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## **Digital Text and Brazilian Folklore: Discussion on Referential Activity and Beyond**

### **Abstract**

This paper discusses how socio-communicative practices that originate in oral tradition, with a focus on Brazilian legends, manifest themselves in the digital environment. It foregrounds the production of discourse objects as a category of analysis and approaches the theoretical assumptions of linguistic and cultural studies through an interdisciplinary approach. It is a study of a theoretical-analytical nature that aims to answer the following research questions: How are Brazilian folk narratives constructed in multimodal texts-based interactions in digital environment? How are the objects of discourse constructed in the analyzed texts? The analyzed texts were collected through screenshots of interactions on public Facebook pages. It is hoped that the results will allow us to understand how digital texts are constructed and show how referential processes contribute to text construction and meaning production, deepening studies of language use in digital environments.

**Keywords:** digital text, folk narratives, referencing, linguistic analysis, meaning making

### **Introduction**

Technological devices progressively occupy minimal physical space, but significantly influence contemporary sociocommunicative practices. They facilitate the emergence of new and diverse human experiences and contribute to the expansion of such practices. Some of these communicative practices originating from oral tradition and orality (Marcuschi 2010, Calvet 2011, Peck 2023), such as myths and legends, have already extended to digital environments and since the beginning of the last decade of the last century and are the subject of study by scholars of language and culture (Lopes 2007, Howard 2008, Zarenti and Katsadoros 2023). As part of the multifaceted communicative practices of everyday life, we find an increasing reliance on machines and digital environments for our interactions.

Chatfield (2012) warns us:

[i]f we are to live with technology in the best possible way, we must recognize that what matters most is not the individual devices we use, but the human experiences they can create. Digital media are technologies of the mind and of experience. (Chatfield 2012: 27)

These experiences enabled by digital technologies and digital media have given rise to new communicative environment, practices, and textual-discursive genres such as Facebook and Instagram comments, tweets, memes, and Tiktoks videos that did not exist a several years ago. Paveau (2017) argues that digital native genres are marked by a technodiscursive dimension, wherein they emerge and thrive in a technologically driven environment, tightly interconnected with various technological tools (such as smartphones, blogs, apps, websites, and more). Simultaneously, there exist textual-discursive genres that were traditionally associated solely with orality and oral tradition, including myths, legends, and tales that transmit cultural perspectives and worldviews. Interestingly, these genres have now witnessed a notable shift towards written forms, gaining prevalence across diverse social networks on the Internet. It is this latter group of genres and sociocommunicative practices that will serve as the main point of our analysis in this article. In relation to the folk/popular oral narratives genres in the digital environment, Peck (2020) argues that vernacular behaviors, practices, expressions, and creativity are extended, familiar, and foreign in the digital environment, but that new opportunities are emerging for institutions seeking to sell products, circumvent fact checkers, collect data, or influence people.

Indeed, new sociocommunicative practices such as digital texts require new skills, new ways of thinking, and new methods of managing one's relationships with others, combining different semiotic resources, or the ability to create coherent reading paths in hypertexts (Jones, Hafner 2012). In numerous contemporary, everyday interactions, many people acquire such skills by experimenting with and producing texts, but many of them are unaware of how they manage their communication and the relationships they have with others. Given the use of machines in online interactions, then, it is worth thinking about the notion of text support and the notion of a digital environment with language material as a composite.

Embedded within the field of Text Linguistics (Marcuschi 2008, Koch 2021), in this study a conceptual clarity regarding the terms "digital" and "text" as key-notions is important. This notion of the "digital" aligns with Pierre Lévy's (2011: 11) understanding of virtuality, which characterizes it as a "deterritorialized" entity capable of assuming various real manifestations across different moments and specific locations, transcending confinement to a singular time and place. Contrary to initial perceptions, these terms 'digital' and 'virtual' are not excluding but rather complementary. In stating that the text on a smartphone is 'virtual', we are referring to a characteristic modality of manifestation. This form does not present itself with the tangibility of printed text but operates through various methods such as hypertext. Thus, there are distinct forms of realities: one being the reality of the linguistic system (virtual reality), and the other, empirical reality, which is concrete; this is not paradoxal as the dichotomy lies between virtual and concrete, not virtual and real, as highlighted by Marcuschi (2008).

