

Think Globally, Act Locally: How to Design an Academic Writing Course for Students Entering University

Federico Navarro

In the last two decades, the teaching of academic writing has become central to university administrators' agendas throughout Latin America, driven by the expansion of higher education. All students, not just those who are supposedly disadvantaged, need to master the communication forms specific to their programs. This mastery is essential for learning disciplinary content through reading and writing (epistemic potential) and for understanding the genres relevant to their fields as new members (rhetorical potential). In this chapter, I outline the key administrative, pedagogical, and linguistic principles that can guide the development of a writing course or program. These principles must consider the predominant theoretical and pedagogical traditions, the profiles of faculty and students, institutional resources, and available curricular spaces. First-year writing courses significantly impact incoming students but should be expanded through other initiatives across the curriculum and training levels to foster a comprehensive writing campus. To illustrate this perspective, I discuss the design of a writing course for incoming Economics and Administration students at Universidad Nacional de Quilmes (Argentina).

In the last two decades, the teaching of academic writing, composition and communication has become a central issue in the agenda of students, teachers and university administrators throughout Latin America. This theming or "concern" with writing has a twofold nature. On the one hand, it involves the *training of academic writers*, in other words, the teaching of academic writing to students who gradually enter the rhetorical and disciplinary cultures of their undergraduate program. On the other hand, it involves the *training of academic writing instructors* in a broad sense, i.e., instructors who employ the rhetorical and epistemic potential of writing in their classrooms to foster their students' academic literacy. In this context, it is essential to discuss the

necessary assumptions for designing an institutional initiative promoting a set of actions for teaching academic writing (Carlino, 2013); these discussions must take into account the material and curricular conditions of institutions and higher education systems, the previous trajectories and interests of the educational community, the successes and failures of experiences implemented in the region, and specialized reflections and research on practices and communicative competences and their pedagogy.

In this paper, I aim to review the topics referred to above and outline the conditions to design a writing course or program. Throughout the journey, I will discuss a number of key ideas that summarize my basic pedagogical and linguistic assumptions. Adopting—with some irony—a slogan from the marketing world, the main conclusion will be that initiatives for teaching academic writing must “think globally, but act locally”. They must know the agreed upon expert knowledge of academic writing pedagogy and the administration of writing programs, as well as the successful experiences from other contexts and geographical areas. However, they must adopt solutions which are appropriate for the needs and possibilities of the specific institution in which they are writing.

Higher Education in Latin America: Opportunities and Challenges

Any discussion of the teaching of writing in Latin American higher education requires framing it in the appropriate social, historical, educational and curricular context. Nowadays, we can reflect on the design of a writing course or program only because certain conditions have arisen in the region that have given impetus, with slight differences in different countries, to a set of policies and willingness to support academic literacy instruction. Moreover, any proposal for teaching writing does not happen in a vacuum, only informed by certain theoretical assumptions or stakeholders’ beliefs. Rather, it is intimately linked to the context in which it developed. This allows us to advance the main idea of this chapter:

Key Idea 1: there are no general recipes or designs that can be applied to all contexts, but certain principles and experiences that must be adjusted to the predominant theoretical and pedagogical traditions, to the profiles of instructors and students, and to the institutional resources and to the curricular spaces available.

Therefore, the first question I will address is the situation of the higher education system in Latin America. I do not pretend to be exhaustive, and I

will not provide original data. My intention is to make visible contributions that, from the sociology of education, allow a better understanding of the institutional and educational context in which a proposal for teaching writing would be inserted, together with certain key concepts to justify its role.

In the recent decades, Latin America has experienced a transversal process of mass entry into higher education in addition to an expansion of the university system (Fernández Lamarra & Costa de Paula, 2011). This is not unconnected to a strong expansion of higher education systems worldwide (Ezcurra, 2011). Within Latin America, in little more than a decade (1994-2006), enrolment grew by 125.6%: it went from 7,544,000 to 17,017,000 students (UNESCO data cited by Fernández Lamarra and Costa de Paula, 2011, p. 14). In Argentina, the return to democracy in 1983 found the university education system with 48 universities and 416,000 students. By 2013, universities had grown by 110% (up to 101 institutions) and the number of students by 340% (up to 1,830,743 students, increasing to 1,975,007 when graduate students are included.) During that 30-year period, Argentinean institutions were evenly distributed between private and public, with a clearly predominant option for the public, free and unrestricted access system by students (78.5%) (Buchbinder, 2005; SPU, 2013). In 1984, Chile had a total of 189,151 undergraduate and graduate students; by 2016 that number had risen to 1,247,135 (MINEDUC, 2017). Thus, the Chilean higher education system expanded by 559% in just over three decades. These numbers include universities and community colleges. Furthermore, most of the students were enrolled in private institutions (60% in 2014) (SIES, 2014). In 1980, Peru had 255,000 higher education students, most of them in public institutions (around 79%). By 2013, the number of students had increased by 334% (to 1,107,424 students) and the distribution had reversed: 68.8% were enrolled in private institutions (Cuenca, 2015; INEI, 2016).

As described above, the configuration of the Latin American higher education systems differ from one country to another in several respects, such as the proportion and distribution of the type of institutions (universities, community colleges, etc.) and the distribution of students between public and private institutions, but also in other aspects such as the Gross Higher Education Enrolment Ratio (percentage of the population of young people that continue their studies at university), the percentage and inclusion strategies for traditionally excluded social groups, the selectivity of entry systems and the high or low disciplinary specificity of undergraduate degrees. These variables, among others, give each Latin American country its particular profile in higher education and determine its needs, possibilities and urgencies for setting up initiatives to teach academic, disciplinary and professional writing.

