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GENRE, CORPORA AND COMMUNICATION IN ELT

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Monografia de especialização apresentada à Faculdade de Letras da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, como requisito parcial à obtenção do título de Especialista em Língua Inglesa.

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ATA DE DEFESA DE TRABALHO DE CONCLUSÃO DE CURSO

Às 17:25 horas do dia 02 de dezembro de 2023, reuniu-se na Faculdade de Letras da UFMG a Comissão Examinadora indicada pela Coordenação do Curso de Especialização em Língua Inglesa -CEI/ELI , para julgar, em exame final, o trabalho intitulado, Genre, Corpora and Communication in ELT, apresentado por **Lígia Muniz Polignano Côrtes**, como requisito final para obtenção do Grau de Especialista em Língua Inglesa . Abrindo a sessão, a banca examinadora, após dar conhecimento aos presentes do teor das Normas Regulamentares do Trabalho Final, passou a palavra a(o) candidata(o) para apresentação de seu trabalho. Seguiu-se a arguição pelos examinadores com a respectiva defesa do(a) candidato(a). Em seguida, a Comissão se reuniu, sem a presença do(a) candidato(a) e do público, para julgamento e expedição do resultado final. Foram atribuídas as seguintes indicações:

Prof(a). Dr(a). Marisa Mendonça Carneiro, indicou (X) **aprovação**/ () **reprovação** do(a) candidato(a);

Prof(a). Elisa Mattos de Sá, indicou a (X) **aprovação**/ () **reprovação** do(a) candidato(a).

Pelas indicações, o(a) candidato(a) foi considerado(a) (X) **aprovado(a)**/ () **reprovado(a)**.

Nota: 87

O resultado final foi comunicado publicamente ao(à) candidato(a) pelo Presidente da Comissão. Nada mais havendo a tratar, este encerrou a sessão, da qual foi lavrada a presente ATA assinada eletronicamente por todos os membros participantes da Comissão Examinadora.



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RESUMO

O presente trabalho foi desenvolvido para concluir a pós-graduação em ELT e colocar em prática algumas das teorias aprendidas no curso, aplicando-as à elaboração de duas unidades de ensino, cada uma acompanhada de um guia do professor. A primeira e a segunda unidades são voltadas, respectivamente, a alunos B2 e A2 de cursos de inglês. As teorias nas quais foram baseadas relacionam-se aos conceitos (a) de gênero e consciência de gênero, abordados por Millar (2011); (b) de corpus e linguística de corpus, descritos por autores como McEneaney e Hardie (2012); (c) de competência comunicativa e abordagem comunicativa, fornecidos por Richards e Rodgers (2001). As teorias selecionadas dialogam (em linhas gerais) no sentido de que a abordagem comunicativa abrange, entre outros aspectos, o foco em gêneros, cuja estrutura linguística é “retratada” em corpora. A metodologia consistiu principalmente de revisão bibliográfica, para a elaboração das unidades, e de pesquisa documental, uma vez que a produção delas demandou uma rica variedade de fontes/materiais.

Palavras-chave: gênero; consciência de gênero; linguística de corpus; abordagem comunicativa.

ABSTRACT

The present work was developed to complete the postgraduate degree in ELT and to put into practice some of the theories learned in the course, by applying them to the elaboration of two teaching units, each one accompanied by a teacher's guide. The first and the second units are directed, respectively, to B2 and A2 students from English language schools. The theories on which they were based are related to the concepts (a) of genre and genre awareness, addressed by Millar (2011); (b) of corpus and corpus linguistics, described by authors such as McEney and Hardie (2012); (c) of communicative competence and communicative approach, given by Richards and Rodgers (2001). The theories selected dialogue (in general terms) in the sense that the communicative approach comprises, among other aspects, the focus on genres, whose language structure is "portrayed" in corpora. The methodology consisted mainly of a bibliographical review, in order to elaborate the units, and of a documentary research, since their production demanded a rich variety of sources/materials.

Keywords: genre; genre awareness; corpus linguistics; communicative approach.

