

# Academic writing competences for diverse writers: the experience of producing a first-degree work in the post-pandemic.

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**Abstract.** Considering the challenges to develop academic writing competence at the university, which have worsened in the post-pandemic context, this study systematizes an experience in progress whose main purpose is to characterize the writing experiences of students who are studying second year of university in the context of preparing their first-degree project. The participants are second-year students of a Baccalaureate program at a selective university in Chile who are taking a course that seeks to support them in the production of their first-degree work, the professors of that course and professors who taught classes at students in their first year. The production and analysis of data is carried out in 2 stages: Diagnosis and Implementation. This proposal contains the results of the diagnosis that indicate that the students require accompaniment for the management and production of written texts, which justifies the implementation of the course.

**Keywords:** Writing, Academic Degree, Higher Education.

## 1 Introduction

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have been facing the diversification of the profile of their students since decades; however, the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the tensions associated with it. The end of the confinement, far from reducing tensions, inaugurates a stage in which HEIs must deal with demands prior to the pandemic along with others that have emerged with the return to face-to-face. Among the challenges prior to the pandemic is the mismatch between the entry characteristics of students and the minimum competencies that HEIs expect, being the academic writing competition one of those that has demanded innovative approaches, for example, from the perspective of equity (Navarro et al, 2021). However, the consequences of the pandemic (learning loss, decontextualization of the written productions of the students and the frequent

situations of plagiarism) raise questions about the pertinent approaches to contribute to the development of writing competence. Added to this problem is the widespread use of Artificial Intelligence and its potential use to engage in situations of plagiarism by students (Cotton et al, 2023). This study systematizes an ongoing experience for the development of said competence in second year students, considering their experience of preparing their first-degree work.

## **2 Theoretical Framework**

Recent research on academic writing proposes the notion of diverse writers (Ávila et al 2021) that highlights different ways of writing and positions towards authorship and the production of written texts. This notion questions the visions that put the academic canon before the reality of the authors. In addition, it allows linking the development of written competence to the notions of equity and inclusion in the university, since the development of the attributes traditionally expected in students entering HEIs has shown a direct relationship with the socioeconomic origin of the students. Summarizing, promoting in students their position as diverse writers contribute to the inclusion of their abilities and dispositions.

Research on this field also have expanded their focus to the social representation of writing in students, revealing that writing is an exercise that challenges authors beyond the intellectual dimension (Navarro et al, 2019; Romero & Álvarez, 2019). We propose that this approach is related to the notion of student experience that is widely accepted to fully understand the way in which students live their way through higher education (Santelices & Celis, 2022). In the same way that the idea of social representation broadens the understanding of writing, that of experience includes what diverse writers think and feel in their writing process.

### **2.1. Research Question**

How are the writing experiences of students who are in their second year of university in the context of preparing their first-degree work?

### **2.2. Objectives**

**General Objective.** To characterize the second-year university students' writing experiences in the context of preparing their first-degree project.

#### **Specific Objectives.**

- Characterize the students' dispositions and tensions around the incorporation of the forms of academic writing in the elaboration of a degree project.
- Identify their positions as writers and how they mean writing.
- Characterize their formative needs in the writing process.

### 3 Methods

Descriptive qualitative study. It is part of the institutional strategy of assessment of the devices for the curriculum adjustment.

#### 3.1. Participants and data

**Participants.** Second-year students (35, 2022 cohort) who are studying for a bachelor's degree at a selective university in Chile. The students are enrolled in a course for the development written work to obtain the academic degree.

8 first-year students (2022)

60 first-year professors (2022 cohort).

4 professors of the course, including the first authors.

**Data.** Individual and group interviews. Student's written productions. Data has been produced in 2 stages: Diagnosis (2022) and Implementation (2023).

#### 3.2. Analysis Strategy

Qualitative content analysis with preliminary results (Diagnosis) that inform the following stages (Implementation).

### 4 Results

This contribution contains the results of the diagnostic stage (2022), the results of the implementation are being produced during the current academic period (first semester 2023) and will be systematized when ended.

#### 4.1. Diagnosis (2022)

The 60 teachers who taught classes in 2022 were interviewed to find out their perception of the differences with respect to the pre-pandemic cohorts. At the same time, a group interview was conducted with students to characterize their experience in their first year. The main results were:

**First-year students (2022).** Anxiety about individual evaluations, especially those in a written format and insufficient skills to plan and manage their study time

**First year teachers (2022).** Difficulties in understanding theoretical texts and conceptual processing.

#### 4.2. Implementation (2023)

Based on the diagnosis, the Monographic Essay Seminar course was designed to meet the student's needs in the production of their degree work. The course takes place

between March-July 2023. Once finished, interviews with students will be carried out, the perception of teachers will be systematized, and written productions will be analyzed.

## **5 Discussion**

The results of the diagnostic stage point to the need to rethink the approaches for the development of academic writing competence, including the experience of the students to complement the current approaches from the perspective of equity (Navarro et al, 2021). In this experience, it is relevant to investigate the way in which students incorporate Artificial Intelligence tools to support the production of their written work, considering their potential as sources of plagiarism (Cotton et al, 2023).

## **6 Conclusions**

The preliminary results show that the students have support needs in the management and production of written texts that justify the implementation of a course to accompany them in the production of their first-degree work.

## **7 Limitations and Future Research**

The main limitation is that the context of the study is specific, different from other undergraduate contexts. Future research can be carried out in the context of the production of the major degree work.

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