Such real communicative manifestations, and communication itself occurs through texts, which can be conceived as communicative events where linguistic, social, and cognitive actions converge (Beaugrande 1977: 10). Understanding this foundational concept is of paramount importance when addressing and investigating the phenomenon discussed in this paper, that is, the referential strategies engendered in the textual construction of meanings.

As Beaugrande defines it, a text represents a comprehensive model, consisting of interconnected data and facts acquired by an individual or organization through knowledge or experience. Cabral (2016) extends the notion of text somewhat by introducing interactionist aspects to the understanding of the object:

[t]he text is a sociocognitive situated event in an interactional context; it takes place in an enunciative framework, in an intersubjective relationship between text producers who make linguistic choices and organize textual materiality according to an enunciative purpose that implies an argumentative goal. (Cabral 2016: 39)

This notion is based on the interactive and socio-cognitive perspective of language (Koch 2021), in which the text is the site of interaction.

In language, text, and discourse studies, researchers such as Marcuschi (2008) define support as the place where the text is fixed, and which gives the text a particular form of configuration and handling. Discourse analyst Marie-Anne Paveau (2013), in her study of digital discourse, goes even further in explaining the notion of the environment by adopting an ecological perspective. For this author, the notion of environment contains more elements than that context, as it allows the integration of the interdependent relationship between the text and the technological context in digital environments. In this way, the linguistic matter is composite, i.e., linguistic, multisemiotic, and technological, because it involves the mixing of the human and the technological. Thus, an ecological approach is required in which all linguistic gestures are considered in the totality of utterances distributed through the environment (Paveau 2013, 2017). From the ecological perspective, a digital native discourse has technological components that are not described in “traditional linguistic analysis”, such as enunciative gestures, movements that the reader/writer makes with the body that evoke meanings, such as the act of clicking and accessing textual information (Paveau 2017), with a continuum between the verbal and the nonverbal with no opposition between the two.

Considering the above, we argue that describing the elements on the text surface does not do justice to the complexity of the phenomenon, *i.e.* the linguistic and multimodal productions that emerge from interactions in digital environments. From the perspective of text linguistics as an interdisciplinary field, it is possible to go beyond the surface and understand the importance of interaction and socio-cognition established in the production of interlocutors/social actors, since this field of study is interested in the regulating and controlling linguistic and cognitive operations of production, construction, operation, and reception of written or oral texts (Marcuschi 2012).

Thus, this paper focuses on the examination of multimodal written texts within the Facebook social network as the primary object of analysis. These texts, originating from Brazilian myths and legends, have now proliferated within the digital spaces, appearing in various forms of communicative interactions. Particularly, these texts and comments exhibit evident traces of orality and the oral tradition inherent to Brazilian culture, yet they also refract the perception of reality (Bakhtin [1979] 2011, Marcuschi 2007) and culture within the cultural environment.

## Method

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This study is qualitative and theoretical-analytical in nature (Paiva 2019, Koch 2021). This study aims to analyze how Brazilian legends are part of the interaction in the digital environment, focusing specifically on the referent or object of discourse as a category of analysis.

Knowing how lively the discussion on referentiality is Text Linguistics (Marcuschi 2008, Cavalcante *et al.* 2014, Silva and Cortez 2020, Guimarães 2020, Koch 2021), and intending to make a contribution, even if small, to this discussion, we propose in this paper to focus on the referencing process in order to answer the following research questions: how are Brazilian folk narratives constructed in multimodal texts-based interactions in digital environment? How are the objects of discourse constructed in the analyzed texts?

The sample analyzed in the study were chosen for two main reasons. First, the characters, such as Saci Pererê and Cobra Grande, are widely known in Brazilian culture, which facilitates the understanding of the potential reader of this text and increases the chances of finding communicative exchanges about these characters. Second, these examples provide the opportunity to examine the dynamics of text construction, the objects of discourse, both in the author's creation of the post and in the interactions between users through comments and nonverbal responses such as the use of emojis, which allows the analyst to answer the research questions. The analyzed texts were collected through screenshots of interactions on public Facebook pages. It is hoped that the results will enable an understanding of how digital texts are constructed and demonstrate how referential processes contribute to textual construction and the production of meaning.

