Language and the myth of scientific neutrality: a study of impersonality and clarity in academic researches' elaboration manuals

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ABSTRACT. The context that the present article is included is of the questions' discussion about artificiality of the use of impersonal treatment in the language of scientific researches reports, especially in qualitative studies. Its fundamental question refers to what roles the manuals of elaboration of academic researchers can play – proposed by university institutions –regarding to communication in scientific reports. The highlighted aspects are of impersonality and passivity that are suggested in the academic manuals and its implications concerning clarity in qualitative research. Considering the actual context of dynamic tendencies in knowledge construction, this study is justified, mainly, because of the influence that the recommendations about writing scientific works, established by the university institutions, exert in the elaboration of research reports. Another aspect that is investigated refers to impersonal language that is perceived as a way to keep, in the reports, any influence exemption of the subject-researcher above the researched object. The aim is to describe and to understand the usage patterns of this manuals regarding to language characteristics' recommendations that need to be followed when it comes to adequacy to various modalities of research. Under an outline of documental research, the data were collected from electronic websites of various university institutions that are localized in a delimited region that includes two Brazilian States. Other data that were collected include rules' texts of *Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas* (ABNT) that refers to elaboration of academic works. The analysis, with interpretative bia, was done in two phases: in the beginning, one exploratory and, after one descriptive. The manual's content was grouped in six analysis' categories, according to the language characteristics. The results revealed that the manuals are not flexible about academic language and, they do not explain terms like clarity, objectivity and legimaticy of passive and active voices, compromising clear and updated writing that, in conclusion, could recognize the presence of the researcher as an information manager. So, the suggested inflexibility stes up as a serious obstacle to elaborate a compatible writing with the actual thought that refers to qualitative research.

Keywords: Scientific neutrality; academic manuals; impersonal language; clarity; qualitative research

INTRODUCTION

This article represents a moment on a path of continuous and gradual approaches of the authors to the object of investigation. On these approaches, we discuss the problem of the artificiality usage of impersonality, many times understood as an adequate language for reports of science, in other words, in scientific reports in general and, specially, in qualitative researches.

In these studies, we also pointed out that it was supposed that impersonal language revealed an

exemption's researcher as a subject in apprehension of study object. It was a way, so to speak, to keep in the reports the exemption of any *contamination* of the subject-researcher above the researched object. Well insert in positivist conceptions, this idea served to the concept of scientific neutrality.

These researches, the previous ones as the present one, have been considered the observations of the authors' teaching experience as scientific methodology teachers in higher education, as many teaching and research activities (notorious participation in exams, board of thesis, dissertations and academic graduation and post-graduation works).

One part of these investigation activities resulted in the article *Impersonality and passivity in academic manuals: implications to clarity in qualitative research*, that was presented in the 9th CIAIQ and

published on *New Trends in Qualitative Research -NTQR* (Oliveira & Vidal, 2020), the basis of the present text.

The questions discussed here refer to: (i) what impacts can language (in)flexibility (active/passive voice) have in qualitative research? (ii) what consequences can be observed by the usage of impersonality on elaboration of clarity in the academic works' discourse?

These questions are the focus of this investigation cutting-off because we understand that recommendations' study that university institutions establish – that are included in manuals to guide scientific works' writing by their members - becomes essential because of the determing influence of these materials in academic reports' elaboration.

For this purpose, we establish, as this study's aim, to describe and understand the usage's patterns of these materials, as they refer to language proposed characteristics (impersonality, passivity, clarity, etc) and its adequation to various research's possible outlines.

We hope to contribute to the development of indicators to better interpretation of data and to the construction of more accurate analysis' categories to be used in broader study. So, for this purpose, it was consulted manuals that were elaborated by university institutions and published in their institutional websites. The present article comes from a documental study of this material.

SCIENCE, OBJECTIVITY AND LANGUAGE

On the track of scientific thought, an important mark, when Auguste Comte developed a positivist philosophy, occurred when he proposed to social and human sciences to use the same principles and methods that were adopted by exact sciences and, because of this, the idea that scientific knowledge could be completely impartial, free from any subjective influences.

Bortoni-Ricardo (2013) highlights, among positivist postulates, the perception of the world dissociated from subject-researcher's mind and the postulated categories dissociated from the context. So, it is reasonable to suppose that this conception reveals a belief in the possibility of subject's annulment in the process of scientific knowledge.

