

THE (LACK OF) MUTUAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT BETWEEN IBERIAN-AMERICAN RESEARCHERS OF COMMUNICATION SCIENCES

Paulo Serra

ABSTRACT

This paper presents and discusses the results of a content analysis concerning a sample of scientific journals published within the field of communication sciences in Portugal, Brazil, and Spain. The objective of the analysis was to evaluate until what extent researchers from the three countries acknowledge each other. The study focus, principally, on the nationality of the authors who had published papers in that journals, as well as on the others authors they had referenced in those texts.

KEYWORDS

Journals; communication sciences; Portugal; Brazil; Spain

INTRODUCTION

Language is correctly pointed out as one of the major obstacles to the existence of a universal communication of science. A kind of universality that is recognized since Aristotle as one of the most indispensable characteristics of scientific knowledge. Something that warrants its distinctiveness as regards common-sense knowledge and Philosophy, as well as other practices, such as arts and crafts.

Given the impossibility of a universal language, very well vindicated by Descartes in his famous letter to Mersenne (written on November 20th, 1629), the solution found throughout history has been the institution of “linguas francas.” Latin was a bridge language almost up to the nineteenth century while English started to play this role from the mid-twentieth century to present day.

The institutionalization of the English as a “lingua franca” is generally understood as a major obstacle for articles published by Portuguese and Spanish researchers within Communication sciences to circulate and be disseminated. Nevertheless, it is yet to be known if publishing in Portuguese and Spanish warrants itself that a certain author is read and acknowledged by researchers whose native language is whether the Portuguese or the Spanish. In order to ascertain whether Portuguese and Spanish speaking authors tend to cite more other authors who publish in those languages, or if, on the contrary, they are all unaware of each other, we decided to develop an exploratory study based on the content analysis of a sample of journals of Communication sciences produced in Portugal, Brazil and Spain. We will now present and discuss the results of this study in the following sections.

SCIENCE AS ARGUMENT

In a recent text, Martins (2015), speaking about the Western world cultural tradition, emphasized the gradual undervaluation – almost obliteration – of words in favor of numbers, and of rhetoric in favor of science and technoscience.

The re-establishment of the first requires, *ab initio*, to envisage science as something based on rhetoric and argumentation (Santos, 1993, 2002). That way, “scientific objectivity” is nothing more than “the availability [of scientists] for mutual criticism” (Popper, 1999, p. 122), and the science method – which does not differ from other forms of knowledge – is the process of “critical discussion” based on three fundamental steps: problems, theories, and criticisms (Popper, 1999, p. 131).

If one conceives science as being itself built in a process of argumentation, one can say that argumentation can be done both with words and with numbers – i.e., numbers are only one of the potential means of persuasion. Even in the more formal sciences, such it is the case of Mathematics, words cannot be dismissed. At the same time, we know that Social Sciences and the Humanities often use Math to sustain their theses.

The conception of science as argumentation may also allow the reconciliation of Dilthey’s (1994) distinctions between “natural sciences” (*Naturwissenschaften*) and “sciences of the spirit” (*Geisteswissenschaften*), between explanation and understanding – insofar as each of these pairs always requires argumentation, even if making use of different types of arguments (cf. Ricouer, 1995).

This conception of science as argumentation may also allow us to overcome the classical distinction between empiricism and rationalism, between “truths of fact” and “truths of reason” (Leibniz). Not only because, as shown by Kant, reason itself is already immersed into facts, but also because reason can only acquire a content through facts: “Thoughts without content are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind” (Kant, 2001, p. 115). The *logos* of reason is also that of the word. As Gil (1989, p. 199) states, “the language thinks”. That is to say, the categorization of experience – a *sine qua non* condition for the experience itself – is at the origin of the categorization of the language, and thus they both share (the same) categories. To think of facts is, therefore, to translate these into words, one or another, some rather than others.

In this sense, the familiar assertion that “there are no arguments against facts” fails to take into account that there is a whole set of argumentative assumptions based on facts and that those facts must be accepted by all as such, so that the resulting conclusions can also be unanimously accepted; consequently, what is understood as being a “fact” is itself a result of an argumentative process (Perelman, 1993).

