Academic literacies in policy and practice

Hilda Hidalgo Avilés, BA, MA, MPhil

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Lancaster.

2018

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work, and has not been submitted in

substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

Abstract

In Mexico, where this study takes place, the role of writing and reading as part of the culture of universities is changing in line with changing national and institutional policies. In this thesis, I investigate how academic literacy practices (in particular reading and writing practices) are constructed in policy documents, in interviews with both students and lecturers, which include talk around texts written by students. I explore the academic literacy practices of undergraduate students in two disciplines, Education and Chemistry. I combine two frameworks: critical discourse studies (Fairclough, 2001, 2003) and academic literacies (Lea & Street, 2006; Lillis, 2001) to investigate how broader social and institutional contexts influence specific academic literacy practices reported by university students and staff.

My analysis reveals that academic literacy practices are constructed in terms of a human capital model, which connects what happens at universities with the economic development of the country as a whole. Academic literacy practices are also constructed in terms of their functional value, and I find that reading, not writing, is seen as responding to broader demands since it is ubiquitous in all the four policy documents. Alongside the emphasis on reading in the policy documents, writing is constructed as a skill that students are supposed to have already mastered when they start university. In interviews with students and lecturers, I found that they share this last view; they focus on the arguably more superficial aspects of the writing students do. In addition to establishing how academic literacy practices are constructed, a key contribution of the thesis is to illustrate how a triangulated analysis of data drawn from different levels of context can be carried out in this field.

List of tables

List of figures

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview and motivations for the study

In this research project, I analyse how academic literacy practices, and in particular the writing and reading practices of Mexican undergraduate students, are constructed in policy documents, and in interviews with both students and lecturers, which included talk around texts written by students. Academic literacies as a field of research originated in the United Kingdom and has been developed over the past two decades to examine the writing students do at university in relation to identity and power issues (Lea & Street, 2006). Lea (2008) also suggests that reading should be considered alongside writing because of the self-evident relationship between the two. I also discuss how reading practices are constructed. Academic literacies research views writing as a social practice that is influenced by the context in which it is embedded. Specific practices can thus be related to general cultural views of using written language. The purpose is to go beyond the texts themselves and focus on what people do with literacy, with whom, where and how (see Hamilton, 2010, p.11). Academic literacy practices are understood in this thesis as the writing and reading students do at university in relation to the choices they make when writing the assignments they produce. Academic literacy practices are what students have to do when undertaking academic studies, e.g. writing an assignment. That is, as Tardy (2010) suggests, writing tasks in higher education may require students to "conduct research, summarize and paraphrase, cite sources, adopt genre conventions, and select words and patterns" (p. 12).

Two issues are central to this thesis: The first is the academic literacy practices of students, particularly as I have observed writing becoming more and more central to higher education in Mexico. I have been a part of this context for many years as a student and then as a lecturer in a public university. This has meant that I could witness a process of change, most noticeably since the change of government in 2000. Following this shift in political power, some years later a new curriculum was implemented in a number of institutions. This seems to have been partly in response

to international demands such as globalisation and internationalisation. Concurrently, writing is becoming central to higher education in this institution.

As I have stated above, writing is the means students use to demonstrate disciplinary knowledge attainment. I am interested in the role of writing and reading in contemporary higher education, and thus explore the different meanings attached to these practices in two different data sets. In other words, I examine how academic literacy practices are discursively constructed (i.e. talked about) from different perspectives. Discursive construction is not a common term employed in academic literacies research. In this thesis, as suggested earlier, it refers to the different ways texts and people describe and talk about academic literacy practices respectively.

The second central issue in my research is policy, which I conceive as a social practice that mobilises discourses. Policy contains and reflects broader ideologies and aspects of power. Policy may influence institutions´ decisions, which reflect broader or international demands. I argue that to understand academic literacy practices, it is important to analyse the social context in which these practices take place and policy contributes to this analysis.

To carry out this research, I bring my own experience as a lecturer informed by the theoretical work of others who have researched in the tradition of academic literacies and critical discourse studies (CDS) as well as the information provided by my participants.

1.2 Overview of key frameworks

It is important in reading my thesis to distinguish between the different understandings that have come to be attached to the label "academic literacies". First, when I write about the scholarly tradition that has come to be called academic literacies, I refer to academic literacies research. However, the term academic literacies is also sometimes used to describe different approaches to writing (and to a lesser extent reading) at university; in other words, research into academic literacy practices more generally and from any perspective (see section 3.4). I will use more specific labels for these approaches, e.g. "study skills approach" (section 3.4.1) or

"academic socialization" (see section 3.4.2), and "academic literacies" (3.4.3). Finally, the specific reading and writing practices of students or staff in higher education are sometimes referred to as "academic literacy/ies" – I will avoid this usage, and instead always refer to "academic literacy practice(s)" (or just "practices" if it is clear from the context) when I have this more specific meaning in mind.

Studies of academic literacy practices have thus far generally focused on what academic literacy practices are rather than how they are discursively constructed; by which I mean how they are talked and written about as mentioned above. However, several scholars have engaged in policy analysis to investigate a wide array of aspects of higher education (see Rogers et al., 2005 for a review). For example, Fairclough (1993) analyses the discursive aspects of marketisation of public discourse in higher education in Britain. Hamilton (2012a) examines adult education representations by looking at policy, images and texts written by students. Papen (2015) undertakes, what she calls, a "loosely critical reading" of policy documents to analyse the current policy of synthetic phonics in an elementary school in England. Probably the most illustrative study in relation to academic literacy practices is the study by Clark and Ivanič (1997) who describe the politics of writing in relation to different fields or domains. They combine Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and Fairclough's (1989) approach to discourse as a social practice. There has been little analysis of the discursive representation of academic literacy practices in policy documents. Ashwin and Smith (2015) argue that, "sustained analyses of the relations between particular policy texts and higher education practices are very much the exception in higher education research" (p.1016). This research attempts to contribute to the field by bringing critical discourse studies and academic literacies together by analyzing policy documents alongside interview analysis, which included talk around texts written by students.

1.3 Research design

My aim in this thesis is to document and analyse how academic literacy practices are constructed in relation to policy within larger patterns of social context. This involves juxtaposing the sociopolitical, educational, institutional and disciplinary contexts and

policies with textual analysis of academic literacy practices. In this, I assume that policies both reflect and create ideologies. These are to a certain extent identifiable in discourses, which are mediated by semiosis, i.e. decisions about how to express different meanings, and these meanings (with all their discursive and ideological "baggage"), can in turn be identified by examining specific linguistic realisations.

As I suggest above, I adopt theoretical and methodological frameworks based, on the one hand, on Fairclough's (e.g. 2001, 2003) approach. On the other hand, I draw on academic literacies research or more specifically the "talk around the text" approach (e.g. discourse-based interviews, Lillis, 2001). These two different approaches let me link policy analysis and analysis of academic literacy practices, and give some insight into how sociopolitical, educational, institutional and disciplinary contexts influence local practices. Within this framework, I analyse how academic literacy practices are constructed in two different data sets. I argue that my datasets, which are policy texts, and interviews with lecturers and students including talk around the texts students have produced are interwoven. Many of the discursive constructions occur in both datasets. This analysis shows that dominant discourses, usually dictated by policy texts, influence lecturers/students constructions of academic literacy practices and the way they conceptualise them in their immediate context. This explains how these different constructions respond to a specific view of the world from above.

This allows me to triangulate (see Wodak, 2001) between them, and thus show how academic literacy practices are influenced by the social, political, institutional and disciplinary contexts in which they are embedded and how students and lecturers talk about them. I analyse these data sets from a CDS perspective because as Taylor (2004) states, CDS "explores how texts construct representations of the world, social relationships, and social identities, and there is an emphasis on highlighting how such practices and texts are ideologically shaped by relations of power" (p.435).

I analyse four policy documents that are particularly relevant in my research context: The National Development Plan (NDP), the National Education Programme (NEP), the Education Model (EM) and the Institutional Development Plan (IDP). I argue that because these documents reflect particular ideologies in relation to how academic

literacy practices are constructed, and because they represent different levels of policy that ultimately seek to govern the learning and teaching of the students and teachers whose constructions of practices I am investigating; they are themselves also a relevant part of the context.

These documents help me identify the relationship between context and academic literacy practices: how this relationship is realised at the textual level through linguistic phenomena in texts about education, and how the social actors (i.e. students, lecturers) interpret it. To gain more of an insight into these "from-below" interpretations, I also conducted interviews with students and lecturers.

I follow Fairclough's (2001, 2003) framework for the analysis of the policy documents. The framework uses critical discourse analysis to a) show how social context and genre shape practices at the contextual level (i.e. in institutions and societies) and b) how they are produced in linguistic realisations at the textual level (see section 3.9 for a more extensive discussion). Fairclough aims to map the discourses around academic practices in certain policy documents, which guide public policymaking in the UK, to unveil how they are constructed. My work, however, focuses on Mexico.

It should be noted that there is a long tradition of genre analysis in research in academic contexts (see section 3.6.2). However, I follow Fairclough in using genre as a concept that relates particularly to the communicative purpose of texts in their social context. I do not attempt to conduct "genre analysis" as such of any of my data sets. Instead, at the textual level, I conduct a linguistic analysis by focusing particularly on modality, lexical metaphors and lexical choices within the policy documents. I chose these features because after closely reading the policies, they seemed particularly salient in the construction of academic literacy practices. There is also a wealth of discursive research which, while it may also examine other linguistic and discursive phenomena, also includes these features as salient in some way to the examination of different social phenomena (see Fairclough, 2005; Wodak et al. 2009; see also section 3.9 for a fuller discussion).

As I briefly describe above, in addition to the policy analyses, I interview students and lecturers to show how social actors (i.e. students and lecturers) interpret policy discourses. Alongside my linguistic analysis of the policy documents, I also look for salient themes by means of content analysis drawing on the approach developed by Krippendorff (2004). Salient means here that they have stood out to me as particularly important based on careful reading of the data and my own contextual knowledge (see Unger, 2013 for a discussion of salience).

My decisions around data collection and selection are described in section 4.7. I argue that this triangulated approach, i.e. focusing on constructions of academic literacy practices in policy texts, and in interviews (including talk around students' work) allows a broader understanding of the practices as well as shedding light on how the social context can be linked to the students' writing and reading practices in higher education. It can also be seen as a response to Lea's (2008) critique that writing has tended to be seen in isolation within higher education teaching. Previous studies that have brought critical discourse studies into the educational field (see Rogers et al. 2005 for a review) have also emphasized the need for multi-level analysis, which focuses on contexts and texts alongside practices.

1.4 Research questions

The overarching question that frames this study is the following:

How are academic literacy practices of Mexican undergraduate students constructed in two disciplines at different levels of context?

Some sub-questions that narrow the focus of the research are stated below:

  a. *How are academic literacy practices constructed in policy documents?*

The analysis of the four policy documents that I conduct in this thesis shows how academic literacy practices are discursively constructed in these nationally or institutionally important documents. Looking at the social context in which these policy documents are embedded is important since this can contribute to an understanding of how these documents influence practices. Policy documents

mobilise certain discourses that arguably influence conceptions of academic literacy practices.

Because, as Clark & Ivanič (1997) argue, practices are what people make of them, I decided it was important to talk to my participants and learn what they have to say about their own academic literacy practices:

b. *How do students and lecturers construct academic literacy practices in interviews?*

Since it can be argued that the texts students and others create are equally important in understanding academic literacy practices, I also focus more specifically on the ways participants talk about the texts and genres that students have to write for class (and might choose to write outside of class):

c. *What are the students and lecturers' perspectives on the texts students write in two disciplines?*

Finally, I have added a methodological research question which serves as a reflection on the potential offered by conducting analysis at different levels and with different types of data:

d. *To what extent can triangulated analysis contribute to understanding students' academic literacy practices?*

This relates to the opening up of different perspectives and insights by means of triangulation (Wodak, 2001), which I have already mentioned above. In my research, triangulating means identifying how these practices are discursively constructed from a more pluralistic set of data sources, which arguably also contributes to a more valid and reliable study.

1.5 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. Following on from this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 describes the context of my research in detail, as I see this as central to the understanding of academic literacies. The theoretical framework that supports this

research is presented in Chapter 3. It starts by defining literacy and I discuss literacies as a social practice as well as the perspectives on academic literacies. Research into what students write in higher education is also included. I discuss critical discourse studies. I define policy and explain its link with academic literacies. I finally discuss the framework that supports this thesis. Chapter 4 presents the methodology and research design including the approach adopted, the framework that guides this research, and the data sources providing a detailed description of the participants and how the analyses were conducted.

The analysis of the four policy documents is discussed in Chapter 5. A link is established between the discourses about academic literacy practices and how they come to shape the way in which reading and writing are conceptualized in formal education. Chapter 6 provides an account of the construction of academic literacy practices based on the comments made by the students and lecturers in my study during interviews. I describe the construction of academic literacy practices based on talk about the students' written assignments in Chapter 7. In Chapter 8, I present some conclusions including a comprehensive summary of the project as well as a reflection on the challenges of this study and the benefits of having approached academic literacy practices from a critical discourse analysis perspective. Finally, I present an evaluation of what my study has contributed to the field before discussing some limitations of this project and possible further research, as well as some policy recommendations.

2. A consideration of context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive description of the sociopolitical, educational institutional and disciplinary contexts that are relevant to this study of academic literacy practices. As I suggested in the previous chapter, the social context plays an important role in understanding the writing and reading practices of students. It will become evident from the present research that academic literacy practices shape and are shaped by the context in which they are embedded. This chapter starts by theorising context in relation to language and academic literacy research. In section 2.2, I draw on three main studies that have discussed context in relation to the social purpose of language (Fairclough, 1989); its relation to "lower" layers of academic writing (Samraj, 2002) and specifically the contexts of academic writing (Chitez & Kruse, 2012). I then briefly describe the sociopolitical events that characterise former Mexican President Vincente Fox's government and its actions on Education in section 2.3. In section 2.4, I describe the educational context by discussing the education system in Mexico and I explain a major education reform and its three stages. This reform illustrates the change processes the education system in Mexico has undertaken as an attempt to respond to international demands. In section 2.5, I describe the institutional context chosen for this research. Finally, in section 2.6 I outline the disciplinary contexts. These considerations of context taken together theorise the role of context in my research, but also provide the necessary backdrop of knowledge a reader will need to understand my analysis in the later chapters.