As this massive university intake far exceeds the total population growth of the countries involved, it has meant the enrolment in higher education of so-called “non-traditional students” or “first generation students in higher education”. These students come from families and social groups that, due to their ethnic, geographical, educational or cultural background, have historically been excluded from the university. Many of the initiatives that support learning that have multiplied in recent years—including academic writing courses and tutoring sessions—respond to the need to scaffold the trajectory of these non-traditional students. Thus, for example, at Universidad de General Sarmiento (Argentina), a study of entry-level students concluded that they presented a profile “deficient in ... certain study habits, attitudes and representations (for example, passivity, scarce autonomy, weak participation and low esteem of their own learning possibilities)” (Ezcurra, 2000, p. 4). These diagnoses helped to institutionally justify the creation of massive mandatory reading and writing courses at the beginning, in the first year, and during the advanced years of the undergraduate programs (Navarro, 2012).

The concept of cultural capital, developed by Pierre Bourdieu, can explain some of the difficulties and challenges faced by non-traditional students. Since cultural capital is defined in relation to a given field, higher education in this case, I believe it is more accurate to speak of *academic cultural capital*. According to Ezcurra (2011), cultural capital consists of critical academic habits (writing up an index card, using a dictionary, doing a document search, creating a table of contents, taking notes, preparing for an exam, using the library and computer tools, reading statistical tables and graphs, etc.), cognitive skills (analyzing, synthesizing, relating, judging and applying information, etc.), and metacognitive skills (self-monitoring one’s own learning, study time management and awareness of assessment practices in higher education), in addition to information, concepts and conceptual frameworks. There are other factors that increase the likelihood of student dropouts, such as an intense out-of-school workload.

Traditional students, who come from family and school backgrounds with better academic cultural capital, are more familiar with many of these skills: they have and use a family library, they have studied in certain elite schools with certain teachers and peers, they have relatives who attended university and are involved in university-related practices, they belong to certain social groups and networks, they know what kind of educational options exist and how they are organized, and they have access to certain tools and experiences, etc. These differentiated opportunities and trajectories which extend beyond the school of origin and the family’s income level—influence the possibilities of accessing and remaining in higher education, as they shape the type of cognitive,

psychological, educational, cultural and social obstacles that students will face when they enter (or attempt to enter) higher education. A key aspect, moreover, that differentiates students with more or less academic capital is the image and confidence they have of themselves and their chances of success at university, as well as the esteem they receive from their peers and instructors.

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for non-traditional students to face stigmatization by themselves and the educational community. According to Ezcurra (2011), the weight of cultural capital influences the possibilities of success in the trajectories of non-traditional students. For example, 5.4% of students whose parents completed secondary education graduate, in contrast to 71.6% of students whose parents completed university education (ECLAC data for Latin America, 2007; Ezcurra, 2011). Thus, university graduation data show an inequitable distribution of opportunities for the inclusion of historically underprivileged social groups. Students from more affluent sectors and families with bigger cultural capital graduate. The massification of the Latin American higher education system offers no room for optimism since its counterpart incur high dropout rates, particularly in the first year of university and among students with lower socioeconomic status: in the words of Ezcurra, it is a process of “exclusionary inclusion” that produces “schooling inclusion and cultural exclusion” (p. 35).

Academic Semiotic Capital and Academic Literacy Instruction

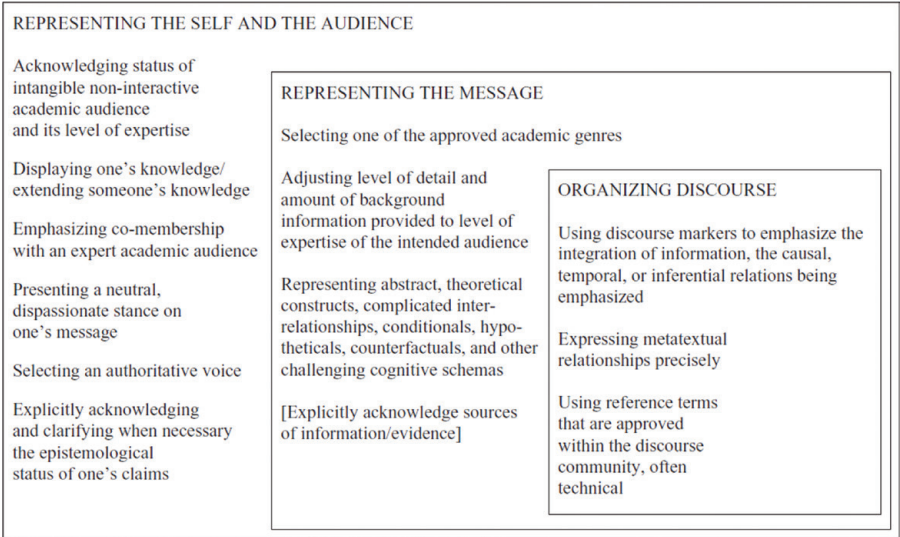
Academic cultural capital, defined as a set of academic habits, skills and knowledge essential for higher education learning trajectories, is articulated with *academic semiotic capital*, understood as the set of communication skills and knowledge (oral, written and multimodal) specific to academic contexts, and linked to disciplinary enculturation (Prior & Bilbro, 2011) and professional acclimation. Some authors have tried to define what academic semiotic capital consists of, using different theoretical frameworks, methodologies and technical terms. For example, Thaïss and Myers Zawacki (2006, pp. 4-7), based on extensive research on the training of academic writers in a United States higher education institution, use the concept of “academic writing,” restricting it to written production for educational purposes at university, and attribute three transversal features to it, regardless of the discipline concerned:

1. Clear written evidence that the writer has been persistent, unbiased and systematic in the study of the subject matter.
2. Dominance of reason over emotion or feelings.

3. An imagined reader who is purely rational, who reads seeking information and who can formulate reasoned objections.

As can be seen, these are rhetorical and epistemological features, with a focus on the practices of knowledge construction and connection with the interlocutor in the context of higher education, but not on the discourse and linguistic features that would materialize these practices.

