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Beliefs and Practices of Academic Reading and Writing in Researchers in Training: a Case Study in Mexico

Creencias y prácticas de lectura y escritura académica en investigadores en formación: un estudio de caso en México

Concepções e Práticas Acadêmicas de Leitura e Escrita em Estagiários de Investigação: um Estudo de Caso no México

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Jésica Franco
Universidad Veracruzana
Mexico
jesicafranco@hotmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0003-3832-4142

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine and explain teachers' and students' reading and writing practices and beliefs in a master's program at a public university in Mexico. We conducted qualitative cross-sectional research. A self-administered questionnaire with open-ended questions was used in the initial stage to examine two distinct beliefs of reading and writing and identify key actors. Six interviews with teachers and students were carried out during the second stage. The study corroborates that the different beliefs are not mutually exclusive but can simultaneously exist in the same person, though they may be weighted differently. Those who firmly hold transmissive beliefs understand that reading and writing are processes to obtain (decode) and transmit (encode) information. In practice, these people emphasize the importance of identifying main ideas, summarizing texts, writing following a structure and taking up ideas from other authors. On the contrary, those who mostly hold transactional beliefs think that reading and writing are creative, dialogic and meaning-construction processes. Some of their reading and writing practices focus on aspects such as: defining a standpoint regarding the text, investigating the context of the author or reader, and defining reading or writing purposes. The research highlights the possibility of reconceptualizing reading and writing in the academic context, valuing their epistemic function and transforming the prevalent discourse that conceives them as technical and universal skills, which can be improved by correctly applying grammatical rules or following effective formulas.

Keywords: academic writing, literacy, beliefs, higher education, research training.

Resumen

El objetivo de esta investigación fue analizar y describir las prácticas y creencias de lectura y escritura de los estudiantes y profesores de un programa de maestría en una universidad pública mexicana. Se llevó a cabo una investigación cualitativa transversal. En la primera fase, se utilizó un cuestionario autoadministrado con preguntas abiertas para examinar las diferentes creencias sobre lectura y escritura e identificar actores clave. En la segunda fase, se realizaron entrevistas a profesores y alumnos. Se corroboró que las distintas creencias no son mutuamente excluyentes, sino que pueden existir simultáneamente en una misma persona, aunque con distinta carga. Los que tienen creencias principalmente transmisivas entienden la lectura y la escritura como procesos de obtención (descodificación) y transmisión (codificación) de información. En la práctica, estas personas buscan identificar ideas principales, resumir textos y escribir siguiendo una estructura y las ideas de otros autores. Por el contrario, quienes tienen creencias mayoritariamente transaccionales piensan en la lectura y la escritura como procesos dialógicos y creativos. Algunas de sus prácticas se centran en aspectos como la definición de una posición (al leer o escribir), la investigación del contexto del autor o lector y la definición de objetivos (de lectura o escritura). La investigación pone de manifiesto la posibilidad de reconceptualizar la lectura y la escritura en el contexto académico, valorando su función epistémica y transformando el discurso predominante que las concibe como habilidades técnicas y universales, que pueden mejorarse mediante la correcta aplicación de reglas gramaticales o fórmulas efectivas.

Palabras clave: escritura académica, alfabetización, creencias, enseñanza superior, formación en investigación.

Resumo

O objetivo desta pesquisa foi analisar e descrever as práticas e crenças de leitura e escrita de estudantes e professores de um programa de mestrado em uma universidade pública mexicana. Foi realizada uma pesquisa qualitativa transversal. Na primeira fase, um questionário autoadministrado com perguntas abertas foi usado para examinar diferentes crenças sobre leitura e escrita e para identificar atores-chave. Na segunda fase, foram realizadas entrevistas com professores e alunos. Constatou-se que crenças diferentes não são mutuamente exclusivas, mas podem existir simultaneamente na mesma pessoa, embora com cargas diferentes. Aqueles que possuem principalmente crenças transmissivas entendem a leitura e a escrita como processos de obtenção (decodificação) e transmissão (codificação) de informações. Na prática, eles procuram identificar as principais ideias, resumir textos e escrever de acordo com uma estrutura e as ideias de outros autores. Em contraste, aqueles com crenças majoritariamente transacionais pensam na leitura e na escrita como processos dialógicos e criativos. Algumas de suas práticas centram-se em aspetos como: definir uma posição (ao ler ou escrever), investigar o contexto do autor ou leitor, e definir objetivos (de leitura ou escrita). A pesquisa mostra a possibilidade de reconceptualizar a leitura e a escrita no contexto acadêmico, valorizando sua função epistêmica e transformando o discurso predominante que as concebe como habilidades técnicas e universais, que podem ser melhoradas através da aplicação correta de regras gramaticais ou fórmulas eficazes.