## Folk Narratives in the Digital Environment

Based on the theoretical assumptions outlined in the introduction and the area of research that fits this study, it is worth discussing the contributions of folklore studies and their relationship to new sociocommunicative practices in the digital environment to highlight the importance of these studies for learning about communicative practices, narratives, and genres.

McDowell (2018) notes that the spoken word and its written derivatives in online venues such as posts on networks “remains at the center of social life in the world's societies. Verbal forms of expressive culture continue to figure in the political and spiritual life of the world's peoples, and forms of talk connect and separate people just as they have in the past” (McDowell 2018: 8). People, then, develop through and in language as they express their perceptions of the world around them in constant interaction with others. Storytelling has a playful role, and given the activation of imagination, it is perceived differently depending on individuals' experiences, opinions, and perceptions (Kapaniaris, Konstantopoulou 2020). Storytelling and listening are present in a wide variety of interactions in everyday life and organize human thought and experience.

Šešo (2020) argues that folk legends and beliefs in supernatural beings do not disappear, but change, are reshaped, and are displaced by new forms. The author calls the “process of the “transplantation” of belief legends from their “original” environment” Šešo (2020: 185) and examines how legends are used in traditional celebrations in Croatia. Although our assumption deviates from the author's goal, as we try to approach textual and discourse studies, it is important to know how recent studies have treated legends

and other folk narratives considering contemporary social and communicative practices and how we can bring human language studies closer to folklore studies.

Hymes (1971) argued already in the early 1970s in a text that folklore studies are “more suited than any other discipline” to explore “the creative aspect of language use.” In attempting to define what folklore is, he uses two criteria that he finds interesting: First, he defines folklore in terms of the study of genres; second, he defines folklore in terms of the study of communicative behavior with an esthetic, expressive, or stylistic dimension. For the author, all speech should be considered as an organization in terms of speech acts “and thus as manifestations of the repertoire of a community of speech acts and genres. There is no speech that is not an example of such an act and genre” (Hymes 1971: 50). Based on the second definition of the author, we defend that the description and analysis of the text production strategies used by the interlocutors/users in the interactions can prepare for possible communicative behaviors that are still poorly described in *referentiality* studies.

Dorji (2010) emphasizes the importance of oral traditions such as folktales, legends, and myths in passing on our traditional values and preserving our unique culture and traditions. The author warns of the danger of extinction of our oral traditions by the forces of globalization and commercial entertainment. Kropelj (2007), in turn, based on an observation of more urbanized societies, states that people generally no longer tell traditional folk tales and fairy tales on social occasions or simply to pass the time, an aspect that also appears in the works of Dorji (2010) and Šešo (2020). However, those position differs from the proposal made in this study and from the notion of text and language advocated in this paper, because it is considered that socio-communicative practices are updated when they lose aspects of the original culture at all (Figueira-Cardoso and Dubin 2022), we are not interested, then, in categorizing or defining a genre, but in how language is used to fulfill a project of (story)telling.

De Seta (2020: 180) argues that “digital folklore is anything but singular and unified and hardly the expression of any one culture”, it is this complexity and diversity of modes, genres, and styles that challenges the analyst in attempting to name them, as Dégh (1991, 2001) argues in his comparative work on legends and beliefs. Robert Glenn Howard (2008: 193), who is also cited by De Seta (2020: 172), pointed out in the early 1990s the existence of “technologically mediated folklore” in the form of urban legends, folk beliefs, and storytelling practices that were disseminated via the Internet. This indicates that scholars’ attention to the importance of these socio-communicative practices mediated by technology is fundamental to understanding the communicative behavior of social groups and (socio-)linguistic communities.

De Seta (2020) also points out that:

On the one hand, digital folklore is the folklore of the digital, a continuation of long-standing practices and genres of content through relatively new media; on the other, digital folklore is a stark break with the past, a new form of vernacular creativity and a self-reflexive aesthetic of user-driven folk art. (De Seta 2020: 180)

We agree with the author on the first definition, since there is indeed a semantic content that is repeated in the new and old versions of the legends. In our view, this is because in communicative practices perceptions of the world are recorded in a particular socio-communicative interaction in a particular sociocommunicative context, which leads to the textual regularities of the textual surface. On the other hand, we reject the position that these practices, *i.e.* digital folklore, represent a “total break with the past” because we understand language as a sociohistorically situated interactive activity. In this way, the genres that emerge in machine-mediated communicative exchanges are hybrid, interactive genres that transcend

the linear organization of writing and reading texts by involving the recipient/user of digital media in the formatting of the text.

