Rhetorical incompatibilities in academic writing: English versus the Romance languages

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RHETORICAL INCOMPATIBILITIES IN ACADEMIC WRITING: ENGLISH VERSUS THE ROMANCE CULTURES

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Abstract

A survey of the many English academic style manuals on the market (Bennett 2009) has shown a remarkable consistency across disciplines and genres as to the qualities required in English Academic Discourse. These include characteristics such as clarity, economy and precision; an emphasis upon rational argument supported by evidence, with an avoidance of 'dubious' persuasive techniques; and a general restraint with regards to claims made. This contrasts sharply with the traditional scholarly discourse of the Romance cultures (Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, French and Romanian), which is characterised by a taste for 'copiousness', manifested by a wordiness and redundancy; a preference for a high-flown erudite register (including complex syntax, lexical abstraction, etc); a propensity for indirectness (the main idea is often embedded, deferred or adorned at all ranks); and the extensive use of figurative language and other forms of subjectivity.
This paper looks in more detail at these differences from the point of view of the translator, editor, writing instructor or non-native English speaker (NNES) author. A contrastive approach is used to suggest ways in which some of the more intransigent problems might be overcome in practice, stimulating discussion about the ethical, ideological and identity issues involved in radical domestication.

Keywords: Academic discourse; contrastive rhetoric; English; Romance languages; rhetorical incompatibilities.

1. Introduction

The Romance languages are notorious for the complexity of their writing style. Spanish academic prose has been described by linguists and educators as 'elaborate', 'ornate', 'repetitious', with long 'flowery' sentences and a penchant for subordination (e.g. Reid 1988; Reppen and Grabe 1993; Farrell 1996; Monaño Harmon 1991); Portuguese is characterized as 'baroque' 'by virtue of its flexible syntax, the inversions of its punctuation, and its fondness for excess and rhetorical

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figures' (Santoro 2014; see also Quadros 1967:178); and the French have been described as so preoccupied with linguistic artistry that they are prepared to sacrifice scientific rigour to achieve balance and symmetry in their prose (Farfor 1976a/b,; Galtung 1981; Maisonneuve 2009). As for the Romance argumentation style, Kaplan (1966) famously described this as 'digressive' in contrast with the supposed 'linearity' of English, a claim that has since been reproduced, elaborated on, and indeed challenged, in a wide variety of cross-lingual and unilingual situations (e.g. Neubauer and Riddle 1990, Connor 1996, Panetta 2000, Miller 2007).

Whether or not one agrees with such sweeping generalizations across languages and genres, there are sound linguistic and cultural reasons for why such characteristics might exist. Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, French and Romanian are all descended from Latin, a language that had many more inflections than English, enabling much greater syntactical complexity and a more flexible word order.[3] This facility was exploited to the maximum in the grand style[4] of Classical rhetoric, which, like the Baroque in architecture and art, became a marker of Catholic identity from the 17th century onwards in frank opposition to the Protestant taste for plainness (Timmermans 1999/2002, Conley 1990, Bennett 2015b). More recently, France's extended cultural hegemony[5] in Portugal, Italy, Spain and Romania throughout the first part of the 20th century meant that certain quirks of its educational system – like the fact that it continued to offer instruction in Classical rhetoric (Holsinger 2005) and taught students to compose essays with features 'traceable to the precepts of Scholastic dialectic' (Siepmann 2006:133) – were propagated throughout the Romance-speaking region.

In more recent years, scholars of academic writing have tended to avoid sweeping generalizations about rhetorical identity in favour of carefully hedged observations about specific discourse features in particular genres.[6] Some linguists go as far as to reject the broad claims made in the earlier works, usually on the basis of empirical studies of corpora. For example, Taft et al. (2011:512) found no difference between Spanish and English as regards sentence length, while Monroy-Casas (2008) forthrightly denies that Spanish is less 'linear', arguing that the differences found by the earlier studies could be explained by variables such as academic background of informants or the type of task given.

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[3] See, for example, Luraghi (1995: 366-373) on inversions in Latin and the influence of this upon the literary traditions of modern Romance languages.

[4] This was characterized by stylistic complexity and ornamentation, emotivity and the abundant use of figures of speech.

[5] French was the second language in these countries until the late 20th century (Dollerup 1995: 88-90), and their education systems were moulded upon the French model.

[6] See, for example, Martín Martín (2005), Moreno and Suárez (2008), Mur Dueñas (2007, 2011) and Burgess et al. (2014) for Spanish; Giannoni (2008), Molino (2010) and Vergaro (2011) for Italian; Van Bonn and Swales (2007) and Salager-Meyer et al. (2007) for French; Bennett (2010, 2011) and Junqueira (2013) for Portuguese; Bardi and Muresan (2014) for Romanian.

The present article, however, revives Kaplan's approach to some extent by deliberately focusing on certain discourse characteristics that all the Romance languages share. This is partly due to the contours taken by one particular research trajectory, initiated with Bennett's (2010a) corpus study of Portuguese academic texts, which affirmed the presence of a humanities discourse that was linguistically and epistemologically distinct from English. However, it subsequently became clear that the features identified were by no means specific to Portuguese. Most of the items on the list of distinguishing features (which include preferences for certain lexical and syntactical patterns, as well as approaches to text organization in general) are also present in Spanish, French, Italian and Romanian academic writing as we shall see, motivating the claim that these are Romance-wide phenomena that cannot be restricted to a single language.

There is also an ideological dimension to this quest that perhaps needs to be explicitly acknowledged. In the current climate of globalization, researchers operating on the semiperiphery of the world system are increasingly anxious to assimilate their discourse to that of the prestigious centre, distancing themselves from practices in their own cultures that they perceive to be backward or undeveloped (Bennett, ed. 2014; Lillis and Curry 2010).[7] In some cases, this attitude is leading to the loss or erosion of those traditional scholarly discourses, producing situations of diglossia (Gunnarsson 2001; Ferguson 2007) and language change, as traditional scholarly discourses gradually alter to become more like English as a result of constant contact with the lingua franca (Anderman and Rogers 2005; House 2008; Bennett 2014b, Muresan & Nicolae, 2015).