As we know, an argumentation entails, by definition, a quarrel, a thesis or a conclusion about a particular matter, as well as a set of premises that support logically that thesis or conclusion. In our case, the question can be addressed this way: do Communication Sciences researchers who share the Iberian-American space (that is, Portuguese and Spanish speakers) quote each other more often than they cite other scientists who speak other languages, namely English? Since they often criticize the predominance (almost exclusivity) of the English as a publishing scientific language, do they pose as an

example of the struggle against such reality? Or, conversely, do they also contribute to maintain, strengthen and extend that predominance – in a kind of parody of what, in another context, Hegel had called “the dialectic of the master and slave”?

Regarding this issue, our starting hypothesis – based on impressions resulting from our own experience in reading scientific papers, and attending conferences and other events concerning communication sciences – is that Portuguese and Spanish-speaking researchers seldom cite each other. We believe that, in their work, they refer mainly to English-speaking scientists (from Britain and USA).

THE SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATION AND THE RETURN OF THE AUTHOR

Interestingly, whereas it has been stated that there is no subject (or individual) in science – in the sense that the subject is anonymous and collective, and that what matters the most is the outcome, not its producer – and that the “death of the author” has long since been announced (Barthes, 1968; Foucault, 2001) – scientific and academic publishing has increasingly been restoring (or has restarted giving importance to) the notions of both author and authorship. Therefore, the situation is now different from what we were used to.

In fact, Foucault states, in the Middle Ages “literary” texts were accepted without having to make reference to its author while “scientific” texts had to be referred to the “authority” of its author (Hippocrates, for example). However, from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries onwards a true “chiasm” happened: scientific texts are relegated to anonymity while the literary ones started to require its authors’ identification (Foucault, 2001).

It is our view that this “return” of the author to scientific publication is not the result of any intrinsic need of science itself. Rather, it is a product of an academic and institutional requirement to measure the productivity of the scientist-scholar to classify, and perhaps reward, the latter – with money, promotions, bonuses, or other incentives – according to his/her productivity. The origins of this requirement can be traced back to the twentieth century, especially to the period after the Second World War when, in countries like the US, a capitalist oriented research model – specialized, competitive, and oriented towards applied results, particularly of economic nature – took place. Research institutions – universities, institutes, etc. – turned out to be true industrial firms, competing within a market where they offer their products to other companies. In this context, and to paraphrase Lasswell’s formula – which is far from being exclusively used in communication studies – it becomes necessary to know who produces what, how, to whom and for what purpose, to allow adequate rewarding or, if needed, punishing.

As Garfield had clearly perceived, at a time when the industrialization of science begins, one of the most objective forms of evaluation of a scientist’s work becomes its “impact factor”, i.e. “the significance of a particular work and its impact on the literature and thinking of the period” (Garfield, 1955, p. 109). Such “significance” is thus measured regarding the number of citations obtained from his/her scientist peers (we are again signaling the prevalence of the number). It is important to observe that Garfield

conceived his “citation index” mainly as a tool for the scientist to be able to know what impact their work was achieving within the scientific community, as well as to access information about the most scientifically relevant work being published by the community.

Even if we disagree with many of the theoretical and practical implications of Garfield’s theory about scientific publications – namely his notion that scientific publishing means the same as having articles published in English language journals, indexed according to the number of citations received in articles published in other journals – we could accept, as a start, that the citation system is an essential mean to assess the impact or the visibility of a given publication. Several decades later, however, this index has moved from journals to researchers, from the impact (visibility) of the work to its importance, from an information mechanism to an evaluation mechanism. Ergo, it is perhaps the essential element of the productivist and capitalist system which domains both the production and dissemination of science at least since the mid-twentieth century.

It is precisely within this context that we raise our question: according to Garfield’s logic, the probability an English-speaking scientist be citing a Portuguese or Spanish-speaking scientist – or one of any other language, for that matter – is almost null. At the same time, the probability of having a Portuguese or Spanish-speaking scholar quoting an English-speaking peer is very high. We need to know, however, what is the probability of Portuguese and Spanish-speaking scientists citing each other.

