

## *Linguistics and Literature – Possible Dialogues /* **Linguística e Literatura – Diálogos Possíveis**

*Camila de Fátima Rosa* <sup>1\*</sup>

Degree in Portuguese Language and Literature with a Teaching Credential and Specialist in Portuguese Language from the State University of Londrina. I work in the area of Linguistics. Funded by CAPES (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel – Brazil).

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-9673-2332>


*Maria José Guerra de Figueiredo Garcia* <sup>2\*</sup>

Professor in the Department of Vernacular and Classical Letters at the State University of Londrina, Paraná, Brazil. PhD in Linguistics, and Postdoctoral Researcher in Communication Sciences. I work in the field of linguistics.

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-2619-9560>

*Marcelo Silveira* <sup>3\*</sup>

Professor in the Department of Vernacular and Classical Letters at the State University of Londrina, Paraná, Brazil. PhD in Philology and Portuguese language. I work in the field of linguistics.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6084-1325>

**Received** in: 20 oct. 2025. **Approved** in: 27 oct. 2025.

### **How to cite this article:**

ROSA, Camila de Fátima; GARCIA, Maria José Guerra de Figueiredo; SILVEIRA, Marcelo. Linguistics and Literature – Possible Dialogues. *Revista Letras Raras*. Campina Grande, v. 14, n. 1, e7220, nov. 2025. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.17504527

### **ABSTRACT**

The relationship between linguistics and literature has been the subject of debate since the emergence of Language Sciences in the 20th century, revealing similarities and tensions between discourse studies and form studies. This article proposes a critical reflection on these interrelationships, based on two distinct and complementary theoretical frameworks. On the one hand, we explore the contribution of Roman Jakobson, representative of the Prague School, who analyzes the poetic function of language from a structural-functionalist perspective. On the other hand, we examine the approach of Brazilian linguist Maria Helena de Moura Neves, who uses literary texts as a starting point to explain grammatical and pragmatic mechanisms of language in use. The research, which is bibliographic in nature, draws on the analysis of literary excerpts by authors such as Paulo Leminski, Ricardo Ramos, and Machado de Assis. The study highlights how the poetic function, in Jakobson, and the metalinguistic function, in Moura Neves, establish a two-way street between literature and linguistics, in which both areas contribute to the understanding of language phenomena.

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<sup>1\*</sup> [camila.fatima.rosa@uel.br](mailto:camila.fatima.rosa@uel.br)

<sup>2\*</sup> [majogue@uol.com.br](mailto:majogue@uol.com.br)

<sup>3\*</sup> [celosilveira@uel.br](mailto:celosilveira@uel.br)

**KEYWORDS:** Literature; Linguistics; Metalinguistics; Poetics.

#### RESUMO

*Tratamos aqui do diálogo entre linguística e literatura por meio da análise da contribuição de Roman Jakobson sobre as relações entre esses dois campos e pela contribuição da linguista brasileira Maria Helena de Moura Neves, que aborda essa relação de maneira distinta dos conceitos de Jakobson. O propósito deste trabalho é elaborar uma reflexão crítica a respeito dos limites, fronteiras e interdependências entre dois dos principais troncos das Ciências da Linguagem: o linguístico e o literário. Partimos da pesquisa de cunho bibliográfico de Roman Jakobson e Roland Barthes, um dos seguidores do Mestre Russo, que compartilham de uma visão saussuriana da linguagem, para abordar as relações entre esses dois campos das Ciências da Linguagem que, de acordo com nossas discussões, não podem ser tratados de modo independente. Para ilustrar essa abordagem, há uma breve análise de texto literário, no qual utilizamos os conceitos linguísticos propostos por Jakobson para compreensão da obra. Para completar nossas análises, fomos buscar as relações linguísticas de um outro ângulo, no sentido de debater as estruturas gramaticais desvendadas nas obras literárias por meio da presença do fazer metalinguístico no texto poético. Selecionamos textos da linguista e estudiosa da gramática Maria Helena de Moura Neves, nos quais – agora, sob uma perspectiva pragmática – a linguista apresenta estudos gramaticais, cujo ponto de partida são textos literários, que estão ali para, no caso, tornar mais acessível a compreensão dos mecanismos gramaticais do discurso. Assim, pretendemos desenvolver neste trabalho o debate sobre essa mão dupla entre a linguística e a literatura.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Literatura; Linguística; Metalinguagem; Poética.

## 1 From Prague to Contemporary Functionalism – linguistics and poetics

This work has as its starting point the reading and reflection on classic studies of linguistics, especially texts by Roman Jakobson (1972) and Roland Barthes (2004), which discuss the relationship between linguistics and literature. Based on these studies, we seek to investigate how the dialogue between these two areas can be conceived, highlighting the contribution of Jakobson and the Prague School to the understanding of the linguistic mechanisms underlying literary production. Thus, this article aims to provide elements for reflection on the relationship between linguistics and literature, in order to foster debate about the boundaries and intersections between these two areas of the humanities. It is a proposal for reflection not only on these relationships, but also on how the perspectives and voices of the humanities shape both areas.

Based on Jakobson's (1972) ideas on the functions of language, this initial approach is complemented by another perspective, represented by the grammatical analyses found in literary works, according to linguist Maria Helena de Moura Neves (2018). In this context, the metalinguistic function is linked to the poetic function, reinforcing the intrinsic relationship between the grammatical and the literary. The author's work is part of a tradition that uses verses and literary excerpts as examples in grammar compendiums, but updates this legacy by incorporating 21st-century systemic-functional grammar models.

