

Re/constructing the past: How young people remember the Uruguayan dictatorship

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Abstract

Investigating how contested periods are remembered by younger generations allows us to better understand the contents that are passed on as well as the discursive processes through which intergenerational transmission occurs. This article explores the intersections of collective and personal memory. We investigate what Uruguayan teenagers know about the dictatorship (1973–1985) and what discourses come into play in shaping these views. The analysis of a group interview, part of an ethnographic project, identifies arguments, representations and evaluations of the period, while exploring intertextual links. The findings show that there are four main arguments used by the youth to explain the dictatorship: *reaction to guerrillas*, *authoritarianism*, *regional ideological war*, and *intolerance*. The social actors are evaluated in terms of social sanctions with negative evaluations of the guerrilla. Intertextual connections foreground the reception of hegemonic discourses that explain the period in terms of ‘two demons’. What youth know about the past is a situated and socially distributed web of meanings that help them make sense of the past and construct their socio-political identities.

Keywords

Collective memory, critical discourse analysis, evaluation, intergenerational transmission, intertextuality, remembering, traumatic past

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Debates about how to remember traumatic pasts exist throughout the world. As with the case of the Holocaust in Europe and Apartheid in South Africa, South American countries are struggling with the legacy of state terrorism left by the 1970s dictatorships. Coming to terms with the past entails understanding the role different social actors played in those events as well as what those events mean for us today. Young people in these situations have to learn about traumatic historical events for which there is no national consensus.

Investigating how contested periods are represented and remembered by younger generations, who were not direct participants in the events, allows us to better understand the contents that are passed on as well as the discursive processes through which inter-generational transmission occurs. This type of study is also relevant when considering debates around *how* or *whether* to teach the recent past in schools and how to educate younger generations into civic participation.

The focus of this study is the intersections of collective and personal memory. In this particular case, the concrete inquiry investigates what Uruguayan teenagers know about the civil-military dictatorship (1973–1985) and what discourses come into play in shaping these views. ‘Discourses are made by the social and cultural interactions of many actual, individual speakers over a period of time’ (Lemke, 1993: 244). Conversations youth engage in shape their identity and their understanding of recent history. These conversations about recent history occur in diverse contexts including the home, the community, the school and popular culture (Wineburg et al., 2007). These conversations constitute social practices where different communities construct different views of the past and value orientations to it. These experiences enable youth to become socialized into specific relations of alliance or opposition with regards to others.

Discourses about the past not only construct particular representations of events, participants and circumstances, but also orientations towards these representations of past experience. When there are competing discourses, individuals need to negotiate differences to construct a sense of self and other as members of groups. How do Uruguayan teenagers construct a sense of themselves as members of a national space and orient to political ideologies that imagine the future and the past of the nation in different ways? How is their understanding of the past affected by their participation in these social conversations?

The construction of the past is an active and dynamic process that results in the transformation of discourses, not their mere reproduction (Welzer, 2010). Investigating the role of discourse in the transmission of the past can contribute to the understanding of how certain meanings become privileged and how negotiations over differences in meaning are conducted. This implies looking at meanings as relational-contextual (Lemke, 1993). In this article, we look at an interaction as an instance of situated language use that serves to show the circulation of discourses about the past as well as the (re)construction of representations and the enactment of different orientations towards those discourses.

Our analysis reveals how young people enter the public conversation about a contested past, by displaying their understanding of events and social actors as well as by negotiating a space for themselves to be heard, drawing on available socio-historical discourses.

Discourses about the past and intergenerational transmission

Societies have access to the past through language (Castoriadis, 1987). The construction and transmission of the past are textually mediated and supported by an interpretive community (Wertsch, 2002). Consequently, participants' semiotic work and active engagement in meaning making are necessary for intergenerational transmission to occur, and result in the transformation of discourses about the past. The inter-subjective nature of constructing and passing on the past calls for an investigation of these processes, not only as instantiated in particular texts, but also as social practices. This means exploring how people use language to make history and to position themselves in relation to others by aligning with or opposing available discourses.

In the Uruguayan case, most studies have explored those struggles over how to give meaning to the past from a historical perspective (e.g. Marchesi, 2002, 2012; Perelli and Rial, 1986) and as conceptual history, tracing the meaning of democracy across time (e.g. Demasi, 2009). Intergenerational transmission of memory has been investigated mostly as a social practice (Irrazábal et al., 2010), as instantiated in cultural products like historical novels (Basile, 1997), and from psychoanalytic perspectives looking at communication within groups in traumatic situations (Fried, 2004). However, there have not yet been discourse analyses of intergenerational transmission in this context.

Previous discourse analysis work on discourses of the past and their transmission (e.g. Achugar, 2011; Anthonissen and Blommaert, 2006; Bietti, 2010; Oteíza, 2009; Schiffrin, 2001; Wertsch, 2008; Wodak, 2006) has identified regular and systematic practices through which representations of the past are recontextualized, legitimized or justified. Among these discursive practices are: the use of particular topoi (e.g. internal war situations, extreme situations requiring extreme measures); the transformation of activities, participants or causes; the deletion and addition of elements; and moral evaluations of events to construct particular narratives and schemas to interpret the past.

These resources show how language is deployed to construct discourses about the past at the textual level mostly. However, since discourse about the past is socially distributed, as such it requires us to rethink the type of analytic lens with which we approach it (Schiffrin, 2000). This means we need to investigate the discourse of the past not only as texts, but also as processes of meaning making. This is why we have chosen to focus our analysis on the construction of meaning in interaction and the transmission of the past as processes of establishing relations between discourses and enacting positionings to different orientations toward these discourses.

Methodology

We approach the exploration of the role of language in the construction and transmission of the past from a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective grounded in social semiotics (Fairclough, 1992; Lemke, 1995; Van Leeuwen, 2008). This means that we not only want to describe how language is used to construct the past, but also explain why some choices are naturalized, and how certain interpretations of the past are legitimized, reproduced or challenged. We intend to make a contribution to the understanding of discursive processes

of cultural reproduction and change. Our approach to the topic is transdisciplinary, bringing together the perspectives and theoretical apparatus of history, linguistics and political science. The project was designed as a multi-site ethnography (Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 1995) to contextualize and situate meaning-making practices in time and space. Our analysis entailed looking at texts from a synoptic and dynamic perspective, focusing on how meanings were instantiated in a text as well as on how meanings circulated and were negotiated in interaction.

