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Academic Writing Books in Argentina, Venezuela and Chile

By Guillermo Cordero Carpio*
University of Cuenca
Cuenca, EC

Monica Prior**
CLAEH - Latin American Center for Human Economy
Montevideo, UY

Claudia Maria Pereira*** (trans.)
Federal University of Santa Catarina
Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, BR

In recent years and in most Latin American countries there has been a growing interest in academic writing among different disciplines in graduate courses. Such interest can be confirmed by the increase in number of research done as from a multiple variety of approaches, the creation of research programs and teachers and researchers networks as well as the amount of undergraduate and graduate courses offered, the implementation of different academic mechanisms for the support of students and teachers, and the number of publications and regional, national and international meetings devoted to the discussion and exchange of different perspectives on a topic that is a real concern for the actors involved in the field of higher education. In order to shed some light on the area and promote experience exchange, four articles will be reviewed, two from Argentina, one from Venezuela and one from Chile. They

* Professor of Literature and Academic Writing at the University of Cuenca, in Ecuador. He is a Master in Cultural Studies and Hispanophone Literature (Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar, Ecuador). His email address is guillermo.cordero@ucuenca.edu.ec

** Professor of Spanish at CLAEH (Latin American Center for Human Economy), Uruguay. She is a Master in Teaching in Higher Education. Her email address is moniprior@gmail.com

*** Graduated in Translation (University of Buenos Aires 1987), Master of Arts (Federal University of Santa Catarina 1994) and a Certified Portuguese Teacher Educator (University of Porto 2003). She has extensive experience in teaching and translation. Since 2014 she is a PhD candidate at UFSC in the area of translation. Her email address is pereira.claudiamaria@gmail.com

all account for different initiatives related to the teaching of reading and writing at the university, the epistemological potential of such practices and the discursive genres that permeate different subjects in the academic and professional sphere.

Reading and writing in learning within the different IFD graduate courses and subjects that prepare teachers for secondary school: concepts and practices stated by teachers' trainers.

Paula Carlino (Director), Patricia Iglesia, Leandro Bottinelli, Manuela Cartolari, Irene Laxalt and Marta Marucco.

Buenos Aires: National Ministry of Education.

E-Book, First edition, 2013

In this work of free circulation, there is a report on a research carried out in fifty Teachers' Training Colleges in Argentina. A group of researchers, led by Paula Carlino, decided to get to know the ways in which teachers who train future secondary school teachers include reading and writing and how these are related to teaching their own subjects. There is a section where the theoretical and methodological framework are briefly described, followed by a long and highly detailed section that refers to the sample characteristics, analysis of data and results obtained through the above mentioned study. Finally, there is a recapitulation of the conclusions and some recommendations that intend to contribute to re-thinking curriculum design and the training of in-service teachers.

Researchers focused on obtaining information on how teachers conceive and understand the relations among reading, writing, and content learning: Do reading and writing only happen at assessment time or is the most of the epistemological potential of these activities made in order to favor the learning process? Is writing considered an acquired knowledge or a tool in progress? Are reading and writing taught as part of the discipline or are they moved to complementary spaces? In order to have access to this information, the researchers applied an online ques-



tionnaire that consisted of 75% closed questions and 25% open questions. 544 valid responses were obtained and quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed.

It is worth noticing the category system developed in order to analyze practices stated by subjects interviewed for this work in the open fields. Authors establish an opposition among those who express making use of reading and writing in class in a marginal way and those who integrate these activities to the contents of their subject, thus accompanying the process. They also defined two didactic positions: the first one related to those who take into consideration the need to generate teaching situations that make the interaction between student and task, teacher and peers possible as a means to favor learning and, on the other hand, those who do not consider this teaching approach.

As one of the main findings, the authors mention the fact that even when most teachers state they take care about reading and writing within their classes, they do it peripherally, generally requesting a task that will be given a grade. However, the number of teachers who follow the process and give some feedback is reduced. It was also observed that teachers whose institutions do not count on writing workshops tend to spend more time on reading and writing in their classes when compared to those who do have such spaces.

This article brings valuable information to those who intend to carry out research on writing within general subjects from teachers' perspective. Useful recommendations for higher education teachers concerned about this topic are offered, as well as for those who are responsible for curriculum design in these educational centers.

