

CHAPTER 5.

WRITING AT UNIVERSITY AND IN THE WORKPLACE: INTERRELATIONS AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY

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Studies on academic literacy (Carlino, 2013) began in Latin America at the turn of the 20th century when universities from different countries created academic reading and writing workshops aimed at first-year university students. Implementing these courses responded to the need to integrate an increasing number of students who are mostly first-generation university students in their families (CEPAL, 2007). The expansion of the university system was particularly favored in Argentina with the establishment of twenty-nine new national public universities from the 1990s (Chiroleu, 2018). In this context, the initiatives on academic literacy have mainly focused on first-year students' "writing difficulties." Gradually, different research lines have been conducted, and new curricular spaces were dedicated to teaching and learning the different genres seen across the university curriculum (Carlino, 2013; Natale, 2013). Despite these advances, the processes university students in Latin America go through in their transition to professional life seem to be an incipient research problem (Natale et al., 2021). Yet, this issue has been addressed in the North American tradition for more than two decades (Artemeva, 2005; 2008; 2009; Bazerman, 1988; Bazerman & Russell, 2003; Berkenkotter et al., 1991; Dias et al., 1999; Ketter & Hunter, 2003; Russell, 1997).

To address this issue, in this chapter, we explore how students and graduates who start their activities in professional contexts approach genres (Bazerman, 1994; 2004a; 2004b) and the written production of specific texts. Likewise, we are interested in researching the writing knowledge built at university that both students and graduates put into practice and what new understanding and reflections on genres and writing they develop in professional contexts. To do

this, we interviewed senior students and recent graduates from two academic programs at the National University of General Sarmiento (UNGS). These novices performed professional activities related to their study programs in different public institutions connected with the UNGS.

This type of inquiry is relevant for different reasons. Firstly, it can provide data on the typical genres and literate activities in the workplace. Secondly, it can gather meaningful information to include writing in the design of the curricula in professional academic programs. In the following sections, we contextualize the study and explain the methodology used and the concepts that support the analysis of the interviews. After examining how such issues are represented in the interviews, we offer some closing remarks.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

UNGS is an Argentinian public university created in 1992 within the framework of the expansion and diversification of higher education institutions in the country. It is located in Greater Buenos Aires, an area around the city of Buenos Aires, which is characterized by a series of economic and educational inequalities among the population. Most UNGS' students come from working families: eight out of ten are the first-generation university students in their families, while five out of ten are the first generation to complete high school.

UNGS is organized into four institutes: sciences, conurbation, human development, and industry. These institutes articulate education, research, and services to the community. Each of them addresses specific geographical, socio-economic, and cultural issues. Their academic programs include degrees in technical studies and undergraduate programs such as engineering, diverse bachelor's degrees, university teacher education, and postgraduate courses, i.e., specializations, master's, and doctorates.

The analysis of the degree qualifications profiles (DQP from now on) from the different academic programs reveals that they equip students both for professional activities and scientific research. As an example, we can cite the bachelor's degree in ecology, as shown on the UNGS website. Graduates from the degree in ecology will be able to

build knowledge on ecology through research and apply it in the specific field of land management in urban, rural, and natural ecosystems. Graduates will be able to carry out environmental diagnoses, design action proposals, and manage the implied ecosystems. They will identify the issues and necessary tools for sustainable management of natural resources

(renewable and nonrenewable). They will develop scientific and technological alternatives from a social perspective to minimize the ecological base of production's degradation and/or destruction and improve the human habitat conditions in their environmental component. (UNGS, 2018)

This DQP and others explicitly suggest that the course of studies prepares students to work in various fields, including scientific, technological, and institutional ones related to management. At the same time, specific genres are mentioned, such as environmental diagnoses and proposals for ecosystem management.

