



Epilogue. Present and Future of *los estudios de la escritura*

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What's in a Name?

The title of this epilogue to *Writing Studies in Latin America: Seminal Works* was no trivial choice. Epilogues come from theater; it was through the epilogue that spectators learned the fate of the characters after the plot. Whilst original epilogues sought to give closure to the story, the history of a field does not simply come to an end—at least, that is what we hope for when engaging in disciplinary work, like this book. Disciplinary work, ultimately, seeks to contribute to the identity, professionalization, growth, development, and expansion of a field. I hope that this volume can make a useful contribution to that end.

At the risk of tokenizing the Latin American experience, I have chosen to name our field in this title in one of our languages, Spanish: *estudios de la escritura*. This translanguaging choice aims to capture at least several layers pertaining to the naming of the field. By using *estudios de la escritura* I tried to account for a shared interest in *escritura* (writing) as an object of *estudios* (studies), in a vast array of manifestations and perspectives, and to stake a disciplinary claim around it, just as this book does. But, by deliberately naming our field in Spanish I try to acknowledge the place from which we are creating knowledge, in reference to one of the central premises of the decolonial perspective: to dismantle the supposed universality of knowledge produced in the North as well as the supposed locality of knowledge produced in the South. Indeed, this book is about studies on writing—a universal concern—that happened to be produced in Spanish or Portuguese in Latin America. In other words, the works in this book do not theorize writing in Latin America; rather, they contribute from Latin America to a global conversation on writing.

Additionally, by using *estudios de la escritura*, I was also trying to avoid the risk of signifying that this book is a sort of Latin American version of the tradition forged in the United States, called writing studies—which, incidentally, was the tradition in which I was trained in my doctorate and which is itself a non-univocal and contested designation for the field of writing research.

In this light, I celebrate the book's momentum in shifting the traditional direction of knowledge flow, enabling anglophone scholars to engage with an

entire research tradition from the South—one that enriches and may help address its existing knowledge gaps. Thus, the conceptual bias that traditionally understands the North as an epistemically “unmarked” space—where universal knowledge is produced—could be challenged, fostering a more nuanced understanding of this knowledge as also inevitably local. I imagine that a desired effect of this book could be not only the recognition and citation of these traditions by colleagues from different locations—a movement that, perhaps, may help scholars from the North reciprocate the citations received from the South—but also the possibility of true dialogue, and future collaborations on equal standing. Such collaborations would contribute to a truly universal understanding of our object of study, building from different localities toward a pluriversality.

Alongside many other Latin American colleagues, in one way or another, we have undertaken various actions to contribute to disciplinary work, and the term *estudios de la escritura* has assisted us with versatility in this endeavor. Some examples include the *Asociación Latinoamericana de Estudios de la Escritura* (ALES) and the *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios de la Escritura* (RLEE). I cannot say with certainty to what extent this name has fully taken root in the field, nor whether other disciplinary homes or labels might make more sense to researchers and practitioners. What I do maintain, however, is that *estudios de la escritura* allows for unity in an inclusive manner, bringing together work on writing without being confined to any particular approach, as this very volume attests.

This group of seminal works holds a crucial place in our disciplinary history, not only because they are among the most cited and have formed an initial canon, but also because they played a key role in bringing unity to the diversity of approaches that, around the turn of the century, began to take an interest in the phenomenon of writing in the region.

Thus, by the 2010s, those of us concerned with writing-related issues—mostly driven by the growing interest in undergraduate academic writing furthered by enrollment expansion and student-centered policies—were able to rely on a body of references specific to the field upon which to build and expand our scholarship, something that many of these pioneers did not have as clearly available. For many of us, reading these works allowed us to recognize ourselves as part of a community with shared interests. And on a personal level, reading some of the titles in this volume helped me, at their time, to grasp the complexity of the layers underlying writing, transcending the somewhat naïve need to “improve” students’ writing that drove many of us, some twenty years ago, to shift from our original disciplines (education, psychology, or linguistics) to becoming scholars of writing.

Therefore, this book comes to share with new audiences the seed of what is today a consolidated field. Evidence of this consolidation is the valuable reflections that accompany the chapters, which reposition many of the initial perspectives in today's view, identifying further gaps to pursue. Hence, although my charge in this text was to speak about the future of *estudios de la escritura*, I cannot do so without briefly examining our present.

