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## ARTICLE

## Citationism as academic erudition and as a strategic action

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Being erudite represents an important characteristic of the academic, causing academic prose to be marked by an aura of sophistication and intellectual elitism. When erudition manifests in the practice of citationism, it can constitute a communicative distortion strategy instrumentalized to avoid or minimize debate or more accurate argumentation. Discussing this specific problem is the purpose of this essay. This criticism is developed by considering Habermas' philosophical-sociological perspective, in which communication constitutes a process of exchange of intersubjective meanings while establishing itself as a strategic act of intervention in the world. In this sense, citationism is seen as a usage of the specificities of the specialized lexicon in the academic world, working as an important mechanism of domination and influence despite the unintelligibility derived from this process.

**Keywords:** Erudition. Academic Communication. Citationism. Power relations. Theory of Communicative Action.

*Citationism as academic erudition and as a strategic action**Resumo*

A erudição é uma característica representativa para o acadêmico. Ela marca a prosa acadêmica com uma aura de sofisticação e elitização intelectual. Quando a erudição se manifesta na prática do citationismo, pode constituir-se como uma estratégia de distorção comunicativa instrumentalizada para evitar ou minimizar o debate ou a argumentação mais acurada. Discutir esse problema específico é o objetivo deste ensaio. Para articular essa crítica, consideramos a perspectiva filosófico-sociológica de Habermas, segundo a qual a comunicação constitui um processo de troca de significados intersubjetivos, ao mesmo tempo que se estabelece como um agir estratégico de intervenção no mundo. Nesse sentido, o citationismo é visto como um importante mecanismo que utiliza especificidades do léxico especializado do mundo acadêmico com o fim de dominação e influência, a despeito da ininteligibilidade derivada deste processo.

**Palavras-chave:** Erudição. Comunicação Acadêmica. Citationismo. Relações de Poder. Teoria da Ação Comunicativa.

*El citationismo como erudición académica y acción estratégica**Resumen*

La erudición es una característica importante para el académico, que marca la prosa académica con un aura de sofisticación y elitismo intelectual. Cuando la erudición se manifiesta en la práctica del citationismo, puede constituir una estrategia de distorsión comunicativa instrumentalizada para evitar o minimizar el debate o la argumentación más certera. Discutir este problema específico es el propósito de este ensayo. Para articular esta crítica, consideramos la perspectiva filosófico-sociológica de Habermas, donde la comunicación constituye un proceso de intercambio de significados intersubjetivos al tiempo que se erige como un acto estratégico de intervención en el mundo. En este sentido, el citationismo es visto como un uso de las especificidades del léxico especializado del mundo académico que funciona como un importante mecanismo de dominación e influencia, a pesar de la ininteligibilidad derivada de este proceso.

**Palabras clave:** Erudición. Comunicación académica. Citationismo. Relaciones de poder. Teoría de la acción comunicativa.

## INTRODUCTION

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Academic communication<sup>1</sup> has been marked by the challenge of providing intelligibility to the non-academic world, a challenge that hinders the very legitimation of academic-scientific knowledge in society in general (Vizeu & Lara, 2022). Beyond a linguistic problem, this process encompasses an important social dimension, which intermingles with the history of the Social Sciences itself and its derivations, marked by the tension between the political interest of social control and the intention to produce emancipatory knowledge (Habermas, 2014; Horkheimer, 1989). In Management and Organization Studies, the need for greater clarity of their social contribution has been remembered as an urgent and necessary issue (Alperstedt & Andion, 2017). This certainly goes through the question of whether the capacity of knowledge produced in this area – as much as possible – is intelligible to the Administration practitioner (Vizeu & Lara, 2022).

One of the traits of a huge part of academic communication in many scientific subfields – and specifically in the Administration area – is precisely the discursive erudition, characterized by the cultured level attributed to prose in order to formally express an established and specialized knowledge. As we have pointed out on another occasion (Vizeu & Lara, 2022), this process conditions the power relations between the participants of the field, especially teachers and students, senior members and beginners. In general society, the origin of this elitist erudite speech in certain fields of academic activity begins especially in the nineteenth century, in line with the Enlightenment values, when the members of bourgeois society that held academic-scientific knowledge among other expertise started being considered cultured and erudite. Mainly for this reason, in a certain way, the academic environment has acquired prestige among the elites, since academic knowledge has come to represent an interesting symbolic capital of differentiation before the masses.

From this perspective, in the present text, we critically analyze academic erudition as an instrument of power in the relationship between academics; especially in Administration research. Our argument discusses specifically a unique practice of academic prose in this field, which we call citationism. Able to be considered a neologism, “citationism” is a term used by the academic community to criticize the practice of citation exhaustively and ceremonially (e.g., Tuleski, 2012; Vizeu & Lara, 2022). It is important to highlight, from this point, that what we understand by citationism is not merely the act of quoting – opportunely, in the present text, we will situate this communicative act as a fundamental characteristic of academic prose. What is under the scrutiny of criticism in this essay is a kind of distortion of such an act, a kind of rhetorical resource that, as we will discuss, can jeopardize the intelligibility of academic debate.