In contrast, Snow and Uccelli (2009) integrate different theoretical perspectives from linguistic and pragmatic traditions to try to account for “academic language”, beyond the educational level and mode (oral, written and multimodal). Adopting a pragmatic approach, they propose that the linguistic features of academic language are no more than conventional ways to respond to the communicative challenges specific to the school and academic context. Therefore, their proposal, shown in Figure 4.1, lists the communication purposes of academic language and its links to inclusion. These attempts to describe academic semiotic capital or academic language show the importance of linking the cultural, communicative and educational demands of the academic environment with the linguistic and discourse manifestations that convey them. These are communication practices situated in personal, situational and cultural contexts. Moreover, it becomes evident how writing—although it is the predominant mode and set of skills—is in permanent interaction with other modes and other communication skills. At this point, another key idea can be presented:



*Figure 4.1 Nested Challenges Within a Communicative Event
Calling for Academic Language (Snow & Uccelli, 2009, p. 123)*

Key Idea 2: higher education trains disciplinary and professional readers, writers and speakers, three distinct but linked sets of situated competences that will shape the academic semiotic capital of university students.

Several issues arise from this statement. First, references here and in much of the current literature regarding writing and writing instruction do not imply that academic literacy instruction initiatives should focus exclusively on writing. Indeed, communication skills also include reading and speaking, with their specific disciplinary and professional features. It is not the same to read in Philosophy—that requires in-depth reading to deconstruct the layers of argument present in a short fragment of a classical author and to link it to previous readings of other scholars—than to read in History—a field that requires extensive reading from different sources, both primary and secondary, and that provides and contrasts exhaustive data, and frequently extensive footnotes. Thus, an expert reader of philosophy and an expert reader of history, two disciplines that are close because they are part of the humanities, read in markedly different ways. Consequently, reading and speaking are disciplinary and professionally situated competences, not general or transversal ones as frequently believed. They must be taught and learned in order to move through higher education and join the professional world. A course in academic, disciplinary or professional writing is necessarily also a course in academic, disciplinary or professional reading and speaking.

Second, reading, writing and speaking are not transversal, general or *soft* skills or competencies. Each of them is part of different competences linked to certain practices located, in this case, in the multidisciplinary spaces of university programs. Writing, for example, includes skills such as depersonalizing a text, creating a niche to justify the relevance of a research contribution, using technical language created through nominalizations, evaluating the contributions of other authors according to certain resources that generate effects of objectivity, providing certain types of evidence to validate hypotheses and reading positions, etc. This complexity of writing can be summarized in another key idea, complementary to the previous one:

Key Idea 3: academic writing simultaneously integrates different dimensions, such as regulatory, lexical, grammatical, semantic, discursal, rhetorical, non-verbal, situational, social, historical, psychological, cognitive, identity, hegemonic and affective dimensions, among others.

Third, the predominance of writing over reading and speaking is due to the fact that written production represents a particularly complex rhetorical

and cognitive challenge for learners. Furthermore, academic genres written by students (Navarro, 2014; Nesi & Gardner, 2012) are instances of assessment and accreditation of learning, and therefore the difficulties in producing them are visible to the entire education community, including teachers, authorities and the students themselves. Finally, writing practices and instruction at all levels of education is rare, particularly when it comes to rhetorically complex activities, with intricate interlocutors and genres, and epistemically complex activities, linking different sources and experiences in order for students to achieve their own and novel knowledge. Therefore, the focus on writing involves emphasizing an aspect of academic semiotic capital that is not addressed enough in classrooms.

Cultural capital and semiotic capital involve competences that, in most subject programs and even more so in teaching practices, are part of the hidden curriculum (Schlepppegrell, 2004), that is, they are not explicitly taught and learned. For example, it is extremely difficult for entry-level students to determine whether a source is scientifically reliable or not, whether it is academically relevant or not, how to survey and study it, and how to include it in a text and relate it to their own voice without committing unintentional plagiarism or reproducing it uncritically. Paradoxically, this is usually not taught, no feedback is provided nor is it practiced. This example shows how cultural capital and semiotic capital are closely related: students who are more familiar with the use of academic sources to argue and demonstrate their positions will write more appropriately regarding the expectations of their university professors. Another key idea can therefore be proposed:

Key Idea 4: a writing course or program is not a set of teachings on language, grammar or writing as isolated competencies; it is a set of teaching objects linking linguistic and rhetorical factors with epistemological, cultural, methodological and institutional factors.

Academic reading and writing are often not integrated into the curriculum as teaching and learning objectives in course subjects, and instructors generally do not have the training, time or support needed to incorporate literacy instruction into their courses. Faced with the entry of non-traditional students into university and their difficulties to become familiar with academic and rhetorical practices and skills that are foreign to their previous educational and cultural backgrounds, it is common to hear accusations and complaints from instructors about the poor preparation of students, generally in contrast to an idyllic past in which students knew more and wrote better. One need only read a newspaper to come across catastrophic headlines, some

made by so-called experts. “It will take over a decade to reverse the educational crisis,” says academic Pedro Barcia in a newspaper article headline from *La Nación* (Argentina). The article adds: “The academic warns about the poverty of children’s speech” (Ventura, 2014). In another Argentinian newspaper, *Infobae*, the headline reads: “It is alarming how many university students do not understand what they read,” and the article goes on to add that the academic José Luis Moure holds that “‘it is unacceptable that the University, in this era of vertiginous progress of knowledge, should dedicate one minute of its time’ to do what schools did not do in 12 years” (Infobae, 2012).

This is a reaction repeated precisely whenever the number of university entrants increased, as happened at Harvard University in the 1870s (Bazerman et al., 2016) or, with non-traditional students, at the City University of New York a hundred years later. Clearly, complaints about student writing, in contrast to the supposed ability of university students of the past, has been repeated for more than a century, at least in the United States (Russell, 2002). Therefore, the criticism of an alleged deterioration in the studying and writing skills of students, and their consequent blaming and stigmatization, is misguided. It hides an elitist and even reactionary position—and the pedagogical actions that should be carried out—of non-traditional students who face specific challenges to “enculturate” themselves in academic ways of communicating in a space historically reserved for a social and cultural elite. However, as Rose and Martin (2012) point out, if students are not taught to read and write independently, educational institutions will only reproduce the underlying social and cultural inequalities of their students.

