collecting the amounts destined for the mayoralty.

In this syntactically complicated paragraph embedded clauses are inserted into the main clauses:

acordada por todos/ agreed for everyone;

que ultrapassam as receitas para .../ that overtake the revenues for...;

assim se atribui/ it is attributed so;

beneficiados com a cômoda situação de chegarem as suas residências e terem as vagas dos seus veículos/ benefited with the comfortable situation of arriving at home and having their car park lots.

These embedded clauses function as modifiers to the closest noun in the fore-clause, reaching the position of the theme in the clause. Based on Halliday (1994), the theme is the information supposedly already known by the interlocutors, from which a new information is provided. Therefore, the theme stands for the shared knowledge in the interaction and leads the interlocutor to a particular way of making sense of this knowledge. The probable coherence achieved with this way of wording is that the action of closing the street to the college students should not be contested, since it was taken by ‘everyone’, and the reasons of the households to not collect the contributions are less important than the ‘comfortable situation of arriving at home and having their car park lots’.

Moreover, the modalization plays a remarkable role towards the meaning being aimed, as in

assim se atribui/ it is attributed so,

where this embedded clause seems to render the households’ reason as something uncertain.

Text 5: leaflet to Faud students, no date specified

Text 5 is a leaflet, produced by a marketing enterprise, about the information from *Faud* to its students of a new car park built for them. The leaflet is an example of what Kress & van Leeuwen (2001) call multimodal discourse, in which the graphological level is enriched with the presence of different types of letter, two logos, a picture and text overlapping with the picture of a traffic sign. Regarding genre, it draws on a layout of an advertisement, where the product being announced is the availability of the new car park. However, different features actually make it a hybrid genre, for instance the sentence in distinct font and size

É com você mesmo que queremos falar!/ It is with you indeed that we want to speak!

on the upper right and the pointing finger render the text as a ‘threat letter’. Its associated speech act (a threat) is reinforced in the last paragraph

O DETRAN e a Polícia Militar estarão por aí nos próximos dias para organizar o trânsito, indicar os locais proibidos, garantir a sua segurança e, se necessário, multar você. / The DETRAN (The Traffic Department) and the Military Police will be around in the next days to organise the traffic, indicate the forbidden places, guarantee your security and, if necessary, fine you.

The representation of social actors (cf.: van Leeuwen 1996) which compose the sender is impersonal and its reference is rather groups than individuals (*Faud, GDF, DETRAN, Polícia Militar*), while the recipient is represented through the synthetic personalization “you”. There is a remarkable exclusion in this matter – the residents’ association itself, which by contrast is always present in the other letters. This exclusion poses the question as to who is the reference in the ‘we’ of the sentence “It is with you indeed that *we* want to speak!”, since the residents’ association are more interested in the issue than the other actors.

Integrating modalization, cohesion and coherence, the modal auxiliary “*pode*”/“may” in the sentence

Os estacionamentos que você pode usar localizam-se em frente ao bloco I, (...) / The car parks that you may use are located opposite to Block I, (...)

actually indicate obligation if juxtaposed to the purpose clause “(...) *para você parar de perturbar os moradores das quadras residenciais.*” / “(...) for you stop bothering the residential quarters residents” in the first paragraph. And the demand in distinct font and size on the bottom of the text “*Colabore!*” / “Collaborate!” also means certain degree of commitment to obligation, besides a semantic relation of conclusion, which is linked to the threat constructed throughout the text.

Examining the interaction between genre, style and discourse in this particular text, there is a combination of three different orders of discourse: the private enterprise, the local government and the community organisation. The voice of community organisation and local government are mixed in the discourse of order and control, whereas the marketing enterprise shapes this discourse in its typical genre. Again the process of text production draws on a ‘contextual metaphor’, where an advertisement replaces a formal letter.

Linking discursive resources to purpose, the residents' association takes advantage of the non-congruent genre advertisement, and of the congruent linguistic styles of official institutions to legitimise the discourse of order and control, so as to reach the goals of security and tranquility for the residents.

