

Hypertext and Enunciation on the Web

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Abstract

This paper aims at discussing the concept of enunciation in Language Studies and reflecting about how this concept can be related to human interaction on the web. To do so, we conducted a rationale based on the enunciation category in the Linguistics Studies, since enunciative-discursive theory by Mikhail Bakhtin (1997 [1953]; 2006 [1929]) through Benveniste's Structuralism (1995 [1966]) and Ducrot (1987 [1984]), discursive perspective found in Foucault (2008 [1969]) and Maingueneau (2001), until Social Semiotics studies by Kress; Van Leeuwen (1996) and Kress (2010). Upon using this theoretical basis, we examine the supposed concept of digital enunciation. According to our analysis, we cannot sustain the notion that, with the hypertext, humanity has reached a new way to state, the so-called digital statement.

Keywords: Enunciation; hypertext; web

1. Initial Considerations

The enunciation concept is tributary of philosophical reflections, however, as Charaudeau and Maingueneau (2008) show, this notion has also raised Linguistics' interest, which made this category productive within many approaches that constitute the Language Studies. Since Saussure, rationale of both enunciation and enunciate¹ definition, have been appearing in various fields in Linguistics Studies, among such: Textual Linguistics, Pragmatics and Discursive Analysis. With the advent of the web, it seems comprehensive the revolution that internet caused on human communication as an opportunity for studying not only the "new genres" which came up, in order to provide the enunciative needs accruing from such a heterogeneous site of discursive practices, as well as we understand the way how subjects expose their projects in saying, regarding the specificities of the virtual place from which they say/enunciate. Starting from these considerations, in the current paper, our suppositions of work is to reflect on re-significants which the enunciation category has been through, due to not only various approaches of Textual Linguistics and of Discourse, in addition all this effort regards the "impacts" that the new digital technology might cause on human interaction.

2 Real Unity of Verbal Communication

Mikhail Bakhtin (2006) ranks among the pioneering theoreticians who searched for an understanding over the term enunciation, whereas he worried about the effective use of language, fact that addresses us to enunciation as a phenomenon which signals the study of language in movement. As Bakhtin states, language is performed by means of enunciates "which comes from integrant of one or another sphere of human activity"²

¹ Enunciate, in this perspective, is equitable to speech.

² Bakhtin understands the notion of communication sphere, as a place of human interaction. In this interactional place, there are own rooms for discursive practices, depending on their functions and their purposes, which will provide the advent of various genres by means of communicative needs.

(Bakhtin, 1997, p. 279³). The importance of studying enunciate within a Bakhtinian perspective is because of it is possible to establish relations between this concept and the problematic of discursive genres. For this language philosopher, Enunciate reflects the specific conditions and each spheres finalities, not only either for its content (the thematic one) or for its verbal style, that is, by the very selection operating through language resources – which are: lexicon, statement and grammar – but also, and foremost, for its compositional structure. These three elements (thematic content, style and compositional structure) link together indissolubly within enunciate, as a whole (Bakhtin, 1997, p. 27).

Each enunciates, then, immersed into a determined sphere in human communication, it is a genre. Bakhtin (1997), in this work, dedicates one chapter to studying of enunciate, in order to declare it as “verbal communication unit”, once that the existence of human interaction is conditioned to a discursive genre. Upon considering this, this author is explicit by stating that “speech only exists, in fact, in its concrete formats of enunciates by an individual: of a subject in a discourse-speech” (Bakhtin, 1997, p. 293). In other words, enunciate will always take part of a molded discourse by the subject. Thence, the fact that enunciates, because of their being verbal communication units, always have a typical structure, however the latter one is not always well limited by borders, in case we herein think of mingled genres phenomenon. In his “Verbal Artistic Creation”, however, Bakhtin regards enunciate as an empirical manifestation of enunciation, since it allows itself catch by discursive genres, as long as enunciation is considered as the fundamental reality of language. This implies that, as active member of human communication spheres, the Bakhtinian subject enunciates from the genres he/she uses to communicate with his/her interlocutors. The latter ones are constituted of empirical subjects, as well, not like an echo of the former one, because they are embodied of responsiveness. Hence, enunciation and enunciate are not defined, exclusively, by its linguistic feature, but also by interactive practices which are embedded within the human communication sphere and, for that reason, they are settled culturally and historically. Even though, by the time of Bakhtin’s writings, the structuralist studies still prevailed. Benveniste (1989; 1995) avails orientation of epistemology, in order to suggest another point of view to enunciation.