The development of communication technologies is only one aspect that enables the materiality of new ways of speaking, new interactive experiences, and the organization of the world in society in and through language. Thus, today's online interactions serve not only for information exchange, but also for entertainment, social contacts, and exchange of opinions, including very personal opinions, which include the expression of emotions (Krawczyk-Wasilewska 2016), but also of apprehensions, fears, and anxieties to express the perception of the real.

Of the best-known genres of folk narratives – myth, legend, folktale, oral narrative –, this study focuses on legend, a genre that is difficult to define because

legend is more contested than other genres, and a true legend event is therefore not the solo performance... It is a dispute, a dialectical duel of ideas, principles, beliefs, and passions. (Dégh and Vázsonyi 1978: 253)

Without claiming to seek a definition of legend, which deviates from the aim of this study, it is appropriate to introduce three concepts that can contribute to the understanding of this phenomenon. Knowing the linguistic and cultural diversity in Brazil, it is worth noting that a large part of traditional and indigenous peoples still maintains the original conception of legends. In this sense, Oring (1986) explains that

legends are considered narratives that focus on a single episode, an episode that is presented as miraculous, uncanny, bizarre, or sometimes embarrassing. The telling of a legend is, in a sense, the negotiation of the truth of those episodes. This is not to say that legends are always believed to be true, as some scholars have argued that at the heart of the legend is an evaluation of its truth status. It may be that a particular narrative is considered false or true, or false by some and true by others. (Oring 1986: 125)

This negotiation of truth, constructed in and through language between the social actors involved in a given communicative event, is what happens in local communities in the Brazilian Amazon, as Cascudo (2011) argues:

“confused between myths and traditions, indigenous legends are more delicate confidences, a fraternal communication, an appeal to the sincerity of understanding through a complex of secrets and evidence, radiant, suggestive, like a day in the rainforest where there is light and shadow at the same time and everywhere”. (Cascudo 2011: 11)

This happens with the legend of the Cobra Grande, very famous in the Amazon, and the Saci Pererê, which will be analyzed later.

Moura (2013), in studying the written narratives of the Amazon legends, argues that the semantic-discursive and referential configuration of the elements that belong to the legend itself, that is, the older versions, begin to insert other discursive elements to manifest new or foreign meanings to those expressed in the legendary construction of which they are remnants and tributaries, what the author calls popular oral narrative. This change of attitude can be understood in a continuum of legend-myth-popular oral narrative, that is, other ways of telling the legend emerge, so that there is a kind of dismantling of this form of configuration considered “ancestral” or old - without losing the linguistic and discursive features from which they originate, and which give a particular meaning to the mode of discursive structuring of these elements.

Considering the above, when discussing folk narratives in the digital environment, we acknowledge the contributions of folklore and seek to advance the discussion from a linguistic, socio-cognitive, and interactionist perspective. We therefore emphasize that the theoretical position of the researcher guides the understanding of the research object under study and therefore may not have a definitive answer (which also proves to be unfavorable to the discussion) in terms of naming the textual-discursive genre, leaving the analysis at the discursive level, *i.e.* representations, beliefs, and values. This often leads to a vague zone of what is a legend, for example. On the other hand, in our study we have tried to understand what choices the speaker/text producer makes and how he uses language to realize his speech project, considering the text as a unit of meaning, as advocated by the authors mentioned in this study. Thus, the next section is devoted to the analysis of the textual-discursive strategies involving the objects of discourse (referents), especially the referential introduction and the anaphoric strategies.

### **Referentiality in Digital Communicative Interactions: Cobra Grande and Saci Pererê**

Apothéloz and Reichler-Béguelin (1995), Mondada and Dubois (2003), Marcuschi (2008), Koch (2003, 2021), Cavalcante (2015), and other scholars defend the dynamic character of reference. Therefore, considering the theoretical assumptions discussed in this paper, we analyze how referents are constructed in texts in digital environment.