Conclusion of analysis

Rather being something that threatened and precluded a reaction by the neighbourhood, the problem evoked it. The obstacles mentioned above – getting the attention of people in the community, of the local authority on Security and the college managers – were partially tackled by the letter writing activity of community leaders. In this case, community participation involved both assembling people inside the community and the leadership representing ordinary people in the relationships between the community organisation and other parties. The former has been a matter of raising strategies to bring up the households, while the latter a set of activities to construct an image of seriousness and well-organised entity. In both, literacy plays a role as part of the activity and in its reflexive construction; that is, there is a discursive aspect in the doing of the parking campaign. These letters mediate the action of appealing for the household's financial participation to avoid college students parking in the residential street. With respect to this issue, texts 1, 3 and 4 are intertextually connected. The appeal made in text 1 is reported as unsuccessful in text 3. The communicative-practical failure of text 1 in getting a comprehensible favourable reaction in the whole community about the contribution is worked out in text 4. This can be seen by the rhetorical devices drawn upon to persuade the head of the block of flats that everyone had agreed the 'initiative' and the reasons for not contributing are irrelevant.

As an evidence of the literacy events efficacy, I saw randomly a guard and a barrier selecting the cars that should have entry into the street of the community when I was walking nearby the residential quarter at that time. Relying upon this sight it could be said the outcome of the conjuncture was successful for the community. Nevertheless, during my research fieldwork, in the second half of 2000, I got to know from the mayor that not long the local Court had decided for the illegality of the community

parking control over the residential street. Therefore, the efficacy of the residents' association actions was not permanent, except within the span between the parking campaign and the Court decision.

So far I have been describing and interpreting how these particular practices in the community organisation have their internal constraints (allegiance from community people) and external constraints (the assistance from official and private institutions in society). In order to foster the desired outcome, the way the mayoralty invests language in the letters functions in the sense of overcoming these internal and external constraints. Firstly, drawing upon different subgenres of letter to reach particular understandings from residents readers. Secondly, choosing what could be recognized as a discourse of quality of life, which brings about unanimity among the different participants. And last but not least, through the style, namely the nominalizations, modalization, the manifest intertextuality, thematization of modifiers and vocabulary, as well as semiotic elements such as the logo of the association and the images in text 5.

Altogether these discursive resources ensure textual efficacy, by rendering the texts as serious and legitimate entities. And so the social activities that the texts are part. In so far as the official bureaucratic texts have attained the *ethos* of seriousness, it is likely that these texts originated in the public sphere of local community are being constructed in order to receive this *ethos* and raise a strategy to have community aims successfully met. But however significant bureaucratic aspects of texts are in this practice, they are not totally responsible for its textual efficacy. A more informal text such as text 5, which shows conversational features, plays an important part. In this sense, there is a contextual metaphor (cf.: Martin 1997) or a recontextualization (cf.: Bersntein 1996; Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999) of bureaucratic and conversational discourse into the letters written by the association's executive board. And this recontextualization may be interpreted as a powerful literacy – a sophisticated strategy to strength the power of the leadership in the community organisation, as a way to raise an open space for struggle from citizens within systems in society.

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Appendix

Text 1

Caro Morador,

Tendo em vista a adesão da maioria dos moradores dos Blocos H, I, J e K à idéia da contratação de um empregado para coibir a entrada de carros de alunos da FAUD nesta rua durante o período de aulas noturnas (18h30 às 21h30 horas), a partir deste mês de janeiro de 1997 está sendo acrescentado ao boleto de contribuição mensal de R\$ 11,00, a quantia de R\$ 4,00 (quatro reais), totalizando R\$ 15,00. Este pequeno acréscimo visa custear o salário (aproximadamente) R\$ 100,00) mais os encargos trabalhistas e sociais implicados (INSS, FGTS e outros) do empregado.