To substantiate our argument, we use premises from the Philosophy of Language paradigm. In this approach, the criticism of communicative practices is restricted to the language in use, to the language games that are established within specialized linguistic communities, like the communicative communities organized in subgroups of the scientific field (Bourdieu, 2011). Thus, to build this path, we begin our text by presenting a brief reflection on the erudition malaise according to Schopenhauer’s vision, extended to the academic community in our days. Moreover, based on Habermas’ Theory of Communicative Action, we point out how communicative distortion in academic prose serves to power relationships in the field. Then, we deal with the central object of our criticism, citationism, considering it as one of the mechanisms of communicative distortion in academic prose. We exemplify how this occurs through two forms of citationism, emphasizing how this practice minimizes eventual problems in the argument presented and ends up jeopardizing the debate and the criticism. In our final considerations, we defend the resumption of the fundamental intention of the communicative act in the academic environment of the Administration area, that is, the illocutionary dimension of speech and the intention to produce knowledge based on the best argument and on the free dispute between the participants of the academic debate, which must be produced by meeting the criterion of intelligibility.

Before starting the discussion, we need to make a caveat. By adopting the Philosophy of Language perspective, we admit that there are different conceptions and language practices in the academic-scientific environment. Putting it in another way, we ought to be careful when examining the practice of academic communication, considering the specificities and substantial

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<sup>1</sup> Like so many other polysemic terms, ‘Academy’ takes on a wide range of meanings and possibilities of specification. In the present text, we adopt the sense in which the term specifies the community of researchers and professors who integrate what is normally associated with the universe of scientific knowledge and other knowledge developed and disseminated in the university environment and in other strongholds of scientific practice. Thus, we follow the understanding of Bourdieu (2011) and his study of this academic-scientific field.

differences between academic subfields and strongholds. Therefore, our text is limited to the circumstances presented here and experienced in a specific subarea, the field of Administration research, which is the main *locus* of Cadernos EBAPE.BR journal reference. Despite the notion that the citationism practices pointed out here are not exclusive to this field, its careful analysis beyond Administration would get away from the scope of the present work.

It should be noted that this text was not written traditionally. It would not be coherent to adopt the same protocol we criticize as an object of academic prose analysis. Therefore, we seek to free ourselves from the mechanisms of citationism, which is under criticism here. However, this did not mean abandoning the practice of citation, since we do not necessarily question the logic of referencing itself and that is necessary to the academic debate, which will be dealt with later.

## THE ERUDITION MALAISE

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The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), known for his criticism of Hegel and his opposition to Kantian moral philosophy, composes a short text on writing, in which he weaves an acid criticism of the erudition of his time. In the context of the expansion of industrialization all over Europe, the German thinker presents a pessimistic view of erudition, seen by him more as an economic strategy of the literate than as the condition for expertise and true knowledge. The philosopher points out the problem of the empty intellectual discourse, taken as a mechanism of social legitimation and *status*, configuring a kind of ‘pseudo’ formation. According to the author, erudition can be an obstacle to true knowledge as it removes the autonomy of free thought. On this point, the philosopher states:

Just as the activities of reading and learning, when in excess, are prejudicial to self-thought, the act of overwhelming writing and teaching also discourages people from the clarity and depth of knowledge and understanding, since they have no time left to acquire those. Thus, when exposing some idea, one needs to fill with words and phrases the gaps of clarity in their knowledge. This, not the aridity of the subject, turns most books incredibly dull (Schopenhauer, 2009, p. 21).

This skepticism of the philosopher about literary erudition is due to his realization that teaching in his time was corrupted with economic interests and the student’s erudition represented only a symbolic resource of *status* and superiority. Indeed, it makes sense to think that, at a time when access to literacy was restricted to the aristocratic elite, holding general knowledge about human culture represented a mark of social differentiation, even if that knowledge was a simulacrum and not effectively comprehended. One studied and read more to demonstrate superiority than for the love for knowledge. For this reason, Schopenhauer was relentless with the unintelligibility of the intellectuals and literati writing of his time. He was the first philosopher to indicate that this communicative mechanism was a ceremonial stratagem, a way of deceiving the audience about ignorance and lack of knowledge about important things.

In parallel to this symbolic process of cultural legitimation by the erudition of the elites in the Enlightenment period, a new field linked to intellectuals and academics emerged: the academic-scientific environment and its organization in specialized disciplines and knowledge dedicated to the utilitarian interest of bourgeois society and the capitalist economy (Habermas, 2014). The academic – here placed as the intellectual, the university professor, the scientist who produces knowledge, the philosopher, that is, all those who represent what Bourdieu called *homo academicus* – takes his activity as a paid profession in the new capitalist and technological society. Rapidly, this community organizes a social field of its own with symbolic exchanges and specific *habitus*, however, dependent on the capitalist economic system, like all other fields (Bourdieu, 2011).

This is how the academic community joins the commodification game of its *outputs* and creates self-mechanisms of productivism (Castiel et al., 2007), making the formal communication of academic knowledge an important economic practice. In the subfield of Administration research, this practice is especially perceived by the production of *papers*, which have become a commodity by the logic of graduate programs regulation in the area (Alcadipani, 2017) and by the corporatist mechanisms of publishing and publication (Torres, 2020).