This article uses data from a 55-minute focus group interview with 17 youth (15–18-year-olds), documents, observation notes and other artifacts collected during the two-year multi-site ethnography in Uruguay. The names used are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants. The research questions we address in this article include the following: What representations of the dictatorship do youth construct? How do youth position themselves with relation to discourses about the dictatorship available in the public sphere?¹ How are contested versions of the past negotiated in interaction?

The discourse analysis focused on exploring how the representation of the past through linguistic choices of participants, processes and circumstances constructs different versions of the contested past. We did a transitivity analysis (Halliday, 1994) focusing on how the dictatorship and social actors are represented, and an argumentation analysis (Van Eemeren, 2001) to identify how the dictatorship is explained. In addition, we investigated the different positionings (subjective, inter-subjective and intertextual) that contribute to the construction of identities vis-a-vis others in terms of axiological affinities or differences. We drew on Appraisal theory (Martin and White, 2005) and Intertextuality theory (Authier-Revuz, 2003; Bakhtin, 1981; Fairclough, 1992, 2003; Voloshinov, 1973) to do an analysis of how participants enact different types of orientations towards the past and negotiate differences connecting their texts to other texts implicitly or explicitly. We identified subjective positionings as evaluations in terms of attitudes towards people, places, events and things. Then, we coded for inter-subjective positionings where interpersonal relations are negotiated through graduation and recognition of alternative positions. And finally, we looked at intertextual positionings as the evaluation of other discourses through direct or indirect reference to the discourse of others (content and texture).

These discourse analyses were later interpreted using middle-range theories from history, sociology and socio-cultural learning theory (Halbwachs, 1992; Koselleck, 2001; Welzer, 2010; Wertsch, 2002; Wineburg et al., 2007) to explain how youth make sense of the past while constructing individual and group identities as historical beings.

Socio-historical context

At a political and public debate level, recent history is a controversial topic in Uruguay. In education, it is also a source of conflict, even though the civil-military dictatorship period (1973–1985) and the subsequent transition to democracy have been part of the official curriculum since the early 1980s. The discussion basically centers around two positions in the debate, one defended by academia supported by research and documentation, and the other defended by diverse sectors of political parties and dominant in the public sphere debate. The dominant position, a construction of the post-dictatorship

period called ‘the Theory of the Two Demons’ (Demasi, 2004), establishes that the events unfolded as a result of the confrontation of the guerrilla and the armed forces. In this position, civilian society is constructed as a hostage in a situation in which it was not able to act or escape. On the other hand, the academic position unequivocally represents the coup d'état emphasizing the slow and constant deterioration of democratic institutions since the beginning of the 1960s (Demasi, 2009; Rico, 2009), as well as highlighting the fact that the guerrilla had already been dismantled by the time the coup took place. From this perspective, the emphasis is placed on the movement of the armed forces and the political parties as key actors in these events. As it will be shown in this article, these arguments are also the ones dominant in the youth’s debate.

Besides debating the causes and factors identified as key to explaining the dictatorship, public discussions center around the periodization of events.² Traditional accounts present the dictatorship as starting with the closing of Parliament on 27 June 1973; however, others (e.g. Demasi, 2009) maintain that since 1967 there had been a gradual institutional deterioration that directly resulted in the dictatorship. Following this periodization (Demasi, 2009), there was a constitutional crisis and a dictatorship by President Bordaberry (1973–1976), followed by a period of military supremacy (1976–1981), and finally a regime crisis (1981–1985).

In a context of deep social and economic crisis throughout the 1960s, a political crisis unfolded. This crisis involved on the one hand, the lack of strong leadership within the traditional political parties, and on the other hand the growing authoritarian practices and repression of the Executive Power towards civilians (i.e. the curtailment of individual liberties from 1965 to contain labor protests). In addition, a guerrilla movement (Movimiento de Liberación Nacional-Tupamaros) became important from 1968 until 1972, when the armed forces and the police jointly dismantled the organization, putting in jail most of its leadership. From then on, the military developed its own political objectives (based on the Doctrine of National Security) and acquired more power in the political sphere. This culminated in the crisis of February 1973, when President Bordaberry (Colorado Party) together with the armed forces created the Council of National Security (COSENNA) and then in June of the same year dissolved Parliament, ending with the ‘process of installing a dictatorship headed by a prime minister of constitutional origin’ (Demasi, 2009: 27).

This brief socio-historical context contributes to situate competing versions of the past that circulate in the public sphere and that serve as background to the corpus analyzed in this article.

Findings

We conducted an analysis of the complete transcription of the conversation amongst youth and later integrated it with the discourse analysis of other sources (i.e. textbooks, classroom observations, family interviews, popular culture artifacts). The analysis was done using a coding scheme developed by adapting categories from the theories listed earlier (see Appendix). The three authors conducted the analysis and reviewed each others’ work. Below we present the results of our discourse analysis, focusing first on responding to our

first research question about what representations youth construct of the dictatorship, and then on how they negotiate differences and draw on available discourses.

Representations of the dictatorship

At the beginning of the focus group interview, participants were asked to complete the phrase 'the dictatorship was ...' and then exchange it with a partner to be read out loud. Even though all participants were provided with the same structure, there was wide variation in the way they chose to complete the phrase. The dictatorship was represented as a participant associated with a relational process in response to the question, which generated a definition-like response. However, the youth chose to represent the dictatorship differently by using modifying attributes that denote affective or moral responses, identifying it as a type of experience or as the trigger for certain actions. The following examples illustrate these different representations of the events in terms of the transitivity participants.

- (1) La dictadura fue muerte [The dictatorship was death].
- (2) La dictadura fue una Guerra donde hubo mucha violencia e injusticia y donde nadie ganó [The dictatorship was a War where there was a lot of violence and injustice and where no one won].
- (3) La dictadura fue una matanza de los milicos a la gente [The dictatorship was a killing of the people by the green machine³].

These representations also used metaphorical meanings that construct the dictatorship in terms of implied comparisons with other things. These metaphors, listed from a to g, include implied comparisons that link the dictatorship to cultural experiences through language mediations (see the examples above).