The interesting thing about the perception of crises is that, behind the underlying conceptual errors, in many cases it not only led to institutional initiatives to teach writing, but also more importantly it frequently helped to make visible the fact that *all* students need to learn to read, write and speak the academic genres of their respective disciplinary fields. This is another key idea:

Key Idea 5: all university students, not only supposedly disadvantaged students, need—and have needed in the past—to learn and exercise the forms of communication specific to their study programs in order to learn disciplinary content through reading and writing (epistemic potential) and also to learn the genres required in the fields they are entering as new members (rhetorical potential).

Given this perceived literacy crisis at the university level, in the last 20 years Latin America has experienced a remarkable expansion of initiatives of teaching and learning academic reading, writing and speaking in higher

education; that is, different types of institutional efforts to address the reading and writing challenges faced by students in university education (see *Reading and Writing Initiatives in Higher Education in Latin America*, ILEES, for more information). Many of these initiatives uncritically echoed the “writing crises narratives” and, in that sense, were not informed by some of the perspectives on the pedagogy of academic writing explored here. In many cases, they followed approaches that were either grammatical (teaching decontextualized linguistic features), generalist (teaching transversal features of writing) or remedial (teaching content and skills from previous school levels). But whether it is based on a nostalgic ideology of supposedly good university writing of the past or based on the belief that universities provide a different rhetorical and cultural space that requires new ways of learning communication, many Latin American institutions have launched several initiatives to improve the teaching of writing.

These initiatives vary in terms of levels, articulation and placement in study programs. They may be offered in pre-admission university courses, during the first years, or in advanced undergraduate, or graduate study years. Some institutions, such as Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (Ávila Reyes et al., 2013) and Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento (Moyano, 2010), have implemented different types of courses covering a broad scope that are articulated to a greater or lesser extent throughout all stages of the university program. In terms of articulation, furthermore, they can be organized as specific transversal writing courses, as writing courses that are part of the program’s curriculum or as disciplinary content courses that dedicate a specific amount of hours on writing, in a continuum that goes from more to less integrated into the classroom and to the epistemological frameworks and disciplinary content of each program. Finally, their inclusion in study programs shows mandatory, optional and other courses, with varying degrees regarding their mandatory nature, which are offered on a temporary basis.

At the same time, several institutional milestones can be mentioned as part of this development, such as the establishment in 1996 of the *UNESCO Chair for Improving the Quality and Equity of Education in Latin America based on Reading and Writing* (Navarro et al., 2016) or in 2016 of the *Latin American Association of Writing Studies in Higher Education and Professional Contexts*. A major incentive for these developments was the concept of “alfabetización académica” (Carlino, 2003), defined in a recent article by Paula Carlino as the “teaching process that may (or may not) be set in motion to facilitate student access to the different written cultures of the disciplines” (2013, p. 370). As an expanded translation of the English concept “academic literacy instruction,” this designation which originated in Latin America made it possible

to give a name to the different initiatives for teaching disciplinary writing in higher education and thus promote its visibility, support, institutionalization, training and research. Furthermore, the use of the concept of “alfabetización” (literacy instruction) to refer to a training process in higher education implies prioritizing the need to continue teaching to read and write after primary and secondary education. In recent years, there has been significant production of scientific knowledge on the subject (Parodi, 2010) that does not emulate or reproduce supposedly successful experiences from other regions; instead the efforts aim to account for local and regional problems on the basis of Latin American traditions and a particular way of critically and eclectically linking itself to international traditions (Navarro et al., 2016). It would be a mistake to consider theoretical developments and experiences in other latitudes as successful models to be copied uncritically, not only because we know that they are not so successful or exemplary, but above all because they have been designed in educational systems, institutions, study programs, instructors and students that are not identical to ours. On the contrary, the interest of knowing and studying these models is to identify their peculiarities, to compare them with our own, to draw upon the successful experiences and contributions and to leave aside those that are not so successful. This is another key idea that is linked to the key idea #1:

Key Idea 6: The initiatives and studies related to academic writing in Latin America have a history and a profile of their own that attempts to address the specific needs and conditions of the region.

Examples include the importance of public education for social inclusion, the interest in the critical education of students, the existence of a discipline-specific curriculum from the first university years, the influence of linguistics and discourse studies, and a historical interest in reading.

The Specific Nature of Teaching Writing at University

The design of a university writing *course* is different from a writing *program* in the region, that is, an articulated set of regular courses—with a common leadership and with consistent theoretical-methodological and evaluation objectives and criteria—taught throughout different years and different initiatives such as writing tutoring, training of writing teachers, interventions and collaborations in content courses, advice to academic units, action and research projects, workshops for writing articles, theses and grant applications, symposia and workshops for dissemination and discussion with the educational

community, etc. However, in one case or another, or even in the different intermediate or poorly articulated instances that may arise in any university, the design, delivery and institutionalization of an action intended to teach academic writing is a specific activity. This can be expressed as a key idea:

Key Idea 7: Setting up a course in academic writing requires specific knowledge of administration, pedagogy and linguistics.

As in the design of a course in *Power Electronics* or *Philosophy of Science*, there are traditions, experiences, ways of teaching, teaching and learning objectives, sources and handbooks, budgets and basic contents, and professionals with expertise in the field. It seems obvious, but it is not: to be able to justify what to teach and how to teach in a writing course requires knowledge as specific and sophisticated as knowing what to teach and how to teach in *Power Electronics* or in *Philosophy of Science*. Some of the questions about language are as follows:

- Which language theory is employed? A language by levels that are integrated or decomposed into others or a language by layers that are realized in each other? An end-oriented language, with systematic options for different types of meaning, or a formal language that is constructed by sentences?
- Which teaching objectives are prioritized? The expert genres that students are likely to write upon graduation, such as protocols and research papers, or the school genres that students are expected to write during their undergraduate program, such as in-person exams and reading reports?
- Should a program be built around issues such as mechanics, punctuation, syntax, cohesion, genres, or rather questions linked to the activity systems and disciplinary cultures in which the texts are framed, such as the importance of validating empirical observations from the observer in an ethnography or of erasing subjectivity in biology's lab reports?