In short, this DQP and others articulate diverse settings and activities and foresee different genres for each of them. This observation corresponds with what a former faculty chair said in an interview for this study—the discussion about the academic programs included the negotiation about the genres that graduates should know to participate in different contexts. Such attention to graduates' and undergraduates' written production is present in the founding documents supporting the design of the academic programs at UNGS. Also, different devices aimed at working with academic and professional reading, writing, and speaking are implemented across the undergraduate curriculum.

Since its establishment, UNGS has offered two compulsory workshops for all first-year students. Spanish language instructors teach both courses in dedicated spaces, not integrated into other classes. These courses are aimed at first-year students and deal with general aspects of scientific and academic texts. They also address typical genres of the beginning of higher education studies, such as tests, monographs, reports. On the other hand, PRODEAC (Programa de Enseñanza de la Escritura a lo largo de las Carreras), a writing program integrated into and situated within the field of the disciplines, was implemented in 2005. It was of an interdisciplinary, progressive, and systematic nature across the study programs at the university (Natale & Stagnaro, 2013). Course instructors could optionally request PRODEAC assistance. This meant that a writing and reading specialist joined the team of course instructors. This specialist delivered the lessons that dealt with reading and writing texts framed in that specific course. Thus, the pedagogy adopted was grounded on collaborative work based on co-teaching (Natale, 2020).

In 2019, UNGS launched the so-called “Programa de Acceso y Acompañamiento a las Carreras de Grado y Pregrado.” This program offers the two courses mentioned above, i.e., the reading and writing workshops, and a third space called “Acompañamiento a la Lectura y la Escritura en las Disciplinas” (ALED for its acronym in Spanish), which subsumes PRODEAC's operation and experience. The three courses are articulated and are mandatory in all academic programs at UNGS. ALED's work concerns two core subjects of the

curricula—an intermediate and an advanced one. In this sense, students taking part in ALED are already oriented in their fields and are close to graduation. The activities usually consist of writing texts based on genres related to academic and professional life. As can be seen, the three curricular spaces aim to address literate practices and develop a sustained and gradual work across the curriculum with a progressive approach to the disciplinary genres.

METHODOLOGY

The study presented here is part of a research project that initially attempted to research the literate activities during the pre-professional practices (PPP) of different courses of studies at UNGS. It also looked into the genres used and the students' identity transformations at this stage in their academic programs. To achieve our objective, we initially planned semi-structured interviews with students in the period they were carrying out their PPP, among other research activities. We assumed that during the PPP, students had their first contact with work settings, considering a trajectory that begins at university and leads to students' labor insertion. However, the first interviews with senior students revealed that this path is not as linear as anticipated, but there are different situations. Given these first data, we reconsidered the students to be interviewed and included senior students and recent graduates already working in areas related to their studies (Natale et al., 2021).

We have collected 15 interviews with students and graduates with bachelor's degrees in public administration and ecology. In this chapter, we selected the interviews of four participants (Ivana, Andrea, Brian, and Agustina) who represent different trajectories between the university and the workplace. Ivana enrolled in the bachelor's degree in public administration because she was already working in an organization where graduates tend to work. Andrea and Agustina, who were finishing their bachelor's degree in ecology, had not had the opportunity to participate in work settings during their training. On the other hand, Brian began working as an employee in the environment department of a municipality shortly after starting the bachelor's degree in ecology.

At the time of the interview, the interviewees were carrying out professional activities in public institutions that have co-operative ties with the university, municipalities in neighboring areas, and a national organization dedicated to research and the provision of specialized services for water preservation. In this sense, we can say that these workplaces are highly organized and regulated by the state. Besides, we interviewed teachers who tutor students during their PPP and faculty chairs in order to delve into the meaning assigned to the students' participation in training activities in the world of work.

The research team members, who had taught the courses framed in ALED in the last stage of the academic programs, carried out the interviews. Thus, these instructors had been in touch with the students and graduates and had built up a degree of familiarity with them. The interview script aimed at exploring students' perceptions about the training that the academic programs provide for the professional practice in general and, in particular, for their participation in literate activities in the workplace.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

From the activity theory perspective (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Prior, 1998; Wertsch, 1999), the interviewed students and graduates worked in highly structured public institutions. There, individuals and groups constituted the internal communities that performed social practices oriented to common goals. In these institutions, people perform social activities mediated by material artifacts, technology, and highly typified genres.