Assuming a critical stance with regard to the centre of the global knowledge production system, this article is thus part of a broader campaign to resist the slide towards an epistemological monoculture (Bennett 2015a) by consciously valuing and propagating traditional forms of construing knowledge. Showing that, in the case of Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian and Romanian, certain surface patterns are not idiosyncrasies of a particular language but significant features common to the Romance family as a whole, it argues that they should not be understood as defective academic writing, but rather as manifestations of a different attitude to the construction of knowledge – one that is humanistic and philosophical, rather than empiricist, and which can therefore offer an alternative to the worldview dominating the centre of the system. By deliberately highlighting the similarities between these languages and the way in which they differ from the norms of English Academic Discourse (EAD), as laid out in the style manuals and taught in EAP courses throughout the world, it hopes to raise awareness of the existence of this 'Romance' attitude to knowledge production, ultimately encouraging a respectful stance towards it on the part of educators and literacy brokers.

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[7] This attitude of uncritical subservience to the centre combined with scorn for anything peripheral (termed the 'butler syndrome' in Bennett 2014a) might underpin the impulse to reject cultural distinctions such as Kaplan's, evident in studies such as Monroy-Casas (2008).

The methodology used in this research is a little unorthodox. Rather than resorting to a controlled empirical study of samples of native-speaker writing in those languages or in English, it takes as its starting point a list of rhetorical features ('distinguishing discourse features' or DDFs) compiled for Portuguese in that initial study (Bennett 2010a), going on to seek out examples of the same in the published writings of authors from the other Romance languages. Unlike most of the earlier cross-cultural approaches to academic writing, it focuses particularly, though not exclusively, upon the humanities in the understanding that knowledge in these disciplines is more culturally and linguistically embedded than in the hard sciences, and therefore less likely to adopt a universalizing discourse.

From the pragmatic perspective, the identification of specific markers of rhetorical difference between the Romance languages and English may be useful for EAP teachers, translators and other literacy brokers wishing to help authors from those cultures produce publishable academic texts in English; indeed, the article offers some advice as to how these difficulties could be overcome in the short term. However, the long-term aim of this article is to advocate a form of contrastive teaching in the EAP classroom that encourages Romance-speaking students and authors to acknowledge and value the scholarly discourse of their own cultures, rather than perceiving it as defective (as occurs in the monolingual EAP classroom when certain formulations caused by mother-tongue interference are simply labelled as 'wrong'). By making students aware of the differences between the discourses and the epistemological frameworks underpinning each of them, the ultimate aim is to try to relativize the megalith that is EAD and its claims to being the only way of construing knowledge in the modern world.

2. The Portuguese studies

Bennett's investigations into the characteristics of Romance scholarly discourses were launched in the early 'noughties' with an attempt to chart and categorise the differences between Portuguese and English academic writing. The study was undertaken primarily with a view to facilitating the work of academic translators in response to the surge in demand for the translation of Portuguese scholarly articles for publication in international journals, but the results were later applied to the teaching of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and the preparation of course materials and manuals that focused specifically on the areas of rhetorical difference.

The study was prompted by the observation that the kind of scholarly writing produced in Portuguese in the humanities and social sciences seemed to be based on quite different epistemological principles to those in operation at the centre of the global system, a situation that raises significant technical and ideological problems for literacy brokers working with authors of that language. Rather than the clarity, economy and precision advocated by the English academic style

manuals (Bennett 2009), these texts seemed to be characterised by a taste for 'copiousness' (that is to say, a generalized wordiness and redundancy), a preference for a very high-flown erudite register with complex syntactical structures and a great deal of lexical abstraction, and also a propensity for indirectness, in the sense that the main idea was often embedded, adorned or deferred at all ranks of the text.

To support the claim that these texts were not merely the work of maverick authors that did not know how to write effectively but evidence of a whole different scholarly discourse, a series of studies were undertaken: i. a corpus study of 1,333,890 words (408 academic texts of different genres and disciplines) submitted for translation between 1998 and 2008, which were analysed for the presence of particular discourse features not usually found in EAD; ii. a survey of Portuguese researchers in the humanities and social sciences designed to gauge their perceptions of the differences between English and Portuguese scholarly discourses in their respective disciplines; iii. a review of the academic writing manuals available in Portuguese. The results were published in a series of articles and books (Bennett 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012 etc.).

It was the historical research conducted during the course of the studies described above, designed to find out something about the origins of this discourse and determine the reasons for the divergence between the English and Portuguese ways of construing knowledge, that suggested that it might not be a purely Portuguese phenomenon. The Catholic Church's rejection of Enlightenment science and explicit cultivation of the older humanistic paradigm of knowledge appears to have had a great deal to do with the perpetuation of the grand style of Classical rhetoric not only in Portugal, but also in the other countries falling under the Church's sphere of influence (such as Spain, Italy and France): not only was this model disseminated throughout the Catholic world in the 17th century by the Jesuits in their extensive network of schools and universities, it was also fostered by the right-wing political regimes that held sway in Spain, Portugal and Italy in the 20th, to the extent of becoming a marker of identity for the conservative Catholic sectors of those societies (Bennett 2015b). France, as pillar of the Enlightenment, is a more complex case of course, though the influence of the Catholic Church in its education system should not be underestimated (Holsinger 2005): indeed, the 1962 book by Bourdieu et al. entitled Academic Discourse describes an entity that is much more similar to the traditional style of Portuguese than to contemporary academic discourse in English.[8] France's cultural influence up until the middle of the 20th century will also have been a factor promoting the spread of this style further afield.

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[8] See particularly the first chapter by Bourdieu and Passeron, 'Language and relationship to language in the teaching situation'.

Romania is also a more complex case, given its very different cultural history. It is surrounded by countries with languages belonging to other language families and is predominantly Christian-Orthodox, unlike the other countries with Romance languages. However, the dominant cultural influence throughout the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, was France,[9] which will certainly have helped shape its rhetorical attitude. The leading figures of the 1848-generation, for instance, went to continue their studies in France, as did many writers, artists and scientists. The education system was influenced by the French model, and French was also the preferred foreign language (along with German) until the 1980s, when English started taking precedence. It is therefore unsurprising that Romanian should share many of the features of the Romance rhetorical style.

