

Karen Bennett

Academic Writing in Portugal

I : Discourses in Conflict

(Página deixada propositadamente em branco)



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PREFACE

When I began translating Portuguese academic texts into English, back in the early '90s, I was confident that I knew what academic discourse was. I had been thoroughly trained in the art of writing papers at university, and had already had some years of teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in Portugal, which had given me an easy familiarity with the advice presented in the academic style manuals.

I knew, therefore, that good academic writing was clear and concise, that one should 'never use two words if one will do'. I knew that all key words had to be defined in order to avoid ambiguity, and that sentences should be kept quite short and simple, with no more than one main idea per clause. I knew that the text had to be planned in advance to ensure that the argument proceeded logically, and that each paragraph had to have a topic sentence that summed up its content, just as the text as a whole had to have an introduction that did the same thing. And above all, I knew that we should try to impersonal and objective, avoiding figurative and emotive language, as it was unfair to manipulate the reader through non-rational means.

Yet many of the Portuguese academic texts that I was being asked to translate were nothing like this. The sentences were incredibly long and complex, and it was often difficult to make out the main point that was being made. The vocabulary seemed pompous and unnecessarily erudite, with metaphorical effusions that would sometimes extend halfway down the page. There were verbless sentences, and strange tense usages (why on earth would one use the present and future when referring to a historical past that was quite clearly over and done with?). And the texts as a whole did not seem to have been logically planned. That is to say, in terms of organisation, they often

seemed to favour the loose flowing style of poetic prose above the tight hierarchical structure that I had come to expect from a serious scholarly work.

At first I thought that Portuguese academics didn't know how to write. But then I realised that this style was so prevalent and so valued in the culture that such a simplistic interpretation was inadequate. I found it reproduced in books and academic journals, and I heard it being used in classrooms and at conferences. And although there didn't seem to be any specific courses available to teach Portuguese academic discourse, my students were certainly being instructed by their Portuguese tutors to write in a very different way to English. I realised this when I saw the bewilderment on their faces as I chopped up their elaborate sentences into smaller ones and replaced their high-flown vocabulary with more down-to-earth equivalents.

Since then, things have changed a lot in Portugal. Nowadays, almost everybody is aware of English Academic Discourse, and many researchers are even producing something very similar to it in Portuguese. This has facilitated the translation process immensely. However, my confrontation with Portuguese academic texts provoked questions in me that did not go away. I wondered why, if this were indeed an alternative academic discourse, nobody had ever thought to study it, why it remained uncoded and untaught. I wondered why the English way of composing texts had always been presented to us as the only way. And this made me wonder whether there might not be other academic discourses in other countries that no one outside had ever heard of because they had actually been silenced by a dominant voice.

Thus, I embarked upon a process of reflection about discourses and cultures and the relationships between them that eventually led to the research presented in this book.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This book is about the Portuguese version of an entity that is known in English as ‘Academic Discourse’. That is to say, it is concerned with the kind of prose that is produced in academia and manifested in genres such as the research article, conference paper, dissertation and abstract (Swales, 1990). In Britain and America, there are literally hundreds of books on the market designed to teach this kind of writing, and courses are offered in it at almost all universities. It is also the subject of a huge body of linguistic research, with entire journals, not to mention numerous books, devoted to it. Yet in Portugal, ‘academic discourse’ has only recently started to be recognised as an entity at all. Before the mid ‘noughties’, it was not systematically taught or researched, and writing manuals were scarce and usually dealt with textual macrostructure rather than with discourse *per se*.

Now, in the wake of the various initiatives to standardise higher education and research processes throughout the European Union,¹ academic writing courses have begun to sprout up in many Portuguese institutions. As might be expected, given the increased pressure upon Portuguese academics to publish and attend conferences abroad, many of these are in English. Moreover, the few that are in Portuguese largely reflect Anglo-Saxon attitudes to knowledge and discourse, and many seem to have been calqued directly from Anglophone models. The instruction given, therefore, bears little resemblance to the way in which Portuguese scholars have traditionally approached the production of academic texts, particularly in the humanities and social sciences.

¹ Such as the creation of the European Research Council, the European Common Reference Framework for Languages, and of course the Bologna Accord for Higher Education.