According to Carolyn Miller (1994), genres can be defined as typified rhetorical actions based on recurrent social situations. The recurrence of the situations gives rise to the recurrence in the forms of communication (Bazerman, 1994) due to the need to make the intended aims socially recognizable. As long as genres are related to activities performed in certain circumstances, they allow us to recognize individuals' intentions (Bazerman, 1994, p. 69). Thus, genres seem to be mediating artifacts to achieve the participants' objectives for an activity in a particular setting (Bazerman & Prior, 2005; Wertsch, 1999).

Overall, playing a social role and its implied actions require a set of genres (Devitt, 1991), i.e., a group of textual genres related to specific situations and certain social systems. Each genre set, in turn, becomes part of a genre system (Bazerman, 1994) as long as it is related to a network with the genres employed by other participants of the social event. In a genre system, relationships are interwoven among the parts and the intervening genres in a situated social activity in a given setting. An activity system surges from the interrelation of such components, i.e., genres, participants, communities, activities, institutional settings (Russell, 1997).

The concept of activity system becomes central to consider the situation students and recent graduates face when joining the world of work. They must begin participating in new activities in unknown settings and interact with other participants using genres, tools, and devices they had not necessarily previously known. Novices learn to perform in new environments by participating in situated activities and relationships with other institution members. Such learning, thus, seems to be a social process since it takes place in a

context, is mediated by other participants, and is related to the use of mediating tools to carry out the activity.

GENRES AND WRITING IN THE WORKPLACE

Before addressing the specific questions of interest, we will review some general questions about how the interviewees represent the genres of the workplace contexts where they are involved and how they carry out the expected written production.

We first include an excerpt from the interview with Ivana, who was studying public administration. This excerpt explores the completion of an assignment given to a team of students she belonged to while doing the PPP. Specifically, they were asked to present a project to improve an area of the municipality:

Ivana: [To carry out the project,] we diagnosed the problem we found. In this case, we studied the municipal doctor's office: the demand, which was saturated; we saw the problems it was having, why it was saturated, why they did not get to see the people who went there. First, we started with a first approach. We did some interviews, not knowing what we were going to find, but, well, we started doing interviews. We aimed at pretty general things, and then we aimed at the main problem based on what we could interpret. And first was that: a status report. And then, yes, the assembly of the project. But we also made graphs, indexes, everything; we put everything together so they could know what problems they were having. And we gave them a set of recommendations to keep in mind too. Some were accepted, and others are still in process. We did more: a report that was for practice, for the university, and besides, we made the final diagnosis report for the municipality. For [the university] we made one and another for the institution.

As can be seen in this extract, Ivana and her peers put into play a series of textual practices learned at university. They aimed to complete a social action assigned to them in the municipality to improve some of its activities. The students had to prepare a project to introduce these improvements. Therefore, they previously elaborated a series of texts. They displayed a set of genres (interviews, situation report, diagnosis, graphics, indexes, recommendations) which constituted a set of actions necessary to achieve their goal. Thus, the project seemed to be a valuable tool for the municipality to introduce changes in an area. Still, it

was also a mediating artifact to fulfill the students' intentions: to complete the assigned activities to pass their PPP.

In other interviews, the students mentioned other purposes, such as learning the professional tasks in the field, learning to operate in it, and doing a good job in the event there were future contracts. Thus, the action becomes guided by several objectives, which is a characteristic of all mediated action (Werstch, 1999).

