

A methodological proposal for a study of style-shifting in a letters sample

Uma proposta metodológica para o estudo da alternância estilística em uma amostra epistolar¹

Érica Marciano de Oliveira Zibetti²

Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina

Abstract: This paper presents a methodological proposal for a study of style-shifting in a sample of personal letters, *Cartas da Tia Ciça* (Letters from Aunt Ciça), written by a woman from Santa Catarina state for her niece from 1988 to 2014. The methodological procedures were inspired by Variationist Sociolinguistic literature and other Linguistics theories with pragmatic motivation. The steps to construct our methodological proposal were: to map the stylistic contexts found in the letters, to identify and to describe them. After that, we organized these stylistic contexts into four groups: narrative contexts, introspective contexts, interactive contexts, and transversal contexts. For the test of this methodology, we applied the stylistic contexts criteria in 50 letters and correlated them to the linguistic variables: (i) second-person singular pronoun (*tu* versus *você*), (ii) first-person plural pronouns (*nós* versus *a gente*), and (iii) variable forms of the second-person in the imperative mood (*indicative* form versus *subjunctive* form). The results show that, when analyzing the contextual styles, we can describe other characteristics of the sender that go beyond the correlation between linguistic uses and traditional social categories, such as social-historical construction of the sender and her emotional involvement with the interlocutor. These results reinforce the high degree of friendship and familiarity among the interlocutors. Finally, we believe that this methodological proposal can be used in Sociolinguistics studies with personal letters, as a complex independent variable (constituted by a list of social-stylistic factors) correlated to the study of some linguistic variables.

Keywords: Style-shifting. Personal letters. Contextual styles. Sociolinguistic Variation.

Resumo: Este artigo apresenta uma proposta metodológica para um estudo da alternância estilística em uma amostra de cartas pessoais, *Cartas da tia Ciça*, escrita por uma missivista catarinense para sua sobrinha, entre os anos de 1988 e 2014. Os procedimentos metodológicos foram inspirados na literatura da Sociolinguística Variacionista e em outras teorias da Linguística com motivação pragmática. Os passos seguidos para construir nossa proposta metodológica foram o mapeamento dos contextos estilísticos encontrados nas cartas, a identificação e a descrição desses contextos. Organizamos os estilos contextuais encontrados nas cartas em quatro grupos: *contextos narrativos*; *contextos introspectivos*; *contextos interativos*; e *contextos transversais*. Após essa etapa, para testar a proposta metodológica, aplicamos os critérios dos contextos estilísticos em 50 cartas correlacionando-os a algumas variáveis linguísticas, (i) pronome de segunda pessoa do singular (*tu* versus *você*); (ii) pronomes de primeira pessoa do plural (*nós* versus *a gente*); e (iii) formas variáveis da segunda pessoa do imperativo (*forma indicativa* versus *forma subjuntiva*). Os resultados mostram que partindo da análise dos contextos estilísticos, podemos descrever outras características da missivista que vão além da correlação entre usos linguísticos e as categorias sociais tradicionais, como a construção sócio-histórica da missivista, o envolvimento emocional da missivista ao relatar algumas histórias, as outras vozes discursivas reportadas pela missivista e os versos e rimas, particularidades da missivista. Tais

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² E-mail: ericzibetti88@gmail.com.

resultados reforçam o alto grau de intimidade e de familiaridade entre as interlocutoras. Por fim, acredita-se que esta proposta metodológica possa ser utilizada em estudos sociolinguísticos com cartas pessoais, como uma variável independente complexa (composta por um rol de fatores sócioestilísticos) relacionada ao estudo de determinadas variáveis linguísticas.

Palavras-chave: Alternância estilística. Cartas pessoais. Estilos contextuais. Variação Sociolinguística.

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Introduction³

Many studies have analyzed the epistolary samples, a genre in which can be divided into two sub-genres, personal letters and official letters. Considering the personal letter a genre fewer formal in writing and closer to the vernacular of the individual who writes it, with some adaptations, this article aims to present a methodological proposal for the study of the style-shifting in personal letter. This study enables the reconstruction of a social-historical context of the written because it contains some necessary information, such as the names of the senders and addressees (found in the envelopes), the possible relationships between their interlocutors (understood from the content of the letters), the place and date of registration, and data on the social context of the time in which it is written. The interaction and involvement among interlocutors are fundamental characteristics of this genre, which is why those who write use linguistic strategies that give the reader the impression that they are in face-to-face interaction (cf. BOUVET, 2006; CONDE SILVESTRE, 2007; GALVÃO; SILVA, 2012).

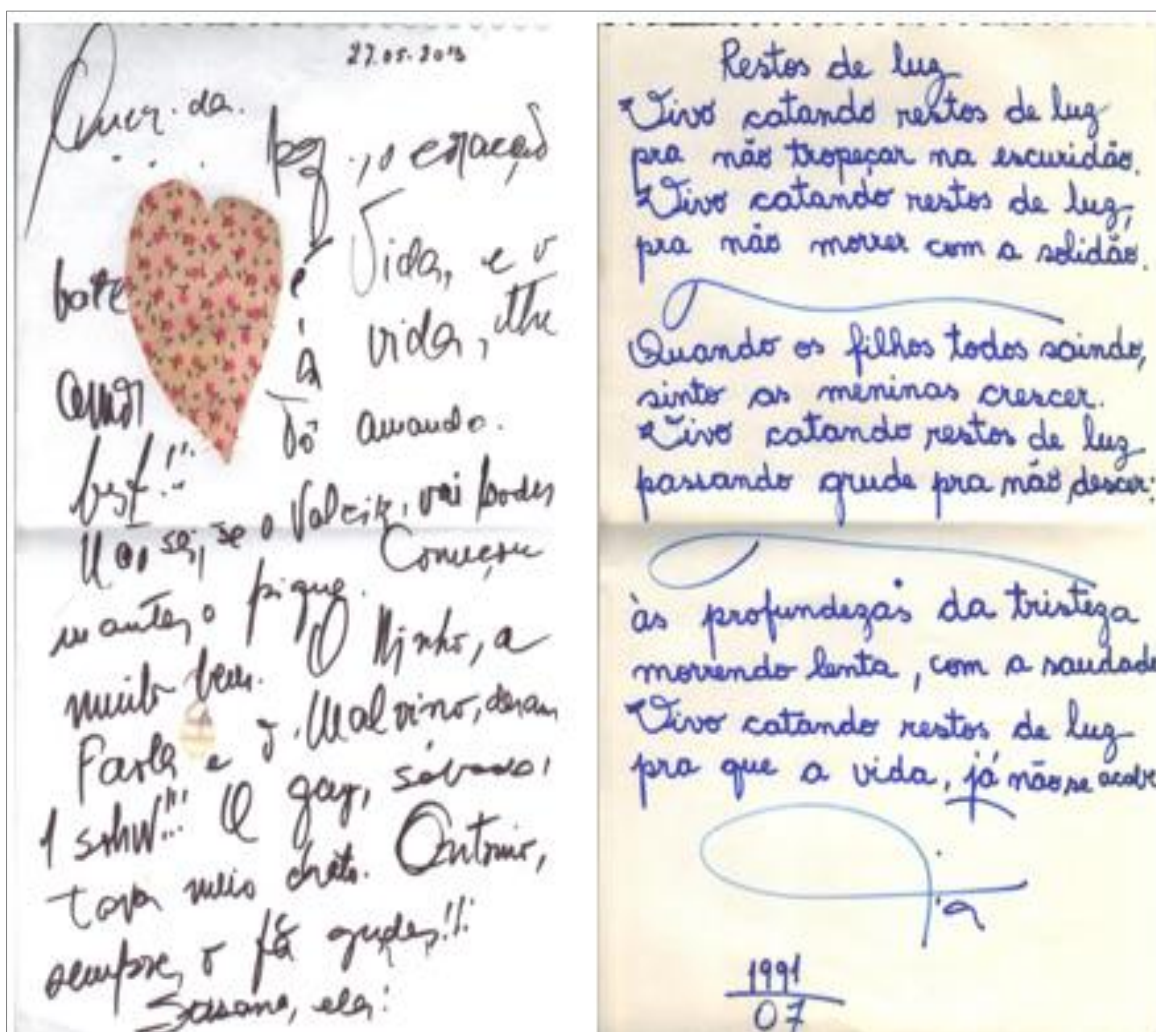
In the personal letter is possible to recover the closeness degree between the interlocutors (friends, father/mother, and children, lovers, among others). We can find a range of linguistic clues that are present in the missives, through the content of the letters and of description of the missives left by the letters' owners (when they do it). Although the personal letters have ensured private communication for centuries, nowadays, its use had reduced. Currently, other genres assume such social-communicative purposes in more modern supports like email and online communication software, like WhatsApp.