2.2 Academic literacies research and the role of context[1]

I argue in Hidalgo-Avilés (2006) that context is central to the understanding of academic literacy practices. Context is a contested term in scholarly literature, and has often been defined in relation to its everyday use (Halliday, 1991, p.5), that is, as "the events that are going on around when people speak (and write)". However,

---

[1] I provide an extensive discussion of context in academic writing in Hidalgo-Avilés (2006). In this thesis, I cover some of the same ground, but focus on a number of different aspects such as the model suggested by Chitez and Kruse (2012).

researchers such as van Dijk (2009) have suggested that context refers to a subjective construct: it is individuals who decide what language to use when writing a text and these decisions affect the situation and not the other way around. For example, different participants understand how a text is organized based on their own interpretation. Context thus does not simply refer to a physical place or a specific setting, but to what contributes to the situation in which the event takes place.

Fairclough (1989, p. 25, 2015) integrates a description of language with the social context and shows that a text (written or spoken) is immersed in the processes of production and interpretation, which in turn are immersed in the local, institutional and socio-historical conditions within which participants are situated (see Figure 1).

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Social conditions of production         │
│                                         │
│     ┌─────────────────────────────┐     │
│     │ Process of production       │     │
│     │      ┌──────────────┐       │     │
│     │      │    Text      │       │     │
│     │      └──────────────┘       │     │
│     │                             │     │
│     │ Process of interpretation   │     │
│     │ Interaction                 │     │
│     └─────────────────────────────┘     │
│                                         │
│ Social conditions of interpretation     │
│ Context                                 │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
```
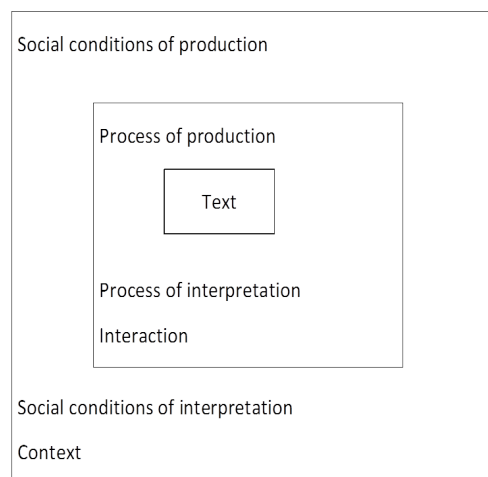
Figure 1 Discourse as text interaction and context

Source: Fairclough, 1989, p.25

Drawing on Malinowski's (1923) *context of situation*, Fairclough (1989) argues that we need to understand this context, or the immediate situation in which learning and language use occur, together with the *context of culture*, a broader and more abstract notion. Hyland (2006) states that, "this concerns the ways language used in particular circumstances is influenced by the social structures, the institutional and

disciplinary ideologies and the social expectations which surround those immediate circumstances" (p.23).

Fairclough (1989) explains his model by arguing that,

> The social conditions relate to three different 'levels' of social organization: the level of the social situation, or the immediate social environment in which the discourse occurs; the level of the social institution which constitutes a wider matrix for the discourse; and the level of the society as a whole. (p.25)

Context comprises the local circumstances in which people are communicating as well as the social, cultural and political aspects within which this communication takes place (Clark & Ivanič, 1997, p.11).

At a local level and in terms of the relationship between various contextual features surrounding academic writing, Samraj (2002) proposes a taxonomy of contextual layers that are arranged into levels (Figure 2). She shows how context and its different layers shape writing:

> The highest level of context that appears to influence writing is the academic institution. The academic discipline forms a contextual level below this. At another level below comes the context of the course, which does not completely overlap with the discipline in terms of its values. A more specific context within the course is that of task, and finally we have the context of each individual student in terms of his or her background and choices influencing the text produced. (p.165)
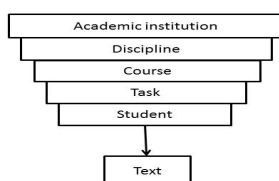
Figure 2 Layers of context
Source: Samraj, 2002, p.165

Samraj's discussion of context clearly contributes to explain that academic writing can differ even within the same academic institution due to the specificities of the discipline, the course, the task and the student. As argued by Ivanič (1998) "writing is a social practice and social practices are not universal: they differ from one social context to another" (p.65).

From another perspective and centred on the student writer, Chitez and Kruse (2012) suggest six contexts of academic writing in which the individual writer, in the core field at the bottom, is not a socially isolated being, but part of many contextual factors that determine his or her actions and thoughts (p.154) as shown in Figure 3.
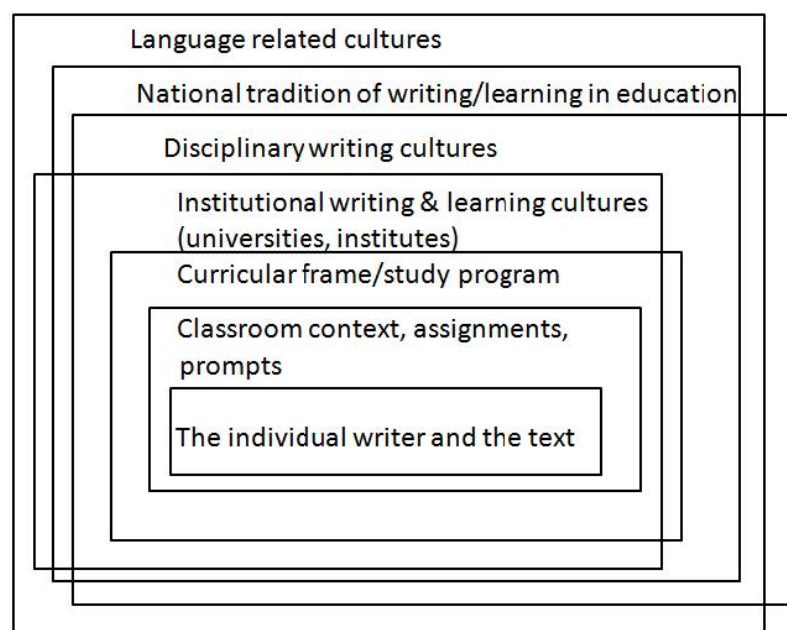
Figure 3 Contexts of academic writing (modified from Jakobs, 2005)

Source: Chitez and Kruse, 2012, p. 154.

In Chitez and Kruse's (2012) contexts of academic writing, the first level of context, academic writing, may be influenced by a) the answer to a prompt or a question that is linked to a classroom situation, and b) the set of values and attitudes of the teacher. The second level responds to the influence of the curriculum within a study programme over the specific genres that students may be asked to write. The third level refers to how study programmes respond to larger organizational structures as they may influence the writing students do. The fourth level is linked to the influence of disciplines as it has been shown that they shape the type of writing students do

based on the epistemological specifications of disciplines. The fifth level refers to the writing culture in which students have been socialised which may in turn influence students' literacy development. Finally, "writing is influenced in many ways by the language, not only because language provides a basic system of grammar, lexis, and idiomatic but also because it determines to a certain degree perception and thinking" (Chitez & Kruse, 2012, p.155).

These six levels have to do with institutional settings which are embedded in the practices students engage in and they can be related to the layers of context proposed by Samraj (2002). These layers correspond to the institution, discipline, course concrete tasks and student background respectively as explained above. Samraj (2002) places the academic institution at a higher level of context, while Chitez and Kruse (2012) consider language to be the most influential aspect in academic writing practices. It seems that these authors leave out the broader levels theorised by Fairclough (1989) which arguably can help explain the reading and writing practices of a given institution. I therefore bring in Fairclough's categories as I investigate higher levels of context beyond the institution. As stated by Ivanič et al., (2009) "context does not pre-exist practice but co-emerges through and with it" (p.23). I argue that a broader conception of context is needed to uncover the different layers of analysis (sociopolitical, educational, institutional and disciplinary). I will return to the relationships between context and data in the next chapter, but in this chapter, I will now move to describe the sociopolitical context of my study, both to provide information for readers unfamiliar with Mexican higher education, and to highlight political developments that are particularly relevant to the policy texts that I analyse in Chapter 5.

2.3 The sociopolitical context

A historic transition of power in 2000 marked probably the most important sociopolitical event in Mexico. Echávarri (2013) argues that, "elections in 2000 presupposed the beginning of a new era as for the first time after the Mexican Revolution a change in parties in power was possible" (p.1). Vicente Fox, the new President, started to rule the country on December 1, 2000. His political party, the

National Action Party (Partido de Acción Nacional, PAN), came to power after 70 years of rule by a right-wing party. Vicente Fox's government represented hope, change and transformation as shared needs.

My interest in this event is due to the marked political change it represents. As Fairclough (2003) suggests, "social research is concerned with the nature and consequences of these changes" (p.4). Echávarri (2013) states that "after the arrival of the new president, the results of the PISA (The Programme of International Student Assessment) assessment placed Mexico within the last places, so it was evident the new government needed to take in hand the matter of education urgently" (p.1). It is therefore not surprising that Fox claimed to place an "educational revolution" at the forefront, and education became one of the main aims of Fox's agenda. However, Moreno (2004) argues that the education proposal of Vicente Fox was a continuation of the traditional Mexican educational discourse (see section 2.4 below):

> Economic development, secularism, free public education, values of modernity combined with the educative discourse derived from globalisation. This second discourse draws on values to invoke productivity, quality, excellence, competitiveness, effectiveness, efficiency, competence and innovation. The means, mechanisms and tools that will make these objectives possible are reflected on the educational policy known as 'productive linkage'. (p. 17, my translation)

This statement highlights two distinct aspects, modernity and globalisation, which in turn are linked to the functional role given to education since it is believed that education contributes to the development of the country. The author points out that "the same discourse of 'educational revolution', implemented during Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988) government emphasizing education as the central priority of the NDP" (p.24, my translation), prevailed.

Higher education was also a priority of this government, which was linked to economic growth. Varela-Petito (2012) argues that since 1988 education policy has aimed to link higher education with the economy. This is not unlike the UK, where

Mulderrig (2012) claims, "the impact of neoliberalism on education policy was increasing structural and ideological pressure to align schooling more closely with economic policy goals" (p.705). Returning to Mexico, Varela-Petito (2012) states that,

> A strategic planning perspective guided the official policy (ANUIES[2], 2000). Accordingly, it was supposed to be the case that, looking ahead to the 21st century, higher education policy must form part of an educational system that fulfils its strategic role for national development attenuating acute social disparities by tapping into human capital, productivity and competitiveness. (p.982)

This statement suggests the need to link education with economic growth and the need to promote actions towards the achievement of these goals. I will argue this is something that occurs in my data, particularly in the policy texts (see Chapter 5). In Varela-Petito's view (2012), "Mexico's higher education system can disseminate universal culture through proper ties with society and, to bring quality to the fulfillment of its function, it should have the necessary human resources at its disposal" (p. 982). From the above, it is evident that like other countries, the challenges faced by higher education in Mexico were, at that time, the ones related to coverage and quality. However, Moreno (2004) argues that, "the educational policy proposal goes around the traditional vision, training human resources and its adaptation to the context because of globalisation" (p.23, my translation).

This last argument invokes globalisation, which had a huge impact on education during this period. Globalisation plays an important role in Mexico: one of the central aims of this government was "to build a new country: a competitive country with a global vision" (NDP, p.ix). As suggested by Dale (1999), one of the effects of globalisation on education policy is the reorganisation of states to make them more competitive (p. 4). Along these lines, raising economic competitiveness becomes a target of this government by bringing together education and social development (see Chapter 5).

---

[2] The National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions is a non-governmental organization and includes 152 public and private higher institutions in Mexico.

2.4 The educational context

The education system in Mexico is based on the General Education Law, which in turn, is based upon Article 3 of the Mexican Constitution. It establishes the general provisions, organizations and general structure of the Mexican educational system (Botello & Davila, 2012). The Ministry of Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública or SEP because of its initials in Spanish) regulates education in Mexico. In addition, the Ministry sets the standards and goals at all levels except for autonomous universities that are ruled by their own norms.

The institutional framework includes pre-school education, for four-year old children. Children complete three years of pre-school, which has been mandatory since 2004. Primary education comprises years 1 to 6; secondary education comprises years 7-9 and high school years 10-12. By law, both primary and secondary education is compulsory. This was, however, a recent modification of the law because in 1993 the Ministry of Education officially increased compulsory education from completion of primary school (grade six) to completion of secondary school (grade nine).

The National Curriculum applies to students of elementary and secondary school age in public schools. The programmes contain the attainment targets, goals, and approaches of the curriculum based on the competences students need to develop so they become the citizens the country needs in this globalised and competitive world (SEP, 2011). Each subject (Spanish, Mathematics, History, Science, Geography, and Civic Education) is based on textbooks that are distributed by SEP throughout the nation and provides a framework for what pupils should be taught. Rockwell (2013) states that "since 1960 the Secretariat of Public Education has published and delivered free of charge to each elementary school child graded texts and workbooks covering all primary school subjects" (p.187).

This use of textbooks is an important aspect of elementary education in Mexico. This practice is particularly relevant as this is part of the previous schooling practices of the student participants of this study, as I will illustrate in Chapters 6 and 7. The use of textbooks has been linked to particular kinds of literacy learning in traditional curricula. Kalantzis and Cope (1993), who write about the Australian context, suggest

that a textbook-based curriculum meant:

> Memorizing spelling lists; doing exercises in traditional grammar like filling in cloze gaps or simply rote learning grammatical rules; 'composition' marked according to its compliance with the conventions of 'standard' English; and testing 'correct' knowledge of spelling and grammar in formal examinations. (p.44)

This example is relevant to my own context because a similar situation occurs. That is, a traditional education based on memorization is still promoted in several education settings.

As stated earlier, higher education is not regulated by SEP, which means that universities establish their own programmes, goals and outcomes. Higher education comprises a Bachelor's degree at the undergraduate level. In most universities, it lasts at least four years divided into eight semesters, but it can last up to nine or ten semesters depending on the programme. Some differences emerge regarding the implementation of these programmes. For example, the US system emphasises late specialisation with a period of general education in the first two years of university, and writing in several disciplines. Russell, Lea, Parker, Street and Donahue (2009, p. 396) point out that "in the UK students have tended to specialize early and write for one discipline, although recently "modular" courses have involved more 'mix' of disciplines and therefore more switching of written genres (Lea & Street, 1998; 2006)". Like the UK, the Mexican system emphasises specialisation from the beginning of the programme students choose to study (OECD-CERI, 2003). The programme may include some additional modules such as English and computer science; however, the core modules are studied throughout the four or five years of study.

Nesi and Gardner (2012) argue that the framework for higher education in the UK states that, "university students must develop skills that are of value to employers, including the ability to act on their own initiatives and make decisions" (p. 170). Similarly, The National Development Plan for higher education in Mexico requires students to meet the requirements of the workplace and to solve problems. Nesi and

Gardner (2012) state that these requirements "are relevant to all disciplines, and are particularly important in disciplines where the degree qualification is recognized by a professional body" (p.170). They also argue that writing is also done for accreditation purposes in the UK, and many university programmes must go through this process.

Nesi and Gardner (2012) add that, "departments generally regard accreditation as a worthwhile activity because it provides a means of quality assurance and enhances the employability of their graduates" (p.170). In Mexico, unlike the UK, all Mexican university programmes are eligible for evaluation and accreditation by external professional bodies. In every discipline, evaluation and accreditation are essential, as these are also the means of quality assurance.

Varela-Petito (2012) notes that, "the education process is increasingly permeated by evaluation mechanisms prompted by educational policy which range from the evaluation and certification of students by organisms outside the HIEs to the evaluation of the academics, institutions and administrative processes themselves" (p. 984). The emphasis is on quality assurance to achieve good results.

Finally, there are three degrees at the postgraduate level: a one-year Diploma (Especialidad), a two-year master's degree and a three-year doctorate. A major reform has taken place in Mexico over the last two decades that has affected the organization of the education system and is discussed below.

2.4.1 A reform to the Mexican education system

A major reform started in 1992 with the national Agreement for the Modernization of Basic Education (Acuerdo Nacional para el Mejoramiento de Educación Básica, ANMEB). Zorrilla and Barba (2008) identify three other main stages of this reform after 1992, namely 2004, 2006 and 2011 as described below.

2.4.1.1 The 1992 Reform

This reform devolved basic education to the Mexican states. Since this year "the 31 federal states operate basic education services (pre-primary, primary, secondary and initial teacher education) within their territories" (OECD, 2013, p. 15). In addition to