This context has been associated with a crisis in the area, since it produces a unique relationship between the academic world and the non-academic spaces of society, creating a linguistic abyss between these two worlds (Vizeu & Lara, 2022). Currently, with the crisis of legitimation that the academic-scientific environment goes through due to the era of post-truth and the denial of Science (Ylä-Anttila, 2018), the insulation and hermeticism of academic discourse became a problem to be overcome under the penalty of jeopardizing the existence of many specialized areas of the academic community, especially in the field of Administration research (Vizeu & Lara, 2022).

To understand how the problem of academic communication can be an issue intrinsically connected to the social dynamics of power relationships and symbolic exchanges, we turn to the perspective of the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas in his theory of social action.

## HABERMAS, RATIONALITY AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF COMMUNICATION

As a dense theory articulated in different areas of Philosophy and Social Sciences, Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action (2012) arouses our interest for it is a theoretical body that explains the role of academic discourse in the historical process of communicative distortion promoted by the institutions of modernity. For our essay purpose, we will not discuss all the points of this theoretical framework and its grounding assumptions, we will only point out the concepts that interest us to appreciate how the process of distortion in academic communication occurs.

To build his theoretical building, Habermas (2012) proposes the re-validation of the rationality notion based on the language paradigm, according to which, in communicative interaction, the rationality of an utterance is in the assumption of content validity of what was said or read by the listener or reader. This is the concept of validity claims, which is expressed, by Habermas, in four ontological dimensions of human life, implying four distinct conditions to determine the rationality of a text or speech, presented in Box 1.

**Box 1**  
**Validity claims of speech acts**

Validity claim	Ontological dimension	Rationality criterion	Example
Truth claim	Objective world (factual and material)	Does the listener consider what is said true or factual?	"The infant mortality rate in Brazil increased during the pandemic."
Sincerity claim	Subjective world (feelings and ideas)	Does the listener consider the expression of someone's feeling or thought in speech genuine?	"That's a robbery! Pass me the bag or I swear I'll kill you!"
Righteousness claim	Normative world (values, morals and other social norms)	Does the listener consider what is said correct and/or normatively valid?	"People in jail need to have decent food, even those who have committed heinous crimes."
Comprehensibility claim	Intersubjective dimension of communication	Is the utterance intelligible to the listener?	"As everyone knows, the structuring conjuncture of the economic contexts prevents more assertive measures for the crisis."

Source: Elaborated by the author based on Habermas (2012).

The synthesis presented in the previous table shows the different dimensions in which rationality is processed in communicative interactions, according to Habermas. The examples presented in the last column illustrate how speeches or texts may or may not be considered by listeners or readers, creating the possibility of questioning by the interlocutor and demanding that the author of the speech or text justify them. This condition determines the dialogicity of the communicative interaction, promoting the processes of debate, argumentation, dialogue, criticism, contestation, refutation, and replication, that is, all kinds of interlocution between two communicative beings to reach an understanding about what is presented through speech or text. For example, in the illustration about the "truth claim", the statement "The infant mortality rate in Brazil increased during the pandemic" will only be accepted as true by the interlocutors if all the factual and objective elements are previously known and accepted or are logical and coherent with other facts already known. In case of doubt about the veracity of the

facts and/or events affirmed, for the statement to be accepted, it will be necessary to establish a new point to convince or clarify the doubts of the interlocutors. This process, when conducted without manipulation of data or arguments, Habermas dubs communication oriented to intersubjective understanding. That is, when there is a disagreement of comprehension about something (which may be a fact, an attitude, a norm, or any other issue that refers to human truths), dialogue is necessary. Through this, the interlocutors can present better argumentation and clarification on obscure points. In this case, agreement means the possibility of convergence of understandings, the possibility of connection between subjectivities. In a word: intersubjectivity.

It is important to remember that this “comprehensive dissonance” does not occur only in the language dimension, considering that one of the intentions of the Philosophy of Language is precisely to bring language closer to the ontological dimensions treated by the Social Sciences (Habermas, 2012). That being said, in human relations, doubt about a statement (speech or text) can occur due to the incoherence between what is said or written and what is perceived or experienced by the listener or the reader. To illustrate this point, let us take the ontological dimension of the subjective world portrayed in Box 1. The order “Pass me the bag or I swear I’ll kill you!” requires the listener to believe that the criminal’s subjective intent is true. The listener will not consider the order if something fosters doubt or uncertainty about the intention. For example, if the victim does not believe the robber dares to accomplish the act or owns the material means to carry it out. In this illustration, the victim may question, “This weapon is not for real,” or state, “You wouldn’t have the guts to do it.” Such a situation will condition the speaker to prove his intention under the penalty of lacking effectiveness in his order.

Another example also illustrates this point. The statement “All prisoners must have decent food, even those who have committed heinous crimes” will be received by the interlocutor as valid only if he agrees with the normative premises implicit in the assertion. That is, the statement will not be considered valid if the listener or reader does not take *a priori* the values or norms that sustain it as valid – in the case exemplified, the right of all human beings to have access to food. He may question: “But what about the victim’s rights?” or “He doesn’t deserve to be treated like this for what he did.” This will require the speaker to find arguments that justify why his statement is valid.