This 'traditional' Portuguese academic writing style is nevertheless still highly visible in certain disciplines. What is more, it is very different from the English model. More akin to literary than scientific prose, its typical features include a taste for 'copiousness', manifested by a general wordiness and much redundancy; a preference for a high-flown erudite register (including complex syntax, lexical abstraction, etc); a propensity for indirectness, meaning that the main idea is often embedded, deferred or adorned at all ranks; and the extensive use of figurative language and other forms of subjectivity.

Despite the prevalence of this style of academic writing, it remains almost entirely unstudied by linguists. To my knowledge, there has been no research conducted into its distinctive features or the historical circumstances that gave rise to it, nor (as I have already mentioned) does it seem to have been systematically taught. Rather, the prevailing attitude amongst those producing it seems to be that this is 'personal' writing, deeply bound up with the individual's identity, and therefore ultimately unteachable.

This somewhat 'mystical' attitude to the production of scholarly texts in the humanities is not, however, borne out by the evidence. The many samples of Portuguese academic writing that have come to me over the years in the form of texts submitted for translation have a great many features in common – so many, in fact, as to belie the claim that each of those authors is simply 'doing his/her own thing'. On the contrary, there is every indication that we are in the presence of a distinct scholarly 'discourse', one that is apparently predicated upon a quite different epistemological framework to that underlying English Academic Discourse (EAD).

The studies presented in this book, therefore, were motivated by the desire to find empirical proof that there exists in Portugal an academic discourse that is clearly distinguishable from the hegemonic one and to make a start on the complex task of defining its parameters and determining its prevalence in relation to other discourses. Hence, this research may be considered as a preliminary reconnaissance of the complex terrain that is Academic Discourse in Portugal. Its primary aim is to provide a descriptive overview of current Portuguese academic writing practices by means of a Corpus study of texts of different academic disciplines and genres (Part I), but it also takes account of the attitudes of Portuguese scholars towards the issue of academic writing

(Part II), and of the prescriptive dimension, as manifested in Portuguese academic style manuals (Part III).

The approach taken throughout is a comparative one. That is to say, as the study was carried out within the discipline of Translation Studies and draws upon my own extensive experience as an academic translator in Portugal, the starting point for all three studies is English Academic Discourse against which the Portuguese situation is systematically compared. However, this does not mean that EAD is taken as a neutral universal standard. On the contrary, it is assumed to be a historically-contingent form of social practice that encodes the values and ideology of the community that gave rise to it. Hence, the current dominance of English in the academic sphere is viewed as a form of ‘linguistic imperialism’ (Phillipson, 1992), which seriously undermines other forms of encoding knowledge, leading in worst-case scenarios to full-blown ‘epistemicide’ (Santos, 2001, 2007). The extent to which this process is under way in Portugal is thus a central theme of this book.

* * *

The first problem assailing the researcher in this field is that the term ‘academic discourse’ is difficult to render into Portuguese. The notion of ‘discourse’ as a community-defined form of social practice seems to be absent from the experience of most Portuguese researchers, who prefer terms like *linguagem* or *estilo* to *discurso*. Moreover, the adjective *académico* does not easily collocate with any of these. The term *escrita académica* has now begun to appear in the context of university writing courses, but when I initially began collecting data for this project in around 2002, it was not common (except perhaps in Brazil). At that time, *linguagem científica*² was more frequently used in Portugal, or, in some disciplines, *linguagem filosófica*. Thus, it became clear from the outset that there was a terminological disjunction between Portuguese and English, which in itself was culturally revealing.

² The word *científico* has a much broader range of application than its English cognate, and can be used to refer to systematic knowledge in all areas, including subjects like literary studies, fine art and theology. It is particularly common in collocations such as *revista científica* (academic journal), *encontro científico* (academic conference) and *conselho científico* (research board).