Jakobson, in turn, proposes a theory that establishes linguistic criteria for the analysis of literature. He shows how the syntactic structures of poetic text reveal articulations between syntagma and paradigm, whose deviations generate metaphors and metonymies.

In this context, this research seeks to broaden the debate between linguistics and literature, now also from the functionalist perspective of Moura Neves. The author addresses pragmatic aspects of language and, through the analysis of literary works, proposes a usage-oriented grammatical reading. For her, understanding language is understanding its use and the effects of meaning produced in different contexts, among which literary text stands out.

It is important to emphasize that Roman Jakobson is one of the pillars of the Prague School, the birthplace of linguistic functionalism. Together with Troubetzkoi and Karcevskij, founders of the Prague Linguistic Circle, Jakobson redefines Saussure's concept of value as difference, attributing to it a communicative function. As a result, linguistic identities came to be conceived as functional differences. This functionalist perspective was later taken to the United States, where it was reworked by Anglo-American linguistics in the context of pragmatics. In this new framework, the sign ceased to be value and became representation – that is, something that represents something to someone.

Although Moura Neves subscribes to contemporary pragmatically based functionalism, there are some common points between her proposals and those of Jakobson. Despite their epistemological differences, both linguists start from the context of communication and usage to measure language, and consider the links between linguistics and literature as central themes in the field of language, giving new shape to current debates.

To achieve this objective, this work is organized into four chapters. The first two delve deeper into the ideas of Jakobson and the Prague School. The third analyzes poetic discourse in light of the linguistic concepts of Jakobson and other Saussurean authors. The fourth chapter presents a functionalist approach, based on the studies of Moura Neves, exploring literary text as a field of evidence for grammatical resources – in an articulation between poetics and metalanguage that reaffirms the link between linguistics and literature.

The broad approach of Jakobson's proposals allows us to understand the tradition of poetic studies that began with the Moscow Circle and continued with authors such as Barthes. The analysis of Moura Neves' work points to avenues for investigation that are not exhausted in this article, but which find here a starting point for reflection and debate.

## 2 The Functions of Language

Before delving deeper into the relationship between linguistics and literature and Jakobson's contribution to such studies, it is necessary to understand some of the mechanisms of language proposed by Saussure, which form the basis of the thinking of authors such as Jakobson, a member of the Prague School. Edward Lopes, in his work *Identidade e Diferença* (Identity and Difference, 1997), establishes several connections between the ideas of Saussure and Jakobson applied to literature, highlighting that these relationships have often been misunderstood: "frequently poorly established connections between linguistics and literature" (Lopes, 1997, p. 30). This statement by Lopes, added to that made by Barthes, who highlights the "taboos of reserved domains" (2004, p. 204) in the field of language, shows that it is essential to question whether the boundaries imposed almost consensually between the linguistic and the literary are really appropriate for contemporary sciences.

Both Barthes' and Jakobson's thinking, as explained in the work *Identity and Difference* (1997), are indebted to the ideas put forward by Ferdinand Saussure. Since the publication of *Course in General Linguistics* (1995 [1916]) in the early 20th century, Saussure's ideas have spread to different academic centers, giving rise to various linguistic circles in Europe and the Americas, such as the Yale Linguistic Circle (Paveau; Sarfati, 2006). Two of these circles are of particular interest to this work: those in Moscow and Prague. In the latter, "together with Troubetskoi and Karcevskij, Jakobson initiated modern phonology and reframed the question of significant differences as functional differences" (Guerra; Silveira, 2017, p. 170).

Like Saussure, Jakobson starts from the principle that language is a social fact and therefore fulfills a communicative function. Based on this idea, and on the studies of Karl Bühler, he reformulates the concept of language functions. Bühler initially proposes three functions – expressive, appellative, and representative – associated, respectively, with the sender, the recipient, and the referent (Jakobson, 1972, p. 126). Jakobson reworks this proposal and adds three other functions: phatic, metalinguistic, and poetic.

Jakobson's decisive contribution lies in reframing Bühler's proposal in terms of language and discourse, adding a linguistic perspective to these functions. To

this end, Jakobson adds the metalinguistic and poetic functions, referring specifically to language (Guerra; Silveira, 2017, p. 172-173).

Jakobson thus identifies six factors of language – sender, receiver, message, code, contact, and context – to which six functions correspond: emotive, conative, poetic, metalinguistic, phatic, and referential. All forms of communication involve these elements; however, as one of them stands out, the corresponding function takes precedence. The metalinguistic function, for example, prevails when there is an emphasis on the code; the poetic function, when the focus is on the message; the phatic function, when the emphasis is on the channel. As Guerra and Silveira summarize:

There is also the phatic function, which emphasizes the channel, highlighting the means of expression that will shape the substance of the signifier. In this way, discursive functions are configured that revolve around the sender (emotive function), the receiver (conative function), the channel (phatic function), the context (referential function), the code (metalinguistic function), and the message (poetic function) (Guerra; Silveira, 2017, p. 173).