the decentralization of basic education, the reform also aimed to improve "efficiency, quality and relevance of the results" (OECD-CERI, 2003, p. 6). As suggested above, there is an increasing focus on human resource development. Zorrilla and Barba (2008) state that the process of decentralization was a response to "the demands of social change and the modernization of the productive sector that is, to prepare human resources with better qualifications to compete in the new economy" (p.9, my translation).

Tatto (2012) argues that in addition to the decentralization of basic education, the agreement also considered provisions to the development of the Educational Development Programme, which aimed the following strategies:

> (a) The reformulation of teaching methods, curricular content and materials; (b) the formation, upgrading and improvement of teachers; (c) the provision of infrastructure and educational materials (including the rincones de lectura or reading corners); and (d) the production and distribution of free textbooks for all basic levels of education; among others. (p. 236)

Tatto (2012) points out that, "according to the reform rhetoric, the implementation of these strategies would improve the coverage, efficiency, and quality of education in the country and specifically for the rural poor" (p.236). Zorrilla and Barba (2008) and Tatto (2012) agree that the reform established a model based on competencies in accordance with a constructivist framework. That is, "the Educational Development Plan argued for a curriculum that would promote critical thinking among all pupils and more independent learning" (Tatto, 2012, p.241). However, as López-Bonilla (2013) states, even when the syllabus was modified in 1993, traditional practices (i.e. copying texts, dictation, repetition of information) still predominate in Mexico. Another important characteristic of this reform is that secondary school became mandatory in 1993 from years six (age 12) to nine (age 15) as a result of the General Education Law. I now discuss the different stages of this reform.

2.4.1.2 2004

Preschool became mandatory in 2004 and instead of one year children now take

three years. That is, basic education comprises 12 years: three for kindergarten, six for elementary school and three for secondary school (from age 3 to 15).

In terms of competencies, SEP (2006) points out that the "new preschool education programme emphasizes the competencies that will promote students' starting point to think, organize and develop the pedagogical work" (p.14, my translation). However, as Alcántara (2011) states, "the basic education reform continues with the participation of teachers in all public schools in the country, and continues to question his [sic] competency-based approach" (p.120).

2.4.1.3. 2006

Despite the efforts of the 1992 reform, the means in secondary education (i.e. to move from a behaviorist paradigm to a constructivist one) were not the expected ones. Guerrero (2013) argues that, "the repetition of information is a practice that the 2006 reform explicitly suggests modifying" (p. 167). In addition, SEP (2006) states that the lack of interest of students to learn "has to do with saturated study plans, teaching practices that prioritize memorization over active participation and the frequency and definitive role attached to examinations" (p.18, my translation). Because of this situation, among other reasons, the study programmes of secondary education were modified in 2006 through the 384 Agreement (Zorrilla & Barba, 2008, my translation).

The educational reform responded to the present learning needs that are linked with the "reflection capacity and critical analysis; exercise civil and democratic rights; the production and exchange of knowledge through different means; care about health and environment, and participate in an increasingly versatile labour market" (SEP, 2006, p.8, my translation). In addition, the aim of the new curriculum was to promote the identification of problems, make some judgments and provide diverse solutions (SEP, 2006, p. 10, my translation).

2.4.1.4 2011

Fortour-Olivier (2014) argues that the Reform of Basic Education (*Reforma Integral*

de la Educación Básica, RIEB), which started in 2011, takes the previous curricular reforms of preschool in 2004, elementary school in 1993 and secondary school in 2006 as its antecedent (p.46, my translation). Its purpose was to "strengthen the quality of the national education system" (p.46, my translation). It "introduced learning standards focused on competencies to improve the coherence of the system and its emphasis on student achievement" (OECD, 2013, p.13).

In addition, the OECD (2013, p. 15) points out that in 2012 the federal government and the most important political parties in Mexico signed the Pact for Mexico (*Pacto por México*). This agreement establishes,

> To increase education coverage in upper secondary (80%) and tertiary education (40%); to improve teaching and learning conditions by providing more autonomy to schools and establishing full-time schools; to create a professional teaching service and promote system improvement with more transparency and consolidation of the evaluation authority. (p.15)

The OECD (2013) states that the Alliance for the Quality of Education (2008-12) celebrated an agreement between the Mexican Government and the national teachers' union (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores del Estado, SNTE) following guidelines established in the Sectorial Education Programme 2007-2012 (p.15). It focused on:

> 1) Modernization of schools, 2) professionalizing of teachers and education authorities, 3) students' well-being and personal development, 4) students' preparation for life and work, and 5) evaluation to improve the quality of education. This led to a number of reforms, including the introduction of the National Teaching Post competition. (OECD, 2013, p.15)

The reforms to the Mexican educational system reflect the various attempts of the country to respond to the policies that have shaped it. Tatto, Schmelkes, Guevara and Tapia (2006) claim that, "reforms respond to the demands of an increasingly sophisticated global economy" (p. 268). They also reveal, for instance, some of the impositions of meeting international standards that can be linked to the

implementation of a curriculum based on competencies that in turn has been the Latin American translation of the Tuning project (see Robertson, 2008). However, Clark and Ivanič (1997) argue that,

> If real democracy is to flourish it is even more urgent that future citizens be properly and critically equipped to take as full a part as possible in political and cultural life as well as economic life. The development of a critical awareness of the world, and of the possibilities for changing it, ought to be the main objective of all education. (p.229)

This statement also maps into the Mexican context, where as I have described above, education is assumed to be responsible for the future of the country. However, "these reforms have not yet ensured appropriate capacity and distribution of responsibilities across the decentralized system" (OECD, 2013, p.15), but important modifications have been made that have affected the educational system. These reforms also reflect the importance of policies since they have influenced the curriculum and instruction under efficiency and global competitiveness arguments (Tatto, 2012). I summarise the reform and its three stages as well as the main outcomes proposed in each one of them in Table 1.

Table 1 A major reform and its three stages

Reform/stage	When did it take place?	Main outcomes
Basic education	1992	Change of paradigms from a behaviourist to a constructivist. A competency-based approach is adopted. Initial teacher education is modified.
Preschool	2004	Three years of preschool become mandatory.
Secondary school	2006	Secondary school becomes mandatory.
Primary education	2011	Primary education began to be articulated with kindergarten and secondary school. In 2012, upper secondary becomes mandatory.

2.5 The institutional context

This study takes place in an institution I will call "Central University"; one of the oldest educational institutions of the state. The institution has gone through four phases. During the first one, the institution was founded under the name of Literary Institute of Arts and Crafts and its first rules were issued in 1872. The second phase that goes from the second decade of 1900 to the first half of the third decade, the school suffered from a civil war, which nearly caused its closing in two occasions. After the Mexican Revolution, the university underwent several changes offering programmes in medicine, law and engineering. During the third phase, the institute acquired its autonomy. In this fourth phase and for 48 years of its institutional life, the university has experienced many important changes characterized by rapid growth and expansion of each of its core functions.

The university is organised into six institutes located on the main campus in the city and nine campuses located across the state. It offers 52 BA degrees; 19 Diploma courses; 20 MA degrees and 10 PhD degrees in a traditional teaching format (UAEH, 2011, p.70). Online courses are also offered, namely 1 Diploma and 2 MA degrees.

2.6 The disciplinary context

Hyland (2011b) argues that language is intimately related to the epistemological framework of each (individual) discipline that determines how to view the world (p.7). A discipline is a branch of knowledge and students are expected to write according to the conventions of that particular discourse community. Kruse (2013, p.39) argues that the disciplinary context "is the most influential factor in making students engage in their majors and get acquainted with the respective genres and rhetorical practices. Writing, from this perspective, is a means of integration into and specialization in their fields of study".

The syllabi of both programmes included in my study, Education and Chemistry, were selected because they represent two very distinct disciplines. They state that students should have good use of oral and written language. The documents state that both reading and writing serve several functions: teaching and learning strategies; to conduct research; to develop critical analysis. However, there is no specific module dedicated to the teaching of reading and writing.

Some features of the two disciplines are mentioned here to describe briefly the context of this study in terms of writing and reading. The literacy practices of academic disciplines can be viewed as varied social practices associated with different communities. The two programmes, Education and Chemistry, state the outcomes in terms of students' profiles once they graduate.

For instance, Education students are expected to be able to solve "big educational problems of the state and the country" (UAEH, 2000a, p.22), while Chemistry students are expected to develop professionally in different areas such as private and public chemistry industries, laboratory management, and research (UAEH, 2000b).

Both programmes ostensibly follow a competence-based approach in which four areas are covered: knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. Outcomes and targets are defined in terms of these competencies. This approach adopted by the institution reflects the impact of this reform in basic education. It also responds to the national demand to train students with the skills and abilities necessary to compete in what is described as a changing and globalised world.

2.7 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have argued that it is important to locate academic literacy practices in larger historical, political, social and educational contexts. I have suggested that it is viable to analyse how academic literacy practices are constructed by looking at both texts and contexts in which they are embedded, something I discuss in more depth in the following chapter.

This chapter illustrated the sociopolitical context of my study. I highlight that Fox's government claims to place education at the centre of the policy agenda and show that this initiative responds to international demands. The section on the educational context and its reforms describes how the school system in Mexico is organised and the institutional context provides a general view of the university and its educational philosophy. Reading and writing play an important role in the two programmes because they serve several purposes (i.e. show knowledge attainment). This description reveals some of the aspects of the social context and the underlying ideologies that frame how academic literacy practices are constructed. In the next chapter, I present the theoretical framework that supports this research.

3. Policy and discourse on academic literacies in higher education: theoretical frameworks

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive description of the theoretical framework that supports my analysis alongside a critical discussion of relevant scholarly literature. I argue that bringing together scholarly approaches situated in academic literacies and critical discourse studies (CDS) provides a basis for understanding the context, the texts undergraduate students read and write and the actual practices in which students engage in higher education. Because it is my aim to analyse policy texts alongside individuals' discourse on academic literacy practices, as discussed in Chapter 2, the chapter starts by defining literacy (section 3.2). I then go on to discuss existing literature on literacy as a social practice (3.3). I describe three approaches to writing and reading at university, namely the skills approach, academic socialization and academic literacies in section 3.4. Studies that have addressed what students write in higher education (section 3.5) are also included. I discuss critical discourse studies and the theoretical framework that supports my study in section 3.6. I explain key concepts from CDS in relation to policy in section 3.7. I then review some key concepts in relation to policymaking in section 3.8. In section 3.9, I discuss how academic literacies research and CDS have typically dealt with different levels of context and analysis, and how I draw on these traditions in this thesis before concluding the chapter in section 3.10.

3.2 Defining literacy

In the early 60's and 70's the word literacy was usually associated with informal education initiatives. Lankshear and Knobel (2011) state that by the 80's this changed to educational policy, practice and research (p.8). They also suggest that,

> Literacy then becomes a strategic component of economic and social development policies. Illiteracy was seen as a major impediment to economic development, and literacy campaigns were prescribed, as cost-effective

measures for developing the minimal levels of 'manpower' needed to give a country a chance for economic take-off. (p. 8)

Hamilton (2012a) argues that, "literacy is represented as a good thing, something that opens opportunities and is associated with positive emotions. It is a *central symbolic attribution of education*, identified mainly with reading, with books and with literacy culture, which are also good" (p. 105 italics in original). If we see literacy as a "'thing' that people possess or not, that can be given, denied, prized, feared or demanded from them, literacy becomes a kind of commodity that has value and can be exchanged within a capitalist economy for other goods or services" (Hamilton, 2012a, p.24). She further argues that this idea of literacy dominates public discourse as it is conceived as the 'tool' or instrument to transform any country's economy and "it is used to create narratives of literacy and ideas of citizenship that justify public interventions" (p.33) as discussed above. However, as stated by Davies (2009) we know that "literacy is not *just* about decoding marks on a page; it is also about performing social acts of meaning, where meanings and practices vary according to context (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1997)" (p.29). I will discuss more about literacy in the next section.

In relation to the different meanings literacy indexes, Hamilton (2012a) states that these meanings,

> have historically been used to justify a range of policy interventions and educational practices. In both poor and rich countries, literacy carries a heavy burden of expectations and morality associated with economic prosperity and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. (p.1)

The author argues that literacy becomes central to arguments about human resource *development* and it is implicated not only in the construction of national identity, but also in the shaping of global citizens in a global marketplace (Hamilton, 2012a, p.4).

Brown and Lauder (2006) suggest that education is conceptualised in terms of economic functionality. Economic principles are used to legitimize educational policy decisions and resource allocation (p.44). As Ball (1998) puts it, "the market solution is

a new master narrative" (p.126). Mulderrig (2011) also suggests that,

> This global economic competitiveness is used to preface and legitimate policy proposals made by the government. Through this rhetorical device, government policy decisions effectively become harder to criticise since their legitimacy rests on global economic forces apparently beyond the government's control. (p.569)

Literacy policy initiatives are justified by governments both based on domestic economic performance, as suggested by Lankshear and Knobel (2001) above and on international comparison because educated people contribute to competitiveness in global markets.

3.3 Literacy as social practice[3]

I will now move on to discuss different conceptions of literacy in scholarly literature and popular imagination. The widespread view among the public at large seems to be that literacy is the ability to use written language and its opposite is 'illiteracy', defined as the inability to use written language. From this perspective, literacy is a set of skills that are needed to function in society. A number of scholars (e.g. Barton, 2007; Ivanič, 1998; Lillis, 2001) have put forward a rather more nuanced view, and suggest that literacy is a social practice influenced by the social context in which it is embedded. Thus, Gee (as cited in Lankshear & Knobel, 2011, p. 13) states that literacy as social practices "are bound up with social, institutional and cultural relationships, and can be understood only when they are situated within their social, cultural and historical contexts" and "they are always connected to social identities to being particular kinds of people" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011, p. 13).

To Russell et al. (2009), the distinction between literacy and illiteracy can also be linked to Street's (1984, 1995) seminal contribution to New Literacy Studies (NLS) as he distinguishes between autonomous and ideological models of literacy. He argues that the former assumes that literacy will have effects on other social and cognitive

---

