Articles

Writing from within: how learning to write occurs in a Communication Studies curriculum

Escrever desde dentro: como ocorre o aprendizado da escrita em um currículo de Comunicação Social

Andrés Forero-Gómez[1]
Nayibe Rosado-Mendinueta[2]
Wendy Valdez Jiménez[3]
Angélica Rojas-Chávez[4]
Johamna María Muñoz Lalinde[5]
María Ynoelia Pastrán Chirinos[6]

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to characterize how writing is taught and integrated within an undergraduate program in Communication Studies at a private research university in Colombia. The relevance of this task is connected to the crucial role that writing plays in college as a facilitator for learning that enables students to think and communicate as experts in their disciplines (Ávila Reyes et al., 2021; Navarro et al., 2022; Thompson et al., 2021). To carry out this project, all faculty members were interviewed and asked to share the materials they use to support and assess student writing; this information was later contrasted with the perception of a group of alums that were polled. The results gathered provide an insightful perspective on how writing teaching and learning occur

1. Universidad del Norte, Departamento de Español, Barranquilla, Colombia. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3931-2434. Email: fforeroa@uninorte.edu.co
2. Universidad del Norte, Departamento de Español, Barranquilla, Colombia. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1865-2464. Email: nrosado@uninorte.edu.co
3. Universidad del Norte, Departamento de Español, Barranquilla, Colombia. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8127-6110. Email: valdezw@uninorte.edu.co
4. Universidad del Norte, Departamento de Español, Barranquilla, Colombia. https://orcid.org/0009-0000-4377-9788. Email: arojasc@uninorte.edu.co
5. Universidad del Norte, Departamento de Comunicación Social, Barranquilla, Colombia. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5540-6495. Email: lalinde@uninorte.edu.co
6. Universidad del Norte, Departamento de Español, Barranquilla, Colombia. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2375-2136. Email: ypastran@uninorte.edu.co

Andrés F.-G., Nayibe R.-M., Wendy V. J., Angélica R.-C., Johamna M. M. L., María Y. P. C.

in an undergraduate program. This characterization aims to align with faculty and alums expectations regarding the role of writing within their discipline, shedding light on the complexities of teaching, learning, and applying writing skills in both academic and professional contexts.

Keywords*: academic writing; curriculum; higher education; Communication Studies.*

RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é caracterizar como a escrita é ensinada e integrada em um programa de graduação em Estudos de Comunicação de uma universidade privada na Colômbia. A relevância desta tarefa está ligada ao papel crucial que a escrita desempenha na academia como facilitadora da aprendizagem que permite aos alunos pensarem e se comunicarem como especialistas nas suas disciplinas (Ávila Reyes et al., 2021; Navarro et al., 2022, Thompson et al., 2021). Para realizar este projeto, todos os docentes foram entrevistados e solicitados a compartilharem os materiais que utilizam para apoiar e avaliar a escrita dos alunos; informação esta que foi posteriormente contrastada com a percepção de um grupo de ex-alunos entrevistados. Os resultados obtidos fornecem uma perspectiva esclarecedora sobre como ocorre o ensino e a aprendizagem da escrita em um curso de graduação. Esta caracterização visa alinhar-se com as expectativas de professores e ex-alunos em relação ao papel da escrita em sua disciplina, lançando luz sobre as complexidades do ensino, da aprendizagem e da aplicação de habilidades de escrita em contextos acadêmicos e profissionais.

Palavras-chave: *redação acadêmica; currículo; ensino superior; estudos de comunicação.*

1. Introduction

Curricula in higher education serve not just as a framework but as a comprehensive mediator for student experiences and a promoter of their holistic development (Barnett, 2009; Magendzo & Donoso, 1992; Tsui, 2013). In this context, the "Curriculum" acts as an integrator of educational objectives steered by dynamic, contextual needs (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). Within this framework, competency-based models have gained traction. These models are formed to shape socially demanded skills and intertwine specific and generic competencies, encapsulating crucial knowledge and

abilities (Miguel, 2005; Sutcliffe et al., 2005). Generic competencies which include social, methodological, participatory and specialized competencies (Clemente & Escribá, 2013) have multiple functions across various dimensions that favor critical, analytical and reflective thinking (García et al., 2020).

Evaluating these curricula is pivotal for universities aiming to enhance the quality of education. This process involves a thorough analysis of curricular plans to determine their relevance and alignment to contextual needs. Curricular mapping emerges as an evaluative tool, spotlighting the coherence, consistency, and possible areas of curriculum enhancement (Fullan, 2003), while striving to foster quality university education that resonates harmoniously within divergent contexts (Wong et al., 2019).

Among the essential competencies in higher education, academic writing is crucial because it fosters students' learning and develops their capacity to think and communicate as experts in the disciplines (Ávila Reyes et al., 2021; Navarro et al., 2022; Thompson et al., 2021). This creates a positive impact on both academic performance and future professional success (Carlino, 2013; Changpueng, 2013; Glau, 2007).

However, universities face significant challenges in teaching writing, such as faculty training deficiencies and a lack of inclusive policies (Ávila Reyes, et al.,2020; Carlino, 2013; Grose-Fifer et al., 2022). Despite these challenges, innovations in writing pedagogy have led to significant advancements in teaching this skill at the university level. The "writing to learn" movement positions writing as a tool for enhancing knowledge and fostering critical thinking, while the "learning to write in the disciplines" movement focuses on mastering writing conventions specific to various academic fields (Curry & Lillis, 2003; Montes & Vidal Lezama, 2017; Navarro & Montes, 2021; Thompson et al., 2021).

In Latin America, the academic debate centers on how and where to teach writing at the college level (Carlino, 2013). Since 2018, most of the universities in the region have begun incorporating academic literacy into their curricula, though full implementation of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) or Writing in the Disciplines (WID) remains limited (Navarro & Montes, 2021; Trigos-Carrillo, 2019). Latin American scholars have moved beyond academic literacy as a fixed set of skills by considering how writing practices and genres vary across the disciplines, redefining literacy as a social

practice. This has led many universities to establish writing courses and support programs that are aligned with this model (Trigos-Carrillo, 2019).

In the area of Communication Studies, mastery of both oral and written expression is critical (Beliche, 2013), as professionals in this field produce and interpret a diverse range of documents, from simple memos to complex scripts (Kloss & Quintanilla, 2023; Valentino, 2007). The curriculum therefore includes a variety of writing-intensive courses that cover journalism, organizational and audiovisual communication.