Present

If I were to say a defining feature of our field today, I would mention a strong theoretical eclecticism, a topic I have had the opportunity to discuss elsewhere and that is exemplified in several of the chapters compiled in this volume. This eclecticism is, in part, a search for complementarity among perspectives. For example, there is an effort to recognize that writing is both an individual and a social phenomenon; thus, cognitive or textual approaches could easily be combined with sociocultural ones. This is also a historically-rooted phenomenon—as the field was initially informed by linguistic and discourse studies, as well as by cognitively oriented research on reading, there is a tendency in the region to shift from a more textual and cognitive approach to one that is more situated and sociocultural, in some cases, integrating them. I have recently observed this eclecticism firsthand through my experience editing a book and a journal special issue, as well as in my role as editor-in-chief of the *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios de la Escritura*. Thus, it is not uncommon to find co-citations of perspectives that might even seem incompatible.

But beyond my personal experience, it is useful to resort to some data to depict the present more thoroughly. Recognizing that any selection is necessarily partial, I would like to follow this book's approach and examine some special issues published in the region after 2020. This will help ground our claims about how the field is currently configured epistemologically. As a reference, I will draw on eight recent volumes: "*Escritura e identidad*," edited in the journal *Enunciación* (Colombia) by Ana Atorresi and Laura Eisner in 2021; "*Estudios de la escritura na educação superior*," edited in *Revista DELTA* (Brazil) by Celia Macedo, Federico Navarro, Orlando Vian Jr., and Marília M. Ferreira in 2021; "*Letramentos Acadêmico-Científicos no Ensino Superior*," edited in *Signum* (Brazil) by Federico Navarro, Vera Lopes Cristovão, and Viviane Bagio Furtuoso in 2021; "*Writing research across borders*," edited in *Literatura y Lingüística* (Chile) by Chris Anson, Jonathan Marine, Federico Navarro, and Paul M. Rogers in 2022; "*Más allá de los textos: investigaciones situadas de la escritura*," edited in *Pensamiento Educativo Latinoamericano* (Chile) by myself and Lina Calle-Arango in 2022; "*Miradas sobre la alfabetización académica*,"

edited in *Cuadernos del Sur Letras* (Argentina) by Daniela Palmucci in 2024; and “*Estudios de literacidad académica y educación: abordajes desde/hacia la justicia social en América Latina*,” edited in *Magis* (Colombia) by Emilce Moreno and Luanda Sito in 2024 and 2025.

This proliferation of special issues in local journals reflects the significant growth and development of the field in recent years—especially considering that I have excluded from this review potential special issues from *Traslaciones*, *Leer, Escribir y Descubrir*, and *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios de la Escritura*, as these are journals entirely dedicated to writing studies. Along with strongly recommending the reading of these special issues, I would like to offer a brief analysis that provides a more comprehensive understanding of the current state of writing research in the region.

The first aspect I would like to address is that of approaches. Of the 57 articles published between 2021 and 2024, 42% explicitly adopt a sociocultural / literacy as a social practice approach (e.g., academic literacies, new literacy studies, critical sociolinguistics). These qualitatively oriented studies appear to be mainstream in the region today. Next, 26% of the studies demonstrate the theoretical eclecticism I previously mentioned. These works frequently combine approaches that offer theoretical complementarities. The most common case are studies that complement two sociocultural approaches—sociohistorical and social practices. However, in only one of these cases does the author explicitly acknowledge that they are drawing on two theoretical frameworks with different epistemologies. On the other hand, there are three instances in which epistemologically incompatible frameworks are combined—for example, integrating situated or critical perspectives on writing with analytical concepts from structuralist traditions or individual cognition. Although these cases are few, it is noticeable that this kind of theoretical eclecticism—which we might call “uncritical eclecticism”—is present in special issues of recently published, peer-reviewed journals.

Third, 9% of the studies fall under linguistic-textual analysis, incorporating perspectives such as corpus analysis, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), metadiscourse, or genre analysis. Finally, 7% of the studies align with a sociocultural / sociohistorical paradigm, linked to activity theory or situated cognition. All other perspectives identified—such as socio-discursive interactionism, systemic functional linguistics, cognitive processes, and multimodal-ity—appear only once or twice in the sample.

Regarding the educational levels addressed, it is important to acknowledge a bias in these data, as three of the special issues specifically focus on higher education or academic literacy. Even so, it is interesting to note that 46% of the studies center on undergraduate higher or tertiary education, 12%

on postgraduate education, 11% on school-level education (primary or secondary), 9% specifically on teacher training, and 7% on researchers or academics. Less frequent areas of interest include adult education, professional fields, multiple educational levels, and early literacy, each represented by one or two articles. Additionally, although two articles refer to society at large (one historical and one theoretical study), none in the sample explore literacy in non-institutionalized contexts.