3 Benveniste and the Enunciation Theory

The statement that Benveniste (1989) conceives enunciation within the limits of language has already become a truism among linguists, what does not mean that such a question has ended. For that reason we intention to briefly revise this author’s approach. The great difference between Benveniste and Saussure resides in the fact that, for the former author, sense does not reduce only into the semiotic domain, as the later defended, but also into the semantic domain, although the latter is fostered by the former. Such a question dislocates the notion of language toward a new discussion, since, for Benveniste, there are indexes in language that foresee language functioning, which transpose the very concept to another perspective, that is, to enunciation. For us to state along with Benveniste that enunciation is an individual appropriation of language, we consider relevant to take into account two aspects that underline this statement: firstly, if there is an individual appropriation of language, it means that such an activity assumes the existence of a subject. Naturally, this subject does not exist by him/herself. That fact that he/she exists assumes the establishment of alterity, therefore, there is the other, or, to use Benvenistean terms, you. This occurs because “language is for man [...] the only way to reach another man [...] language demands and assumes the other” (Benveniste, 1989, p. 93). Secondly, if there is an individual appropriation of language it is because system foresees indexes which corroborate the existence of a subject that personifies him/herself into indicative marks of subjectivity in the linguistic structure. Saying in other words, for language to be put into functioning, it needs the existence of an I who claims a you. Thus, the activity of both seems to break out the process of language functioning, that is, the enunciation. Among the aspects above mentioned, the second one gives the ground not to fall within naïvety of thinking that the structuralist conception of language had been abandoned by Benveniste in detriment of the enunciative perspective. Indeed, the existence of enunciation, according to Benveniste’s conception of it, one conditions this to a language appropriation. Such an activity is performed by a subject which takes advantages of structure to generate language functioning.

Therefore, that would not be childish stating that Benveniste advocates system, per se, as admitting functioning and, consequentely, subjectivity existence, what leads us to conclude that it cannot expurgate it from language because subjectivity is subscribed to language. This perspective had influenced French linguist Oswald Ducrot to elaborate a theory for studying argumentation in language.

³ All citations in this paper are written in Portuguese, and therefore, all translations into English are ours (translator’s note).

4 ATL and Enunciation

Argumentation Theory in Language (ATL) aims at showing that language has had allusions to speech activity. It looks for describing the enunciate meanings, once that they are interpreted, given its semantic description. Thus, Ducrot (1987, p. 163) guarantees a linguistic treatment of the enunciation term as, within his concept of “linguistic pragmatics”, enunciation starts to be focused from diverse perspectives and from various points of view that underlines the enunciate, what implies speaking about polyphony. On being so, the concept of enunciation, once that it relates enunciation to “the [simple] fact that enunciates appears” (Ducrot, 1987, p. 169). Thus, this author advocates that it is possible to signal, within an enunciate, the presence of voices which point out a fragmentation of the subject, at this point turned into discursive figures that act in a scene. Polyphonic enunciation, by the way Ducrot conceives it, allows the search for discursive indexes of voices that form enunciate, which are assumptions, denials, irony, free indirect discourse, quotation marks usage etc. These indexes show up in the movement of determined characters, which are taken as locutors and enunciators that act in different grades or levels. In short, ATL analysis consists of the relation between enunciate and discourse. Its proposal is to show that argumentation is inherent to language, irrespective of contextual situations and ideological aspects, far from Bakhtin’s proposals, for instance. With respect to the concept of enunciate, Ducrot (1987) opposes it faced to the sentence, the latter is an “abstract linguistic entity” that could have various occurrences and be identical. Enunciate, for this author, is defined as “the particular occurrence, in other words the hic et nunc accomplishment of the sentence”. That is why it was denominated as “significant/meaning” for the sentence semantics; and “sense” for enunciate. Perhaps, the major Ducrot’s contribution had been the Polyphonic Theory of Enunciation: herein this author tears apart from Benveniste’s perspective: while the latter characterizes a unique subject-enunciator held responsible for the act of enunciating, the former shows that it is possible to bring out, at least, two points of view in a same enunciate. Thus, in Ducrot, discourse is taken as the result of a sequence of enunciates, which empirical manifestation is translated into what it is observable and, for that reason, it is likely analyzed by the linguist, limited, then, to what is registered by language. Such a thought diverges from the discursive ideas found in Foucault.