Hence, it would seem appropriate to begin this study of academic writing practices in Portugal with a discussion of some of the key terms that will be used throughout this work. Let us begin with ‘discourse’.

i. Discourse

The notion of discourse as a form of social practice that effectively constructs the object it purports to describe was first articulated by Michel Foucault in his 1969 work *L'Archéologie du Savoir*. This was a revolutionary idea at the time, not only for linguistics (in that it shifted the focus away from the word and sentence to much larger units of text) but also politically, as it suggested that that language is always inescapably ideological. That is to say, the syntax and lexis of the simplest sentence can be shown to contain value judgements that relate it synchronically and diachronically to other texts in the system, constructing a complex web of interconnections, which, when institutionalized, may form a coherent ‘discursive formation’ (Foucault: 2002:41) with its own ideology, history and agenda.

These observations went on to inform an approach to textual analysis that has come to be known as Critical Discourse Theory³. Within this perspective, Kress (1985:7) describes discourse as follows:

Discourses are systematically organised sets of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution. Beyond this, they define, describe and delimit what it is possible to say and not possible to say (and by extension – what it is possible to do or not to do) with respect to the area of concern of that institution, whether marginally or centrally. A discourse provides a set of possible statements about a given area, and organises and gives structure to the manner in which a particular topic, object, process is to be talked about. In that it provides descriptions, rules, permissions and prohibitions of social and individual actions. (Kress, 1985:7)

³ Cf. Kress & Hodge (1981 [1979]); Kress (1985); Fairclough (1989, 2002, 2003); Wodak & Meyer (2001), amongst others.

This leads on to another important feature of discourses, namely that they are inherently totalitarian in mission ('discourses tend towards exhaustiveness and inclusiveness', *Idem*) and imperialistic in reach, constantly aiming to explain and control as much area as possible. This is an important aspect to be borne in mind when attempting to map out the terrain of academic writing practices in Portugal. For EAD has systematically ousted rival academic discourses in many parts of the globe and with them alternative ways of construing knowledge. It is of interest to this study to determine the extent to which the traditional Portuguese approach is now under threat.

When the notion of discourse first began to be applied to the sphere of academic production, the concept of the 'discourse community' soon acquired a central role.

Use of the term 'discourse community' testifies to the increasingly common assumption that discourse operates within conventions defined by communities, be they academic disciplines or social groups. The pedagogies associated with writing across the curriculum and academic English now use the notion of 'discourse communities' to signify a cluster of ideas: that language use in a group is a form of social behaviour, that discourse is a means of maintaining and extending the group's knowledge and of initiating new members into the group, and that discourse is epistemic or constitutive of the group's knowledge. (Herzberg, cit. Swales, 1990:21).

Hence, by the mid '80s, academic writing was no longer considered an individual enterprise, crafted by lone scholars in pursuit of some referential truth. Instead, it was perceived above all as an *interpersonal* activity, a means of achieving membership of a community that would then endorse one's own production by conferring upon it the status of knowledge.

Thus, academic discourse became something eminently teachable. Indeed in the field of Applied Linguistics today, it is frequent to speak of 'novice' versus 'expert' writers, reflecting the assumption that the acquisition of writing skills is something that takes place over time, resulting in a continuum of expertise.

There is little place here for individualistic notions of ‘inspiration’, much less for aesthetic concerns. Rather, academic writing skills are seen as a craft that can be acquired somewhat mechanically by the systematic analysis and imitation of exemplary models.

This shift in perception will also have accounted in part for the great flurry of research activity that subsequently began in the Anglophone world into the entity now known as ‘academic discourse’. Since the mid-‘80s, there has been an intense interest in the phenomenon on the part of descriptive and applied linguists, leading to the production of countless books and articles that explore every possible aspect of the practice and how it should be taught⁴. Naturally, economic concerns are never very far away. Given Anglophone dominance in matters of scientific research, the teaching of academic writing skills is big business, as is testified by the burgeoning of EAP courses all over the world and the hundreds of style manuals on the market aimed at ever more tightly-defined target publics.

Let us look now at the entity that has been object of such attention, in order briefly define what it represents.

ii. English Academic Discourse (EAD)

Although research into the way that academics actually write in practice has shown that English Academic Discourse is by no means monolithic and that there are numerous genre and disciplinary variations (Swales, 1990; Hyland, 2000), EAD is usually presented to novices as a coherent entity with clearly defined features. A review of English academic style manuals conducted between 2004 and 2007 (Bennett, 2009) revealed that the advice given in them is broadly the same, irrespective of discipline, genre or target public. Of the 41 books actively consulted, only 1 (Woods, 2006), which was aimed specifically at qualitative researchers in the social sciences, took a different approach;

⁴ See, for example, Swales (1990); Halliday & Martin (1993); Battalio (1998); Martin & Veel (1998); Candlin & Hyland (1999); Hyland (2002); Flowerdew (2002); Schleppegrell & Columbi (2002), to name but a few.

indeed, the very fact that this author sets out to deliberately challenge 'traditional' practice would seem to confirm the hegemony of the conventional discourse⁵.