According to this reasoning, the proposal of Habermas (2012): the free rational debate is the way to establish intersubjective consensus and democratic processes directed to the attempt to solve disputes, disagreements, divergences, etc., within the limits of the valid references in the community of which divergent individuals are part. That said, there is no point in using arguments centered on references that are not valid to the interlocutor. For instance, no one will be able to convince an atheist about something through religious arguments, but it is possible to convince him by using valid arguments for both interlocutors (this is illegal, it is unconstitutional, it is inhumane, etc.). This is how Habermas’ intersubjective understanding occurs: the agreement regarding a divergence by the argumentative dialogue valid for the interlocutors. In time, this is how free and rational debate happens.

It is important to note that the concept of validity claim indicates that it is the listener or reader who determines the validity of the statement. They attest to whether what is said or written is true, sincere, correct, or intelligible because these dimensions are part of their world of life. Due to this condition of the speech act, we cannot convince a child about something they did not experience by using arguments based on facts or knowledge constituted by an experience they did not have. That is, the child will not be able to understand events, behaviors and rules that only exist in the adult world. Therefore, parents call upon two communicative strategies to convince children about something: i) they translate what they understand into the references that match to child’s world; or ii) they manipulate what they say so that it makes sense to the little interlocutor. In the translation case, there is still an effort to maintain the understanding of the communicative relationship, because translation is only a resource for adapting the truths of the adult world to the context of truths of the children’s world. When a parent says to their child: “Eat the vegetables to be strong like Superman,” the adult actually believes that eating vegetables is healthy (true to the adult world), which, in the children’s universe, can be translated as the “superhero strength.” However, when parents tell the child, “Don’t be naughty or the bogeyman will take you away,” they are manipulating the child’s universe of ‘truths’ to ensure their behavior since they know it is a lie, they know no one will take them in case of misbehaving.

Thus, Habermas (2012) considers that the speech act encompasses two different dimensions: the illocutionary dimension – I say something about the world shared by me and my interlocutor – and the perlocutionary dimension – by saying something about our shared world, I produce an effect in this same world.

Here we come to the point that interests us in the Habermasian theory of communicative action to explain the academic debate. Considering that academic-scientific knowledge is constituted by criticism and argumentative rational debate (Habermas, 2014; Horkheimer, 1989), communicative interaction among members of this community is fundamental. Therefore, the formal channels of verbal communication – spoken and written – have considerable importance for the members of this community. The communicative interaction occurs in congresses and other scientific events, as well as in the annals of such events reading, the books and journals where the texts are published, it means, the researcher and intellectual work result.

Another important point to be considered in the interaction between members of this community can be observed in the prose of the academic text. In this, an important part is the referencing of other texts of the community, because this makes a connection with the understanding legitimized by peers to ratify or question it, contributing to the progress and renewal of academic-scientific knowledge. Nevertheless, as the epistemological premises between the different scientific conceptions are diverse and competitive, the academic debate ends up being limited by the possibility of paradigmatic compatibility, that is, the argumentative debate in the academic environment depends on the convergence of the onto-epistemological premises presented in the discussion. This condition not only creates a multiplicity of perspectives on the same human and social problems, portrayed by views that may even be significantly contrary (Hassard, 1990); but also establishes that the different academic-scientific conceptions organize, in the same proportion, different spaces of communicative interaction.

Here comes a new point of reflection on academic interaction. The coexistence of these different perspectives is only ensured because members of the community consider them as legitimately ‘academic.’ This means that such legitimacy is sustained more by the formal mechanisms of attachment to the field than by the convergence of understandings obtained by the debate established by different chains and epistemological perspectives. It does not mean that there are no general scientificity principles that must be shared and that the process of building academic knowledge should not be respected. However, the diversity of understandings and perspectives restricts the debate to specific strongholds where such premises are shared, which allows the arguments to be feasible.

We can illustrate the extent to which epistemological diversity coexists in the field by an example. Hardly a member of the academic community will be able to publish a text whose theoretical references are assumptions of Astrology, even if this member has a doctorate, is a member of some scientific society and meets all the formal requirements of academic writing. This is precisely because Astrology is a field of knowledge that is not legitimate for the scientific community. This lack of legitimacy is not necessarily justified by the lack of ‘scientificity,’ since other perspectives exogenous to the academic-scientific world were inserted in the debate and today circulate among the channels of academic communication. This is the case of Psychoanalysis, an approach that still suffers resistance from numerous part of Psychology academics, but is accepted by them as a legitimate perspective of its members’ thoughts, which allows it to ‘circulate’ in the formal community communication channels. It is interesting to highlight that such incorporation of exogenous knowledge to the academic-scientific environment also occurs in the Natural Sciences, such as Medicine, which today accepts therapeutics such as Homeopathy and Acupuncture, previously rejected as ‘non-scientific therapeutics.’ When members of the medical community began to adopt such exogenous therapies, the academic community in this area found itself in the need to legitimize them, creating denominations (e.g., alternative medicines) to allow acceptance and minimize resistance from some of its members (Sigolo, 2019).

Thus we see that the social structure of the academic field ends up taking a central role in the dynamics of academic communication. Bourdieu (2011) emphasizes this aspect when presenting his essay on the assumptions of academic life based on his theory on the social field. He remarks that social capitals of this field, such as titles and other symbolic forms, create a hierarchy among the members of the community, by pointing out how to transit and grow (in *status*) in this social environment. An important point highlighted by Bourdieu is that the formation of the academic community members, in Brazil and most parts of the world, happens in master and doctoral programs. In these courses, students are trained in language and academic values, so that, when becoming effective members of the community, they can keep the cycle of reproduction of values or language, thus turning into agents of new members formation. In this dynamic, the sociologist emphasizes two forms of social capital: the temporal, which is the institutionalized power of position in the field – positions, titles, control of resources, management of academic processes and organizations, etc. –, and the power of reputation, a symbolic power more or less independent of the first (even if, most of the time, they are integrated).

