

## Polifonia na Comédia Stand-up Portuguesa: Uma abordagem Sócio-Discursiva para a Construção da Identidade

### Polyphony in Portuguese Stand-up Comedy:

### A Socio-Discursive approach to Identity Construction

MOROZOVA, MILANA A.  
milana1002@gmail.com

Centro de Linguística da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal

#### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE:**

Identidade;  
Polifonia;  
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Sócio-discursivo;  
Vozes enunciativas;  
Stand-up comedy.

**RESUMO:** O presente artigo visa analisar alguns mecanismos linguísticos que contribuem para a construção de identidade. Privilegiando uma abordagem interacionista sócio-discursiva, o objetivo é descobrir até que ponto a polifonia (Bakhtin, 1981) e, mais especificamente, a distribuição de vozes através dos pronomes pessoais no discurso contribuem para a construção de identidade do comediante no género ainda pouco explorado stand-up comedy em português. Numa perspectiva franco-suíça (Bronckart, 2012), o termo “vozes enunciativas” remete para os mecanismos que contribuem para o estabelecimento de coerência pragmática (ou interativa) do texto. Este artigo demonstra como um comediante cria diferentes identidades no discurso, alternando entre as vozes do autor empírico, as vozes sociais e as vozes das personagens. Em particular, a análise textual demonstra a forma como as alterações de pronomes pessoais (nomeadamente, *eu* e *nós*) são utilizadas como estratégia não apenas para produzir um efeito humorístico mas também para exibir dinamicamente aspetos da identidade do comediante. Os comediantes podem “apagar” ou distanciar-se de suas identidades individuais, identificando-se com a voz social. Assumindo a responsabilidade, eles visam enfatizar sua própria identidade individual em oposição à voz social, zombando frequentemente de princípios e ordens sociais. O domínio raramente investigado de *stand-up comedy* fornece dados originais para a análise da identidade do comediante e da maneira como ele é retratado no discurso.

#### **KEY-WORDS:**

Identity;  
Polyphony;  
Socio-Discursive Interactionism;  
Enunciative voices;  
Stand-up comedy.

**ABSTRACT:** This paper focuses on some of the linguistic devices, which contribute to identity construction. Adopting a socio-discursive interactionist approach, the goal is to discover the extent to which polyphony (Bakhtin, 1981) and, more specifically, the distribution of voices by means of personal pronouns in discourse contribute to comedian's identity construction in the understudied genre of Portuguese stand-up comedy. In a Franco-Swiss perspective (Bronckart, 2012), the term “enunciative voices” stands for mechanisms that contribute to the establishment of pragmatic (or interactive) coherence of the text. This paper demonstrates how a comedian creates different identities in discourse by shifting between the voices of empirical author, social voices, and voices

of characters. In particular, the textual analysis shows how pronoun shifts (e.g. between *I* and *we*) are used as a strategy not only to produce a humorous effect; it is also used to dynamically display aspects of the comedian's identity. Comedians may distance and erase their individual identities by identifying with the social voice. Or, by assuming responsibility, they aim at emphasizing their own individual identity as opposed to the social voice, often mocking social principles and orders. The seldom investigated domain of Portuguese stand-up comedy provides a rich ground for the analysis of the comedian's self and the way it is portrayed in discourse.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Identity construction in discourse have been previously analyzed in various studies (for instance, de Fina, 2006, 2011; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Bamberg, de Fina & Schiffrin, 2007, 2010; Bamberg, 2009, 2011; Hall, 2000; Moita Lopes, 2006). Majority of these studies are placed in the context of social constructionism, which suggests several characteristic features of identity together with specific conditions for its construction.

First and foremost, social constructionist perspective looks at identity construction as a process grounded in different kinds of social practices and activities (de Fina 2006, p. 353). Identity is not a static, psychological construct; rather, it is seen as a dynamic product, which emerges in the process of human social activity. In other words, identity is not seen as something a human possesses or can be characterized by. On the contrary, it is associated with an action within a social practice, or with “doing” something instead of a stable state of “being” (de Fina, 2011, p. 267).

Secondly, identity is primarily constructed through language and linguistic resources a particular language provides. Besides, identity construction is always contextualized, as it is negotiated in discourse: “language and discourse are central to the construction and negotiation of identities”, (de Fina, 2011, p. 263). It is through linguistic materialization that we convey the image of ourselves and identify others. In particular, different narratives emerging in different social practices are seen as specific loci for emergence of identities. According to Bamberg, de Fina & Schiffrin (2010, p. 180), narratives have become a privileged form of discourse for identity analysis, because “it is by way of narrative that people are said to be able to construct a sense of a continuous self – one that fuses past and future orientation together into one’s present identity”. By telling stories, narrators present social worlds they are part of; they evaluate these worlds and positions themselves as members of particular social groups through interactional, linguistic, rhetorical and stylistic choices (de Fina 2006, p. 352). Identity is therefore a dynamic, plastic phenomenon, which is constructed in discourse by means of various linguistic devices and easily transforms/adapts to new contexts and practices.

Thirdly, identity is a discursive construct that emerges in interaction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 587). In other words, construction of identities thorough linguistic materialization is not a one-sided process. It is directed towards an addressee/receiver, i.e., it is via human communication that identity takes shape. Social interaction between individuals is one of the key conditions within a particular social context and/or group to convey different aspects of their identity.

Finally, identity is seen as a cultural phenomenon, emerging in the process of human day-to-day interaction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 588). It means that by means of language interaction we convey what kind of people we are and which historical, geographical, ethnical, socio-economic, religious and ethical values we transmit.