THE PORTUGUESE SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTION

Our question turns out to be even more relevant as we look at the statistics of the Portuguese scientific publications in recent years. Statistical data from Pordata¹ concerning works produced in the period between 1981 and 2013 shows the following trends:

1. An exponential increase in the total number of publications, particularly of articles in journals – whose rise far exceeded any other type of publication (communication abstracts, proceedings and undisclosed “others”).
2. An exponential increase in the overall number of scientific publications of cited scientific publications and citations – albeit there is a drop in the number of publications mentioned since 2012 and the number of citations since 2008.
3. An exponential increase as regards co-authored articles, especially with co-authors from countries such as Spain, USA, and UK. Co-authorships with Brazil are also considerable.

It is, however, worth noting that InCitesTM obtained the data we are referring to, from Thomson Reuters (2014). As Pordata clarifies,

InCitesTM, a Thomson Reuters product, contains all bibliographic records that list the address of at least one author with a Portuguese affiliation, and is based on the Web of Science databases: Science Citation Index-Expanded (SCI), Social Science Citation Index (SSCI), Arts & Humanities Citation

¹ The information is available at: <http://www.pordata.pt/Subtema/Portugal/Publicacoes+Cientificas-83>. This data is based, in turn, on data from DGEEC - Directorate-General for Education and Science Statistics. More information is available at www.dgeec.mec.pt.

Index (AHCI), Conference Proceedings Citation Index-Science (CPCI-S), Conference Proceedings Citation Index, Social Science & Humanities (CPCI-SSH). (Pordata, 2015)

By using this data source, Pordata and DGEEC – which serves as the primary source of the former– uncritically confirm what we had previously pointed out as the dominant paradigm in the scientific publication: a paradigm that excludes from science other languages than English, other publications other than articles or conference proceedings. In short, everything that is not indexed by these specific databases. Thus, Portuguese national institutions, both public and private, are themselves responsible for legitimizing – on the basis of numbers – this veritable process of glottophagy and cultural destruction.

This, however, once again raises the question of how Portuguese communication sciences researchers react when confronted with a situation which tends to be highly penalizing for them, since they are neither native English speakers nor able to publish articles encompassing a (supposedly) universal reality. Additionally, they cannot influence the great Anglo-American journals editorials boards.

METHODOLOGY

In order to discuss our thesis and following the idea that Portuguese and Spanish Communication sciences researchers do not mention each other, usually choosing to cite English-speaking scientists (from Britain and the US) instead, we decided to undertake a content analysis from a sample of scientific journals on Communication Studies published in Portugal (3), Brazil (3) and Spain (2). We chose to study a lower number of Spanish journals because they publish a considerably higher number of articles per issue. The journals and issues that are part of our sample are the following ones:

Portugal

- *Comunicação e Sociedade* (U. Minho), No. 25, 1st half of 2014
- *Estudos em Comunicação* (UBI), No. 16, 1st half of 2014
- *Prisma* (U. Porto and U. Aveiro), No. 24, 1st half of 2014

Brazil

- *Contemporanea* (UFBA), Vol. 12, No. 1, 1st quarter 2014
- *Eco-Pós* (UFRJ), Vol. 17, No. 1, 1st quarter 2014
- *Matrizes* (USP), Vol. 8, No. 1, 1st quarter 2014

Spain

- *Comunicación y Sociedad* (U. Navarra), Vol. 27, No. 1, 1st quarter 2014
- *Comunicar* (U. Huelva), Vol XXI, No. 42, 1st semester of 2014

We decided to delimit this *corpus* following the criteria presented below:

- Journals with online editions (although, in some cases, they also have paper-based editions);
- Generalist journals, not exclusively dedicated to a specific set of topics in the area of communication sciences (though, at times, they may have published issues about specific topics);

- Journals which attract a high level of prestige and which are greatly recognized amongst the members of the scientific community in each of the countries;
- Number of issues published during the same period.