³ This paper congregates the main results of the Zibetti (2018)'s thesis: *A methodological proposal for the study of stylistic alternation in the sample Letters from Aunt Ciça*, orientated by Dr. Izete Lehmkuhl Coelho and co-orientated by Dr. Chistiane Maria Nunes de Souza.

Many researchers have dedicated themselves to seeking different methods for style control in speech data and writing data in Sociolinguistic Variation. Studies on style-shifting in written have been realized to understand social relations and the use of language in different contexts. The sample Letters from Aunt Ciça (Cartas da Tia Ciça) is composed of 125 letters (in this study, we analyzed 50 letters) of a Santa Catarina state's woman to her niece, written between 1988 and 2014.

We decided to study this sample because we were fascinated by the sender's creativity, who mixes her write with fabric collages, figures taken from magazines and newspapers, photographs, and drawing. These materials are inserted in the letters in agreement with the various themes discussed in that. This appears as much in the written sheets as the envelopes of the letters, as we can see below.

Figure 1: Some letters from the sample *Letters from Aunt Ciça*.



From: Zibetti (2018).

For this reason, we conducted a second analysis to identify and describe, in an interpretative and qualitative manner, the contextual styles that stood out in the sender's writing. The results showed us the possibility of mapping the stylistic contexts found in the letters, as we will see in the next sections.

In addition to this introduction, this paper is organized into five sections. In the second section, we briefly present the theories that support our research. In the third section, we expound our methodological proposal for the study of stylistic alternation in the sample Letters from Aunt Ciça. In the fourth section, we test our methodology, correlating the stylistic contexts with some linguistic variables, such as (i) second-person singular pronouns (tu versus você), (ii) first-person plural pronouns (nós versus a gente), and (iii) variable forms of the second person imperative (indicative versus subjunctive). Finally, we exhibit an evaluation of our methodological proposal.

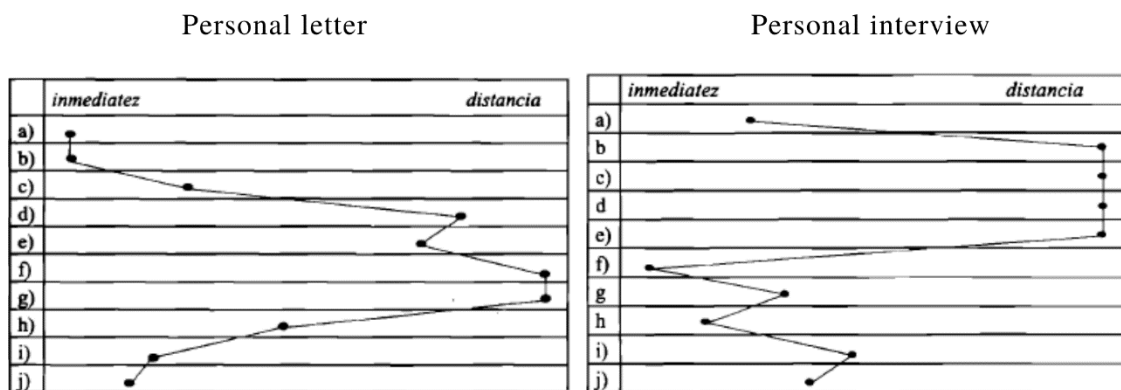
2 The main approaches of style-shifting in Sociolinguistics

To construct our methodological proposal for a study of style-shifting in the sample of personal letters, we bring the three main approaches of stylistic variation in spoken language, studied in Sociolinguistics area: *Attention paid to speech*, *Audience design*, and *Speaker design*.

Aware of some restrictions in this research, we propose the study of style-shifting from the writing of personal letters, in consideration of the adaptation of these approaches that studied speech data to the writing data and considering just the written of a single sender since we had no contact with the addressee answer letters.

Despite the differences between the discursive genres – sociolinguistic interview, for the capture of speech data, and personal letters, for the capture of writing data –, according to Koch and Oesterreicher (2006), in the comparison of parametric values between these two genres, there are many similarities among them.

Figure 3: Comparison of parametric values between genre's letter and personal interview.



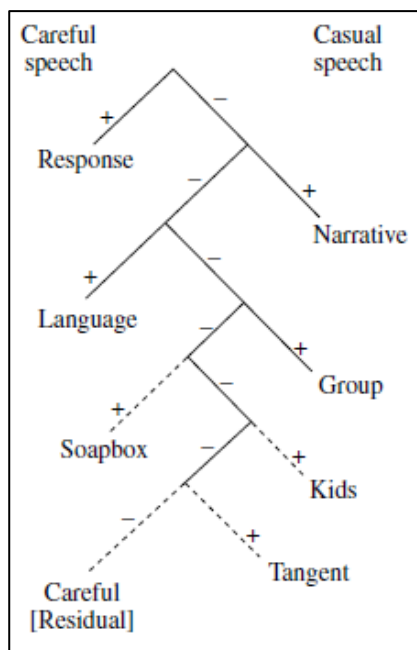
From: Koch and Oesterreicher (2006, p. 28-29).

In this frame, we notice that the degree of privacy (a) and familiarity among the interlocutors (b), as well as the emotional involvement (c), in the personal letter genre, is closer to the *imediatez* (spoken) axis than in the personal interview genre, which is too close to *distancia* (written) axis. This leads us to understand how much closer the personal letter is to the speech than the personal interview.

For the *Attention paid to speech* perspective, in which the degree of attention to speech is related to the formality of linguistic use, Labov (1966, 2008 [1972]), in the model of *Isolation of Contextual Styles*, proposed to systematically study the style-shifting in speech, through the sociolinguistic interview genre. For this author, one of the fundamental principles of sociolinguistic research can be defined as "there are no single-style speakers" (LABOV, 2003 [1969], p. 234).

Furthermore, in the 1970s, Labov (2001) improved the isolated contextual categories in the Decision Tree, a new methodological treatment of style with eight contextual criteria: *response*, *narrative*, *language*, *group*, *soapbox*, *kids*, *tangent* and *residual*, that were developed to analyze the speech of individuals in the sociolinguistic interview. From this approach, we bring some categories of the decision tree methodology, such as narratives of personal experience (*narrative*), reports on childhood experiences (*kids*), and opinions of a general nature, expressed as if for a wider audience, besides the interlocutors (*soapbox*), as we can see below.

Figure 4: The *Decision Tree* formulated to the study of the degree of attention paid to speech in the sociolinguistic interview.



From: Labov (2001, p. 94)

From the *Audience Design* view, we bring the perspective that individuals alternate their speech styles according to the discursive theme, their interlocutor and the audience in mind (BELL, 1984, 2001). We also consider Bell's *principle 10* (2001), which suggests that stylistic research requires its designs and methodology.

From the *Speaker design* approach, we bring the qualitative perspective more than a quantitative one on the study of style. We also bring Eckert's (2004) understanding of the study of variation, in which we should not start from the linguistic variables, but rather from the investigation of style, then trace the contributions of individual style features (e.g., ECKERT 2001, 2004; COUPLAND, 2007; SCHILLING, 2013). In this sense, we consider this conception a good strategy to investigate possible linguistic variations in personal letters.

Furthermore, we also bring the *Historical Sociolinguistics* (CONDE SILVESTRE, 2007) that understand the style in writing materials as a result of a communicative relationship between the interlocutors in a speech event, considering the analysis of personal and contextual factors, and the personal relations that go beyond the communicative interaction.

- 1) Personal factors, including (a) the speaker and the control that he/she exercises over his/her linguistic production, in addition to the historical-geographical and sociolinguistic constraints to which he/she is subject; (b) the interlocutors, the number of them participating in the interaction (establishing bilateral or multilateral relations with the speaker), and the attention they pay, as an audience, to the message (monitored or casual

depending on whether they are directly addressed or not); and (c) the type of relationship established between them (intimate, formal, casual, etc.), expressed, for example, in the power and/or solidarity exercises. [...] 2) Non-personal factors, which they understand (a) discursive elements as the topic (formal or informal, personal or not), the type of communication (monologue, directed conversation, free conversation) and the discursive genre (narrative, expositive, argumentative); and (b) contextual elements, as the place (familiar or not), the moment in which the communicative interaction takes place (suitable or not), and the type of public or private activity that is developed with it (CONDE SILVESTRE, 2007, p. 59)⁴.