One of the pillars of the reflection developed here is the concept of poetic function. It is the poetic function that seeks, in syntax, the essential mechanisms of verse composition; for Jakobson, the secrets of verse lie in syntax. The poetic function allows us to understand linguistic constructions and the specific effects generated in literary discourse. Jakobson, based on Saussure, revisits the concepts of syntagma and paradigm – perhaps the most grammatical of Saussure's concepts – among others, and gives poetic production a linguistic and grammatical dimension, refuting the simplistic notion that poetry is defined solely as a deviation from the norm (Guerra; Silveira, 2017, p. 174). As Roland Barthes (2004, p. 204) states: “Jakobson gave literature a beautiful gift: he gave it linguistics.”

It is in this regard, referring to the functions of language, that it is possible to advance some observations on the works of Moura Neves, as well as on the theoretical and epistemological convergences and divergences between the Brazilian linguist and the Russian linguist. Both work with two essential and not always associated points: grammar – metalanguage – and literature. These points are normally dissociated in language studies and, under divergent theoretical perspectives – one Saussurean and the other pragmatic – point out that verse is made up of sentences, and that sentences always obey a grammatical structure. These are the poetic and metalinguistic functions, which intersect in literary discourse. Although Professor Moura Neves does not make direct reference to Jakobson's functions, and discusses the Prague School taking

into account other themes, such as the functional perspective of the sentence (1997), the question of grammar – morphology, syntax, semantics – and the literary question occupy a decisive position in the work of both authors.

Metalinguistics, it should be emphasized, has a special place in the reflections of Maria Helena de Moura Neves (1997; 2018). The metalinguistic exercise arises when language speaks of itself, revealing its internal mechanisms; the processes of text construction become evident. Metalinguistics allows language to explain and reflect on its own structure – a decisive aspect for the dialogues between linguistics and literature explored in this study. The work by Moura Neves reads grammar through poetic discourse. For the author, verses and stanzas unveil the tricks of syntax, morphology, and semantics.

## 2.1 The poetic function

The poetic function manifests itself in literary texts and highlights the mechanisms that lead Roman Jakobson to demonstrate how linguistics can contribute to the understanding of grammatical constructions present in literature. This study is concerned with the distinctive features of poetic discourse, which are recurrent in all literary works. From this perspective, it is necessary to understand certain mechanisms specific to poetic language, as outlined by Jakobson in his essay "Linguistics and Poetics," published in *Linguistics and Communication* (1972).

To understand the Russian master's proposal, it is important to consider the influences of the Moscow Linguistic Circle (Lopes, 1997), which deepened the analysis of literary discourse and defined poetics as a linguistic-discursive mark. Jakobson broadens this discussion, taking it to the general field of linguistics.

The scope of the poetic function goes beyond poetry. It can be present in other discursive genres, such as cinema and photography, among others. It is not restricted to literary text, but to all discursive manifestations in which the form of the message is emphasized. In literature, however, it is predominant, since it is in this domain that the message becomes the center of communication. The poetic function projects aesthetic values into discourse through grammatical rearrangements.

Another essential study for understanding poetics appears in the chapter "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasia," also in *Linguistics and Communication* (1972). Although it

deals with psycholinguistics, the text revisits Saussure's concepts – such as language/speech and syntagma/paradigm – to explain the mechanisms of linguistic articulation present in the communication of individuals with aphasia.

Jakobson analyzes the syntactic articulations of language, both syntagmatic and paradigmatic, which manifest themselves in all discourse. In specific contexts, such as literary texts and aphasic discourse, these articulations deviate from the norm, generating unexpected grammatical effects. In such cases, “the principle of equivalence of the selection axis over the combination axis” is projected (Jakobson, 1972, p. 130).

According to the author, paradigmatic selection involves organized lexical repertoires that offer options for choice. Syntagmatic combination, on the other hand, refers to the joining of linguistic units:

This means that selection (and, correlatively, substitution) concerns entities associated with the code, but not the given message, whereas in the case of combination, entities are associated with both or only the actual message. The recipient perceives that the given utterance (message) is a combination of constituent parts (phrases, words, phonemes, etc.) selected from all possible constituent parts (code) (Jakobson, 1972, p. 40).

Selection refers to the internal elements of language; combination refers to the external elements. Both need to be aligned – by similarity and contiguity – for the message to be effectively conveyed. In aphasic disorders, these operations are compromised. As in poetic function, there is a deviation from the norm, since speech involves selecting and combining complex entities according to social and linguistic rules.

This dissolution presents a temporal order of great regularity. Aphasiaic regression has proven to be a mirror of speech sound acquisition in children; it shows the child's development in reverse. Furthermore, the comparison between children's language and aphasia allows us to establish several laws of implication (Jakobson, 1972, p. 36).

The central concept, which deserves to be highlighted, is that “the speaker selects words and combines them into sentences” (Jakobson, 1972, p. 37), according to the linguistic system shared with the interlocutor.

But the speaker is by no means completely free in their choice of words: the selection (except in rare cases of actual neologism) must be made from the lexical repertoire that they and the recipient of the message have in common (Jakobson, 1972, p. 37).



The communicative act, therefore, operates within pre-established possibilities. Textual production depends on the articulation between selection and combination – processes that, in social discourse, follow the linguistic variations imposed by the dynamics of society.