In the Administration area, as well as in several other subareas of the academic field, reputation is measured particularly by the impact of intellectual production, especially whether it is the result of research. In the case of academic communication, the author's reputation is associated with his writings' reputation, which can be measured by mechanisms and indicators of the articles' impact, journals, and authors (Torres, 2020). Regarding the academic reputation, 'classical' is an interesting idea disseminated in the community. For the academic community, a classic is a fundamental author for the academic field (Meneghetti et al., 2014), even if only in a subfield; emphasizing that legitimacy is not associated with the acceptance of ideas, but rather with the acceptance of presence in the interaction channels. Let's show an example again. Karl Marx is a classic of Sociology, Economics and so many other subareas due to his texts. His ideas are far from being accepted by all academics, but all accept him as a 'classic' in his subfields (perhaps, not that much, in his more specific strongholds). This condition allows the texts of this author to circulate in the formal channels of academic communication but limits itself to the possible debate, the one in which the 'paradigmatic incompatibility' will not occur. For this reason, in the same department of a university, it is possible for Marxian professors and others who are radically opposed to Marx's ideas to coexist!

This example illustrates a fundamental condition for academic communication: it is necessary to know the social rules of the communicative game. Sometimes they are more important than the acceptance of assumptions that validate the arguments used to produce debate among members. From a sociological perspective, these rules follow the same aspects of any other social field – symbolic and cultural aspects, interests, relations of power and domination, dependence on the capitalist system among many other aspects of our historical time. Therefore, academic practice – and academic communication in particular – is a practice with cultural, symbolic, political, economic, etc. dimensions, and takes contradictions that must be turned explicit and properly understood. What we point out in this essay is that one of these contradictions is the communicative distortion, a process that Habermas (2012) associates with the economic and political systems of our historical period. One of the forms of communicative distortion in academic practice is what we call citationism. We then discuss how citationism becomes a practice of communicative distortion which becomes a problem in the academic debate.

## CITATIONISM AS COMMUNICATIVE DISTORTION

According to the idea that erudition in academic prose can hold a utilitarian dimension, that is, it would serve as an instrument for persuasion in communicative interactions among academics, we remark on how citationism proceeds and is seen here as a specific form of Habermasian strategic action in this communicational practice. Following the premises of Habermas' theory, we can consider that the use of quotations is a norm of academic prose that aims to meet the criteria of validity of the ontological spheres of the world of life – truth, sincerity and righteousness. That is, by making the use of citation in the academic text, it is ensured that the assertions contained in it – statements, findings, interpretations, analyses, justifications, among other argumentative resources – are sustained by the force of legitimation of this writing strategy. It can be helpful in a specific issue, that is, the need for argumentation before disagreements of comprehension between interlocutors involved in academic communication. That is, the rhetoric of legitimation implicit in the communicative resource of the citation can minimize this need or even nullify it, since the legitimation force of the citation can act as evidence of reputation and/or convergence of understandings, thus avoiding the need for questioning in situations of lack of comprehension. If this process is stressed to the point of avoiding debate or obstructing comprehension, the contradictions of citationism are established, we will detail it below.

Quoting an author or text can be an act with different functions and ways of undertaking. We can cite different texts and in different media – a journal article, a book or book chapter, a master's dissertation or a doctoral thesis, among a diversity of forms of writing practiced in the academic environment. Such diversity is also determined by the different community participants (researchers, professors and students in the university environment), who practice it for different purposes. Thus, the act of citing resources can be used to meet different demands of argumentation: to verify or refute empirical evidence, to confirm or deny, to explain or exemplify a theoretical, conceptual and/or analytical interpretation, to introduce a position regarding a controversy, among many other possibilities.

What is important to highlight here is that there is a basic premise in the act of quoting in all argumentative support functions. We cite other texts written and published in legitimate channels of the community because the debate among the members and the convergence of comprehension for the consolidation of knowledge is a fundamental element of academic practice. As different analysts of scientific practice maintain, academic-scientific knowledge, even if configured as diffuse and heterogeneous, supposes accumulation and convergence. If we consider that, in addition to this presumption of convergence and accumulation, there is a need for dialogue, we have two principles of academic-scientific doing that make the act of quoting or referencing a fundamental element of academic prose.

The reflection on the functionalities of the quoting act makes us see this practice as fundamental, as something that must be considered beyond mere ceremony. It happens because this practice is a rational-formal course (in the Weberian sense), which, in addition to corresponding to a norm standardized by the community, encompasses a rationality that justifies it.