The eight selected journals published a total of 93 articles during the period under analysis, as shown in Table 1:

COUNTRY	JOURNAL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
PORTUGAL	<i>Comunicação e Sociedade</i>	12	12.9
	<i>Estudos em Comunicação</i>	7	7.5
	<i>Prisma</i>	7	7.5
	Subtotal	26	27.9
BRAZIL	<i>Contemporanea</i>	14	15.1
	<i>Eco-Pós</i>	8	8.6
	<i>Matrizes</i>	15	16.1
	Subtotal	37	39.8
SPAIN	<i>Comunicación y Sociedad</i>	10	10.8
	<i>Comunicar</i>	20	21.5
	Subtotal	30	32.3
TOTAL		93	100.0

Table 1: Articles published by journal

Each article, initially classified by Country and Journal, was then analyzed according to the following categories (we give indication between parentheses about the abbreviations used for classifying some cases):

1. Languages

- Languages used in the abstract.
- Languages used in the text.

2. Author(s)

- Author from Portugal (AutPort)
- Author from Brazil (AutBrasil)
- Author from Spain (AutEsp)
- Author from Hispano-America (AutHispAm)
- Author from another language/location, normally English language (AutOutro)

3. References

- Referenced author from Portugal (RefPort)
- Referenced author from Brazil (RefBrasil)
- Referenced author from Spain (RefEsp)
- Referenced author from Hispano-America (RefHispAm)
- Referenced author from another language / location, generally in English language (RefOutros)
- Referenced author from the Portuguese-speaking world other than Portugal or Brazil (RefLusof)

We had to make some methodological decisions regarding the use of these categories:

1. In the case of the articles we chose not to consider editorials, book reviews, interviews, reviews, etc. We have only considered the items in the so-called “IMRAD format” (Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion – including also the Abstract, Keywords, and the References).
2. In the case of articles signed by several authors (on rare occasions of different nationalities), we have only considered the first author.
3. As regards references, when there were more than one academic, including those of different nationalities (rare cases), we took into account only the first author.

FINDINGS

We will now present the results provided by the content analysis of the articles selected from the aforesaid journals. We chose to organize the results’ presentation in three sections corresponding to the three classes of the analytical categories in use, namely: languages, authors, and references.

LANGUAGES

As shown in Table 2 (below), almost all the authors publish the abstract simultaneously in the journal’s national language (Portuguese or Spanish) and English.

COUNTRY	JOURNAL	LANGUAGES OF THE ABSTRACT					TOTAL
		SP+ENG	FR+PORT+ENG	ENG	PORT	PORT+ENG	
PORTUGAL	<i>Comunicação e Sociedade</i>	0	0	0	0	12	12
	<i>Estudos em Comunicação</i>	0	0	2	1	4	7
	<i>Prisma</i>	0	0	0	0	7	7
	Subtotal	0	0	2	1	23	26
BRAZIL	<i>Contemporanea</i>	0	1	0	0	13	7
	<i>Eco-Pós</i>	0	0	0	0	8	7
	<i>Matrizes</i>	0	0	0	0	15	15
	Subtotal	0	1	0	0	36	37
SPAIN	<i>Comunicación y Sociedad</i>	10	0	0	0	0	10
	<i>Comunicar</i>	20	0	0	0	0	20
	Subtotal	30	0	0	0	0	30
TOTAL		30	1	2	1	59	93

Table 2: Languages of the abstract of the articles

As regards the article text (see Table 3, below), we separated the journals under analysis into three different groups:

1. Those that publish almost exclusively in the national language (Portuguese). This is the case of *Prisma*, from Portugal, and of the Brazilians *Contemporanea* and *Eco-Pós*;
2. Those that publish mostly in the national language and occasionally in English. This is the case of *Estudos em Comunicação*, from Portugal, and *Comunicación y Sociedad*², from Spain;

² The Journal *Comunicación y Sociedad* is now published in Spanish and English since October, 2014 (*Communication & Society*).

3. Those that publish simultaneously in their national language and English, as *Comunicação e Sociedade* (Portugal), *Matrizes* (Brazil), and *Comunicar* (Spain).