Writing in journalism focuses on crafting narratives that inform and engage the public. Instruction here includes learning to write various journalistic pieces such as interviews (Halperín, 2013; García et al., 2011), chronicles (Jaramillo, 2019; Franco, 2020), and reportages (Del Río, 1977; García & Gutiérrez, 2011). Additionally, the rise of digital media has pointed to the development of skills for writing web-based journalistic texts and digital infographics, reflecting the evolving technological landscape (Salaverría & Díaz, 2003).

In audiovisual communication, students learn to write texts that bring stories to life on screen. This includes crafting narrative treatments, storylines, loglines, rundowns, literary scenes, and various scripts for advertising, television, and technical purposes (McKee, 2004; Truby, 2009; Katz, 1991). Further, students develop skills in creating character profiles (Corbett, 2018) and texts for audiovisual analysis (Casetti, 1996), enhancing their ability to engage with and construct complex visual narratives.

Organizational Communication focuses on the strategic aspects of communication within corporate and non-profit environments. Students learn to formulate communication objectives, strategic plans, and intervention proposals, vital for effective internal communication (Aljure, 2015; Libaert, 2005). They also acquire skills in drafting statistical reports and conducting image audits (Álvarez, 2011), tasks that are essential for maintaining the public image of organizations. The curriculum also covers the creation of various business communications, including news summaries, press releases, social media content, and scripts for corporate events, ensuring that students are well-equipped to handle diverse communicative needs within professional settings.

This study is centered on this inquiry: "How do university curricula foster the development of specific writing skills needed within the discipline

of communication studies?" The purpose of this research, therefore, is to characterize how writing is taught and integrated within an undergraduate program in Communication Studies[1] at a private research university in Colombia. This characterization seeks to align with faculty and alums expectations regarding the role of writing within their discipline, shedding light on the complexities of teaching, learning, and applying writing skills in both academic and professional contexts.

This study is positioned within a broader academic discourse that recognizes the critical role of writing in the educational journey of students. As indicated by previous research, there is a paucity of studies specifically addressing the pedagogical approaches to teaching writing within communication studies (Navarro & Montes, 2021; Trigos-Carrillo, 2019). This investigation aims to fill this gap by detailing the various dimensions that influence the teaching of writing, including the design of writing tasks, the support provided by faculty in the text creation process, the roles writing plays within the curriculum, the genres most frequently assigned as writing tasks, and the methods used to assess written work. Through this exploration, the study endeavors to offer insights and recommendations for aligning the teaching of writing more closely with both educational and professional needs in the domain of communication studies.

2. Methods

This study is part of a larger research project about how writing teaching occurs in several academic disciplines. We adopted a qualitative research approach to explore how writing is integrated and taught within a Communication Studies program at a private research university in Colombia. The choice of a qualitative method aligns with the study's aim to explore the experiences and perceptions of faculty and alums regarding writing instruction and its role in the curriculum and follow such similar studies as Thonney's (2023). Employing an illustrative case study design, this research project focused on a triangulation strategy that ensured a robust analysis (Creswell, 2013), one that is centered on data collection from faculty interviews, alum surveys, and the analysis of several educational documents (from syllabi and rubrics to writing guidelines and samples). Prior to their participation, all involved individuals provided informed consent based on the format approved by the University's Ethics Committee.

Andrés F.-G., Nayibe R.-M., Wendy V. J., Angélica R.-C., Johamna M. M. L., María Y. P. C.

Program Selection

The program was selected based on its explicit focus on developing writing competencies, integral to the learning outcomes for Communication Studies graduates. This focus presented a proper opportunity to examine the nuances of writing instruction because it is a discipline where text production is a central component of academic and professional preparation.

Participants

Faculty Selection: the research team invited all 25 faculty members teaching core courses within the Communication Studies program to participate. The selection excluded professors from other departments who taught general education courses to maintain a focus on discipline-specific writing instruction. Interviews were conducted with those who incorporated writing into their classes, providing insights into the pedagogical strategies employed and the types of writing assignments utilized.

Alum Selection: alums who graduated between 2019 and 2022 were targeted for the study to ensure that participants had recent experiences with the program's writing instruction. Sixteen alums, now working in fields relevant to their degrees, responded to the survey. Their perspectives offered valuable insights into the long-term impact of writing instruction on their professional practices.

Data Collection Methods and Analysis of Data

Data triangulation was employed to enhance the study's validity, utilizing semi-structured interviews with faculty, surveys with alums, and analysis of educational materials (e.g., syllabi, assignment rubrics). This triangulated approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the writing instruction within the program. All participants provided informed consent, with the study's protocols approved by the university's Ethics Committee.

As mentioned earlier, faculty perspectives were gathered through semi-structured interviews consisting of five targeted questions. The initial two questions focused on the role of writing in both the learning process

and professional performance within the discipline. The remaining three questions explored how writing is integrated into the courses they teach: what do students write, why do they write those texts and how they learn to write them. Alum's feedback was captured via surveys comprising four questions, which assessed the importance of writing in their disciplinary training and its impact on their professional responsibilities. Both the interview and survey questions were developed and refined with input from faculty and alums, and a pilot test was conducted to refine these tools based on preliminary feedback. Following the data collection, the interviewer conducted the initial coding and analysis. This was independently verified by two observers who re-analyzed the data using Atlas TI, enabling triangulation and validation of the initial findings. This step was crucial for confirming the consistency and accuracy of the thematic interpretations.

Writing Profile and Mapping

The team synthesized the interview and survey data to construct a detailed writing profile, which outlined the primary genres of writing that students are expected to master within their disciplinary studies, as well as the key skills required for producing these texts. Concurrently, a comprehensive writing map was developed. This map documented the occurrence and purpose of writing assignments across the curriculum, as delineated by faculty responses, and noted on a course-by-course and semester-by-semester basis. The writing map also included details on teaching methods and assessment criteria for writing tasks, cross-referenced against class materials such as syllabi, rubrics, writing guides, and text models for accuracy.

This information was quantified to display data on various aspects of the writing curriculum, including the number of writing assignments per semester and throughout the program, the role of writing in the curriculum, and the organization of writing tasks (individually or in groups). Additionally, it evidenced how classroom materials support the writing process and the evaluation of written work. The resulting data from the writing map was visualized using Power BI, creating an interactive display presented to the senior staff of the target program.

Andrés F.-G., Nayibe R.-M., Wendy V. J., Angélica R.-C., Johamna M. M. L., María Y. P. C.

Genre Analysis

Utilizing the data from the writing profile and map, the team conducted a genre analysis focusing on the most frequently encountered genres within the target discipline. This analysis applied the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach and genre pedagogy, as described by Martin and Rose (2012). In SFL, genres are defined as goal-oriented social processes executed in stages, each with specific linguistic and structural features. The analysis involved identifying each text's genre and its social purpose, delineating the stages of the text through strategies such as identifying subtitles, hyperThemes, and the macroTheme. This nuanced analysis helps in understanding how language functions in various social contexts and assists in developing targeted instructional strategies for teaching genre-specific writing skills.