Nonetheless, various options regarding specific teaching and learning theories and strategies must be explicitly stated and addressed:

- Should you start with superficial textual aspects such as paragraph construction and the use of organizers, or follow a top-down approach that starts with objectives, genres and the communication situation and, from there, explain the rest of the writing options?
- Should you follow a workshop methodology in which model texts are deconstructed with an instructor's guidance or a more lecture-type class providing lists of resources and options and templates with the typical structures of the texts to be written?

- Should students be taught how to produce the academic genres of hegemonic scientific discourse or make room for students to express their identities of origin, their diverse cultural capitals, through more vernacular forms of communication?

Moreover, specific teaching materials are needed for instruction. Academic communication—although not learned by pure immersion and practice—requires many hours of practice and the question of what teaching materials to use in the classroom is perhaps more relevant than in courses of a different nature:

- Will writing handbooks be prepared for this initiative by the instructor of record, or will it be a collection of previous handbooks and different activity sources?
- What kind of texts will be read: texts selected by instructors or administrators for the course purposes, or by looking through texts that students actually read throughout their program or after graduation?
- Will the teaching materials emerge from research and practices of the expectations of disciplinary communities, or will they attempt to add to those practices and expectations certain knowledge about academic writing from a long tradition of applied and educational linguistics?

Last but not least, there is also the decision on institutional strategies for setting up a course or program:

- Should the prior experience and practices of university instructors be employed—many of them misguided or theoretically misinformed but enriching—or should a novel methodology and curriculum be proposed to modify certain entrenched habits that will generate resistance and a sense of menace?
- Shall an external expert be hired, with expertise in the subject matter but little institutional knowledge and networks, or shall an “in-house” teacher be selected and empowered?
- Shall a mandatory course or program be adopted, ensuring that all students and instructors will participate, or shall an optional course or program be chosen that offers a more gradual and negotiated establishment?

These are not simple questions, nor do they have absolute or identical answers in all contexts, but their answer is the core of the knowledge that a higher education writing educator must have. Whether explicitly formulated or left unsaid, agents in a writing course or program will always have to deal

with them. In other words, it is possible that the new initiative may attempt to answer these questions, generally from the specific knowledge of pedagogy and writing studies in higher education, or it may fail to answer them and continue to work following implicit theories, often based on common sense or on the knowledge of other disciplinary areas. Implicit theories consist of “certain basic principles or assumptions which, because of their implicit nature, often organize and underlie our actions or decisions about learning and teaching” (Pozo et al., 2006, pp. 95-96; own translation). To omit such questions is to let a course design respond to potentially uninformed and outdated implicit theories. This is undoubtedly an extremely dangerous option, because it can lead to courses that confirm the perceptions of crisis and consolidate the inequitable distribution of academic cultural capital and semiotic capital mentioned at the beginning. For example, by creating remedial courses focused exclusively on low-level skills—such as spelling—which are not only inefficient, but also stigmatize students required to take them. In short, the design of a writing course or program, or curricular innovation with respect to existing initiatives, requires a specific pedagogy of academic writing, including what to teach and how to teach it, and how to assess and accredit what has been learned.

In addition to specific knowledge about pedagogy and the selection and preparation of teaching material, writing courses and programs need a specific administration: in other latitudes, this has been called *writing program administration* since the 1970s (McLeod, 2007), a complex and demanding area that crosses across fields of professional practice and different types of knowledge:

- Linguistic and pedagogical knowledge (see questions above).
- Knowledge of training, selection, and development of teaching faculty.
- Knowledge of curricula, innovation and institutionalization of initiatives.
- Political knowledge, on building alliances and developing support between academic units.
- Knowledge of economic issues and of budget procurement, administration, and salary negotiation issues.
- Knowledge of accountability, assessment and research on the impact of interventions.

It is not an easy job, even though administrators of large courses or writing programs often continue with their other teaching and research duties, as institutions still fail to recognize the huge demands on their time and skills that the position requires. Moreover, since teaching writing as part of the

curriculum is a novel and specific activity, it often puts at risk other disciplinary areas with a longer tradition, and administrators must be proactive in ensuring that initiatives are created, expanded and institutionalized. Thus, the administration of writing courses and programs is an activity that complicates narrower decisions about what to teach and how, and it raises fundamental administrative and budgetary issues that may determine other pedagogical decisions that are more inherent to the classroom. Thus, writing administrators must work with the instructors available, specifically:

- With their implicit or explicit theories, sometimes with little information on current developments in the pedagogy of writing.
- With their training trajectories, very rarely linked to the teaching of academic writing and, more frequently, to other disciplinary fields.
- With their professional aspirations and needs, often far removed from a career as writing professionals.
- With the teaching positions available, often in low-level, precarious and poorly paid circumstances.
- With the classroom experiences and the use of previous teaching materials, an area where the most interesting, mobilizing and formative experiences and discoveries generally take place in order to build quality courses.

In short, as proposed at the beginning of this text, we can conclude that writing courses are designed according to the resources, people, habits and opportunities available to each institution. The possibilities and limitations of any discussion on the ways of teaching writing are built on the resources and capacities available. To conclude this section, I propose a key idea that addresses the previous dimensions:

Key Idea 8: initiatives to teach writing at the university must aim to create a real writing campus.

This means that, ultimately, we must explore all the pedagogical options proposed throughout this chapter. Teaching and learning writing during the *shock* of university entry, in the lethargic transitional stages, at the difficult moment of graduation, when dealing with graduate dissertations. Teaching and learning writing in the writing classroom, in the articulated classroom between teachers of writing and of the disciplines, in the writing center, in regular content courses, in *ad hoc* courses for specific purposes. Teaching and learning writing to remedy heterogeneous prior learning trajectories, to prepare for the general demands of academia, to develop the academic genres that students must write for other courses, to prepare for the expert genres of

professional contexts. Teaching writing to peers, tutoring incoming students, training teachers about pedagogical tools, thematizing and disseminating the need to teach writing. Teaching hegemonic genres in academia, teaching how to denaturalize and criticize their features and circulation, validating the emergence of other genres and discourses where part of the students' identity is manifested. In other words, writing courses should tend to be institutionalized in a true *writing campus* through initiatives fostering learning opportunities and enculturation in disciplinary writing. These initiatives might need to be consistent among each other to a certain extent and may belong to different institutional units. This is an approach to teaching writing across the curriculum, across university levels of student classification at the university level, and across university roles (students, faculty, staff).