This belief includes the idea of a pure objectivity, in the knowledge process, that brings, as consequence, the usage of a compatible language with the annulment of the subject. This myth of scientific neutrality is a paradigm's exponent of modernity that is now in the threshold of significant transformations.

Thinking about it, Pourtois & Desmet (1999) consider that, in the bulge of these transformations, one of them, probably the principal one, is the subject's revaluation, including his/her participation in the process of human knowledge.

In other order of pleas, it is verified, for example, in the pity of social science's researchers, that this proposition represented an unacceptable neglect of social-historical context. Edgar Morin (2010), for example, criticizing principles that guided the science until the middle of 20th century, mentions, among them, the separation subject/object in the sense that we can have the objective knowledge eliminating the subjectivity. He highlights that there are projections of subjects' mental structures in the objective knowledge that it is also produced above precise historical, sociological, and cultural conditions.

Therefore, it appeared an alternative paradigm to produce science: the interpretative paradigm. It comes from this that the qualitative research seeks to understand and to interpret social phenomena that constitute a context that language is part of it.

It is necessary to say, before anything, that science is a way to think, more than a set of knowledge (Sagan, 1996). This idea can be completed with the position of Bortoni-Ricardo (2013), when he ensures the impossibility of observing the world without social pratice's influence. To the author, it is, principally, evidenced that, in each time, the meanings that are validy are settled in observer's ability, whose comprehension reveals an active agent. In this sense, on the 70th decade, Umberto Eco emphasized that to write is a social act, and that the person who writes hopes that the reader accepts what it is proposed on the text (Eco, 2002).

Corroborating with this conception, Pinker (2016) considers that we seek to understand the social world as it is constituted of strength, pression, process and development. The author continues pointing out that this strength is a result of the actions of millions of men and women that behave according to their beliefs seeking their desires. In fact, the habit to submerge the individual in abstractions can lead not only to a bad science, but also to dehumanization.

So, it is perceived that, behind the decanted neutrality, processes related to domination and to social power can be hidden, and the linguistic impersonality serves as an aura that encompasses the philosophical senses incorporated in those conceptions.

About this, Guelfi (2006) – commenting Habermas – points out that language brings two possibility's orders, that is, to make possible communication, as it can make possible the legitimation of domination and power relations in society. The author continues highlighting the recognition that the communication makes possible either to reveal or to hide the reality, once it is constructed in the web of social relations.

We underline, at this point, as Minayo (1996) notifies the nonexistence or the impossibility of impartial observers and of an elaboration of a-historical point of view. In a similar line of reasoning,

the comprehension of Koch (2009) that to every argumentation exists an ideology and that neutrality is just a myth.

In this way, the usage of impersonal language sets up as an attempt to convince the reader that the knowledge that is produced is totally objective, free from any subjective influence.

Completing this, we add that the phenomena referring to social and human world occur in a dynamic and mutant reality, and they can neither be seen nor communicate as nature's static phenomena.

On a previous study of Oliveira and Vidal (2017), it was highlighted that the supposition that the impersonality's usage as scientific communication's characteristic brings an attempt to convince the reader that the knowledge that is produced is totally objective, we insist, exemption of any subjective influence. And, therefore, it is the truth without other cultural influences.

As effect, it can also be a result of distorted understanding on reading of some precepts about language in science as, for example: Diehl and Tatim (2006) point out that, even, that difficultly we reach the absolute truth of the analyzed phenomena, we should try hard not to be carried away by subjectivity of personal positions and options.

Apart from this, there is on scientific community a kind of common denominator or a common sense of what it can be or of what it cannot be. In this sense, there is a scientific language that some authors call slang. This language eliminates, beyond the use of adjectives, the individual preferences and options, in order to not infringe the basic structure of scientific thought.

In this and in other examples, to avoid the subjectivity refers to eventual distortions that it can cause to the results. It does not imply that this subjectivity will be corrected by impersonality in reports' language.

Extending and deepening this reflection, it is emphasized that the exclusive usage of impersonality in the scientific reports tends, in our opinion, to hide reality data and, with this, ends prejudicing clarity. Thus, when it tries to disguise or to use impersonality as a disguise of objectivity, the researcher can distort his/her own study's results, making them unclear.