[3] I discuss some of these ideas in the context of the rhetorical structure of essay introductions in Hidalgo-Avilés (2006); in this thesis the focus is, however, on the discursive construction of academic literacies.

practices; the latter posits that literacy is a social practice that varies from context to context and culture to culture.

There are two concepts that contribute to the understanding of literacy: literacy practices and literacy events. Russell and Cortes (2012) state that,

> The term practices (evoking sociologist Max Weber's notion of social action and the Marxist concept of praxis) and the term 'community' (evoking the sociolinguistic concept of 'speech community' and later 'discourse community') suggest the importance for these traditions of going beyond language *per se* or even the functions of language to observe people using language. (p. 11)

Barton and Hamilton (2000) argue that, "literacy practices are the general cultural ways of utilizing written language which people draw upon in their lives" (p.7). Clark and Ivanič (1997) suggest that practices highlight "the social nature of what we do as writers. Practices are not just what people do, but what they make of what they do, and how it constructs them as social subjects" (p.82). They go on and suggest "practices refer also to the linguistics and discursive choices that the writer makes" (p.82). This view goes in line with discursive construction in CDS in the sense that they refer to the semiotic choices participants make when talking about academic literacy practices.

Heath (1983) uses the term "literacy event" to describe observable actions or groups of actions in which written text plays a role. She defined a literacy event as "any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants' interactions and their interpretative processes" (p. 50). Thinking of literacy in terms of "literacy events" leads researchers to focus not on the literacy "skills" of individuals but,

> On how written language is used to mediate social life: who is doing what, when, where and how, and what the participants have to say about their purposes, intentions, views of literacy, values, feelings, and reasons for doing what they are doing and for the way they are doing it. (Ivanič, Edwards,

Satchwell, & Smith, 2007, p.706)

Barton and Hamilton (2000) similarly argue that "practices, events and texts provide the first proportion of a social theory of literacy that: *literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these are observable in events which are mediated by written texts*" (p. 9, emphasis in original). "Texts and practices come together… here textual practices are one element of social practices, complemented by the practices associated with the creation and use of texts" (Barton, 2001, p.99). An example of an event is having students discuss and plan an assignment with someone and the practices are the actions (what, when and where to write it) around this event.

3.4 Perspectives on literacies in academic contexts

Having established a definition of literacies in general, I will now turn to literacies in academic contexts. Lea and Street (2006) describe three perspectives on academic literacies, which can be labelled study skills, socialization and academic literacies research. Each is discussed in turn below.

3.4.1 Study Skills

Street (2010) argues that the sources of the study skills approach "lie in behavioural psychology and training programmes and it conceptualises student writing as technical and instrumental" (p.348). This approach has assumed that "literacy is a set of atomised skills, which students have to learn and which are then transferable to other contexts. The focus is on attempts to 'fix' problems with student learning, which are treated as a kind of pathology" (Street, 2010, p.348).

Lea and Street (2006) suggest that the study skills model

> is concerned with the use of written language at the surface level, and concentrates upon teaching students formal features of language (i.e., sentence structure, grammar, and punctuation). It pays little attention to context and is implicitly informed by autonomous and additive theories of learning which are concerned with the transmission of knowledge. (p.369)

Wingate (2006) concurs with this argument and suggests that this approach has

proved not to be effective because "it separates study skills from the process and content of learning" (p. 457).

This conception is often linked with the term functional literacy which has been defined by Christie and Misson (2002) as "a term intended to capture a sense of a basic competence in reading and writing of a kind held to be sufficient for fostering efficient and informed workers" (p.10). However, the link between literacy and development of informed workers is not a straightforward or a simple cause and effect relationship.

The arguments that link literacy with development seem to be closely related to discourses of international and national agencies as they "have been influential in promoting literacy as a policy issue" (see Hamilton, 2012a, p.5) and they may also establish standards in terms of achievement.

3.4.2 Academic socialization

Lea and Street (2006) argue that the academic socialization model "is associated with the growth in constructivism and situated learning as organizing frames, as well as with work in the field of sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and genre theory" (pp.369-370). Likewise, the authors suggest that academic socialization "recognizes that subject areas and disciplines use different genres and discourses to construct knowledge in particular ways (Bazerman, 1988; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995)" (p.369). Bazerman et al. (2005) note that,

> academic language socialization is the process by which individuals learn to enter the discussions and again [gain] access to the resources of academic disciplines through learning specialized language use and participating in academic activity settings. Learning to read and write in academic settings occurs through extended experiences in those settings. (p.8)

Street (2010) argues that this approach could be criticised "as it appears to assume that the academy is a relatively homogenous culture whose norms and practices have simply to be learnt to provide access to the whole institution" (p.348). And it "tends to treat writing as a transparent medium of representation and so fails to

address the deep language, literacy and discourse issues involved in the institutional production and representation of meaning" (p.348-349).

3.4.3 Academic literacies

Academic literacies research highlights issues of power and identity that serve to define reading and writing as social practices because of the influence of the social context.

Ivanič and Lea (2006) find that studies such as Ivanič (1998) and Lillis (2001) have also contributed to this field and have examined "the experiences of mature students entering the academy, using linguistics and language-based framing for exploring student writing" (p.13). They go on and suggest that "this particular orientation by all three writers (Lea, 1994; Lillis, 1997; Ivanič, 1998) laid the foundation for the more contested approach to student writing, which has become the hallmark of academic literacies research during the last decade" (p.13). This approach, then, considers issues of student writing within a broader and contested institutional perspective. Writing seems to vary depending on the context in which it takes place.

Lea (1994 as cited in Ivanič and Lea, 2006) argues that "to understand more about student writing it is necessary to move away from a framework which conceptualizes writing in terms of study skills, and to consider the institutional, disciplinary and social contexts within which students' written texts are produced" (pp.12-13). This claim is particularly important, as this is one of the aims of this thesis. Academic literacies research sees reading and writing as social practices rather than skills. It situates them in multimodal activities as well as paying attention to how context shapes the kinds of reading and writing people engage in.

Ivanič and Lea (2006) argue that,

> this approach provides an alternative to a 'deficit model' of student learning… which positions the student as lacking basic skills; and the task of support staff, academic staff or curriculum design is to enable students to acquire the skills they are deemed to lack in order to complete their studies successfully. (p.12)

In contrast with the socialization model, students play an active role because they have to negotiate the conventions of the academy, and in doing so "issues of meaning-making and identity are implicated, not just in student writing, but in teaching and learning more generally" (Ivanič & Lea, 2006, p.12).

At the theoretical level, both the academic literacies and socialization model focus their attention on the relationship between epistemology and acts of writing in subject areas and disciplines. However, as suggested by Lea and Street (2006),

> the academic literacies model goes further by focusing on the relationship of epistemology and writing not just in the subject area in general but also more generally, in institutional requirements (e.g. regarding plagiarism, feedback), as well as in more specific contexts such as variation across individual faculty members' requirements and even individual student assignments. (p. 369)

Lea and Street (1998) point out that the models are not presented as mutually exclusive and each should encapsulate the other. They argue that the academic literacies model is best able to take account of the nature of student writing in relation to power, authority, meaning making and identity (Lea & Street, 2006, p.370). However, Lea and Street (2006) note about the UK context that "to date, both at the university level and the elementary and secondary levels, it has been the skills and academic socialization models that have guided curriculum development and instructional practices, as well as research" (p.369).

In a similar vein, Wingate (2012) argues that despite the efforts made,

> more than a decade after Lea and Street's (1998) seminal study, no substantial changes at the institutional level have occurred in the predominantly remedial support provision at British universities. This is partly due to the fact that no writing pedagogy has been developed by Academic Literacies, and the model's impact on higher education policy has remained limited as a result. Progress has been made at some institutions where individuals or groups of writing specialists have initiated change. (p. 26)

The author suggests that some of these initiatives have been materialized in the

American model of Writing in the Disciplines, which aims to promote ways for students to learn how to write in their disciplines of study.

Academic literacies research has been criticized. For example, Ivanič and Lea (2006) suggest that much academic literacies research has been small-scale, qualitative, using case study and ethnographic approaches (i.e. Ivanič, 1998; Lillis, 2001). These studies also use text analysis; Ivanič and Lea (2006) state that this is because"many of the researchers are Applied Linguists, [so] studies often use textual analysis, including the identification of generic and discoursal characteristics of particular types of writing" (p.14). These arguments are, however, by no means a drawback because these qualitative, textual studies have become a typical approach within academic literacies research.

Another criticism of academic literacies is signaled by Lea (2008) who emphasises that, "academic literacies research has focused almost exclusively on writing and has not foregrounded what is to some extent a self-evident relationship between writing and reading. It may be time to redress this balance" (p.235). I argue that one way to address this gap is by making reading explicit and foreground the neglected relationship between reading and writing.

Lillis (2006) argues that the academic literacies approach "has proven to be a useful theoretical framework for researching student writing" as it works as "critique by serving as an oppositional frame to conventional approaches to student writing" (p.33), however as a design frame (see also Lillis, 2003) or pedagogical frame, it has limited applicability. Wingate and Tribble (2012) claim that "academic literacies theorists have criticised the focus on discipline- specific texts in what they have called English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (e.g. Lillis & Scott, 2007); however, they have themselves offered few practical alternatives to the models they have criticized" (p.482). This has been contested by Lillis, Harrington, Lea and Mitchell (2015) as a response to the different ways academic literacies can be adopted as well as the approaches to writing in contemporary higher education.

Lea and Street (2006) argue that, "to date, both at the university level and the elementary levels, it has been the study skills and the academic socialization models

that have guided curriculum development and instructional practices as well as research" (p. 369). In addition, Wingate (2006) points out that "practices at universities remain largely unchanged, and are still based on this deficit model of providing support for weak students" (p. 458).

3.5 Writing and reading in higher education

Several studies have examined the writing tasks and assignments that students are required to write at the undergraduate level. Most of these studies do not adopt an academic literacies approach, but they are relevant here because they show what students read and write in higher education across the disciplines. Braine (1989) identifies two approaches to research the types of assignments students write at university. Some of them (i.e. Ostler, 1980; Eblen, 1983; and Bridgeman & Carlson, 1984; Light, 2003) have employed questionnaires or surveys to find out the writing assignments students do. However, these studies are limited in the sense that they may impose the type of tasks and assignments students do at university because of the research instruments used. On the other hand, studies such as (Rose, 1983; Horowitz, 1986, Braine, 1989; Carroll & Dunkelblau, 2011) have examined the actual writing assignments of students instead of giving a questionnaire or a survey.

Recent studies have attempted to go beyond these approaches and have tried to provide a wider understanding of what students write. Melzer's (2003, 2009) provides an overview of college writing through a large-scale survey of writing assignments across disciplines. Jackson, Meyer and Parkinson (2006) examined both the writing and reading tasks. They administered a survey to academic staff to identify the writing tasks and the readings assigned to undergraduate science students in a South African university. The results confirm previous findings that the laboratory report is the most important genre that students should master in science writing followed by the summary of readings and the essay is the least common genre assigned to science students. Concerning the reading assigned, the most common source is the textbook followed by photocopied chapters from other textbooks. In the Mexican context, Roux (2008) administered a questionnaire to 2032 students in 41 BA programmes from different disciplines. She reports that the

five texts students write more often are: essays, investigaciones bibliográficas (literature reviews), lab reports, summaries, free writing (i.e. note taking, reflections) and written tests. The author mainly reports that students have different conceptions about what an essay is, which is something I will discuss extensively in my context in Chapter 7. She also suggests there is a lack of guidelines provided to students of the texts they must write.

These studies show that there are different tasks, assignments and genres students write at university and multiple writing practices that may vary from university to university, and from discipline to discipline and even from lecturer to lecturer.

3.6 Critical Discourse Studies

Critical Discourse Studies "subsumes a variety of approaches towards the social analysis of discourse" (Fairclough, 2003, p. X). Fairclough (2001) emphasizes the role of language in processes of social transformation such as globalisation. He prefers the term semiosis (rather than language) as it may include but it is not limited to language, visual images and body language. He argues that social practices are mediated by structures of events and are interconnected in particular ways through orders of discourse that constitute social fields, institutions and organizations. These orders of discourse are comprised of genres, discourses and styles. Central to Fairclough's (2003) framework is genre defined as "a way of acting in its discourse practice" (p. 65). His understanding of social change is relevant as texts are shaped by social structures and social practices. He claims that critical discourse analysis of texts includes both interdiscursive analysis of the genres, discourses and styles and how they are articulated together. Like Fairclough, in this study, I am interested in globalisation, in particular how it influences the discourses in policy documents relevant to higher education, and in talk around social practices such as reading and writing by undergraduate students. The aim is to analyse how academic literacies are constructed by looking at different features of texts in relation to their wider context. In this research, I investigate discursive constructions – in other words, how the authors of policy documents write about and how participants talk about academic literacy practices. This notion of discursive construction draws on both

understandings of discourse(s) – in other words, texts construct and are constructed by the world (and in this case, the part of the world that relates particularly to academic literacy practices), and in doing so, reflect particular ideologies.

Some key concepts central to Fairclough's (2001, 2003) framework, and how I adopt them in my thesis, are described below:

3.6.1 Defining discourse and discourses

Discourse is a contested term and has been used in different ways according to different traditions. The understanding of discourse that I am adopting is that developed within social theory, based on the work of Fairclough (1992, 2007), to refer to the dialectic analysis of the relations between language and its social context. Hereby discourse is understood as language in use conveyed as social practice. That is, "discourse moves back and forth between reflecting and constructing the social world. Seen in this way, language cannot be considered neutral, because it is caught up in political, social, racial, economic, religious, and cultural formations" (Rogers et al., 2005, p. 369). Another definition of discourse that I draw on is put forward by Bernstein (1996), more specifically the notion of regulative discourse, which is defined as the dominant discourse that provides the rules of the internal order of instructional discourse itself.