In the case of aphasia, both processes – selection/substitution and combination/contexture – are affected. In selection disorders, which Jakobson classifies as first-type aphasia, the ability to substitute elements is compromised, and context becomes decisive. In such cases, patients rely on contiguity, which explains the recurrence of metonymic forms (Jakobson, 1972, p. 44). In contiguity disorders, on the other hand, it is combination that is impaired ; in these cases, the internal structure of the language, based on similarity, prevails. Jakobson clarifies that, in the face of a failure in context, the aphasic “uses similarities and their approximate identifications of a metaphorical nature [...]” (Jakobson, 1972, p. 52).

These studies reveal an association between metaphor and combination/syntagma, and between metonymy and selection/paradigm. Such relationships are central to the construction of literary discourse, whose poetic effects often stem from the subversion of these processes.

In literary discourse, the poetic function promotes the deliberate deviation from syntactic norms, creating aesthetic and meaning effects. Jakobson observes:

The development of a discourse can occur along two different semantic lines: *one* topic can lead to another either by similarity or by contiguity. It would perhaps be more accurate to speak of the metaphorical process in the first case and the metonymic process in the second, since they find their most condensed expression in metaphor and metonymy, respectively (Jakobson, 1972, p. 55).

These relationships stem from two fundamental syntactic movements: paradigmatic selection and syntagmatic combination. From these, the metaphorical and metonymic effects of literary language are structured. Jakobson explains:

Since at every verbal level – morphological, lexical, syntactic, and phraseological – one or the other of these two relationships (similarity or contiguity) can appear, each in one or another of its aspects, an impressive range of possible configurations is created (Jakobson, 1972, p. 57).

The message is the axis around which the poetic function is constructed. In literary texts and some other discourses, syntactic irregularities can be observed. In these cases, equivalence becomes the principle that guides not only selection, but also combination itself. The inversion of the paradigmatic axis over the syntagmatic axis creates patterns of repetition and parallelism that are exploited as an expressive resource. Jakobson states:



The measure of sequence is a resource that, outside the poetic function, has no application in language. Only in poetry, with its regular reiteration of equivalent units, can one experience verbal flow, as happens – to cite another semiotic pattern – with musical time (Jakobson, 1972, p. 131).

Commenting on these principles, Edward Lopes observes that “the poetic function is simply a verbal product, constructed on the principles of deviation from parallelism, which, by deforming the signifying object, destroy the automatism of perception” (Lopes, 1997, p. 279). Such mechanisms give the poetic function its structuring role in literary discourse.

Jakobson goes further: he proposes that metaphor and metonymy extend to the symbolic processes of language in general. The relationship between meanings by similarity or contiguity guides not only figures of speech, but also metalinguistic systems: “The similarity of meanings relates the symbols of a metalanguage to the symbols of the language to which it refers. Similarity relates a metaphorical term to the term it replaces” (Jakobson, 1972, p. 61).

The poetic function, therefore, is linked to the principle of similarity. The metrical parallelism of verses, the phonic equivalence of rhymes, semantic contrasts – all these resources are subordinate to the logic of similarity. Jakobson summarizes:

The principle of similarity dominates poetry; the metrical parallelism of verses or the phonetic equivalence of rhymes impose the problem of semantic similarity and contrast; there are, for example, grammatical and anti-grammatical rhymes, but never agrammatical rhymes. On the contrary, prose essentially revolves around relations of contiguity. Therefore, metaphor for poetry and metonymy for prose constitute the line of least resistance, which explains why research on poetic tropes is mainly oriented towards metaphor (Jakobson, 1972, p. 62).

Metaphors and metonymies produce effects of meaning mediated by semantic relations activated in discourse. These processes not only structure literary text, but also underpin a linguistic theory of poetic creation.

## 2.2 Poetics and Literature

When reflecting on Roman Jakobson's work on topics related to poetic function, it becomes clear how linguistics, the analysis of grammatical mechanisms, and the understanding of sentence structures contribute decisively to the reading of literary works. The Russian linguist points out that

linguistics and literary studies are complementary facets of the same object: the discourse produced by culture.

From this perspective, authors such as Jakobson paved the way for dialogue between linguistics and literature, which was followed by theorists such as Roland Barthes. In these studies, Saussurean concepts – such as syntagma and paradigm – and the subversion of syntactic norms and syntax stand out. Jakobson understands language as a system of signs that combine to form a message according to it. The study of poetics, in this sense, approaches verbal structures and reinforces the links between linguistics and literature.

Literary language, unlike other discursive genres, has its center of organization in the poetic function. It is characterized by a unique expressiveness and specific forms of construction, especially at the lexical and syntactic levels. Literary elaboration points to a unique grammatical architecture, marked by significant deviations from the norm.

The study of literature, in turn, follows a historical path that reflects social and cultural transformations. It explores, from a historical perspective, the linguistic phenomena that convert the literary message into poetic texts. Jakobson insists on this poetic dimension of literature and further asserts that literary texts can also be understood in the light of linguistics, especially through the articulations between syntagma and paradigm that underpin poetic constructions.

Until the mid-19th century, literature was associated with the interests of the ruling classes:

Traditionally linked to the ruling classes, literature obediently served power, establishing itself in the privileged hands of the cultured, wealthy bourgeoisie, whose interests and visions, transposed into "humanist values," it had become a noble megaphone until the end of the 19th century (Lopes, 1997, p. 177).

Later, literature took center stage at decisive moments in history, playing a more active social role. This led to a reconfiguration of language, aligning it with the social movements of the period. In this context, questions arise about the social impact of literature: "what does it do to people with what it says" (Lopes, 1997, p. 178). These questions abandon traditional models and provoke criticism of old humanist values.