Referents are culturally adapted constructs whose intersubjective representation and formalization are constantly negotiated in co-text (Cavalcante 2015). Mondada (1994) calls them objects of discourse, a representation nourished by linguistic activity. In this paper, referent and object of discourse terms are used interchangeably.

In the sociocognitive perspective, “the real” world “passes through the speaker’s cognitive processing and is reprocessed according to his sociocultural experiences and only temporarily stabilized according to the project of speaking” (Guimarães 2020: 5). Thus, the referent is a sociocognitive construction of discourse objects that reveal versions of reality and are produced through negotiation processes” (Cavalcante *et al.* 2014: 41–42).

In this theoretical proposal, referentiality is treated sociocognitive and interactionally. The social aspect is considered through the linguistic-textual referents that incorporate the referencing strategies in the construction of the text-discourse meanings that intervene in the text configuration. The cognitive aspect emphasizes that referents are concepts in the minds of speakers and addressees (Kribik 2011) and that their processing takes place through lexico-grammatical choices that result from the mobilization of the prior knowledge of the subjects involved.

Studies related to text linguistics practiced in Brazil have pointed to three basic features of referentiality: the (re)elaboration of reality, the elaboration of lived and perceived experiences; the negotiation between interlocutors, the joint (negotiated) construction of discourse objects; and the socio-cognitive nature, dynamic, socio-cognitively motivated operations. Recent studies highlight three main categories of referential processes: referential introduction, anaphora, and deixis (see: Koch and Cunha-Lima 2005, Salomão 2003, Cavalcante *et alii.* 2020, Barros 2022).

A referential introduction occurs when an object of discourse is inserted into the text without having been previously anchored in an element of discourse (Koch 2021). Anaphora, a referential strategy

that involves the reintroduction of the same discourse object through new referential expressions in a direct, indirect, or encapsulated manner. Deixis, in turn, is defined by the ability to establish a connection between the cotext and the enunciative situation of the communication participants. Deictic referential expressions can both introduce and reintroduce object of discourse and resume them (see: Koch 2021, Cavalcante *et al.* 2014, Oliveira and Figueira-Cardoso 2023), or there are recent studies indicating an anaphora-deixis continuum (Dos Santos and Cavalcante 2014).

Thus, studies on the phenomenon of referencing have been focused on the written verbal text, with researchers devoted to understanding the functioning of reference categories of observable linguistic devices in the written text (anaphora, encapsulation, recategorization). Currently, however, the referential processes approach is emphasized in considerations of intertextual narratives (Custódio Filho 2015) and multimodality, as the concept of text goes beyond verbal material and forms of representation (Fontenele and Carvalho 2022, Morais 2023).

Considering the anaphoric referential processes for text construction, we proceed to the analysis of two interactions carried out in the digital environment, discussing two legends related to the Brazilian folk narratives, the legend of Saci Pererê and the legend of Cobra Grande.