- a. the dictatorship as social illness
- b. the dictatorship as socially reprehensible actions
- c. the dictatorship as a change (event)
- d. the dictatorship as a war/catastrophe/killing
- e. the dictatorship as experiential time
- f. the dictatorship as an historical period
- g. the dictatorship as an historical process

This variety of representations of the dictatorship provides us with a first glimpse into the differing views and social voices that are constructed when remembering the past.

Arguments used to explain the dictatorship

The analysis of argumentation constructed in interaction entailed exploring how speakers defended and advanced reasons regarding their standpoint on the dictatorship. The

speaker who advances argumentation defends his/her standpoint to a listener who doubts the acceptability of this standpoint or has a different one (Van Eemeren, 2001: 12). According to Van Eemeren et al. (1996), argumentation can be defined as a verbal, social and rational activity aimed at convincing a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint by advancing a constellation of propositions justifying or refuting those expressed in the standpoint. In our analysis, we identified the premises used to justify the standpoint, as well as the claims reached through them. The premises were recovered by inferring presuppositions in the text. For example, the premise ‘crisis caused by guerrilla’, used as logical support for the Two Demons argument, was inferred by the ways in which the guerrilla were evaluated and by the actions they were depicted as doing.

- (4) Porque los militares tuvieron que recurrir a la violencia para reprimir el grupo de violentos que andaban en las calles [Because the military had to resort to violence to control the group of violent ones that wandered around the streets].

Here, the military’s entrance to the scene is explained as a response to violence from ‘the group of violent ones’, which refers to the guerrilla. This binary representation of military versus guerrilla and the negative characterization of the latter in terms of their violence is the core of the Two Demons argument.

In Table 1 we present the main arguments used to explain the dictatorship during this group interview. These arguments operate as assumptions that link implicitly this interaction to other discourses in the public sphere by appealing to similar explanations of the events. These assumptions are a type of implicit intertextual link (Fairclough, 2003) that presents an explanation of the events against the background of other available explanations circulating in the public sphere. These assumptions connect this text to other texts through relations that can be established by informed listeners who may have heard them elsewhere.

Subjective positionings: Orientation towards events and social actors

The analysis of subjective positionings focused on identifying the types of evaluations that events (i.e. the dictatorship) and social actors related to the dictatorship (i.e. the military, people, the guerrilla, political parties, the government) were given in the text. Following Martin and White (2005), we distinguished between three types of evaluations: affect (reaction), judgment (human behavior) and appreciation (things), which are encoded linguistically as adjectives, adverbs, nouns and verbs. For example:

- (5) Yo creo que fue [la dictadura] un exceso de poder [I think it [the dictatorship] was an excess of power]. Judgment: negative social esteem

This evaluation of the dictatorship highlights the unacceptable qualities of the behavior associated with the period and personalizes the event to evaluate it as socially inappropriate. In example 6, we see the affective evaluation of the dictatorship as a thing that produces a certain effect on those people causing problems.

Table 1. Arguments to explain the dictatorship.

Argument	Premises	Claim
Reaction (Two Demons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A crisis is caused by guerrilla violence b. The president represents the majority c. Democracy is not viable with high levels of social crisis d. Extreme measures are justified in extreme situations e. The government responds to the crisis 	<i>In response to guerrilla violence, the government limits civil liberties and closes parliament.</i>
Authoritarianism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The state imposes austerity measures and people respond by protesting b. The state represses popular demonstrations and public protests c. There are limits to individual civil liberties d. There is a gradual deterioration of democracy e. There is an abuse of state power f. Armed struggle is a response to defend the population from the authoritarian government 	A deterioration of individual civil liberties is the outcome of state repression, triggering protests and armed struggle on the part of the population, resulting in the total destabilization of the democratic system.
Ideological regional war	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The regional and international context influences local politics b. Cold War at the local level results in militarization and anticommunism as well as national liberation movements and left-wing groups c. The Doctrine of National Security explains the deterioration of individual civil liberties and military/government repression 	<i>The international situation and regional context lead to dictatorship (with the involvement of the USA in local politics).</i>
Intolerance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Fear of change and conservatism are typical of the national mentality b. Extreme positions lead to intolerance to differences and discrepancies c. Change is stopped through violence 	<i>There is control of the population through force and intolerance of differences.</i>

- (6) La dictadura fue un sedante para los problemáticos [The dictatorship was a sedative for the problematic]. Affect: positive effect

Most of the evaluations of the dictatorship are judgments; there are only a couple of affective reactions. On the other hand, the evaluation of social actors reveals that the two most prominent social actors are the military and the guerrilla (both occurring 37 times each). The types of evaluations associated with these social actors are mainly judgment and affect. For example:

- (7) Los militares no están hechos para gobernar . . . pero en esa época me parece que estuvieron bien [The military are not made to govern . . . but in that time I think they acted right/appropriately]. Judgment: negative capacity and positive social esteem
- (8) Cómo era eso que te agarraban y te torturaban hasta que dijeras que sí para que digas cualquier cosa [How was it that they would capture you and then torture you until you said yes to anything]. Judgment: negative/immoral behavior and unacceptable/unfair behavior
- (9) Pero muchos militares vieron morir amigos en los brazos por culpa de Tupamaros también [But many military also saw friends die in their arms because of the Tupamaros]. Affect: negative reaction to suffering caused by Tupamaros

The representation of the Tupamaros (*guerrilla*) is equally focused on judgment and affect and appreciation. However, their evaluation in affect and appreciation terms is not as frequent; and when it happens, it is as the producers of negative feelings in others or with implied sarcasm. Examples 10 and 11 provide evaluations of this social actor.

- (10) Un grupo de iluminados que andaba por las calles [A group of enlightened folk who went around walking the streets]. Appreciation: negative social valuation. Judgment: negative, acceptable and normal
- (11) Los tupamaros no eran un grupo de sicarios que iban por la calle matando gente [The Tupamaros were not a group of hired assassins walking the streets and killing people]. Appreciation: negative, social valuation. Judgment: negation of negative, moral and abnormal evaluation.

The last example shows how even when speakers were trying to counter negative evaluations of the guerrilla, they did not do it by constructing positive evaluations. Their discursive strategy was only to deny the validity of the negative evaluation, implying there was no positive quality to be attributed to the group. This is also supported by example 12, where there is an explicit statement by one of the speakers showing that no one has a positive evaluation of the guerrilla.