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1 INTRODUCTION

To express the motivation for the present work implies to put in relief its academic purposes and its themes. The former are especially to complete the postgraduate degree in the area of English language teaching and, in the future, to pursue a master's degree in Literature, so that I will have more property to analyze texts from English Literature. The latter involve the topics on which were based the teaching units created for this assignment: *places of memory* and *pet animals*. The first unit is divided into four parts¹ (old houses, archaeological sites, museums, libraries), respectively associated with the four abilities (reading, listening, writing, speaking). The second unit begins with a *Warm-up* section for conversation, followed by the focus on three abilities and their themes (reading/cats, listening/dogs, writing/birds), and ends with a speaking part, directly related to the previous content (writing/birds) and complementary to the initial section (*Warm-up*) in the sense that it also consists of an oral activity.

Both the units comprise parts in common: “pre”, “while” and “post” activities linked to the abilities, information boxes, as well as sections entitled Grammar, Vocabulary, Help!, English sounds—it addresses pronunciation topics—and Homework. However, the first unit includes specific components: *Connections*, in which there is a proposal of dialogue/intertextuality between the material of the “while” activity and another material (a video, a poem, a song); *Entertainment*, in which it is recommended to watch a video that does not have English as its idiom; and *Starting point*, in which there is an approach of the unit's core theme before grammar exercises and text production (in oral or written form).²

Concerning the main texts of the two units, it should be highlighted herein that their vocabulary part was obtained by means of the tool Oxford Text Checker, from the Oxford Learner's Dictionary site. The written texts were pasted in a box and submitted; the oral texts, entirely transcribed and then pasted, submitted. The tool categorized the vocabulary level in line with the CEF—the Common European Framework (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2). The lexical items whose classification exceeded the level of the learner for whom the unit was developed composed the word lists of the chapters.³ In order to “give shape” to such lists, some words returned by the site were removed (true friends); others, chosen and added to them (in the first unit, the “standard” amount of words per list is 20; in the second one, a maximum of 15).

¹ In order to avoid repetition, the words “part” and “section” will be treated as synonyms in this text.

² See Table 1 on the next page.

³ See Unit 1: Listening - pages 3, 6 and 13; Writing - page 4; Speaking - pages 3 and 12.

Unit 2: Reading - pages 2 and 7 (*Homework*, box); Listening - pages 2 and 7 (*Help!*, word cloud).

It is important to stress that the units are independent, although they include a similar design, and, on the subject of CEF, dedicated to Brazilian teenager students from the levels B2 (High School age) and A2 (Elementary School age, final years) who attend a language school. Due to the differences in terms of level and depth of the topic, the first unit, more complex, has a longer range of pages if compared to the other one.

Ultimately, the guides for them contain the answers of the written activities, along with the recommendation of books and links whose content may be accessed by the teacher and/or shared with the students, since the teacher finds a way to adapt/use it—for instance, when preparing an activity).

Work		Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking
Unit 1: Places of memory/ B2		Pre-reading Reading Connections Vocabulary Post-reading	Pre-listening Vocabulary Listening Vocabulary Connections English sounds Post-listening Homework Help!	Pre-writing Entertainment Vocabulary Starting point Grammar Writing Connections Post-writing	Pre-speaking Entertainment Vocabulary Starting point Minute grammar Speaking Connections Post-speaking Help!
Unit 2: Best friends forever (pet animals)/ A2	Warm-up (Speaking)	Pre-reading Vocabulary Reading Post-reading Homework	Pre-listening Vocabulary Listening English sounds Grammar Post-listening Help!	Pre-writing Writing Post-writing	Minute speaking
Teacher's Guide	Unit 1 - Places of memory	Unit 2 - Best friends forever	Key: [] Basic sections [] Special sections [] Special vocabulary section		

Table 1: General organization of this work. Source: Elaborated by the author.

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2 RATIONALE

It was a complex task to choose the specialists who had been seen throughout the course in order to compose the panel of the rationale. Nonetheless, it became clear that the units “dialogue” essentially, from my perspective, with three theoretical axes on which I seek to shed some light in the next sections: Genre Awareness, Corpus Linguistics and Communicative Approach.