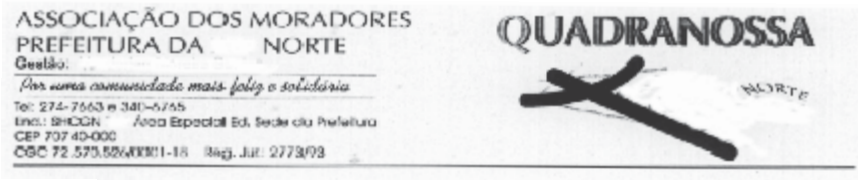
A antecipação deste acréscimo já em janeiro objetiva angariar os fundos necessários para a construção de um cavalete e a compra de dois cones, um colete, uma capa de chuva, faixas com mensagens e produção de panfletos para os alunos evitarem estacionar na rua.

O início das aulas na FAUD está previsto para fevereiro. Por isso é importante que a arrecadação mensal se inicie logo, para que se forme caixa suficiente para assumirmos este compromisso que, a exemplo da 1a. rua, mudará radicalmente a situação nos dias de semana à noite.

A sua participação é fundamental. Não deixe de confirmar a sua contribuição, assim como de manter a sua regularidade mensal.

PREFEITURA DA 56 NORTE

Text 2



CT/PR708N-000/97

ILMO SR.
SECRETÁRIO DE SEGURANÇA DO DF
SSP-DF

Brasília, 17 de fevereiro de 1997.

Prezado Senhor,

Solicitamos a atenção da Secretaria de Segurança Pública para que seja desencadeada, a partir desta semana de 17 de fevereiro, no período noturno (18h00 às 23h00), uma operação conjunta do DETRAN e da Polícia Militar nas vias W4 e W5 Norte, nos trechos em torno do , quadras norte , objetivando controlar e organizar o trânsito, impedir o estacionamento desordenado sobre calçadas, gramados, em locais proibidos e em frente de garagens de moradores, orientar estudantes do para utilizarem o estacionamento da W5, garantir a boa fluência do tráfego e prestar policiamento, em particular dentro do estacionamento público da W5.

Certos de que seremos atendidos, em nome das comunidades das e Norte agradecemos.

Atenciosamente,

PREFEITO DA NORTE

Anexo:

VMS

Arquivo: CT\PR708-00097 Disk N° 03/97

Text 3

BRASÍLIA, 16 DE MARÇO DE 1.997

CARO MORADOR:

A partir da próxima semana, estaremos dando início à “operação de fechamento da rua, aos estudantes da Faud”, no período de 18:30 às 21:30 horas.

A demora na implantação do sistema, deve-se a uma série de imprevistos surgidos desde a baixa arrecadação para essa finalidade, até dificuldades em conseguirmos pessoa qualificada para a função e com disponibilidade para esse horário.

Lamentavelmente, não conseguimos contratar pessoa que conhecesse os moradores da rua, para fazer a seleção de entrada de veículos nesse horário. Portanto, estamos promovendo a distribuição de adesivos de identificação, que solicitamos, sejam afixados no vidro do lado direito dos respectivos veículos (lado do passageiro).

Além disso, nos primeiros dias, precisaremos contar com a disponibilidade e espírito de colaboração de todos, no sentido de manter presença junto ao cavlete que ficará na entrada da rua, visando orientar o funcionário sobre identificação de moradores e seus convidados.

Um rodízio de pelo menos dois moradores por noite, dentro do horário citado, será fundamental para o sucesso da medida.

Nessa expectativa, agradecemos sua colaboração.

PREFEITURA DA 708 NORTE

“POR UMA COMUNIDADE MAIS FELIZ E SOLIDÁRIA”

Text 4

ASSOCIAÇÃO DOS MORADORES
PREFEITURA DA QUADRA NORTE

Gasão

Por uma comunidade mais feliz e solidária

Tel: 274-7003 e 340-0700

Fins: RHC69 - Área Esportiva - Fd. Sada do Pitulatum

CEP: 70740-000

CNPJ: 22.870.626/0001-10 Reg. Jur.: 277393

QUADRANOSSA



CT/PR 24-01/97

Brasília, 30 de maio de 1997.