Conceptualizations of identity vary and depend on the theoretical stances researchers take towards the existing alternative views. In social psychology, identity is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1981, p. 355). In sociocultural perspective, identity is broadly defined as “the social positioning of self and other” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 586). In discourse, the concept of identity can be specified as “an independent variable, accounting for participants’ use of particular linguistic or discourse devices; as a means of referring to and making inferences about self and other; as a constructed display of group membership, as a rhetorical device, etc.” (Zimmerman, 1998, p. 87). In narratology, which is a privileged form of discourse for identity analysis, it is seen as “the attempt to differentiate and integrate a sense of self along different social and personal dimensions” (Bamberg, 2009, p. 132). Despite several nuances of meaning, these definitions convey one common idea, i.e., identity can be described as a process of either individual’s assumption of his “self” and, therefore, distancing from “others”, or, on the opposite, involvement and identification with “others” by means of identity erasure. In any case, these switches between “self” and “others” in the process of identity construction can be intentionally employed by narrators as a strategy to achieve a desired effect.

This paper focuses on stand-up comedians, who construct their identities through linguistic choices and manifest different aspects of their identity to achieve a desired humorous effect and elicit the audience's laughter. Based on a Franco-Swiss socio-discursive interactionist perspective (Bronckart, 2012), which is largely inspired by Bakhtin's previous work on polyphony (Bakhtin, 1981), the aim is to examine how "enunciative voices" are used by comedians create different identities in discourse by shifting between the voices of the empirical author, the social voices, and the voices of characters.

## **2. POLYPHONY IN DISCOURSE: "VOICES" AS MECHANISMS OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION**

Polyphony (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984), "voices devices" (de Fina, 2006), multivocality or "footing" (Goffman, 1981), and enunciative voices (Bronckart, 2012) are similar linguistic mechanisms, which may emerge in discourse in the process of identity construction and/or assumption of degree of responsibility. The concepts are designated in various ways according to the theoretical choices of the researchers. Whereas the phenomena are quite comparable, there are some potential nuances of each term, which are to be discussed.

Bakhtin (1981, 1984) was the first to introduce the idea of "polyphony" in discourse as part of his analysis of Dostoevsky's novels. According to the author, Dostoevsky's novels are mainly characterized by "a plurality of voices", i.e. multiple manifestations of characters, merged together with the author's omnipresent existence in a piece of literary work. The concept is defined as follows: "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather, a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 6).

As stated in Bakhtin (1981, p. 5), the term “voice” implies the character’s consciousness about his own presence in discourse and the coexistence of his voice with other voices in the same discursive space at the same time:

“A character’s word about himself and his world is just as fully weighted as the author’s word usually is; it is not subordinated to the character’s objectified image as merely one of his characteristics, nor does it serve as a mouthpiece for the author’s voice. It possesses extraordinary independence in the structure of the work; it sounds, as it were, alongside the author’s word and in a special way combines both with it and with the full and equally valid voices of other characters” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 7).

Bakhtin’s concept of a “polyphonic novel” reinvents traditional novel as a manifestation of many voices heard as one, i.e. through the prism of its single author. A polyphonic novel, on the opposite, gives the impression that the reader is not dealing with a single author, but with a multiplicity of authors (e.g. Raskolnikov, Myshkin, Karamazov, etc.); thus, each character with his/her unique voice assumes its own position in a multi-leveled and multi-vocal novel.

Goffman (1981, p. 128) explains multivocality in his concept of “footing”, which stand for “the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance”. He proposed the idea that a speaker, depending on his status in discourse, performs three distinct roles: 1) the animator, 2) the author, and 3) the principal. While the animator is the person who physically produces an utterance, the author is the person responsible for putting it together, i.e. the “originator” or “creator” of the utterance. The principal, in this case, is “the person responsible for and committed to the content of the utterance” (Goffman 1981, p. 128).

The differences between these notions can be useful for understanding to what extent a speaker (or a comedian, for instance) assumes his/her authorship and therefore different degrees of responsibility for what has been said. Although it is typical of the animator to take the role of the author, it may not always be the case. Back in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when stand-up comedians presented their comic monologues as parts of American vaudeville performances, co-

medy actors were merely performers, whose material was provided by writers (Double 2014, p. 416). Such being the case, the animator's role was performed by the comedy actor, whereas the authorship of the comic text belonged to its writer (the latter were actually designated as "the comedians"). Shortly afterwards, the sick comedians promoted the idea that the comics should create their own material (*ibidem*). It was the sick comedians who set the tone for modern stand-up comedy, as we know it today, with a highly auto-biographical, self-expressed contents. Today, a comedian can be the animator, the "producer" of comic texts onstage; the author, i.e. h/she elaborates their own texts and the "principal" committed to the comic content displayed.

Although polyphony as a language phenomenon was first discovered and applied to literary texts, its practical use and applicability goes beyond them. Studies showed that speakers may use polyphony or "layering of voices" described by Bakhtin (1981) as an interactive strategy in everyday spoken interactions. From a linguistic point of view, there are different ways of incorporating voices into everyday speech. For instance, Günthner (1999) focuses on the prosodic and voice quality techniques, used by speakers to contextualize their points of view towards the reconstructed utterances in reported dialogues. Prosodic and voice quality techniques are employed to show various perspectives within one utterance: the perspective of the quoted figure and the perspective of the reporter (Günthner, 1999, p. 705). In Günthner's approach to polyphonic discourse, layering of voices in everyday reported dialogues is mainly achieved by means of prosody (Günthner, 1999, p. 685).

Fløttum (2010, p. 990) suggests a selection of linguistic units indicating the presence of different voices in political speeches. Explicit polyphony is often realized through reported speech, whereas implicit layering of voices often involves the use of various linguistic markers, such as the negation *not* (in its polemical use); the contrastive connective *but* (in its concessive use); connectives such as *thus*, which mark an argumentative relation between different points of view; *although* and *even if*, used to show a contra-argumentative relation; *since*, used to indicate a causal relation; semantic-logical markers such as *perhaps*, *maybe* and modal verbs such

as *may*, which indicate epistemic relations of uncertainty between different points of view (Fløttum, 2010, p. 995). In general, as stated in Fløttum (2010, p. 993), different linguistic categories contribute to construction of polyphony in discourse, e.g. pronouns, connectives, sentence adverbs, negation, presupposition, information structure, reported speech and many more. The configurations created by these linguistic manifestations contribute to the construction of “self” and “others” in a more visible way; and also, these configurations help to clarify the complexity of political multi-voiced discourse (Fløttum, 2010, p. 993). In this respect, polyphony is seen as an approach to uncover the hidden messages and the subtle interactions that take place in political discourse (Fløttum, 2010, p. 992).