- (12) Nadie está defendiendo a los Tupamaros [No one is defending the Tupamaros]. Affect: negative reaction. Judgment: negation of positive social sanction of admirable behavior

The other social actor that is mentioned a high number of times in the text is ‘the people’ [*gente, pueblo*]. This social actor is represented 64 times as *gente* and 10 times as *pueblo*. The latter has a more political connotation and the former is a more neutral

term to refer to people in general. The evaluations mostly represent them as victims in affective evaluations and as having socially valued or moral attributes such as being common or innocent. For example:

- (13) Salieron a defender a la gente [They [the military] went out to defend the people].
Judgment: positive capacity/morals of military and incapacity of people (who need to be defended by others)
- (14) Un grupito de la población salió a asustar a la gente con armas y a derrocar el gobierno [A small group of the population went out to scare the people with guns and to depose the government]. Judgment: negative unacceptable behavior of small group of the population (referring to guerrilla); affect: negative produced effect on people (scare), negative reaction of people (fear)
- (15) La gente normal que no andaba con armas [The normal people who were not carrying guns]. Judgment: positive capacity and normality

These examples show how the people are evaluated mostly in negative terms as being at the mercy of others' actions and without agency. However, it is also interesting to note that there seem to be differences within the 'people'. 'Normal' people are contrasted with those who appear to break the norm and act differently from what is expected (those who carry guns and those who attack their own). This complex construction of the people as the source of the crisis, and also as the victim of it, highlights the contradictions in some discourses about the dictatorship, where the people are not seen as active players in the process. The fact that the people appear often, but still in non-agentive roles (except when seen as equivalent to the guerrilla), foregrounds the fact that these discourses do not offer a lot of roles for youth to identify with besides victim or perpetrator. If you do not want to align with the military nor with the guerrilla, what alternatives do you have? Associating yourself with the people positions you as victim and in a non-agentive role that does not seem like an attractive option for these youth. This is demonstrated by the fact that no speaker in this conversation used the pronoun 'us' or 'we' when talking about the 'people'. The people were always referred to in the third person: a social actor for whom they can feel pity, but not identify with.

Inter-subjective positionings: Negotiation of differences

In dialogue, speakers organize their contributions in relation to those of other participants in the interaction. The positioning at this level serves a different function – one of creating solidarity among the group and saving face, while maintaining a standpoint. We focus here on the interaction as an interpersonal meaning-making situation where speakers react to those immediately in front of them.

The analysis revealed that the main points of difference emerged from Federico's standpoint explaining the cause of the dictatorship as the government's response to the guerrilla's actions. Most of the other participants responded to this position by trying to point out flaws in the argument. These counter-arguments were rebutted by Federico. For most of the discussion, there was no clear presentation of a new standpoint until the Cold War and the regional situation were introduced by Juana as alternative explanations.

Some of the discursive strategies used to establish solidarity among participants who held different positions included: humor, recognition of the other's right to hold a different perspective, and agreeing with parts of the other's argument. For some of the participants, the interpersonal strategy was to avoid participating vocally altogether. Even though they had expressed clear and strong positions in their individual interviews and in class discussions, they chose to remain silent in the group discussion. The social purpose of the interaction, at the inter-subjective level, seemed to be to maintain a cordial relation among participants.

The extract presented in example 16 gives a taste of what the discussion and negotiation were like.⁴ The underlined highlighting refers to dialogic positioning that brings in or responds to other voices encoded through a variety of linguistic resources such as: projection (projecting clauses, names for speech acts, projecting within clause, scare quotes), modality (polarity, probability, necessity), concession (conjunctions, continuatives). These resources can be deployed to open up or to close dialogue. The other coding (underlined: judgment, underlined: appreciation and underlined: affect) represents different types of evaluation (subjective positioning). The coding is included here because the alignment of evaluations constructs difference or solidarity through an axiological prosody or a disruption of it. We also coded for graduation resources used to raise or lower the force of the evaluations (underlined) or to sharpen or diffuse the focus of the evaluations (underlined).

(16)

- *Luis: ¿estuvo bien o estuvo mal que hayan estado los militares?
- *Federico: Todo tiene su pro_y_sus_contras.
- *Federico: La dictadura tiene muchos pro_y tiene muchos contras.
- *Sofía: <La mayoría son contras>
- *Federico: Los tupamaros también tendrían muchos pro_y tendrían muchos contras. Pero yo:
- *Sofía: Los contra fue que murió gente, ya está: los pro_no importan.
- *Ernesto: ta claro lo que:
- *Sofía: No hay nada de pro en cuanto murió la tal cantidad de gente.
- *Federico: <Y vos que le encontrás de pro a salir a la calle con las armas e intentar agarrar el gobierno?
- *Sofía: Nada.
- *Federico: Y bueno viste entonces tampoco.
- *Federico: Yo tampoco le encuentro pro
- *Juana: Nadie está defendiendo a los tupamaros.
- *Sandra: Y toda la gente que estuvo presa no eran tupamaros.
- *Marcos: Claro_no hacían nada y los metían presos.
- *Ernesto: simplemente pensaba distinto.
- *Marina: Por simplemente tener libertad de expresión.
- *Ernesto: <Por pensar diferente>
- *Marcos: <Por pensar, por pensar solamente>.
- *Ernesto: porque tampoco había tantos tupamaros.
- *Federico: Pero yo pienso que libertad de expresión no es salir a matar gente a la calle.
- *Marina: Bueno porque justamente es lo que te estamos diciendo.
- *Federico: <Y a robar bancos>
- *Marina: No era todo el mundo.
- *Sandra: NO era todo:

- *Juana: <No toda la población era así>
- *Juana: Y en las escuelas se reprimía no dejar enseñar algo libre porque un grupito de población salió a las calles a asustar a la gente con armas y a derrocar el gobierno.
- *Federico: Al gobierno no lo derrocaron Bordaberry disolvió las cámaras él no más.
- *Sofía: Porque ta en parte hubo presión de los dos lados.
- *Federico: Los militares no están hechos para gobernar pero en esa época me parece que estuvieron bien.
- *Luis: Was it good or bad that the military had been here?
- *Federico: Everything has its pro and cons.
- *Federico: The dictatorship has a lot of pros and it has a lot of cons.
- *Sofía: <most are cons>
- *Federico: The Tupamaros also would have a lot of pros and a lot of cons. But I:
- *Sofía: The cons were that people died, that's it: and the pros don't matter.
- *Ernesto: yes that is clear what:
- *Sofía: There is nothing pro since so many people died.
- *Federico: And you, what do you find pro in going out to the streets with guns and trying to take over the government?
- *Sofía: Nothing.
- *Federico: And so do you see then either.
- *Federico: I don't find pro either in that.
- *Juana: No one is defending the Tupamaros.
- *Sandra: And not all the people who were in jail were Tupamaros.
- *Marcos: Right, they didn't do anything and they put them in jail.
- *Ernesto: they simply thought differently.
- *Marina: Simply for having freedom of expression.
- *Ernesto: <for thinking differently>
- *Marcos: <for thinking, for thinking only>
- *Ernesto: because neither were there so many Tupamaros.
- *Federico: But I think that freedom of expression is not to go out to kill people on the street.
- *Marina: Well, because that is just what we are telling you.
- *Federico: <and to rob banks>
- *Marina: It wasn't everyone.
- *Sandra: No it wasn't every:
- *Juana: <not all the population was like that>
- *Juana: And in the schools there was repression, they didn't allow the teaching of something free because a little group of the population went into the streets to scare the people with guns and to bring down the government.
- *Federico: The government was not brought down. Bordaberry closed the parliament himself alone.
- *Sofía: Well, because in part there was pressure from both sides.
- *Federico: The military were not made to govern but in that time I think they were right.

Example 16 shows one interaction in response to a question that demonstrates what this interpersonal negotiation looked like. Here, Federico establishes his standpoint about the dictatorship, evaluating the event as a thing in terms of its qualities: having positive and negative attributes. Sofia responds, challenging this evaluation by adding some graduation to part of his evaluation, stating 'la mayoría' ['most of it'] was negative. This overlap and modification of the other's statement leaves unchallenged the premise and shows some degree of agreement, since there was no complete refusal of his premise. Federico responds to the challenge by establishing a comparison, switching the

social actor that is being questioned. By substituting the dictatorship for the Tupamaros, he builds his argument by changing focus. Graduation becomes a key resource to negotiate difference in this conversation.

Sofía continues the negotiation by changing focus again and moving to foregrounding the negative aspects of the period in general without mentioning any social actor ('no hay nada de pro'). Here, she introduces a new actor, the 'people', as victims of a process in which the agents are removed to avoid confrontation. Federico does not accept this repair, and challenges Sofía again by posing a question about the actions of the Tupamaros (without explicitly mentioning them). He refers to their killing of people on the streets and directly requests her response to that scenario. By forcing a response to his morally negative evaluation of a situation using a question, Sofía is left with no space to disagree. She says 'nada' (nothing), another graduation that is used to elicit agreement. Federico then accepts her response, taking it as an agreement with his premise that the Tupamaros acted incorrectly, instead of making it about the dictatorship. Here, Juana intervenes to clarify the point, stating that it is not a true agreement. Her strategy is to reintroduce the rebuttal point, stating that the discrepancy is not about the Tupamaros. However, she is not able to move beyond denying his implied premise: critique of the dictatorship equals support for the guerrilla (Tupamaros).

The next turn is taken by Sandra, who builds on Juana's contribution using the conjunction 'y' (and), to rectify Federico's statement by narrowing the focus (not everyone who went to prison was a Tupamaro). Marcos elaborates on Sandra's contribution by diffusing focus again in talking about the more general experience of all those who were unjustly imprisoned ('no hacían nada' [they didn't do anything]). Ernesto builds on Marcos' turn by narrowing the focus ('pensaban distinto' [they thought differently]), to point out the type of injustice it was. Marina and Ernesto repeat the same premise by using terms that refer in more specific ('libertad de expresión' [freedom of expression]) or more broad ways ('pensar diferente' [think differently]) to the same idea: thinking differently was punished. Focus serves as a function to challenge the opposing view, while building alignment around another position is achieved by playing with the graduation of the premise. Ernesto introduces a new challenge by pointing out a flaw in Federico's argument (that the Tupamaros were not that many), implying that the issue was not important enough to generate the situation. Federico responds using the contrastive conjunction 'but' (*pero*) to point out a difference and goes back to the previous speaker's turn to make a direct citation that challenges the meaning of the phrase 'libertad de expresión no es matar' [free speech isn't killing]. Marina responds by showing agreement, starting her turn with *Bueno* ('well') and then the conjunction *porque* (because), which presents her point as building on Federico's, not challenging it. She maintains that there is agreement. Federico ignores this and overlaps his statement, bringing in more information to continue discrediting the Tupamaros (*robar bancos* [rob banks]) by adding to his questioning of the use of the phrase 'freedom of expression' [free speech]. Marina, Sandra and Juana use the strategy of playing with focus to challenge and deny Federico's argument ('no era todo el mundo', 'no toda la población era así' [it wasn't everyone, 'not all the population behave like that']), implying that the effect of the dictatorship was felt by everyone, not just the guerrilla. The modification of 'population' with quantifiers like 'all' and 'everyone' challenges the legitimacy of the

argument by questioning the inclusive relation implied in the comparison between those who felt the effects of the dictatorship and those charged with having caused it. Juana then expands on her challenge of the argument by quoting directly, but in an ironic way, Federico's words ('un grupito de población' [a little group of people]). By defining more explicitly the meaning of 'freedom of expression'— changing focus to mean it also included a limitation on what was taught at schools – she tries to rebut his position. Federico disregards the main premise of Juana's rebuttal, focusing on another part of her turn and correcting part of her statement ('*derrocar el gobierno*' [bring down the government]). By using focus to highlight the fact that it was the president himself that gave the order for the coup d'état, he tries to discount her objection. Sofia intervenes once more to try to reach consensus and diffuse any differences, pointing out that there were excesses on 'both sides'. Federico, however, has the final word and does not take up her offer to reach agreement. He re-states his argument, introducing a new actor via a change of focus (from dictatorship to the military), conceding that the military should not govern, but again saying he agrees with what happened.

After this long interaction, Federico makes little accommodation to those in the group who challenge his viewpoint. However, we can observe a couple of instances where both 'sides' of the argument make efforts to establish agreement by modifying the others' statements, using force to make them compatible, or by selectively changing the focus to diffuse difference.

The negotiation of difference was a struggle, but it was not avoided by participants. In the end, they reached a semi-agreement without completely accepting the others' side by diffusing focus to eliminate clear implications of responsibility for the dictatorship.