5 Foucault’s Enunciate

Foucault (2008, p. 98) defines enunciate, such as: a function of existence that, significantly, belongs to signs and, from that point, one can decide, afterwards, by either the analysis or the inspiration, whether they “make sense” or not, according to what rule they succeed or juxtapose, of what sign or what act they realize by their formulation (either orally or written). As we can observe, for this author, enunciate is, in fact, an enunciative function, that is, what really matters are the conditions of this function exercise as opposite to the restrictive systems that asset it. That being so, this author is not worried about formally defining enunciate, or about differentiating it from previous and formal definitions, such as sentence (grammatical basis), utterance (logical basis), and act of speech (pragmatic basis). One perceives that it is impossible to define enunciate by the same means of grammar characteristics in a sentence. Enunciate needs to have “a substance, a support, a place, and a date. When these requirements change, so the very enunciate changes its identity” (Foucault, 2008, p. 114). And if enunciate changes its identity, one cannot refer to the same enunciate. Upon considering this quests, this author comes to the term enunciation: “Enunciation is a happening that does not repeats itself: there is a singularity settled and dated that cannot be reduced” (Foucault, 2008, p. 114). That being so, **enunciation** is found at the level of discourse, which is, therefore, unique, settled in a given social historical and ideological context, whereas **enunciates** is found at the level of language, that is, in discursive memory, which is only updated through enunciation. It means that enunciate is submitted to the order of happening, which allows repetition to be reformulated, what engaged to new enunciative conditions. These studies lit up French DA in the 1980’s.

6 Enunciate and Enunciation in DA

According to Charaudeau and Maingueneau (2008), DA does not find, in a linguistic explanation about enunciation, enough elements to attend all peculiarities and nuances of what one conceives as enunciation. It is likely the reason why Maingueneau, in another work (2001, p. 20), states that each act of enunciation is, fundamentally, **asymmetric**: the person who interprets the enunciate rebuilds its meaning from given indications produced within the enunciate, but nothing guarantees that what he/she rebuilds coincides with the enunciator’s representations [author emphasis]. This means that, under this perspective, it is unavoidable deviate enunciation from both context and meaning.

Out of a determined enunciative situation, which occurs in specific time and place, that is, to the point to where contextual indication, in order to converge mobility of various enunciative, previous and shared participants' knowledge, it is impossible talk about meaning, but, at large, about any verbal sequence. Maingueneau (2001) gives great importance to pragmatic statute of any enunciate: it is necessary to show, by means of enunciation, its value, in a way that the addressee, to whom enunciate refers, has a pertinent behavior in relation to the enunciate. We cannot testify that this Maingueneau's way of referring to the text (2001) approximates to Ducrot's definition of sentence (see item 4), once that, for the first one the enunciate goes beyond sentence. Given this statement, without intending to define text under DA analysis, it seems to be reasonable to infer that, by the DA perspective, it is likely to oppose enunciate "and sentence value subscribed to a particular context" to text "when it is respected with verbal units belonging to a discursive genre" (Maingueneau, 2001, p. 57).

7 Enunciation Digital Mode

Starting from the twentieth century, means of communication have been re-elaborated and recreated because of the ebullition of digital technologies, such as PCs, tablets and smartphones. Based on this fact, ten years ago, Xavier (2002) proposed the concept of digital enunciation, in order to refer to digital hypertext, which is, itself, a concept in progress in the language studies field. For Xavier (2002, p. 97), enunciation modes are "forms of expression, communication and interaction developed and improved by the humankind throughout history to get along with each other and with the world in communication". Such modes are only possible by means of various enunciative technologies which demand a certain training and acquisition of abilities, so that they convey an effective use of enunciate. According to this author, there are, at least, four modes of enunciating: verbal, visual, auditory and digital ones, this latter is conveyed by enunciative technology, which is the hypertext. Digital enunciation mode basically relies on the possibility of, by integration of various medias (verbal-auditory-visual), promoting a more involving approach of the reader with the hypertext, having him/her experiment the sensation of total immersion into the support of reading, upon activating electronic and interactive devices (hyperlinks), which are inherent to that digital surface (XAVIER, 2002, p. 105). The author's reasoning goes around the fact that only by the access of a PC connected to the internet that the hyper reader meets all possible semiosis, can put them together and is able to build meaning before this effect. "The hypertext 'mix' enunciation modes without having supremacy over any other ones" (Xavier, 2002, p. 135), that is, it is on the screen the only reason for both hypertext and enunciate digital mode existence.