Here it fits the following example: if an author, when he/she gives his/her opinion, says *I conclude that* he/she will be correctly assuming that it is a personal position. Although, if he/she says *It was concluded that*, he/she will be, in any way, hiding the authorship and giving the impression that is a general statement.

Among the researchers that have been studying the theme about clarity, we mention Vidal (2011) to whom the elaboration of intelligible texts has to include elements like: (i) knowledge that it has about the receiver; (ii) knowledge about the interaction situation; (iii) adequation of personal and impersonal forms, active and passive, in the report of facts and procedures that are carried out.

In relation to the knowledge about the receiver, in a socio-communicative activity, the text's producer must manage information according to his/her intention and purpose. He/she also must anticipate which pragmatic information will be given to the one whose the text is destined and that, on the other hand, will (re)construct this intention from indications or clues that the text offers.

In relation to the knowledge of interaction situation, it is almost always the socio-historical-cultural context that will define the senses, data that includes all the types of archived knowledge in memory that need to be arouse because of the verbal exchange.

Finally, in relation to adequation of personal and impersonal forms, active and passive, in the report of facts and procedures that are carried out, weights negatively some misconceptions, especially when they result in omission of important procedural information as, for example, the identification of the person that elaborated the instruments, how/in which situation context was the collect realized. So, we understand that, in researches' reports, the most important is the information management.

Referring to clarity, it fits to the speaker or to the editor to choose, among various available resources in language, the ones that can construct the clarity in his/her text. Although, before it must consider that the written expression is based on the knowledge set that the editor has.

However, this information set can be explained in bigger or smaller quantity in the texts, according to the communicative intention of the person who writes. So in this way, the person that writes can help the reader, offering the maximum of clarity in the exhibition of his/her written ideas. He/she can also choose, if he/she wants, not to explain much of the knowledge that he/she has, just because this knowledge is from common ou shared domain.

Pinker (2016) reminds that writing can promote different ways of perceiving the world and he compares it to the figure of cup/two faces that is, frequently, used as illustration in Psychology's manuals.

It is important to remember that almost 60 years separate the recent discussions of original text *Epistle to thesis writers* from the authorship of the social psychologist Gordon Allport, in which he makes extremely severe considerations to the ones that, because of anxiety and insecurity, are tempted to use impersonality pleading that it is the only alternative to avoid the excessive usage of personal pronoun of the first person, or of the majestic we.

The author ensured: "Dare to win the cowardice and begin the chapter of conclusions with the creative statement: Done! I found…". I don't see any dangerous on saying *I* when I want to say *I* (Allport mentioned in Pinker, 2016, p. 72).

On a brief gap of time, because it was published for the first time in 1977, Eco (2002) also confirms the idea that the usage of impersonal language only fits to impersonal content. From his conceptions come the idea that there are cases that we must appeal to expressions that are more impersonal, but there are several situations that it is valid the usage of personal expressions. And he also suggests that, when the author of a research shows personal opinions, he/she must affirm *we judge that*.

Corroborating this opinion, Booth, Colomb & Williams (2000) affirm that the researchers use the first person, typically, at the beginning of articles to specialized publications, in which they describe how they discovered their problem, and at the end, they write their solution to the problem.

In fact, Oliveira and Vidal (2017) wonder how weird it would be the expression of an author, in the circumstances of showing a personal position, if he/she used *it was judged that*, or in description of procedures, he/she chose *a questionnaire was elaborated, an interview was realized* (after all, who judged?/who elaborated?/ who interviewed?).

In all these cases, we suppose that the worry to turn the language impersonal finishes causing a severe problem that is the omission of important methodological information: who is making value judgement, who is the person that elaborates the questionnaire, who took the interviews.

On the same way, the role of flexibility in scientific language is also emphasized by Roesch (1999), when he comments about the impersonality and passivity question in scientific language. Reinforcing this idea, a long time ago, Alasuutari (1995) had already advised about the problem of excessive usage of passive voice that makes the text very impersonal.