Fairclough (1992) draws on Foucault (1982) for whom discourse refers to a set of ideas or beliefs rather than to specific instances of language, and suggests defining discourses (as a count noun) as "ways of signifying areas of experience from a particular perspective" (p.135). Fairclough (2003) states that,

> discourses are characterized and differentiated not only by features of vocabulary and semantic relations, and assumptions, but also by grammatical features. Discourses differ in how elements of social events (processes, people, objects, means, times, places) are represented, and these differences can be grammatical as well as lexical (vocabulary). (p.133)

3.6.2 Text and Genre

According to Titscher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetten (2000), "one of the most widespread definitions of 'text' comes from de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981). They define a text as a communicative event"(p.21). They state that texts must satisfy seven conditions or criteria: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality.

Wodak (2008) adopts this taxonomy and argues that texts can be described in terms of internal and external features. Unger (2013) draws on Wodak (2008) and points out that, "the former refers to the structure of texts (cohesion and coherence), while the latter describes the relationship of the text to co-text, context, audience, society, etc." (p.53). He further states that, "texts can be longer or shorter, visual and verbal and can appear in different contexts" (p. 53). For Fairclough (2003), social effects of meaning making mediate texts, or as he puts it, "it is the meanings that have social effects rather than text as such" (p.11). In this sense in this research, *text* is understood as the semiotic realisation of discourse.

Wodak (2008) argues that, "discourse implies patterns and commonalities of knowledge and structure whereas a text is a specific and unique realization of a discourse. Texts belong to genres" (p.6). Following Wodak's example, in this case, discourses on academic literacies can be realized in a range of genres and texts: policy documents; on the one hand, but also texts written by students and talk by social actors directly involved in the creation of these texts, namely students and lecturers.

It might be suggested that genre in academic literacies is typically understood as any type of text (Lea & Street, 2006), in this research I draw on CDS understanding of genre. Wodak (2008) argues that Swales (1990) "takes situations and their conventions as a starting-point and proposes the concept of *discourse community* as constitutive for the use and creation of genres" (p. 15). Fairclough (2003) has contested Swales' argument, and says that genres "vary quite considerable in terms of their degree of stabilization, fixity and homogenization" (p.66). That is, genres are not static and their structure may vary. Genre is here understood as "the specifically

discoursal aspect of ways of acting and interacting in the course of social events"
(Fairclough, 2003, p.65). Thus, a typical genre such as the student assignment simply
labelled as an "essay" may in fact have a wide range of forms and institutional
functions, as I show in my analysis of students and lecturers' discussions of writing
practices in Chapter 6.

3.7 Defining policy

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) argue that policy indicates and guides the orientation of a
nation as it dictates the measures and decisions undertaken from above. They
further suggest that a policy states,

> patterns of decisions in the context of other decisions taken by political
> actors on behalf of state institutions from positions of authority. Public
> policies are thus normative, expressing both ends and means designed to
> steer the actions and behaviour of people. (p.4)

Policy tends to describe change and foresees the outcomes or goals, or as Rizvi and
Lingard put it (2010) policy "desires or imagines change- it offers an imagined future
state of affairs, but in articulating desired change always offers an account
somewhatmore simplified than the actual realities of practice" (p.5). Ball (1998)
notes that policies "are both systems of values and symbolic systems; ways of
representing accounting for and legitimating political decisions. Policies are
articulated both to achieve material effects and to manufacture support for these
effects" (p. 124). In other words, policies dictate actions that are enacted in practice.

Ball (1993) defines policy by means of two main conceptualisations: policy as text
and policy as discourse (see sections 3.7.1 and 3.7.2 respectively). Like texts, policies
are framed by discourse. "Text is always affected by the context of its production,
which has in recent years been increasingly shaped by the discourses of globalisation
and globalised discourses" (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p.14). Similarly, Edmondson
(2002) argues that policies are politically, historically, and socially situated. Because
of the effects policies can have on nation's decision making, Levinson, Sutton and
Winstead (2009), suggest seeing policy as a "kind of social practice, specifically a

practice of power" (p. 767). At the broadest level, I see policy as responding to global demands that impose pressure on nations and policymakers to follow certain ideologies; they articulate international priorities that are presented as shared needs. In turn, these measures become national impositions and sometimes differ from the local needs.

3.7.1 Policy as text

Ball (1993, p.11) explains that policy as text considers "policies as representations that are encoded in complex ways (via struggles, compromises, authoritative public interpretations and reinterpretations) and decoded in complex ways (via actors' interpretations and meanings in relation to their history, experience, skills resources and context)". Policies adopt a global view and their effects are expected both in local practices and actors in schools, for example. Ball (2015) refines his conceptualization and argues that policies as text are "contested, mediated and differentially represented by different actors in different contexts" (p.311). The argument is the same as he suggests the straight relationship between the global and local aspects of policy.

For Jones (2013), policy as text is based on "content analysis of policy texts" (p.3). This view is often associated with the traditional understanding that policy is embedded in texts. As Levinson et al., (2009) point out, "traditional policy research attempted to understand how and why a given policy worked or failed to work as it was intended" (p. 767). Treating policy purely as a text can, however, be criticized because of "its lack of interest in social practices of power", especially for those "interested in power dynamics regulating dominant trends and uses of education" (Jones, 2013, p.4). Treating policy as discourse, by contrast, allows a more nuanced analysis and draws on a definition of discourse that goes beyond language and speech (see section 3.6.1).

3.7.2 Policy as discourse

For the understanding of policy as discourse, both Ball (1993) and Jones (2013) draw on Foucault's ideas on discourse and suggest that this definition goes beyond just

language. That is, "statements are treated as events that depend on the contextual and interactive conditions in which they emerge and exist within a field of discourse" (Jones, 2013, p.12). Issues of power and ideology are identified when looking at the contextual conditions where policies are produced and interpreted.

For Ball (1993) policies as discourse "are set within a moving discursive frame which articulates and constrains the possibilities and probabilities of interpretation and enactment" (p.15). Broader social aspects frame these possibilities; policies are not "found" within policy texts or institutions, but across sites (Jones, 2013, p.11). On this, Ball (2015) argues that policies as discourse are "produced and formed by taken-for-granted and implicit assumptions about the world and ourselves" (p.311).

Jones (2013) explains that policy as discourse "sees policy as representing and refracting reality" (p.10). It is "in a sense a scripted mixing and matching of cultural codes derived from (and deriving) the school context, community, traditions, and practices" (p.10). This conception goes in line with Levinson's et al. (2009) conception of policy as critical social practice in the sense that policy is a "complex, ongoing social practice of normative cultural production constituted by diverse actors across diverse contexts" (p.770). Policies mobilise discourses (Jones, 2013) as they are read and interpreted.

I analyse the content of policy documents (policy as text) as well as policy as discourse because I see policy as social practice mediated by language, which is dialogical in reflecting and representing reality.

3.8 Policy into practice

I now turn to discuss briefly the relationship between policymaking and a) globalisation, b) governance, and c) international agencies, all of which are relevant concepts in understanding how policy influences practice in my research context.

3.8.1 Globalisation

Globalisation has influenced policy decisions because they respond to international discourses. Researchers (i.e. Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) agree that globalisation has

meant a shift from industry to knowledge. Knowledge society or knowledge economy becomes central to policy texts and discourses. Peters (2001) argues that knowledge economy is "an extension of the neoliberal paradigm of globalisation" (p. 13). These concepts "serve and symbolise the increasing colonization of education policy by economic policy imperatives" (Ball, 1998, p.122) and set some sort of competition (Dale, 1999, Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) among nations. As Peters (2001) notes "national policy constructions of the 'knowledge economy' are constructed on the assumption that it is the future basis for national competitiveness and success in the global economy and will provide the necessary new jobs for successive waves of 'knowledge workers'" (p. 15).

The knowledge society is the response to the demands of a global economy and places new demands on universities. Brown, Lauder and Ashton (2008) point out that "the argument that a knowledge-driven economy demands a larger proportion of the workforce with a university education and with access to lifelong learning opportunities has had a major impact on participation rates in tertiary education" (p. 134). Bell and Stevenson (2006) suggest that a human capital approach to education is adopted and the accumulation of skills used to produce wealth is the ultimate goal and the impact of globalisation has forced nations to enhance the skills levels of their labour force (p.41).

Jessop (2008) suggests that, "after the crisis of Fordism, there was a broader emphasis on the role of education in promoting the globalizing, knowledge-based economy through the development of human capital" (p.18). It is assumed that education will allow the transformation of economic growth. Higher education institutions become the sites where the skills needed to contribute to the economy are acquired. Educated and talented individuals are the ones that will contribute to the development of a nation leaving out the "uneducated" and "untalented". This human capital is, as stated above, often equated with the acquisition of skills and credentials that in turn are associated with success. Brown and Lauder (2006) state that,

> a 'fair' educational system is no longer one that attempts to create a level

playing field but one dedicated to raising the standards of all, and facilitating greater access to higher education in order to arm the workforce with the credentials, knowledge and skills that are valued in the global labour market. (p. 28)

However, as Bell and Stevenson (2006) point out "the issues surrounding which skills and knowledge are to be acquired, by whom and who makes those decisions often lack clarification" (p. 43).

3.8.2 Governance

One of the effects of globalisation is the restructuration of the state as it is given more 'control' over its decisions. That is, there has been a change from government to governance. Bache (2003) suggests that governance "implies an increasingly complex set of state-society relationships in which networks rather than hierarchies dominate policy-making. In this context, government's role is increasingly one of coordination and steering rather than command" (p. 301). There is a shift in the way power is distributed as it seems that this power (from the government) is handed to the state and in turn to the citizens and stakeholders as they are expected to have a more active participation in public policy.

This concept of governance has dominated education policy. Mulderrig (2007) argues that, "education policy discourse construes education as an object of governance. It circumscribes the educationally possible within the parameters of what is seen to be politically and economically possible" (p.137). Mulderrig (2011) argues that governance has occupied an important role in academic inquiry during the last twenty years, and this reflects the changes in the way advanced liberal states organize their economic, political and social activities (p.570). She also suggests that, "given the naturalised landscape of global competition among macro-regional economies, this serves to justify supra-national layers of governance" (Mulderrig, 2008, p. 159). Vidovich and Currie (2011) claim that, "university governance, then, is increasingly characterised by a diversity of actors operating at multiple levels from global to local" (p. 54). With regards to the case of higher education policies in Romania, Wodak and Fairclough (2010) point out that "the discourse of governance

which represents all relevant groups as 'partners' seems to be alien and totally at odds with the extremely hierarchical nature of social relations in universities" (p.33). This concept of governance has dominated policy-making decisions because it implies some shifts in how power is distributed. Nations and states are given the power to take control of their own decisions; however, it is evident that states do not have total control as policies respond to more global demands.

3.8.3 International agencies

International agencies tend to influence policymaking. The OECD (2013), for example, promotes an international discourse of literacy as a human right and as empowerment. PISA (OECD, 2002), presents indicators of literacy that are used to compare individuals and nations. Hardy and Boulton (2012) suggest that, "today statistics are collected regularly on literacy levels internationally by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) for children and adults" (p.4). UNESCO (2003 as cited in Hardy & Boulton, 2012, p.4) claims that,

> the testing of literacy among both adults and children is based on a functional view of literacy, which became prominent with Governments and UNESCO (United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organisation) in the 1960s. Functional literacy is promoted as a response to economic demand, with a focus on the reading and writing skills required to increase productivity of the individual and hence the nation.

Most of these discourses are used to justify public interventions and policies since "standardized and measurable outcomes are preferred for demonstrating achievement" (Hamilton, 2012b, p. 171). Kalman and Street (2013) argue that,

> in Latin America, an idea that has dominated the official discourses for decades, if not more, is that reading and writing are singular, neutral, and objective skills that are learned through a progression of ordered exercises and then transferable to any situation. Consequently, governments and international agencies alike have promoted – and continue to promote- programs that reduce literacy to mechanical skills that fail to capture the

complexity of literacy practices in the social world. (p.1)

This means that the concept of literacy that seems to dominate public discourse is that of literacy as a set of skills that are transferred from one context to another.

3.9 Contextual and textual levels of analysis

Contextual and textual are key concepts in the framework that underlies my analysis of the construction of academic literacy practices. As I will show in this section, while critical discourse studies has typically distinguished between contextual and textual, often using the terms *macro* and *micro* to describe these different levels, work in the tradition of literacy studies has sometimes made different distinctions or drawn boundaries at different points. Macro, micro, and sometimes meso have been used in both traditions in relation to context, levels of theory, levels of society, methodology, social processes and language use. I will clarify and illustrate how I use these concepts below after briefly reviewing how the terms are employed in existing literature from different scholarly traditions.

3.9.1 Micro, macro and meso in critical discourse studies

Several authors (i.e. Fairclough, 1989, 2003; van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 2008) have discussed how critical discourse studies work at different levels of context. Fairclough's (1989) three-dimension framework has been widely used as he stresses that social context plays a role in the study of discourse in relation to society. He suggests conducting textual analysis by linking lexicogrammatical analysis (micro) of texts to the macro analysis of how power relations work across networks of practices and structures (pp. 15-16). These two levels, together with a third level he labels meso, correspond to what Fairclough (1989) calls text, interaction and context respectively. At the micro level (texts), "analysis is generally thought of as a matter of identifying and 'labelling' formal features of a text in terms of the categories of a descriptive framework" (Fairclough, 1989, p.26). The meso-level (interaction) is the "cognitive processes of participants" (p.27) or the text's production and interpretation of texts. The macro level (context) is "the relationship between transitory social events and more durable social structures which shape and are

shaped by these events" (p.27). Rogers et al. (2005) gloss this as the "analysis of what is happening in a particular sociocultural framework" (p.371). Text is shaped by the social situation of production and interpretation, which is influenced by the social context in which the interaction takes place.

Koller (2012) draws on Fairclough's (2010) three-dimensional framework of discourse analysis and examines the collective identity construction in discourse at these three levels - macro, meso and micro. Koller (2012) defines the macro level as the analysis of social context as part of what the researcher seeks to identify and what social effects, socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions, impact on the text and on the "discursive practices that surround the text, i.e. the roles of, and relationships between, members of a discourse community" (p. 26). The meso level for Koller refers to the context of discourse practices; that is, the production, distribution, reception and appropriation of texts (see also Fairclough, 1989), and the micro level looks at the text and asks the questions what and how something is constructed. That is, she argues that the linguistic and semiotic analyses are part of the microanalysis for critical discourse analysts. "As the three levels of text and context are interrelated, the analysis of the wider social formation is also taken into account to interpret the findings of the textual analysis" (p. 27).