Palavras-chave: escrita acadêmica, alfabetização, concepções, ensino superior, treinamento em pesquisa.

Introduction

During the second half of the 20th century, the democratization process of higher education in Latin America was accompanied by a sharp increase in university enrolment (UNESCO, 2009). This trend, which continues to the present day, has favored access to universities for heterogeneous groups, which has led to debates about educational inclusion. In Mexico, the Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior (ANUIES), in its 2018 proposal to renew higher education, determined that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) should "guarantee inclusive, equitable and quality education, and promote lifelong learning opportunities" (p. 25). However, guaranteeing equal access does not imply retention and completion of studies. One of the contradictions arising from this inclusion process is the high dropout rate detected mainly in the first years of studies (Carlino, 2005; Navarro, 2012; Castro Azuara, 2016; Carrasco, 2017).

To level students' academic performance, reading and writing courses have emerged in several HEIs throughout Latin America. These courses typically take place in the first semesters since they aim to make it easier for new students to integrate into the academic environment. However, despite initiatives to encourage inclusion and retention, institutions must choose between improving students' prior educational experiences and emphasizing teaching the specifics of academic discourse, which necessitates dismissing those students who fall short of the institution's expectations (Franco, 2021). Therefore, initiatives to reduce students' inequities in higher education have yet to impact retention or outcomes. Figures from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2018) show that, on average, young individuals who completed higher education were 18 percent for this region. It drops to 7.6 percent in Mexico. Although it cannot be assumed that a student's lack of basic academic skills is the main reason they drop out of school, compensatory programs do not structurally address these problems.

Research in the Latin American context has long established the difficulties that graduate students experience when they write their thesis (Chois & Jaramillo, 2016; Peredo Merlo, 2016). However, most recent studies indicate that the problem does not lie in the 'deficits' students present but in the idea that reading and writing are individual cognitive processes that can be enhanced by teaching certain grammatical rules and content formulas.

The importance of understanding the beliefs underlying reading and writing practices in higher education is related to their mediating role in the production of academic and scientific discourses. We could help students generate better strategies for critically deploying reading and writing practices in their disciplinary fields if we understand how these beliefs —often implicit, even for the actors themselves— are constructed and distinguish which aspects influence this construction process (Franco, 2021). Beliefs about reading and writing become more important in graduate school because they are directly related to the production of knowledge and, as a result, to critical capacity, self-organization, and regulation of autonomous work. The previously said can only be communicated through a mastery of writing that is difficult to achieve in previous stages (Arnoux *et al.*, 2013).

We are still in the early phases of scientific investigation of how various actors in higher education understand reading and writing habits. In Spain, we can find the works of Monserrat Castelló and Mar Mateos (2015) and Ruth Villalón (2010). In Chile, Navarro *et al*. (2020) studied the social representations of academic writing in students in their first year. In Mexico, we have few but substantial contributions. Research about implicit theories in university students carried out by Hernández Rojas (2012) and Hernández Rojas and Rodríguez Varela (2018) account for the differences between disciplines; Gaeta et al. (2020) conducted an exploratory study to identify the epistemic and reproductive dimensions of academic writing conceptions in medical students. The findings indicate that undergraduates do not entirely agree on epistemic concepts, implying difficulty elaborating ideas and learning from academic writing.

Research on this concept is interested in two distinct but complementary planes: those that refer to the individual —and attempt to demonstrate a causal relationship between beliefs and writing practices— and those that refer to the collective plane —and point out that beliefs about writing are forged—. Thus, beliefs are formed in response to the types of practices that exist in communities (Hernández Rojas, 2012). However, as Hernández Rojas and Rodríguez Varela (2018) correctly point out, more research is required to comprehend the latter relationship fully.

Beliefs have been studied from various theoretical perspectives. Generally, three of these perspectives are considered relevant to reading and writing studies. First, the phenomenographic perspective focused on the learning experience of students in different instances and disciplines and distinguished between surface-level and deep-level approaches to learning (Marton & Säljö, 1976, as cited in Zanotto, 2018). Later, this methodology was transferred to the reading and writing domain following Schraw and Bruning's research in 1996. Second, the metacognitive perspective integrates cognitive (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Bandura, 1982) and epistemic factors with emotional and motivational factors (Boice, 1990; 1993, as cited in Zanotto, 2018) and assumes that beliefs about writing influence the quality of academic writing. Finally, the implicit theories perspective tries to explain how we construct, store and retrieve the knowledge to solve problems.