Thus, on the basis of the advice given in those style manuals, the main features of EAD might be summarized as follows:

a) General Principles:

- clarity and coherence;
- economy and precision of language (avoiding vagueness, verbosity, circumlocution);
- structured rational argument supported by evidence (avoiding dubious persuasive techniques);
- * generally impartial/objective with fact distinguished from opinion;
- caution and restraint about claims (use of hedging devices, etc);
- incorporation of theory through citation and referencing;

b) Text Structure:

- text organised into sections (Introduction / Development / Conclusion in the humanities and arts; Introduction / Method / Results / Discussion / Conclusion in the sciences);
- sections are organised into paragraphs, each of which deals with one particular idea;
- hierarchical organisation at all ranks, with general statement of theme followed by development;
- coherence created by thematic progression and made explicit through signposting;
- cohesion (through use of linkers, back- and forward referencing, ellipsis, etc);

⁵ There are, of course, other counter-hegemonic discourses being produced in English and American universities. Besides the various discourses of qualitative research, we could include the emancipatory *écritures* produced by different subaltern groups and the somewhat dense and opaque discourse of Critical Theory. However, within the academic panorama as a whole, these occupy a very peripheral role, as we can see by the complete lack of attention given to them outside of a few trendy sub-departments.

c) *Sentence Length and Structure:*

- complete sentences, each containing one main point, with straightforward syntax;
- sentences relatively short or varied in length, rarely containing more than about 40 – 50 words;
- *predominance of impersonal structures (passive; impersonal verbs etc);

d) *Lexis:*

- technical terminology from discipline (nominalisations);
- lexis used denotatively (definition of key words);
- concrete terms rather than abstractions;
- *limited use of figurative language.

(NB. *The asterisked features are controversial or discipline-dependent).

Historical studies into the origins of this discourse shed some light on the reasons for certain features. Work by the Systemic Functional linguists of the Australian School (Halliday & Martin, 1993; Wignell, 2007) has shown that this discourse was consciously developed in the 17th century to serve as a vehicle for the ‘new science’ that was then emerging, and that, over the course of the next three centuries, it spread to other disciplines to eventually become the default discourse of factuality. The technological and economic benefits brought by science ensured that this paradigm of knowledge rapidly took over from the earlier scholastic/humanistic approach until, by the mid 20th century, the humanities and social sciences were under a great deal of pressure to present themselves as ‘scientific’ in order to be taken seriously.

The scientific revolution of the 17th century essentially shifted the focus of knowledge away from texts and language to the concrete things of the outside world. Thus, the new grammar put the emphasis on physical phenomena with the development of nominalizations and impersonal verb forms, which presented the scientists’ findings as objective universal truths. Even today, despite the challenges to the whole notion of objectivity raised by poststructuralists and others in the final decades of the 20th century, the highly

nominalised impersonal style is still preferred by many academic authors as a marker of authority and factuality. Indeed, whether or not personal pronouns and other markers of subjectivity are permissible in academic discourse is still a moot point, as the survey of academic style manuals revealed (Bennett, 2009: 48-50).

The emphasis on plain language and clarity can also be historically explained. Most of the early scientists were Protestants (Merton, 2001 [1938]) with an inherent distaste for mediation in all aspects of life. For them, in science as well as in religion, 'to speak plainly....meant speaking the Word' (Bercovitch, 1975:29). Hence, in the rhetorical debates between Ciceronians and Anti-Ciceronians that wracked the Early Modern period (Croll, 1969 [1929]; Ryan, 1953), Protestants naturally gravitated towards the Anti-Ciceronian camp, spurning the elaborate grand style of Cicero in favour of the more demotic plain style. This gradually became reified, until today it is viewed in Anglophone culture as the only valid vehicle for fact; indeed, implicit connections are often made between the use of a 'neutral' 'transparent' prose style and the truth value ascribed to a writer's claims.