In one of her studies, de Fina (2006) approaches group or collective identity, focusing on voices. She also sees “voices devices” in a broader way, which includes alternations between dialogue and narration, pronoun switches, and paralinguistic features such as tempo, pitch, loudness and rhythm. According to the author, these “voices devices” are central strategies of involvement or distancing while constructing identities (de Fina 2006, p. 357). Pronoun switches, seen by de Fina as one of the voices devices, is a grammar-based strategy for identity construction, which will be closer analyzed further in this paper.

The socio-discursive interactionist framework suggests a more tangible method of analysis of voices. From the methodological point of view, each text is seen as consisting of three layers: the general infrastructure of text, which corresponds to its internal structural organization; the mechanisms of textualization and the mechanisms of enunciation. According to the author, the distinction between these three levels adequately responds to the methodological need to “unveil the complexity of each text’s fabric” (Bronckart, 2012, p. 119). The level of enunciative mechanisms, which comprises both enunciative voices and modality, contributes to establishment of pragmatic (or interactive) coherence of the text, explaining, on the one hand, various evaluations (e.g. judgments, opinions, feelings, etc.) and, on the other hand, indicates the very sources of these evaluations, i.e. the instances that are responsible for them (Bronckart, 2012, p. 319).

According to Bronckart's perspective, enunciative voices are manifested in discourse mostly grammatically, through use of personal pronouns and verbs in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular or plural. The author distinguishes the voice of the author, voices of characters and social voices (see Table 1 for more details). Previous research indicates that construction of identities can be achieved by mobilising pronouns (de Fina, 2006 and Wolfers, File & Schnurr, 2017 for identity construction; Glick 2007 for polyphony construction in stand-up comedy). The speaker's choice of pronouns is intentional, as it contributes to creation of various aspect of his/her or collective identities to achieve a desired effect (a humorous one, as in Wolfers, File & Schnurr, 2017; Glick 2007).

1. Voice of the author <sup>1</sup>	The voice of the empirical author (or the speaker/agent of the text, i.e. the instance that produces the text). It assumes what is being said and positions him/herself towards it accordingly. The voice of the author is typically expressed by means of personal pronoun "I" and/or verbs in 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular.
2. Voices of characters	The voices of characters are voices belonging to human beings, or to humanized entities (e.g. animals in fairytales), or to agents in different events or actions, which constitute the thematic content of a textual segment. These may also be heroes of a narrative story, or interlocutors in an interactive dialogical discourse, etc. (verbs in the 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> person, singular).

Table 1 - Enunciative voices in discourse (based on Bronckart 2012, pp. 130-131, 326) (see next page for continuation of the table)

1. The original examples in French for each category can be found in Bronckart (2008, pp. 82-83).

Table 1 - Enunciative voices in discourse (based on Bronckart 2012, pp. 130-131, 326) (continuation).

2. Social voices are also described as typical events of language use and cultural ideologies (Glick, 2007, p. 292).

3. Social voices <sup>2</sup>	The voices of other people or human entities and institutions that are outside the thematic content of the utterance. In this case, the responsibility for what is being said is delegated to third parties (by means of discursive markers “according to”, “conforming to”, indefinite pronouns “somebody”/ “nobody”, indefinite articles “a”, verbs in 3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, personal pronoun “we”, etc.). Social voices may stay undetermined and/or implicit.
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As it will be further seen, the voices of the empirical author, the social voices, and the voices of characters are important to consider when attempting to understand how comedians produce their identities. By representing the voice of the empirical author, i.e. assuming authorship, the comedian assumes responsibility for what is being said. On the contrary, s/he may opt for presenting the social voice, leaving the author’s voice behind and thus erasing or masking his/her own identity. Some examples in Section 4 will illustrate these cases. Before I proceed with the analysis, it is important to draw some general notes on the genre of stand-up comedy, its key features and its history in Portugal, and to describe the corpus used for the analysis.

### 3. THE GENRE AND CORPUS UNDER INVESTIGATION: STAND-UP COMEDY

Stand-up comedy is often defined as “an encounter between a single standing performer behaving comically and/or saying funny things directly to an audience, unsupported by very much in the way of custom, props, setting, or dramatic vehicle” (Mintz 1985, p. 71). Double (2014, p. 19) describes a stand-up performance as “a single performer standing in front of an audience, talking to them with the specific intention of making them laugh”.

The vagueness of comedian's identity is one of the key features of a stand-up performance. Strictly speaking, comedians can be seen as those who perform as themselves and those who create a particular character or stage personae, so-called "character comedians" (Double 2014, p. 124). The range of characters on stage is wide enough, and the boundaries between the performer and the stage character (or stage persona) are sometimes quite difficult to trace (Double 2014, pp. 124, 126, 128, 130). Double (2014) identifies four prototypical types of comedian's "identities", which emerge in a stand-up act: character comedians, exaggerated personae, "the person in the persona" and authentic human being. The distance between the comedian and the character can be quite shocking, and it is mostly due to his/her costume, wigs, make-up and names he or she gives to the character that the distance is signaled. Exaggerated personas are those who adopt an exaggerated character but leave the boundary between the comedian and the persona vague. The acts of such comedians may be quite autobiographic, but include the elements of persona; it is "like a party dress they put on" (Double 2014, p. 126). The "person in the persona" is characterized by "the subtle interweaving of truth and fiction in the onstage identities of stand-up comedians" (Double 2014, p. 130). It can be quite difficult to understand if the comedian is the same person onstage and offstage, or if they are more of an act. Authentic human beings stay unaffected by the performance and present themselves to the audience exactly how they are. "Stand-up comedian addresses the audience as a naked self" (Double 2014, p. 129), i.e. stand-up is frequently seen as a form of self-expression (Carter: 1989, p. 22; Double 2014, p. 160). Today, the idea that comedians appear as real "selves" or real "personalities" is quite common. In fact, the premise "...this is my view of the world, this is my little angle of life" (Double 2014, p. 115) can be a key to a successful joke telling for many modern stand-up performers.