As defined by Schraw and Bruning (1996), implicit models of reading are a group of epistemic beliefs about the location of a text's intended meaning. As part of their early research, they requested college students to read a story and provide feedback, during which they evaluated the students' reading preferences. They determined that students with beliefs associated with a transmissive model emphasize the idea that the meaning is in the text itself; therefore, it is independent of the reader. On the other hand, students with beliefs associated with a transactional model think that the text's meaning is in the reader's mind and must be actively constructed by incorporating their own thinking into the process. In their written products, students who followed a transactional model included a more significant number of critical evaluations and personal reactions.

Research purposes

The general objective of this research was to analyze the beliefs and writing practices of students and teachers in a postgraduate program in architecture at a public university in Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico. In order to achieve this purpose, two specific objectives were stated: to characterize transmissive and transactional beliefs and to identify critical actors with transactional beliefs to inquire about their reading and writing practices.

Methodology

Participants

We worked with volunteer subjects from a master's program in Architecture at a public university in Veracruz, Mexico. Collaborating members were 20 in total: 12 students (4 eighth generation and 8 ninth generation) and 8 full-time teachers. Table 1 provides more details on participants.

Table 1

General Data on Participants

		Students	Teachers
Gender	Female	42%	75%
	Male	58%	25%
Age	24-29	50%	
	30-38	50%	
	39-49		25%
	50-64		75%
Nationality	Mexican	92%	100%
	Foreigner	8%	
Education	Bachelor's	83%	
	Master's	17%	13%
	PhD		87%

Note. The table shows percentages for students and teachers regarding categories of gender, age, nationality and education.

This qualitative cross-sectional study was carried out in two stages. During the first stage, we used a self-administered questionnaire with open-ended questions to investigate community beliefs and identify critical actors. The questions were based on the definitions of implicit reading models (Schraw & Bruning, 1996) and writing beliefs (White & Bruning, 2004). As a result, two main categories (Reading and Writing) and twelve subcategories were created. Questionnaires were administered to both teachers and students and were applied using Microsoft Forms. In addition, we included a consent agreement that described the research's objectives and stated that both the information provided and the participants' identities would be anonymized. The responses were collected over three weeks in April 2020 and automatically recorded on the platform.

For data analysis, we followed Structural Discourse Analysis (SDA) (Martinic, 2006). This type of analysis allows the determination of 'units of meaning' that seek to organize and classify the discursive material to establish the principles that organize the subjects' beliefs. For the coding process, we used ATLAS.ti (8.4.4) and identified eight units of meaning: definition of reading, definition of writing, purpose of reading in the academic context, purpose of writing in the academic context, competencies needed to read academic texts, competencies needed to write academic texts, academic reading practices, and academic writing practices. Each of these units, in turn, corresponds to the two types of beliefs established from theory: transactional and transmissive. Therefore, during the analysis process, we worked on generating opposition and equivalence relationships, which resulted in 117 codes classified under each unit (see Tables 2 and 3). With these emerging codes, we were able to generate a definition of transmissive and transactional beliefs for this community of teachers and students.

Table 2

Units of Analysis and Linked Codes for Transmissive Beliefs

	Reading	Writing
	Linked Codes	Linked Codes
Definition	- Assimilate ideas from others - Understand a written message - Interpret signs (decoding) - Receiving a written message - Individual process	- Expressing ideas through graphic signs - Writing about a topic - Conveying ideas based on our knowledge - Encoding ideas in words
Purpose	- Acquire knowledge/information - Professional improvement (discipline)	- Provide information - Disclose knowledge - Transmit findings
Competencies	- Ability to prioritize information - Reading comprehension - Experience with disciplinary discourse/ specific scientific language	- Analytical skills - Investigative capacity - Ability to organize information - Knowledge of text structure - Knowledge of the subject matter - Knowledge and correct use of grammar - Be objective - Experience as a writer
Practices	- Summarize the text - Make several readings - Identify main ideas - Read according to the text's structure/order - Review key concepts - Review bibliography to enhance knowledge - Underline ideas - Make sure to understand key concepts/ vocabulary	- Writing a draft - Writing a final text - Organize the information to be transmitted - Organize the ideas to transmit them in a clear way - Write in a clear and concise manner - Drafting ideas based on the texts you read Check coherence