COUNTRY	JOURNAL	LANGUAGES OF THE TEXT						TOTAL
		SP	SP+ENG	FR	ENG	PORT	PORT+ENG	
PORTUGAL	<i>Comunicação e Sociedade</i>	0	0	0	0	0	12	12
	<i>Estudos em Comunicação</i>	0	0	0	2	5	0	7
	<i>Prisma</i>	0	0	0	0	7	0	7
	Subtotal	0	0	0	2	12	12	26
BRAZIL	<i>Contemporanea</i>	0	0	1	0	13	0	14
	<i>Eco-Pós</i>	0	0	0	0	8	0	8
	<i>Matrizes</i>	0	0	0	0	0	15	15
	Subtotal	0	0	1	0	36	0	37
SPAIN	<i>Comunicación y Sociedad</i>	4	0	0	6	0	0	10
	<i>Comunicar</i>	0	20	0	0	0	0	20
	Subtotal	4	20	0	6	0	0	30
TOTAL		4	20	1	8	48	12	93

Table 3: Languages of the text of the articles

AUTHORS

Table 4 displays information about the authors who publish articles in journals from Portugal, Brazil, and Spain, which have been aggregated to this effect. The journals from the three countries are in slightly different situations:

1. In Portugal authorship is scattered between Portugal and Brazil in almost equal parts and, to a lesser extent, between authors of other nationalities;
2. In Brazil articles are written almost exclusively by Brazilians. The authors with other nationalities are very much under-represented.
3. In Spain situation resembles Brazil, although national representation is a little bit less clear, mostly due to the presence of Spanish-American authors, who are also Spanish speakers.

Nevertheless, by comparing the origin of the authors who write in the two languages under analysis, we came across another meaning: we found out that all the Portuguese and Brazilian journals (63 articles) have only two Spanish and Hispanic-American authors. When it comes to journals from Spain (30 articles), we found neither Portuguese nor Brazilian authors.

JOURNALS FROM...	AUTPORT		AUTBRASIL		AUTESP		AUTIHIS-PAM		AUTOUTRO		TOTAL	
	FREQ	%	FREQ	%	FREQ	%	FREQ	%	FREQ	%	FREQ	%
PORTUGAL	11	42.31	9	34.62	1	3.85	0	0.00	5	19.23	26	100
BRAZIL	0	0.00	31	83.78	1	2.70	1	2.70	4	10.81	37	100
SPAIN	0	0.00	0	0.00	23	76.67	3	10.00	4	13.33	30	100
TOTAL	11	11.83	40	43.01	25	26.88	4	4.30	13	13.98	93	100

Table 4. Article's authors

REFERENCES

As regards the references inside articles, journals from the three countries have in common the fact that the largest number of references (around 60%) relate to authors who do not speak Portuguese or Spanish: that is to say, they are mainly English-speaking authors (see Table 5, below). Subsequently and by order of importance we found: i) In the Portuguese journals, references to authors from Portugal (19.59%) and Brazil (18.28%); ii) In the Brazilian journals, references to authors from Brazil (31.07%); iii) In the Spanish journals, references to Spanish authors (30.30%). In the cases other than these, the percentage of references naming other authors does not exceed 5.19% (Hispanic-American author's references in Spanish journals).

JOURNALS FROM...	REFPORT		REFBRASIL		REFESP		REFHIS-PAM		REFOUTROS		REFLUSOF		TOTAL	
	FREQ	%	FREQ	%	FREQ	%	FREQ	%	FREQ	%	FREQ	%	FREQ	%
PORTUGAL	180	19.59	168	18.28	45	4.90	8	0.87	516	56.15	2	0.22	919	100
BRAZIL	21	2.42	274	31.07	30	3.45	39	4.49	501	57.65	4	0.46	869	99.54
SPAIN	4	0.35	0	0.00	350	30.30	60	5.19	741	64.16	0	0.00	1155	100
TOTAL	205	6.97	442	15.02	425	14.44	107	3.64	1758	59.73	6	0.20	2943	100

Table 5: References inside the articles

By examining in contrast authors and references, we corroborate the same trends: moving beyond the prevalence of non-Portuguese or Spanish-speaking references employed by Portuguese and Spanish-speaking researchers (an average of 59.73%), we found that the latter tend to choose references in their own language, giving preference to authors from their own country.

We must also highlight the fact that authors of languages other than Portuguese or Spanish – who are mostly English-speaking – barely mention authors of those languages (they do so only in 5.25% of cases) – despite being themselves referenced, on average, in 59.73% of cases.