Intertextual positioning: Orientation towards other discourses

This interaction is not only an instance where this particular group of youths makes meanings to fulfill their immediate communicative needs, but also a mode of participation in larger social discourses. This interaction also connects the youth to other discourses: '[...] each act participates in local constructions of meaning on shorter timescales at the same time that it also participates in the systematic networks of interdependent activities that sustain institutions and societies over much larger distances and longer times' (Lemke, 2002: 84). The web of intertextual connections established in this interaction enables us to understand the external relation of the text to other discourses about the dictatorship available to youth. Discourses are 'always oriented toward the already uttered' (Bakhtin, 1981: 279). The struggle over the representation and value of the dictatorship in this instance reflects the creation of something that never existed before, but also a creation out of something given (Bakhtin, 1981).

Our analysis of intertextuality focused on the evaluation of other discourses through direct or indirect reference to the discourse of others. We did a referent analysis to identify ideational representation of others' discourses and a texture analysis to document the interpersonal meanings through which others' words are commented upon and evaluated (e.g. irony, humor, etc.). We distinguished between direct report, indirect report and quasi-direct report. In addition, we explored types of evaluations of these discourses and how they were used to contract or expand dialogue (Martin and White, 2005). This

allowed us to establish which sets of other texts and voices were potentially relevant and incorporated into the text by the youth (Fairclough, 2003: 47).

The following examples illustrate the various ways in which speakers introduce other discourses into their conversation.

(17)

- *Federico: Un tío de mi padre vio morir a varios de sus amigos, muchos amigos morir en los brazos.
- *Federico: A varios los vio.
- *Luis: <Y a él le parece que estuvo bien la dictadura?>
- *Federico. Y a él yo no sé a él nunca le pregunté la opinión de ellos pero él siempre
le decía a mi padre vos no sabes lo que fue yo estar peleando contra estos medios locos
que andan en la calle sólo porque uno que está arriba mí me manda y que vengan y
me maten a un amigo de un tiro en la cabeza y yo lo tenga que aguantar en mis brazos.
- *Marina: <y no fue así de las dos partes acaso hacían eso?>
- *Marcos: Como era eso que te agarraban y te torturaban hasta que dijeras que sí para que digas
CUALQUIER cosa. Te decían vos hiciste esto y esto.
- *Federico: Por eso yo no estoy de acuerdo con las torturas.
- *Federico: Pero con salir a reprimir a ese grupito de iluminados sí estoy de acuerdo.

- *Federico: An uncle of my father saw several of his friends die, many friends died in his arms.
- *Federico: Several of them he saw.
- *Luis: <And does he think that it was right, the dictatorship?
- *Federico: And him I don't know, I never asked him his opinion about that but he always told my father, you don't know what it was like for me fighting against this kind of crazy people who were on the streets. Only because the one above me told me to and said that they would come and kill one of my friends with a gunshot to the head and that I would have to hold him in my arms.
- *Marina: <and wasn't it like that on both sides that they did that?>
- *Marcos: There was that thing where they would grab you and torture you until you said yes to telling them WHATEVER. They would say you did this and that.
- *Federico: That is why I am against torture.
- *Federico: But going to repress that little group of enlightened ones, yes I do agree with that.

In this example, we can observe three different discursive strategies used to make connections to other discourses available in the public sphere. The first instance of reported speech brings in family experience by using indirect and direct reports to cite people who were directly involved in the events. The reference to the uncle and his words as mediated through Federico's father serves to legitimize his position through a connection with first-hand accounts. This type of sourcing strategy enables Federico to use direct reported speech via his father: 'he always told my father' [*el siempre le decía a mi padre*]. The use of the first-person reference – 'you don't know what it was like for me fighting' [*vos no sabés lo que fue yo estar peleando*], together with the contrast between *you* and *I* – transforms Federico into a kind of ventriloquist who brings his uncle to life. The past becomes present in that moment where he completely identifies with his source.

The second type of discursive strategy used to position in relation to other discourses occurs when Marcos appeals to his interlocutors to support his recollection of other accounts that provide a different version of events. However, since he does not remember

exactly who had said it, the persuasive effect is not as powerful as with Federico's citation. The more general reference to an established anecdote that has been depersonalized and made into a general truth highlights the fact that this is a discourse to which everyone has access, albeit more indirectly. It seems to be a predominant discourse in the public sphere, to which youth have access by just being members of society, but not necessarily of a particular group.

The last example of intertextual positioning in example 17 comes once more from Federico. In the last utterance, he uses a euphemism for the guerrilla ('*grupito de iluminados*' [the little group of enlightened ones]) that evokes a negative connotation that is typically used in political discourse to refer to the Tupamaros. He does not only state his position on the topic, but does it using irony to align with certain axiological positions that index particular ideological interpretations. In this example, we see how intertextuality is used to legitimate one's argument and to align oneself in a larger ideological debate on how to remember the past.

Example 18 shows another discourse that is integrated into the debate – knowledge of expert sources on the topic. Ernesto cites the history professor and information they discussed in his history class as evidence to rebut the positive evaluation of the dictatorship being advanced by Federico.

(18)

- *Ernesto: Hay un dato que dijo la profesora de historia, y supongo que está bien
- *Augusto: No sé si estaré bien. (riéndose).
- Risas
- *Sandra: Dudas de la profe (riéndose).
- *Ernesto: NO, o sea quiero que sí pero quiero decir para todas las fuentes pasa. Entonces no sé.
- *Ernesto: Mi fuente es la del Liceo D.
- *Ernesto: Una de cada tres personas durante la dictadura estuvo presa.
- *Ernesto: Y dudo, no sé y no hay tantos tupamaros.
- *Ernesto: Y tenía más que ver con cualquier cosa:

- *Ernesto: There is a piece of evidence that the history teacher told us about and I suppose that it is correct.
- *Augusto: I am not sure if it is correct. (laughing)
- Everyone laughs
- *Sandra: Do you doubt the prof? (laughing)
- *Ernesto: NO, I mean I want to say that yes but I want to say that for all sources it happens. Then I don't know.
- *Ernesto: My source is from High School D.
- *Ernesto: One out of three people was in prison during the dictatorship.
- *Ernesto: And I doubt, I don't know and there are not as many Tupamaros.
- *Ernesto: And it had more to do with anything (referring to the imprisonments).