This kind of writing has variously been called 'windowpane prose' (Golden-Biddle & Locke, *cit.* Woods, 2006:43), 'the rhetoric of anti-rhetoric' (White, 1997:27) and the 'authoritative plain style' (Bernstein, *cit.* Venuti, 1995:5). Based upon a philosophy of language that is termed 'realist'⁶, it posits the existence of a world 'out there' that can be perceived, analysed and discussed in absolute terms, irrespective of the subjective position of the observer or the cognitive tools that are used for the purpose. But this apparent neutrality is a construct. It is largely achieved through the systematic use of nominalizations and impersonal verb forms, which remove the subjective observer from the picture and focus upon the world outside; by simple sentence structures and clearly defined lexis, which create an illusion of a basic correspondence between words and things; and by a careful reasoning process that uses 'logical' devices such as entailment and consistency to create a watertight argument.

⁶ 'Realism I characterise as the belief that statements of the disputed class possess an objective truth-value, independently of our means of knowing it: they are true or false in virtue of a reality existing independently of us' (Michael Dummett *cit.* Rorty, 1991:3)

The art of the matter, as far as the creation of facts is concerned, lies in deceiving the reader into thinking that there is no rhetoric,/.../and that the facts are indeed speaking for themselves. (Swales, 1990:112)

From this perspective, then, ‘facts’ are no more than claims that have been canonised by the discourse community. Hence, the teaching of Academic Discourse largely involves equipping the students with the rhetorical skills that will make their claims acceptable to that community. As Swales implies, this often involves a certain amount of linguistic manipulation.

iii. Contrastive Rhetoric

Despite the fact that the EAP industry has long been sustained by a legitimizing discourse that portrays EAD as the only valid vehicle for academic inquiry (Lyotard, 1984; Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994), applied linguists working with foreign students have gradually become aware that there may exist cultural differences in discursive or expository writing patterns. This notion was first broached by Robert B. Kaplan in a seminal paper first published in 1966, in which he suggested that many of the errors of text organisation and cohesion made by foreign students in their English academic writing may be due to different cultural conventions and indeed ‘thought patterns’ encoded in their mother tongues.

Logic (in the popular, rather than the logician’s sense of the word), which is the basis of rhetoric, is evolved out of a culture; it is not universal. Rhetoric, then, is not universal either, but varies from culture to culture and even from time to time within a given culture. It is affected by canons of taste within a given culture at a given time. (Kaplan, 1980:400)

He went on to assert that the typical linear development of the expository English paragraph may in fact be quite alien to other cultures, and even suggested a series of diagrammatic representations of how a paragraph might develop according to Semitic, Oriental, Romance and Russian styles. (*Idem*: 403-411)

Although this initial approach was overly simplistic, Kaplan's work spawned a multitude of similar studies that explored discourse differences from a variety of cultural perspectives (eg. Smith, 1987; Ventola & Mauranen, 1996; Duszak, 1997), culminating in the formal constitution of the discipline that is today known as Contrastive Rhetoric (Connor, 1996). However, amidst this plethora of contrastive studies, Portuguese academic discourse has been somewhat neglected. There has been some work done into other Romance languages, particular Spanish, which has a certain relevance: for example, Kaplan (1980:408), in his initial article, observed that 'there is much greater freedom to digress or to introduce extraneous material in French, or in Spanish, than English', while Grabe & Kaplan (1996:194), summarizing the work of several different researchers, report that Spanish writers prefer a more 'elaborated' style of writing, use longer sentences and have a penchant for subordination.⁷

However, although Contrastive Rhetoric is predicated upon the assumption that cultural differences exist in academic writing style, in my view, none of the CR studies that I have yet encountered go quite far enough in their claims. That is to say, although a great deal of attention has been given to identifying and analysing minor details of form and structure (such as sentence length and structure, personal pronouns, modality, argumentation strategies, etc), I have yet to find a single author who postulates that there may in fact be an entirely different paradigm underlying academic production in any other culture.