Similarity to a conversation is another striking feature of stand-up comedy. Brodie (2014, p. 5, 2008, p. 153) describes it as "a form of talk" and sees stand-up as an intimate conversation that occurs in an informal, day-to-day, face-to-face communication (Brodie 2014, p. 217).

Likewise, Double (2014, p. 339) argues that stand-up is built on the model of conversation, albeit “a very one-sided one”. Although the comedian does most of the talking and the audience’s part consists of laughter and applause, it feels very conversational because of the direct interaction (Double 2014, p. 339).

Similar to other studies on identity construction in face-to-face interactions and conversations (Günthner, 1999), in political discourse (Fløttum, 2010) and in conversational narratives (de Fina, 2006), comedian’s speech is rich in voices of other characters and often includes dialogic discourse in order to present his/her “self” or stage personae, to portray the characters in his/her narratives, etc. (Bakhtin 1968).

Inspired by Bakhtin’s (1986) concept of polyphony and voices, Glick (2007) focuses his analysis on the dialogic form used by the British stand-up comedian Eddie Izzard in his performances. The comedian develops a fictional dialogue between the voices of the colonizer and the colonized (i.e. Great Britain, India and the US). Using polyphony as a humorous strategy, the comedian speaks with overlapping voices. At the very least, he speaks both as an individual and a citizen of Britain, and as a professional comedian giving a stand-up performance (for instance, when he uses utterances that are typically linked to standard stand-up, e.g. “*Hey how’s everybody feeling tonight?!?*”) (Glick, 2007, p. 294). At the same time, in the course of the performance, the comedian discursively creates “participants” in “conversations” (Glick, 2007, p. 296). His “characters” sound different and take turn, thus sounding like a real-time conversation (Glick, 2007, p. 304). Multi-layering of voices can therefore be an effective strategy for humor construction, as suggested in Glick (2007).

#### **4. CORPUS AND METHODOLOGY**

The textual analysis for the present study was carried out on a 41,651 word oral corpus collected from the Portuguese stand-up show “*Graças a Deus*” – performed in the first stand-up co-

medy club in Lisbon, Portugal. The full first season of the show was transmitted on a local TV channel. The analyzed programs were collected between 2014-2015 and resulted in the corpus containing a total 25 samples of oral texts, corresponding to 25 different comedians. All the samples were organized according to specially elaborated transcription conventions, based on Discourse Transcription (Dubois, 1991, 2004) and C-ORAL-ROM Project and CHAT Transcription Format (MacWhinney, 2000).

The textual analysis is based on previously reviewed categories, which constitute enunciative voices in discourse (Bronckart, 2012, pp. 130-131, 326), namely, the voices of the empirical author, the characters or the social voices. These voices are manifested through the use of pronouns and verbs in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular or plural, i.e., the focus is on the grammatical forms. The qualitative analysis was carried out in two phases.

In the course of the textual analysis, the objective was to locate the instances of the voices of the empirical author, the characters and the social voices expressed by means of personal pronouns. The focus was therefore on personal pronouns identification. Pronouns “I” and or/ verbs in 1<sup>st</sup> person singular corresponde to the voice of the author. That is, the comedian takes responsibility for what is being said and positions him/herself towards it. The identification of verbs in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person, singular assists in locating heroes or characters in different events or actions, which constitute the principal content of a textual humorous storytelling. Finally, the identification of verbs in 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural and personal pronoun “we” refers to the third parties that take responsibility for what is being said by the comedian.

Once the “voices” were identified and assigned to a particular category (e.g., the empirical voice, the voice of the character or the social voice), a special attention was paid to pronoun shifts (e.g. between “I”, “we” and 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronouns) and their impact comedian’s assumption or erasure of identity.

## 5. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The examples extracted from the corpus will assist in illustrating how the phenomenon of polyphony and the distribution of voices by means of personal pronouns in discourse contribute to comedian's identity construction. The examples are provided here in their original Portuguese (1a, 2a, 3a), along with corresponding English translations (1b, 2b, 3b).

For the purposes of the present paper, I shall limit myself to most remarkable examples found in the corpus.

### Example 1a.

1 COM: É tipo isso / É a minha mãe / é <é> espetáculo / Quando *a gente* vai às compras  
*a gente*

2 estamos numa metodologia de poupar não sei quê / mas a minha mãe exagera como eu já disse /

3 ela <ela> uma tacanha com dinheiro / <uma tacanha de um cabrão> / Quando vocês /  
*a gente* para

4 poupar / todos agora está a chegar o verão / a gente gosta de mamar um geladinho verdade ou mentira /

5 ah? / Verdade ou mentira? / Não perceberam eu falei muito rápido se calhar / Pareço um relator da

6 bola / É um algarvio a falar normalmente parece um relator da bola / sempre não é / Então chega o

7 verão /*a gente* apetece mamar um geladinho / Só que os outros geladinhos da máquina ficam

8 muito caros / Então a gente compra caixa de gelado / como toda a gente faz e põe na arca certo? /

9 Pronto eu não sei / é que não sei parece que vem do Algarve / vem do estrangeiro / tem

10 comportamentos [X] / Agora / Onde é vez / vocês estão a ver aquelas caixas de gelado do Lidl que diz