In an attempt to highlight what the Romance cultures have in common in their approach to discourse, this paper is organized around the list of 'distinguishing discourse features' (DDVs) compiled for the original Portuguese corpus (Bennett 2010a, 2014b). These include both macro - and micro-textual elements commonly found in the scholarly writing of that language but which are generally frowned upon in English style manuals (e.g. the tendency to defer, embed or ornament the main information at all ranks of the text; the taste for long complex sentences, the magisterial 'we', verbless sentences, etc). Examples of these were then sought in published academic writing in the other Romance languages (not only French, Italian, Spanish and Romanian but also Catalan and Galician).

In each case, some suggestions are made for the kinds of changes that a literacy broker would have to implement in order to make such features acceptable in English. The aim of this is to help Romance-speaking authors produce publishable papers, as well as offering a focus for EAP teachers in these countries, while at the same time valuing these features as evidence of an alternative and valid form of construing knowledge. Indeed, the paper will end with a brief discussion of the ideological and ethical implications of this process in the light of English cultural hegemony, discussing the extent to which these features are being abandoned as English increases its dominance as Lingua Franca of academia.

In all examples the following abbreviation system will be used: CA – Catalan; ES – Spanish; FR – French; GL – Galician; IT – Italian; PT – Portuguese; RO – Romanian.

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[9] France was not the only influence, however. Germany, Austria, Italy and Great Britain were also popular destinations for university study, and the Higher Education system shows many influences from Germany and Austria. After World War 2, there was a shift towards politicising education under the Soviet model, but – unlike in other countries in the region – this lasted for only about a decade. From the early 1960s onwards, the trend was reversed, and several of the traditions that had been valued in Romanian education between the two world wars were re-integrated in the system (see Giurescu 2001).

3. Rhetorical incompatibilities

Perhaps the most prominent marker distinguishing the Romance style from the English is a taste for verbal expansiveness and elaboration, manifested first and foremost by syntactical complexity, ornamentation and circumlocution. This trait reflects the Classical humanist belief that linguistic abundance and complexity are a sign of mental sophistication,[10] an attitude that is perpetuated today in schools around the Romance-speaking world, where children are routinely taught to produce elaborate syntactic constructions and penalized when their style is too sparse and direct (or 'impoverished', as Portuguese researchers put it in a recent survey [Bennett 2010b]). There is also a tendency to use a very high-flown register as a marker of erudition, with a preference for abstract archaic vocabulary and indirect modes of expression. However, when these features are transferred to English, they do not have quite the same cultural value. The elaboration is perceived as redundant and digressive, while the tone may be seen as pompous and undemocratic, compromising the values of clarity, economy and precision that lie at the heart of English factual writing.[11]

Let us now look at some of the concrete manifestations of the Romance style in scholarly writing today, discussing how they could be approached by teachers and literacy brokers in a non-normative way.

3.1. Complex sentences

One of the most salient features of the Romance academic style is a penchant for long sentences, often with complex syntax involving a great deal of subordination. In the Portuguese Corpus described above (Bennett 2010a), there are many passages in which most of the sentences are over 70 words long (the longest one being 358 words). These are naturally very difficult to put into English, given that the English style manuals consistently advocate keeping sentences short and straightforward in the interests of clarity (Bennett 2009).

However, it is structure rather than length that really determines translatability. English, being an analytic language, relies much more upon word order than the Romance languages to convey grammatical relationships; hence, the English style manuals usually advocate maintaining the Subject-Verb-Object unit intact, with most of the adverbial information placed before or after the main clause. In the Romance style, however, the main clause may be interrupted as the cohesion is

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[10] Cf. Erasmus's (1512) description of language as "a magnificent and impressive thing, surging along like a golden river, with thoughts and words pouring out in rich abundance" (1978: 638).

[11] See Bennett (2015b) on the tensions between the (Protestant) plain style and the (Catholic) high style in Portugal and England between the 16th and 21st centuries.

maintained by the inflections and the phenomenon of grammatical agreement, and this facility is often exploited to the maximum, allowing the author to pack the sentence full with subordinations, parallelisms and all kinds of circumstantial information.

The following example, from a Portuguese text of religious historiography, is a very typical Romance sentence, in that the overarching conditional structure is complicated by a series of internal parallel structures (not only/but also; on the one hand/on the other, etc), producing a long sentence that is densely packed with as much information as an English text might put in a whole paragraph. We might also note that the grammatical subject of the main clause is the author of the text (referenced using the first-person plural pronoun – see Magisterial 'we' below) rather than the object of study as might be expected in English, reflecting the anthropocentric approach to knowledge typical of the classical humanities.

(1)   **(PT) Se** tivermos em conta a realidade brasileira, teremos que considerar **não apenas** a editada *Chronica da Companhia de Jesu do Estado do Brasil* (1663) de Simão de Vasconcellos, **ou** os escritos que permaneceram inéditos até ao século XX e de podem ser exemplo a Crónica do Maranhão de Butendorff, **mas também** o imenso investimento na redacção e edição de vidas devotas que ambicionavam **por um lado**, levar jesuítas «brasileiros», **isto é** actuando no território, aos altares, **e** , **por outro**, criar uma espécie de santidade «territorial», valorizando as terras de Vera Cruz que, de muitos pontos de vista, **mas talvez sobretudo** do ponto de vista simbólico, **tanto** em termos políticos **como** religiosos, não detinham a imagem prestigiante de que o Oriente continuava a usufruir

The next example, this time in French, and produced by that doyen of style, Michel Foucault, is of a rhetorical device known as the periodic sentence, in which the main clause is deferred in order to create suspense (in this case through the addition of lists and parallel structures). It was a feature of the grand style of Classical rhetoric, made popular by Cicero, but fell out of favour in the Anglo-Saxon world after the 18th century, probably because of its excessive formality. The Romance cultures, however, have continued to cultivate it, particularly in humanistic and philosophical writings.