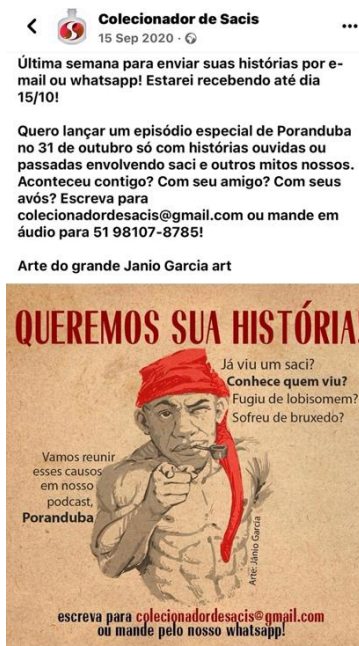


Figure 1. Post about Saci Pererê (base-text)<sup>1</sup>

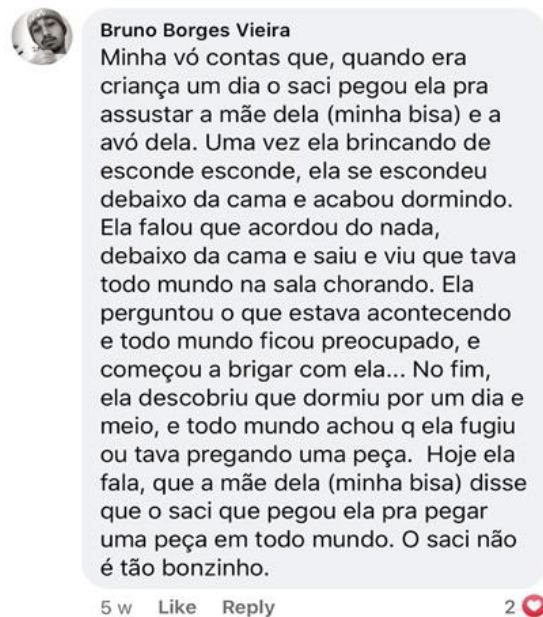


Figure 2. Comment on the post about Saci Pererê (text-comment)<sup>2</sup>

1 “Última semana para enviar...” post on the Colecionador de Sacis page. Source: Facebook, 20 September 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/colecionadordesacis/photos/pb.100063503110718.-2207520000/1834939799994810/?type=3> [date of access: 20 October 2023].

2 Comment on the post about Saci Pererê. “Última semana para enviar...” post on the Colecionador de Sacis page. Source: Facebook, 20 September 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/colecionadordesacis/photos/pb.100063503110718.-2207520000/1834939799994810/?type=3> [date of access: 20 October 2023].



*Base-text 01:*

I want to launch a special episode of Poranduba on the 31st of October, only with stories heard or past (orally!) involving Saci and other myths of ours. Did it happen to you? With your friend? With your grandparents? Write to xxxxx or send audio to xxxx

Art of the great XXXX

*Text-comment 01:*

My grandmother says that, when she was a child, one day Saci took her to scare her mother (my great-grandmother) and her grandmother. Since she was playing hide and seek, she hid under the bed and ended up sleeping. She said she woke up out of nowhere, under the bed, and came out and saw that everyone in the room was crying. She asked what was going on and everyone got worried and started to fight with her... In the end, she found that she slept a day and a half, and everyone thought she had run away or was playing a prank. Today she says that her mother (my great-grandmother) said that the Saci who took her to play a prank on everyone. The Saci is not so good.

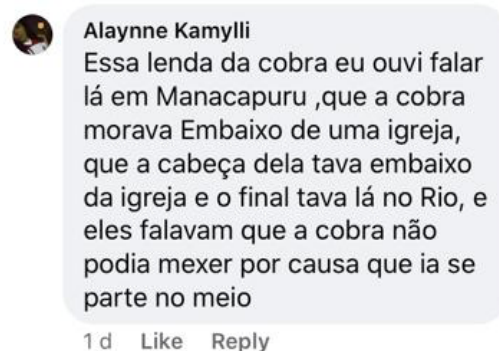
In the base text there is a text from the public page, *Colecionador de Sacis*, which asks followers to share stories with Saci Pererê, a character from Brazilian folklore whose best-known representation can be seen in the image that accompanies the text: a man or boy of short stature, thin, one-legged black man who wears a red cap. There is, therefore, a pure referential introduction, that is, “when there is no relationship with any other referent in the text” (Cavalcante 2011: 122). It is worth noting that Anastasia cited in Vieira (2009: 30) argues that the Saci “was the allegorical creation from European, African and indigenous myths”, a creation forged from the mixture of various entities that were present in both African and Western imaginary, since it has characteristics of African entities (Ossaim), indigenous legends (Yací Yaterê), Portuguese (Matinta Pereira and Fradinho), in addition to European elves.

In the selected comment, there is the formation of a referential chain (RC) through explicit retaking by repetition of lexical items: saci – saci – saci, from the base text. Although, the text mentions the request for legends and stories with different supernatural beings of Brazilian folklore, the Facebook page, and the image refer to Saci, which may be motivated many comments about Saci the date of data collection, October 2020.

Roncarati (2010) states that the constitution of referential chains is the integrative mechanism of the incoming information, “because, from the linguistic-cognitive and semantic-interactive processes, it allows to connect the information, continuously added to the referents throughout the sentences and paragraphs, in a dynamic and variable network of semantic interrelations” (2010: 22). In the author’s studies on referential chains point out that referencing strategies are subject to the differentiation between textual types and textual genres of speech and writing.