3. Results

Faculty Conceptions about Writing in Communication Studies

All faculty members (N=25) of the Communication Studies program at the target university were interviewed regarding their conceptions about the role of writing in their academic discipline. The first part of the interview was related to the role that writing plays in the learning process of achieving a degree in Communication Studies.

All faculty members argued that writing is a key component in the learning process for Communication Studies majors. One faculty member mentioned that a professional in this area of knowledge must be "an expert on language" (T1). This means that writing has a primordial role in the Communication Studies curriculum, as another faculty member pointed out that "writing is present across [the curriculum]. It is the backbone of each class. Without writing, there is no class" (T2). Writing is thus a key component whether the class revolves around it ("Journalism", for example) or not (courses related to audiovisual production).

For faculty, writing as a tool goes beyond form and implies reflection, as highlighted by another professor in the program: "It is not just about placing accent marks and commas … it is about organizing your ideas so that others can understand them" (T3). Professors also mentioned the responsibility

that majors in this program have concerning good writing; in this regard, another faculty member expressed that student "must become aware of the fact that good syntax and grammar … can totally change the meaning of what you are saying" (T4).

The second part of the interview focused on the function that writing has in professional tasks once Communication Studies majors have graduated from college. Once again, all professors in the program underscored the relevance of writing for work related purposes linked to Communication Studies Here, faculty coincided on the fact that, as one professor puts it, "textual production is the essence of everything"(T19), since it is present in the wide range of activities that majors in this program perform once they graduate, from journalism and organizational communication to social media interaction and audiovisual productions. This ample scope of professional needs also implies that Communication Studies professionals must be able to write texts that range from a tweet to a complex project and all of them must reflect a proper use of the language.

Faculty members also highlighted that good writing at the professional level goes beyond proper grammar, since it also involves adjusting texts according to the audiences that they are addressed to. Regarding this, a professor in the program explains that "the communicator represents the voice: the official, institutional or corporative voice of an organization" (T20). Therefore, the ability to convey different needs to diverse audiences is a must.

Alums Conceptions about Writing in Communication Studies

This section presents an analysis of the role of writing in the educational and professional realms of social communication and journalism, as perceived by a group of 16 program graduates. Three main areas emerged from the analysis: the importance of writing in education, its significance in the workplace, and its role in professional practice.

In the first category, "Importance of Writing in Education" (60 units of analysis, 35.29%), the graduates emphasize the critical role of writing in their academic journey. They view writing as a foundational element, integral to their education as expressed by one of the graduates "writing is important, it is the key communication tool regardless of the area in which

Andrés F.-G., Nayibe R.-M., Wendy V. J., Angélica R.-C., Johamna M. M. L., María Y. P. C.

40.3
2024

one is interested in working, learning to write is transversal in all social communication" (G1). This sentiment is echoed in their recognition of writing's pervasive presence in their coursework and its designation as a necessary and fundamental skill.

The second category, "Importance of Writing in the Workplace" (88 units of analysis, 51.76%), reveals that graduates consider writing a vital component of their professional lives. Writing is seen as indispensable, not only in terms of its frequent use but also as a core skill for effective communication and crafting impactful messages. A graduate says "The role of writing in the professional field of a communicator is fundamental. Our job is to communicate/send messages, and no matter the area we specialize in, writing will always be necessary"(G2).

Finally, the third category, "Role of Writing in Professional Practice" (22 units of analysis, 12.94%), explores the diverse applications of writing in the field. Graduates report using writing for various purposes, from communication and scriptwriting to problem-solving and providing instructions. One says writing has a "Crucial role, because communicating in writing has been a cornerstone of my professional practice"(G3). Another one adds, "writing is a source of power, a social necessity, a way to gain knowledge, and a means to solve everyday problems"(G4). This variety illustrates the dynamic and multifaceted nature of writing in their professional practice, underscoring its indispensability across different contexts.

Characterization of Writing Genres in the Communication Studies Curriculum

Communication Studies majors in the program under study need to be flexible in their written work, since they have to create both objective and subjective texts in which they can either inform, narrate, describe or persuade. Communicators need to be both accurate in their use of the written language and effective in a myriad of contexts: institutional, corporative, commercial, and creative, among others.

One of the main areas in the Communication Studies curriculum is Journalism, in which an objective stance usually prevails. Genres produced in this area include news articles and reports, profiles, interviews, and

infographics. Nevertheless, there is also room for a subjective perspective in such pieces as op-eds and chronicles. This area also requires students to be proficient in the use of multimedia to create reports.

Another important area in the curriculum is related to the institutional or organizational context. This requires a level of proficiency related to strategic communication. Students must be able to produce both texts that are internal to a company (such as emails, memos, statistical reports, and image audits) as well as those that are external and that shape a company's image (press releases, copies, tweets, and scripts for different media, among others).

Communication Studies majors enrolled in this university also learn how to write audiovisual texts, either for fiction or non-fiction productions, as well as for advertising purposes. They must be able to create texts that reflect the development process of a script (from loglines, synopses, outlines, and treatments to complete literary scripts with specific instructions), as well as create audiovisual proposals for prospective investors and production books that showcase the whole process of creating an audiovisual text.

Majors also need to produce texts that are connected to their learning process and that evidence their use of Communication Studies theory when analyzing how communication occurs. The genres that fulfill this purpose include discourse analyses, semiotic analyses, reviews, argumentative texts, research proposals, and research papers.

Based on the analysis of student samples of the most frequent genres produced by students in this Communication Studies program, we provide an overview of the linguistic features commonly found in various text types across different genres:

- Multimedia Report: this text type often employs past tense verbs, temporal connectors, and direct quotations, combined with short paragraphs and multimedia elements.
- News Articles: news predominantly uses past tense verbs, extensive temporal connectors, and direct quotations. They are structured with short paragraphs.
- Audiovisual Proposal: characterized by a descriptive tone with an academic style, this type utilizes discourse markers, technical terminology, and a mix of present and future tenses.

- Image Audit Report: these reports adopt a formal and technical language, offering clear structures with sections and headings. Visual aids and industry-specific terminology are commonly included.
- Opinion Column: opinion columns typically use past tense verbs, discourse markers, verb phrases expressing opinions, direct quotations, and concise language.
- Cinematographic Production Book: these texts feature discourse markers, technical terminology, visual descriptions, and dialogue, often mixing present and future tenses.
- Journalistic Chronicle: these employ discourse markers, descriptive adjectives, a mix of present and past tenses, verbs reporting discourse, and rhetorical figures.
- Literary Script: characterized by scene descriptions, stage directions, dialogues, and a mix of present and past tenses, often with direct quotations.
- Organizational Communication Project: these highlight essential information, use concise language, incorporate visual elements, employ industry-specific terminology, adopt formal language, and include historical narratives.