Let's take a look at what that justification would be recurring to an example. The statement "As Copernicus (1543) proposes, the Earth revolves around the Sun," when made in academic prose, acquires validity due to a kind of 'transference' of validity claim to the cited author – that is, quoting an author means to transfer to him the validity claim of the assertion. Thus, beyond the logical elements of the written argument, this transfer of validity claim is possible because, when it comes to a text legitimized by the channels of diffusion of academic knowledge, it is assumed that its assertive force lies in the fact that this manuscript has already circulated and is accepted by the members of this community, even if only by a part of it. Considering the specific universe of Administration research, in which journals are the main channel for intellectual production (Alcadipani, 2017; Alperstedt & Andion, 2017), the acceptance of the cited reference has another element of rationality in its legitimation: the fact that articles published in journals have passed the scrutiny of peer review, fulfilling the rite of validity implicit in the *modus operandi* of the editorial process in this subfield (Torres, 2020).

Whether in the broad sense or the specific case mentioned, citing an academic text legitimized by the community is to accept that the argument of the cited text is valid. Obviously, this 'argument' already circulates and is assimilated by the community in its practices of formation, consolidation, or debate. This aspect demonstrates the importance given to the qualification of the publication channels. That is why, in many academic communities, including the Administration area, there is a real "vilification" of publications considered "non-academic", such as certain texts written by practitioners "without scientific rigor" and other studies popularized outside the field (for example, historical studies done by journalists and published in non-academic channels). Still considering the area of Administration, it is common for books not to have the same validity as texts published in academic journals, precisely because there is no guarantee of rigorous criteria adoption by peer review and experts (Torres, 2020). One of the arguments considered for this book notes was the growth of technical-scientific books' commodification logic, which stimulated a loosening in the rigor of the editorial processes in these literary products.

Having made this brief reflection on the function of the quoting act or referencing in academic prose, we can evaluate a kind of distortion of this practice: citationism. As we have already pointed out, we understand by citationism the strategic use (in the Habermasian sense already presented) of this form of argument construction, which relies more on the effects of the legitimation force than on the interest in the debate itself. In other words, citationism can be a rhetorical device that has the practical effect of avoiding and/or minimizing any difficulties of argumentation. That is why we consider citationism a form of communicative distortion.

This practice is observed here under two distinct but complementary forms of manifestation: i) citation exhaustion; ii) referencing of classics and/or authors of high reputation. The first form corresponds to the practice of using a huge number of references in the same argument and leading to the understanding that the community widely uses it. In the second case, the citation uses the great reputation of the cited author, considering that his or her notability ensures credibility to the argument, even if it is not intelligible to the reader. Let's take a closer look at both cases.

### Citationism through citation exhaustion

The exhaustion of references can generate communicative distortion by the criterion of unintelligibility caused by the excess of information. This form of communicative distortion has already been observed in other studies about this Habermasian construct. In this case, the volume of data and information prevents the contestation and/or hinders the understanding of

the argument (e.g. Vizeu & Bin, 2008). In the case of quotations use, the manipulation of the understanding occurs in two aspects: the presumption that the assertion is true for a large number of cited texts support it (the knowledge universality criterion); Too many references for an argument creates the difficulty of verification since it is unlikely to know in depth all the referenced authors.

Let's start with the second case. If you are well versed in the subject and really know exactly all the references cited in the text — this is possible in many cases — you can check the adequacy of the argument presented when there is a large number of references associated with it. That is, in order to assess whether the author cited the references properly, a thorough verification work is necessary when all of them are not known in advance and in detail.

Thus, the reader or even the evaluator of the text with a large number of references cited in the same argument (and with probable references that are unknown to the reader or evaluator) tends to take the 'validity claim' of the argument and the referencing made since it is not feasible to redo the author's work during the evaluation or reading step. Precisely at this point, it lies the strategy of communicative distortion: as there is no way to verify all the references mentioned, our starting line is the premise that, when exhaustively referenced, what the author says is supposedly validated by other authors and/or studies. That is, the scrutiny of the academic legitimacy by referencing to exhaustion is to validate what is cited because other members of the academic community have already said it before, even if there are no guarantees of the correctness of the referenced authors' appropriation.

Obviously, the inadequate appropriation of cited authors' thoughts is often observed, especially in the review processes of submitted works. However, what we want to highlight here is that this type of observation is not always possible due to the excess of citations used in certain works. An interesting sign of this situation is the reference lists in certain articles published in the area of Administration: it is not rare to find *papers* with more than 40% of their pages dedicated to the list of references!

In the hypothetical case of assertion, "As Copernicus (1543), Galileo (1642), Newton (1727), Einstein (1955) and Hawking (2018) state, the Earth revolves around the Sun", the large number of citations increases credibility, since it is assumed that this understanding is ratified by many other studies or publications, therefore, it is taken for granted. This same process occurs in the argumentation of legal communication, known as 'jurisprudence', in which a large set of judicial decisions made in the same direction points to a convergence that, in turn, suggests that the interpretation is 'true'. While this understanding makes sense and, in many cases, is confirmed, it is not necessarily a guarantee. This is because citationism is selective and, in the sense that a large number of authors who converge have been identified, there may also be a similar number of publications that point out the opposite. In fact, in situations where the evaluator of a text dominates the topic and knows the specialized field, it is very common to have divergent references pointed out. However, this is not always the case. If we also consider the dimension of the academic publishing sector (with thousands of specialized journals), allied to the plurality of approaches and perspectives, the possibilities of having many references for the most varied positions are immense, which facilitates the strategic use of this citational artifice.