(2)   **(FR)** Entendue comme renouvellement des points de vue, des contenus, des formes et du style même de la description, de l'utilisation des raisonnements inductifs ou probabilitaires, des types d'assignation de causalité, bref comme renouvellement des modalités d'énonciation, la médecine clinique ne doit pas être prise comme le résultat d'une nouvelle technique d'observation, - celle de l'autopsie qui était pratiquée depuis bien longtemps avant le XIXe siècle; ni comme le résultat de la recherche des causes pathogènes dans les profondeurs de l'organisme – Morgagni s'y exerçait déjà au milieu du XVIII siècle; ni comme l´effet de cette nouvelle institution qu'était la clinique hospitalière – il en existait depuis des dizaines d'années en Autriche et en Italie; ni comme le résultat de l'introduction du concept de tissu dans le Traité des membranes de Bichat (Foucault 1969:72-73).

Finally, here are three more examples of complex sentences in Italian, Catalan, and Romanian:

(3) **(IT)** 'Fatta l'Italia, facciamo gli Italiani.' Nessuna frase, come quella che per tanti anni è stata attribuita a Massimo d'Azeglio, 1 sembra meglio rispecchiare due luoghi comuni che da un secolo e mezzo sono evocati per spiegare i più vari fenomeni sociali e politici della storia unitaria d'Italia (dal brigantaggio ai primi insuccessi militari nelle colonie, per arrivare sino alla nascita della Lega Nord): l'idea, cioè, da un lato, che gli Italiani non avessero prima dell'Unità una coscienza nazionale (e magari neppure dopo), dall'altro, che la guerra d'indipendenza del 1859 e l'epopea dei Mille dell'anno successivo siano state concepite e realizzate da una ristretta élite.

(4) **(CA)** L'última obra dels 50 que convoco entre nosaltres és un film: Europa 51 de Roberto Rossellini, protagonitzat per Ingrid Bergman, el plantejament del qual ofereix una contracara de La plaça del Diamant: la dona que representa les elits guanyadors del feixisme i les contradiccions de l'humanisme que navega sense nord entre el comunisme i el cristianisme després de 1945 a Europa en Rossellini i, en Rodoreda, la dona que en simbolitza el pathos sense identitat dels qui van perdre la guerra civil feixista i resten a la ciutat devastada sense atributs, gairebé sense altra personalitat que la que atorguen les desgràcies col·lectives, ni heroica ni antiheroica, éssers que la consciència no acostuma a recordar.

(5) **(RO)** În ultimul deceniu, o dată cu afirmarea consolidată ştiinţific şi empiric a rolului antreprenoriatului ca factor de creştere economică la nivel organizaţional şi naţional […], problematica evaluării acestuia a început să suscite interesul din ce în ce mai accentuat, atât în plan academic […], cât şi pragmatic […].

Sentences like these are impossible to reproduce literally in English for both linguistic and cultural reasons: the grammatical structure of that language cannot support such complexity, as mentioned above, which means that any attempt to do so would naturally contravene the imperative for clarity, economy and precision. Therefore, authors should be encouraged to split such long sentences into component parts, reorganizing the information so as to produce an English style paragraph with a topic sentence.

3.2. Deferral of main information

Another significant trait distinguishing Romance discourse from English is the tendency to defer the main information, rather than presenting it in first position. The English taste for a frontal statement of theme at all ranks is amply documented, manifested in the elaboration of a topic sentence at paragraph level, the theme/rheme progression at sentence level (e.g. Ghadessy 1995), and a hierarchical structure at the level of the text as a whole, in which the first unit at each rank (paragraph, section, chapter) functions as an introduction to the rest, presenting in general terms the content of what follows after.

In the Romance languages, with their continued focus on the interpersonal dimension of the text, it is considered unaesthetic or impolite to go straight to the point: in formal letters, for example, there will typically be a long phatic preamble before the reason for writing is explicitly stated. In academic texts, this is manifested by an inductive approach to textual construction, where the main point is reached at the end. This is particularly marked in the following abstract in Portuguese, where the first lines are looking forward (using cataphora) to the main clause which comes at the end.

(6) **(PT)** Partindo de um levantamento arqueológico e antropológico sobre os barcos e a navegação desde a pré-história até aos meados do séc. XX, nas tradições associadas à construção naval existentes no litoral do NW de Portugal, no tipo de turismo existente nesta região (associado a actividades costeiras e marinhas) e no público-alvo, as autoras apresentam um projecto de desenvolvimento do produto O Museu do Barco e da Construção Naval.

This phenomenon of deferral is evident at all ranks of the text, but is particularly significant in the aim statement, as shown in the following examples from Spanish, French, and Romanian, which use a similar mechanism to the Portuguese example above.

(7) **(ES)** Partiendo de un uso generalizado del concepto de lo político, y atendiendo a ciertas formas simbólicas, en el presente artículo pretendemos mostrar cómo el régimen franquista pudo interpelar a sus ciudadanos.

(8) **(FR)** A travers l'ethnographie de prise de décision au sein d'un comité d'experts nigériens et européens au moment de la pandémie annoncée de grippe AH1N1, et pendant l'épidémie de méningite la plus importante connue au Niger depuis plus d'une décennie, cet article met en lumière les représentations différentes du risque.

(9) **(RO)** Admiţînd deci că istoria literară ca istorie de valori este legitimă, acceptând lateral şi istoria condiţiilor materiale din care iese o operă, adică istoria culturală, confundată în genere cu istoria propriu-zis literară, cu observarea că nu se deosebesc profund de istoria generală, să vedem care sînt condiţiile istoriei. (Călinescu, 1939/1974: 138)

Once again, the order of the information is better inverted in English.

3.3. Interpersonal Framing Devices

A further characteristic of the Romance style is a tendency to avoid presenting 'facts' directly, but rather preferring to embed them in another grammatical structure that foregrounds the interpersonal dimension of text. Although these are not usually perceived as 'wrong' in English, they do tend to contribute to the effects of verbosity and indirectness; hence, they usually need to be reformulated in the interests of concision.

Such framing devices have a number of different functions. The most prominent are listed below. The examples given are in Portuguese and Romanian but they exist in all the Romance languages.