To specify each contextual style found in the letters, we have used approaches of various linguistic theories, for instance, *Enunciation Theory*, from which we bring the subjective notion in language and the distinction of the verbal tenses from Benveniste (1991 [1958]). From the *Textual Linguistics*, we bring the study of the distinction of the verbal tenses and the pragmatic notions of the narrated world and commented world from Weinrich (1964). From the *conversation Analysis*, we bring the study of conversational pairs (or adjacency pairs) from Schegloff and Sacks (1973). Moreover, the *Speech Act Theory* that we bring the five basic categories of illocutionary speech acts from Austin (1990 [1962]) and Searle (1995 [1979]).

We presented these studies to underpin this work and to facilitate a better understanding of our methodological proposal that we describe below.

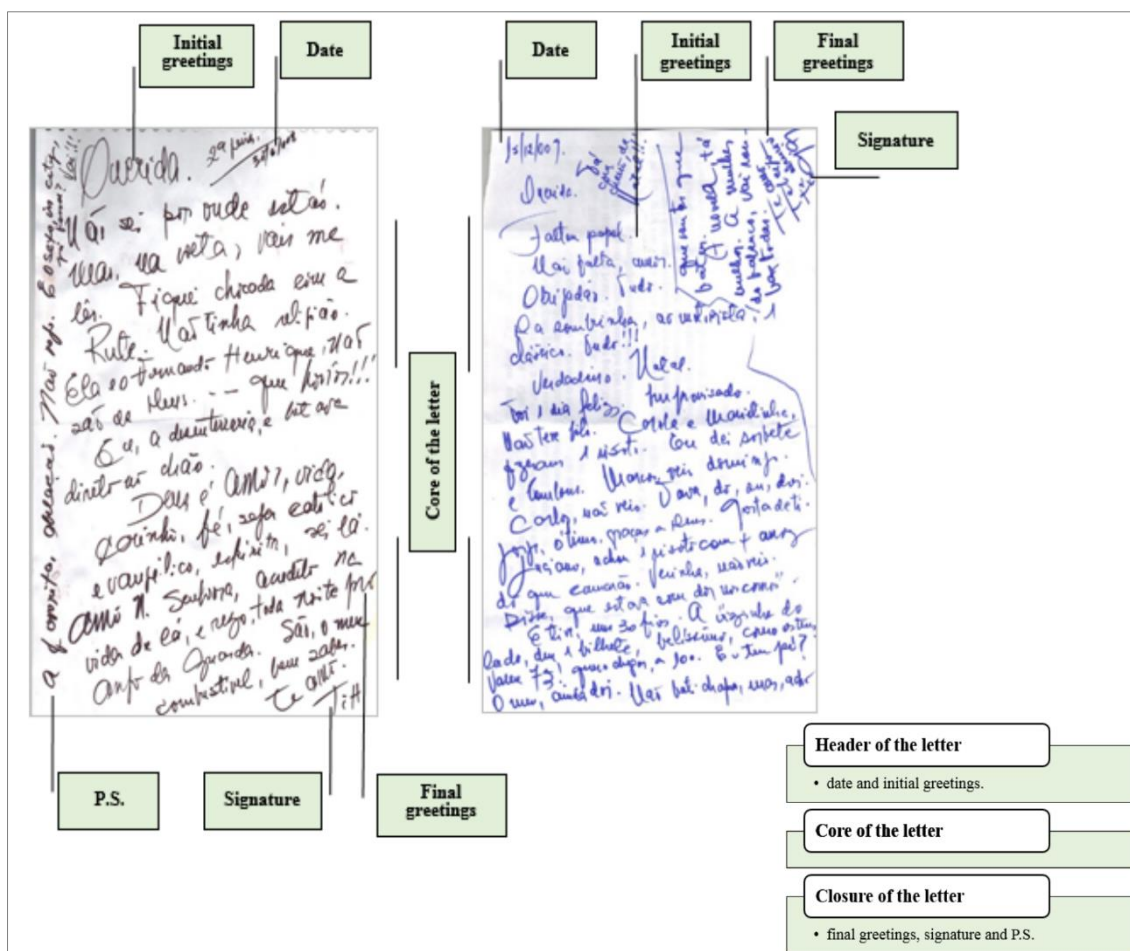
3 Our methodological proposal

To reach the main objective of this study, we surveyed the contextual styles that stick out in the sample, moreover the identification of the interlocutors, and we did the description of these contextual styles according to the literature exposed above.

To identify the contextual styles in the missives from Aunt Ciça's Letter sample, we follow some steps. The first step was the identification of the epistolary structure, i.e., the parts of the letter in the *Letters of Aunt Tia Ciça* sample, as can be seen in the figures below.

Figure 5: The mapping of the missives structure.

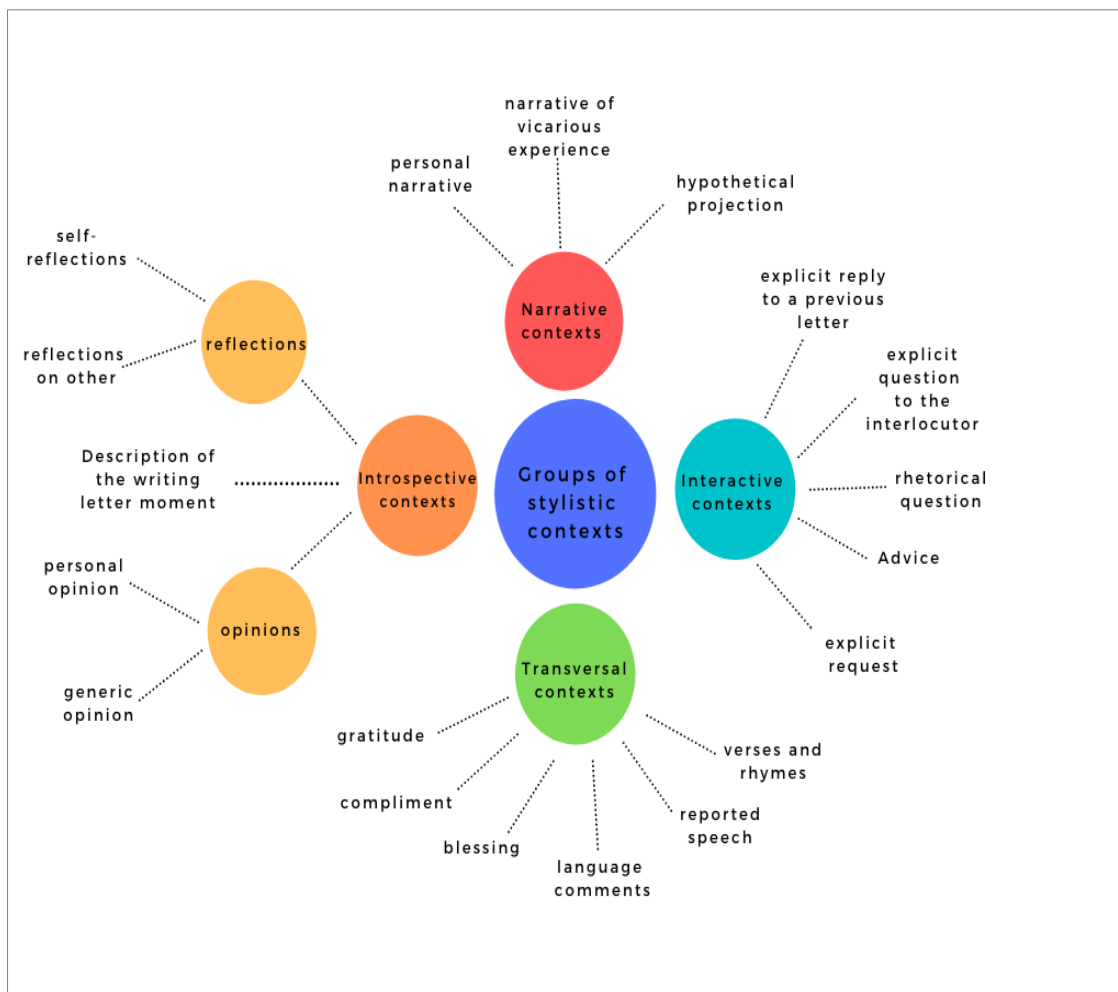
⁴ The original version is in Spanish.



From: Zibetti (2018).

In the second step, we described the segmentation criteria for the establishment of contextual styles found in the own missives sample. Thus, we found different stylistic contexts in the letters, which were grouped according to similar characteristics between them, resulting in four groups of stylistic contexts at all.

Figure 6: Organization of the stylistic contexts groups found in the epistolary sample.



From the author.

Narrative contexts (contextos narrativos) – represent the reports of personal experiences, habitual and the reminiscences, as well as relates of experiences lived by third someone close to the sender, and stories of hypothetical projection imagined by the sender. As can be seen below, the stylistic contexts of this group are:

- *personal narrative (narrative pessoal)* - experiences lived by the sender in ordinary routine, in childhood, and other memories, as we can see in the excerpts below⁵.