So, he defends that the researcher can introduce variation in the text when he/she uses the first person of singular (or of plural), for example, in parts of the report that he/she tells how he/she carried out the study. The author called attention, at that time, that, although, the use of the first person of singular to report scientific works was not common, the situation was changing, emphasizing, that its use has to serve to a propose.

In relation to this, Givón (2012), examining the types of passivation in different idioms, uses a functional rule, according to it the passivation means the promotion that a non-agent is raised to the role of the principal topic of the statement. It is in this way that many times the editor, having the necessity to draw the attention away of the reader from the agent of an action, finds in passivation this possibility to modify a scene's perspective. In essence, the problem with the manuals of academic texts' elaboration is that they do not consider these purposes.

According to Pinker (2016), the active and the passive voice change the subject's protagonism, as an author of verbal action; as a pacient of this action. So, if considering Booth, Colomb & Williams (2000, p. 292, author's emphasis) they exemplify smartly: (i) "If the tropical forests continue *to be devastated* in the benefit of financial profit in short time, all biosphere *can be damaged*"; (ii) "If the loggers continue to devastate the tropical forests in the benefit of financial profit in short time, they *can damage* all biosphere".

Although, apparently, the statements say the same thing, between the two sentences there is a significant difference of protagonism that, in the first one is represented by the forest, and, in the second one is represented by the loggers.

Either the active voice or the passive one is legitimate in language, and they meet the communicative needs. Complementing, Abreu (2021) reminds another reason for the use of passive voice that is to allow the discard of the responsible for a determined action, sometimes to be redundant to show them, sometimes to be compromising to do it. Consequently, the passive voive with discard of the agent can be used in situations that it is desired to *protect the face* of the person who produced the action as, for example, when there are ethical reasons.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

We reaffirm: in superior teaching experience, this article's authors have been noticing the worry of some people of academic world referring to the usage and the recommendation of impersonal language in researches' reports; observing, even, some members of examing boards demand the usage of impersonality when they criticize eventual situations in which it was used the first person of singular or plural.

It was really, in past times, the strong idea of impersonal language that consists of the usage of the verb in third person could ensure neutrality in the study of several phenomena and objects, what makes we believe that impersonal language could represent an exemption of the subject-researcher inapprehension of the object that is researched.

This assumption that well represents the positivist concept of scientific neutrality is still believed by many members of academic world. Because of this behavior, it appeared the interest to investigate research's reports as academic graduation works, dissertations, thesis; recommendations of scientific methodological books; manuals of academic works' elaboration. All these studies converged to the focus of which language characteristics are more appropriated to qualitative research's reports.

On the track of our researches, it was compiled data as: (i) conversation record and chats with other teachers that we have daily contact; (ii) notes that were done during the participation in scientific events; (iii) discussion record that occurred during examing boards and even at classroom (Oliveira & Vidal, 2017). In the investigation, this kind of observation, sometimes naturalist sometimes participant, remained as a data collect instrument.

It is convenient to mention that, in qualitative research, it must be clear the insertion of the researcher in the object. Either his/her reasons or his/her ability of observations and comprehension, and even his/her point of view are present in his/her investigation, what leads to a point of view influenced by the meanings that are incorporated by him/her in his/her social practices.

It is worth here the observation of Bortoni-Ricardo (2013), when he insists that the researcher is an active agent in research's process. All the mentioned aspects lack to be considered, once the methodology focus on interpretation that seeks to understand human phenomena that are observed in a determined socio-cultural context.

By the way, Veiga, Resende & Fonseca (2001) underline that, in qualitative research, it is necessary to *sew* the collected data to fit into a set of interrelationships. In this sense, it is forcible to add that the documental interpretative analyse – methodology that answers to the investigation question – sometimes is permeated by observational data that are compiled by the authors, converging to the focus of the question: what language characteristics are the most adequate to qualitative research's report.

We consider these procedures as very significant to the present investigation. Authors as, for example, Erickson (1990), Bortoni-Ricardo (2013), among others, remember that the importance of observation procedures, in the context of researchers, has been emphasized with the aim to catch meanings that are attributed by people in general context of society and, in special, in niches or contexts of job.

It is also research's proposal to realize a study in written materials that mention recommendations of the generic usage of impersonal language (represented by the third person of singular of verbal tenses, including the particle "it was" ("se" in Portuguese) as way of setting aside the subject). For this, it is either indicated the procedures of documental research or the ones of content analysis in bibliographic research.