2.1 Genre Awareness: Diane Millar (2011)

Millar (2011) defines genre as a socio-cognitive schema—people have a mental prototype in terms of content, steps (content order) and language it involves—, concretized in the form of texts which, although not identical, “share a communicative purpose” (p. 4); to achieve it, the texts demand similar language/structure. Genre awareness (GA), in turn, is defined by the author by quoting Johns (2008, p. 238): “the ability to select and use an appropriate genre [...]”. According to her, GA activities not only “ask students to notice how language works in relation to the context.” (p. 6-7), but also can encourage them to notice it (p. 10).

Considering Paltridge (2001), who proposes the focus of such activities on the levels context, discourse and language, Millar (2011) offers a short explanation on these, followed by examples of tasks associated with each one for teachers to put into practice.

In the section for context awareness activities, there is a focus on the purpose of the communication and the interlocutors (audience). Moreover, it is convenient to point out that “Genre researchers [...] argue that all texts depend on the context in which they are used. The purpose of the communication and the context, including the audience, the topic, and the mode, directly shape the organization and the language of a text.” (MILLAR, 2011, p. 3).

We may infer, from this fragment, that context emerges as the main factor when the matter is shaping a genre, while organization and language are intrinsically linked to it.

In the sections for discourse awareness activities and language awareness activities, the emphasis lies, respectively, on the structure—divided in so-called “moves” or “steps”—and on the lexico-grammatical patterns of a genre: both of them contribute to attaining the communicative purpose.

The units expose learners to a great variety of genres; among the GA activities provided, I can cite those involving:

- two TV commercials (Unit 1, Post-listening, Part II, p. 11-12), since students need to “speak about (a) the profile of the interlocutor; (b) the purposes of the brand; and (c) the

(non-)verbal strategies to achieve such purposes.” (number 1), as well as to analyze the reference to an *idiom* (number 4);

- a news article (Unit 1, Writing, p. 7), since students have to produce one—their *classmates* will read it—in order to *report* something about a museum (context), by taking into account basic elements (e.g. the headline) and the inverted pyramid scheme (discourse), and by using direct/reported speech (language);
- an oral review (Unit 1, speaking ability/Starting point, Part III, p. 8), since students need to do a brief analysis of the review in terms of context, discourse and language, and then to record a review (Speaking, p. 10);
- a recipe (Unit 2, Homework, p. 7-8), since students have to get acquainted with the vocabulary (numbers 1, 2, 3) and the lexicon/moves (number 4);
- a comic strip (Unit 2, Writing, p. 2-3), since students need to interpret one and to create another, with the objective to post it on a social network and to bring readers a positive message (context), by using properly the frames (discourse) and the modals to express motivation (language).

2.2 Corpus Linguistics: McEnery and Hardie (2012), among other authors

According to McEnery and Hardie (2012), corpus linguistics is an area which focuses upon a group of procedures (or methods) for studying language. These procedures are being developed, but other ones are well established (e.g. concordancing).¹ The authors point out two generalizations concerning that area. First, it deals with a usually large set of machine-readable texts² (a corpus), which is studied under the light of research questions—the corpus data are read, searched and manipulated via computer. Second, a corpus is invariably exploited by means of tools; some of them (concordancers) allow users to look at words in context, and others, to produce frequency data (e.g. a word frequency list). McEnery and Hardie affirm that concordances, related to qualitative analysis, and frequency data, related to quantitative analysis, have the same relevance in corpus linguistics. The authors also affirm that a close relation must exist between the corpus data and the research question. Finally, they specify features which guide studies in corpus linguistics, such as mode of communication (there are corpora of written language, corpora of spoken language, corpora of both types, video corpo-

¹ It “means using corpus software to find every occurrence of a particular word or phrase” (O’KEEFFE; MCCARTHY; CARTER, 2007, p. 8). The search item (the node) is presented in the center of the concordance lines, with some words at either side (Key-Word-In-Context displays or KWIC concordances). Thus, these lines give us many examples of patterns of use concerning the node.