Table 3

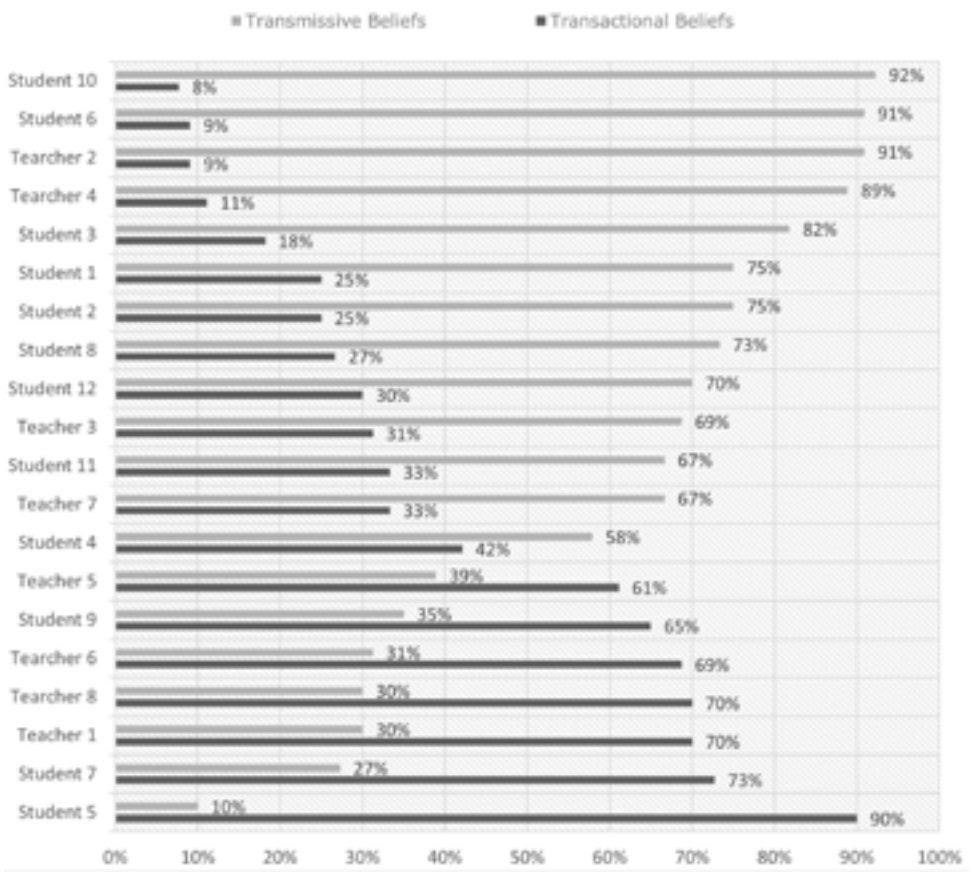
Units of Analysis and Linked Codes for Transactional Beliefs

	Reading	Writing
	Linked Codes	Linked Codes
Definition	- Comprehend, in a situated way, a written message - Construct meaning - Creative process - Dialogic process	- Communication tool - Convey a message with the reader in mind - To think and build knowledge - Creative process - Recursive process
Purpose	- Develop a standpoint - Think (analyze, problematize, question, reflect, form criteria, develop other ideas). - To support ideas - Learning to write - Establish dialogue	- Writing allows to transform own thinking - Develop a standpoint - Discuss with the reader - Teach/Learn - Generate knowledge - Motivate dialogue - Organize ideas - Solve problems/Make decisions
Competencies	- Capacity for critical analysis - To be sure of one's own interests and motivations. - Ability to transform information into knowledge - Formulate reading purposes (critical reading) - Generate context of the topic addressed in the reading. - Be familiar with references used by the author - Recognize parts and characteristics of text type	- Argumentative capacity - Ability to express one's own voice - Knowledge of the discourse of their discipline - Academic humility - Interest in disseminating research - Creative thinking - Possess cultural capital - Know how to search for relevant sources - Recognize the purpose of the text - Know how to write in a simple way - To be ethical
Practices	- Establish a reading objective - Research the context and author - Perform several readings, at different levels of depth. - Review theoretical standpoints - Refer to other texts to improve comprehension - Underline important parts	- Contrasting results and theory - Give to a third party to read - Define who will be the reader -Define a standpoint - Prepare notes on the bibliography reviewed - Establish coherence among parts of the paper - Generate maps to break down ideas - State objectives - Conduct *previous* research on the topic - Review the coherence in theories used

Once the analysis of questionnaires was completed, we identified key actors, i.e., those with the highest percentage[1] of transactional beliefs. This action marked the completion of the first methodological stage. Figure 1 shows that teachers 1, 8, and 6, and students 5, 7, and 9 hold the highest proportion of transactional beliefs.

Figure 1

Prevalence of Transmissive and Transactional Beliefs in Teachers and Students



Note. The figure shows percentages of transmissive and transactional beliefs for each participant. Percentages were calculated by adding the codes that each participant had linked to them under each type of belief.