How Writing is Taught in Communication Studies

The 36 faculty members that were interviewed in the Communication Studies program assign 59 writing tasks in 27 courses across 8 semesters (it is a nine-semester program, but the ninth semester is dedicated to internships). These tasks are evenly distributed across the curriculum, except for the first two terms (Table 1).

Table 1 — Number of texts per term

| Term (semester)	Texts per term
1	3
2	5
3	9
4	9
5	8
6	9
7	7
8	9
Total	59

The Communication Studies curriculum at the target university requires a flexible perspective with respect to writing, since it must attend to several thematic perspectives, which can be organized into five different categories: journalism, audiovisual production, organizational communication, Communication Studies theory, and research and academic production. All writing in this curriculum is linked to these categories, and course connection with these areas reflect which are the most frequent texts that Communication Studies majors must produce, with those related to audiovisual production and Communication Studies theory being the most frequent (Table 2).

Table 2 — Number of courses where writing occurs per category withing the Communication Studies curriculum

| Category	Courses per category
Audiovisual production	8
Communication Studies theory	7
Journalism	6
Organizational Communication	5
Research and academic production	3

We examined the role of writing in the Communication Studies curriculum at the target university through faculty interviews. In this case, professors reported whether they used writing as an assessment tool, as a methodology strategy, as an explicit objective in the syllabus or a combination of these (Figure 1). Beyond evaluating student learning, writing is mostly used to promote actual learning in the classroom.

**Figure 1** — Role of writing in the Communication Studies curriculum
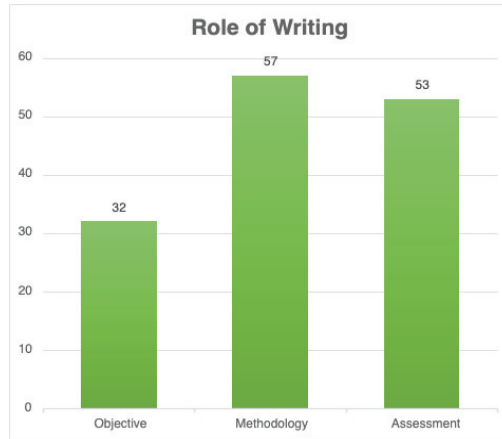
Regarding how writing occurs within the classes that compose the Communication Studies Curriculum, one of the aspects that was considered was whether the type of assignment involved individual or group writing, with the former being the preferred choice by faculty (Figure 2).

Figure 2 — Types of writing assignments structured by Communication Studies faculty based on individual or group tasks.
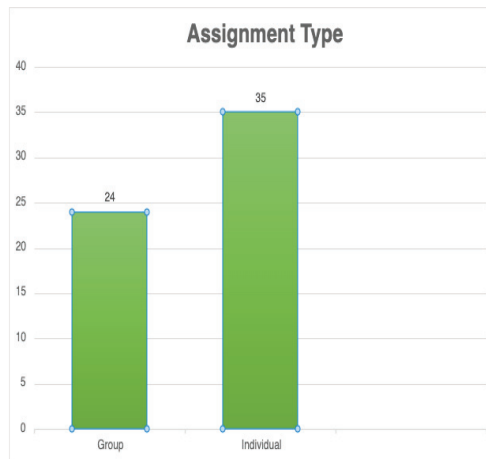

Furthermore, faculty members reported how they assess writing tasks within the curriculum. Most professors reported the "Other" category, which means that they don't use any formal and explicit tools to assess texts, while a second group uses rubrics, and a third group provides written guidelines to students when evaluating their texts (Figure 3).

Figure 3 — Instruments for assessing writing in the Communication Studies curriculum
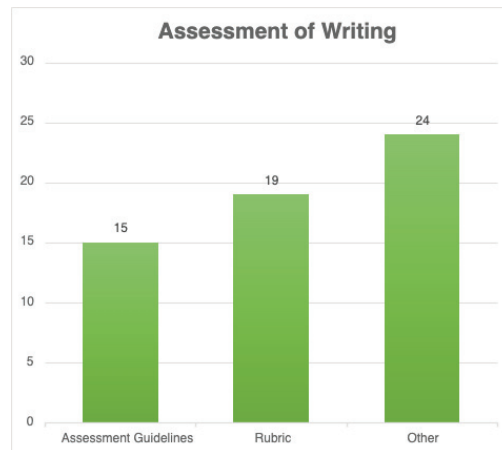
Beyond the basic guidelines and assessment tendencies for writing, interviews with faculty also addressed how they support text production within their courses. Instructions and guides for student writing are the most frequent, while models for text production are less recurrent. Furthermore, several writing tasks are given without any support material (Figure 4).

Figure 4 — Material provided by faculty to support student writing in the Communication Studies curriculum.
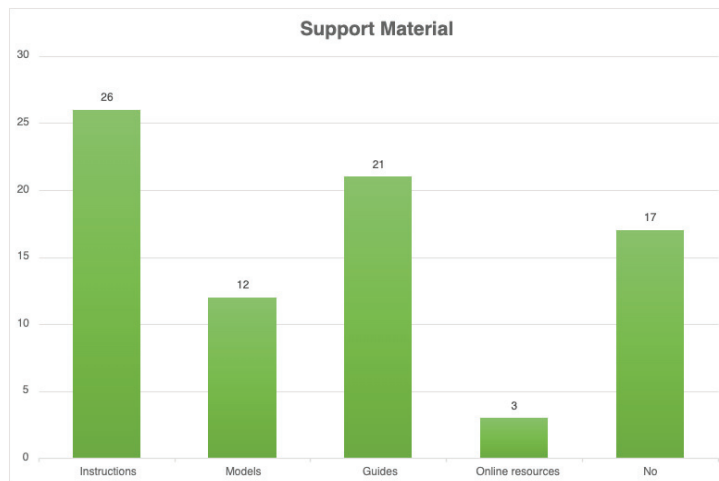
Faculty were also interviewed regarding their use of strategies to incorporate the writing process when students are creating their texts. This means allowing them opportunities to plan their writing, to revise and edit

it (by themselves with a guide provided by the teacher or with the help of a peer), and to produce not just one draft that is assessed by the professor but multiple versions until a final one is handed in (Figure 5).