11 “Tricolore” / estão a ver / que tem três cores que é chocolate / baunilha / morango / Estão a ver o que é

12 que eu estou a dizer? / Agora é que dava jeito que batessem palmas /

13 [%com: o público aplaude]

14 Já que não falam comigo / Não / só as pessoas que estão a ver porra / cacete / A malta que está a ver

15 que tipo de gelado que eu estou a dizer //

16 [%com: o público aplaude]

17 Agora onde *a gente* vê um gelado / uma caixa de gelado “Tricolore” *a minha mãe* o que é que *vê* / *Vê* 18 um taparuere que por acaso tem gelado lá dentro //

19 AUD: hhhhhh

20 COM: Olha este taparuere! / Olha que vem com gelado! / Que giro //

21 AUD: hhh

### Example 1b.

22 COM: It’s like this / My mom / it’s a show / when *we* go food shopping *we* adopt this

23 methodology of saving and so on / but my mom exaggerates as I already said / she is greedy with

24 money / Shitty greedy / When you / for *us* to save / all of us now summer arrives / *we* like licking an

25 ice-cream true or false? / ah? / True or false? / You didn’t get it maybe I was speaking too fast / I look

26 like a football commentator / It's a person from Algarve talking normally that looks like a football

27 commentator / always isn't it / And so summer comes / We feel like licking an ice-cream / It's just that

28 all the ice-cream from the machine is very expensive / So we buy a box of ice-cream / like everyone

29 does and puts it in the freezer right? / Well I don't know / I don't know / It seems he comes from

30 Algarve / he comes from abroad / has his own behavior / Now / do you know those boxes of ice-cream

31 from Lidl that say "Tricolore"? / you see / that have three flavors of chocolate / vanilla / strawberries /

32 Do you see what I mean? / Now it would be handy if you made some applause /

33 [%com: the audience applauds]

34 Now that you don't talk to me / No / just the people that understood damn / boring / Guys who

35 understood which type of ice-cream I mean /

36 [%com: the audience applauds]

37 Now where we see ice-cream / a box of ice-cream "Tricolore" what does *my mom* sees / *She* sees a

38 Tupperware box that has ice-cream inside by chance //

39 AUD: hhhhhh

40 COM: "Look at this tuppaware box! / Look it goes together with ice-cream! / So nice" //

41 AUD: hhh

In 1a and 1b, two types of enunciative voices can be observed. The comedian's voice, which is expressed by the personal pronoun "eu/I", is both the voice of the author and the agent who produces text. By using the personal pronoun "eu/I" and explicitly stating his "self", the comedian assumes responsibility what is being said and positions himself towards it accordingly. The social voice is mostly manifested by "a gente/we". "A gente" is an expression which semantically corresponds to the personal pronoun "we", but it is grammatically a third person singular and refers to a group of people which he talks about. A similar English translation would be "folks", however, "folks" does not necessarily include the speaker himself when referring to a particular situation in an informal conversation.

In terms of the joke's substantive contextualization, as a consequence of the European financial crisis, the EU imposed tight budget constraints on Portugal in efforts to save and reduce costs. Consequently, the government urges people to save – an idea, which is explicitly conveyed by the social voice (lines 22-24). There is a general knowledge in Portuguese society that in order to keep the family budget under control, everyone has to opt for a cheaper product when given the choice (line 28).

At first, the voice of the author fully coincides with the social voice: his family also falls into the saving policy and he, as an individual, must also save money by opting for a cheaper product. However, as he keeps developing the subject, he puts himself into opposition to his mother's identity, which is represented as the character's voice "ela/she" and by the verb in 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular in Portuguese "vê/sees" (lines 37-38). The idea is that his mother has done so well in the art of saving that instead of a simple box of ice cream she "sees" first, a container for storing food, relegating the ice-cream to the status of a mere by-product. In this way, buying just one item, she gets two products: ice-cream and an entire food container, the latter of which can be used repeatedly and proves to be extremely useful from an economic point of view.

Thus, in 1a and 1b we can observe a case of polyphonic discourse and the presence of various co-existing voices, namely, the voice of the empirical author, which is the comedian's himself and his own "self" ("eu/I"). In addition, the excerpt introduces a character, i.e. his mother, represented by the personal pronoun "ela/she". Besides, there is a clear shift in comedian's positioning of his "self" and his identity in the course of this excerpt. First, there is a complete coinciding of the author's voice and the social voice when it comes to the saving policy of the state and the families that have to struggle to manage it. The comedian's identity at that discursive moment happens to be the same as that of the social voice (and not his mother), as he fully identifies with the social voice and the policy of economy.

However, the comedian (re)assumes his identity in opposition to his mother, who represents a hyperbolized version and a perfect embodiment of an economic housewife. The comedian's decisions to distance himself from his mother's identity triggers a humorous effect and elicits laughter on the part of the audience (line 39). In other words, although the comedian identifies with the saving policy of the state and the social voice, he presents his mother as an exaggerated case and distances himself from it, this creating a comic effect by ridiculing his mother's actions. By distancing or involving himself, the comedian can both build up humor and show his own identity in a different light.

The excerpt is enriched by another instance of the comedian's representation of his "self", namely, when he mentions "Algarve". This is a clear example of an identity claim in relation to regional linguistic variation (lines 29-30). The comedian assumes his regional identity in the course of his performance and uses it as a strategy to draw the audience's attention and to elicit some kind of reaction (lines 22-32 present a long).