The second methodological stage addressed the last specific purpose: to identify how the reading and writing practices declared by the collaborating members can benefit the implementation of teaching actions in graduate education. According to the analysis of the questionnaires, we interviewed the subjects with the highest percentage of transactional beliefs. Interviews were conducted during September and October 2020. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, it was decided to use the Skype platform. Interviews were recorded, with the interviewees´ consent, for later transcription.

The interview questions were developed based on emergent categorization. We elaborated questions for each subject to deepen their previous answers. We asked them, for example, to explain in greater detail how they put reading

and writing into practice according to the definition they had presented in the questionnaires. In this way, we could corroborate the interpretation we had made of the data in the questionnaires.

Results

Major findings on beliefs corroborate the presence of two types of conceptions when talking about academic reading and writing: transmissive and transactional. These beliefs are not presented as opposites but as a greater load of one or the other. Those who strongly hold transmissive views think that reading and writing are acts of encoding and decoding written messages that are used to acquire or transmit knowledge. On the other hand, those who hold transactional beliefs see reading and writing as dialogic, creative, and meaning-building processes that allow them to reflect with others and transform their thinking. Transmissive beliefs prevail in the academic community studied among both teachers and students.

According to transmissive beliefs, reading and writing are individual processes where the reader must understand what the text says (using different techniques, such as extracting main and secondary ideas from the text), and the writer must be as neutral as possible when transmitting a message. Therefore, they conceive reading and writing as general tools that can be used in any context. On the contrary, those with a greater load of transactional beliefs understand reading and writing as dialogic, creative, and meaning-building processes. From this perspective, writing can be a teaching and learning tool since, through the writing process, it is possible to organize ideas, solve problems and make decisions. Regardless of beliefs, similar practices can be identified; however, transactional beliefs correspond to reading and writing practices that are more critical and meta-reflective.

Transmissive Beliefs of Academic Reading and Writing

According to the transmissive beliefs of teachers and students, reading is defined as a process that requires interpreting signs to obtain information. It is also used to gain knowledge in the academic setting. As a result, to comprehend a text´s meaning, the reader must decode it. Reading is thus seen as a personal activity in which a reader absorbs, interprets, or internalizes the ideas presented in the text. The competences or knowledge deemed necessary to read in this context include comprehension of what is being read, the capacity to prioritize information, knowledge of the subject, and familiarity with the discipline's language. Special consideration is given to scientific language.

Reading strategies used by teachers and students include summarizing the text, looking up supporting information in the bibliography, and recognizing important concepts. According to transmissive views, writing is the act of verbally expressing our thoughts. Therefore, when we write, we codify our knowledge to communicate it in a text. Writing is employed in academic contexts to convey research study findings or our opinions on a particular subject. To put it another

way, writing serves to spread information, and everybody who receives it is viewed as a peer. Academic writing is thought to need a variety of skills, including the capacity for analysis and investigation, the capacity for information organization (knowledge of the subject, the format of the text, and the rules of the language), prior experience, and objectivity.

Transactional Beliefs and Practices of Academic Reading and Writing

Subjects who hold transactional beliefs recognize reading as a dialogic, creative, and meaning-making process. That is, the reader receives information from a text but also contributes to its meaning. Reading is a contextual activity; therefore, understanding written communication requires knowledge of the context. According to these views, reading in an academic setting can be used to start a conversation, define a stance, and reinforce ideas. The major abilities necessary for reading in this context are recognized as the capacity to critically evaluate (i.e., defining reading objectives, identifying structure, and examining the context of the text) and the capacity to reflect on one's own interests and motives.

Both students and teachers express the importance of establishing reading objectives. In this way, when approaching a text, they can make a first "quick" or "skim" reading that allows them to detect, among other things, the main ideas, the structure, the theoretical approach, and the usefulness of the text for their own research. For example, one of the students explains it as follows:

> I will be honest; I do not read texts thoroughly. I first read the summary, the introduction, I begin to select elements that catch my attention, and I quickly go down and break down the reading. If I consider that it is a suitable reading, I start generating a kind of a mental map and then I transfer the information to my own text or research document. (Student 5)

The student also refers to his writing process by mentioning that he makes a mind map and transfers information to his text. That is, sometimes, they refer to other sources during the process of writing when they need specific information. As one teacher expresses, "if you are going to write a paper, then you already know the subject, and you know what you are looking for when reading related information" (Teacher 7). Similarly, another student states, "first, it is like a very quick reading, and then, if I am interested, I do a more thorough reading and take some notes" (Student 7).

Other teachers refer to critical reading practices such as investigating whom the author is, considering when and where the text was written, its theoretical approach and reviewing the references.