Figure 5 — Strategies used by Communication Studies faculty to promote the writing process in the texts they assign.
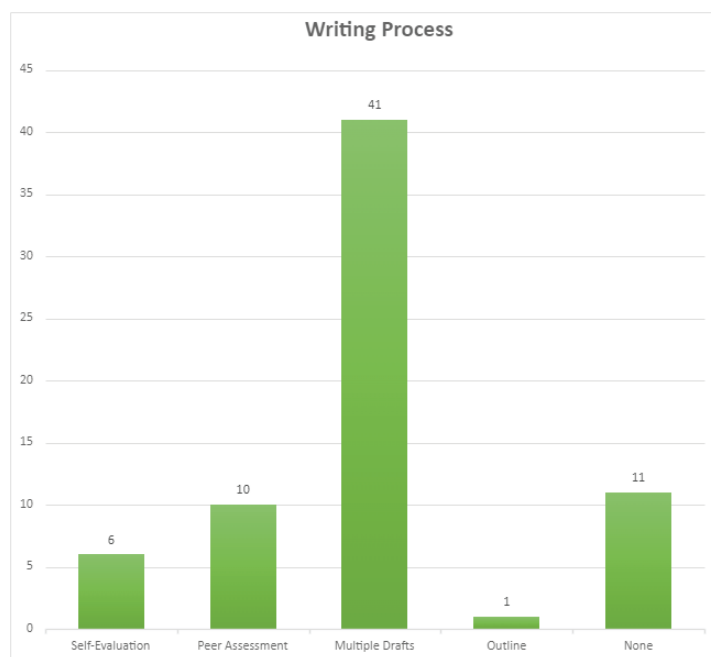
The strategy of producing multiple drafts is clearly the preferred option by Communication Studies faculty when incorporating the writing process into their classes. However, this is rarely linked to a specific self-evaluation or peer assessment activity that fosters text quality; more often, professors link multiple drafts to the idea that the text is written in different moments throughout the semester and not just in one specific instance. Concerning planning opportunities for writing, these are extremely rare in the curriculum.

4. Discussion

Faculty and alums conceptions about writing

Faculty emphasize writing as the "backbone" of the curriculum, while alums stress its indispensability in professional practice. This agreement

highlights the continuous thread of writing's importance from education to employment. Graham (2019) explains that writing does not develop naturally; it must be instructed. Therefore, incorporating writing systematically in the curriculum becomes essential to fortifying this backbone.

They also underscore that writing transcends its academic utility, becoming a core skill for professional communication, irrespective of the specific area within the field. This finding suggests the need for integrating real-world writing tasks within the academic curriculum to mirror professional demands better, which is coherent with recent studies that aim for an integration between the academic and professional spheres (Hassock & Hill, 2022; O'Neill & Short, 2023).

While faculty focus on writing as an educational tool integral to learning processes, alums often discuss writing in terms of its practical applications and its impact on their careers. In disciplines such as communication, both perspectives are relevant; however, the importance of sequenced and steady development of generic writing skills conducive to learning, such as building a logical argument and formulating complete sentences and texts, remains crucial (Wollscheid, Lødding & Aamodt, 2021).

Furthermore, faculty stress the importance of writing for reflecting and organizing ideas, suggesting an emphasis on the cognitive and metacognitive aspects of writing, in which it fosters thinking as well as a consciousness about learning. In contrast, alums frequently mention the diversity of writing applications in their jobs, hinting at a more pragmatic approach to writing. As discussed by O'Neill and Short (2023), the curriculum should integrate alums' pragmatic perspectives for relevant writing curriculum design and meaningful learning.

Genres and teaching writing

Communication Studies majors must learn to be flexible and diverse in their written work. Compared to other majors like Engineering, where writing is located within a small variety of genres like technical, lab or executive reports (Hart-Davidson, 2015), students in this program must learn to produce at least nine very different genres related to their discipline. Therefore, the curriculum must provide ample opportunities to teach, practice, and assess these texts within different courses, making sure that

there are no genres that are much more favored than others with regards to student practice.

The diversity of formats that students must learn to produce these texts can certainly be a teaching challenge for Communication Studies faculty. The use of writing guides and models for each genre (created by the program itself) would be of great assistance in this matter; models, for example, have been highlighted for their role in helping students learn new genres with less hesitation (Macbeth, 2010). This material would also ensure that all professors are aligned when assigning students a writing task based on a particular genre.

Opportunities for Writing within the Curriculum

The previous section describes how students in the Communication Studies program at the target university actively engage in numerous opportunities to practice writing texts pertinent to their discipline, with these opportunities generally spread throughout the curriculum. This information holds significant importance for the effective teaching of writing. Johnstone et al. (2002) argue that a reliable correlation exists between superior writing skills and the frequency of writing practice. Furthermore, distributing writing tasks evenly across the curriculum can enhance the long-term retention of skills essential for text production (Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009). Therefore, universities must consistently monitor the frequency of writing production in their curricula to ensure they provide students with ample opportunities to refine their writing abilities within their disciplines.

Opportunities for text production are connected to the role that writing has in the curriculum. As evidenced by faculty in the Communication Studies program, writing as an assessment tool plays a frequent role in course design. In this regard, Hawthorne et al. (2017) have underscored the function of writing as an ideal method to assess student learning. Nevertheless, writing also plays an important role as a learning tool, as evidenced in the fact that this is the more frequent choice that faculty in the Communication Studies program make when assigning a role to writing. Concerning this, Covill (2012) has emphasized that there is also a consensus within university faculty from diverse disciplines concerning the potential of writing as a pedagogical resource. If writing is considered not only to assess knowledge but also as a tool to build it, more writing opportunities will occur within

the curriculum. Hence, including writing as an explicit learning goal in the syllabus (the least preferred choice by Communication Studies professors) can further promote text production, since this decision involves teaching about writing, practicing writing, and assessing writing.

Teaching Writing as a Process

Teaching writing can emphasize either the product or the process. The product-focused approach assumes students will produce texts akin to final drafts that professors then revise as though they were submissions to a scholarly journal (Murray, 2003). The process-focused approach, however, sees student texts as works in progress that undergo a sequence of planning, drafting, and editing (Ramírez Balderas & Guillén Cuamatzi, 2018). Faculty within the Communication Studies curriculum tend to teach writing as a process involving multiple drafts. They recognize the importance of allowing students to edit their texts, which is crucial because professional writing demands careful decisions about text structure and word choice (Hinkel, 2015), and editing plays a significant role in these decisions. Furthermore, when students experience writing as a process in the classroom, they connect it to meaningful learning experiences, noticing the progressive evolution of their texts. Conversely, without this process orientation, students often see their writing merely as a task to meet a teacher's requirement (Ramírez Balderas & Guillén Cuamatzi, 2018).