In example 18, Ernesto directly cites an authority to legitimize his argument. However, the citation is made with some evaluation that opens up the possibility of questioning its veracity ('I suppose that it is correct'). He uses a citation to authority as a rhetorical strategy to strengthen his argument, but at the same time he questions authority to establish his alignment with his peers. By not taking at face value authority or adult versions of the period, he positions himself as critical of everything, even established and legitimate sources. The effect this produces in the audience highlights the atypical nature of the

discursive strategy he chooses. He is trying to deconstruct the opposing argument, while maintaining a position that does not necessarily align him with the ‘other’ side. This seems like an attempt to construct a third position to break the dichotomous discourse (i.e. military vs guerrilla) that has dominated the debate so far. However, his use of a citation of an authority with an interpersonal evaluation that questions its credibility seems to be inappropriate for the rest of the group, causing laughter all round. Here, we can observe the transmission of a particular content (the high number of political prisoners), but with a new orientation to it. This represents a particular take on what has been passed on, not just an automatic acceptance of it.

In example 19, the youth incorporate a new discourse that brings in the argument that local events were connected to the Cold War. Miles brings in a new political actor, the USA, as a key player in explaining the causes of the dictatorship.

(19)

- *Miles: Estados Unidos planteó eso de la seguridad nacional y les dio esas opciones a los países.
 - *Miles: Brasil me parece por lo que dijeron acá fue el que primero la tomó:
 - *Miles: fue en el:
 - *Sofia: Sesenta y cuatro.
 - *Miles: ¿El golpe de Estado?
 - *Sofia: Sí.
 - *Sofia: Después fue en Argentina.
 - *Miles: Y ta después fue como que Uruguay lo tomó.
 - *Luis: Uruguay ya había tenido un intento de golpe en el treinta tres creo que fue antes.
 - *Luis: Creo que fracasó: Y después en mil novecientos setenta y tres creo.
 - *Sofia: Yo creo que empieza con la revolución cubana cuando Estados Unidos dice “a estos los quiero fuera”.
 - *Sofia: Ahí empezó el quilombo.
 - *Sandra: Tenían miedo que se expanda el comunismo por Latinoamérica.
 - *Sofia: Claro.
 - *Juana: El quilombo estaba antes de la revolución.
- RISAS
- *Juana: El quilombo estaba antes con Marx. (risas)
 - *Augusto: no digas más.

*Miles: The United States suggested that thing of national security and gave those options to the countries.

*Miles: Brazil, I believe, for what you all said was the first one that took it:

*Miles: It was in:

*Sofia: Sixty four.

*Miles: The coup d'état?

*Sofia: Yes.

*Sofia: Then it was in Argentina.

*Miles: And so then it was like Uruguay took it.

*Luis: Uruguay had already had an attempt at a coup d'état in thirty-three I believe it was before.

*Luis: I think that it failed: And then in nineteen seventy-three I think.

*Sofia: I think that it starts with the Cuban revolution when the United States says ‘these ones I want out’.

*Sofia: THERE it was where the mess started.

*Sandra: They feared that communism was going to expand around Latin America.

*Sofia: Sure.

*Juana: The mess was there before the revolution.

LAUGHTER

*Juana: The mess was there before with Marx. (laughing)

*Augusto: Don't say anymore.

This example shows a different discourse being introduced through more indirect references, such as using a word to evoke a larger discourse (Marx for Marxism), or using metonymy to represent an ideological position through the name of a country (the USA for capitalism). Miles, with the support of his peers and building on what others have mentioned, comes up with a little narrative to explain the causes of the dictatorship. In this narrative, countries become the participants who engage in dialogue and a game of persuasion. The indirect discourse used to represent what the USA 'suggests', depicts it as a verbal act which has material effects: countries act to satisfy the suggestion of the USA by violating norms and doing away with democracy. It is also interesting to note how these discourses are framed in more affective terms, switching the tone of the interaction from a moral debate to a more passionate one. The distancing of the debate to impersonal and foreign players allows these youth to make the debate lighter (as shown through their laughter), while, at the same time, bringing in more academic interpretations of the historical events under discussion. This discourse strategy of sourcing and alignment enables them to reconstruct their identity as youth distinct from older generations and ideological groups.

The references to other discourses show that these youth are familiar with several discourses about the dictatorship and deploy them to different degrees of rhetorical effectiveness by citing them to support their argument or deconstruct those of others. Family, school and popular political discourses about the dictatorship emerge in this discussion framed as legitimizing devices in the search for a successful explanation of the events.

Summary

The discursive forms of transmission of the past that emerge in this conversation show the various ways in which youth have access to discourses of the past and construct their own understanding of it. We observed that the representation of the dictatorship highlights its socially questionable and negative value, together with its definition as a historical event, period or experience more than as a personal experience. The exploration of the different types of orientations youth enacted in this text reveal that most of their interpersonal work was to maintain dialogic relations and construct a sense of solidarity among interactants. Table 2 provides a summary of the frequency of positionings (subjective, inter-subjective or intertextual) in relation to one another.

Even though positioning with respect to other discourses was not very prevalent in this interaction, youth showed awareness of a variety of discourses regarding explanations of the dictatorship. In addition, the variety of sources cited or implicitly referred to in their conversation demonstrate the influence different contexts have in the shaping of their views about the dictatorship. The family, the school and popular political discourses emerge as relevant sources of knowledge about the recent past. It is also important to highlight the distributed nature of this type of knowledge about the past, since as we observed in example 19, the construction of the meaning of the past is achieved as a collaborative effort among the interactants.

Table 2. Positionings enacted throughout interaction.

Subjective	Intersubjective	Intertextual
274	346	187
34%	43%	23%

In the next section, we provide some conclusions for further thought about this particular case and how to investigate the (re)construction and transmission of discourses of the past.

Conclusions

The analysis of this group interview about the dictatorship, together with other texts and artifacts collected during the ethnography, provide us with a window into the process of how discourses about the past circulate and are recontextualized in communicative situations. This process entails the reaccentuation and subtle change of discourses about the past as they are deployed in interaction. To understand discourses about the past, youth not only take the ideational meanings to construct a particular representation of them, but also orient themselves with respect to these discourses to find a proper place for them in the present context (Voloshinov, 1973: 102). Discourses about the past are not only received as particular ideational positions, but also as particular expressions of subjective orientations to these ideas and positionings of the speaker him/herself indexing a particular individual and group identity.