Designing Writing Courses: A Proposal

I will now present a case, implemented at Universidad Nacional de Quilmes (Argentina), to illustrate how the previous reflections can be translated into institutional elements or practices such as the profile of the faculty or pedagogical aspects such as the type of activities to be used in the classroom. Universidad Nacional de Quilmes is a public higher education institution located in the southern area of the suburbs of Buenos Aires. It was established in 1989 and it is divided into three departments (social sciences; science and technology; and economics and administration) and a university-based school. The university offers undergraduate and graduate degrees. Its faculty has been recognized locally and regionally for their research and it is a pioneer in Latin America for offering online education, a program that began in 1999. In 2013, the university had 1,015 faculty members and 22,451 students, 5,654 of which were incoming students (SPU, 2013). Since its origins and until 2016, the university has offered different course modalities of mandatory preparatory courses that were large, pre-admission, and transversal to all departments and programs and had no administrative or pedagogical dependence on the degree programs the students sought to enter. Some of these courses taught academic reading and writing.

This model of a general, very large first-year "reading and writing" course has been very popular in Argentina since the 1990s. Its strengths and advantages are manifold. Instructors tend to have informed, up-to-date and explicit theories and tools for reflection on language, because most of them have bachelor's and master's degrees in letters. The courses institutionalize the teaching of writing, thereby prioritizing and ensuring that the teaching of writing is part of the curriculum at the entry level and ensuring its continuity. The courses are intended to level out differences and inequalities in prior

learning, in particular by including non-traditional students, and preparing them in academic reading and writing skills for transferring to the new contexts students will face. The courses develop metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness in students as they read and reflect on language and writing. More importantly, they have enabled writing pedagogy initiatives to grow massively in scale, reaching tens of thousands of students in recent years, and in doing so building up a considerable mass of writing instructors.

However, the system also has many weaknesses. The fact that they are poorly linked to the practices, discourses, exigencies and needs of future programs, and that students are not yet full and entitled members of those programs, makes learning of little significance. “When are we going to start learning macroeconomics?” is a common complaint from students who, for example, enrolled in a program in Foreign Trade. Enculturation of students is limited, restricted to familiarization with aspects of academic life in general, as administrators, professors and texts are external to their programs.

Similarly, the directors of undergraduate programs have little influence on the curriculum design of the writing courses, a fact that can lead to neglect and political conflict between the different departments. Moreover, working and pedagogic conditions are often precarious: massive classrooms; young, novice, unqualified teachers, sometimes with little training in teaching writing; students who are not yet part of the undergraduate programs, who do not vote for their university representatives yet, who ignore habits and customs and the institutional organization, and who have few networks with other students. A more serious issue is that these courses frequently act as “filters” in practice since they operate as a kind of internal selection system whereby many students who fail or drop out are the ones with the least cultural and semiotic capital. Moreover, the courses may give the impression of “solving the problem” of writing at an institutional level, give the impression that no other initiatives need to be implemented at other stages with other objectives, and that there is no need to articulate them with content courses and update their curricular design and pedagogic materials. This contrast of strengths and weaknesses serves as a key idea, complementary to the previous one:

Key Idea 9: First year writing courses have an important impact on the initial literacy instruction of entry-level students, but these courses should be continued, broadened and deepened in other courses and initiatives across the curriculum and across levels of training.

In 2015, Universidad Nacional de Quilmes’ Students Affair Office, led by Dr. Sara Pérez, split up the traditional large pre-entry general writing course

into departments. The general course, which had consisted of two four-month courses for most students, was divided into courses for each of the three University Departments. Thus, the teachers, the incoming students and the curriculum linked to the teaching of writing became administratively dependent on the different departments. This change in the organization of the university curriculum had multiple consequences—in most cases preserving the strengths and addressing the weaknesses mentioned above. The design of the new courses included the instructors who until then belonged to the general writing course with instructors from the different disciplines in multidisciplinary teams. This new arrangement required offering ongoing training and development opportunities for all faculty. The administrators of the courses and contents, competences and readings included were defined by the departments themselves. Students started to enter the programs directly, taking writing alongside other courses of their interest, and dependent on the administration of their degree's department, which increased the commitment and interest of everyone involved in the educational community due to the impact of these initiatives.

In this context, the preparation of teaching materials, authored by some of the writing instructors in their new role and institutional affiliation, became a strategic process to train the faculty and to guide and articulate their pedagogical actions in the university's multiple writing classrooms. With a detailed and extensive writing handbook that includes models and activities on what to teach and how to teach it, the faculty could become involved in curricular innovation while having the option to choose the paths, exercises and emphases. Preparing teaching materials included a preliminary stage of research into the practices, demands, needs and diagnoses of the first-year courses of the different programs: what students read and studied, the difficulties they faced, and what aspects they had to learn. Furthermore, learning materials drew on the previous experiences and interests of the faculty who prepared the chapters, although the teaching objects were defined on the basis of the course curricula. Lastly, the learning materials were tested in the first year of implementation of the curriculum innovation (2016) and then revised for publication the following year.

As an external advisor, my role in this process was to define the contents and competences of the course syllabus, in collaboration with the department directors, administrators of the introductory courses and the writing course administrators; to train the writing instructors and the instructors of the disciplines who took on the responsibility of teaching the innovated courses; and, above all, to lead the preparation of some of the handbooks that would include these theoretical perspectives, pedagogical objectives and feasibility conditions of the courses. An illustrative example of the content of one such

course is provided: *Academic Reading and Writing*. This mandatory course is offered in the first semester of the programs at the Department of Economics and Administration, with a class load of seventy-two hours, distributed in two classes per week lasting two hours each. It is intended to have entry-level students broaden and develop general scientific and academic oral and written communication skills as a first step in university enculturation.