Writing Seedbed: writing tasks throughout three courses at the UNGS

Lucía Natale (Coordinator), Sergio Agoff, Natalia Ben-gochea, Franco Chiodi, Cecilia Chosco Díaz, Marcelo Muschietti, Federico Navarro, Daniela Stagnaro, Carolina Zunino
Los Polvorines: Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento

E-Book, First edition, 2013.

This article, seeking to contribute to reading and writing teaching at university level, is the result of a project developed at the Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento (UNGS) which updates and broadens previous researches carried out within the frame of the Program for the development of academic reading and writing skills throughout the course (PRODEAC).

The project focuses on directions and prompts for writing in assessment instances of the subjects corresponding to the University Second Stage in three courses (University Teaching Training History Course, Bachelor's in Public Administration, and Industrial Engineering). It follows two transversal axes: text production and assessment activities. The purpose, as explained by the coordinator, Lucía Natale, is to contribute with the mapping of writing activities performed at UNGS according to teaching/learning processes.

This work is divided in two parts. The first part is composed by three chapters: "Writing directions data collection and analysis; writing tasks and learning". The analysis is presented from different perspectives according to the prompts used in the different courses already mentioned.

In the second part, titled: "The interdisciplinary construction of directions and guidelines for text production", different experiences developed within the PRODAEC frame are collected. In the first chapter, imbalances in relation to representations by teachers and students are shown, particularly on discursive operations required in subject evaluations, and intervention strategies are proposed to correct such difficulties. In the second chapter, they present some of the strategies applied in different subjects in order to guide the writing process of the introduction and the theoretical frame, two central points of academic texts. The third one refers to the criteria considered in the joint elaboration of the task required to advanced students in the Bachelor's in a Public Administration course. Chapter four displays the adaptation of a prompt and its adequacy process in a group of students in one of the subjects in the Industrial Engineering course. Finally, in the fifth chapter,

the authors analyze some of the difficulties encountered in the last assessment that UNGS Engineering students have to complete in order to graduate: a final report on Professional Supervised Practice in Industrial Engineering.

This text is undoubtedly interesting for specialists in different areas, particularly Education and Language Sciences. Accordingly, their results will be useful for university teachers acting in courses similar to those in the research.

Academic writing in Venezuela: Research, reflection and proposals

Stella Serrano de Moreno and Rudy Mostacero (Editors)
Universidad de los Andes, Mérida, Venezuela
First edition, 2014

This volume, as stated in the prologue by the editors, has a strong pedagogical vocation. Herein, there are researches, theoretical reflections and didactic suggestions from Venezuelan teachers and researchers with the objective of promoting academic literacy that will generate substantial improvement in university training as well as professional performance. The objective of this work is to provide teachers from different disciplines in higher education with conceptualizations and didactic tools to help them rethink what reading and writing at the university represents, and introduce variations in their courses in order to present their students with discursive practices appropriate to each disciplinary field. The variety of contributions provided are included in cognitive and sociocultural perspectives, and the teaching approach that suggests introducing writing in the curriculum.

At the beginning, there is a prologue by the editors followed a presentation by Villalobos where the accuracy of the content of each chapter is detailed. The authors also include an interesting interview to Paula Carlino.

The core of the text consists of three large sections. The first one gathers four research articles addressing problems related to academic literacy through diverse methodological options. Silva and Ramírez describe a framework for didactic research on writing in five phases, developed within a

Spanish language class in seven teachers' training courses in a three-year time span. Serrano and Duque carried out a research-action in teachers' training where they decided to analyze a sequence of didactic intervention and identify writing strategies in 99 students' essays focusing on the way knowledge is transformed. The study presented by Martins and Palou describes the transformation of three teachers' concepts in non-linguistic areas, during a workshop on academic literacy training. Finally, García and Andrade describe the characteristics of eleven special undergraduate works that were awarded publication honor in a specialization on the promotion of reading and writing.

In the second section, Mostacero reflects on the epistemic potential of writing and the way in which it is used in teaching and learning. Its purpose is to construct a Multilevel Pedagogical Model. Villalobos' reflection focuses on challenges faced by a university institution in order to include reading and writing teaching in all and every subject. On the other hand, Peña presents a didactic approach to this problem seeking to combine critical reading and academic writing.