This article, we reaffirm, is a cutting-off of a broader study and it is limited to the study of texts included in manuals of academic works' elaboration in the context of university institutions. So, it refers to documental research. Document refers to recorded information (printed, manuscript, iconographic records etc), that is contained in a observable device that can be research's object (ABNT, 2018).

This modality of research is justified, especially, when we consider, with Flick (2009),that the construction of explanations about events can be done from documents that are not understood as information containers, but as instruments of information contextualization that are methodologically elaborated.

In this sense, this research is done with a sampling of manuals of institutions of delimited regions, that are situated approximately 125 miles around the city of Franca, in São Paulo State, and around the city of Uberaba, in Minas Gerais State.

This choice is justified, firstly, because these regions have a big number of university institutions. Other reason is the interest in regionalized studies, once one of the authors is a teacher in Master's Program in Regional Development. The third reason is that they are the head cities where this research's authors teach.

As we can verify, the documents that were used, in this cutting-off, are written and available electronic format and they fit four criteria that were proposed by Scott (1990): (i) authenticity; (ii) credibility; (iii) representativeness; (iv) significance. Flick (2009) reaffirms that the documents are not a simple representation of reality, because they are produced aiming the goals and the definition of receivers. So, the documents must be seen inserted im communication processes.

Its analysis is done seeking for usage patterns' comprehension in its contexts, of which the pattern's rules are part of. The focus concerns recommendations that are eventually proposed in relation to language characteristics that must have been followed by the authors of the reports as its question referring to outline adequation of these researches.

One part of this report, as it was mentioned before, includes the texts of the following technical rules of *Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas* (ABNT), that refer to academic works elaboration, namely: ABNT-NBr 14.724(2011); ABNT-NBr10.520 (2002), ABNT-NBr 6023 (2018); ABNT-NBr 6027 (2012) e ABNT-NBr 6028 (2003). The other part of collect consisted of data that were collected in websites of university institutions, according to the following steps.

First step: preliminarily, with exploratory intention, websites of some higher education institutions were randomly consulted, observing the manuals that are produced by them, updated from 2017 on. So, it was consulted, firstly, websites from the following institutions: Faculdade de Ciências Humanas de Curvelo (FACIC); Universidade de Caxias do Sul (UCS); Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG); Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP); Universidade Vale do Rio Verde de Três

Corações (UNINCOR); Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos (UNISINOS); Universidade do Oeste Paulista (UNOESTE); Universidade Federal de Uberlândia (UFU); Universidade de São Paulo – Enfermagem (USP).

The content of these manuals was verified referring to usage guidance of language in academic works. On this initial phase, we observe many reporductions, excerpts, that is, compilations of ABNT rules. In these materials, there are some of them that do not mention what kind of language style must be used, in others we found recommendations as *Try to write the texts in third person…*; *Textual elements: text written in the third person of singular…*; and another that delegates this role to adviser professor. There are also mentions to objectivity and clarity.

Second step: having these more general data, we seek to propose the content aspects that have to be observed, clustered according to categories, firstly, established as the following: (i) objectivity recommendation in language; (ii) impersonality recommendation in language; (iii) clarity recommendation in language; (iv) usage recommendation of the verb in the active voice and in the third person of singular in the complete text; (v) usage recommendation of the verb in the active voice and in the third person of singular only in the abstract; (vi) no recommendation about language characteristics.

Also, at this moment, we seek to proceed with sample composition, choosing significant institutions in the region and that are structured as universities and university centers, either in São Paulo State or Minas Gerais State. Totally, six universities and five university centers: (A) Universidade de São Paulo (USP); (B) Universidade de Ribeirão Preto (UNAERP); (C) Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP); (D) Universidade Federal do Triângulo Mineiro (UFTM); (E) Universidade de Uberaba (UNIUBE); (F) Centro Universitário Municipal de Franca (UNIFACEF); (G) Centro Universitário Barão de Mauá (UNIMAUÁ); (H) Centro Universitário Moura Lacerda (MOURA LACERDA); (I) Centro Universitário de Araguari (IMEPAC); (J) Centro Universitário de Araxá (UNIARAXÁ); (K) Universidade Estadual de Minas Gerais (UEMG).