Nevertheless, the Communication Studies curriculum could incorporate some steps of the writing process more thoroughly into its class methodology. One such step is text planning, a main trait distinguishing expert writers from novices (Ramírez Balderas & Guillén Cuamatzi, 2018). Considering higher education aims to develop students into professional writers within their disciplines, instructors should deem text planning an essential skill when assigning written tasks. Researchers have long recognized planning as a strategy that fosters goal setting and the generation of new ideas via brainstorming (Tierney & Pearson, 1983). Moreover, planning offers writers a moment to pause and make decisions about language use and structure, considering the intended audience of their texts (McDonald & Salomone, 2012; Ramírez Balderas & Guillén Cuamatzi, 2018).

Additionally, peer assessment and self-assessment represent vital strategies that the Communication Studies curriculum should more actively

promote within the writing process. Cho and Schunn (2007) discovered a more significant improvement in text quality from first to final drafts with peer feedback than with instructor feedback. Similarly, Moussaoui (2012) has emphasized peer assessment's role in enhancing critical reading skills when providing feedback and fostering critical thinking during text revisions based on classmates' comments. Regarding self-assessment, Ramírez Balderas and Guillén Cuamatzi (2018) have noted its effectiveness in reducing errors in student texts. Fahimi and Rahimi (2015) have also observed that self-assessment practices help students develop skills to monitor their writing progress, thereby enhancing metacognitive abilities.

The evidence presented here suggests that university students should learn writing as a process rather than as a narrow focus on a product. Implementing this integrative approach necessitates meticulous course design to weave these activities into the curriculum alongside content-related work. A practical solution involves assigning these activities to be completed outside the classroom, such as conducting peer assessments online from home using shared documents.

Tools that support the process of learning to write

All material that is used to support student writing in class (instructions, guides, text models, etc. is defined as "designed scaffolding" (Gibbons, 2002; Kuiper et al., 2017), since these tools aim to help the student become a progressively autonomous writer. Therefore, they play a key role in the teaching process of writing. Particularly, in the Communication Studies program studied here, there is an opportunity for using text models more often in class. This is especially useful when teaching academic genres, since students need to learn how to follow a particular structure when writing. For example, the Genre-based writing instruction developed by the Sydney School involves the deconstruction of a model as one of the steps necessary for students to produce their own texts within a particular genre (Gibbons, 2002).

Individual and group writing

Even though writing in groups is sometimes associated with difficulties such as making sure that all students contribute equally to text production,

several studies have found that collaborative writing can have a positive effect on the development of writing skills (Borge & White, 2016; Storch, 2005; Suzuki, 2008; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009), since students can monitor each other's work and challenge each other through meaningful discussions that end up improving the text itself. While individual writing tends to be more frequent in the Communication Studies curriculum studied here, group writing is still fairly present and can be further promoted as long as faculty teach students how to make this type of writing truly collaborative.

Assessing writing

Rubrics go beyond assessing texts and support the teaching-learning process when shared with students beforehand, which is the reason why they should be further incorporated into the Communication Studies curriculum. Trinh (2020) has argued that rubrics help teachers establish expectations and requirements, which in turn aids students with their understanding of the assigned task; therefore, rubrics can play a significant role in making students aware of what effective writing means (Hayes, 2000). Covill (2012) has also discussed how students, when given rubrics beforehand, use this tool in all aspects of the writing process (when planning, drafting, and revising their texts). In this regard, rubrics have become a teaching tool and not just an assessment device (Arter & McTigue, 2001). These reasons highlight the importance of moving beyond assessment guidelines and developing analytic rubrics that can provide specific expectations for student writing from faculty.

5. Conclusion

The alignment between faculty and alums conceptions on the essential role of writing underscores its foundational significance across the spectrum of academic and professional contexts in Communication Studies. The challenge lies in synthesizing the cognitive and metacognitive aspects of writing, as emphasized by faculty, with the pragmatic, real-world applications noted by alums. Bridging these cognitive and pragmatic perspectives within the curriculum will ensure students develop both deep writing competence and the ability to apply these skills flexibly in various professional contexts. This requires programs to make sure that students have ample opportunities

Andrés F.-G., Nayibe R.-M., Wendy V. J., Angélica R.-C., Johamna M. M. L., María Y. P. C.

to practice writing the genres that they will encounter in their professional lives, while also consciously incorporating writing in the curriculum as a methodological tool that helps students think and reflect on their ideas, as well as foster their learning processes regarding their discipline.

The findings of this research also reflect that faculty training with respect to how to guide students' learning process with writing is a matter of importance. Writing centers and programs can provide instruction with regards to aspects such as developing writing rubrics, guiding group writing, producing support materials such as text models and guides, and incorporating the writing process into the classroom.

Establishing a writing curriculum within each academic program is another conclusion that arises from the issues discussed in this article. This process would basically require faculty to decide which texts are going to be taught in the program and which courses/faculty are going to be responsible for teaching such texts. This would facilitate students' learning process regarding how to produce the genres that are necessary for communication in their discipline. This would ultimately avoid a frequent practice within academic programs: texts that are demanded from students without being taught to them.

Recommendations for further studies include a call for a more nuanced understanding of the role of writing across educational and professional landscapes, the development of a curriculum that mirrors professional writing demands and the fostering of partnerships between academia and industry to ensure writing education remains relevant and impactful. Furthermore, future studies could offer similar profiles to the one given here with Commnication Studies (and how writing learning occurs in this program) and explore the specific characteristics of this process in other academic disciplines.

Acknowledgements

Conflict of interests

The authors declare they have no conflict of interest.

Credit Author Statement

We, Andrés Forero-Gómez, Nayibe Rosado-Mendinueta, Wendy Valdez Jiménez, Angélica Rojas-Chávez, Johamna María Muñoz Lalinde and María Ynoelia Pastrán Chirinos, hereby declare that we do not have any potential conflict of interest in this study. We have all participated in study conceptualization, methodology, study design, formal data analysis, fund-raising, project administration, project supervision, data collection, data generation, data validation and editing. All authors approve the final version of the manuscript and are responsible for all aspects, including the guarantee of its veracity and integrity.

Data available upon request

The data used in this study is available upon request to the corresponding author [Andrés Forero-Gómez]. The data is not publicly available because it contains information that compromises the privacy of the research participants.

References

Aljure, A. (2015). *El plan estratégico de comunicación*. Editorial Universidad de la Sabana y UOC.

Álvarez, A. (2011). *Medición y evaluación en Comunicación*. Instituto de Investigación en Relaciones Públicas.

Arter, J., & McTighe, J. (2001). *Scoring rubrics in the classroom: Using performance criteria for assessing and improving student performance.* Corwin/Sage.