(10) *Epistemic modality*: **(PT)** a verdade é que…/ é certo que…/é legítimo pensar que…/é talvez de admitir que… (adverbials or modal auxiliaries); **(RO)** este adevărat că.../evident că.../cu siguranţă că (it is true that.../ it is obvious that... – all these usually appearing in frontal position);

(11) *Attitude*: **(PT)** não surpreende que…/é de estranhar que…/ é interessante observar que…/é compreensível que… (adverbials); **(RO)** în acest context, nu este de mirare că... (in this context, it is not surprising that...) / este interesant de observat că... (it is interesting to observe/notice that...);

(12) *Emphasis*: **(PT)** convém sublinhar que…/é importante ressalvar que… / cabe aqui realçar que… (it should be emphasised that/stressed that…); **(RO)** de subliniat că.../de remarcat că.../este important de amintit că...

In addition to these, there are some examples that seem to have no real semantic content, existing only to pad out the sentence in accordance with the Romance taste for 'copiousness' (e.g. **PT**: constata-se que…/ de referir que…/ diríamos que…/ informa-se que…; **RO**: se constată că…/ observăm că…/ trebuie observat că…/ se poate remarca faptul că…), with some becoming so complex that they extend the sentence considerably (e.g. **PT**: 'não podemos aqui deixar de nos referir à…'/'é importante que se leve em consideração o facto de que…'/'reveste-se também de particular interesse verificar que...; **RO**: În acest context, ţinând cont că…, este prezentată…/ Discutând despre…, nu putem să nu amintim că…).

These are generally best removed from English sentences in order to create more impact.

3.4. Verbless sentences

Another kind of grammatical structure that is common in the Romance languages but utterly unacceptable in English is the verbless sentence. This often, though not always, takes the form of a relative clause that has become detached from its main clause, as in the following examples:

(13) **(CA)** Aspectes que vinculen Rodoreda i Bellow, de nou, a l'art brut: la història contada a través de l'estricta experiència personal, no llibresca, sovint d'un boig o a través de la bogeria.

(14) **(ES)** Historia folletinesca la de esta huérfana que, ante la promesa "ejemplar" de Carlos ("si te casas conmigo tendrá un hermano en mí, y entre los dos haremos de él

un chico de provecho" [14]), acaba también declarándole que su amor es correspondido.

(15) **(PT)** O que não obsta a que o consentimento possa ser expresso ou tácito, nos termos gerais.

(16) **(PT)** Dentre os quais nos propusemos avaliar três.

Here is a longer example in Spanish:

(17) **(ES)** Una entrevista en la que el dramaturgo, en la ola de ese lógico optimismo histórico con la que la mayoría de nuestro exilio republicano de 1939 saludó la victoria aliada durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial – una victoria, dicho sea de paso, a la que tantos de ellos contribuyeron con su lucha heroica en las filas de la Resistencia francesa-, expresaba su rotunda esperanza en una inmediata caída de la dictadura franquista en España, así como un optimismo histórico en la función y vigencia de un "teatro social" por el que se sentía miliciano combatiente, al tiempo que insistía en la unidad de todos los partidos políticos en defensa de la legalidad democrática republicana: (quotation)

Not all verbless sentences are detached relative clauses, however. Some of them seem to have been introduced to create a poetic effect or one of orality, as in the following examples:

(18) **(CA)** La casa. La natura-casa. La dona-casa. Són dos conceptes altament adients per interpretar i llegir Rodoreda, la dona i l'obra.

(19) **(IT)** La mémoire intesa come punto di intersezione del ricordo individuale con quadri di pensiero collettivi; memoria come ricostruzione, trasmissione e immaginazione; memoria che esiste grazie a una rappresentazione collettiva del tempo e dello spazio. Memoria individuale resa possibile attraverso una "mediazione sociale" con la memoria collettiva.

(20) **(PT)** Uma última palavra sobre o papel das comissões de ética numa eficaz protecção de dados de saúde nos hospitais.

(21) **(RO)** Italia si Spania – două dintre cele mai mari state ale Europei latine si mediteraneene, două vechi focare de cultură şi civilizaţie. Dar şi două state cu un trecut glorios, care au cunoscut, secole de-a rândul, o mare fragmentare politică şi culturală.

Then there are others that are clearly vestiges of the rhetorical approach to discourse, in which the functional unit was the 'period', rather than the sentence, and where the pause is introduced for rhetorical effect than for grammatical expediency. This is particularly well exemplified in this verbless sentence which follows immediately after the periodic sentence from Michel Foucault given above:

(22) **(FR)** Mais comme la mise en rapport, dans le discours médical, d'un certain nombre d'éléments distincts, dont les uns concernaient le statut des médecins, d'autres le lieu institutionnel et technique d'où ils parlaient, d'autres leur position comme sujets percevant, observant, décrivant, enseignant, etc.

The following example illustrates the combination of a rhetorical question with a brief, elliptical answer, for a more powerful impact – a recurrent feature of George Călinescu's well-known style:

(23) **(RO)** Este aceasta o poezie ermetică? <u>Nicidecum</u>. E o poezie numai dificilă pentru oamenii care nu s-au ridicat cu cultura pînă la nivelul speculațiunilor lui Paul Valéry. (Călinescu 1939/1974: 47)

Verbless sentences are anathema to English academic discourse, however, firmly rejected by all the style manuals as inappropriate to careful logical writing. Consequently, such sentences have to be reformulated upon translation, either by adding a finite verb or linking it to the one before.

3.5. Verbal fronting

Scientific discourse is of course characterized by its tendency for objectivity, manifested by intense nominalization and the use of impersonal verb structures (such as the passive, impersonal active and existentials) which shift the focus from the observing subject onto the thing of the outside world that is being observed (Halliday and Martin 1993). In the Anglo-Saxon world, the prestige of the scientific/empiricist paradigm has meant that such patterns are now commonly used in the social sciences and humanities too, to the extent that linguist Jim Martin has observed there is an 'essential continuity between humanities and science as far as interpreting the world is concerned' (Idem:220).[12]

The Romance languages have all developed impersonal verb forms, such as passive and reflexive structures (and more recently the impersonal active), which are used liberally in more scientific subjects. The main cause of difficulty for authors wishing to write English academic texts is the phenomenon of verbal fronting, particular to some of these languages, which cannot be transferred directly into English. As the name suggests, this involves inverting the normal Subject-Verb word order to begin the clause with the verb, thereby throwing the focus (which, we have seen, falls in the second part of the unit in these languages) upon the subject.