Therefore, the course focuses on teaching the reading, writing and speaking skills common at the university level and thus students read scientific texts written for the public and write basic academic texts. A thematic axis relevant to the department articulates the topics within the reading corpus: business, sustainability and social responsibility. To support the transition from high school writing and other forms of vernacular writing, reading is positioned midway between scientific discourse and other social discourses with which students may be more familiar, while writing includes common university genres (in-class exams, reading reports, encyclopedia definitions). Simultaneously, students are taught applied grammar content and the meta-skills of monitoring and reflecting on reading and writing. The latter is reinforced by reading texts on reading and writing (history, learning, strategic and cultural framing).

The course is divided into seven units that organize articulated and gradual training in academic rhetorical skills needed to prepare a complex and group writing: the *reading report*. This student genre seeks to have students select, contextualize, present and contrast different sources on the same topic drawn from academic or scientific texts written for the general public, an essential activity for any university student. Instructors assess the research and selection of a topic and relevant sources; the construction of a neutral, academic and informed authorial voice; the inclusion, reformulation and evaluation of quotations that proof the reading hypotheses; and the ability to negotiate collaborative writing with peers in a complete, articulate, cohesive and coherent piece of work. The work involves several submissions of general planning and specific sections drafts.

Unit 1: Reading and writing at university reflects on the specifics of reading and writing at university and of academic genres, and discusses the experiences and difficulties of both novice and experienced writers. In the following example, students describe their trajectories as writers, link them to the difficulties and needs faced by other students, and write an autobiography as writers.

Write an autobiography as a reader and writer, reconstructing how the ways of reading and writing have changed over time.

In addition to considering experiences in formal education,

do not forget that people read and write for many different purposes in different areas (on Facebook, for example)....

Read the testimonies of students at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of Universidad de Buenos Aires when asked about their training in reading and writing practices in their courses.

Discuss the following questions in small groups and then among the entire class:

1. What are the common features of the testimonies?
2. Do you identify yourself with any of them? Which ones? Why?
3. How could the situation they point out be reversed?
(Romagnoli, in Navarro & Aparicio, 2018, pp. 52-3).

Unit 2: Planning a reading report explores ways to read and the basic features of reading reports as a genre and how to plan them. In addition, literacy and academic practices at university are investigated. The following excerpt shows a research activity outside the classroom in which students must investigate the literate and institutional culture of their university, department and program.

To begin this institutional journey, choose one of the following activities to discuss at future meetings. Compile all the information in a folder to be shared in the next class.

1. Consult the syllabus of a first-year course in your program, go to the Main Library (its physical or online space), select two or three mandatory readings, locate them and leave a record of their location for future reference.
2. Consult the university's publishing house; talk to and/or interview the people in charge and record at least two titles that relate to your program to determine their importance in your discipline. Record the details of the titles.
3. Consult the calendar of events and schedule events if the institution offers conferences, book presentations, interviews or other cultural events of your interest; record the details to attend the event and justify your choice.
4. Access your program's course requirements and plan a future pathway all the way until the degree conferral; you

may wish to interview your academic advisor or program director and record what you discuss.

5. Make a sketch of the common areas of the institution and the department to which your program belongs to (conference room, offices, laboratories, etc.); also include the current Student Resource Building and the services it offers. Explain the function of each place.
6. Inform yourself about meetings or research conferences to be held both at your own university and other universities and, if you have access to them, specify the call and/or rules for participating in these events.
7. Talk to and/or interview the Department of Extension and make a (synthetic) survey of the courses the university offers to the general public. Write a brief description of the courses and select two of your interest. Justify your choice in writing. This activity can also be done online. (Galván, in Navarro & Aparicio, 2018, p. 67).

In *Unit 3: Research your sources*, students learn the specific nature of scientific authorship, the criteria for finding and selecting appropriate academic sources and writing an introduction for a reading report, as shown below.

1. In groups, take one of the texts and classify the sources referred to according to the type of source. For classifying purposes, consider authorship (academic, public or private organization), subject (theoretical or current affairs) and genre (articles, chapters, books, web pages).
2. Specify where each source can be found when creating the reading report. (Moragas, in Navarro & Aparicio, 2018, p. 102).

In *Unit 4: Comparing and explaining sources*, students exercise strategies for connecting, contrasting and evaluating sources. The features that distinguish sources are identified and strategies and resources for citing are learned. The following excerpt is an activity of reading, contrasting and answering questions about three texts on forms of citation, thus encouraging the development of readers and writers through metalinguistic reflection on the processes of academic intertextuality.

Reyes, García Negroni and Marcial carried out works reflecting on the importance of citation in academic texts. Read the

following excerpts and complete the activity. Estimated time: 45 minutes.

1. In Marcial's text, mark the excerpts in which the author refers to other texts and those in which he does not.
2. According to the excerpt from Marcial's article, how does argumentation appear in academic texts?
3. Explain the following sentence in your own words: "The citation system is assumed to be a scrutiny of the scientific process aimed at improving the quality of research."
4. What role does the figure of the author play in Negroni's text? What is the relationship between the author of the text and the authors cited?
5. How can the following sentence be interpreted: "there will be a citation whenever the listener recognizes the speaker's intention to evoke someone else's utterance or thought"?
6. Considering the end of Reyes' excerpt, how does the sense of responsibility operate when writing an academic text?
7. Compare the forms of citation that appear in the three texts, what similarities and differences appear? (Eiras, in Navarro & Aparicio, 2018, pp. 157-9).

In *Unit 5: Building assertions*, students create definitions in the genre encyclopedia entry, and exercise reformulation and revision to improve consistency, punctuation and subordination, and the use of discourse organizers. In this exercise, that is part of a broader series of activities, students read definitions and encyclopedia entries on economic topics and write their own definitions and examples of the genre:

Read the summary of "Chapter XV. Functions of money" from the book *Economics: principles and applications* by Francisco Mochón and Victor Becker. Then write an entry for the term "money" for inclusion in a specialized encyclopedic dictionary. To write the entry, please refer to the instructions below. Finally, share in class and make revisions. (Pisano, in Navarro & Aparicio, 2018, p. 186)

In *Unit 6: Building an authorial voice*, students learn to personalize and de-personalize discourse for the construction of scientific authority, mitigate and

emphasize to negotiate with the knowledge and expectations of readers, and produce a conclusion for a reading report. In the following exercises, students rewrite a text using depersonalization and analyze the impact of this change with regard to certain situations and disciplinary genres:

The following text is an abstract of a conference proceeding not yet approved by the conference's organizing committee to which it was submitted. The organizers requested that the wording be depersonalized.