Thus, altogether it was consulted 11 (eleven) manuals that constituted the sample. It was excluded isolated colleges, that are foreseen to be included in future research. It is necessary to make clear that between the first data survey and the present version, three institutions no longer let the manuals available in their websites, reason why they were replaced.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To analysis' effect, the data were organized in two distinct groups. One of them includes aspects from the rule of *Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas* (ABNT) once they establish general parameters for academic works in Brazil. In another group, it was analyzed the data from manuals that were available in institutions websites, according to the established categories for analysis.

- In relation to the rules of *Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas* (ABNT):
The technical standards for formatting academic works and that serve as reference to the manuals produced by university institutions are: ABNT-NBr 14724 (2011), that establishes the structure of academic works and rules of formatting; ABNT-NBr 10520 (2002), that sets up rules to quotations in academic texts; ABNT-NBr 6023 (2018), that guides the elaboration of bibliographic references list; ABNT-NBr 6027 (2012)that sets up the way to do the summaries; and ABNT-NBr 6028 (2003), that controls the elaboration of the abstract in academic works.

The rules that come from ABNT, referring to academic works' elaboration, only contemplates the formatting of the works. It is worth to say: they do not dedicate to *how to elaborate*; but they dedicate to *how to format* the work that is ready, that is, how to give that intellectual construction, written as a descriptive/argumentative discourse, in a constituted way of standardized elements. Yet, the rules do not bring detailed recommendations about the language that needs to be used, except for rule ABNT-NBr 6028 that establish the elaboration of the abstract in academic works. In this rule we find a more detailed reference about language, recommending that *we must use the verb in active voice and in the third person of singular.*

However, it is necessary to say that this rule is specific to the elaboration of abstracts of academic works. On the one hand, it refers, in conclusion, to a structure of only one paragraph, in which it is shown the panoramic view of a research, without detailing the procedures. On the other hand, it could be that this recommendation would be justified because the abstract is a synthesis, which focus is the research not the authorship.

Nevertheless, because of the big variety of researches, specially the qualitative ones, this rule becomes questionable, once this recommendation can be seen arising from assumption that the usage of other verbal inflection outside the third person singular, as soon as the passivation usage, can infringe the basic structure of scientific thought, observations that were either described or criticize by Diehl & Tatim (2006). But when its acceptance is extended to all textual elements, what can bring problems to text's clarity. We reaffirm, although, that there is no device that extends the recommendation of this rule to the entire text of the academic work.

- In relation to all the available manuals in the websites researched:

The manuals' contents, referring to language recommendations, were listed and clustered in categories and they were distributed according to the chart below:

Chart 1. Recommendations of language characteristics usage in manuals.

CATEGORIES	INSTITUTIONS/MANUALS
(i) recommendation of objectivity in language	B – G – I – k
(ii) recommendation of impersonality in language	I – K
(iii) recommendation of clarity in language	B – G – K
(iv) verb in active voice and in the third person singular in the entire text	K
(v) verb in the active voice and in the third person of singular in abstract	B – D – E – F – H – I – J – K
(vi) no recommendation about language characteristics	A – C

On the category (i), we verify that objectivity in language is emphasized on four manuals (B; G; I; K). None of these documents explain what they want to mean with the word objectivity or objective language. One of them (G) recommends direct language without explaining what is expected with this.

On the category (ii), it appears two manuals (I; K) that recommend the impersonality, one of them (I) mentioning especially scientific neutrality: *The scientificity is obtained by the usage of a research method, by the worry about scientific objectivity and neutrality and, principally, by obedience to some determinations, either in the investigation or in textual apresentation of a study that is considered scientific.*

On the third category (iii), it appears three manuals (B; G; K). On B and G, clarity is imposed as a textual quality without conceptualization. However, clarity is a complex concept and it seems that mentioning it, without explaining, can point out a lack of knowledge of its nature that includes, among other factors, the knowledge of the context and the adequation to personal and impersonal forms, active and passive, as it has already been mentioned (Vidal, 2011).

And just one manual (K) explains the meaning of clarity: *They are indispensable principles to scientific writing: clarity, accuracy, and communicability. To make a text clear, it can't leave room to interpretations different from the one that the author wants to communicate.* As we can see, even giving this explanation, it does not consider the context in which the relation author-text-reader occurs.