AUTHORS / REFERENCES	ARTICLES	REFPORT		REFBRASIL		REFESP		REFHIS-PAM		REFOUTROS		REFLUSOF		TOTAL	
		Fq.	%	Fq.	%	Fq.	%	Fq.	%	Fq.	%	Fq.	%	Fq.	%
AUTPORT	11	121	27.69	53	12.13	27	6.18	1	0.23	222	50.80	2	0.46	437	97.48
AUTBRASI	40	79	8.16	384	39.67	34	3.51	30	3.10	397	41.01	4	0.41	968	95.87
AUTESP	25	4	0.40	0	0.00	336	33.63	30	3.00	604	60.46	0	0.00	999	97.50
AUTIHISPAM	4	0	0.00	2	1.46	21	15.33	44	32.12	66	48.18	0	0.00	137	97.08
AUTOUTRO	13	1	0.20	3	0.61	7	1.41	2	0.40	469	94.75	0	0.00	495	97.37
TOTAL	93	205	6.97	442	15.02	425	14.44	107	3.64	1758	59.73	6	0.20	2943	100.00

Table 6: Authors by references of the articles

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This exploratory study has shown two main exploratory trends in the communication sciences journals published in Portugal, Brazil, and Spain:

1 - There is a mutual reference of authors who write in the same language and the same country. The percentage of citations exchanged among Portuguese and Spanish languages-writing authors is low. The percentage of references exchanged between Portuguese-language authors from different countries is also low.

2 - The number of references to authors of other languages - mainly English - made by Portuguese and Spanish authors prevails, while the reverse does not happen.

As the title of this text suggests, these trends/assumptions allow us to infer, as a general conclusion, that there is, in fact, a reciprocal unawareness of Iberian-American researchers between each other in the field of communication sciences. As a corollary, we can argue that continuing with this trend, Spanish and Portuguese Communication Sciences researchers are providing a valuable contribution to strengthening the dominant paradigm. Said pattern privileges publications in English (mostly British or American journals), which are also indexed in databases such as the Web of Science (Thomson Reuters) and the Scopus (Elsevier), and which clearly favor empirical and quantitative studies.

Obviously, the reliability of both our conclusion and its corollary is conditioned by the exploratory nature of our sample (journals and issues), which is rather limited both in terms of time and space.

However, even if they are accepted as valid, neither the conclusion nor its corollary can lead to assuming that unawareness as inevitable. Hence, we list as conclusions what we believe are worthwhile suggestions to stimulate more collaborative relationships among Ibero-American communication sciences researchers:

1. Journals should publish both abstracts and texts in their native language, as well as in English (Portuguese-English, Spanish-English). This is already done by most of the journals when it comes to the abstracts. The journals *Comunicação e Sociedade*, *Matrizes*, and *Comunicar* also do it for the integral texts.
2. Journals should publish thematic issues involving researchers from various countries and both languages (Portuguese and Spanish).
3. Each journal should eventually establish a publication quota to be afforded by Ibero-American authors from countries other than the one of that journal's provenience.
4. Scientific meetings should be organized jointly, focusing on specific topics, and fostering joint publications, including special issues of journals.
5. Exchange of teachers and students should be intensified both for teaching and research purposes. This would create new avenues for mutual acknowledgment between languages, cultures, and authors within the Communication sciences scientific field.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Paulo Serra has a Graduation in Philosophy, and a Master's Degree and a Ph.D. in Communication sciences. He is Professor at the Department of Communication sciences of University of Beira Interior (Portugal), and researcher in the unit Labcom.IFP. Currently, he holds the position of president of SOPCOM (Portuguese Association of Communication sciences). He is the author of the books *Information as Utopia* (1998), *Information and Sense* (2003), and *Communication Theory Handbook* (2008), and co-author of the book *Information and Persuasion on the Web* (2009). He organized and co-organized several books, the last one being *The Ubiquitous Television* (2015). He has also published several articles and book chapters in journals and collective works.

E-mail: pserra@ubi.pt

Departamento de Comunicação e Artes, Universidade da Beira Interior, Rua Marquês D'Ávila e Bolama, 6201-001 Covilhã, Portugal.

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