#### Example 2a.

42 COM: Não vou começar por aqui / porque eu acho / desculpa lá uma coisa / olhando para estas mesas e

43 olhando desde que eu cheguei às 9 da noite nós somos uma geração / desculpem lá / nós não somos

44 pessoas / somos cada vez mais virtuais / cada vez teclamos mais / desculpa lá uma coisa / Nós

45 estamos tão agarrados aos telemóveis que ontem tive que ir à escola secundária Luís de Camões / e os

46 namorados saem da escola e em vez de dizer aquela coisa bonita que se dizia antigamente à gaja /

47 “os teus olhos cintilantes com estrelas infinitas!” / já *ninguém* diz isso / *ele* saca de Nokia 3G /

48 aproxima-se dela / *ela* saca do Samsung Galaxy é pá / Shshshsh! / Tuh tuh tuh / Manda um sms que diz

49 / *I love you* //

50 AUD: hhhh

51 COM: E *ela* responde / Tuh tuh tuh tuh! / Eu também //

52 AUD: hhhhh

53 COM: Nós estamos virtuais qualquer dia em vez de ir para cama fazer amor não / podemos os telemóveis

54 a vibrar um em cima do outro / Zzzz / Zzzz //

55 AUD: HHHHH

56 COM: E nasce um telemóvel de Hello Kitty cor de rosa //

57 AUD: hhhhh

58 COM: Desculpe! / Nós qualquer dia casamos por igreja e o padre pergunta / oh noivo /

59 Aceitas casar com esta porta USB até que a morte vos separe? / E ele responde / Só se eu tiver uma pen

60 64 Gb //

61 AUD: hhh

62 COM: E quando o padre pergunta aceitas casar na saúde e na doença / ele em vez de dizer “Sim!” / Diz

63 a frase que derrete uma mulher hoje / Como é que as gajas acham isto interessante / ele olha para ela e

64 diz / LOL //

65 AUD: hhhh

66 COM: Tu já nem cantas uma música do José Cid a gaja / diz LOL //

67 AUD: hh

68 COM: Se for à moda do Alentejo é LOOOOL //

69 AUD: hh

70 COM: Parece que estás a chamar um rebanho de ovelhas Maria // Mas *nós* estamos tão

71 virtuais tão virtuais tão <tão> viciados nesta porcaria e *somos* atualizados com isto //

### Example 2b.

72 COM: I´m not going start from here / because I think / sorry / looking at these tables and looking since

73 I arrived at 9 pm *we* are a generation / sorry / we are not humans / every time *we* are getting more

74 virtual / every time we text more / Sorry for that / *We* are so stuck to our smartphones that yesterday I

75 had to go to a secondary school Luís de Camões / a boyfriend and a girlfriend get out of the school and

76 instead of saying that beautiful thing that in the old days used to be said to a girl /  
“your sparkling eyes

77 with infinite stars!” / *nobody* says that anymore / *He* texts from Nokia 3G / comes up  
to her / *she* texts

78 from her Samsung Galaxy / Shshshsh! / Tuh tuh tuh / *Send* her a text saying / I love  
you //

79 AUD: hhhh

80 COM: And *she* replies / Tuh tuh tuh tuh! / Love you too //

81 AUD: hhhhh

82 COM: *We* are getting so virtual that one day instead of going to bed and making love  
we will put our

83 smartphones vibrating one above another / *Zzzz* / *Zzzz* //

84 AUD: HHHHH

85 COM: And a pink Hello Kitty smartphone is born //

86 AUD: hhhhh

87 COM: Sorry! / One day when we get married in church and *the priest* asks / Oh groom  
/ Do you take

88 this USB until death do us part? / And he replies / Just if I have a 64 Gb pen drive //

89 AUD: hhh

90 COM: And when the priest asks “do you take her in sickness and in health?” / Instead  
of saying “Yes!”

91 he says a phrase that nowadays makes every woman melt / How girls find it interesting  
/ h e looks at her

92 and says / LOL //

93 AUD: hhhh

94 COM: And you don't even sing a song by José Cid to the girl / He says LOL //

95 AUD: hh

96 COM: If it is pronounced how they do in Alentejo then it is LOOOOL //

97 AUD: hh

98 COM: It seems as if you are calling a flock of sheep Mary // But *we* are getting so virtual so virtual so

99 so addicted to this bullshit and we are updated with it //

2a and 2b present another excerpt rich in polyphony, with multiple enunciative voices. It includes the comedian's (or the author's voice), the voices of different characters pictured in the course of the performance and the social voice. The comedian's voice is represented by a recurrent use of "*eu/I*". The characters include a loving couple of teenagers, i.e. a girlfriend and her boyfriend, who are equally represented by the personal pronouns "*ele/he*" and "*ela/she*", as well as by the verbs in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular. Besides, there is also a character of the priest (line 87). Similar to 1a and 1b, the social voice in this excerpt is expressed by the personal pronoun "*nós/we*". The social voice demonstrates the general public concern about smartphone addiction (lines 73-74), especially among young people. As a result of this modern form of addiction, real and live communication between people has sharply decreased and is being completely replaced by a virtual counterpart (lines 77-80). The recurring social voice (line 98) expresses yet another characteristic – the inevitability of the addiction to mobile devices. Since nowadays everyone, at least to a certain degree, has fallen victim to the excessive use of smartphones, the phenomenon is omnipresent and quite common, which makes it more difficult to combat.

The author's voice is expressed by means of personal pronouns "*eu/I*". Through personal pronouns, as well as constant apologies to the audience (line 74), the author admits that he

does not understand what is happening. He is sincerely puzzled and concerned about this addiction existing in modern society and what future consequences it might bring (lines 82-83). The comedian assumes a critical position toward the problem of smartphone addiction, and brings his “self” into opposition with “others”, i.e. with other members of the society he is part of.

The comedian’s negative positioning towards digital technology and the modern media world is also implicitly manifested through a melancholic comparison with the old times (lines 76-77). According to Bronckart’s framework, social voices can also be manifested through the use of indefinite pronouns. In this excerpt (line 77), the comedian uses “nobody” to refer to the members of the society he is part of. Romantic declarations, which used to be common, are no longer practiced among modern, tech-addicted young men.