However, in light of Social Semiotics and Systemic Functional Linguistics perspective, the \Leftrightarrow imodality approach (Kress; Van Leeuwen, 1996), in fact, brought the same parameters to explain what occurs with updated multimodal texts in a PC connected to the internet. That being so, what Xavier calls "enunciation mode", Social Semiotics' authors either appoint semiotic mode or "semiotic resource socially formatted and culturally given to produce meaning" (Kress, 2010, p. 79). In light of multimodality, therefore, modes are different ways by which the human being can represent his/her experiences, besides codify and share meanings. Thus, upon postulating the equation **TEXT + IMAGE + SOUND = HYPERTEXT = ENUNCIATION DIGITAL MODE**, Xavier did not either demonstrate a new way of enunciating the world, by only being circumscribed to a PC screen connected to the internet, or a phenomenon of language which could be called digital enunciation that dialogues minimally with enunciation linguistic theories, such those we mentioned above. Consequently, the merit of Xavier's work (2002), beyond pioneering, lays on the perception that the digital condition of hypertext allows distinctive semiotic interlacement, but this phenomenon is not typical text practices in the internet, and therefore, this can be analyzed in other language practices out of the internet in light of analytic multimodal perspective (Kress; Van Leeuwen, 1996; Kress, 2010) and its displays (Lemke, 2002). Modes to construct meanings in multimodal texts remind us of what Maingueneau (2001) indicates as social mutations coming from mediologic changes. For this author, mediatic apparatus are held responsible for the material manifestation in discourses and that is why analysts need to be aware of the command of use that media imprints on speech. So, the use of media, especially the audiovisual and the ones that come from the development of computer sciences, alters sensitively the way how discourse is produced and is received.

In this sense, we consider that digital hypertext can be a good opportunity for us to study formation and discursive practices that happen on the web, once that "mode of transport and enunciate reception propitiate the very constitution of the text and model the speech genre. Many social mutations realize through a simple mediologic displacement" (Maingueneau, 2001, p. 72). Digital technologies have helped and changed at some level the mode of getting along with the world, but there was not, necessarily, an inaugural way of enunciating.

Although there is the hypothesis that changes occur much more in the cognitive field than in the social relations. Such a hypothesis has not been empirically proved yet. On the other hand, there are researches demonstrating more similarities and fewer differences with respect to the procedures and to the navigation in digital and printed hypertexts (Ribeiro, 2008; Gualberto, 2008). It is a fact that there are differentiated – and easier – ways of getting along with the world through the internet, but we do not know in which level this is settled in and, exactly what different cognitive ability is already known by linguistic science are necessary for the procedure and the production of multimodal digital texts. What is current is a curious phenomenon, the so-called convergences, to use Jenkins' terms (2006). Upon converging media and its genres into a same technology, such as the internet, it is natural that, according to Snyder (2009), the “online world” has been more and more connected to the “offline world” and vice-versa. We will discuss the way how this occurs.