On the other hand, in the above extract, students said they had to do another activity to pass the course that accompanies them during the PPP. They had to deal with another genre, i.e., a report on the carried-out tasks. In their dual role of student and intern, the interviewees reported different aims related to the activities they simultaneously developed in two different settings or "separate worlds" (Dias et al., 1999), which—as we will see in other examples—participants managed to articulate. To do this, they used typical genres of two complex institutional settings with established and regulated practices. Therefore, it seemed that they could be actively involved in two genre systems. In the intersections between the actions of the world of work and that of the academy, the complexity acquired by students' and graduates' participation in instances such as PPPs is revealed.

Next, to account for how textual production is repeatedly represented in the workplace, we analyze an extract from the interview with Andrea, a senior student in ecology who had no previous work experience. Based on the recommendation of her thesis tutor, she joined a national organization as an intern, where she worked as a professional. This institution produces specialized information for water preservation and disseminates it through periodic reports. Andrea was assigned the task of preparing these reports when she joined the organization. As we will see, producing reports seems to be a socially distributed activity in which different actors intervene:

Andrea: For example, a provincial secretary of environment asks us for a report on the status of the rivers because there is a severe drought, and they have to make decisions. So, we prepare that report. We use data that the Argentinian Naval Prefecture usually gives us. They measure the rivers and pass the data on to us. Then, sometimes, drawing from that data, we produce other data. They give us raw data, and with that, we create others. For example, we make flow data modeled with models made by a colleague of mine. So, I do the following: I take the data, pass it through the model, and write the report. After that report, I send it to my boss, we discuss it together, and I adjust things. And usually, afterward, we discuss every-

thing in meetings, with the help of others. . . . Those meetings are great; I learn a lot. There, we evaluate the objective (of the report) and adjust everything based on that.

In this extract, Andrea outlines a series of scenes that present writing a hydrological report as an activity situated in a particular context and motivated by a need. Likewise, as seen, performing the activity is distributed. It concerns the people who develop practices to fulfill the intention of providing the requested information (from the collection of raw data to the discussion on the textualization of the report). It also considers time, as it develops in different phases. On the other hand, various artifacts mediating the report preparation are also recorded, such as the models used for flow calculations. Besides, in the represented scenes, it is possible to see the links between different institutions (the government of a province, national organizations with varying types of participation) that come together to complete the activity. Thus, a literate activity (Prior, 1998) at a workplace within an institution is designed. As indicated by Prior, in these settings, the “documents cycle through a hierarchy of interlocking rings (internal and external)” (Prior, 1998, p. 142), which can be registered both in the vertical dimension of the hierarchical chain and in a horizontal axis, among the different groups involved. In addition, the characterization of this literate activity shows that the written production is not the only process taking place. Other subjective and social processes are also developed. Andrea begins to learn about the practices by participating in community activities. In her recount of the carried-out actions, we can understand that her participation goes beyond the elaboration of one first version of the text since it includes the interactions in which they offered her suggestions and other exchanges taking place in the meetings she attends.

BEGINNING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WORKPLACE THROUGH GENRE PRODUCTION

After introducing the overall representation and production of genres arising from the interviews, we will focus on some specific aspects. We were interested in exploring how students and recent graduates face writing texts in the initial stage of their labor insertion. We wanted to know how they relate the knowledge and writing practices developed in the university training and what new knowledge on genres and writing they acquire.

To learn how they dealt with the text production of genres, we added questions in the interviews aimed explicitly at recovering those scenes. The following extract describes Andrea’s experience in writing the requested hydrologic reports.

Interviewer: Those hydrologic reports they asked you to make, did you know them from university?

Andrea: No, they were nothing compared to the reports we worked on at UNGS. I had never handled this type of report. No. The truth is that I cried a lot because it was hard for me, really hard, as all of a sudden, they told me: “Well, you are going to write reports.” I started reading previous reports, and on top of that, I did not like the way some of them were written. But I managed to write them because what they requested was important. . . . In the beginning, I found guidance in the previous reports that had been done, and later on, I started modifying some things, the things that I did not like. And well, that was how I managed to make it work.

Interviewer: And did the institution regard them immediately as very good reports?

