

THE LANGUAGE OF SCIENCE

Science belongs to humankind. There is no regional or international science. Some subjects, of course, are more related to a specific country or region. The dissemination of knowledge, however, should not have boundaries. Communication of knowledge depends mostly on the written language, irrespectively of the media used to its divulgation. Furthermore, with the increasing advances in computerized communication, access to information in the scientific community has been acutely expanded. Nowadays, electronic periodicals are easily accessible in most libraries worldwide and even at your home there is possibility to assess an important array of titles and read the full text (Packer, 1998) – thus, the issue of the language of science arises again as a key point in this connection.

Until the end of the World War I, French was the predominant language used internationally for sciences and arts. Particularly in medicine and engineering most textbooks used in many countries were published in France. After the war, the hegemony of English was established and has lasted until now. Indeed, English is the most common second-language adopted in the world. For this reason, it is convenient to discuss the issue of English language as the predominant or necessary common language for scientific communication.

In the year 2000, SALUSVITA Journal launched its first bilingual edition (Portuguese/English) soon to become exclusively English. Reasons for that are the difficulty, on the part of the international scientific community, to access the knowledge produced in Brazil due to language problems; research funding agencies in Brazil base their decisions mostly on the number of publication and the impact index of the journals in which authors publish their papers; indexation of periodicals, on the other part, depends mostly on the number of citations of their articles by the scientific community. As a result it is of utmost importance, not to say essential, to adopt English as the choice language in scientific periodicals. This is the keystone to solve the problem of integration of the knowledge produced in Brazil into the international scientific

community (Guerra, 1991). Of course, the quality of articles and the seriousness of editors are fundamental to the success of a periodical. However, for its accreditation, it is essential that the scientific community, as a whole, have access to its contents – and the best possibility to achieve this is to publish such periodicals in a common language – which, presently, is English.

Portuguese is our native language and the core of our culture. However, the adoption of English as a scientific language is not destructive to the national culture (Timo-Iaria, 1991). Furthermore, to protect our culture one should disseminate its achievements and, paradoxically as it can be, the use of English as a common language in scientific periodicals is important to this goal. It is also important to note that issues mostly related to the Latin America setting can be of interest to the international community as they are for the regional community (Forattini, 1997). Thus, as mentioned before, there should not be a regional science. Science belongs to the humankind and a common language remains mandatory in this regard.

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