To summarise, from a critical discourse studies perspective, macro generally refers to the analysis of social phenomena or the socio-political/socio-cultural context, which may incorporate broader ideologies that influence the text and that help to understand the production and interpretation of texts (Fairclough, 1989). Micro is usually associated with the analysis of linguistic realisations that are used to create meaning in text. Researchers focus on particular linguistic realisations, which aim to answer research questions. Analysis of the micro level of context (i.e. what is happening in and around texts) may lead to realisations about the texts themselves but also about practices around the texts, institutional practices, and even broader social issues (i.e. around how national identity is constructed and the impact this may have on the lives of people). There are therefore different levels of analysis, even when the focus is on individual texts. For example, a text can be analysed at a more macro level in terms of the claims made about social phenomena, or how the

general rhetorical structure contributes to constructions of society, and at a more micro level by looking at specific linguistic features (i.e. modality, metaphors and lexical choices) and how these are used within the text.

3.9.2 Micro, meso and macro in literacy studies

Some scholars (i.e. Maybin, 2000; Rex et al., 2010; Tusting, 2013) argue that literacy studies can also be conducted incorporating these three levels of analysis. Rex et al. (2010) draw on the academic literacies perspective (see section 3.4.3) and suggest that literacies is a "situated phenomenon can be described at three units of scale – macro, micro, and meso" (p. 96).

Like most authors, Rex et al. (2010) do not define each one of these units of scale, as they call them, but provide some examples of what researchers at a macro level deal with. They suggest that analysts can investigate "global educational policy, institutional procedures, and schooling curriculum as sites in which discourse practices determining literacy also determine right of access, right to resources, and what constitutes schooling achievement" (p. 96). Micro scales focus on "interactions and literacy practices in specific classrooms, schools, and other sites of literacy production" (p.96). Meso refers to the literacy discourses that become recognised through local situated practices as genres or discourse types which can be located inside and outside school, as well as in community groups and in administrative and policy venues (p.96). Despite these definitions by Rex et al. (2010), literacy researchers tend to work with the idea of macro and micro, but not necessarily meso.

From an education policy perspective, Rogers (2011) suggests that macro refers to social structures such as national policies and curricula and the schools, classrooms, and educational sites where these social structures take place are referred to as micro. It is important to highlight that from a literacy studies approach; scholars do not necessarily conduct linguistic analyses at the micro level as understood by critical discourse analysts. That is, as defined earlier, in literacy studies micro refers to "specific" events that take place in different situations, but the focus is not on the language realisations themselves. Micro for literacy researchers would thus mean

something like observing and analyzing specific things people do with texts, but that micro level of interaction around a text would always be examined in the macro context it is part of. In fact, this approach has been criticised (e.g. by Rogers et al. 2005; Taylor, 2004) because of this lack of linguistic analysis. That is why I draw on understandings of micro and macro from discourse studies, considering levels of context but also levels of analysis. In literacy studies the important difference is between the event or instance of a text being used and produced and the more abstract, social mediated practices we can observe in this event. A key contribution of my thesis is at the meso level because it refers to literacy discourses recognized through situated practices, as stated above.

3.9.3 Combining discourse studies and literacy studies perspectives on micro/macro

To reduce terminological confusion, in this thesis, I have decided to avoid using the terms micro, macro, and meso in relation to both context and levels of analysis. While it is useful to use the concept of meso to locate the specific contribution of this thesis in broad terms it is also useful to work with the framework of text and context. I argue that a societal phenomenon – academic literacy practices – can be studied using both contextual and textual analyses. Context or contextual analysis refers to the study of the social context (sociopolitical, educational, institutional and disciplinary) that shapes the actual, day-to-day academic literacy practices that take place in a specific institution. Textual analyses involve, in this thesis at least, looking at texts about literacy practices (either because they are policy documents, or talk that has been elicited specifically to find out what stakeholders think about their own and others' literacy practices. To avoid the confusion around macro and micro, I use the terms top-down and bottom-up to distinguish between the data that arises in these different levels of context, which is indicative of whether they are texts that carry institutional power (of the state, government, institutions, etc.), or whether they arise from people who are affected by institutional power.

My analysis is thus of both the top-down texts (policy documents, see Chapter 5) and the bottom-up texts (texts written by students and spoken in interviews, see Chapters 6 and 7). This includes some analysis of the content and form of the texts

themselves (e.g. what is actually in student assignments), but mainly how academic literacy practices are discursively constructed within the texts. This is a key difference between my work and the work of other scholars working on academic literacy practices: I use texts (both top-down and bottom-up) to explore how practices are talked and written about, and thus how they are discursively constructed. This inevitably involves some exploration of practices, but others working in this field would emphasise analysis of practices themselves (e.g. through ethnographic observations, etc.). I discuss this in terms of the methodological implications in further detail in the following chapter.

My analysis can best be described as multilevel since I approach texts in their context from different angles (i.e. what Wodak, 2001, calls "triangulation"). At the contextual level of analysis, I focus particularly on policy documents and the broader social context that has given rise to them. These documents are tied closely to particular ideologies that serve certain interests, so they reflect the broader discourses that dominate local sites. Codd (1988, pp.243-244 as cited in Taylor, 1997) suggests that policy documents "are ideological texts that have been constructed within a particular context. The task of deconstruction begins with the recognition of that context" (p. 28). Thus, Codd (1988, p.237 as cited in Taylor, 1997) argues that,

> Policies produced by and for the state are obvious instances in which language serves a political purpose, constructing particular meanings and signs that work to mask social conflict and foster commitment to the notion of universal public interest. In this way, policy documents produce real social effects through the production and maintenance of consent. (p. 26)

At the textual level, researchers suggest to focus on fine grained linguistic analysis (e.g. Taylor, 2004), as studies that claim to adopt a CDS approach without including systematic linguistic analysis are often criticized for this lack as stated above. Critical discourse analysis serves this purpose because it offers a systematic linguistic analysis of policies (spoken and written language).

3.10 Conclusions

This chapter has provided an overview of the themes that shape and support the framework of this research. In this thesis, I draw on some of the central ideas of Fairclough (2003) as I adopt a dialectical approach to critical discourse studies in the sense that there is a recursive movement between social and linguistic analysis. It is my interest to describe, interpret, and explain the relationship between texts and social [academic] practices at different levels.

A critical discourse studies approach informs the analysis of policy documents that sheds light on the context of these academic practices in two disciplines. The framework focuses on how to bring together both the contextual and textual levels of analysis to explore how academic literacies are constructed in policy documents, in interviews with students and lecturers, and in talk around assignments written by students.

4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed description of the research design of this study. I have highlighted throughout this thesis so far that the social context in which academic literacy practices take place may reflect wider ideological patterns of policy. I thus aim to analyse how academic literacy practices are constructed at two levels of analysis, namely contextual and textual, from a critical discursive perspective. While this thesis is partly about investigating the practices and the texts undergraduate students write in two disciplines (Education and Chemistry), it is also about the students and lecturers that participate in these academic literacy practices.

In this thesis, I analyse different datasets, including policy texts, and interviews with students and lecturers including talk around the texts that students produced. I carefully read all the policy documents, interview transcripts, and student texts. I conducted content analysis on the policy texts and interview transcripts. I conducted textual analyses of particularly salient passages from the policy documents and interview texts. That is, I show how CDS is operationalised by combining contextual and textual analysis.

In section 4.2 I start by explaining my reasons for taking a qualitative approach. I then present the research questions in section 4.3. I describe the different data sources in section 4.4, mainly policy documents, interviews with both students and lectures, and texts written by undergraduate students. In section 4.5, I describe my participants. In section 4.6, I outline the pilot study conducted. In section 4.7, I mention some aspects of transcription and its challenges. In section 4.8, I describe some issues about translation. In section 4.9, I describe in detail my methods of data analysis, combining critical discourse analysis and academic literacies. In section 4.10, I describe how the coding of the different sources (policy documents and interviews) was conducted by means of ATLAS.ti. Finally, I summarise my methodological framework.

4.2 Overall approach

This qualitative research brings together academic literacies and critical discourse studies. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) point out that qualitative scholars "stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning" (p.14).

Every methodology rests on the nature of knowledge and of knowing. The philosophical and epistemological assumptions that lay the foundation of any methodology (i.e. a way of thinking about and studying social phenomena) reflect the nature of knowing and knowledge of the world (see Creswell, 2009, Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).[4]

Creswell (2007, p.7) argues that "researchers make claims about what is knowledge (ontology), how we know it (epistemology), what values go into it (axiology), how we write about it (rhetoric), and the processes for studying it (methodology)". In this case, by adopting a constructivist philosophy, I reveal my position and vision of the world in the sense that there are many realities, which are not fixed but dynamic. Thus, the social context in which the academic practices are analysed is essential to understand them. It also has to do with the fact that this research takes an abductive approach as the research follows "a cyclical process rather than linear because the findings that arise from the data analysis, can often lead to more questions" (Freeman, 2009, p.29).

Researchers (see Croker, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Silverman, 2009) agree that one of the virtues of qualitative research is that there are many alternative sources of data (i.e. interviews, observation, videos, documents, drawings, diaries, memories newspapers biographies) to obtain as many perspectives as possible of a phenomenon. The decision of the researcher to use one or several of these

---

[4] Different authors, among them Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Creswell, 2009, Heigham and Croker, 2009 identify different philosophical paradigms (i.e. Positivist, post-positivist, pragmatist, constructivist) that contain the researcher's epistemological, ontological and methodological premises.

resources may be based on the problem to be investigated but also on the desire to triangulate or observe various types of data on the same problem (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The use of multiple methods and sources of data, or triangulation (Cicourel, 1974; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001), reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. In this case, I chose policy documents, and interviews with both lecturers and students including talk around the texts written by students as part of this process.

Academic literacies research emphasizes a focus on "'practices' over texts that are the 'material outputs of these practices'" (Coffin & Donohue, 2012, p.2). In critical discourse studies, on the other hand, the main object of investigation has traditionally been texts (Wodak & Meyer, 2015). I suggest combining these perspectives by linking a practice-oriented approach with interviews and analysis of policy documents that situate literacy practices in larger historical, social, political and institutional contexts. I analyse what texts and participants say about their practices to problematise how both students and lectures understand them by the different discoursive constructions they use. Discourse, as defined in Chapter 3, is here understood as a social practice that implies a dialectical relationship between a particular event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it (see Fairclough & Wodak, 2008). I will explain these relationships below.

4.3 Research questions

My interest is to focus on how academic literacy practices are constructed in policy documents, and in interviews by students and lecturers including talk around the texts written by students. I argue that looking at context allows researchers to understand how dominant ideologies shape the construction of academic literacy practices. The overarching research question is therefore:

How are academic literacy practices of Mexican undergraduate students in two disciplines constructed at different levels of context?

Some sub-questions that narrow the focus of the research are stated below:

> *a. How are academic literacy practices constructed in policy documents?*

This question aims to illustrate how social context and its discourses dominate public policy and how they are enacted in policy agendas. The focus is on how discourses come to shape the conceptions of education and students "from above" in relation to these dominant discourses that guide local practices.

I also examine how academic literacy practices are constructed in the bottom-up data, i.e. the interviews:

> *b. How do students and lecturers construct academic literacy practices in interviews?*

I formulate this research question as a response to understand how both students and lecturers talk about their own practices and how they are constructed in relation to their previous and present schooling experiences.

I argue that it is important to understand the academic practices of students, and thus I focus on the participants' perspectives on the functions of the texts written by students.

> *c. What are the students and lecturers' perspectives on the texts students write in two disciplines?*

This research question aims to explore what students and teachers say about the texts students write at university, and the different roles they ascribe to reading and writing.

Finally, I have included a methodological research question. This relates to the link between the contextual and textual levels of analysis:

> *d. To what extent can triangulated analysis contribute to understanding students' academic literacy practices?*

The purpose is to evaluate whether a triangulated approach to the construction of academic literacies is useful and challenging given that a critical discourse analysis approach informs this research as discussed in Chapter 1 and 3. The operationalisation of the research questions is explained in Table 2 below in the format suggested by Sunderland (2010).

Table 2 Operationalisation of research questions

Research question	Data collection
How are academic literacy practices constructed in policy documents?	Policy documents
How do students and lecturers, construct academic literacy practices in the interviews?	Interviews
What are the students and lecturers' perspectives on the texts students write in two disciplines?	Interviews
To what extent can triangulated analysis contribute to understanding students' academic literacy practices?	Policy documents Interviews

4.4 Data sources

To answer the research questions set, I focus on two sources of data: policy documents and interviews with both students and lecturers, which included talk around the texts written by students.

Using different sources of data allows me to explore how these academic literacy practices are constructed in talk around the text, but also information about the context of the practices at different levels. I believe that these varied sources of data give me a rich view of student and faculty attitudes around academic literacy practices. Qualitative research mostly focuses on "understanding the particular and the distinctive, and does not necessarily seek or claim to generalize findings to other contexts" (Croker, 2009, p. 9). Selecting data in qualitative studies, which are not concerned with how representative the sample is, can be achieved by means of

purposive sampling; the strategy undertaken can be said that of *criterion sampling* where the researcher selects participants who meet some specific predetermined criteria (Patton, 2002).

4.4.1 Policy documents