> I first do some research, perhaps some terms to know exactly what it refers to. Because then it happens that you are reading authors who are not from your same country and the terms they use are different. Then, when I finish reading, I classify the elements that stand out, such as the approach, context, and circumstances. (Teacher 1)

Sometimes, the text is the same, but the reading objective changes:

> I always have a very clear objective when approach reading, some definition or some relation of terms or theory. There are many books with which I have worked in parts, and over many years, I keep coming back to them, and they always seem new to me because, probably, I am always working with different aspects. One of them, for example, is Dialogues of Plato, which I have read for some things when I studied Architecture, I read it when I studied Law, I also read it for pleasure when someone recommended it to me. (Teacher 6)

Likewise, it is important to know the genre characteristics for a filter reading to be efficient. As one student points out:

> Before entering the master's program, I did not know how to distinguish between an article and an essay, and that caused me many problems. But once I understood what the structure of the article was, I said: ah yes, it is different. When they told us, during the first seminar, what was research, they taught us how to use repositories, and at that moment I said to myself, ah, well, everything there must be valid then. (Student 7)

Another common practice among teachers and students is to discuss what they read; that is, to create a space for dialogue, either inside or outside the institution. One of the teachers explains the previously said as follows:

> When I have finished reading and I think I have understood, then I talk with my sister, and we exchange ideas, she recommends authors or gives me a new direction. And when it comes to architecture, the person I talk to the most is a colleague, who is an educated person. He has read a lot. At another time I used to talk a lot with my supervisor; he was also a well-read person and, well, that allowed me to have an exchange of interesting ideas. (Teacher 6)

One student refers to this practice as "community reading":

> Sometimes with the teacher, face-to-face, we do get to discuss it [the text read] and it always stands out like what part of the reading each of us noticed more. Maybe something for me was not important, but for someone else it was, or someone understood something very differently, and someone else saw it in another light, and so yes, it is enriching when we do that. But we haven't done it much recently because of COVID and because we are now more concentrating on writing our thesis and you forget a little bit about community reading. (Student 9)

The student also states that in case the teachers do not provide the space to share the readings in class, they try to generate it among classmates: "what we do, for example, with some classmates, sometimes we do discuss one or two things outside the classroom" (Student 9). This practice of oral feedback among students can also be used as a strategy for teaching disciplinary content.

Students highlight writing as a means to help them to remember what they have read: "Generally, I take notes, just main ideas. And I am very bad at organizing them, but, somehow, when I have already written them down, I remember. I remember more when I write it down" (Student 7). Writing also helps to think or reflect on what they read: "When I am already writing, it is as if I analyzed it and can understand it better, that is, it has already had meaning inside me, and I can write it down. It is as if I become more aware of what I am writing" (Student 9). The important thing is, in some way, to be able to externalize what they have read to adapt it and understand it better.

Since writing is primarily used as a communication tool, we must take the reader into account when writing. Similar to this, many who hold transactional ideas see writing as a creative and recursive process that enables us to reflect and expand our knowledge, alter our thinking, establish an opinion, and inspire discussion. Some of the abilities needed for academic writing include argumentative abilities, subject-matter expertise, the capacity to project one's voice in the text, and critical reading abilities (such as the ability to find pertinent sources or understand the purpose of the writing).

Just as objectives are defined for reading, a script is defined for writing. This script can take the form of a mind map or, simply, a list of associated ideas in the writing. This is a practice reported by both professors and students.

> What I always do is a script, what I want to do, and where I want to get to. In the script, I must state an objective. For example, the objective is to demonstrate that housing is important in times of pandemic, much more than public space. And when I have already made that proposition, I say: let's see, I must talk about what a pandemic is, I have to talk about what housing is, I have to talk about what public space is. (Teacher 6)

Students and teachers agree that it is essential to know, beforehand, the intention of our writing, since this will guide the argumentative line or position in the text.

> The script does not emerge just because; it emerges because there is an intention. From the moment you are going to write something, you have, I don't want to call it an objective, but you do have an intention. And that intention must guide your argumentation, to defend something or to be able to build something. Because writing without meaning does not lead you anywhere. (Student 9)

The student further states that without an intention, writing would be pointless. In general, in the academic context, it is said that the intention is to convince the reader; therefore, as seen in the previous examples, attention must be paid to how the argumentation is constructed to achieve that end.