Yet 'Continental philosophy', with its long tradition of idealism⁸ stretching back through poststructuralism and structuralism to phenomenology and hermeneutics, is fundamentally sceptical of knowledge gleaned by empirical means. Thus, it is to be expected that cultures where this paradigm dominates might incline towards a different type of discourse, one in which meaning is generated within the sign system rather than purporting to reflect the world outside. The fact that these alternatives are given such short shrift in the

⁷ For other more recent studies contrasting specific features of Spanish and English academic texts, see Moreno, 1997; Martín Martín, 2003; Mur Dueñas, 2007a, 2007b.

⁸ In philosophical idealism, the so-called external, or real world is inseparable from consciousness, perception, mind, intellect or reason. Cf. Kant '... if I remove the thinking subject, the whole material world must at once vanish because it is nothing but a phenomenal appearance in the sensibility of ourselves as a subject, and a manner or species of representation' (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A383).

Anglophone world would seem to support the claim that it is ultimately engaged in a neo-imperialistic exercise to impose its own worldview throughout the globe.

iv. Linguistic Imperialism

The ongoing debate about linguistic imperialism in academia was prompted by the publication in 1992 of Phillipson's critique of the English language teaching (ELT) industry entitled precisely *Linguistic Imperialism*. In this influential work, Phillipson points out that, despite being packaged as a kind of 'aid' for under-developed countries,⁹ the English language is in fact both a very lucrative export commodity and an effective form of propaganda. Indeed, he devotes an entire chapter to describing how the British Council, along with parallel American institutions, was set up in the early 20th century as part of a concerted attempt to avert the threat of war through cultural diplomacy, with English language teaching forming a central weapon in its armoury.¹⁰ According to the first *British Council Annual Report* of 1940-41:

The Council's aim is to create in a country overseas a basis of friendly knowledge and understanding of the people of this country, of their philosophy and way of life, which will lead to a sympathetic appreciation of British foreign policy, whatever for the moment that policy might be and from whatever political conviction it may spring. (*cit.* Phillipson, 1992: 139)

Reframing this intent within the Bourdieuan concept of 'symbolic power', Phillipson focuses upon the consequences for the recipients, who are persuaded to internalise a whole set of ideological assumptions and values that may not necessarily be in their own interest.

⁹ 'The white man's burden had been metamorphosed into the British native-speaker teacher's burden' (*Idem*: 179).

¹⁰ By 1940-41, the institution's activities were focused on four main areas of the globe which were considered to be of prime strategic importance, as 'this was where the Germans and Italians had concentrated their propaganda efforts'. Interestingly, one of those four areas was Portugal (*Idem*: 140).

What is at stake when English spreads is not merely the substitution or displacement of one language by another but the imposition of new 'mental structures' through English. (*Idem*: 166)

Thus, by presenting itself as a vehicle of modernity and progress, English language and culture managed in the first part of the 20th century, to acquire hegemonic status¹¹ in the world, rapidly overtaking French as the *lingua franca* of cultured elites. When the United States emerged as superpower after the Second World War, its future was assured. English had become the language of power, required by anyone that wished to make their voice heard on the international stage.

This argument was furthered with Pennycook's work *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*, which came out in 1994. Amongst other things, this author introduces the specific issue of academic discourse, pointing out that access to the most prestigious kind of knowledge is often only through English.

In international academic relations, the predominance of English has profound consequences. A large proportion of textbooks in the world are published in English and designed either for the internal English-speaking market....or for an international market. In both cases, students around the world are not only obliged to reach a high level of competence in English to pursue their studies, but are also dependent on forms of Western knowledge that are of limited value and of extreme inappropriacy in the local context. (1994: 20)

Although Pennycook goes on to discuss this with relation to India,¹² the same argument might be applied in the context of Europe, which has long been split between two distinct paradigms of knowledge, as mentioned briefly above. Recent EU policies designed to standardize higher education and

¹¹ See Phillipson (1992:72-76) for a detailed discussion of Gramsci's notion of 'hegemony' in the English language context.

¹² See Canagarah (2002) for a further exploration of the material and conceptual constraints affecting scholars from peripheral countries.

research have ensured that it is the Anglophone empirical model that has prevailed, with inevitable consequences for the kinds of discourse produced in academia.