Ávila Reyes, N., Navarro, F., & Tapia-Ladino, M. (2020). Identidad, voz y agencia: Claves para una enseñanza inclusiva de la escritura en la universidad. *Archivos Analíticos de Políticas Educativas*, *28*, 98. https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.28.4722

Ávila Reyes, N., Navarro, F., & Tapia-Ladino, M. (2021). "My abilities were pretty mediocre": Challenging deficit discourses in expanding higher education systems. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 16*(6), 723-733. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000366

Barnett, R. (2009). Knowing and becoming in the higher education curriculum. *Studies in Higher Education*, *34*(4), 429– 440. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070902771978

Beliche, M. (2013). Leer y escribir, prácticas sociales continuas. La formación en la escolaridad, en la universidad y en la cotidianidad. *Anuario de Investigaciones* 2013, noviembre 2014.

Borge, M., & White, B. (2016). Toward the development of sociometacognitive expertise: An approach to developing collaborative competence. *Cognition*

40.3
2024

Andrés F.-G., Nayibe R.-M., Wendy V. J., Angélica R.-C., Johamna M. M. L., María Y. P. C.

and Instruction, *34*(4), 323–360. https://doi.org/10.1080/07370008.2016
.1215722

Carlino, P. (2013). Alfabetización académica diez años después. *Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa*, *18*(57), 355-381. https://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1405-66662013000200003 (Accessed 27 June, 2024).

Casetti, F. (1996). *Cómo analizar un film*. Paidós Ibérica.

Changpueng, P. (2013). The implementation of the genre-based approach in the teaching of writing to Engineering students. *International Journal of Communication and Linguistic Studies, 10*, 1-15. https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-7882/CGP/v10i02/43601.

Cho, K., & Schunn, C. D. (2007). Scaffolded writing and rewriting in the discipline: A web-based reciprocal peer review system. *Computers & Education*, *48*, 409–426. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0360131505000333?via%3Dihub (Accessed 27 June, 2024).

Clemente-Ricolfe, J. S., & Escribá-Pérez, C. (2013). Análisis de la percepción de las competencias genéricas adquiridas en la universidad. *Revista de Educació*n, *362*, 535-561. https://doi.org/10.4438/1988-592X-RE-2013-362-241

Covill, A. E. (2012). College students' use of a writing rubric: Effect on quality of writing, self-efficacy, and writing practices. *Journal of Writing Assessmen*t, *5*(1). https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5f79g6kz (Accessed 27 June, 2024).

Corbett, D. (2018). *El arte de crear personajes: en narrativa, cine y televisión*. Alba Editorial.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches.* 4th ed. Sage Publications.

Curry, M., & Lillis, T. (2003). Issues in Academic Writing in Higher Education. In C. Coffin, M. J. Curry, S. Goodman, A. Hewings, T. Lillis, & J. Swann (Eds.), *Teaching Academic Writing*. Routledge.

Del Rio, J. (1977). *Periodismo interpretativo: El reportaje*. Editorial Época.

Fahimi, Z., & Rahimi, A. (2015). On the impact of self-assessment practice on writing skill. *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *192*, 730-736. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.06.082.

Franco, J. (2020). *El camino de la crónica*. Editorial Universidad del Norte.

Fullan, M. (2003). *Las fuerzas del cambio: Explorando las profundidades de la reforma educativa.* Akal.

García Chamorro, M., Rolong-Gamboa, M., & Villar Guerra, L. (2020). Una revista académica como estrategia pedagógica para el desarrollo de competencias genéricas y específicas de profesores de lenguas en formación. *Íkala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura, 25*(2), 329-351. https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.ikala.v25n02a14

García, M. & Gutiérrez, L. (2011). *Manual de géneros periodísticos*. Ecoe Ediciones y Universidad de La Sabana.

Gibbons, P. (2002). *Scaffolding language, scaffolding learning: teaching second language learners in the mainstream classroom*. Heinemann.

Glau, G. R. (2007). Stretch at 10: A progress report on Arizona State University's Stretch Program. *Journal of Basic Writing*, *26*(2), 30-48. https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/jbw/v26n2/glau.pdf (Accessed 27 June, 2024).

Graham, S. (2019). Changing how writing is taught. *Review of Research in Education*, *43*(1), 277-303. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X18821125

Grose-Fifer, J., Crossman, A., & Baker, S. (2022). Flipping professional development to improve writing skills in undergraduates. *College Teaching*, *70*(3), 380-386. https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2021.1954871

Halperín, J. (2013). *La entrevista periodística. Intimidades de la conversación pública.* Editorial Paidós.

Hart-Davidson, B. (2015). Genres are enacted by writers and readers. In L. Adler-Kassner, & E. Wardle (Eds.), *Naming what we know: Threshold concepts of writing studies*, (pp. 39-40). Utah State University Press. https://doi.org/10.7330/9780874219906.c002

Hassock, L., & Hill, C. (2022). Employability and employment: The role of higher education in a rapidly changing world. In Ng, B. (Ed), *Higher Education and Job Employability,* (pp. 155-178). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-05716-8_8

Hayes, J. R. (2000). A new framework for understanding cognition and affect in writing. In R. Indrisano, & J. R. Squire (Eds.), *Perspectives on Writing: Research, Theory, and Practice* (pp. 6-44). International Reading Association.

Hawthorne, K., Bol, L., & Pribesh, S. (2017) Can providing rubrics for writing tasks improve developing writers' calibration accuracy? *The Journal of Experimental Education*, *85*(4), 689-708. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.2017.1299081

Hinkel, E. (2015). *Effective curriculum for teaching l2 writing: Principles and techniques.* Routledge.

Jaramillo, R. (2019). *Enseñanza de la crónica periodística en el curso textos especializados del programa de comunicación social de la UNAB*. Universidad Autónoma de Bucaramanga. http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12749/16130 (Accessed 27 June, 2024).

Johnstone, K. M., Ashbaugh, H., & Warfield, T. D. (2002). Effects of Repeated Practice and Contextual Writing Experiences on College Student's Writing Skills. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *94*(2), 305–315. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-0663.94.2.305 (Accessed 27 June, 2024)

Katz, S. (1991). *Film directing shot by shot: visualizing from concept to screen*. Michael Wiese Productions.

Kellogg, R. & Whiteford, A. (2009). Training Advanced Writing Skills: The Case for Deliberate Practice, *Educational Psychologist*, *44*(4), 250-266. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520903213600

Kloss, S., & Quintanilla, A. (2023). Cualidades profesionales de un buen comunicador social de acuerdo con estudiantes de periodismo y periodistas en ejercicio: un estudio desde la disponibilidad léxica. *Comuni@cción*, *14*(1), 5-15. https://dx.doi.org/10.33595/2226-1478.14.1.807

Kuiper, C., Smit, J., De Wachter, L., & Elen, J. (2017). Scaffolding tertiary students' writing in a genre-based writing intervention. *Journal of Writing Research*, 9(1), 27-59. https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr-2017.09.01.02

Lattuca, L. R., & Stark, J. S. (2009). *Shaping the college curriculum: Academic plans in context*. Jossey-Bass.