It was within the Moscow Circle that Jakobson, along with other researchers, devoted himself to the study of poetic language:

[...] despite knowing that Muscovites were more particularly interested in the construction of phonetics/phonology and the systematization of the study of Slavic languages and dialects, while the capital problems of St. Petersburg were the definition of the construction procedure – or principle of composition

(from the Russian *priem*) – the definition of the poetic function (literary function) of language and the systematic observation of the effects of r meaning, which they called singularization or estrangement (Lopes, 1997, p. 186).

These studies reveal how grammatical phenomena are constitutive of literary language. Jakobson's contributions to the understanding of poetic creation were decisive for the analysis of forms, language mechanisms, and literary structure itself (Lopes, 1997, p. 189).

The ideas presented in this chapter show that literary texts break down aesthetic barriers and produce new meanings. An example of this is the visual poem “Vejo Miro” by Arnaldo Antunes, an artist who moves between music, visual arts, and literature. In visual poems, the author explores lexical games and syntactic constructions that highlight how grammatical mechanisms operate in this type of discourse; in this context, one cannot ignore the syntactic issue as an articulation between paradigmatic selection and syntagmatic combination.

This refers to the articulations between selection in paradigmatic categories – which, in languages, take on semantic and morphological contours and constitute units of the lexicon – and the combination of these elements based on the guidelines of the syntactic axis.

Antunes' poem draws attention for its syncretic structure – formed by different semiotic systems –, for its expressive use of color, for its unusual syntactic combinations, for the way the verbs *ver* and *mirar* appear in the poem, and for the graphic arrangement of the letters. In other words, there are syncretic grammatical resources that subvert traditional syntactic linearity and give body to the poetic text.

However, it should be emphasized that underlying the textual surface – beyond the syncretic text with colors and verbs – is a syntactic axis marked by the same movements of selection and combination that direct the syntactic articulations of language and extend throughout the language. Poetics is responsible for subverting, diverting, and surprising with unexpected syntactic relationships, unusual combinations that awaken the pathemic dimension of discourse, whatever the semiotic systems involved.

Figure 1: Poem “Vejo Miro” (I See I Look), by Arnaldo Antunes



Source: Antunes (2002).

The construction is simple – “I see with a kiss / I aim like a shot” –, but the lexical choices and syntactic organization transgress the norm. This rupture reveals a diverse language and allows for a unique interaction with the reader. The poem reaffirms Jakobson’s observations regarding the presence of poetic function beyond literature. Poetics is, above all, a semiotic operation: it manifests itself in painting, graphic arts, and multiple forms of expression. In the example in question, the poet uses an implicit adverb to express the manner in which the action takes place: “I aim like a shot” – fast, direct. The language privileges the message, reinventing forms and meanings.

Another element to highlight is the phonetic-phonological dimension of the poem, which gives the poetic text its own sonority. The semivowel “i” disappears in “beijo” (kiss), rhyming with “vejo” (I see). This prosodic device is characteristic of the poetic function. As Jakobson (1972, p. 144) states, “rhyme, by definition, is based on the regular recurrence of equivalent phonemes.” The words “vejo” / “beijo” and “miro” / “tiro” establish sonorous and visual rhymes. In the second pair, in addition to sonority, there is graphic identity. Counting the rhyme from the stressed syllable reveals morphological effects, such as the silencing of the diphthong under the prosody of the sentence.

Sonority is one of the most significant aspects of poetic function, but it is not the only one. Jakobson also emphasizes how the subversion of syntactic movements of selection and combination, through paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes, constitutes the core of poetic construction. As Guerra and Silveira explain:

Equivalence is put into action at all levels of poetic discourse, at the phonological, morphological, and semantic levels. Jakobson seeks in Saussurean theory the linguistic reasons for understanding the sounds of language; it is about the linguistic value of sound. Rhyme, in this context, is the expression of the play of phonemes in the service of verse construction. Here we see this linguistic definition of literary subjects. The mechanisms of poetic language are explained through grammatical mechanisms (Guerra; Silveira, 2017, p. 176).

In fact, the poet's lexical choices give poeticity to the work and bring out multiple meanings. The new arrangement of words creates new forms of meaning. The poet intends to communicate expressive effects through bold syntax. The poetic text is neither disorganized nor a simple deviation from the norm: it is a grammatical reconfiguration guided by communicative and aesthetic purposes. Its structure indicates the best way to express certain meanings.

Lopes (1997) and Barthes (2004) argue that poetics in Jakobson is linked to discourse, to language put into action. It is not only in literary works that the poetic function is linked to discursive mechanisms; in all manifestations of language in which it appears, it always refers to the process, to discourse, to language in use.

It is important to highlight, once again, that Antunes' text presents all these characteristics of poetic discourse. It is through the sound of speech that the diphthong present in "beijo" disappears in the rhyme; the graphic construction of the poem resembles that of a poster, billboard, or other forms present in everyday communication; the syntactic combinations of lexemes refer to the characteristic sloppiness of speech. Thus, we can observe how Roman Jakobson's discursive perspective is consolidated in the analysis of poetic works.