This situation is discussed by Swales, who likens EAD to a *Tyrannosaurus Rex* ‘gobbling up the other denizens of the academic linguistic grazing grounds’ (1997:374). One of the greatest risks posed, he argues, is the loss of ‘registral biodiversity’ (Idem: 378), as languages deliberately cultivate modern scientific or academic varieties in order to ensure the production of competitive scholarship. Continuing this theme, Tardy (2004:250) points out that 95% of the publications in the 1995 edition of the *Science Citation Index* were in English, and that gatekeeping roles (in the form of editorial boards and referees) are most often occupied by Anglophone scholars.

Common methods and measurement standards have coupled with cumulative and self-referential knowledge-making to result in an increased standardization of scientific discourse. Therefore, when genre or discourse patterns do not follow the expectations of the gatekeepers, they are more likely to be viewed as non-standard and to be excluded from publication.
(Idem)

The emerging picture is therefore of an academic monoculture that seems intent on wiping out all competition. The Portuguese sociologist, Boaventura Sousa Santos (2001, 2007) has termed this process ‘epistemicide’.

v. Epistemicide

Although Pennycook (1994:13-14) mentions ‘linguistic genocide’ and ‘linguistic curtailment’¹³ as consequences of the global spread of English,

¹³ ‘Linguistic genocide’ refers to the disappearance of minority languages as a result of dominance by a more powerful one. ‘Linguistic curtailment’ occurs when the usage of a particular language is restricted, qualitatively and quantitatively, in certain situations. A relevant example in this context might be the increasing use of English in international conferences held on Portuguese territory.

neither of these concepts quite corresponds to the far more serious allegation of ‘epistemicide’ brought by Boaventura de Sousa Santos. The sociologist has used this term a number of times over the course of his wide-ranging critiques of Western thought, but it is perhaps most explicitly developed in his 2001 essay on the ‘epistemology of blindness’. In this, he accuses modern science not only of being blinkered to the existence of other forms of knowledge, but of deliberately bringing about the destruction of any that might threaten its pre-eminence.

Social practices are knowledge practices, but they can only be recognised as such to the extent that they are the mirror image of scientific knowledge. Whatever knowledge does not fit the image is discarded as a form of ignorance. The single view rather than being a natural phenomenon is the *ur*-product of the creative destruction of modern science. The epistemological privilege that modern science grants to itself is thus the result of the destruction of all alternative knowledges that could eventually question such privilege. It is, in other words, a product of epistemicide. The destruction of knowledge is not an epistemological artefact without consequences. It involves the destruction of the social practices and the disqualification of the social agents that operate according to such knowledges. (2001: 266)

Most of Santos’ work has concentrated upon oppositions between the Western and non-Western, or between North and South; consequently, although Portugal is granted a role on the ‘semi-periphery’¹⁴ of the world system, little attention has yet been given to the way in which knowledge is encoded in this culture. Indeed, the implications seem to be that Portugal largely partakes of centre values in this domain. However, as I am hoping to show over the course of this book, much of what is generated in humanities departments in Portugal

¹⁴ This concept was originally formulated by Wallerstein (1984) and applied to Portugal by Santos (1985). According to this analysis, semiperipheral countries are positioned, geographically and economically, between the core and the periphery of the world system and have characteristics of each; thus, they are essential to the functioning of the world system, providing a buffer zone between rich and poor as well as mediating change.

has little in common with the hegemonic knowledge that is the object of Santos' critique. Often based upon quite different epistemological assumptions to the empiricism and linguistic realism that underlies Anglo-Saxon research, such texts can rarely be made fit for publication in English-language journals without extensive re-structuring and reformulation. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere (Bennett, 2007b), the translational act may itself be considered as a form of 'epistemicide' in the sense that it is sometimes obliged to destroy the epistemological infrastructure of the original work in order to ensure acceptance by the target culture.

On the other hand, translation may also offer an escape route from what Santos calls the trap of 'abyssal thinking'. In a later work, he calls for an 'ecology of knowledges' which would make extensive use of intercultural translation to guarantee epistemological biodiversity.