For the students, their readers are their teachers, supervisors, and the evaluation committee who reviews their thesis: it is these readers that the students must convince. This is how one of the students explains it:

> That is another thing they teach us that I have learned in the master's degree: that I can be against what the teacher says, but if I am solid in my position, which has to be reflected in the thesis, I can make a good defense. (Student 5)

Some students relate their textualization procedure as a back-and-forth, a mixture (perhaps by way of cognitive synthesis), between their ideas, readings, and notes. They also speak of writing as a process of continuous revision. One student, for example, states that she uses different colors to differentiate between what is preliminary and what has already been revised or ideas that are not yet clear or have yet to be integrated coherently:

> For example, I have the idea and I try to write it down. If I know it is still not clear, I mark it with a color and I have about three different colors. I know what I want to write, and this is already important, but I still can't find the link with the [paragraph] above and, then, I mark it in another color. And I kind of try to forget them and go

> on, and then I go back to read it again. I start to have, like, the links. But sometimes I have to go through them several times. And then I remove the color, or just change it, for example, what was in red, it is now in yellow. And then I start to put notes like "something is missing here". (Student 9)

Another student also highlights her process of "putting together" the text as a continuous revision of coherence:

> I take out my notes, I take out the texts and, at some point, in my head, I imagine the big picture: I am going to start on this idea, and I am going to draft it out like this, more or less, and I am arranging them in that order, generally. From there on, I write or do some more reading and I also incorporate what I think. I go like that, making a mix. Then, after that, I see how much coherence there is in it. Because it has happened to me that, sometimes, I am convinced by the paragraph, but it doesn't go there, or it does not say what you want to express. Then I say: "ah, I should put this in the introduction". Then I remove it and change its place, I place it where I think they would work better for coherence. And, even so, there are times when I find myself eliminating them, when I say: this is fine, but it is not what I think I should say at this moment. (Student 7)

In both cases, it is emphasized that there is already a general idea of what is to be transmitted, namely, there is already a script or writing objective. As observed, the practices of reading, writing, and speaking, in the academic context, are interwoven with each other.

Most of the teachers and students who participated in this research highlight that architects are not used to reading and writing academic genres; therefore, transitioning from a bachelor's degree to a master's degree focused on research training is quite challenging. One of the teachers puts it this way: "Architecture is a practical activity; it is reflected in something practical. This is not valued in a research program. [Students] have a hard time, especially in the first semester, because many think of a practical solution to their research problems." (Teacher 7).

Students agree that the transition from undergraduate to graduate studies is 'radical': "Almost all of us are trained in technical matters: proportions of materials, knowing what the structure is like, more construction issues. To think theoretically is a bit of a radical change for us" (Student 9). One student speaks of the difficulty she encountered in understanding how to cite the work of other authors in her own paper:

> At the beginning, I had a hard time understanding how you had to express what other people say, because that was also something we were told: of course, these are your ideas, but you have to rely on what someone else said. So, I thought, well... but then how, how to express it correctly, without plagiarizing or even not saying anything? And from there on, I have realized that the more I read and the more information I had, I was able to change this, to do it a little bit better in the way I write, or I present something. (Student 7)

Another teacher confirms the above and explains that architects in undergraduate training do not have many experiences where they read and write academically:

> The subjects that could nurture them with writing would be theory or history, but they [the authorities] have turned them into a design workshop, where they show slides in a PowerPoint, and there is no reading. When you ask the kids to read something, they look surprised. (Teacher 6)

One teacher even considers her own learning process in the doctoral program she attended in Spain, referring to the lack of feedback from her supervisor:

> I had many problems writing my thesis, and now I realize that I could have done it differently, and that perhaps I really needed someone to read my work and tell me if I was on the correct path, someone from the discipline, because not even my supervisor read my work. (Teacher 1).

In addition to the above, both teachers and students expressed that academic writing is not a pleasant activity since there are limitations and rules that restrict the interest of those who decide to get involved in research.

Discussion

The above confirms the need to teach reading and writing (even at the graduate level). However, it should be noted that students and teachers with more transactional beliefs also consider that these courses should be taught by an expert (linguist) and not by someone from their disciplinary field. This finding is consistent with other studies (Castelló *et al*., 2012; Solé *et al*., 2005), where there is an absence of writing tasks aimed at using writing as a tool for the development of learning, even when teachers recognize its potential.

The results also reveal similar practices in subjects with different beliefs. This coincides with the findings in other research (White & Bruning, 2004; Villalón & Mateos, 2009; Villalón, 2010; Hernández Rojas & Rodríguez Varela, 2018; Gaeta *et al.*, 2020) that states that both types of beliefs can coexist in the same subject. However, practices described by subjects during interviews corroborated that these coincide with the use of reading and writing as tools for dialogue and reflection. This can be related to the results of Schraw and Bruning (1996). They found that students with beliefs linked to the transactional model tend to include a greater number of critical evaluations and personal reactions in their written products.