The excerpt is entirely built on an opposition between the social voice and the comedian’s voice. By stating his voice in discourse, he constructs his own identity, distinct from the social common voice. He openly criticizes smartphone addiction among the young. The humorous effect is achieved through the use of common, real-life, hyperbolized examples (lines 82-83, 87-88, 90-91). The effect is akin to “laughing at ourselves”, as the audience recognizes their own weaknesses and behaviors, harshly ridiculed by the comedian.

It is also interesting to observe the role of laughter in this passage. It can be easily seen from recurrent responses and laughs that the audience is actively engaged in the performance. Lines 79-99 follow a turn-taking, dialogic model, in which comedian’s short remarks are immediately followed by a burst of laughter (Brodie, 2014; Double, 2014; Rutter, 1997). In fact, and as it has been previously stated, the objective of stand-up is not only to make the audience laugh (Attardo, 1994, p. 13; Nunes, 2016), but also to persuade the audience (Greenbaum, 1999, p. 33). In 2a and 2b, the comedian goes against the flow, i.e. his views differ greatly from the ones assumed in the society. It can be supposed that by assuming his own “self”, the comedian is

trying to shape the view of the audience, to influence how “others” think and, therefore, to persuade them about the rightness (or wrongness) of excessive use of mobile devices.

**Example 3a.**

100 COM: *Tu* vais comprar uma posta de bacalhau / está embalada no vácuo / um bocadinho assim / o

101 rótulo diz “posta de bacalhau maduro” / E *tu* vês que é um bacalhau depois de morto tem outra

102 personalidade / Um bacalhau que passou muito na vida é pá //

103 AUD: hh

104 COM: Que esquartejou muito para chegar ao Pingo Doce sabes / A vida é dura / É um bacalhau que

105 chega ao prato / olha para a ervilha e diz / Olha cresce e aparece //

106 AUD: hh

107 COM: E *tu* compras / *tu* não questionas / nada / *Tu* vais comprar um frango ao talho do Pingo Doce /

108 Tem o frango grande que é o do aviário e tem o pequenino que é o do / Não desculpem / O frango

109 grande que é o do campo e o pequenino que é do aviário / O frango grande do campo ainda tem uma

110 particularidade / tem um autocolante no peito que diz assim / *Adoro* esta publicidade / Isto é verídico /

111 Frango do campo Pingo Doce / Criado ao ar livre // *Eu* não estava à espera //

112 AUD: hhhh

113 COM: Nunca *pensei* que o frango do campo fosse criado ao ar livre / Dá a sensação que o mais

114 pequenino vem da prisão do Pinheiro da Cruz com certeza //

115 AUD: hh

116 [...]

117 COM: Tu compras / Tu <tu> / Tu <tu> / o que está escrito na marca / Agora inventaram uma Colgate /

118 Adoro esta / Colgate com clareadores ópticos / está lá / <Clareadores ópticos> / *Alguém* sabe a função

119 dos clareadores ópticos dentro de uma pasta dentífrica? / Então tu chegas um dia chegas ao dentista que

120 pergunta / Tem caries? / Não / Tenho miopia nos molares //

121 AUD: hhhhh

### Example 3b.

122 COM: *You* are going to buy a cod fish steak / it's vacuum packed / a bit like that / The packaging says

123 "mature cod fish steak" / And *you* see that a cod fish after death has another personality / It's a cod fish

124 that has been through a lot in life //

125 AUD: hh

126 COM: It carved itself up a lot to make its way to Pingo Doce you know / Life is tough / It's a cod fish

127 that arrives to a plate / looks at a pea and says / Look grow up and show up then //

128 AUD: hh

129 COM: And *you* buy / *you* don't question / anything / *You* are going to buy a chicken in the butchery of

130 Pingo Doce / There is a big chicken and a small one from / No sorry / The big chicken is from a farm

131 and the small one is from an aviary. The big chicken has another peculiarity / It has a sticker on the

132 chest that says / *I* adore this publicity / This is true / Farm-fresh chicken Pingo Doce / Created outdoors

133 / *I* was not expecting it //

134 AUD: hhhh

135 COM: *I* have never thought that a farm-fresh chicken was created outdoors / It gives a feeling that the

136 smallest chicken certainly comes from the prison Pinheiro da Cruz //

137 AUD: hh

138 [...]

139 COM: *You* buy / *You* <*you*> / *You* <*you*> / what's written on the brand / Now they invented a Colgate

140 toothpaste / *I* love this one / Colgate with optical brighteners / there it is / <Optical brighteners> / Does

141 *anyone* know the function of optical brighteners inside a toothpaste? / So one day you go to your

142 dentist and he asks / Do you have cavities? / No / I have myopia in the molars //

143 AUD: hhhhh

The examples 3a and 3b represent another case of polyphonic discourse. The comedian presents various examples of customers that are being fooled by common marketing strategies, such as a beautiful packaging or a catchy slogan. His own voice is constructed either by means of the personal pronoun “*eu/I*” (line 132, 133, 135, 140) in English and Portuguese, or by verbs in the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular in Portuguese, as he repeatedly refers to different commercial advertisements (e.g. Colgate, poultry and codfish). Quite ironically, the comedian talks about the advertisements and why he “loves” them. In fact, he takes a critical position towards excessive advertising and constructs his own identity, with a different take on the issue, as opposed to the social voice.

The social voice in this excerpt is quite peculiar, for it is represented by the personal pronoun “*you*”. The grammatical manifestation of the social voice in 3a and 3b differs is not a typical case. The comedian repeatedly addresses the audience in the singular “*tu/you*” (lines 122-123, 129, 139) and constructs a collective identity of the audience. In other words, by using the 2<sup>nd</sup> person personal pronoun “*you*” the comedian does not simply address a single person from the audience in a random way. Rather, he addresses the audience as a whole. The social voice, represented as a collective identity of the audience, explicitly suggests that the great majority of people fall victim to harsh marketing policies. As a result, people tend to buy certain goods of a specific and strongly advertised brand because this “brand” allegedly provides better quality (line 132). Instead of making their own decision, the customers are being fooled by beautiful packaging, a catchy slogan (line 140), or an appealing advertisement – some of the most common instruments in marketing. This quite common behavior unites its representatives into a single group, thus constructing a collective identity, represented by the pronoun “*tu/you*”.