8 Semiotic Modes in the Internet

Cultural history has been showing us that a new technology, simply do not come out of nothing or even suppresses an obsolete technology, for instance. There is a gradual improvement of the former one, not disregarding, at once, the latter one. For Eco (1996, p. 298), that, in a way, forgoes the discussions about media convergence, “if that is true that nowadays visual communication is put upon written communication; the question is not oppose one against another; the question is what one can do in order to improve both of them”. What calls our attention to Eco's proposal, then, is the fact of questioning the predominance of image in new technologies and proposing verbal writing as the semiotic pattern to prevail in the internet. We will see how this critique does not resist to the empirical atmosphere in which the hypertext is settled on the web, which digital condition points out to one of its characteristics: a multisemiosis. We will analyze the figure 1: In the above example of digital hypertext, the syntactic combination among various multimodal resources, which constitutes digital hypertext, conspires for the construction of meaning shared by who accesses it. It is possible to show how two co-occurring works in combination. On one hand, we see the mix of distinctive semiotic modes, and on the other hand, it is likely the concrete manifestation of medias converging (Jenkins, 2006), one of the most present elements in the digital medium. We will examine this figure in order to better come to understand the digital condition on this hypertext. In 1, we have the verbal modality resource that, once it occurs in different kinds of colors, sizes and formatting font, it is already regarded as multimodal; in 2, we observe a figure composing a report on filmmaker Woody Allen. We highlight, however, that this is not concerned to hypertext, since that there are patterns of a newspaper first page, at least, by a formal point of view. The visual syntax arrangement that we observed in this figure translates a strategy of negotiating both verbal and imagetic semiosis to facilitate the meaning construction by the read of this hypertext; in 3, there is a highlight on a banner with an advertisement of a preparation course for contests. Under the online condition, it is an image in movement, that changes into other advertisements, which is typical of what happens either in the intervals of TV programs or of animated springboards that we find in big cities. The images in movement in the referred banner, thus, makes dynamics of the open webpage of the analyzed site and, by the multimodality point of view, it is visually informative. In 4, at last, we have a video that shows an amphibian bus, which is a touristic attraction in Rio de Janeiro. This video can be accessed by any internet navigator by clicking on the image, what will allows anyone to see and listen to the highlight about the bus, simulating what occurs on TV.

Gathered into an only one digital hypertext there are three multimodal resources that have been skillfully distributed over the page, just like important clues to meaning construction. In fact, this aspect points out to the phenomenon of convergence in the extent that the homepage either imitates the newspaper or the latter one imitates the former one. Both the hypertexts gather multimodal characteristics, however, the presence of a video and a banner exhibiting images in movement brings out a new semiotic component, separating, formally, both hypertexts, once that, in printed newspaper is not possible the presence of videos or banner which carries images in movement. New literate patterns are requested from the internet navigator for his/her navigation through a hypertext, like the analyzed one, turns into an efficient reading.

A proper reading comprehension, thus, goes through the domain of visual literacy, once that navigate Reading the information containing in text with images, which is the case of a homepage, points out to the development of agility in comprehending the visual syntax that is present in homepages (Dondis, 1997). It is necessary to observe that, in the example we brought herein, figures, videos, written texts, sound resources etc are combined in a very complex way to produce meaning. All of the above are propitiated by new media that Interact with older media.

Bolter and Grusin (1999) try to enlighten this reality with the remediation theory, which is exactly the process of reformulating through which these media pass. Snyder (2010) discusses this question upon stating about new literate patterns: Whenever we access News, educational content and entertainment programs in a same medium, yet from different sources, there is a dilution of the differences among the contexts in which one of these elements have originated from. According to the author [Bolter and Grusin], New practices of literacy associated with the use of new technologies do not represent a rupture with the past: old and new practices interact in much more complex ways, producing hybrid practices and not totally new ones (Snyder, 2010, p. 275).

Following Snyder (2010), we consider that there is not a new way of enunciating, formulated by the digital hypertext. We do not regard hypertext as a force that explodes a dike that was once restraining old enunciations, as if, upon bursting, would overflow human cognition with novelty never yet existent. Digital does not overflow with print, but it connects to the former one, such as a symbiotic relation, print connects with digital, for many times, upon imitating it. The opposite is also true, and therefore, it composes the empirical atmosphere of those questions. Thus, in light of analysis like the one we are presenting in this paper, we consider reasonable suggest that changes and media convergence enable us to combine new and old literacy that connects with one another in order to satisfy our enunciative needs. In other words, hypertext has not brought a rupture in the way of constructing meanings, but it can get to connect them, thanks to the power of converging to itself media that, beforehand, operate separately. In the figure under analysis the reader will only need to choose to which one he/she will firstly pay attention to: either read the highlight through the language written modality (1); or see the video and build meaning through the audiovisual medium (4) or pay attention to the pay-per-view advertisement, which is also through the audiovisual medium (3). It does not seem to be possible pay attention to the three genres (written news, TV news and advertisement) at the same time, although the nature of the digital environment generates this false sensation onto the reader who navigates. Limitation, in this case, is not technological, but human. Despite of the theoretical basis assumed in this paper, we do not deny the possibility of research systematization that, upon gathering empirical data which are results from well controlled tests, can, with minimal theoretic-methodological consistence, confirm the thesis that Reading on the screen is a more complex activity, by the cognitive point of view, and that being a subject of language on the web means put on scene a new way of enunciating.