1. Identify and underline the personalized forms (verbs and pronouns).
2. Rewrite, using depersonalization strategies.
3. In groups, review the changes made to the text.
4. Compare both versions: what effect is achieved by depersonalization?

Estimated time of the activity: 40 min. (Obregón, in Navarro & Aparicio, 2018, p. 231).

Finally, in *Unit 7: Oral presentation of a reading report*, students prepare a presentation script, roles are distributed strategically, and non-verbal resources for communication effectiveness are practiced. In the following activities, students must develop a script of topics to be presented orally, taking into account different presentation situations:

1. Review the completed report and make a list of all the issues covered.
2. Create a list of topics that can be included and the order and manner in which they should be presented, based on the three situations defined below:
 - The potential audience has general knowledge of the chosen topic, but lacks up-to-date data. Students are allowed 10 minutes for the presentation.
 - The potential audience has no prior knowledge of the topic. Students are allowed 10 minutes for the presentation.
 - Presentation time is cut in half. Students now have only five minutes available. They must select one of the above points and perform the appointed task. (Russell, in Navarro & Aparicio, 2018, p. 264)

Some Conclusions for Further Reflection

In these pages, I have proposed a set of key ideas that can help to design courses for teaching academic writing. Through updated data, I have shown that Latin America is going through an explosion of student enrolment in higher education, but not one of democratization in terms of entry and graduation. Academic writing initiatives and studies in the region have their own history and profile, determined largely by the needs and conditions they face. There are, in fact, no general recipes or designs that can be applied to any context, but certain principles and experiences that must be adjusted to the predominant theoretical and pedagogical traditions, to the profiles of faculty and students, to the institutional resources and to the curricular spaces available.

Higher education has among its stated aims to develop readers, writers and disciplinary and professional speakers, three distinct but linked sets of situated competences that will constitute part of the academic semiotic capital of university students. All students, not only those who are supposedly disadvantaged, need—and have needed in the past—to practice the forms of communication specific to their programs to learn disciplinary content through reading and writing and also to learn to read and write (epistemic potential) so as to learn the kinds of texts specific to the fields they are entering as new members (rhetorical potential). Specifically, academic writing simultaneously combines normative, lexical, grammatical, semantic, discursive, rhetorical, non-verbal, situational, social, historical, psychological, cognitive, identity, hegemonic and affective dimensions, among others. Thus, a writing course or program is not a set of teachings on language, grammar or writing as isolated competences, but a set of teaching objectives linking linguistic and rhetorical factors with epistemological, cultural, methodological and institutional factors. For these reasons, setting up a course in academic writing requires specific knowledge of administration, pedagogy and linguistics.

First year writing courses have an important impact on the initial literacy instruction of incoming students, but these courses should be continued, broadened and deepened in other courses and initiatives across the curriculum and across levels of training. For this reason, initiatives to teach writing at university should aim to create a real writing campus. The case presented here, a writing course for students entering economics and administration programs at Universidad Nacional de Quilmes (Argentina), can illustrate some strategies to ensure that the teaching of academic writing, without losing its massive nature and taking advantage of existing resources, experiences and faculty, can be, to a large extent, situated, relevant, meaningful, complex, critical, consensual, creative and diverse.

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Reflection

This chapter grew out of a conference at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Perú (PUCP), an institution of significant influence in Peru that at that time was tasked with rethinking undergraduate curriculum design and organized an event aimed at authorities from universities across the country. In my case, I was tasked with addressing the development of teaching writing, while other colleagues addressed topics such as teaching reading or competency-based curriculum organization.

Within that particular context, writing this text allowed me to systematize a set of principles for addressing the teaching of academic reading, writing, and speaking in higher education, which I was contemplating at that time. This topic has developed rapidly in Latin America under the untranslatable term “alfabetización académica,” a concept that combines notions of literacy, academia, instruction, but also establishes an intertextual and epistemological relationship with initial literacy instruction in school contexts. My chapter attempts to position itself within an important debate at that time: the implementation of large first-year writing courses led by language experts vs. the implementation of writing initiatives throughout the university curriculum led by literacy experts.

I believe that the contribution of the chapter, which remains relevant today, is that these two approaches do not constitute a dichotomy but rather two possible, complementary actions, with their own strengths and weaknesses, within a vision towards the development of a “writing campus” that takes advantage of all financial, institutional, and academic opportunities available to teach reading, writing, and speaking. Today, I can see that reconciling and articulating these positions is possible because we now share a history of at least a quarter of a century of researching and teaching academic literacy in higher education in Latin America.

Another contribution of the chapter is, it seems to me, that it draws from different theoretical traditions and educational contexts. First, the North American tradition of writing program administration. Second, the curricular and social configuration of higher education in Latin America, with its features of both inequality and state-funded or semi-funded high-quality and

prestigious educational offerings. Third, the field of writing studies in Latin America, with different trends and traditions depending on the country. This mix results in both a panorama and a roadmap for thinking about writing instruction that does not closely resemble what happens in the United States, Europe, or other regions.

Finally, it is inevitable to wonder what I would write differently today. I am happy to discover early signs of aspects that interest me today, such as a perspective centered on students' experiences and their right to education. This critical literacy perspective explores how to articulate the knowledge, practices, and reference worlds—rhetorical and epistemological—of students with the academic and hegemonic discourses and practices imposed on them in university contexts, sometimes in a violent and discriminatory manner. It would have served me well to think and claim, as I do today, that teaching should simultaneously give students critical access to the hegemonic discourses of the university while recognizing and accommodating their experiences of validation, resistance, and identity adjustment.

– Federico Navarro