Another work that can be analyzed based on Jakobson's ideas, especially regarding paradigmatic syntax, is Ricardo Ramos' short story "Circuito Fechado" (1972), in which ideas are articulated through paradigmatic choices that transform the similarity of the paradigm into a syntagmatic sequence, that is, syntactic:

Slippers, toilet, flush. Sink, soap. Water. Toothbrush, toothpaste, water, toothpaste, shaving cream, brush, shaving cream, razor, water, curtain, soap, cold water, hot water, towel. Hair cream, comb. Underwear, shirt, cufflinks, pants, socks, shoes, tie, jacket. Wallet, coins, documents, pen, keys,

handkerchief, watch. Newspaper. Table, chairs, cup and saucer, saucer, plate, teapot, cutlery, napkin. Pictures. Briefcase, car. Desk and armchair, chair, papers, telephone, diary, cup with pencils, pens, notepad, spatula, folders, inbox, outbox, vase with plants, pictures, papers, telephone. Tray, small cup. Papers, telephone, reports, letters, notes, vouchers, checks, memos, tickets, telephone, papers. Clock, desk, easel, chairs, advertisement sketches, photos, notepad, pen, film projector, cup, poster, pencils, cigarettes, matches, blackboard, chalk, paper. Urinals, sink, water. Taxi. Table, towel, chair, glass, plates, cutlery, bottle, napkin, cup. Toothbrush, briefcase, water. Table and armchair, papers, telephone, magazine, paper cup, internal telephone, external telephone, papers, advertisement proofs, pen and paper, telephone, papers, advertisement proofs, pen and paper, clock, paper, briefcase, cigarettes, matches, paper and pen. Car. Jacket, tie. Armchair, glass, magazine. Pictures. Tables, chairs, plate, cutlery, glasses, napkins. Cups. Armchair, book. Television, armchair. Cufflinks, shirt, shoes, socks, pants, underwear, pajamas, slippers. Toilet, flush, sink, water, toothbrush, toothpaste, toothpaste, water. Slippers. Blanket, bed, pillow (Ramos, 1972, p. 21).

In this story, the paradigm guides the syntactic construction: it is the similarity between the paradigmatic elements that drives the phrasal organization. The author selects items from the nominal paradigm, forming a sequence of names that structure the literary narrative. The text, composed mainly of nouns – with the exception of a few prepositions – constructs an idea of routine. A striking example of this is: “Slippers, toilet, flush. Sink, soap. Water. Toothbrush, toothpaste, water...”.

These nominal phrases are connected by morphological and semantic relationships and are organized in such a way that, contrary to the norm of colloquial speech, one term does not exclude the other. On the contrary: it is similarity that articulates the phrase. Meaning emerges in a different way, through new morphosyntactic forms. The words are related to each other by equivalence, and this semantic articulation stitches together the syntax of the verse, providing new regencies due to the absence of the verbal phrase.

When making grammatical choices, the author selects elements from the lexical paradigm that are capable of constructing new meanings. The structures used by Ricardo Ramos illustrate how Jakobson expands the concepts of syntagm and paradigm, assigning them new functions within the poetic text.

### 3 Poetics, Metalinguistics, and Linguistics

The concept of poetic function was proposed by scholars of the Prague School during the presentation of the Prague Theses at the First International Congress of Linguists in The Hague (1928), the First International Congress of Slavists in Prague (1929), and the First International Congress of Phonetic Sciences in Amsterdam (1932). During these congresses, the three Theses were presented, the third of which proposes the question of poetic function.

As previously noted, the concept of poetic function definitively marks the profound relationship between linguistics and literature. The Theses explain, through poetic function, how linguistic concepts contribute to the understanding of literary text. Jakobson, as Barthes emphasizes, offers a linguistic basis for literary analysis. In this case, linguistics helps literature to understand poetic creation, and literature helps linguistics to understand the limits of morphosyntax.

From a different angle, we can observe the work of Brazilian linguist Maria Helena de Moura Neves, who shows how literary texts can clarify the grammatical relationships within a sentence. The poetic message can establish clear metalinguistic relationships, which highlight the grammar of the sentence and illuminate the syntactic mechanisms of the verse.

Thus, we have not only Jakobson and the poetic function affirming the links between linguistics and literature, but also the contribution of linguists who follow different theoretical bases, such as Moura Neves, demonstrating how the articulations of grammar are unveiled by the mechanisms of poetics. The exercise of metalanguage becomes broader when one observes the poetic mechanisms in literary works.

In her book *A Gramática Funcional* (1997), the linguist works with theoretical foundations that differ from those presented by Barthes and other authors who, following the Prague Circle and other linguistic circles of the first half of the 20th century, followed in Saussure's footsteps. She distances herself from linguistics centered on the sign as value and adopts another branch of Language Sciences: Pragmatics.

It is important to remember that North American Functional Linguistics departs from the Prague School model by recontextualizing the question of language, proposing the sign as representation. It should not be forgotten here that the social dimension of discourse has been present in analyses since Saussure – for whom language is a social fact – passing through Jakobson and continuing in functional models.

Moura Neves discusses, based on functional models and pragmatic dimensions, the grammatical relationships of text, considering the context of use. She presents grammar based on



the use of linguistic expressions in verbal interaction, which presupposes the pragmatization of the syntactic-semantic component of the linguistic model.

These ideas reappear as theoretical foundations in another work by the author, also based on functionalism: *A gramática do Português revelada em textos* (The grammar of Portuguese revealed in texts) (2018). Taking a different path from Barthes and other heirs of Jakobson, this work clearly demonstrates the intrinsic relationship between linguistics, literature, and grammar. The linguist uses literary works to investigate the deep interdependencies between these areas, establishing an important strategy for linking linguistics and literature.