On the category (iv) – recommendation of the use of the verb in the active voice and in the third person singular in the entire text of the research – it appears one of the manuals (K): it gives the recommendation of using active voice in general and it does not consider, in this way, important discursive functions performed by infamous passive voice on the socio-communicative context, that had already been cleared, for example, on Givón (2012), Pinker (2016), Booth, Colomb& Williams (2000), Abreu (2021).

The category (v) contemplated the ones that mention the usage of the verb in the active voice and in the third person of singular, only on abstract, in which appears eight manuals (B; D; E; F; H; I; J; K) that recommends it. These mentions certainly occur because they reproduce rules of ABNT that are destined to writing of abstracts.

On the category (vi), it appears two manuals (A; C) that do not mention demands of language characteristics. One of the possibilities of interpretation comes from the fact that these institutions give freedom to write, what means to allow language flexibility. We can consider this, in part, as positive; but it may be better, in the actual context, that it indicates flexibility as something that is recommendable, that is, what is impersonal should be expressed as impersonal, but it does not fit impersonal expression to something that is personal – for example: procedures, inferences and judgements, on the context of qualitative researches.

The data above can be seen in two interpretation perspectives. On one hand, if the orientations that are established by higher educations institutions, mostly, do not purpose impersonality – and likewise the biggest part of available methodological manuals – how this belief still exists? It would be oral tradition that is making this persistence stronger than written production? What strength does this tradition have to reproduce these beliefs in actual universitary population? What are the conceptions with other common recommendations in manuals for methodology and writing of academic works?

On the other hand, even there are few manuals that recommend impersonality, and the others omit language flexibilization, we can consider that they reinforce that neutrality preconception remains in academic context. The called recommendations, because they extend, explicitly or implicitly, impersonal language characteristics to the entire text;

and the omission, because it leaves room for more updated explanations about the usage of language in the reports.

Without despising the question of oral tradition, this second view seems to be more compatible with the recommendations of documental analysis that make evident that: (i) avoid exclusive focus on documental content despising the context, the function and the usage of studied document;(ii) conceptualize the relations among explicit and implicit meaning (Flick, 2009).

CONCLUSION

The context of this investigation is the discussion about questions that refer to artificiality of the usage, insistently proposed, of impersonal language in general scientific research reports and, especially in qualitative researches.

On this context, we studied the assumption that impersonal language could materialize the exemption of the researcher as a subject in apprehension of study object, from content of documents, in the case the ones that contain orientations to scientific works elaboration produced by higher education institutions. For this, the study that relapsed above manuals that are available in websites of higher education institutions was guided by actual theoretical conceptions of the studied authors about the relation subject/object in human knowledge, as well as about the adequate expressions about the usage of (im)personality and its effects in clarity of scientific discourse.

So, it has emphasized the role that academic works can perform in construction of knowledge as it refers to clarity in scientific works, considering actual tendencies of social sciences and qualitative research.

So considering, it seems reasonable to point out that unadvised manuals in disciplines of language – and construction of scientific quality – they end revealing less flexible about language usage. And other manuals, that do not explain terms as clarity, objectivity and legitimation.

From data that was discussed here, it is evident to suppose that inflexibility in language that is suggested by academic reports is reinforcing in neutrality preconception. And it can be one of the most important obstacles to the construction of a writing that is more befitting with the actual thought thinking referring to qualitative research.

It was also suggested to consider that questions that arise from present research investigation and the ones that refer to factors that are associated with permanency neutrality illusion, through language, are relevant to produce new researchers.

Certainly, these questions, as they were elaborated, make us believe everything that is relevant

to guide to a communication outline when it is verified the advance of qualitative research in human and social science in academic world.

We can also say that the developed instrumental to list and to analyse data, showed to be useful to the presente study, can serve to be applied in future research.

Finally, it fits to emphasize that the results that we reached, although they are compatible with several theoretician position, they can not be generalized outside the context that they were obtained. Despite that, it does not seem misplaced to defend that the results can contribute, even modestly, to adjust language characteristics to qualitative research peculiarities, having the perspective its own expression that is always becoming bigger in production of knowledge in the world nowadays.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

None declared.

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