The analysis of these texts showed that there are some similarities and differences among these youth's reconstruction of the past. In the first place, their reconstruction of events in terms of participants and circumstances seems to be very similar. The general evaluation of the period is negative for everyone. Most differences emerged in their explanatory arguments. According to Hodges (2008), 'a well-formulated argument can resurface many times to emphasize a position in the struggle over the representation of an issue' (p. 500). We saw in this interaction that the students were mostly debating one argument, the one that explains the dictatorship in terms of a 'War between Two Demons' (the military and the Tupamaros). Even though other arguments emerged towards the end of the discussion, most of the time was spent trying to counter this argument. This is also the hegemonic position in public discourse, as social scientists and historians who study the period have demonstrated (Demasi, 2004; Lessa, in press). So it is not surprising that the debate unfolded like this.

In addition, it is important to consider that politeness and general conversational norms also played a role in negotiations of difference. The youth's alignment in terms of communities of values showed that to construct a positive self-identification, some of them needed to distance themselves from the dichotomous construction of the past. By creating a third space that allowed them not to take sides, while constructing a negative evaluation of the dictatorship, they tried to construct an alternative meaning of the past. On the other hand, for some youth, adopting the Two Demons argument required a choice between positive or negative identification with the Tupamaros or the military. These different interpretations of the positions available to them resulted in an extended

negotiation of ways of framing their identity in relation to explanatory arguments. This resulted in the construction of a dialogic text that brought in other voices to constrict possible explanations more than to entertain new ways of thinking about the issue.

The transmission of the past occurred through both integration and attribution of other discourses to construct their positions. Several discourses emerged in the form of anecdotes, emblematic examples, or words that evoked connections to larger discourses about the past. These intertextual connections involved the reproduction and contestation of the meaning and value of the dictatorship and the social actors associated with it. This type of analysis of intertextuality in action (Hodges, 2008) contributes to 'the understanding of how forms of sociocultural knowledge (e.g. truth claims, narratives, accounts) come into being and may be reproduced, resisted or challenged' (p. 484).

The process of transmission of the past develops as the unfolding of semiotic work that constructs representations and axiological meanings to produce ideological perspectives on the past. Interaction with others reaccentuates and expands potential realizations of established arguments and evaluative perspectives about the past. This transmission can be understood as a meaning-making process through which individuals choose from the culture's reservoir of available discourses, while resignifying them to serve their own purposes. A focus on the circulation of meanings and a look at the construction of meaning through time capture the dynamic nature of discourses about the past.

Discourses about the past constitute particular representations of historical events, but also evaluative orientations that produce possible readings and understandings of the past within situated interpretive communities. Some of the questions we are left with include whether changes in alignment or evaluative orientation necessarily entail changes in the representation of events at the ideational level. The other important question left is: How are hegemonic discourses about the past destabilized?

In the case at hand, the discussion about how to explain the causes of the dictatorship centered around the language and central argument of the Two Demons. Even those who opposed it ended up using its binary logic, which was not effective in rebutting this hegemonic argument. This is demonstrated by the fact that the two most frequent social actors that were identified throughout the discussion were the military and the Tupamaros.

To find their voice and a space to contribute to the construction of the future as active members of society, youth need to negotiate their understanding of the space of experience and the horizon of expectations (Koselleck, 2001). Historical consciousness operates as a compass to guide us in our historical understanding of the present by explaining the current situation in connection to a temporal frame (Rusen, 2004). To think historically entails connecting past and future. For youth to make sense of the past, they have to be able to make these connections.

Investigating the transmission of a traumatic past as a communicative process highlights the tension between the determinism of the inherited tradition and beliefs embodied in discourses, in relation to the creative action of individual meaning-making agency. Understanding how youth make meaning of the past can help us open up spaces for more civic engagement and inform the teaching of recent traumatic pasts.

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Notes

1. ‘The domain of everyday living, in which people can deliberate on matters of social and political concern as citizens’ (Habermas, 1984, cited in Fairclough, 2003: 44).
2. The polemic about the ‘true beginning of the dictatorship’, whether February or June, still continues, as the creation of COSENZA suggests to some historians a ‘technical’ coup d'état, since the creation of this state allows the armed forces to occupy an unconstitutional place in government. See Demasi (2009) for a more elaborate explanation.
3. The term ‘milicos’ refers derogatorily to the military. We tried to find an equivalent in English, but only found terms that may be dated since they were used during the Vietnam era (e.g. ‘green machine’ or ‘uncle Sam’).
4. The transcription code follows CHILDES (MacWhinney, 2000). See <http://childepsy.cmu.edu/manuals/chat.pdf>

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Appendix

Representation and evaluation of social actors and events

Transitivity analysis (Halliday, 1994). Identification of type of process (material, mental, verbal, behavioral, existential or relational), participants and circumstances.

Evaluation: Attitude (Martin and White, 2005). Types of evaluation: affect (happiness/unhappiness; security/insecurity; satisfaction/dissatisfaction), judgment (social esteem and social sanction), appreciation (reaction, composition and social valuation)

Identified: social actor evaluated, type of evaluation, nature of evaluation (positive or negative), and graduation (degree of force and focus).

	<u>Affect</u> (positive/negative; direct/indirect)
Attitudes (kinds)	<u>Judgment</u> (personal: admire/criticize; moral: praise/condemn)
	<u>Appreciation</u> (positive/negative)
Amplification (grading)	<u>Force</u> (intensifiers, attitudinal lexis, metaphors, swearing; raise/lower)
	<u>Focus</u> (sharpen/soften)
	monogloss
	(one voice)

Engagement (source)	projection (projecting clauses, names for speech acts, projecting within clause, scare quotes)
Heterogloss (more than one voice)	modality (polarity; probability; necessity) concession (conjunctions, continuatives)

Coding scheme positioning/forms of speech transmission

Subjective (attitudes/individual positioning with respect to information): evaluative lexis, modification, comparison

Intersubjective (dialogic positioning/with respect to interlocutors): repetition, dislocation, modals, conjunctions, interpersonal metaphor

Interdiscursive (implication/positioning with respect to other discourses): direct discourse (parallelism of intonation, rhetorical, interference, author's imposition) and indirect discourse (theme analysis, texture analysis)

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