In terms of the countries of affiliation of the first authors, Argentina leads the list (21%), followed by Chile (19%), the United States (12%), Brazil and Colombia (11% each), the United Kingdom (7%), and Mexico and Spain (5% each), not counting other countries with one or two appearances (France, Belgium, Peru, and Uruguay). In total, affiliations of first authors outside Latin America account for 30%. This progressive internationalization of research produced in the region is notably linked to the existence of multilingual publications. At the same time, there are several cases of non-Spanish-speaking authors publishing their work in Spanish. This trend reflects the gradual internationalization of local journals—a highly positive development, as it opens the door to future cross-regional collaborations. However, for now, such collaborations remain limited. In the sample, only five articles involve international collaborations, four of which are between different regions.

This data-grounded analysis appears to offer a useful synopsis of the current state of the field. It is characterized by a predominant interest in studying writing at the undergraduate level, a prevailing approach that views writing as a social practice, a strong tendency toward eclecticism, and a growing trend toward the internationalization of its academic venues. With the exception of one essay, all the articles are either empirical studies or data-driven theoretical works. They draw on a diverse range of data sources, with a clear predominance of qualitative methods. In my view, this is an accurate picture of our present reality—at least of the writing studies community that coalesces around these special issues—one that reflects a field with a distinct identity and which is now well-established.

Despite this disciplinary consolidation, certain challenges remain. The first concerns a noticeable slowdown in the enthusiasm we experienced ten years ago for establishing writing initiatives in the region. While the academic output analyzed in the special issues reflects a thriving, expanding, and well-rooted research field, cutting-edge teaching practices are constantly at risk due to the challenges of securing institutional funding and preventing the precaritization of well-informed initiatives across various educational levels. In a similar vein, the fragile disciplinary identity of *estudios de la escritura*—much like in other parts of the world—makes it difficult to access

external research funding, which must often be sought within more recognizable disciplinary fields, such as education or applied linguistics.

Future

The fate of the characters in this story remains open. The growth and professionalization of the field over the years, from the original publication of these Seminal Works to the present, suggest a promising future for *estudios de la escritura*.

First, it is important to stress the unique contribution that the epistemological eclecticism of research in our region can offer—potentially leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the object of study and more integrative methodologies. However, for this to fully materialize, eclecticism needs to be a conscious and explicitly articulated choice, rather than a loosely defined blend that accommodates incompatible perspectives on the nature of writing. Thus, a key task for our Latin American field could be to further develop its “critical eclecticism.”

Critical eclecticism can also be a step toward decolonization, in the sense that it does not necessarily conform to the epistemic borders and theoretical boundaries imposed by perspectives that have emerged from the Global North. Articulating different dimensions of writing phenomena has been a staple of past and current work of *estudios de la escritura*, and emerges as a productive avenue for future developments.

In this same vein, I want to insist on the value of this book in its effort to position these seminal works—many of them theoretical—globally, enabling more fluid conversations. Our future work will be to continue aggregating knowledge on writing based on our own developments, while also hoping that, in a similar way, knowledge from other parts of the world aggregates and builds upon what we produce in Latin America.

In this regard, an important direction for future work is cross-fertilization—that is, ensuring that traditions from both the North and the South read, learn from, and cite each other, developing and expanding their ideas. At present, this is not the case; rather, there remains a strong tendency in the region to adopt theoretical frameworks from the Global North, with little to no tendency for the North to engage with theory from the South. Similarly, the space that our journals have begun to offer for more international scholars to gain visibility among researchers in Latin America is extremely valuable. However, it is crucial that this growth occurs with reciprocity, increasing Latin American representation in global journals, which are currently dominated by the anglophone North. Ultimately, one outcome of these processes

of cross-fertilization should be both the decolonization and epistemological diversification of global writing studies, as well as a greater number of transnational collaborations between different regions—particularly by breaking through linguistic and geopolitical barriers between Latin America and the Global North.

A penultimate challenge for the future falls upon us—the mid-career researchers who are now responsible for training the next generation of scholars. It is crucial that we ensure a highly prepared new generation capable of addressing the epistemological, theoretical, methodological, and geopolitical challenges ahead. It is an ethical imperative to train undergraduate and graduate students to the highest standards—with dedication, care, and the genuine hope that they will soon surpass their (temporary) mentors.

And finally, there is no possible future unless we collectively take responsibility for some of the central challenges facing the world today: the rise of increasingly divisive discourses, climate collapse, threats to peace, alternative truths, and the erosion of diversity. The study of literacy in general, and writing in particular, is more relevant than ever in a time when full social participation is at risk. Writing studies must adopt a teleological commitment to social justice. In other words, the knowledge we produce about writing should seek to ensure the best possible living conditions for all people as its defining purpose, through the most diverse means and approaches. This ethical challenge, which transcends regions, should be at the forefront of our efforts in the years to come and can guide a common goal for the field worldwide.