It is not questioned here whether the convergence of understandings by the exhaustion of citations is a good criterion of validity, but rather the fact that it can be used in a manipulative way when producing conformity as an effect. That is, even considering that many texts use this bias in the act of quoting honestly, it is a strategy of persuasion that can sustain false or inadequate understandings, in which there is a constant risk of fragile argument circulation. We reiterate that the problem here is the lack of guarantees that the citation is properly made — since the appropriation of the cited authors' thought cannot always be checked by the evaluator or reader — as well as it is not possible to ensure whether the cited texts had availed themselves of other unverified 'truths' presented in their own references. This cycle of 'citing texts that have cited other texts' in academic prose can create a continuous process of reproduction of understandings that, once statements support their legitimacy primarily by the logic of universality, they are not necessarily arguments validated by the rationality of shared knowledge and accepted by the interlocutors.

### Citationism by referencing classics and/or authors of prestigious reputation

Unlike the first form of citationism we mentioned, the strength of legitimation, in this case, lies in the breadth of the author and/or text cited and not in the exhaustion of the references used to build an argument. Here implies a mechanism already pointed out by the Habermasian perspective of discourse: the pre-linguistic constraint arising from the asymmetry between the interlocutors (Felts, 1992; Habermas, 2012). The pre-linguistic constraint is the condition, in an interlocution, of asymmetry

in the relationship between the interlocutors, since arguments are not questioned because it is assumed that their author is an authority. Simply put, it is when interlocutors do not understand what is said to them, but accept it because it was said by an authority. Emphasizing that citation is a kind of argumentative authority transfer: citing classic or reputable authors' works in the same way. Thus, the acceptance of an unintelligible argument occurs by the perception of the importance of the author or text cited, since readers or evaluators, even if the argument exposed is not fully understood, accept what is said for they do not consider themselves able to question the author (or classical text) attributed as the source of the thought or argument.

In a certain way, this process is stimulated by the arrogant attitude, since erudition reflects more vanity than love for truth – as Schopenhauer (2009) has long signaled. In this context, the fear of appearing ignorant by doubting something silences the debate. Such an approach was mentioned by Felts (1992) when assessing that asymmetric power relationships in contexts of organizational communication lead to communicative distortion, either in the manipulation of the validity criteria (as exemplified in Box 1) or by the omission of the contestation when one does not understand what was said. In the case of the communicative interactions of the academic environment, the logic is very similar. Thus, the asymmetry in positions within the academic field – defined by titles, levels reached in the career, participation in editorial boards, commissions, academic management positions, in addition, of course, to the reputation derived from the authorship of texts, studies, theories and ideas – leads to the contamination of communication by this social capital (Bourdieu, 2011), turning the free debate difficult and nullifying the contestation of ideas and arguments.

Obviously, with the criticism of this form of citationism, we do not want to invalidate the classics' importance and the authors' reputation. The consolidation of ideas that elect an author as a classic is fundamental in the formation of the academic environment, as asserted by Meneghetti et al. (2014). In fact, it does not necessarily invalidate the debate and the contestation: when readers or evaluators face well-known reputation icons, they start to debate with the author that references them about the accuracy of the referencing, that is, evaluate how precisely the cited text was appropriated, check for interpretation errors, if any important aspect is overlooked, etc. There are situations in which the evaluator – aware of the classic authors referenced – can act pedagogically, helping the author under analysis to improve the argument, bringing it to the reflection of aspects that were not addressed. In this scenario, we see the ideal condition of the academic *paper* assessment: the debate between the author of the text and the evaluator, to discuss the appropriation of the cited references idea.

However, this ideal situation ceases to exist when there are no conditions to evaluate the property in the appropriation of the referenced texts, as we have already indicated. That is, the problem is when there are no conditions for debate (due to ignorance of the sources) and when such conditions are not enunciated to decline the evaluation of the text (for the embarrassment of admitting their ignorance). If the reference is considered a classic text or author, demonstrating ignorance may be even more difficult.

How much do we know about the classical texts? Being a classic, we obviously know something about it, its importance to the field, the broad outlines of its theory and/or study, main terms and concepts; this occurs due to the universal feature of the classic in academic training (Meneghetti et al., 2014). However, we do not necessarily know deeply all the classics we come across in academic work; The specialization of knowledge imposes choices on us, and we are not always qualified to debate theories in depth or studies and approaches about which we own a general view. This would not be a problem if it were not considered shameful to admit not deeply knowing the argument of a classic or of great reputation text.

Vanity as an academic personality trait forces us to avoid showing ignorance. Knowing references in a generic way would already qualify us to play the game of appearances revealed by Schopenhauer (2009). In this case, one does not assume ignorance or misunderstanding of the argument so as not to compromise the egos of academic erudition. Thus we have perceived many authors assuming a prose that proves to be erudite but empty of content, although it may lack precision in the appropriation of the classic and its ideas. To make this 'vener' of erudition work, all one needs is to have the ability to navigate in superficiality, relying on the use of classical authors in rhetoric without having a deep comprehension of them. In the same way, in this situation, readers avoid exposing their ignorance: admitting that there was no understanding of an argument supposedly attributed to a classic can be interpreted as ignorance of it, and, in turn, be considered a fault in the game of appearances to the academic relationships. The problem is not to consider that the citation error may be in 'the classic appropriation.' Finally, this game impoverishes the debate and the possible correction of misinterpretations of the classics' arguments.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

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Erudition as a trait of academic prose would not be a problem if it were obviously considered a more exempt sense of this issue. If it were simply seen as the instruction and the cultured form of writing (in this case, it is also necessary to problematize the elitist meaning associated with the term 'cultured')... perhaps we could even consider that erudition is not problematic because it is a prerequisite of the members of the academic community for its interlocution; In this case, competence in the training process would have to be necessary and developed. Nevertheless, if we wish it were not problematic, we should recognize that the erudite prose of the academic community would not be an obstacle to the internal communication of that community. In the case of the erudition present in citationism, we see that communication between members of the community may be defective indeed.