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[12] Although there has been a reaction against excessive impersonality in recent years in some disciplinary areas in English, this is counteracted by the tendency throughout the Anglo-Saxon world for funding to be ringfenced for the so-called STEM subjects, putting pressure on humanities subjects to present themselves as 'scientific', by espousal of methods, aims and discourse typical of the hard sciences.

It is particularly evident in aim statements, as can be seen in the following examples:

(24) **(ES)** <u>Se analiza</u> la incidencia social de la hipótesis científica que asegura la extinción de los indígenas selknam…

(25) **(ES)** En este texto <u>se refieren</u> las preocupaciones y miedos que las posibilidades de "manipulación genética"…

(26) **(PT)** <u>Descrevem-se</u> três casos clínicos de crianças de apresentação invulgar…

(27) **(PT)** Com este trabalho <u>pretende-se</u> analisar e avaliar as condições higrotérmicas de um museu.

(28) **(RO)** <u>Sunt prezentate</u>, în primul rând, prevederile legii referitoare la [...]. În continuare, <u>sunt expuse</u> dispoziţiile [...]. <u>Se fac</u>, totodată, referiri la cele mai importante convenţii [...]

As English does not permit verbal fronting, the use of the passive voice requires a change of word order, often producing undesirably top-heavy subjects.[13] Thus, such sentences can usually be expressed most easily in English using the Impersonal Active[14] (e.g. 'This article analyses/describes/aims to…').

Verbal fronting may be found in other parts of the scientific text besides the aim statement, as can be seen in the following examples. Once again, they need to be reformulated in English in order to avoid errors of grammaticality or style.

(29) **(IT)** Attualmente in Italia è obbligatoria per legge l'esecuzione di cinque test di screening neonatale…

(30) **(IT)** A partire dall'ottobre 2007 si è evidenziato un peggioramento del quadro clinico…

(31) **(IT)** A distanza di 6 mesi (agosto 2008), è stata ripetuta l'EGDS con biopsia ed esame istologico…

(32) **(FR)** Depuis le tournant des années 1990 se multiplient dans les revues scientifiques médicales les tribunes, éditoriaux ou articles traitant des rapports de la neurologie…

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[13] A top-heavy subject is when there is too much information between the subject and the verb. This is frowned upon in English, as it puts strain upon the reader, creating problems of intelligibility.

[14] The use of an active verb with an inanimate subject. This device was rare in the first Portuguese corpus (Bennett 2010) but a second corpus study in the field of history concluded in 2013 (Bennett 2014) revealed that it was now prevalent.

(33) **(RO)** ... <u>se cer</u> neapărat câteva precizări de natură epistemologică […] (Blaga 1982/2008: 493)[15]

3.6. Magisterial 'we' for authorial self-reference

Another common characteristic of the Romance approach is the use of the magisterial, or majestic, 'we' for authorial self-reference. Umberto Eco, in his 1977 guide to thesis writing, *Come si fa una tesi di laurea*, which was translated into the main Romance languages as well as into English, reflects on the question of whether it is more appropriate to use the 'I' or the 'we' form for authorial self-reference, and opts for the latter:

I or we? Should the student introduce his opinions in the first person? Should he state, "I think that…"? Some believe that this is more honest than using the majestic plural. I disagree. A writer says "we" because he presumes that his readers can share what he is saying. Writing is a social act. I write so that you as the reader can accept what I propose to you' (Eco 2015: 155)

This view is echoed in a Portuguese academic style manual, which argues that it creates the effect of collective thought, thereby attenuating the impositiveness of the claims.[16] Unsurprisingly, then, the form is commonly found in academic writing in all the Romance languages:

(34) **(PT)** E, ainda antes de avançarmos, seja-nos permitido relevar…

(35) **(PT)** Na secção seguinte mapeamos algumas destas principais estratégias jurídicas…

(36) **(PT)** Dissemos anteriormente que…

(37) **(RO)** În cele ce urmează <u>vom prezenta</u> un studiu de caz pentru explicarea etapelor mai sus prezentate ...

(38) **(RO)** … considerăm că evaluarea proiectelor reprezintă …

(39) **(RO)** În acest studiu ne-am propus să aprofundăm dimensiunea economică …

However, this contrasts markedly with the advice given in English academic style manuals, which usually encourage impersonal forms or the first person singular, depending on disciplinary area (Bennett 2009). Indeed, one such manual explicitly states that 'we', like 'one', should be avoided as a form of authorial self-reference

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[15] Lucian Blaga (1982/1988) *Opere vol. I-XII*, București, Editura Minerva, quoted in *Noul Dicţionar universal al limbii române*, București: Editura Litera Internaţional, Ediţia a treia/2008, p. 493.

[16] " ...cria-se o efeito de expressão de um pensamento colectivo, suavizando o modo impositivo das afirmações." (Estrela et al. 2006: 34)

because it seems 'archaic and pompous' (Fabb and Durant 2005: 96-7). Hence, Romance-language authors need to be taught to reformulate such references using a different form (a first person singular or impersonal form depending upon disciplinary convention).

3.7. Historical tenses

Another characteristic of Romance academic style with no direct correspondence in English[17] is the use of present and future tenses when referring to completed actions in the historical past (albeit often mixed with conventional past tenses). Here is an extract from Fernand Braudel's famous work *La Méditerranée: l'espace et l'histoire*:

(40) **(FR)** Ce cabotage, qui lentement s'améliore, se développe et grossit ses effectifs, représentera longtemps l'essentiel des activités maritimes de transport. Des cortèges de barques assurent des liaisons utiles encore au XVIII" siècle par exemple de Naples à Gênes, ou de Jênes en Provence, ou du Languedoc à Barcelone, etc. (58)

And here are some more examples in other Romance languages:

(41) **(GL)** En 1922 deixa o empleo no Banco Español del Río de la Plata e comeza a traballar en Nordiska, unha luxosa tenda de mobles da Praza San Martín.