What draws attention in this comment is the use of the definite article for the introduction of the referent – o [the] saci, because according to Koch (2003) the choice of definite descriptions involves the activation of shared knowledge between the interlocutors able to reveal opinions, beliefs and attitudes of the speaker and, still, can bring new information, properties or data of the referent that, sometimes, are not known to the interlocutor.

The use of the definite article points to the construction of a socio-cognitive context shared between the interlocutors, without the need to establish the referent indefinitely, is not given textually, but is relevant to the manufacture of the referent and generates the maintenance of the topic and the reactivation of the focus of consciousness. There is, therefore, in Roncarati’s terms (2010: 142), a coreference and co-signification, but not recategorization.

Figure 3. Post about Cobra Grande (base-text)<sup>3</sup>Figure 4. Comment on the post about Cobra Grande (text-comment)<sup>4</sup>*Base-text 02:*

About the big snake that was under the central church.

Well, I always believed that!

Art of the big snake

*Text-comment 02:*

ALAYNNE: I heard about this snake legend in Manacapuru (town), that the snake lived under a church, that its head was under the church and the end (the tail) was in the river, and they said that the snake could not move because it would split in the middle.

In the base text 02, there is an art-post about the legend of the Cobra Grande (Big Snake), a legend whose place of origin is unknown, but there are versions in the city of Óbidos, Belém, Pará and Manacapuru, Amazonas. In one of the best-known versions of the legend, a large snake is standing under a Catholic church in some towns in the Amazon region. If for some reason it wakes up or moves, the church will be destroyed, and the city may even sink.

The introduction of the object of discourse through the referential expression “the big snake”, pointing to a “vizationalization” of the referent, at the same time, starting from a supposed sociocognitive context already established between the author of the text and the readers/interlocutors. Thus, it is possible to point out that this sociocognitive context is created by the image that one has in the text/post and reinforced by the referential expression, or by indications of both textual modalities. Thus, there is what

3 “Sobre a Cobra Grande...” post on the South Itapiranga memes page. Source: Facebook, 7 October 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/southitapirangamemes> [date of access: 20 October 2023].

4 Comment on the post “Sobre a Cobra Grande...” post on the South Itapiranga memes page. Source: Facebook, 7 October 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/southitapirangamemes> [date of access: 20 October 2023].

Koch (2021) called “anchored” activation of the referent, that is, a new object of discourse is introduced by virtue of some kind of association with elements present in the co-text or in the sociocognitive context, which can be established by association and/or inferencing.

In the comment selected for analysis, it can be observed that the interlocutor presents knowing the legend “this snake legend I heard about there in Manacapuru”. We thus resort to Ongodia (2014) who argues that storytelling reflects the journey of life, providing listeners with opportunities to explore their personal narratives in their social environment.



Figure 5. Comments on the post about Cobra Grande Figure 3 (text-comment)<sup>5</sup>

Through storytelling, the ability to understand life experiences in a meaningful way is enhanced. As can be observed in the base text, digital storytelling combines the act of storytelling from traditional practices with new technologies, *i.e.* the text is framed by the image of the snake under the church in the post of the base text, creating meanings and motivating new interactions in non-linear movements for the construction of texts, as seen in the comment sets of the base text 03.

*Text-comments 03:*

EDIMILSON: Sthephanne I don't know much about the story sis, but I only know that 5 are already gone there, when it falls into the water it disappears, it seems like something pulling

ISABELA: God is more

<sup>5</sup> Comments on the post “Sobre a Cobra Grande...” post on the South Itapiranga memes page. Source: Facebook, 7 October 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/southitapirangamemes> [date of access: 20 October 2023].

FLOW MEDUSA: Edimilson they told me this is also the river flow

EDIMILSON: Flow Medusa Well, a lot of people saw when something furry was pulling a man there at the port and he got all scratched up.

In this series of comments on text-comment 03, one can observe other classifications and textual-discursive strategies in the construction of the textual. There are other semiotics that point to the establishment of an ‘anchor’ with the object of discourse from the base-text, but it is also possible to see that from its new referents are established, as seen in Isabela’s comment “God is more”, opening new possibilities and engendering new meanings. Thus, in digital environment interactions, the construction of the discourse object and the reading of the text does not happen in a linear way. This happens, because in multiple texts, open to the establishment and management of objects of discourse, involving an indeterminate number of participants, working collaboratively, and in doing so, indicate attention to contextual aspects.