⁵ All the excerpts exemplified in this article were taken from the sample Letters from Aunt Ciça and follow the transcription norms of the project Projeto Para História do Português Brasileiro de Santa Catarina (PHPB-SC), which this sample is part of. *The translation of these excerpts in English was loosely translated.*

1. [...] *É que, quando escrevi a última carta pra ti, eu mesma atirei os fogos, os balões e chorei emocionada. Falei do P. e sua trágica morte; do Bota Branca, de igual sorte e só eu vivi, senti, bati palmas. Não me deste um Bravo, bravo! (Carta de 08/12/1992, grifos nossos)*⁶.
 2. [...] *Eu também andei péssima. Nos exames críticos, e apreensivos, de útero e mama, passei: Raspando, mas passei: Na graça, e milagre de Deus [...]*⁷ (Carta de 14/06/2013, grifos nossos).
- *narrative of vicarious experience* (narrativa de experiência vicária) - we have accounts of participation of other people, close to the sender, that were told or were observed by the sender.
3. [...] *Meu polaco era o outro lado. Foi o filho, querido de Ladiviga, lá da Cracóvia. Era o único filho do Casaca de ferro (meu vô, pintou a Hercílio Luz) que usava camisa de sêda. Então, aquele olhinho azul ceu, era Só coração. Morreu dêle, por causa. (Carta de 05/07/1991, grifos nossos)*⁸.
 4. [...] *Em 1955, F. esbanjava tudo. Ou, debochava tudo. Driblou, ou jogou, o amor puro e único de sua mulher, como de seus filhos próprios ou bastardos. Foi Santo aparente e bandido às ocultas. Um homem resultant[e] de sua própria sorte. Simpático. Por vêzes, galante. Italianíssimo. Até na morte: sórdida, pesada, lúgubre [...]* (Carta de 15/06/1993, grifos nossos)⁹.
- *hypothetical projection* (projeção hipotética) - we call hypothetical projection the accounts that refer to the imagination of the sender, which express information in the realm of *irrealis*.
5. [...] *Amo o Lula, amo o Ibsen, amo o Lando e similares e amo o PC [Paulo César Farias]. La com ele fazer tudo que nunca tive ou fiz, em Ibiza. Beber Moet Chandon (deve ter coisa melhor), saber o que é caviar, salmom, ficar nua na areia quente e botar aquele barrigão por cima. Da própria vida! Deixava C., M. e J., na Suíça. C. X M. no Central parque vendendo*

⁶“[...] When I wrote the last letter to you, I threw the fires, the balloons, and I cried with emotion. I spoke of P. and his tragic death; of the Bota Branca, in the same way, and only I lived, felt, clapped. You did not give me a Bravo, bravo!”

⁷ “[...] I’ve been awful, too. In the critical and apprehensive examinations of uterus and breast, I passed: almost, but I passed: In grace, and the miracle of God” [...]

⁸ “My Polish [the sender’s father] was the other side. He was the darling son of Ladiviga, from Krakow. He was the only son of Casaca de Ferro (my grandfather painted the Hercílio Luz bridge) who wore a silk shirt. Then, that little blue sky-eye was only heart. He died because of heart”.

⁹“[...] In 1955, F. was squandering everything. Or, he debauched of everything. He circumvents the situation or he played the pure and unique love of his wife, as of his children or the bastards. He was a saint and a bandit in secretly. A man resulting from his luck. Sympathetic. At times, gallant. He is so Italian. Even in death: sordid, heavy, mournful. [...]”.

algodão diet. J. X I., em Portugal. M., no Caribe e L. em Londres. Pra te contar as mais lindas coisas e te mandar os + lindos cartões, como os que sempre vem de ti (Carta de 28/09/1992, grifos nossos)¹⁰.

6. [...] *Eu te garanto, fossemos eu, tu, M., Carre[i]ras, Domingos, Pavarotti, Mascarenhas, Coelho, Bigudo, e toda a nossa turma, falar com o Sadam, não só libertaríamos o Cuaite, como traríamos o bigodudo num persa, bonzinho, bonzinho! Sem sangue, nem vela¹¹ (Carta de 11/03/1991, grifos nossos).*

Interactive contexts (contextos interativos) – It represents the strategies of communication that favor dialogue between the letter writer and her interlocutor through writing. This group consists of stylistic contexts:

- *explicit reply to a previous letter* (resposta explícita a carta anterior) - when the sender's return refers to the subject asked by the addressee in a previous letter.

7. *T.. Pra fechar o envelope, tu disseste: ser feliz! Eu te juro, doce amiga: isso é tudo o que eu quis!¹² (Carta de 12/12/1988, grifos nossos).*

8. *Queridíssima. Amei, tú me amares, Êsse meu amonto[a-]do de considerações politica familiares. Eu também, adoro o que me dizes. Não é fácil, ser eu. Bem sabes (Carta de 28/08/2006, grifos nossos)¹³.*

- *explicit question to the interlocutor* (pergunta explícita ao interlocutor) - it is a question directed at the addressee in which we suppose that this question will be answered by the addressee, in a next letter.

9. [...] *Espero por ti. Porque não vieste mais? Sabes que te adoro (Carta de 02/1993, grifos nossos)¹⁴.*

¹⁰ “[...] I love Lula, I love Ibsen, I love Lando and similars and I love PC [Paulo César Farias] too. There, with him, I want to do everything that I never had or did in Ibiza. I want to drink Moet Chandon (must have something better), I want to know what is caviar, salmon, I want to get naked in the hot sand and put me on top of the PC's belly. Or on the belly of the own life! Thus, I will leave C., M., and J. in Switzerland; I will leave C. and M. in Central Park [in NY] selling diet sweet cotton; I will leave J. X I., in Portugal; I will leave M., in the Caribbean; and I will leave L., in London to tell you the most beautiful things and send to you the most beautiful cards, like the ones that always come from you”.

¹¹ “[...] I assure you, if we went there, I, you, M., Carreiras, Domingos, Pavarotti, Mascarenhas, Rabbit, Bigudo, and our whole cluster to talk to Sadam Hussein, not only would we free the Cuaite, but we would bring the big mustache into a Persian carpet, nice, nice! Without blood and cry”.

¹² “T. To close the envelope, you said: be happy! I swear to you, sweet friend: that's all I wanted!”

¹³ “Oh, sweetheart. I love to know that you love me and love my heap of family political considerations. I love what you say too. It's not easy to be me as you know...”

¹⁴ “[...] I'll wait for you. Why didn't you come? You know that I love you”.

10. [...] *E o teu pé? Operas, mesmo? Vai no melhor ortopedista. Bate tudo, até, o pé no chão[...]*
(Carta de 22/02/2010, grifos nossos)¹⁵.

- *rhetorical question (pergunta retórica)* - it is a question asked by the sender to emphasize or to activate shared knowledge or to criticize certain subject about something or someone without the intention of getting an answer from the addressee.

11. *Lembras do tombo? Pois é. O meu pé operado há 14 anos + ou -, está multimídia, ou, absolutamente demagógico: depo[is] de 8, dias, se apresenta, verde amarelo, azul e branco. Tô com medo, e compressas. Rezo, pelo teu [pé]. Estamos com empate técnico* (Carta de 02/12/2009, grifos nossos)¹⁶.

12. [...] *O menino + novo, já voltou. Passou 3 dias na Maçã, com direito à museu e pubs. Adorou, disse, que os americanos estão + flexíveis (Obama, né?) N[ão] o vi, ainda, ao vivo* (Carta de 02/12/2009, grifos nossos)¹⁷.

- *Advice (conselho)* - it is guiding someone. In accord with Austin (1990 [1962]), the counseling is part of the group of acts of illocutionary speech exertion. In this sense, we interpret it as an attempt by the sender to convince the addressee to do something.

13. [...] *Sonha mesmo, de olho aberto, fechado voa a imaginação. Com asas de borboletas, porque, é primavera, em tudo e em todos. Lembra sempre, que, ser feliz, é querer. É sentir, a felicidade [...]* (Carta de 31/10/1996, grifos nossos)¹⁸.

14. *Querida. Tô podre. Peguei 1 porco [uma gripe], horrível, e dôr pelo corpo, até febre, me deu. Lê essa "missiva", e joga fora, deve estar lotada de vírus, bactérias, em geral* (Carta de 23/06/2010, grifos nossos)¹⁹.

¹⁵ “[...] And your foot? Do you really go to operate it? You have to go to the best orthopedist. You have to tap everything! Even your foot on the ground [...]”.