Andrea: No, no, no. . . . They made a lot of suggestions when we had round table discussions. In those discussions, we read the reports, made suggestions, and they told me: “Look, maybe you can write this here, that there.” And that’s how I polished them. Now, luckily, they do not point anything out to me.

In this excerpt, Andrea describes how she faced the challenge of writing the assigned reports. As a genre, this report was unfamiliar for her, but it seemed to be a means to participate actively in the institution. Before this situation, through an analytical reading, she appealed to the recognition of the typified forms established in the institution. According to Andrea’s point, reading the reports was not limited to identifying the report organization. It was a critical reading as she evaluated the aspects that she disliked so that she could then make changes. In this sense, Andrea adapted her statements to the typified forms that the genre adopted in the institution. Thus, the texts she produced are based on a strong relation of intertextuality, using forms, phrases, and expressions related to previous reports. It could then be a type of intertextuality internal to a system (Bazerman, 2004b, p. 90), as long as accepted forms are still respected. In this way, as a newcomer, Andrea showed signs of adaptation to the usual practices in the institution. Simultaneously, she introduced changes, which allowed her to gradually register her voice and creativity, in a tension between typifications and individuality. Thus, resorting to intertextuality seems to be the first step to learning to participate in the activities developed in the institution. However, her learning process was not passive; it did not arise from a mere reception of

instructions. Instead, Andrea, still a newcomer, found room to get started in the genre and took the initiative to introduce modifications.

On the other hand, it seems clear that this process does not occur in isolation, but other senior employees and peers made suggestions so she could make the adjustments. The report was adapted to the objectives and the audience so that the final version of the text is “polished” in Andrea’s words. In this sense, while learning was guided, it emerged as a collective enterprise since her experienced peers collaborated with the process. As Day et al. (1999) have found, it could be seen that the oldest members of the institution collaborated with the newcomers. Hence, they adapted to the situated practices and conventions. Likewise, these authors’ findings are also confirmed—novices execute tasks considered essential for the institution and make substantial contributions to achieving institutional objectives, even though their productions are later reviewed by their superiors.

The newcomers’ initiatives to generate changes in the typified forms can be seen in different interviews. In the following extract, Ivana recalled situations when she suggested modifications in the genre organization:

Ivana: This year, a new manager came to the department.

This person works with the council a lot. What the councils mainly do is present projects. He had seen that I worked on projects and asked me to help him. So I set up projects with him. In fact, I planned one, and it worked really well. I did carry it out; I did complete it. He shared a draft with me, and I changed and modified it so it looked like a professional project.

Ivana: Perhaps, what I see is that this person, who is in charge, when he wants to plan projects, he makes a draft. But he does not have the perspective we have here [at university] regarding structure—what goes first and what to keep in mind. In fact, I gave him some ideas: “Look, it would be nice to include some data, some statistics, something to account for here.” When they present you with the project and say: “Look, I have this idea,” I wonder: what is the objective of this idea? Is it necessary? Is there a need to implement it? What I mean to say is: “OK, let’s think about how to account for it so that it is more appealing and they want to take.” You may present the project, but the question is: is it necessary? Who requests it? Is there an issue that it solves? That is the perspective of public administration: to see the state problems, to see the problems of the society, how the state can set up projects or proposals

and solve those problems. It is precisely that: to study the context, not to invest in something just because of it, but rather there should be a justification for executing it.

As in other interviews, we find that Ivana points out the differences in “perspectives” related to genres (a project, in this case) both in the academy and the municipality. She seems to identify herself close to the academic sphere since she describes the activity carried out from “the point of view of public administration.” It includes the tasks of “looking at” and “analyzing” the problems of society. From such a perspective, the projects planned in the municipality appeared to be barely justified. That is why she emphasizes the need to strengthen the structure, the organization of the project’s different parts. This means that she makes questions that cooperate in the reconstruction of the project. These questions somehow reflect those that the university instructors make students when they are writing a text with the same characteristics. In this sense, it can be said that the modifications Ivana introduced to the draft given by her boss show an intertextual relation with the projects she wrote for the university.