² The term *text* denotes a file of machine-readable data (MCENERY; HARDIE, 2012, p. 2).

ra), and monolingual versus multilingual corpora (there are corpora limited to one language and corpora with two or more languages).³

For O’Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter (2007), a corpus is a collection of written or spoken texts (or a mix of both) that can be usually stored on a computer, amassed and analyzed by means of analytical software. It is built to represent a certain linguistic context (that is, a corpus is a principled set of texts) according to a design matrix. We can either create our own corpus, or choose one in line with our needs (bought or accessed for free). A corpus allows us to search for a word or phrase and to generate examples of the search item in its context of use. Thus, a corpus allows us to look at a language feature in quantitative terms—when we see how many times a word or phrase is used—, as well as in qualitative terms—when we see, through the number of occurrences, how a word or phrase is used.

Frankenberg-Garcia (2014) indicates three paths to apply corpus-based language aids in the classroom: (I) published tools and resources, (II) corpora hands-off and (III) corpora hands-on.

- I. Using published corpus-based tools and resources: Learners and teachers can benefit from tools and resources developed by experts by means of corpora for the general public. These tools and resources we use in our everyday lives include from simple spell checkers in word processors and web browsers to sophisticated machine translation programs. They also include materials among which dictionaries, grammars and textbooks. Most people use the tools and resources mentioned without realizing they were built from corpora, without understanding what corpora are, and without having direct contact with corpora.
- II. Using corpora hands-off: To complement their teaching, language teachers can produce corpus-based materials and activities suitable for their students. In this case, while the teachers have received some training in corpus linguistics, the learners do not receive any training in the area—consequently, they do not learn neither to use concordancing software, nor to keep in mind corpus linguistics terminology. Thus, the teachers come into contact with corpora directly, and the learners come into contact with them indirectly, through corpus-based materials and activities. The teachers must be able to use them judiciously and, when preparing activities, “must make sure that they are relevant, useful and accessible to their particular group of learners”. In addition, the teachers should resort to the materials and activities referred to in order to “help learners develop their language skills more fully”.⁴

³ For details about the definition of multilingual corpora, see O’KEEFFE; MCCARTHY; CARTER, 2007, p. 19.

⁴ Both passages were extracted from FRANKENBERG-GARCIA, 2014, p. 12.

III. Using corpora hands-on: Language learners can come into contact with corpora directly, when they are guided by their teacher to use corpora themselves and to explore such tools. The teacher can not only propose exercises focused on the students' interests and needs, but also explain them how to use corpora to find specific information about language. In this context, in spite of having direct contact with corpora, the learners do not need to know terms from corpus linguistics.

In a nutshell, when the matter is *using published corpus-based tools and resources*, teachers and learners have indirect contact with corpora and are probably not aware of their existence. When the matter is *using corpora hands-off*, only teachers have direct contact with corpora and are aware of them. Finally, when the matter is *using corpora hands-on*, learners also have direct contact with corpora, but are not aware of them the same way teachers are (for example, regarding corpus linguistics terminology).

The units contain several exercises with excerpts from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), predominantly consulted, and from the PARCOLAB corpus, consulted specifically to create quizzes on the site Typeform.

COCA	Ability	Location		Query	Source
UNIT 1	Reading	Vocabulary	number 1, p. 5		corpus-like activity (video excerpts)
			number 5, p. 6	Collocates	fiction
			number 6, p. 6	Collocates	magazines
	Listening	Vocabulary (1)	number 2, p. 3-4	KWIC	spoken texts
			quiz	KWIC	general
		Vocabulary (2)	number 4, p. 8		corpus-like activity (book passages)
		Connections	number 5, p. 10		corpus-like activity (video excerpts)
	Writing	English sounds	quiz	Expression	*PARCOLAB
		Vocabulary	number 1, p. 4-5	KWIC	newspapers
			Grammar	quiz	Expression
	Speaking	Vocabulary	number 3, p. 4	Collocates	general
			number 5, p. 5	Collocates	academic journals
		Minute Grammar	numbers 2, p. 10		corpus-like activity (video excerpts)
UNIT 2	Reading	Vocabulary	number 2, p. 3	KWIC	fiction
			number 3, p. 3-4	Compare	general
	Homework	number 2, p. 8	Collocates	fiction	
	Listening	Vocabulary	number 4, p. 3	KWIC	magazines
		Grammar	quiz	Expression	*PARCOLAB
		Post-listening	number 4, p. 6	KWIC	general

Table 2: Corpora-based activities. Source: Elaborated by the author.