Therefore, it was necessary to rely on the analysis of the communicative process having the Habermasian theory of communicative action as reference, which combines the concepts of strategic communicative act and systematically distorted communication. Based on this reference, we observe that citationism establishes the false idea that the incomprehensibility of the text or speech is the result of the ignorance of those who do not understand it, a condition that induces the silencing of the argumentative debate. That is, those who are above in the hierarchy of academic positions do not feel comfortable revealing their incomprehension so as not to expose a supposed ignorance, since those who are at a higher level of training and/or academic knowledge are expected to know about what is exposed by someone lower in the scale of academic relations. In turn, those who are below accept their supposed ignorance and, as a result of such a condition, do not question the text or speech of the colleague with more academic seniority. In this game, silence is perpetuated, and the debate that is necessary for the clarification and continuous improvement of the theses and understandings produced in the academic-scientific field is interrupted. Without debate, there is no academic production since dialogue is a fundamental aspect of the construction of knowledge.

Although it may seem like a problem that is part of the complexity of relations in a given social field, it is necessary to point out that the systematically distorted communication provoked by citationism contributes to the legitimation crisis of the academic community. This crisis has several hues, but we will highlight two points: i) the growing difficulty in maintaining the staff, expressed by a decrease in demand and an increase in the dropout rate of graduate students and by the abandonment of continuity in training (master's students give up pursuing a doctorate); and ii) the emergence of true fiefdoms in the academic subareas, fiefdoms that are tolerated but do not interact with different groups, hindering the movement of knowledge exchange and transdisciplinarity among specialized areas. The already evident consequence of this picture is the weakening of the academic community, accused of being a great Babel Tower, where no one understands each other (in the intersubjective sense), but everyone accepts such a situation, in a true pact of mediocrity, which makes impossible a precept that should be sacred when doing science: free debate and the establishment of convergences for the knowledge progress.

In our essay, we indicate two forms of occurrence of citationism that close the debate or dialogue: one that we call 'exhaustion by quantity' and another called 'reference of the classics.' It is worth noting that these are not the only forms of citation and should be taken here as examples of how citationist rhetoric can nullify the debate. The first case occurs by the exhaustive use of cited references, since, due to the large number of references associated with an argument, it becomes difficult for the reader to verify whether the mention of all these actually proceeds or is taken in a generic way to give credibility to the assertion. The excessive number of citations also makes it difficult to assess the correct appropriation of the ideas of the cited author, since many may not be known by the reader, which prevents him from properly evaluating each cited text that he does not know.

In this context, we see a large number of unquestioned texts circulating in the academic world (especially in congresses and journals, when we consider the area in Administration research), due to the pre-linguistic constraint, especially with the practice of citationism. Thus, there is no admission as to the inability to follow or know deeply all the texts cited and there is also no question about the ownership or use of classical authors and/or concepts (which are not deeply known but are recognized as a 'classic').

That said, what would be the way out of the citationism dilemma? Avoiding citation? Accepting the neophytes' claim to accept texts 'clean' of references? Once again, we reiterate the need for references since they encompass an important basis of the process of construction of academic knowledge, which is continuity through convergence and/or criticism of the established understanding. On the other hand, the practice of citationism as it occurs today in the mainstay of productivism seems more ceremonial to us. To attest to this finding, we see that it is not uncommon for a master's or doctoral student to be criticized for long passages "without citation," which makes us wonder if his evaluator would be able to explain why this is a problem!

Would there be a way out of citationism then? The present text did not come to this point, since it intended only to present the problem and its hues. But, perhaps, we can briefly indicate a perspective for its overcoming. Since textual communication is the main practice of academics, and criticism and doubt are the fundamental principles of overcoming the given knowledge, the academic community needs to rethink its way of writing so that the dialogue capable of producing new understandings is not annulled. By adopting the same logic as the political disputes of other specialized social fields, we lose to some extent what should be the essence of our accomplishment: the love for knowledge, the search for explanations that guide us to give answers to the main problems of society. We will not go too far without genuinely taking the Socratic position of knowledge, admitting that we do not know when we do not understand, trying to confront our ignorance through argumentation, requesting the proper explanation of what is strange to us so that our peers help us understand better, or so that we have real conditions to refute the theses and inadequate positions presented in our midst. Without undertaking a humble posture of doubt and non-understanding of what is presented to us in an unintelligible way, we will not really know and learn. We need to foster honest and unarrogant debate, learn to question what we do not understand, aim at comprehension and build bridges between different subfields of study and research.

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### DATA AVAILABILITY

The entire dataset that supports the results of this study was published in the article itself.

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