The third section includes three quite different pedagogical suggestions: Bruno and Beke describe the creative process and trial stage of an academic reading and writing handbook. Arnáez's proposal consists in a didactic sequence to produce an undergraduate project work and Aguirre's consists in a plan of pedagogical orientation for the production of research articles by new engineers.

Reading and writing in academic and professional contexts: Genres, Corpus and Methods

Giovanni Parodi and Gina Burdiles (Editors), Paulina Meza, Juan David Martínez Hincapié, Enrique Boudón, Cristobal Julio, Marcela Jarpa Azagra, Maritza Farlora, Liliana Vásquez-Rocca, Millaray Salas.
Santiago de Chile: editorial Planeta Chilena S.A.

First edition, May 2015.

This volume presents thirteen research works on discursive genres that are read and written in different disciplines wi-

thin the academic and professional fields. Even when each work constitutes an independent part, together they become an organic whole, converging through multiple communicating thematic, methodological and procedural vessels.

The work starts with a prologue and an introduction where the editors, Giovanni Parodi and Gina Burdiles, present the axis that pass through the study: Reading and writing, discursive genres and discipline, and specialization dimensions: rhetorical organization, knowledge attribution, encapsulation, multidimensional analysis, academic undergraduate courses, discursive communities in Chile and Spain, metadiscourse and multisemiosis.

The core of the work is divided into four parts. The first one consists of five chapters that explore different discursive genres that support the generation and transfer of subject knowledge within academic and professional fields. In the first chapter, 30 genres are identified and described, those used as reading material in six doctoral programs. In the second chapter, the variability of linguistic resources used is determined. They are part of the attributive knowledge in Linguistics dissertations; and the third one refers to functional rhetoric patterns in History and Physics doctoral dissertations. Chapter four describes the functional rhetoric organization of the genre Economy Handbook and chapter five refers to the organization of a “macro-movement” Case Study within the genre Clinical Case in texts coming from nine medical specializations.

The second part presents two chapters devoted to the characterization of Evaluative Academic Genres in a PhD course on Biotechnology and the genre Essay Type Test in History and Psychology.

The third one is divided in four chapters and is devoted to the study of semiotic devices present in academic genres of different disciplines. The first chapter identifies and describes devices from samples in Physics, Chemistry, Biotechnology, History, Literature and Linguistics texts, while the second one refers to Economy Handbooks. The other two chapters focus on the genre Monetary Policy Reports and delve into intersemiotic relations between the graphic device and its verbal context, and the incidence of

layouts for the presentation of multisemiotic information in reading comprehension.

Finally, part four brings two studies on lexico-grammatical characteristics of certain disciplinary genres, that is, encapsulation mechanisms regarding the neutral pronoun “ello” in Economy texts and lexico-grammatical features that signal a reflective metadiscourse in a sample of Linguistics, Economy and Medicine texts.

In each chapter, the steps followed in the construction of the corpus, conceptual categories of effectiveness, analyses and results obtained are clearly explained and follow an organized way too, thus, facilitating the researcher’s or scholar’s work seeking to replicate this kind of study in other contexts.

Notes

1. Teachers’ Training Institutes
2. Title in Spanish: Leer y escribir para aprender en las diversas carreras y asignaturas de los IFD que forman a profesores de enseñanza media: concepciones y prácticas declaradas de los formadores de docentes. Available at http://cedoc.infed.edu.ar/upload/Leer_y_escribir_para_aprender_en_las_diversas_carreras_y_asignaturas_de_los_IFD_que_forman_a_prof_de_ensenanza_mediaCarlino.pdf
3. Title in Spanish: El semillero de la escritura: Las tareas escritas a lo largo de tres carreras de la UNGS. Available at http://www.ungs.edu.ar/cm/uploaded_files/publicaciones/582_EDU14%20El%20semillero%20de%20la%20escritura_web.pdf
4. Title in Spanish: La escritura académica en Venezuela: Investigación, reflexión y propuestas.
5. Title in Spanish: Leer y escribir en contextos académicos y profesionales: Géneros, Corpus y Métodos.

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