Moura Neves' *Grammar* is an exercise in metalanguage – language explains the structure and functioning of language – following a pedagogical perspective. The work emphasizes teaching based on literary texts and other genres (NEVES, 2018, p. 19). In *A gramática do Português revelada em textos* (2018), the author brings together works by musicians, poets, and writers – names such as Paulo Leminski, Noel Rosa, Verissimo, Raul Pompéia – who offer texts capable of demonstrating the grammatical relationships intrinsic to literary discourse.

From the point of view of the functions of language proposed by Jakobson, Moura Neves' grammar highlights the co-occurrence of poetic and metalinguistic functions in these texts, making the entire morphosyntactic structure perceptible and allowing grammatical mechanisms to be clearly revealed. The morphosyntactic and semantic constructions of the poem are thus made clear.

Leminski's poem transcribed below illustrates Neves' work, using literature to explain grammatical relationships. Although the author sometimes keeps literature in its traditional place of deviation from the norm – as proposed by many studies of linguistics and literature – throughout the book she demonstrates that this is not the only case. Considering Jakobson's proposals on poetic function, it is possible to observe that the message reveals syntactic movements of selection and equivalence, responsible for exposing the complex dynamics of the rules of the system on the textual surface.

"The murderer was the scribe."

My syntactic analysis teacher was the kind of guy who didn't exist.

A pleonasm, the main predicate of his life,  
regular as a paradigm of the first conjunction.

Between a subordinate clause and an adverbial adjunct,  
he had no doubts: he always found a way  
asyndetic way to torture us with an apposition.

He married a regency.

He was unhappy.

He was possessive like a pronoun.

And she was bitransitive.

He tried to go to the US.

It didn't work out.

They found an indefinite article in her luggage.

The interjection of the mustache declined expletive particles,  
connectives, and passive agents all the time.

One day, I killed him with a direct object to the head.

Source: Leminski (1985, p. 144).

The analysis of this poem is often used in classrooms as teaching material in Portuguese language classes and related areas. The author's proposal is to play with language, treating grammar in a playful way, with the lightness of poetry. Still under Jakobson's gaze, it is noticeable that the lexical choices blur semantic boundaries, mixing poetry with metalinguistics. The nominal references in the text refer to grammatical metalanguage. Elements such as "non-existent subject," "pleonasm," "predicate," "subordinate clause," and others appear in the poem to bring the categories of grammar to life. This subversion of the verses suggests a new hierarchy in the analyses, contributing to the construction of a persona in the poem and producing a comic effect in the narrative.

Moura Neves (2018), in turn, understands that lexical organization and selection produce a differentiated effect, with a meaning of their own at the moment of reading. The deviation leaves behind its disruptive character to become one of the possibilities of the system, beyond normative constraints, revealed with the aid of the poetic function.

The author continues her grammatical analysis with the literary prose of Machado de Assis, illustrating one of the most debated topics among functionalist theorists: word order. Through *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas*, Neves shows how the predetermined grammatical structures between nouns and adjectives in Portuguese are altered in Machado's prose. She explains that, in everyday Brazilian Portuguese, it is not common to use adjectives before nouns; we learn that the

most appropriate form would be "a cadeira é azul" (the chair is blue), rather than "azul é a cadeira" (blue is the chair). However, such choices are subverted in syntax and lexicon in order to emphasize expressiveness. These combinatorial possibilities are revealed by literature. Machado de Assis explores different forms of construction, as can be seen in the opening passage of *Memórias Póstumas*:

I hesitated for some time as to whether I should begin these memoirs at the beginning or at the end, that is, whether I should put my birth or my death first. Assuming that the usual practice is to begin with birth, two considerations led me to adopt a different method: the first is that I am not exactly a deceased author, but a deceased author, for whom the grave was another cradle; the second is that the writing would thus be more gallant and younger (Machado de Assis, 1994, p. 2).

In the syntactic construction "defunto autor" (dead author), we have the noun "autor" modified by a preceding adjective, which is not usual in the normative structure. Moura Neves explains the mechanisms of construction of the phrases in the sentence, based on literary structures whose poetic function allows for new syntactic combinations. By selecting and combining the elements in a different way, Machado de Assis gives a new meaning to the phrase. "Autor defunto" becomes "defunto autor," taking on new meanings.

If we cross-reference Jakobson's words with those of Moura Neves, we see that these mechanisms of combination, this other syntactic order of word combination, this syntactic order that differs from the construction of the phrase, are elucidated thanks to the possibilities of the system opened up by the decisive position that the poetic function occupies in literary discourse.

It is also worth remembering the work of Ricardo Ramos, already highlighted above, in which this new word order implies a subversion, demonstrating that language is full of possibilities and varied mechanisms. The short story "Circuito Fechado" (1972), as already discussed, presents peculiarities in the way it subverts syntax. The word order and the ordinary and usual lexical selection in Portuguese are not followed in the short story. The traditional syntactic order of the Portuguese language establishes that syntactic functions are organized in such a way as to place a noun in the subject position, a verb as the predicate, and then the complements. In Ramos's short story, nouns are organized in such a way as to occupy all the syntactic positions in the sentence, also acting as temporal markers that give the sentence the status of a clause in the syntactic composition of the short story. This is a word order that departs from the canonical rules of

grammar. This short story by Ricardo Ramos is included in Moura Neves's book *A gramática do Português revelada em textos* (2018) precisely to illustrate the syntactic resources of discourse.