Following Artemeva’s findings in a case study (2005; 2009), we can point out that the institutional project structure reveals the knowledge of genres the student had developed at university. The suggested changes are not only accepted, but they are soon repeatedly asked from her. In this sense, we could argue that the knowledge of genre developed in the two “separate” worlds (Dias et al., 1999) can be articulated to render a new shape to institutional genres. Thus, this interrelation shows that the genre-based training at the university contributes to revising the discursive practices of local institutions.

Therefore, the academic genres assigned at university and work seemed to be interwoven in the activities that students and graduates perform simultaneously in the two activity systems. This intersection is particularly true in a situation that Brian recounted. Brian, a senior student in ecology, had begun to work in a municipality. At the same time, he attended his first year at university, as he had applied for a job in a job bank before. He was hired temporarily to communicate a waste separation program to city dwellers. Once that contract expired, he became a permanent employee in the municipality’s environment department, where he works as a middle manager. One of the first tasks he was assigned was to write a report on urban recyclers picking up waste at night. He was asked to gather information and interview them. At the same time, he was beginning to attend the methodology of qualitative research course at UNGS.

Brian: It is a course where they teach us to carry out open interviews in which I have guiding questions, but they are not structured interviews. So, I was given a waste issue, and I had

to do that for work. So, I worked on both things simultaneously. I proposed interviewing these urban recyclers from San Miguel. It was what I had to do for the municipality. And we conducted the interviews based on the bibliography of the course. The point is I did not work alone; I teamed with three classmates for the university assignment, they were reliable classmates . . . and well, we were going to work on it at night during my working hours. We went together, and together we asked the questions for the municipality and those that were useful for the course.

Once again, this excerpt reveals how two social actions in which Brian participated intersected. One of them draws from the will to achieve a university goal: to complete the assignment, and with it, to pass the course. The other action is connected to his work assignment. Thus, we can see an intricate path where challenges surged, and Brian faced them strategically, binding the genres from both settings. In the two activities that Brian carried out simultaneously, the interview as a genre operates as a mediating tool of the activity. According to Brian, the tool designed with his peers is not used in the same way in the two contexts. We might suggest they are not using the same genre: they make questions “for the municipality” and “those that were useful for the course.” Therefore, each subgroup responded to a specific objective, although some questions could be shared. In this sense, as the actions carried out are highly differentiated, we could conclude that they are two different genres. One is used as a source of information to produce an ethnographic work, and the other is a population survey interview. In this sense, Brian adopted different roles (student and employee) and thus participated in two different activity systems (academy and work). However, Brian managed to bind these roles by using the course literature to design the interview questions for work. Unlike the previous examples, he did not use accepted and recognizable forms for the institution, but he resorted to a validated supporting source (Bazerman, 2004b; 2015). In this point, it is remarkable how Brian, an inexperienced student coming from a working family, without an educational and social background that supported his performance, managed to articulate both actions with knowledge constructed solely at the university. Hence, without disregarding Artemeva’s observations (2005; 2009) on the role that family-cultural capital plays in novices’ professional development, we can argue that first-generation university students with good opportunities can advance in their careers developing their own strategies.

To conclude this section, we summarize some findings that arise from the interviews, exemplified through the selected extracts. Firstly, we found that

resorting to intertextual relations is a frequently used resource. In general, students and fresh graduates tend to recycle knowledge acquired in the academy and critically examine the statements recognized as valid by the institution where they have their first professional experience. As newcomers, they avoid the passive reproduction of the typified forms and want to introduce changes that would improve texts in their opinion. Ivana's earlier excerpts show that the internal text structure is an aspect to improve in the documents of the administrative organisms. In this claim, the view of genres that seems to prevail is closer to the university's, as it is required in students' productions.