Policy documents as defined by Woodside-Jiron (2011) are "well-circulated documents that serve to redefine current thinking, and specific events where particular voices, ideas, or agendas are brought to the front and acted on" (p.154). Thus, because the first research question aims to investigate context, four policy documents were included as they are important to understand the sociopolitical context (the NDP and the NEP) of these literacy practices as well as the institutional context (the Education Model and the IDP). As discussed in Chapter 3, policy documents carry the goals of a nation, an institution. Thus, I expect these documents to provide information about how academic literacies are constructed at these different levels:

1. The National Development Plan 2001-2006 is the policy-making framework that guides or governs all the initiatives in Mexico. The NDP then establishes the policies of the country in relation to economy, education, and health care, among others.

2. The National Education Programme 2001-2006 incorporates the educational policies in correspondence with the NDP.

3. The Education Model 2000 constitutes the philosophy of the institution, its mission, vision and contains the goals of the institution. It incorporates both the NDP and the NEP.

4. The Institutional Development Plan 2011-2017 is the document that establishes the policies of the institution.

The first two texts were issued under the government of Vicente Fox (2000-2006). The other two were written by the institution, where the research took place, and they are still current. I will provide more details of these documents in relation to the broader context in Chapter 5. All four documents are available online and in pdf

format. I downloaded them once I decided they contributed to investigating my first subquestion.

4.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

Ten students were interviewed but in the end, only eight of the students were part of the study as the data from the remaining were used as part of the pilot study. I interviewed four students in the summer of 2014. I conducted two of the interviews via Skype and the other two over Facebook. Sullivan (2013) suggests "these interactions have the potential to mirror face-to-face interactions for those that are geographically dispersed" (p.54) as it was my case. As mentioned above, because of technical issues identified in the pilot study, I decided it was best to collect my data collection in situ. Only two of the initial students were later interviewed face to face during my visit and I asked the questions I added because of the pilot study. The other six students were only interviewed once. I interviewed five lecturers with the same approach used with the students.

Interviews with both students and lecturers lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. I transcribed (see Appendix 2) and coded them in Spanish. The transcripts were returned to the students via email and additional questions asking students to elaborate or clarify on the topic discussed were also included in this email. The students turned in written responses to these questions with the transcripts and were added to the dataset. I decided not to send the transcripts to the lecturers as I anticipated they have busy schedules and will not be willing to conduct a follow-up interview.

4.4.3 Talk around the texts written by students

The interviews consisted of both more general semi-structured questions, as described above, and close reference to texts the students had written, and it is the latter sections of the interviews I will describe in more detail in this section. Once students were contacted, they granted consent by signing the consent form[5] and I explained the aims of the research provided in the Information Sheet. I asked

---

[5] Appendix 1

students to hand in a copy of all the assignments they had written during their studies. Some of them were sent via email and some others were photocopied. These assignments were expected to be typical of writing in the two disciplines.

I asked students to share the texts with me they had written during their years at university. Unlike Rose (1983) and Melzer (2003), I decided not to focus on written examinations because I am interested in the academic assignments students write. The texts I collected are *authentic texts* since students did not know they would be used for research purposes. This decision goes in line with one of the principles of discourse analysis stated by Lazaraton (2009), "it examines authentic data - authentic in the sense that it is produced spontaneously rather than elicited experimentally" (p.246).

I collected 46 assignments from two disciplines written by eight undergraduate students. Thirty-five texts are from Education and eleven from Chemistry as shown in Table 3. The "labels" used in this table are the result of an examination of the rhetorical structure of the texts and their communicative purpose based on the talk around the texts with participants. They are also informed by scholarly literature on the texts students write in higher education (see section 3.5). I draw on Castelló and Donahue (2012) who suggest that labeling texts,

> needs to be accompanied by additional information about the context, the practices, the actors, the disciplines, the language, the discursive mechanisms, and the genre families, in order to build its specific meaning in a particular time and place, and in some cases, to differentiate it from other "similar" texts. (p. xx)

Overall, texts are from 1 page to 60 pages in length. The assignments were provided in both digital and print form.

Table 3 Texts written by students

Education	Chemistry
22 *Exercises*- ejercicios 5 *Essays*-ensayos 3 *Research proposals* - propuestas de investigación 1 *Research project* - Proyectos de investigación 3 *Lesson plans*- planeaciones de clase 1 *Self-analysis*- autoanálisis-	9 *Lab reports* -prácticas de laboratorio 1 *Research project* - proyecto de investigación 1 *Proposal*-propuesta

My reason for collecting these students' texts is that they were used as prompts to discuss the participants' perceptions about their academic literacy practices, and what I have called talk around texts described below which constitutes substantial proportion of the interview data.

Semi-structured interviews with both students (Appendix 3) and lecturers (Appendix 4) were conducted using a text-based interview format. This is *talk around the text* (Ivanič, 1998; Lillis, 2001). According to Paltridge (2012) "talk around text aims to get writers' perspective on texts they have produced. Often this involves carrying out text-based interviews … to supplement the textual analysis" (p.80). Rather than referring to the format of the interview, text-based here means that they were centred around looking at one or more texts and discussing them. That is, I brought the assignments students had shared with me during the interview. I showed each one of the texts and students responded to some questions about what type of assignment it was; what its purpose was. I showed the same texts to lecturers and I asked similar questions.

4.5 Participants

4.5.1 BA Education and Chemistry students

The institution is in central Mexico. It is the largest public and autonomous university in the state. As described in Chapter 2, this means that it sets its own norms and outcomes, however like any other public university in Mexico, it receives funding from the government.

Eight female students were interviewed from two different departments or institutes: Education, from the Social Sciences and Humanities institute and Chemistry, from the Biology Sciences institute.

Education students take a total of 56 modules and Chemistry students 64 distributed across nine semesters in both cases. Students have a set of compulsory modules they must take in each semester and are offered some optional courses. Students choose from several options to write a thesis[6] and do a viva to obtain the degree.

To contact students who would be willing to participate in this study, a member of staff at this institution talked to a group of each programme with previous authorization from the Dean. The students were informed of the study and its purpose. Of 18 students who initially showed interest, only 10 could take part in the research. I contacted them via social media, Facebook, which proved to be the most effective.

Some details of the informants are included in Chapter 6 in the form of vignettes (see Croker, 2009) that describe their reading and writing practices both in and outside school. All the names are pseudonyms.

4.5.2 Lecturers

Lecturers were recruited by contacting the coordinators of the two programmes, considering that these lecturers were the ones who had marked the assignments I collected. I also considered full-time lecturers as the more likely candidates because I assumed they would know more the culture of the institution where they work. I

---

[6] A thesis at the BA level in Mexico is equivalent to a dissertation in the United Kingdom.

asked coordinators to "recommend" lecturers who were likely to be willing to participate. The coordinators provided me with the lecturers' timetable and I visited their classes. I told them about my research aims and asked them for the interview. They agreed and suggested a set time and place to meet them.

Three lecturers from Education and two from Chemistry were part of the study. Two of the Education lecturers (Iris and Oscar) are full-time and the other one (Jude) is hourly-based. The two full-time lecturers work 40 hours a week, which are distributed among teaching, researching, tutoring, supervising and administrating responsibilities. They are also expected to hold a PhD degree (Iris was in the process of obtaining it by the time of the interview). Hourly-based lecturers, on the other hand, hold an MA degree and they just teach the hours they are paid for. They do not have any other type of responsibilities or duties. Some of them may be tutors and supervise students but this is not mandatory. The two Chemistry lecturers (Charles and Joel) are full-time and are entitled to the same responsibilities as the other full time lecturers in Education. I introduce all my participants in more detail in Chapter 6 in relation to their reading and writing practices.

4.6 Pilot study

The pilot study consisted of two stages: The aim of the first stage was to trial the interview guides for both lecturers and students. The second stage involved the analysis of one policy document (The NDP).

For the first stage of the piloting, I tested the interview guide with two students: one via Skype and one via Facebook, and with one lecturer via Skype. This process helped me realise that that the medium I used to conduct the interviews would affect my study. The interview via Skype with the student was initially planned as a *video* call, due to some technical issues (i.e. weak internet signal) it turned into a written exchange. I then decided it was best to conduct the interviews in situ.

After conducting the interviews and transcribing them, using the transcription conventions described in section 4.8, I identified a misleading word I was using in one of the questions, *relevante* (relevant) as shown in the extract below:

> *I[7]: Among the pieces of writing that you ask students to produce, which one is relevant to their training?*
>
> *M: What do you mean by relevant?*
>
> *I: Typical?*

This word was particularly problematic for the lecturer, not for the students. I decided to change it to *típico* (typical). I also realized I was not asking enough questions that would help me identify the students and lecturers' practices, so I included questions that targeted practices outside the school and academia respectively. For example:

> *Do you read anything apart from academic texts?*
>
> *When do you read?*
>
> *What do you do when you read?*
>
> *How do you read?*
>
> *Do you write anything apart from academic texts?*
>
> *When do you write them?*

The second part of the pilot involved an initial analysis of the NDP. I identified key words such as education, academic literacies and reading and writing. This was helpful, as a step towards conducting a more systematic analysis.

The most salient words became the focus as units of analysis. As explained in the introduction, salient refers to the words that stood out as particularly important because of the systematic analysis of the policy documents. The pilot study was particularly important in helping me to develop a transparent and rigorous analytical framework, and identifying linguistic and discursive features that contributed to answering my research questions, and excluding ones did not contribute to the overall aim of the study. For example, I did not take into account the use of gender

---

[7] I stands for interviewer and M for the interviewee's initial.

to differentiate between female and male nouns even thought I initially thought that this linguistic feature was relevant to my study (i.e. Mexican is used for both female and male in English; and Mexicano (m) and Mexicana (f)are used in Spanish).

I was able to trial my analysis of some of the linguistic features in Fairclough's (2003) framework (i. e. modality, metaphor, and lexical choices). For example for modality, I focused on modal verbs. The following extract is an instance of deontic modality as deben (*must*) is used:

Education <u>must</u> contribute to the preparation of a new citizen (p.87).

La educación <u>debe</u> contribuir a la formación de un nuevo ciudadano.

This is an example of metaphor since the word *columna vertebral* (backbone) is used to illustrate the important role attached to education.

The Plan establishes education like the <u>backbone</u> of development (p. 6).

El Plan establece como <u>columna vertebral</u> del desarrollo a la educación.

I did not include any of the data for the piloting in the actual study since the purpose was to test the questions to be asked in the case of the interview guides, and to identify the units of analysis for the policy documents. This goal was achieved, thus, I could finalise my plans for data collection, selection, transcription and analysis, as detailed in the following sections.

4.7 Transcription key and challenges around transcription

I first listened to all the interviews to get a general idea of the content. I tried to transcribe them as soon as I conducted them to remember my participants' views more closely. I wrote the transcription on one side and left the other to write any comments (e.g. things that needed to be clarified or additional questions for the follow-up process).

I did not focus on facial expressions or hesitations, as I did not consider them relevant for the study. I used the following code for the transcriptions:

(.)   Short pause (three seconds)

(…)   Omitted information

4.8 Translation

Interviews were conducted in Spanish and the policy documents are written in Spanish. I conducted both analyses in this language and it represented a challenge. Like Bashiruddin (2013) when translating from Urdu and Minglish into English, I also considered "to write in logical and grammatically correct English which can be understood in academia" (p. 361) when translating from Spanish into English.

When carrying out analysis I worked in Spanish. I only translated into English extracts that I included in my thesis. There were times when certain words or phrases could not be translated into English, as there were no clear equivalents. Therefore, in some cases the translation became an 'interpretation', as suggested by Bashiruddin (2013). I was particularly careful to match the original meaning of the texts as far as possible.

A challenge that I faced when translating the extracts from the policy documents, especially from the NDP, was that the discourse was full with words, and phrases that in some cases were confusing or incoherent in the original language. For example, the following extract shows an interpretation instead of a literal translation. For example, I translated the word cuidarse (take care) as promote because it will not make sense in English. The word eje (axe) was not translated as such because that would create misleading connotations in English.

> *The pedagogical use of new technologies should be promoted in the context of a social and educational project that emphasizes equity; teachers' capacities and the respect towards cultural identities should be prioritized over the possibility to efficient learning by means of technology.*
>
> El uso pedagógico de las nuevas tecnologías deberá cuidarse en el contexto de un proyecto social y educativo cuyo eje sea la equidad; la posibilidad de hacer más eficaces los aprendizajes vía la tecnología deberá potenciar las capacidades de los profesores y el respeto a las identidades culturales antes que las virtudes prometidas por la tecnología (NDP, p.85).

4.9 Data analysis

4.9.1 Adopting a critical discourse analysis approach

As discussed in Chapter 3, critical discourse studies allow researchers to investigate the discourses of policy texts as they reflect issues of power and broader ideologies. Rogers (2003) argues, "this framework allows the analyst to contextualize discourse in a public domain and to make links between texts and contexts" (p.142). I adopt a CDS approach to analyse how academic literacy practices are constructed within particular levels of context, and how these constructions are realised linguistically at the textual level.

To analyse the documents, I used my research questions as a point of departure, and I started by reading each one of the four documents to familiarize myself with its contents. A second reading was done to identify the plausible units of analysis by focusing on lexical choices as they suggest the discourses employed to describe academic literacy practices. I initially followed a more deductive directed approach, in which pre-existing themes are used from the beginning of analysis such as:

education

academic literacies

academic literacy practices

literacy

However, as in discourse analysis it is important to let the data 'speak'. I then adopted a more inductive version where codes are derived directly from a close reading of the data. For each text, I selected those passages that have the most salient words based on the same pre-existing themes paying special attention to key words such as **education, reading, writing, literacy, literacies, and academic literacies**. Once I identified these salient words, I highlighted the extract(s) and entered an open code. For example, the following extract taken from the NDP was considered as the word illiteracy was identified in all extracts with this keyword in them. The extract was highlighted and the same label was used to name it.

Regarding education, the lags are also notable: during the last mid decade illiteracy among indigenous people was almost four times higher than the national average (NDP, p.84).

En el aspecto educativo, los rezagos son también notables: a mediados de la década pasada el analfabetismo entre los indígenas era casi cuatro veces mayor que el índice nacional.