The reading and writing practices examined in this paper are primarily transactional in nature, focusing on aspects such as goal setting, defining a position, inquiring about the author's context, and determining who the reader will be. In other words, they are practices that imply a meta-reflection on what and why one reads and writes, which is inextricably linked to the ways of doing things in a particular academic community. In this sense, it is essential to consider the epistemic nature of reading and writing in the academic context since, as Cassany (2006) points out, reading and writing are recursive processes that involve contrasting and organizing information, ideas, authors, reviewing, re-contrasting and re-reading. This can be corroborated by what teachers and students state about their reading practices, for example: reading other sources to understand a text better; reviewing the bibliography of the text being read to understand the author's position; or conversing with classmates about what they have read, that is, externalizing what they have read in order to learn. In addition, practices in terms of writing include reviewing notes while writing or reading other texts to go deeper into a specific idea and marking the text with different colors in each revision to organize the information coherently. Thus, teachers and students not

only read and write to research and generate innovative contributions to their disciplinary field but also learn, converse and develop a position through these practices.

From the above, both teachers and institutions need to consider reading and writing as epistemic tools, that is, tools to teach how to think, analyze, establish dialogue and learn. Furthermore, they should consider that reading and writing will allow students to generate a meta-reflection on how and what they are using them for, which would help to promote critical thinking, essential in the training of researchers. As suggested by Sánchez Camargo (2016), the communicative skills of young people and the opportunities provided by the institutions (in the entry to a disciplinary community) are determinants in their enculturation process. Although graduate schools do not represent a first approach to a disciplinary community, it is a first approach to a community of researchers (particularly in the case studied) whose practices differ from those students who are familiar with them. In this sense, Paula Carlino (2005) emphasizes that teachers can and should be willing to share the experience they have acquired as members of their respective academic communities.

Despite the inquiries that demonstrate the epistemic value of reading and writing (Carlino, 2003, 2005; Gutiérrez Serrano, 2014; Padilla, 2019; Navarro *et al.*, 2020), it can be said that the main obstacle to "putting into practice" the previously mentioned is that many are still unaware of this function. In the case of this research, most conceive them as a means to communicate what is known, already analyzed, or thought; they conceive them as basic techniques that, once acquired, can be used at any time and context.

According to Padilla (2019), current research points out the need to implement dialogic teaching proposals that reformulate the traditional unidirectional feedback practices, that is, teacher-student. The new approach aims to favor multidirectional exchanges between students and teachers and between peers and interaction through written comments and dialogue spaces, whether face-to-face or virtual.

The above, precisely, has been highlighted in the results of this research: instances of dialogue, both with teachers and with peers, feed meta-reflection and make reading and writing practices critical, which creates a more autonomous learning process for students. Similarly, the evaluative practices with reading and writing referred to by the teachers interviewed (reading summaries, essays, Excel tables, etc.) are also presented as examples for teaching reading and writing.

The results also show that, in the community studied, there is a generalized idea that architects do not know how to express themselves through writing, which constitutes an obstacle since they assume it as part of their stereotype. Despite having a greater burden of transactional beliefs, the teachers and students interviewed emphasize that architects are not used to reading and writing since architecture is a practical or technical activity. However, these results reveal that what teachers and students do when reading and writing does not have to do with the difficulties they have that, in a generalized manner, are attributed to architects, nor with the discourse of the deficiencies that students carry with them from previous educational levels. However, they are ways of reading and writing that differ from the generalized imaginary.

Therefore, it is corroborated that it should not be the university's task to promote courses that seek only to remedy difficulties. The institution of higher education is responsible for teaching the disciplinary communities specific forms and structures and what they do when they read and write. The practices reported by the teachers interviewed coincide with what Carlino (2005) states regarding what inclusive teachers do: they teach students to read as members of their disciplinary communities: they teach them to identify the author's position and the positions mentioned by other authors, they develop the history or context of these positions, they encourage them to recognize the controversies raised, the reasons that the author of the text wields to support his ideas, and finally they help them evaluate these arguments in the light of the proper methods to each area of knowledge.

Conclusions

Implementing actions for teaching reading and writing at the graduate level is not a simple task, since it is necessary to consider its situated, cultural and diverse character, in addition to generating strategies that can be implemented in a progressive manner. These strategies should aim both at helping students to participate in the communities and to critically deploy reading and writing practices so that students can use them deliberately and autonomously. Although reading and writing, by themselves, are not emancipatory tools, teachers can mediate to transform students' beliefs intentionally. Therefore, our responsibility lies not only in becoming aware of our practices and their teaching but also in generating critical dialogues that promote plural, interdisciplinary, and collective construction of knowledge.

Notes:

[1] Each questionnaire had several codes linked, which allowed us to record a percentage for each participant easily.

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