Libaert, T. (2005). *El plan de comunicación organizacional. Cómo definir y organizar la estrategia de comunicación*. Editorial Limusa.

Macbeth, K. (2010). Deliberate false provisions: The use and usefulness of models in learning academic writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *19*, 33-48. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2009.08.002

Magendzo, A., & Donoso, P. (1992). Diseño curricular problematizador en la enseñanza de los derechos humanos. *Cuadernos de educación en y para los derechos humanos IIDH-PIIE*, 4.

McDonald, S., & Salomone, W. (2012). *The Writer's response: A reading-based approach to writing*. Wadsworth.

McKee, R (2004). *El guion. Story: sustancia, estructura, estilo y principios de la escritura de guiones*. Alba Editorial.

Miguel Díaz, M. de (Dir.). (2005). *Modalidades de enseñanza centradas en el desarrollo de competencias. Orientaciones para promover el cambio metodológico en el espacio europeo de educación superior.* Ediciones Universidad de Oviedo. https://www2.ulpgc.es/hege/almacen/download/42/42376/modalidades_ensenanza_competencias_mario_miguel2_documento.pdf (Accessed 27 June, 2024).

Montes, S., & Vidal Lizama, M. (2017). Diseño de un programa de escritura a través del currículum: opciones teóricas y acciones estratégicas. *Lenguas Modernas*, *50*, 73 – 90. https://lenguasmodernas.uchile.cl/index.php/LM/article/view/49252 (Accessed 27 June, 2024).

Moussaoui, S. (2012). An investigation of the effects of peer evaluation in enhancing Algerian students' writing autonomy and positive affect. *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *69*, 1775-1784. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.12.127

Murray, D. M. (2003). Teach writing as process not product. In V. Villanueva (Ed.), *Crosstalk in Comp Theory: A Reader* (pp. 3-6). National Council of Teachers of English.

Navarro, F., & Montes, S. (2021). Los desafíos de la escritura académica: concepciones y experiencias de estudiantes graduados en seis áreas de conocimiento. *ONOMÁZEIN, 54,* 179-202. https://doi.org/10.7764/onomazein.54.05

Navarro, F., Montes, S., & Álvarez, M. (2022). How do students write in engineering and the humanities? Intertextuality and metadiscourse in undergraduate dissertations written in Spanish. *Círculo de Lingüística Aplicada a la Comunicación*, *90*, 35-46. https://doi.org/10.5209/clac.81305

O'Neill, G, & Short, A. (2023). Relevant, practical and connected to the real world: what higher education students say engages them in the curriculum. *Irish Educational Studies*, https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2023.2221663

Ramírez Balderas, I., & Guillén Cuamatzi, P. (2018). Self and peer correction to improve college students' writing skills. *Profile Issues in Teachers` Professional Development*, 20(2), 179-194. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v20n2.67095

Rose, D. & Martin, J.R. (2012). *Learning to Write, Reading to Learn: Genre, Knowlededge and Pedagogy in the Sydney School*. Equinox.

Salaverría, R., & Díaz, J. (2003). *Manual de Redacción Ciberperiodística*. Editorial Ariel.

Storch, N. (2005). Collaborative Writing: Product, Process, and Students' Reflections. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *14*, 153–173. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1060374305000172 (Accessed 27 June, 2024).

Sutcliffe, N., Chan, S. S., & Nakayama, M. (2005). A Competency Based MSIS Curriculum. *Journal of Information Systems Education, 16*(3), 301-310. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/301386812.pdf (Accessed 27 June, 2024).

Suzuki, M. (2008). Japanese learners' self revisions and peer revisions of their written compositions in English. *TESOL Quarterly*, *42*(2), 209–234. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40264448 (Accessed 27 June, 2024).

Tierney, R. J., & Pearson, P. D. (1983). Toward a composing model of reading. *Language Arts*, 60, 568-580. https://literacyresearchcommons.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Toward-composing-model-of-reading.pdf (Accessed 27 June, 2024).

Thompson, R.J., Finkenstaedt-Quinn, S.A., Shultz, G., Gere, A.R., Schmid, L., Dowd, J.E., Mburi, M., Schiff, L.A., Flash, P., & Reynolds, J.A. (2021). How faculty discipline and beliefs influence instructional uses of writing in STEM undergraduate courses at research-intensive universities. *Journal of Writing Research*, *12*(3), 625-656. https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr2021.12.03.04

Thonney, T. (2023). What Community College Instructors Think about Student Writing: Results of a National Survey about Writing across the Curriculum. *College Teaching*, 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2023.2208816

Andrés F.-G., Nayibe R.-M., Wendy V. J., Angélica R.-C., Johamna M. M. L., María Y. P. C.

Trigos-Carrillo, L. (2019). A Critical Sociocultural Perspective on Academic Literacies in Latin America. *Íkala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, *24*(1), 13-26. https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.ikala.v24n01a10

Trinh, L. (2020). The effectiveness of using scoring rubrics in academic writing to English-majored students. *Vietnam Journal of Education*, *4*(4), 76-82. https://doi.org/10.52296/vje.2020.83

Truby, J. (2009). *Anatomía del guion. El arte de narrar en 22 pasos*. Alba Editorial.

Tsui, A. (2013, September 2). *Reimagining undergraduate education*. Keynote presented at the Enhancement and Innovation in Higher Education Conference, Glasgow, Scotland. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JalJGBrEAfY (Accessed 27 June, 2024).

Valentino, A. (2007). Prácticas de lectura y escritura en la formación de comunicadores. *Trampas de la Comunicación y la Cultura*, 56, 27-31. https://sedici.unlp.edu.ar/bitstream/handle/10915/36545/Documento_completo.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (Accessed 27 June, 2024)

Wigglesworth, G. & Storch, N. (2009). Pair versus individual writing: effects on fluency, complexity and accuracy. *Language Testing*, *26*(3), 445-466. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532209104670

Wollscheid, S., Lødding B., & Aamodt P. O. (2021). Prepared for higher education? Staff and student perceptions of academic literacy dimensions across disciplines. *Quality in Higher Education*, *27*(1), 20-39. https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2021.1830534

Wong, J., Baars, M., Davis, D., Van Der Zee, T., Houben, G., & Paas, F. (2019). Supporting self-regulated learning in online learning environments and MOOCs: A systematic review. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, *35*, 356-373. https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2018.1543084