Ricardo Ramos' short story is presented by Moura Neves (2018) as a possibility for grammatical study based on poetic texts that speak of everyday life, in line with the author's functional proposal. In the short story, it is possible to observe peculiarities that subvert, above all, the usual patterns of textual cohesion. New possibilities for cohesion in the narrative are explored there. There is a semantic connection between the terms, constructed through paradigmatic similarities, which ultimately sustains the entire syntactic combination of the syntagm.

From Roman Jakobson's point of view, Moura Neves works with points of intersection between poetics and metalanguage. She seeks, in poetics, the intrinsic reasons for grammar that reveal its structure and grammatical function. In this sense, he reverses Barthes' statement about Jakobson, when he claims that the latter gave linguistics as a gift to literature (Neves, 2012, p. 204). Moura Neves reverses the meaning of the relationship that Barthes – echoing Jakobson – highlights between linguistics and literature: for Barthes, linguistics is a valuable gift for unraveling the mysteries of literature; conversely, Moura Neves reminds us that literary works are a privileged space for observing and admiring the profound relationships of grammar. It is possible to say, then, that the Brazilian linguist offers a gift to linguistics: she gives the science of linguistics literature as a beautiful gift.

All these mechanisms are extensively analyzed based on ideas that intertwine linguistics and literature. Grammar penetrates literature, and literature, through its own syntactic freedoms, reveals the grammatical relationships of verse.

#### 4 Linguistics and Literature: the contribution of the various paths of functionalism

The ideas presented here seek to provide elements that contribute to establishing some guidelines for reflection and debate on the relationships between the fields of linguistics and literature. This debate is often neglected because it involves ambiguous and nebulous areas that are foreign to territories already consolidated in the academic world.

The relations between linguistics and literature presented in this work seek to understand how literary studies and linguistic studies dialogue, based on the discussions of two important

researchers in the general panorama of linguistics: the 20th-century Russian linguist Roman Jakobson and the Brazilian linguist of this century, Maria Helena de Moura Neves. Both favor a functionalist view of language – whether with the pioneering functional structuralism of the Prague Circle in the early 20th century, with Jakobson, or with the pragmatically based functionalism of the Anglo-American school, with Moura Neves.

They are different voices, at different historical moments and with different perspectives on the object – language. For Jakobson, language is a system of values structured on the basis of functional differences. Grammar, in this context, is conceived as a functional structure, whose interplay between identities and differences generates the values that give meaning to everyday social communication. Moura Neves, in turn, bases his approach on pragmatics and contemporary Anglo-American functionalism. This is also the result of the Prague Circle, since it was there, in the theses of 1928 and 1929 (Paveau; Sarfati, 2006), that the Praguers proposed language as discursive communication, whose identities and differences take on a functional character and establish the communicative functions responsible for the development of language in use. The concept of functional grammar originated in Prague in the 1920s.

It is especially this functional conception that, as we have already pointed out, was taken to Anglo-American linguistics and rethought, resized, based on the assumptions of Pragmatics, already well developed by the British at Cambridge and Oxford.

Jakobson presents the factors of communication – sender, receiver, code, message, context, and channel – and emphasizes that the message is linked to poetic function. To establish this relationship, Jakobson and Barthes analyze literary works and clarify the mechanisms of syntagma and paradigm, revealing the plots of syntax, morphology, and semantics in poetics. The Russian and French linguists believe that, through the subversion of grammatical structures, it is possible to convey new meanings in poetic utterances. Thus, they use linguistic elements to understand literary works.

Moura Neves, in turn, emphasizes that, through literary texts, the grammar of language can be unveiled and understood in the breadth of language's uses and possibilities. The author addresses metalanguage – grammar – and literary discourse – poetics – as keys to understanding the structures and syntactic constructions present in the social use of language.

Language is not something fixed or stagnant; therefore, the relationships established here between linguistics and literature allow language to permeate its various manifestations, always in

multiple ways. The mechanisms by which language is constituted in social relations are the object of both literature and linguistics, regardless of the angle from which the literary or grammatical gaze is oriented. Linguistics and literature are at each other's service: literature offers new discourses, constructed with diverse intentions, while linguistics provides ways to understand the structures of works and thus point to meanings.

Roman Jakobson, Roland Barthes, and Maria Helena de Moura Neves are some of the names, among many others, that move between linguistics and literature, pointing out convergences and divergences that require reflection, debate, and criticism so that the field of language can advance and account for the variety of syncretic discourses that emerge with the advent of new digital media. The debate, which is not always consensual, provokes new perspectives capable of dealing with contemporary digital horizons, which still lack a solid scientific discussion to guide new social guidelines for these means of communication.

<b>CRediT</b>
<b>Acknowledgement:</b>
<b>Financing:</b> Not applicable.
<b>Conflicts of interest:</b> The authors certify that they have no commercial or associative interest that represents a conflict of interest in relation to the manuscript.
<b>Ethical Approval:</b> Not applicable
<b>Contributor Roles:</b>
<p><b>ROSA, Camila de Fátima</b> Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review &amp; editing.</p> <p><b>GUERRA, Maria José</b> Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review &amp; editing.</p> <p><b>SILVEIRA, Marcelo</b> Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review &amp; editing.</p>

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