Another issue recurrently pointed out refers to the role peers and superiors of the institution play in the professional training. According to the interviewees, these participants acted as guides; they accompanied the activities that novices carried out and oriented textual practices through successive suggestions. They let novices display the knowledge acquired in the academy while newcomers get guidance from peers and superiors. Thus, work training for novices seems to be another social activity in the institutions where genres work as mediators.

LEARNING GENRES AT UNIVERSITY AND THE WORKPLACE

One of the axes of the interviews focused on exploring the learning of genres built in both contexts where students and graduates participate. The interviewees reported having developed new knowledge on texts and adapting them to different audiences and contexts. In Ivana's interview, we find the following reflections:

Ivana: For example, writing this [intervention] project here [at university], is not the same as for the municipality, because maybe [the one for university] is more of an assignment. In the assignment, they give you the instructions, and in the municipality, you have more freedom, and you have to think how to put it together. That's why they differ a lot. . . . For that reason, [while we were doing the PPP] we have to know how to speak in two different ways. Here [at university], there is a mor' academic context, and there are concepts that we could not use in the municipality report because they are not related to the context. Considering these issues helped us decide what to say, what not to say, and to whom.

In this extract, we find that Ivana can differentiate the characteristics of the genre project in the two activity systems (the academic and the world of work)

in which she participates while carrying out her PPP. As Dias et al. (1999) point out, the production of the university project is considered part of the academic genres. It aims to train students, as a characteristic that Ivana attributes: it was an “assignment.” According to her, using concepts is a distinctive feature in this genre due to the professor’s aim to evaluate the students’ theoretical knowledge. On the other hand, academic textual production is constrained by the professor’s definition of the task. Although it may work as a guide, it takes away some degree of “freedom,” in Ivana’s words. In the municipality, on the other hand, the activity requires a greater degree of autonomy: “It’s you who has to think how to put it together.” Thus, an essential difference surges, i.e., the degree of participation in the project design. The workplace is conceived of as a place for developing autonomy, always following the established rules and the tensions that arise among the different participants.

Ivana’s thoughts on the relation between the shapes of genres in both spheres is also found in another extract:

Ivana: They are two totally different products: what you prepare for university is academic-oriented, and you are prepared for that; you cite, and then you address an issue. Perhaps we did not know how to translate that, but we later realized we did not transfer it into another executive-level presentation. It was another product, we addressed it again from scratch: what the diagnosis was, the issues, the proposal, and that was it. [It was important] to be succinct and not to tire the reader, in this case, the organization. We discovered that back then, but we had not seen it before. I believe that it would be a significant difference.

From her participation in the work context, Ivana “discovered” an essential issue that “we had not seen before.” The genre is not the same even though they have the same name: “project.” Ivana understood that “they are two totally different products.” That is why it was impossible to address them by treating them as a transfer problem. The contents or the issue addressed in the project seem to be the same. However, the purposes (pass a course/generate an improvement in an area of the municipality) and the audiences are different, leading to reorganizing the text to serve the essentials (diagnosis, problems, and proposals), to “be succinct and not to tire the reader.” Thus, Ivana seemed to account for her awareness of the two audiences and the need to adapt her statements accordingly. She summarized this learning developed in the work context by saying: “it is necessary to know how to speak in two different ways.” She elaborated on this idea later on, saying that understanding this issue helped her know “what to say

and what not to say, and to whom.” Through these comments, Ivana reveals that she has learned to consider her audiences and adapt her statements accordingly. In this instance, she begins to consider rhetorical aspects of the activity system in which she starts participating. In her own words, “I learned to be politically correct there [in the workplace].”

These learning experiences, from Agustina’s point of view, a senior student in ecology, provided complementary training to the university’s offer.

Interviewer: What relationship do you find between the training offered by the municipality and that provided by the university?