The procedure of concordancing was adopted for a qualitative analysis, combined with a hands-off “angle”, with sights to lead the class to observe the features of a lexical item in carefully selected excerpts and, as a consequence, to know how people employ it. In COCA (monolingual, made of written/spoken texts, and of controlled access), most of the queries occurred via KWIC (e.g. patterns of use of “eager” and “treat”, in blue) and Collocates (e.g. nouns which collocate with the adjective “filthy”, in green); in an activity of a reading ability section, the function Compare gained space (difference between the adjectives “rich” and “wealthy” when employed with nouns, in orange).

Regarding PARCOLAB, it is multilingual,⁵ made of written/spoken texts, and of unlimited access, for which it is not required a login. Curiously, whereas the registers in COCA date from last century on and come from varied sources (fiction, magazines, etc.), in PARCOLAB the large majority of them belong to books (primarily, from literature), among recent and century-old ones. The results are exhibited in three columns, each one in a different language; the first one (English was always chosen for this work) heads the search, which can happen in these levels of complexity: expression (single word or phrase, chosen for this work), feature and expert (morphosyntactic details). Literary passages and spoken fragments of videos (PARCOLAB) appear in grammar/phonetics exercises (see Table 2).

The preference for corpora texts in the present assignment is due to the fact that they provide authentic material, a material that brings a living language, so that students can learn vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation through contents whose expanded context may generally be recovered. Furthermore, the consultation to dictionaries, described as corpus-based resources by Frankenberg-Garcia (2014), and the focus on pieces from the materials of the assignment in corpus-like activities (e.g. the uses of “as” in “The history of chocolate”, by Pucciarelli, in yellow), also reveal a concern towards real texts.

2.3 Communicative Approach: Richards and Rodgers (2001)

The term *communicative competence* (herein also called C2) was coined by Hymes (1972) to designate “what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community.” (RICHARDS; RODGERS, 2001, p. 159). For the author, it involves the acquisition of knowledge and ability to employ language in different aspects, for distinct objectives. Canale and Swain (1980) identify the dimensions of C2: (I) grammatical competence (the domain of grammatical/lexical capacity), (II) sociolinguistic competence (the do-

⁵ English, Spanish, French, Italian, Alsatian, Corsican, Occitan, Serbian, and Poitevin-Saintongeais, “officially recognised by the French Ministry of Culture”, according to Wikipedia. Some languages lack registers.

main of the social context of communication, which includes *participants* and *communicative purpose*); (III) discourse competence (the domain of the relation between the cohesion/coherence of the message and the text or discourse as a whole); and (IV) strategic competence (the domain of interlocutors' strategies to maintain communication, for example).

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 153), who bring us a historical perspective, linguists "saw the need to focus [...] on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures." Thus, emerges the Communicative Language Teaching or Communicative Approach (CA), which prioritizes processes of communication instead of language forms and aims to develop not only the communicative competence, but also integrated procedures to teach the four skills. With regard to CA, the authors point out some characteristics or "principles that reflect a communicative view of language" (RICHARDS; RODGERS, 2001, p. 172). Among them, is basically the conception of learning as a communicative practice and as a creative construction, plus the association of communication with authenticity, fluency, meaning, combined skills.^{6,7}

Richards and Rodgers (2001) affirm that, in this "learner-centered" and "experience-based" approach, the student plays the role of *learning in an interdependent way*, while the teacher acts, for instance, as a counselor, group manager and needs analyst. Moreover, they state that activities involving real interaction and language use for meaningful tasks promote learning (JOHNSON, 1982), and that meaningful language supports such process. The types of CA activities cited by the authors include interactions in pair/group work or written ones (FINOCCHIARO; BRUMFIT, 1983); functional communication activities (e.g. following directions) and social interaction activities (e.g. conversation/discussion sessions) (LITTLEWOOD, 1981); information-gap (PRABHU, 1987), information sharing or information transfer (JOHNSON; JOHNSON, 1998). Finally, the types of CA materials classified by them are text-based (e.g. with comprehension questions, paraphrase exercises), task-based (e.g. with "different role relationships for the partners") and realia. Concerning it,

Many proponents of Communicative Language Teaching have advocated the use of "authentic," "from-life" materials in the classroom. These might include language-based realia, such as signs, magazines, advertisements, and newspapers, or graphic and visual sources around which communicative activities can be built, such as maps, pictures, symbols, graphs, and charts. (RICHARDS; RODGERS, 2001, p. 170).