¹⁶ “Do you remember the fall, right? I operated my foot 14 years ago + or -[more or less] and the foot looks like a multimedia or absolutely a demagogic. After eight days, it presents itself green, yellow, blue and white. I'm scared, and I'm doing compress with ice pack. I pray for your foot too. We have a technical be deadlocked”.

¹⁷ “[...] the youngest boy comes back. He spent 3 days in the Big Apple, going to museum and pubs. He loves there. He told me that the Americans are more flexible now (Obama, isn't it?) I haven't seen him in person yet”.

¹⁸ “[...] You have to dream with opened or closed eyes. Let your imagination fly like butterfly wings because it is springtime for everything and everyone. Always remember to be happy. Feel the happiness [...]”

¹⁹ “Honey, I'm rotten. I caught a pig [i.e. an H1N1 Flu], and I have pain in all my body, I have also fever. Read this "missive" and throw it away. It's probably full of viruses, bacteria in general”.

- *explicit request* (pedido explícito) – It is an explicit request from the sender to the interlocutor in which we presume that the addressee will answer the sender in subsequent letters.

15. [...] *Volto a consultórios. Reza tá? Hoje 11, V.. Rezei. Essa revistinha é pra R.. Mil beijos a todos. Deus nos abençoe. Nossa senhora, nos aqueça. Te amo. Tia. (11/09/2007, grifos nossos)*²⁰.

16. [...] *Mais que nunca, tuas preces, tua energia, tú, minha sobrinha, filha, amiga, tudo que és, te peço: me ajuda! Te beijo, te abençoo, Te amo!!! Tia Ciça. (09/06/2011, grifos nossos)*²¹.

Introspective contexts (contextos introspectivos) – It represents the sentimental expressions of the letter writer:

- *reflections (reflexões)*
 - *self-reflections (reflexões sobre si)* is a context in which the sender shares her intimate knowledge with the addressee.

17. *T. Não tenho pra quem falar das minhas análises sócio, econômicas, emotivas ou políticas. Só pra ti. É difícil no bairro, na rua, na própria casa, encontrar um eco, porque as cabeças que me rodeiam não têm absolutamente nada comigo. Sou mesmo diferente. E agradeço a Deus o privilégio (Carta de 13/11/1989, grifos nossos)*²².

18. *T.. Tenho medo de morte, mortinha. Pouco vela. Pouca gente. Pouco choro. Porque, assim como eu tanto amei a vida e ela foi Safada Comigo, desejo que o dia que eu me for, seja cantando em prosa e verso. Como tudo, sempre [...] (Carta de 25/02/1989, grifos nossos)*²³.

- *reflections on other* (reflexões sobre o outro) – the sender expresses in the letter the emotions of another person, close to her and her family. Usually, these statements are exposed in the third person.

19. *Querida. Nessas minhas andanças de médicos exames, ressonâncias [i] friends, eu disse pra M. – te juro, eu vou fincar pé na decisão de não ser + vaca de presépio. Quem era, era a Z..*

²⁰ “[...] I'm back in the doctor's office. Pray for me, okay? Today 11, I prayed for V... This little magazine is for R... A thousand kisses to everyone. God bless us. God bless us. I love you. Aunt”

²¹ “[...] more than ever, your prayers, your energy. You, my niece, daughter, friend, everything that you are, I ask you: help me! I kiss you, I bless you, and I love you! Aunt Ciça”.

²² “T., I don't have someone to talk about my social, economic, emotional or political analyses. I have only you. It is hard to be me. I do not find in the neighborhood, in the street, and in the house itself, an echo. Because the heads around me do not look like me. I am different. And I thank God for this privilege”.

²³ “T., I'm scared of death, with no much candle and no many people, and not much crying. Because just as I loved the life that it was naughty with me, I wish that the day I'm gone, be it singing in prose and verse like everything [...]”

Herdei. Ela, coitada, pobre, sem inss, vivia secando camarão do sól para mandar pro Q.. Num dia de sól, êle a deixou aqui no portão - Pra sofrer, e morrer [...] (Carta de 11/09/2007, grifos nossos)²⁴.

20. [...] *E lá, aquêles 2 montinhos em pele e ôsso, se agarrando desesperadamente pra não afundar ou, afundarem juntos. Meu Deus, o que é isso? Por que? Será que foi a I. quem praticou o crime da mala em 1916? Só pode! (Carta de 09/1991, grifos nossos)²⁵.*

- Description of the writing letter moment (descrição do momento da escrita da carta) - This category refers to the intimate look of the sender on the environment in which she writes the letters for her niece, in describing her surroundings, includes her reader in her "momentary" space.

21. [...] *Estou novamente de avental[l] escarlata, C. + suss, bola [o cachorro], solidão, revistas, gelatinas, curativos morais. E só. Absolutamente. (Carta de 23/05/2002, grifos nossos)²⁶.*

22. [...] *No prato [toca disco], Charlles, o rei negro [...] De frente, a cruz de Fátima, o meu pé de laranja lima e o telhado tosco e limoso do quintal. Claro, quando êle [o cão Bola] tá no pedaço, ninguém entRA. Ah, minha dôce prima, filha, afilhada, imagem, súdita, tudo que representas pra mim, por que a vida não é sempre um prato (cheio) com o negro Charlles? (Carta de 07/1991, grifos nossos)²⁷.*

- *opinions* (opiniões):
 - *personal opinion* (opinião pessoal) - it is a sender's evaluation about a subject, in general, written in the first person, like "I think (that...), I believe (that...)", among others of this nature.

23. [...] *Vi tudo o que se referiu à política. E cheguei à conclusão: a cabeça é do Gabeira e do Freire. Infelizmente se daqui uns 10 anos o brasileiro talvez pense assim. Somos 3o mundo e*

²⁴ "Honey, in my walks of doctors exams, resonances, and friends, I told to M. - I swear to you, I will stand and I decided of not be fooled more. I inherited this character of Z. She was poor without INSS, she lived drying shrimp under the sun to send to Q. On a sunny day, he left her here in the gate to suffer and to die".

²⁵ "[...] And there, those two little skinny [I. and her husband], clinging desperately not to sink together. My God, what is that? Why is that? Was I. who committed the crime of the suitcase in 1916? That's gotta be it!"

²⁶ "[...] I'm wearing a scarlet apron again, C. more succesful, ball [the dog] is lonely, magazines, gelatines, and moral dressings. I am alone. Absolutely."

²⁷ "[...]On the Long-playing record, there is Charles, the black king [...] In front of me, there is the cross of Fátima, my lime orange foot, and the coarse and muddy roof. Of course, when it [her dog] is here, no one comes in. Ah, my sweet cousin, daughter, goddaughter, everything you represent to me, why the life is not always a (full) plate with Charles songs?"

*aqueles, do 1o. A fonte é grande e as cabeças, sem cabeça (Carta de 13/11/1989, grifos nossos)*²⁸.

24. *T., A Xuxa chora, porque é jovem, bonita, tem poder e fortuna. Sena balbucia porque “indiferente” tem as mesmas coisas. Collor, põe e dispõe dos miseráveis com gestos obscenos e mandando banana às massas, porque as que ele ingere vêm do Haiti[...] (Carta de 09/1991, grifos nossos)*²⁹.

- *generic opinion* (opinião genérica) - it is a sender's evaluation about a general subject, written as if it were in the presence of a larger audience, besides the addressee (cf. BELL, 1984, 2001). Usually, the audience appears in the written with an indeterminate first-person pronoun of the plural.

25. *[...]Enquanto existir um bilheteinho, a maçã do amor e o papo, a indignação e a intranquilidade, que vão pros 5os dos infernos. O dia que todos podemos sentar à sombra da figueira. E não precisa ser a da Praça 15. A figueira é a nossa cabeça. É o momento, o de ser e estar. Vivo (Carta de 15/08/1992, grifos nossos)*³⁰.

26. *[...]Mas, os ventos se encarregarão de varrer o impácto ou a própria saudade. Porque, nós, emotivos e por vezes passionais involuntários, estamos sempre, num ultra leve, por um Velho Vento Vagabundo (Carta de 15/06/1993, grifos nossos)*³¹.

Transversal contexts (contextos transversais) – Contexts that "traverse" the epistolary structure, appearing in the header, in the core and the closure of the letter, and also in Post Scriptum. This group is constituted by:

- *gratitude (agradecimento)* - it is classified by Austin (1990 [1962]) as illocutionary behavioral acts, related to attitudes and social behavior.

²⁸ “[...]I saw everything about politics at this moment and I came to the conclusion: Gabeira and Freire are the heads of this situation. Unfortunately, in 10 years the Brazilian may think about it. We are the 3rd world, and those are the 1st. The fountain is big and the politicians’ heads do not have heads”.