Senhor Síndico,

A Associação dos Moradores da Quadra Norte - Prefeitura da Norte, vem desempenhando trabalhos que visam ao bem-estar e à melhoria da qualidade de vida dos moradores e seus familiares, emvidando esforços no sentido de que a nossa máxima **POR UMA COMUNIDADE MAIS FELIZ E SOLIDÁRIA** se consolide e se torne realidade.

As atividades de limpeza das ruas e jardins, pintura de muros-fios, rastelagem, recolhimento de lixo, frizagem das gramas, manutenção do parquinho, marcação de vagas nos estacionamentos, manutenção dos postes de iluminação, manutenção da arborização da quadra, recuperação de calçadas, manutenção dos equipamentos esportivos e criação de novos atrativos para esportes e lazer e tantas outras imprescindíveis para que se tenha condições melhores de habitabilidade exigem recursos humanos e financeiros adequados e suficientes para os dispêndios.

Alguns problemas causam desconforto para os moradores. O principal deles, reconhecido por todos, era a quantidade de veículos de estudantes do usando as vagas de estacionamento destinadas aos moradores, criando irremediável incômodo além de ter sido motivo de inúmeras desavenças. Foi equacionado com a construção de estacionamento exclusivo para os universitários. Mesmo assim, a utilização do estacionamento ao lado da Igreja, exigiu um trabalho junto aos usuários que insistiam em colocar os seus carros nas vagas da quadra, principalmente nos estacionamentos dos blocos.

A solução assumiu caráter definitivo com a contratação de um guarda para solicitar às pessoas, não residentes na quadra, que usassem o estacionamento a elas destinado.

A iniciativa, acordada por todos, gera despesas que ultrapassam as receitas para o cumprimento das obrigações salariais com o guarda, em razão, assim se atribui, das dificuldades que os moradores, beneficiados com a cômoda situação de chegarem as suas residências e terem as vagas dos seus veículos, têm em recolher as importâncias destinadas à Prefeitura.

ASSOCIAÇÃO DOS MORADORES
PREFEITURA DA NORTE

Quadrão

Para uma comunidade mais feliz e solidária

Tel: 274-7603 e 340-6700
Fins: SHCGM - Área Funcional Fd. Sado da Prefeitura
CEP: 70740-000
CNPJ: 12.570.536/0001-16 - Reg. Jur.: 2772/93

QUADRANOSSA



Hoje a contribuição para Prefeitura manter as suas atividades mais o guarda é no valor de R\$ 15,00 (R\$ 11,00 mais R\$ 4,00). Gostaríamos que essa contribuição fosse, no total, de R\$ 10,00.

Assim, solicito que submeta à apreciação dos moradores desse bloco a incorporação na taxa do condomínio, mantida a voluntariedade, da importância de R\$ 10,00 destinada à Prefeitura.

Atenciosamente,

PREFEITO DA NORTE

Ao Senhor
SÍNDICO DO BLOCO H/ SHCGM
Brasília - DF.

Text 5

*É com você mesmo
que queremos falar!*



O xx em parceria com o GDF criou um novo estacionamento na W5, e deu mais segurança aos antigos, para você parar de perturbar os moradores das quadras residenciais.

Os estacionamentos que você pode usar localizam-se em frente ao bloco I, na altura do ginásio e paralelos às vias W4 e W5.

Não é preciso muita imaginação para sentir o drama que uma situação de emergência pode causar, se um inconseqüente estaciona o carro em local indevido, privando o vizinho do direito de ir e vir. A partir de agora, pense duas vezes antes de deixar o seu veículo atrapalhando a vizinhança e seus próprios colegas de universidade. Pois seu carro pode matar alguém. Mesmo parado.

O DETRAN e a Polícia Militar estarão por aí nos próximos dias para organizar o trânsito, indicar os locais proibidos, garantir sua segurança e, se necessário multar você.



Colabore!