The use of “*tu/you*” can also be explained by the specificity of the genre. As previously stated, stand-up comedy is akin to an intimate form of talk (Brodie, 2014, p. 217); it follows a conversational, turn-taking model (Brodie, 2014, p. 5; Double, 2014, p. 339). This intimacy might be achieved more effectively through the use of the personal singular pronoun “*tu/you*”, rather than its plural counterpart “*vocês/you*”.

The comedian's intention is to mark his critical positioning towards the audience, represented by the social voice. The comedian therefore fully assumes his "voice" and his "self" in discourse and constructs his own identity, mocking unthoughtful consumerist behavior and ridiculing it (line 142).

## 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to analyze the extent to which polyphony and the distribution of voices by means of personal pronouns in discourse contribute to comedian's identity construction in the genre of Portuguese stand-up comedy. The textual analysis presented here, although quite limited, demonstrated that identity can be effectively constructed through the use of these linguistic forms. Polyphony functions as a mechanism for the multi-layering of enunciative voices produced by comedians.

The selected range of examples (1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a and 3b) demonstrate cases of polyphonic discourse and the presence of various co-existing voices, namely, the voice of the empirical author (i.e. the comedian's voice), the voices of characters portrayed in the course of the humorous interaction, and the social voices. These voices are manifested through the grammatical use of personal pronouns. By switching between these voices, the comedian can negotiate different aspects of his/her identity. In other words, h/she can either involve or distance himself, and thus create a humorous effect.

In 1a and 1b, the comedian's identity first happens to be the same as that of the social voice (and not his mother), as he fully identifies with the social voice and the policy of economy. However, in the course of the performance the comedian (re)assumes his identity in opposition to his mother's hyperbolized character. The comedian's decision to distance himself from his mother's identity triggers a humorous effect and elicits laughter on the part of the audience. In other words, by distancing or involving himself, the comedian can either assume his "self" in opposition, or to identify himself with the social voice. These findings match the earlier ones

described by de Fina (2006), who partially focused on grammatical representation of voices (i.e. pronouns). According to her data analysis of Mexican immigrants' group identity, a switch from "we" to "they" form occurred when the speaker wanted to distance him/herself from the story world; in other words, h/she wished to step out of it and to look ironically at him/herself and his/her friends (de Fina 2006, p. 372). The speaker then steps back into the story through the use of the pronoun "we" (de Fina 2006, p. 373). Thus, the shift between the voices transpires through a switch between pronoun use.

In 2a and 2b, there is an opposition between the social voice and the comedian's voice. By stating his "self", the comedian constructs his own identity, which is distinct from the social voice. He openly criticizes smartphone addiction among the young. The humorous effect is achieved through the use of several stereotypical examples on excessive smartphone use, which the audience identifies with.

In 3a and 3b, there is another opposition between the social voice and the comedian's voice. Once again, the comedian takes a critical position towards a social phenomenon (i.e. excessive advertising). The social voice is represented as a collective identity of the audience ("tu/you"), and may suggest a higher level of intimacy.

In sum, the comedians in the selected range of examples distribute different voices in humorous discourse of stand-up and position themselves either in line with those voices (Example 1a and 1b) or oppose themselves against them, thus creating their own identity (Examples 2a, 2b, 3a and 3b). We have seen that in both 2a, 2b and 3a, 3b the comedian constructs his own identity by strongly criticizing social behavior. The opposition occurs between the comedian's voice and the social voice (expressed either by the pronoun "nós/we" or "tu/you"). Although the comedian explicitly assumes his positioning and thus constructs his own identity in both cases, it seems that this opposition is slightly less categorical in 2a, 2b. The use of the pronoun "nós/we" suggests inclusion of the comedian himself, as he partially identifies with the social voice. "Nós/we" is used to denote a "self" which is not alone, but is always among others who

belong to the same group (a similar case when the pronoun “we” equals “I” in English was described in Ige, 2010; “we” can also referentially include the comedian, as stated in Glick, 2007, p. 296). Responsibility for what is being stated is therefore shared between the two instances, the comedian and the social voice. In 3a, 3b, however, the comedian seems to create a wider locus between his own identity and the collective identity represented by the audience. The comedian seems to make critical judgment regarding advertising without being involved. In sum, there is a stronger assumption of identity in cases of “I/you” opposition as compared with “I/we” opposition, for there is a narrower locus between the later, as well as partial presence and identification of “I” inside “we”. These subtleties are prompted mainly by the linguistic choices made by comedians while constructing a comic discourse.

The examples presented in this paper show that polyphony and personal pronoun shifts can be an effective strategy to produce a humorous effect, on the one hand. On the other hand, it is used to dynamically display aspects of the comedian’s identity.

In line with the tradition of self-expression in stand-up (Carter: 1989, p. 22; Double 2014, p. 160), all the comedians introduced in the course of the analysis perform as real “selves” or real “personalities”. Therefore, the observed cases represent construction of comedians’ identity (and not their stage personae’s). Laughter, as one of the key elements of stand-up comedy, is essential for humor construction in this genre. Each statement the comedian produces is accompanied by laughter, thus underlining the comicality of the situations h/she describes. In the selected excerpts, it can be seen that the comedian’s remarks are constantly accompanied by laughter and/or applause, which indicates a continuous feedback and appreciation from the audience’s part.

Finally, this textual analysis broached new empirical data – the genre of Portuguese stand-up comedy – an area where research is thus far largely missing, but which has shown itself worthy of closer attention. Identity construction and negotiation via multiple voices proves to be an essential feature in this modern humorous practice.

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