²⁹ “T., Xuxa cries because she's young, beautiful, has power and fortune. Sena babbles because "indifferently" has the same things. Collor treats the miserable people with obscene gestures and sends banana to the masses because those bananas that he ingests come from Haiti [...]”

³⁰ “[...]As long as there is a little note, an apple of love and the conversation time, the indignation time and the social uneasiness, that everything goes to hell. The day that we can all sit in the shadow of the fig tree. And it doesn't need to be the fig tree of the 15th Square, because the fig tree is in our head. It's the moment, the moment to be and to be. So, I live”.

³¹ “[...] But the winds will sweep away the impact or our the longing itself. Because we, emotionally and sometimes passionately involuntary, are always in an ultralight airplane that flies in an Old Wandering Wind”.

27. *Linda. Mais uma vez, mil obrigadas. E se puderes passar um fio pro D. W. dizendo da minha tranquilidade... (Carta de 07/1991, grifos nossos)*³².

28. *Querida. Tô te devendo atenção, e enorme obrigada, pela oração para saúde, o cartão JK, e similares[...] (Carta de 09/05/2011, grifos nossos)*³³.

- compliment (elogio) - Austin (1990 [1962]) classifies it as a veredictive illocutionary act — assertive for Searle (1995 [1979]) —, in which the positive aspects of someone or something are highlighted by the sender. We consider this category as an expression of the sender's affection for the interlocutor.

29. *Minha querida e amada T. — você não precisa ir. Você é a Europa, a Norte América, o Canadá. Conhece tudo, melhor do que os que vão lá — Isso é coisa tua, criatura iluminada com Deus, Nossa Senhora, filha do N. e da V., irmã do M., tia da R. e da F., tendo ainda a M., nessa bagagem de amor, solidariedade, afeto, tão puros [...] (Carta de 24/11/2004, grifos nossos)*³⁴.

30. *[...] És bacana mesmo. Assino em baixo. Já do Rio, + uma vez, te lembrás de mim. Sei que continua lindo [...] (Carta de 24/06/1992, grifos nossos)*³⁵.

- *blessing* (benção) – it is found in the most part in the final greetings of the letters, i. e. in the closure. This context refers to the act of blessing. The sender, as the aunt of the addressee, in a gesture of affection, exposes her authority in blessing the niece in the farewell of the letters.

31. *[...] Bom dezembro, bom final de semana. Beijos nos Ms., e pra ti. Te abençoo, Te amo, Te beijo. Ciça (Carta de 02/12/2009, grifos nossos)*³⁶.

32. *[...] Meu Deus, se “tudo vale a pena, se a alma não é pequena”, juro, nós não temos alma, nós temos o céu transbordando no peito. Obrigada. Deus te abençoe. Sempre. Porque, agora*

³² “Pretty girl. Once again, a thousand thanks. When you can pass a wire to D.W. saying about my tranquility...”

³³ “Honey. I owe you my attention, and a huge thank you for the prayer of my health. Thank for the JK's card and similar [...]”

³⁴ “My dear and beloved T. - you don't have to go there. You're Europe, North America, Canada... You know everything, better than those who go there - this is your thing, a creature enlightened by God, by Virgin Mary, because you are the daughter of N. and V., sister of M., aunt of R. and F., having still M. in this luggage of love, solidarity, and affection. You are so pure [...]”

³⁵ “[...] You're nice and I can prove it, signing below. From Rio, plus one time, you remember me. I know that the city is still beautiful [...]”

³⁶ “[...] Have a good December and a good weekend. I send kisses to M. and you. I bless you, I love you, I kiss you. Ciça”.

quero “tropeçar no céu, como se fosse um bêbado”. Mils eus! Pra ti, Ciça (Carta de 02/08/91, grifos nossos)³⁷.

- *language comments* (comentários sobre a língua) – they are inspired by the Language category of the Labov's Decision Tree (2001). This context relates to the metalinguistic comments of the sender.

33. [...] *Essa estória que ficou na história (não sei se escrevi certo) me foi contada pela própria C., nas minhas alucinações de 4 anos de febre amarela (Carta de 11/05/1992, grifos nossos)³⁸.*

34. *C., ainda não exerga d[o] olho operado. Precisa de 1 lente especial, e os corticoides, os incha. (É com ch?) [...] (Carta de 06/2007, grifos nossos)³⁹.*

- *reported speech* (discurso reportado) - the reported speech brings the voice of other people in the interaction, that can be both an utterance in the enunciation, and an utterance about the enunciation (cf. ZILLES; FARACO, 2002).

35. *T.. Sabes perfeitamente que não dispense aplauso. Aliás, fui ao T., dêsses dos ienepeesses da vida e êle foi taxativo: “precisas dum palco. Mais nada” (Carta de 08/12/1992, grifos nossos)⁴⁰.*

36. *T. Como disse, andei por baixo quase de baixo. Fui atrás do meu bruxo (C.). Disse êle: tu és pra lá de realizada, quem fala quem grita, quem não tem preconceitos, é rei; Eu disse: é muito fácil, tú tás aí e eu aqui, com um tanque me esperando na estrada! Êle tem razão (Carta de 02/08/1991, grifos nossos)⁴¹.*

- *verses and rhymes* (versos e rimas) – they are verses and parodies written by the sender on different subjects in the letters. It can appear in the core or the Post Scriptum.

37. *Qual é? // Já pintei a cara toda. / Fui pra rua protestar. / Hoje, pasma eu pergunto: / e a cueca do Itamar? // Será zorba, a horrível grega, / de passarinho pra voar? / Hoje pasma eu*

³⁷ “[...] Oh My God, if "All is worthwhile if the soul is not small" [Fernando Pessoa Poem]... I swear, we don't have soul, but we have the sky overflowing in the chest. Thank you! God bless you, Always. Now I want to "stumble into the sky like a drunkard" [Chico Buarque song]. Thousands of myself for you, Ciça”.

³⁸ “[...] This story that remained in the history (I don't know if I wrote it right) was told to me by C., in my hallucinations of 4 years of yellow fever”.

³⁹ “C. still does not move the operated eye. He needs a special lens and the corticosteroids because they swell. (this is written with sw?) [...]”

⁴⁰ “T., you know that I love applause. I went to Doctor T. and he told me, "You need a stage. That's all.”

⁴¹ “T. As I told you, I walked almost underneath. I was looking for my witch (C.). He told me: "You are an accomplished woman, you talk what you want and do not have prejudices. You are the queen". I said: "it is very easy for you to say that because you are there and I am here, with a war tank waiting for me on the road!" But I think he is right...”

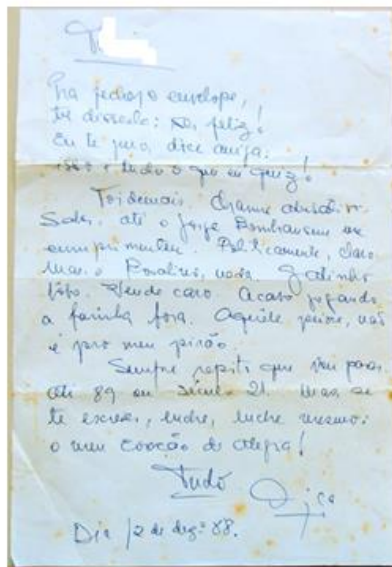
pergunto: | E a cueca do Itamar? || Samba canção tá muito chique, | só Fitipaldi pode usar.
| Hoje, pasma eu pergunto? | e a cueca do Itamar? || Será que tudo não passou, | de uma
louca confusão? | Porque, no fundo tenho mêdo, | que Itamar use calção (Carta de
15/10/1992)⁴².

The contexts above were mapped in the letters. In the sequence, we show the potentialities of our methodological proposal.

4 Testing our methodological proposal

To see the capability of our methodological proposal, we applied the criteria of the contextual styles in the 50 letters of the sample, as we can see in the example selected below.

Figure 7: Letters' mapping according to the stylistic contexts found in the epistolary sample.