(42) **(PT)** Na segunda metade do século II a.C. Eudoxo de Cízico /.../ alcança mesmo a Índia, e os Gregos continuarão traficando/.../ ao longo da costa da Somália...

(43) **(CA)** Practica la plàstica entre 1947 i 1956.

(44) **(RO)** Minea şi-a continuat pregătirea la Viena, apoi, reîntorcîndu-se în Transilvania, a lucrat în redacţia ziarului "Tribuna". În 1910 a trecut în România, cercetînd, sub îndrumarea lui D. Onciul - căruia îi <u>va păstra</u> o vie recunoştinţă […]. Voluntar în timpul războiului, un timp profesor la Giurgiu, el <u>devine</u> în 1919 profesor suplinitor la Universitatea din Iaşi […], iar în 1922, recomandat cu căldură de Onciul, Pârvan şi Iorga, profesor titular de istoria românilor. ln această funcţie - unde îi <u>succede</u> lui Xenopol - a desfăşurat o neobosită activitate pînă la moartea sa, în 1943. (Boia, 1976: 295)[18]

In most cases, these need to be converted to the conventional narrative past tenses (past simple, past continuous and past perfect) in English.

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[17] In English, present and future tenses are only really used to refer to completed events in the past in colloquial story-telling registers rather than serious historiography, with a view to creating an effect of immediacy.

[18] Lucian Boia (1976) *Evoluţia istoriografiei române*, Universiatatea din Bucureşti, Facultatea de Istorie, p. 295.

3.8. Gerund

The form of the verb known in the Romance languages as the 'gerund' (more properly a present participle in English[19]) cannot easily be transferred into English in academic texts because it masks a whole range of logical relations (condition, concession, purpose, anteriority, posteriority, simultaneity, consequence), thereby generating a level of ambiguity or vagueness that would be considered unacceptable in written academic English. Here are some examples in Portuguese, followed by their English version:

(45) *Condition*: 'havendo conflito entre direitos humanos fundamentais e direitos patrimoniais, são estes últimos que devem ser sacrificados' (['*There being...] If there is conflict between fundamental human rights and property rights, the latter shall be sacrificed')

(46) *Concession*: 'mesmo sendo de caráter pacífico, durante as manifestações é comum haver repressão policial' (['*Even being] Even though the demonstrations are peaceful in nature, there is often police repression')

(47) *Purpose*: 'Após os jogos, a equipa de observadores reunia-se, sendo trocadas impressões e preenchidos os protocolos de observação.'(After the matches, the observer team gets together [*exchanging] to exchange impressions and fill out the observation forms')

(48) *Anteriority*: 'O doente fez tratamento quimioterápico, tendo-se assistido nos exames laboratoriais e imagiológicos' ('The patient was treated with chemotherapy [having undergone] after undergoing laboratory and imaging tests')

(49) *Posteriority*: 'O doente fez quimioterapia, verificando-se desaparecimento da massa descrita' ('The patient underwent chemotherapy, [*it being found that] after which the mass was found to have disappeared')

(50) *Simultaneity*: 'realizaram a demarcação física de sua terra abrindo picadas na mata e fixando improvisados marcos e placas' ('They physically demarcated their land by opening up pathways in the forest and putting up improvised markers and wooden plaques')

(51) *Consequence*: 'tanto a idade gestacional como o peso ao nascer transitaram de variáveis contínuas para variáveis categóricas abrindo-se, desta forma, a possibilidade de ainda poderem entrar no modelo final'('gestational age and birthweight shifted status from continual variables to categoric variables, thereby opening up the possibility that they might still play a part in the final model').

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[19] Although the present participle and the gerund have the same form, they are usually distinguished in English grammars by function: the gerund is understood as a verb functioning as a noun (as in the sentence 'Swimming is good for you') while the present participle is a non-finite form of the verb used as adjective ('a daring person') or in continuous tenses ('He is swimming').

This is equally a feature of the other Romance languages, as illustrated below. In Romanian, for instance, the gerund in frontal position is one of the DDFs of academic texts. Sometimes it may act as a lead-in to longer stretches of text, with embedded subordinate clauses, resulting in deferral of the main information (see also example 9 above):

(52) **(RO)** Depăşind confuziile care există la nivelul utilizării termenilor […], considerăm că…

(53) **(RO)** Pornind de la constatarea indubitabilă că…

(54) **(RO)** Revenind la […], de subliniat este că…

(55) **(RO)** Reprezentând obiectul de studiu al mai multor discipline […], fenomenul delincvenţei implică o serie de aspecte teoretice, metodologice şi practice pentru cercetarea ştiinţifică […]

In addition to encapsulating one or several of the relations mentioned above, it may take on also other rhetorical functions, e.g. a cohesive role within the broader discourse framework (examples 9, 52-54), or an attributive function, introducing details related to the main subject (example 55).

Similar features and functions are noticeable in the examples below for French, followed by their English version, as published in the bilingual journal *Air & Space Power Journal (ASPJ) – Afrique et Francophonie*:

(56) **(FR)** Ensuite, bien qu'étant souvent utilisés pour mettre fin aux conflits, les accords de paix négociés semblent être plus fragiles à l'ère de l'après-guerre froide qu'ils ne l'etaient pendant cette période. (Second, although turned to frequently as a means of ending conflict, negotiated peace settlements appear to be more fragile in the post-Cold War era than they were before this period.) (Emmanuel 2016: 16)[20]

(57) **(FR)** S'inscrivant dans le prolongement de cette logique, DC, qui analyse de quelle manière les états utilisent les incitatifs avec d'autres états, définit un incitatif comme étant 'l'octroi d'un avantage politique ou économique en échange d'une modification de politique par la nation bénéficiaire'. (In line with this logic, DC, who analyses how states use incentives towards other states, defines an incentive as 'the granting of a political or economic benefit in exchange for a specified policy adjustment by the recipient nation'.) (ibid.)

If we compare the two language versions, we can see that there are different structures in English for the first two gerund constructions in French (étant … utilisés, in example 56, and s'inscrivant, in example 57), whereas the third one (étant) is left out altogether from the English version.

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[20] Nikolas G. Emmanuel, Les stratégies incitatives mises en place par des tierces parties et la gestion des conflits en Afrique. *ASPJ-Afrique et Francophonie Vol. 7, No. 1*/2016: 16.