Agustina: I believe that the former complements the latter. And it complements it a lot in the sense that we have to suggest topics. Here one is immersed in a utopia of what management is like or needs or what one thinks it can obtain, while in a municipality one gets to see the constraints; one sees what to focus on. Delivering a presentation depends on the audience, so we try to use a language that everyone understands because not everyone knows what we know. I believe that it complements a lot more so that, in the future, we can continue growing [professionally]: we had to talk to other areas, talk to the neighbors and register their complaints. We gather information and presentations and process data. And working as a team, of course, also allows you to show your virtues. So, it complements it by taking all this into account. I think it enriches [university training] greatly.

In this extract, Agustina presents a sort of contrast between the learning process at university and that which derives from her participation in a work setting. Whereas the former is considered ideal or utopian, the latter allows them to experiment with issues connected to the reality of the organizations, the existing constraints, the audiences of the actions undertaken, and the statements made. Likewise, she highlights the fact that students have to participate in activities adopting different roles (interacting with other areas, listening to neighbors, registering complaints). Plus, they have to interact with diverse audiences and adapt their statements accordingly. Simultaneously, a new social intention appears: to show one’s virtues and be eventually hired, as other interviewees have also said.

To summarize this section, it is important to consider, as stated in the previous section, the knowledge on genre the interviewees have built from their university training. One of them mentioned the organization of texts, the necessity to take care of the parts that they consist of. This emerged mainly in Ivana’s

testimony, who demanded the inclusion of data, arguments, and justification in the projects of the municipality.

Additionally, in this section, we have found that the students' participation in professional practice settings reveals dimensions of writing that the university does not show. Academic productions usually have a single audience, the professor, and one main objective: to account for the learning process (Dias et al., 1999). Thus, students' participation in work settings functions as complementary training. In these contexts, genres are no longer mere structures or parts to be included in a text but they operate as goal-oriented instruments to solve specific problems. Likewise, participants highlight the different audiences they address and their need to adapt their statements to the relationships established with them. Finally, another fundamental issue can be observed: students' participation in the two activity systems helps students gain awareness of the distinctions between the genres in both contexts.

CLOSING REMARKS

The findings that emerge from the analysis of the interviews have been presented, which are summarized below. As pointed out, students and graduates tend to solve the challenges given to them concerning the genres of the workplace by establishing intertextual relations between academic texts and those accepted in the organizations in which they start carrying out professional activities. Besides, it is seen that they adopt a critical perspective towards the texts of the organizations where their first professional practices are developed and remark on the necessity to introduce changes. These modifications they suggest are often based on the knowledge that they have developed from genres they have learned at university. Therefore, the characteristics of the academic genres that they retrieve appear when they produce new texts in the professional settings where they participate. On the other hand, the texts that students must make in the workplace are based on readings from the recommended bibliography in their courses. At the same time, the experiences they live in their jobs become input for academic productions. Thus, text productions, framed in both contexts, are connected through an intertextual relation. In these interrelationships, it can be seen that the research participants establish bridges between the two worlds in which they act: the academic and the workplace.

According to our interviewees, academic productions lead them to learn to pay attention to the internal organization of texts. On the other hand, it was found that the participation of students and graduates in the workplace generates new reflections and learning about writing and genres. Their involvement in the organizations where they started to work makes them aware of the importance of the rhetorical aspects and the goals that genres pursue.

Thus, learning about genres and writing built in both activity systems appears complementary. The systematic knowledge developed in the academy continues to be used since it is appreciated in public organizations. Simultaneously, the participation in the activities of those contexts highlights aspects of genre production that had not been considered so far. In this sense, we find a coincidence with Ketter and Hunter's (2003) claims: participating in social activities and using genres in two contexts enrich learning and encourage reflections on the textual practices in both contexts. Therefore, a pedagogical implication of this study is that the students' participation in actions that take place in work settings is extremely beneficial for the understanding of genres they gain and the learning of academic writing.

To conclude, we need to mention the limitations of the results found. Although they offer valuable information similar to those of international lines of research, we gathered them in a small-scale study. In this sense, future investigations intend to extend the number of participants and the research to other professional settings.

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