<p>Cartas da Tia Ciça Localização: Florianópolis Tipo: Carta pessoal Data: 12 de dezembro de 1988. Coletado por: VARSUL Transcrição: Érica Marciano de Oliveira Zibetti Revisão: Helena Alves Gouveia</p>		
<p>Resposta Explícita Reflexão sobre si (sobre si)</p>	<p>[fol. 1r] T. Pra fechar o envelope, tu disseste: ser feliz! Eu te juro, doce amiga: isso é tudo o que eu quiz! Foi demais.</p>	
<p>Opinião pessoal Narrativa pessoal (política)</p>	<p>Charme abusativo. Sabes, até o Jorge Bornhausen me cumprimentou. Politicamente, claro. Mas, o Rosalino, nada. Gatinho bôbo. Vende caro. Acabo jogando a farinha fora. Aquê peixe, não é pro meu pirão. Sempre repeti que vou parar. Até 89 ou Século 21. Mas, se te escrever, enche, enche mesmo: o meu coração de alegria! Tudo Ciça Dia 12 de dezembro 88.</p>	
<p>Opinião Pessoal (política)</p>		

⁴² “What is it? // I’ve painted my whole face. / I went to the street to protest. / Today, I’m astonished, and I ask: What about Itamar’s underpants? // Is it Zorba, the horrible Greek with flying bird? / Today, I’m astonished, and I ask: What about Itamar’s underpants? // The samba canção is too fancy, / only Fitipaldi can wear it. / Today, I wonder? What about Itamar’s underpants? // Was it all just a crazy mess? / Because I’m afraid / if Itamar will wear shorts”.

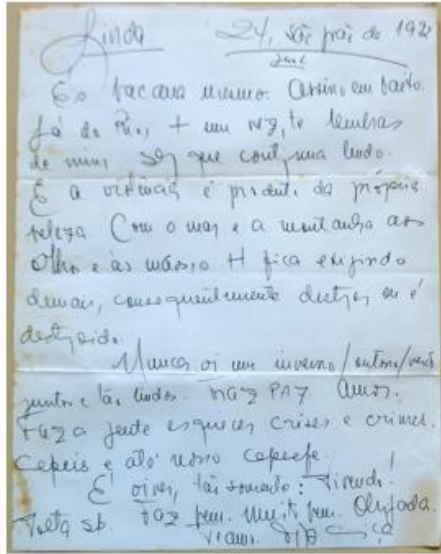
Cartas da Tia Ciça
Localização: Florianópolis
Tipo: Carta pessoal
Data: 24 de junho de 1992.
Coletado por: VARSUL
Transcrição: Elaine Cristina Rosa Xavier
Revisão: Érica Marciano de Oliveira Zibetti

[fol. 1r] Linda 24, São João de 1992 | junho

Agradecimento (afeição) || **És bacana mesmo. Assino em baixo. | Já do Rio, + uma vez, te lembras | de mim. Sei que continua lindo. | E a violência é produto da própria | beleza. Com o mar e a montanha aos | olhos e às mãos, o Homem fica exigindo | demais, consequentemente destroi ou é destroído. || Nunca vi um inverno/outono/verão | juntos e tão lindos. Traz PAZ. Amor. | Faz a gente esquecer crises e crimes | Cepeis e até nosso cepeefe.**

Opinião pessoal (política)

Pedido explícito + Agradecimento (afeição) || **É viver, tão somente: Vivendo! | Volta sempre. Faz bem. Muito bem. Obrigada. || Te amo. Tia Ciça**



From Zibetti (2018, p. 146-147).

We implemented different colors for each stylistic context, for better visualization of the mapping in the missives, and we organized the themes next to each stylistic context.

The theme topics found in the sample Aunt Ciça's Letters were:

- Politics - themes focused on politics at the national, state and municipal levels;
- Family - matters about family members, children, and grandchildren;
- Childhood - issues about childhood memories, stories heard as a child;
- Media - matters concerning soap operas, magazines, and newspapers;
- Health - issues about going and coming to the doctor, reports of suffering due to certain discomfort or illness;
- Religion - matters about religion, prayer or act of religious beliefs.
- World Cup - subjects about players in the World Cups.
- Emotions - feelings such as happiness, sadness, suffering, concerns, among others.
- Mail/Correspondence - matters about the sending and delay of letters.
- Carnival - subjects about the carnival in the Florianópolis and in Rio.
- Party in town - matters about popular festivals in the city.
- Birthday - issues related to the birthday of the sender or the birthday of the addressee.
- Affection - affectionate words exchanged between aunt Ciça and her niece;
- Pets - subjects related to the dogs and cats of the house.
- Ontological reflection - subjects about the nature of man, related to life existence.

After mapping the stylistic contexts, we surveyed some linguistic variables found in the sample for testing the methodology. Due to the high number of occurrences, we selected the following linguistic variables for this test: (i) *second-person singular pronouns* (tu versus você); (ii) *first-person plural pronouns* (nós versus a gente); e (iii) *variable forms of the second person imperative* (indicative versus subjunctive). We made a correlation of stylistic contexts with these linguistic variables, as we can see below. Table 1: Most recurrent linguistic variables of the epistolary sample.

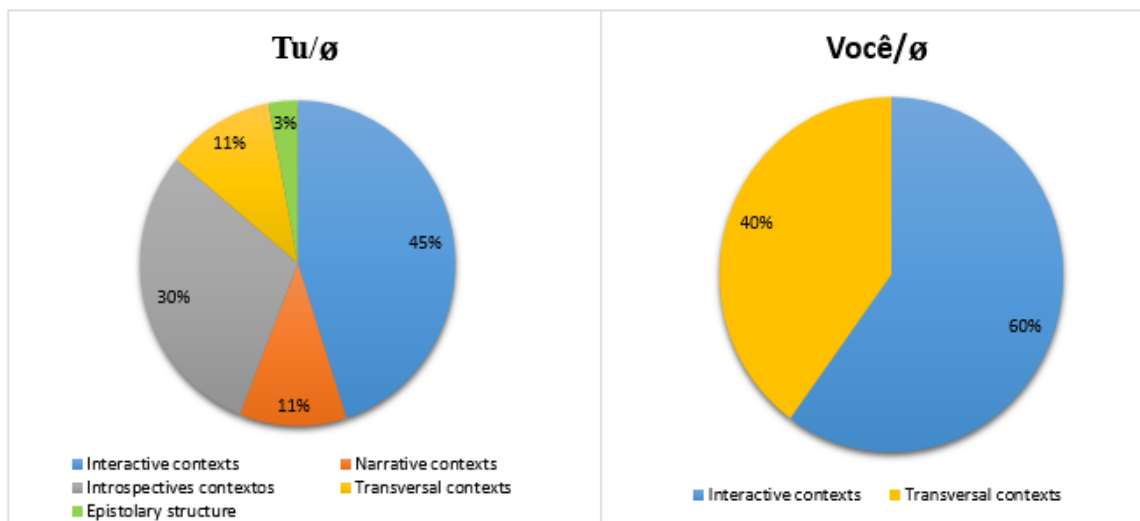
Linguistics Variables	Theme topics	Interactive contexts					Narrative contexts			Introspective contexts				Transversal contexts					Epistolary structure	Total							
		Explicit reply to a previous letter	Explicit question to the interlocutor	Rhetorical question	Advice	Explicit request	Personal narrative	Narrative of vicarious experience	Hypothetical projection	Self-reflections	Reflections on other	Personal opinion	Generic opinion	Description of the writing letter's moment	Reported speech	Blessing	Compliment	Gratitude			Comments about the language	Verses and rhymes	Final greeting				
2 nd second-person singular pronouns	Tu/ø	Family; Politics;	17	3	4	2	5	5		3	3			18						4		4				2	70
	Você/ø	Emotions; Media; Health	3																	2							5
1 st first-person plural pronouns	Nós/ø	Family; Politics;	1			2		5		4	5			10	7					1	1						36
	A gente/ø	Emotions; Media; Health; Childhood; Ontological reflection				2	1	3		1	1			6	5												19
2 nd second-person of Imperative	Indicativo	Family; Politics; Emotions;				14	15			2				3	1					1			1				37
	Subjuntivo	Media; Health				1	3	1						1										1		7	44

From Zibetti (2018, p. 150).

In the letters analyzed, we found high use of the pronoun **tu**, that some studies on speech data show the use of this pronoun is frequent on the Santa Catarina coast (cf. SCHERRE et al., 2009; among others). Such studies also show that informants use this pronominal when the interlocutor is a family member or someone very close to the speaker. Therefore, the results show that the pronominal form **tu** appears in all stylistic contexts: *interactive*, *introspective groups*, *narrative*, and *transversal*, including in the epistolary structure, whereas the form **você** appears only in the *interactive* and *transversal* contexts groups.

Considering that this linguistic variable is related to the interaction between the sender and the addressee, the contextual group with the highest frequency in the two cases was the *interactive contexts*, as we expected.