In Rosângela’s comment, in the continuation of the interaction, the referent was not lexicalized, in the construction of the text, the referential expression ‘uma lenda – a legend’ has the anaphoric function, contributing to the construction of meaning, because it is already part of the discursive memory of the reader introduced in the base text of the post. Recent studies show that the referent can appear in the text in other ways, for example, through contextual inferences and knowledge that are activated at the time of reading (Cavalcante *et al.* 2014, Guimarães 2020, Custódio Filho 2021).

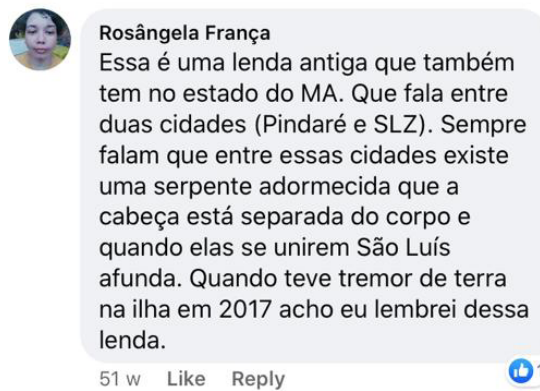


Figure 6. Comment on the post about Cobra Grande Figure 3 (text-comment)<sup>6</sup>

#### *Text-comments 04:*

ROSÂNGELA: This is an old legend that also has in the state of MA. That speaks between two cities (Pindaré and SLZ). They always say that between these cities there is a sleeping serpent whose head is separated from the body and when they come together São Luís sinks. When there was an earthquake on the island in 2017, I think I remembered this legend.

<sup>6</sup> Comment on the post “Sobre a Cobra Grande...” post on the South Itapiranga memes page. Source: Facebook, 7 October 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/southitapirangamemes> [date of access: 20 October 2023].

### Final remarks

Throughout this paper, we seek to examine how communicative interactions and practices manifest in the digital environment take place, with a special focus on Brazilian folk narratives and the phenomenon of referentiality in discourse.

The text-based multimodal communicative interactions in this environment provide a rich locus for the analysis of linguistic and cultural phenomena, illuminating both the evolution of oral traditions in a digitalized context and the processes by which objects of discourse are constructed and meaning is produced. Through the analysis of texts collected from public Facebook pages, we were able to observe and dissect the interaction between elements of orality and digital native practices, unraveling the intricate interweaving of sociocultural context and technological possibilities that go beyond the simple 'support' that is given by the machine.

The study unearthed how traditional narratives are dynamically constructed within a multimodal digital environment and showed how various referential processes are instrumental in this construction and, by extension, in the creation of meaning. It is emphasized that the analyzed aspects of referencing indicate how it happens in several texts open to the creation and management of objects of discourse, involving an indefinite number of participants who work collaboratively, paying attention to contextual and cultural aspects.

It is also highlighted that the referential processes that arise for the construction of the referent are fundamental to the textual process, which highlights the importance of the studies for writing, reading, teaching, and text comprehension. In this sense, we recall Custódio Filho (2015: 275), who states that when studying interaction situations that are different from those usually analyzed, it is possible to find other ways of manifesting textual-discursive strategies that have not yet been adequately considered by the 'usual' text linguistic research. In the case of the author in the study of intertextual referencing, which, according to the author, is a reflection on another manifestation of referencing, which was possible only when he "directed attention to texts whose interaction process takes place in another sphere, in terms of the forms of interaction between subjects and texts" (Custódio Filho 2015: 275).

In our case, it is the referentiality in digital-multimodal-textual interactions as communicative events (Marcuschi 2008, Koch 2021) laden with cultural materialities of oral tradition. At the same time, it points to the need to know not what, but how texts and communicative practices are performed and how they can help us understand linguistic and cultural use in digital environments.

In conclusion, it is important to recognize that the present study's findings are specific to the analyzed data and may not universally apply to all digital communicative practices, but with aspirations to move forward in future studies, this study proves relevant to the field of humanities, especially in terms of crossing the boundaries of linguistic and cultural studies, as it highlights emerging socio-communicative practices (thus, language in use), experiences, and beliefs that are sometimes marginalized in the professional literature and language teaching materials.

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