Curiously, this was a feature that caused difficulties for translators working into English from Latin, as we can see from the following quotation from John Purvey's Prologue to his revision of the Wyclife Bible, dating from the late 14th century.

In translating into English, many transformations are necessary in order to make the meaning plain. For example: the Latin "ablative absolute" construction[21] should usually be transformed into a phrase with the prepositions <u>while</u>, <u>because</u>, <u>if</u>. So, for example, we would not translate literally, <u>the teacher reading, I stand</u>, but instead, <u>while the teacher reads I stand</u> or <u>if the teacher reads I stand</u>, or <u>because the teacher reads I stand</u>, etc. And sometimes it suits the meaning better to use <u>when</u> or <u>after</u>; and so render <u>when the teacher read, I stood</u>; or <u>after the teacher read, I stood</u>. And sometimes it may well be transformed into an equivalent phrase by supplying a verb and conjunction, as in the following example. <u>Arescentibus hominibus præ timore</u> may be rendered <u>and men shall become dry for fear</u>. Also a participle in the present or preterit tense, either in the active or passive voice, may be transformed into an equivalent phrase with a verb of the same tense and a conjunction, as for example when <u>dicens</u> (saying) may be rendered <u>and says</u> or <u>who says</u>; and this will in many places make the meaning plain, whereas if we rendered it in English in a strictly literal fashion, the meaning would be obscure and doubtful.[22]

3.9. 'Literary' use of language

Finally, scholarly texts in the Romance languages are often much more effusive and literary than their Anglo-Saxon equivalents, with the unself-conscious use of poetic expressions, connotative rather than denotative use of vocabulary, emotive diction. A combination of different rhetorical aspects is illustrated in the following example from *Getica*, by the well-known Romanian historian and archeologist Vasile Pârvan:

(58) **(RO)** Ceea ce e însă mai curios e că pe reliefele de pe soclul Columnei vedem reprezentate *trompete* absolut identice cu cele celtice. (Pârvan 1926/1982: 295)[23] ([But what is more surprising is that on the reliefs on the pedestal of the Column we see represented *trumpets* absolutely identical with the Celtic ones.]/ What is more surprising is that the *trumpets* represented by the reliefs on the pedestal of [Trajan's] Column are absolutely identical with the Celtic trumpets).

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[21] See Harris (s.d.) on the relationship between the Latin ablative absolute and the participle forms of modern languages.

[22] Modern English version of Chapter 15 of Purvey's Prologue to the Wyclif Bible, translated from the Middle English. Available at: http://www.bible-researcher.com/wyclif2.html (accessed 3/3/15).

[23] Vasile Pârvan (1926/1982) *Getica*, Bucureşti: Editura Meridiane, p. 295.

Two further examples from Romanian illustrate literary effects – suspense – achieved through deferral of the main information by preceding it with one or several negations (indicating what the study is not about or what is not characteristic of the object analysed). Example 59 is from the humanities (from an important work of literary criticism, written by Tudor Vianu in the first half of the 20th century), whereas example 60 is from the social sciences (one of several such examples in articles published nowadays):

(59) **(RO)** Renunţînd la portretul moral şi la despicarea complexelor sufleteşti, Caragiale nu foloseşte mai mult nici aşa-numitul portret fizic. Rareori întîlnim evocarea aparenţei umane [quotation]. În schimb, ceea ce notează Caragiale, cu o insistenţă care trebuie neapărat reţinută, este reacţia fiziologică, vaga senzaţie organică, cenestezia eroilor. (Vianu 1941/1988/2008: 316).

(60) **(RO)** În acest studiu nu ne-am propus să aprofundăm dimensiunea economică a oraşelor mici - mai curând să delimităm o serie de caracteristici [...].

Here are a couple of examples of Portuguese effusiveness:

(61) **(PT)** [...] instituição mater cujo corpo ilumina o tempo com as luzes do saber ('alma mater, whose body illuminates time with the lights of knowledge' – to describe a university)

(62) **(PT)** [...] o grito de madeiras feridas, mordidas pelo impiedoso ferro e adoçadas pelo artífice ('…the scream of wounded timber, bitten by merciless iron and sweetened by craftsmen' – describing the construction of an organ).

Emotivity such as this appears excessive in English academic writing, and so has to be eliminated or neutralized.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued that there exists an approach to scholarly writing in the Romance cultures that is so different from EAD that it could be considered a distinct discourse. Unlike English, it does not aim to transmit the 'facts' as concisely and straightforwardly as possible, but rather delights in linguistic complexity and nuance, presenting all data as filtered through the consciousness of the human observer. In this regard, it could be said to encode a different theory of knowledge to the empiricism that underpins the English plain style, a humanistic orientation that is more holistic, in that it values subjectivity (aesthetics, ethics and emotivity) as essential components of knowledge.

This naturally causes problems for speakers of these languages that wish to publish internationally. Given the current hegemony of EAD as global vehicle of knowledge, EAP teachers and literacy brokers working with Romance-speaking authors need to develop mechanisms for converting such texts into acceptable

English, while at the same time acknowledging their value as manifestations of an alternative approach to scholarly writing. Recent research has demonstrated a preoccupation for understanding the epistemological and cultural roots for the preference for a certain academic style when designing EAP materials and conducting a course (e.g. Pérez-Llantada 2012 on Spanish, and Dacia Dressen-Hammouda 2008 on French). We are suggesting here that this understanding needs to be made explicit in the EAP classroom, perhaps by actively contrasting certain features typical of the two styles, such as those listed here, exploring the epistemological principles underpinning each one and making evident the historical and cultural dynamics that produced the difference.

It is hoped that the list of DDFs might also encourage linguists and educators in Romance-speaking countries to codify and propagate their own scholarly discourses in order to enable them to acquire status as alternative ways of construing knowledge. This is increasingly necessary in the light of the centripetal pull exerted by EAD, which is causing these discourses to change and assimilate to the dominant discourse. As discourses actually encode particular theories of knowledge in their very structure, the erosion of difference is leading to a loss of epistemological diversity, something that needs to be avoided at all costs.

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