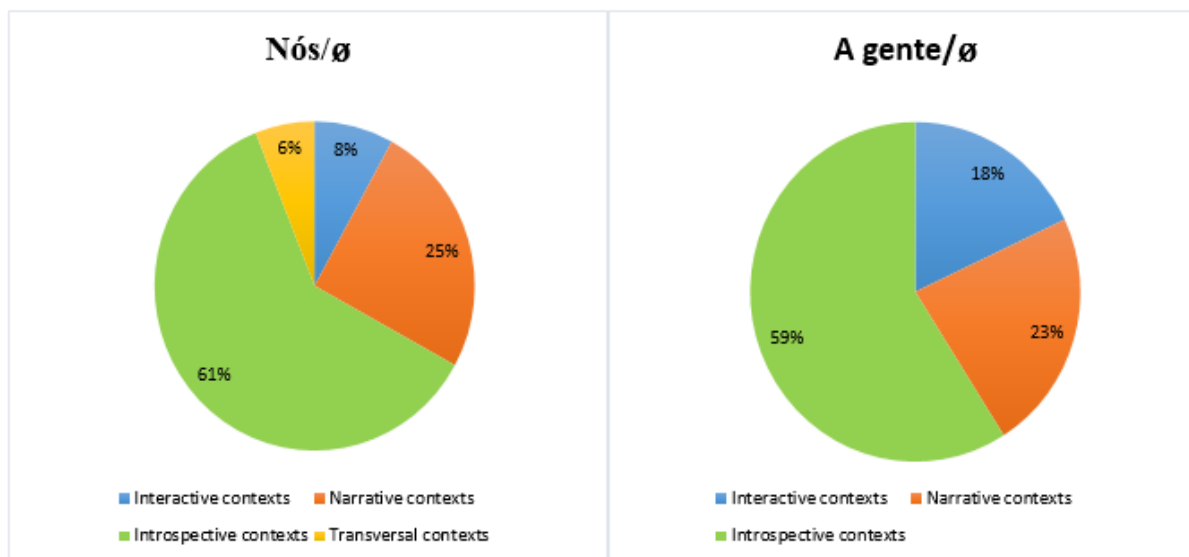
Chart 1: The use frequencies of the pronouns tu and você related to stylistic contextual groups.



From Zibetti (2018, p. 152).

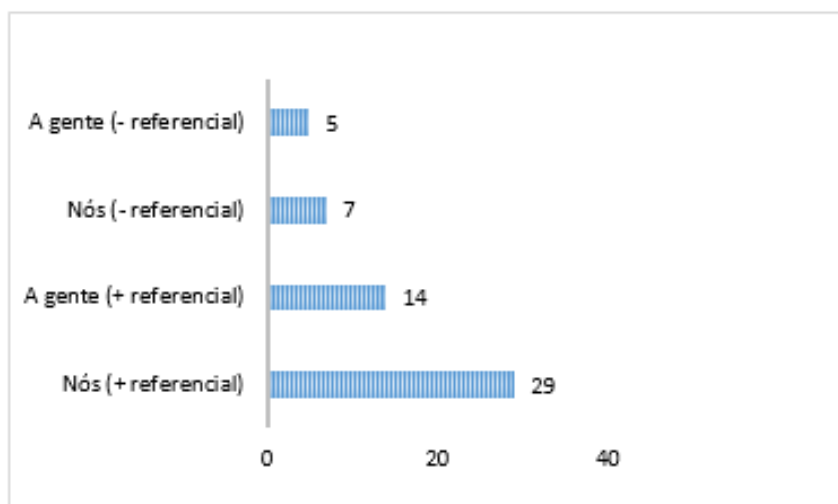
The pronoun **nós** appear in all stylistic contexts: in interactive, introspective, narrative, and transversal groups, and the pronoun **a gente** appears in the interactive, introspective, and narrative groups. This linguistic variable is related to a personal pronoun form, the notion of the "I" plural (cf. LOPES, 1998), and at the same time, it is related to a no personal pronoun form, the notion of the "I - expanded" (cf. LOPES, 1998), used by the sender when exposes her point of view, evaluations, and opinions, i.e., appearing in introspective contexts.

Chart 2: The use frequencies of the first-person plural pronouns (**nós** and **a gente**) related to stylistic contextual groups.



From Zibetti (2018, p. 155).

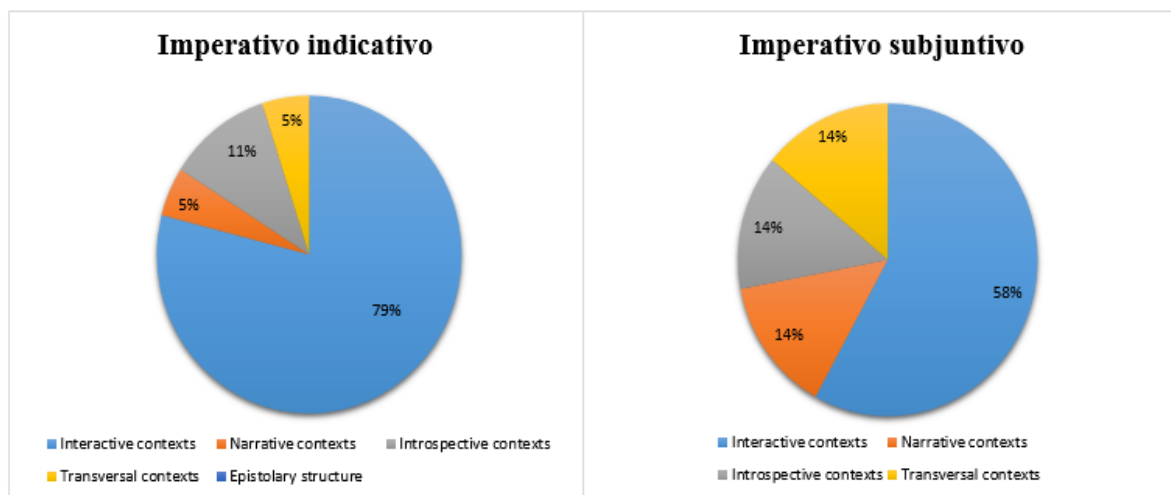
Chart 3: Usage number of **nós** and **a gente** in the sample people *Letters from Aunt Ciça*



From Zibetti (2018, p. 158).

The variable forms of the second person in the imperative, in indicative and in subjunctive moods, appear in all stylistic contexts: interactive, introspective, narrative, and transversal groups. As this linguistic variable is related to the interaction between the sender and the interlocutor, the contextual group of higher frequency was that of interactive contexts, as expected, due to the injunctive characteristic of these stylistic contexts.

Chart 4: The use frequencies of the second person in the imperative (in indicative and the subjunctive mood) related to stylistic context groups.



From Zibetti (2018, p. 160).

In sum, the first variable, (i) second-person singular pronoun (**tu** versus **voce**), was more frequent in the group of interactive contexts, with variation in the stylistic contexts *reported speech* and *explicit reply to a previous letter*. The second variable, (ii) first-person plural pronouns (**nós** versus **a gente**), was more frequent in the group of introspective contexts, with variation in the stylistic contexts *personal opinion*, *generic opinion* and *self-reflection*. Also, the third variable, (iii) variable forms of the second person imperative (**indicative** form versus **subjunctive** form), was more frequent in the group of interactive contexts, with variation in the stylistic contexts *advice* and *explicit request*. The results show that the linguistic variables most commonly used by the sender concerning stylistic contexts reinforce the character of each contextual group and show a certain degree of friendship and familiarity between the interlocutors.

Final remarks

In response to the first question raised in this paper⁴³, we show that this study made a possible capture of the stylistic contexts through an exhaustive survey of the utterances that characterize relations of interaction and cooperation between the sender and the addressee.

About the second question⁴⁴, we also show utterances that characterize different discursive aspects, such as narratives, evaluations, and compositions among others, by a more interpretive and qualitative bias.

⁴³ (i) *How to capture the stylistic contexts (from which elements?) in personal letters from the sample of Letters from Aunt Ciça?*

⁴⁴ (ii) *What is expected from a methodology for the study of the stylistic alternation of contextual styles in the writing of personal letters?*

Concerning the third question⁴⁵, our methodological proposal made it possible to investigate the stylistic contexts correlated to certain linguistic phenomena, as can be seen in the testing of the model. The general results of this correlation reinforce the high degree of friendship and familiarity between the interlocutors. The study also showed the proximity of the sender's writing with some orality uses, mainly in specific stylistic contexts, such as narrative contexts, interactive contexts, and introspective contexts groups.

Conscious of some limitations of the research, we evaluate that this study can be adjusted in other samples of personal letters, taking into consideration the individualities of the writing of each sender and adapting some criteria of the contextual styles to the sample in which intend to investigate. Furthermore, we believe that the stylistic contexts can be analyzed as a complex independent variable (composed of a set of social-stylistic factors) correlated to the study of some dependent variables. Thus, we hope that this methodological proposal can inspire new ways of studying style in personal letters.

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⁴⁵ (iii) *What is expected from a mapping of stylistic alternates in the writing of a single individual (the sender)?*

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