⁶ Richard and Rodgers (2001) list CA characteristics on pages 161 and 172.

⁷ Howatt (1984, p. 279) contrasts a weak and a strong version on CA: "If the former could be described as 'learning to use' English, the latter entails 'using English to learn it.'" In other words (FINOCCHIARO; BRUMFIT, 1983), "Language learning is learning to communicate." Both sources are quoted by Richards and Rodgers (2001), as all the sources in this section.

In the fragment, the authors highlight that real-life materials of (non-)verbal or multi-modal nature, of several genres/supports, and from several fields of human activity, can be part of materials for classroom. After all, if CA emphasizes authentic communication, it must occur through authentic (re)sources.

The units, with plenty of real-life materials (short story, poem, painting, comic strip, etc.), comprise many CA activities. I can mention the group works (Unit 1, Writing, p. 7; Speaking, p. 10), in which students are asked to produce a news article and an oral review; the activities of the Writing section in the two units; the Homework in both ones, in which learners have contact with the command of following directions, in order to record a WhatsApp audio and when reading the steps of a recipe; the conversation/discussion moments that, apart from the Speaking sections, exceed twenty, considered the two units; an information transfer question, in which students are asked to read an encyclopedia entry on Cora Coralina to complete a timeline (Unit 1, Pre-writing, p. 2); and paraphrase questions, such as those associated with the Aztecs (Unit 1, Listening, p. 6, number 6) and with the Egyptians (Unit 2, Reading, p. 5, number 2).

3 LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Regarding the Communicative Approach, we read:

The focus on communicative and contextual factors in language use also has an antecedent in the work of the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski and his colleague, the linguist John Firth. British applied linguists usually credit Firth with focusing attention on **discourse** as subject and **context** for **language** analysis. Firth also stressed that language needed to be studied in the broader sociocultural context of its use, which included **participants, their behavior and beliefs, the objects of linguistic discussion, and word choice**. (RICHARDS; RODGERS, 2001, p. 158, emphasis is ours).

It is pertinent to note that the keywords of this fragment (context, discourse, language), as well as their ramifications (see end of the quote), evidence a concern about genre both in genre theory explained by Millar (2011) and in Communicative Approach theory explained by the authors above mentioned. As pointed in Millar's academic paper, genre is a real text, which, in line with the book chapter by Richards and Rodgers, comes up in CA when the matter is realia. The distance of ten years between the productions (2001-2011) shows that the topics addressed remain relevant in teaching. Additionally, it is possible to visualize a relationship of interdependence linking communication, genre and corpora (these deal with words, in the microstructure of a written/spoken text) by means of a simple diagram, presented below as a conclusion. In it, it becomes clear that GA activities are also CA activities.

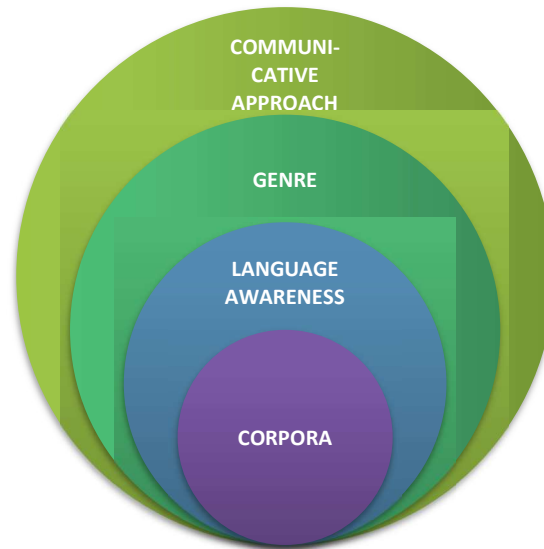


Diagram 1: Communication, genre and corpora. Source: Elaborated by the author.

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