From the perspective of Northern abyssal epistemologies, policing the boundaries of relevant knowledge is by far more decisive than arguing over internal differences. As a consequence, a massive epistemicide has been under way for the past five centuries, whereby an immense wealth of cognitive experiences has been wasted. To recuperate some of these experiences, the ecology of knowledges resorts to intercultural translation, its most characteristic post-abyssal feature. Embedded in different Western and non-Western cultures, such experiences use not only different languages but also different categories, symbolic universes and aspirations for a better life. (2005: 16)

He goes on to discuss the issue of whether these different knowledges are in fact 'incommensurable'.¹⁵

...there are those who defend that there are not one but many philosophies and believe that mutual dialogue and enrichment is possible. They are

¹⁵ This question was first raised by Thomas Kuhn (1962) in the context of different scientific paradigms. Kuhn mentions translation as a way of overcoming incommensurability (1970 [1962]: 198-204), although this perspective is amended in a later work in which he acknowledges that 'the roots of incommensurability lie in the nature of language itself' (2009 [1999]: 182).

the ones who often have to confront the problems of incommensurability, incompatibility, or reciprocal unintelligibility. They think, however, that incommensurability does not necessarily impede communication and may even lead to unsuspected forms of complementarity. It all depends on the use of adequate procedures of intercultural translation. Through translation, it becomes possible to identify common concerns, complementary approaches, and, of course, also intractable contradictions. (*Idem*)

Similar opinions have been voiced with the field of Translation Studies. For example, Venuti (1995) famously called for a ‘foreignizing’ approach to translation into English that would highlight the ‘otherness’ of the discourse and make the reader aware of the different worldview. To some extent this has now taken place in the field of fiction, particularly with the burgeoning market for postcolonial novels. However, factual texts remain stubbornly impervious to such techniques. Research into the academic writing of multilingual scholars (Curry & Lillis, 2004; Lillis & Curry, 2006a, 2006b) confirms that journals often reject articles by foreign academics on linguistic and stylistic grounds, and that ‘literacy brokers’ (such as journal editors, reviewers, academic peers, etc) systematically intervene in texts of foreign authorship to bring them into line with target culture expectations. Hence, Santos’ optimistic vision of an ‘ecology of knowledges’ still seems very remote at this point.

* * *

Of course not everyone involved in the production of academic texts sees the hegemony of English as a bad thing. A survey of foreign graduate students carried out in the US revealed that the overwhelming majority felt there was a need for a *lingua franca* for scientific communication, and that some considered EAD to be particularly suited to the task given its ‘explicit and objective’ structure (Tardy, 2004: 258). Hence, in this study of academic writing practices in Portugal, I felt that it was important to take account of the attitudes of Portuguese researchers towards both Portuguese and English, and to gauge their awareness of the issues described above.

This book, therefore, contains three self-contained (though complementary) studies into different aspects of Portuguese academic writing practices. **Part I** is a Corpus Study of 408 Portuguese academic texts (1,333,890 words) of different disciplines and genres, which had been submitted to me for translation over a roughly ten-year period (1998-2008). These were analysed for the presence of features considered to constitute markers of difference from EAD, as well as for general ‘translatability’, on the basis of which they were allocated a score known as a ‘Variance Factor’ ranging from 0 to -4. The results were then interpreted in the light of discipline and genre.

Part II describes the results of a survey of Portuguese researchers conducted in 2002 and 2008, designed to gauge their attitude towards the issue of academic discourse and find out something about their habits as regards the production of academic texts in English. As one of the main aims was to further test my hypothesis that there exists in Portuguese a discourse of the humanities that is distinct in structure and underlying epistemology from EAD, the questionnaire was administered mainly to researchers operating in the Humanities and Social Sciences, who were asked not only about their writing practices, but also about their perceptions of the differences between Portuguese and English in their respective disciplines and their subjective responses to the encroachment of English. There were also questions about the strategies used for publication in English (where appropriate), in order to assess the prevalence of translation.

Part III describes a review of the Portuguese academic style manuals on the market, designed to mirror the survey of English academic style manuals, mentioned above (Bennett, 2009). Its objective was not only to assess the volume of such material available but also the nature of the advice given, in order to determine the kind of academic discourse that was being promoted via this channel.

Finally, the **Conclusion** draws together the results of all three studies in order to offer an overview of academic writing practices in Portugal at present, discussing some of the implications of the findings made.

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