9 (Semi)-Final Considerations

In this paper, we intended to clip, in order to use in analytical exercises, what an enunciative act would be by means of hypertexts. Would we be before a new way of enunciating introduced by digital hypertexts or would we be learning how to combine old practices in new environments? To examine these questions, we intended to draw a possible theoretic route through it passed the term enunciation to the linguistic science, raising paradigms about the issue since a structuralist perspective, yet linked to inherently linguistic mechanisms, passing through what extrapolates the texts limits, along the discourse and, finally, coming to the social semiotics perspective. That being so, we can question: among the ones indicated herein, which of the enunciation theories dialogues with the thesis that hypertext is a digital way of enunciating? We consider that, either in digital hypertexts, or in printed hypertexts, there will always be a Benvenistean I awakening language and putting it into the enunciative dynamics in exchange with you. If this one is the analytical option of digital hypertexts, we are before old enunciations and not before new ones. Independently of support or genre, in case the analyst's theoretical alternative is based on argumentation semantics by Ducrot, it is also possible to analyze in the hypertexts the roles that enunciators and Ducroteans locutors perform in forms of polyphony foreseen by this enunciation theory perspective. Moreover, in this case, we would not be before a new way of enunciating, once that polyphony is not a new phenomenon. If enunciation is a happening that does not repeats itself, according to Foucault, how is it supposed to maintain the thesis that all the times in which we navigate on digital hypertexts we are producing digital enunciation, if enunciations are multiple because the literacy they demand are also multiple?

If, finally, the analysis goes toward the hypertext semiotic heterogeneity, searching for analyzing the intersemiosis as resources that enable grounds for the meaning construction, we will be doing either a multimodal analysis or, in case we prefer to use Lemke's terms (2002), a hyper modal analysis of digital texts. However, it would not be appropriate attribute to multimodal resources, of which hypertexts on the web are constituted, a definition of a new way of enunciating, once that enunciation does not lay on technical basis, but linguistic, cultural and historical instead.

With respect to the reasoning we have just presented, our conclusion, thus, is that it is not possible to talk about a digital way of enunciating, but on multiple enunciations that consolidate themselves by/in the multifaceted character of old textuality that embodies new techniques in digital environments. For that reason, if the digital hypertext is not a rupture, but linkage instead, according to what we argue along this paper, we ratify the thesis that from linguistic theories, passing through discursive propositions and getting to multimodal approaches, the uses that we make of the hypertexts on the web, and not themselves, allow us to argument not on the digital way of enunciating, but on plural enunciations instead.

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Figure 1: Example of a Digital Hypertext. Source: <www.estadao.com.br

The image shows a screenshot of the website www.estadao.com.br. The page layout includes a top navigation bar with options like 'Edição Digital', 'Celular', 'Tablet', 'Local', 'Acervo', and 'Broadcast Político'. Below this is the 'ESTADÃO' logo and a search bar. A main menu lists various news categories such as 'São Paulo', 'Brasil', 'Política', 'Economia', 'Internacional', 'Esportes', 'PME', 'Jornal do Carro', 'Link', 'Opinião', 'Rádio', and 'Eldorado'. The main content area features several news items, each with a title and a small image or icon. On the right side, there are several advertisements, including one for 'RÁDIO ESTADÃO 107.3', 'CRÉDITO BRADESCO', 'Concurso para nível médio', 'TRIBUNAL DE JUSTIÇA / SÃO PAULO', 'Escrevente Técnico Remuneração de R\$ 4.190', and 'Jornal do Carro'. Red numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 are overlaid on the page to highlight specific elements: 1 points to a news article titled 'SP: filho de Alckmin é abordado e escolta troca tiros com os criminosos'; 2 points to an infographic titled 'Infográfico: Jogos de Sochi'; 3 points to the 'TRIBUNAL DE JUSTIÇA / SÃO PAULO' advertisement; and 4 points to a video player titled 'Rio tem agora o ônibus-anfibio'.