I followed this process with each document. Once I had the list of themes and quotes (i.e. extracts from the policy documents), I went through each one of them to look for commonalities, but I also paid special attention to the differences such as the different ways participants define writing as a competence (i.e. cognitive skill, set of skills, values and attitudes). I grouped codes that were similar based on the analysis explained above. I then selected the keywords that were present across the four policy documents. I used an adapted version of content analysis because by following this process, unlike Krippendorff (2004), I considered both the salient themes and the ones I had already identified because of the review of the literature. The documents are available in pdf format, so they were analysed with the help of ATLAS.ti (v.7.5.10) qualitative analysis software.

4.9.2 Linguistic features

With the list of codes and quotes, I focused on a small number of specific "linguistic features, which can be seen as realizing a discourse" (Fairclough, 2003, p.129) and represent a more fine-grained linguistic analysis than is typical for work in the field of academic literacies research as explained in relation to the distinction between contextual and textual levels of analysis (see section 3.9).

Fairclough (2003) defines modality as "to what people commit themselves" (p. 165). He draws on Halliday (1994), Verschueren (1999) and Hodge and Kress (1988) as these authors concur with his view and see "modality in terms of a relationship between speaker or writer, or 'author' and representations" (p. 166). Modality is mainly expressed by modals (can, will, may, must, would, should, etc.), but there are other ways in which modality is marked (p. 168). Fairclough (2003) identifies two

types of modality that are particularly useful for the analysis: epistemic and deontic. The former is the modality of probabilities and the latter is the modality of necessity and obligation. For the purpose of this research, I focus on modals rather than other markers.

For example, the following extract from the NDP shows two instances of deontic modality as the modal *must* is used to show obligation:

> *Education <u>must</u> contribute to the preparation of a new citizen. To achieve this, contents <u>must</u> be modified and the relations among all the actors in school* (NDP, p.89).

> La educación <u>debe</u> contribuir a la formación de un nuevo ciudadano. Para ello <u>deberán</u> adecuarse los contenidos educativos y las relaciones de todos los actores de la escuela.

Moving on to other linguistic features, lexical choices as defined by Fairclough (2003) are "words that generally represent one part of the world being extended to another" (p.131). These can be indicative of particular ideologies, as shown by Joel, who says:

> *Writing is a complex process and students do not know how to write (Joel, ChL).*

> Escribir es un proceso complejo y los estudiantes no saben cómo escribir.

In this extract, "complex process" makes it sound like a struggle, and the last part of the sentence works as an evaluation of students writing as very simple (and absolute – there is no hedging/epistemic modality markers).

The words used to describe academic literacy practices or where the words literacy and illiteracy were mentioned were particularly salient in my analysis as shown in the following example:

> *<u>Illiteracy</u> is a complex problem, both cultural and social, that is not solved simply with the provision of traditional <u>literacy</u> campaigns, as experience from the last 60 years has shown* (NEP, p.61).

> El <u>analfabetismo</u> es, pues, un problema complejo, de índole cultural y social, que no se soluciona simplemente con las tradicionales campañas de <u>alfabetización</u>, como demuestra la experiencia de los últimos 60 años.

This extract was considered because the words illiteracy and literacy are explicitly mentioned.

Metaphor is "one resource available for producing distinct representations of the world" (p.132). For example, the word competition is used in the policy documents to represent a race as shown in the extract below:

> *Knowledge society demands education and permanent training so that productive forces that have assumed different occupational levels, which result in a great <u>competition</u> among educational institutions to satisfy these education needs* (IDP, p. 40).

> La sociedad del conocimiento demanda de educación y formación permanente para las fuerzas productivas que han de asumir los diferentes niveles ocupacionales emergentes, lo que provoca una fuerte <u>competencia</u> entre las instituciones educativas del sector terciario por satisfacer esas necesidades de educación.

These metaphoric features contribute to identify the way academic literacies are constructed considering the linkages between the data and its wider social context as these features characterize genre (Fairclough, 2001). For each of the extracts, I identified these linguistic features. In the illustrative extracts in this thesis, I comment on them where they are particularly salient.

4.10 Coding the interviews

Codes, categories and themes or concepts are central terms to the data analysis process. Saldaña (2009) argues that sometimes the terms codes and categories are used interchangeably; however, this is misleading since "qualitative codes are essence-capturing elements of the research story that, when clustered and regularity (a pattern), they actively facilitate categories and thus analysis of their connections"

(p. 8). Codes can represent the words, phrases that participants mention during the interview. Codes become the categories that are more conceptual and abstract in nature and a theme is "an outcome of coding, categorization, or analytic reflection, not something that is, in itself, coded" (p.14). Codes are organized into major categories and subcategories (p.25) and then they lead to themes that can lead towards the development of theory (p.13). "Coding is thus a method that enables you to coded data into categories or "families" because they are the beginning of a pattern" (p.9).

The coding was conducted by means of Atlas.ti (v.7.5.10) and I followed a similar procedure described for the policy documents analysis except that I adopted an inductive approach that started with identifying the codes (see below) from the outset, as opposed to starting with an initial set of categories and then expanding it. My interview questions guided the content of the interviews and thus the key themes to emerge.

Codes are the result of what Punch (2009) calls *basic* content analysis and there is not necessarily a one to one correspondence between linguistic realisations and codes. I focused on salient themes based on my own close reading of texts. I followed the same procedure described above with both students and lecturers' interviews. I then compared the codes between the two groups and focused on the commonalities as well as on the differences. From the analysis, codes were generated from the words I used.

Table 4 Code: writing for class discussion

> **P14: T3Jude.docx - 14:2 [A veces si son que ellos tiene..] (17:17)   (Super)**
> Codes: [writing for class discussion]
>
> **P26: T10Oscar.docx - 26:7 [Los ensayos son para hacer las..] (30:30)   (Super)**
> Codes: [writing for class discussion]
>
> **P 3: S2Martha.docx - 3:4 [entonces lo que los maestros b..] (10:10)   (Super)**
> Codes: [writing for class discussion]
>
> **P 3: S2Martha.docx - 3:14 [Estos trabajos solo nos sirven..] (82:82)   (Super)**
> Codes: [writing for class discussion]
>
> **P 6: S4Fiona.docx - 6:4 [totalmente porque todo te lo p..] (21:21)   (Super)**
> Codes: [writing for class discussion]

With the initial list, I looked for commonalities and differences and the final list emerged once the coding process was over as illustrated in Table 5:

Table 5 Interview categories and subcategories

> **1.Construction of academic literacy practices**
>
> 1.1Writing as shaping words
>
> 1.2 Writing as a set of skills
>
> 1.3Writing as apprenticeship to the academy
>
> 1.4 Writing as enabling critique
>
> 1.5 Reading as preparation for class
>
> 1.6 Demonstration of reading and writing
>
> **2. Writing assignments in higher education**
>
> 2.1. Students' voices
>
> 2.2 Lecturers talking about students´voices
>
> **3. Functions of writing**
>
> 3.1. Wriiting for class discussion
>
> 3.2 Writing for occupational purposes
>
> 3.3. Writing for research purposes

4.11 Conclusions

This chapter has described the methodology that informs this study. I have explained the method and the procedures employed. I show that the pilot study was very useful because it allowed me to modify my approach to conduct both the analysis of the policy documents and the contents of the interviews. This thesis draws on different sources of data (policy documents, and interviews with both students and lectures including talk around texts written by students). These contribute to understanding about the way academic literacy practices are constructed at both contextual and textual levels of analyses. This data triangulation allowed me to approach the phenomenon from different data sources leading to a more systematic and reliable analysis. For the analysis of the policy documents, I draw on Fairclough's (2001, 2003) textual analysis, which allows analysing policy in its wider social context. I also look at the linguistic realisations of the salient themes of the documents. This framework aims to analyse both texts and practices by studying them within the contexts in which they are embedded to provide rich and in depth descriptions of the way academic literacy practices are constructed and how they are brought into practice in particular situations.

The next three chapters comprise the analyses. Chapter 5 presents the analysis of the policy documents through critical discourse analysis. The academic literacy practices of both students and lecturers' are described in Chapter 6. I illustrate the perceptions of the students' assignments in Chapter 7.

5. Constructing academic literacies through policy document analysis

5.1 Introduction

As discussed in earlier chapters, policy is produced in texts[8] and these texts reflect discourses, which are embedded in larger issues of power and ideology. Policy documents, like discourses, are better understood by considering the context(s) in which they are produced and interpreted. In CDS, analysts start by providing the analysis of social context where the texts were produced and then move to the linguistic analysis of texts.

In this chapter, I show how academic literacy practices are discursively constructed in a set of key policy documents that are highly salient in the context of Mexican higher education. Within a critical discourse studies framework (see section 4.10.1), I analyse four policy documents: The National Development Plan, the National Education Programme, the Education Model and the Institutional Development Plan. As a reminder of my methodology (see section 4.10), I first approach the text using content analysis (Krippendorf, 2004). I situate each policy document within its national/institutional context and comment on salient genre features (5.2). At the textual level, I concentrate on linguistic features (specifically metaphors, lexical choices, and modality), which are particularly relevant to these genres. The analysis (5.3) focuses on the salient themes that emerge from the data, which I use to illustrate how the policy documents discursively construct academic literacies.

5.2 A description of the policy documents

I describe the policy documents in terms of their genre features to understand how practices are constructed. I mention their length, a broad outline of the structure, and some information about who was involved in authoring each document because it is important to understand the role of the public in policymaking. I also mention the relationship between each document and the others.

---

[8] See the discussion on Policy as text in Chapter 3.

5.2.1 The National Development Plan

The National Development Plan 2001-2006 is how the government establishes the policies of the country in relation to economy, education and health care among other areas. In other words, the NDP is the policy-making framework that ostensibly guides or governs all the initiatives in Mexico. The document describes who participated in its writing process as well as its objectives and strategies. The document aims to persuade the public that the policies are important for the development of the country. Its communicative purpose is both expository and hortatory because the NDP is the document that presents policies as shared needs and exhorts people to be part of them (see Longacre, 1996). This document is equivalent to a white paper in the UK context, which as stated by Mulderrig (2012), "outlines, explains and justifies the government's agenda for legislation" (p.706).

The NDP is divided into eight sections:

1. Introduction
2. The writing of the NDP work
3. Mexico: Towards a rapid take-off
4. The Federal Executive power 2000-2006
5. Social and human development area
6. Growth and quality area
7. Order and respect area
8. Commitments with Mexico

A total of 19 objectives are stated in the document. Only two of them are linked to education and relate to the role of education in people's lives.

1. To improve the education level and wellbeing of Mexicans.
2. To promote education for the development of the personal and collective capacities and individual initiative.

As part of the drafting process for this document (the NDP), citizen participation was sought via forum meetings (in which presentations were given), thematic meetings, planning sessions and surveys sent via mail and internet. A total of 379,525 proposals

were received. Savski (2015) discusses the participation of the public in policymaking and suggests that while a group of actors writes policy texts, they are usually associated with the institution or the policy that they govern (p. 57). He further suggests that, "policymaking involves actors from several different fields engaging in social action across a number of nexuses of practice and at various possible times" (p. 58). Even though policymaking involves the inclusion of the public in policy discussion there is a gatekeeping control over who may contribute in what way (p.153). The NDP is online and a printed version is available to those who do not have access to internet.

The National Development Plan suggests that education is the key element to improve the living conditions of the population as well as the economic development of the country. Moreno (2004) supports this claim, but he suggests that the

> NDP sees education as the central strategy towards national development, however it does not mention what type, class, kind or method of education; except for the traditional discourse of democracy that never materializes as well as the old rhetoric of equity. (p.24, my translation)

In addition, Varela-Petito (2012) argues that in practice, the predominant focus of this policy document in terms of educational policy was on quantity (i.e. coverage) rather than on the quality of education.

The NDP could be considered as a hegemonic genre. It is endorsed by the political elite; however, it may be called a "weak" hegemonic genre, which, like the Scottish educational policy document, analysed by Unger (2013) "operates on the basis of consent rather than enforcement" (p.70). It could be seen as an attempt to demonstrate that the public can take an active role in policy construction. The purpose of consulting the public may be to avoid the perception that a group of politicians is just imposing the policy. Instead, the document is expected received as the result of everybody's participation. As stated by Mulderrig (2011), in her research in particular, "policies are thereby represented as meeting some form of shared need" (p.568). The language conforms to typical policy texts as it includes the use of present tense to state facts and the use of future tense to set targets and strategies

(Williams, 2009). It uses strategic lexical choices and metaphors, as I will exemplify in the analysis below.

5.2.2 The National Education Programme

The National Education Programme contains 264 pages and is divided into three sections. The first one includes an analysis of four transitions (demographic, social, economic and political) the country has gone through, and these serve to outline the changes Mexico was facing in 2000. The second section states the policies, the general aims and the actions that permeate the different levels of education. The third section describes the programmes that are part of the educational system (primary, secondary and tertiary education). Education for life and work are also included.

Like the NDP, the NEP also states that the document is the result of participatory consultation and discussion "the programme collects the experiences, interests and desires of thousands of Mexicans that provided elements for its elaboration, sharing their knowledge and worries, with the conviction that education is a matter that concerns us all" (p.19). Fairclough (2001) discusses goverments or institutions' claims to be communicating with citizens; however, a one-way communication can also take place. The NEP incorporates the current educational policies in correspondence with the NDP and there is a direct relationship between them. It states that, "public policies translate general purposes into precise proposals from which concrete actions can be started" (NEP, p.18). This statement illustrates the 'traditional' view of a policy text in the sense that aims become visible outcomes.

The NEP is a statutory genre as it dictates the educational policies that must be followed across educational institutions in the country. A comparison can be drawn with Unger (2013), who as I suggest above, discusses statutory and non-statutory curricula in the context of UK school education. He shows that while the English National Curriculum is compulsory and imposed 'from above', the Scottish Curriculum Guidelines are non-statutory and be more of a request than an imposition. A similar aspect is identified in the case of the NEP, which is statutory, and it is the basis for the National Curriculum and sets the general aims and targets

for the three levels of education in Mexico (i.e. elementary, secondary and tertiary).

5.2.3 The Education Model

The Education Model sets out the educational philosophy as well as the vision and mission of every educational institution in Mexico. A group of academic experts wrote it and other stakeholders, people involved in teaching and learning. This document describes the theoretical framework that guides the teaching and learning processes of each institution. This document is unique to Mexico because as I mentioned above, it is the document that supports and guides the pedagogical model.

The Education Model is also a long document. It contains 265 pages and it is divided into six parts: philosophical, pedagogical, sociological, legislative, political and operational. As with the previous documents, intertextuality is also evident. The EM explicitly draws on the NDP and the NEP as they serve as reference documents to establish the institutions' goals and targets.

Like the NEP, the EM is a statutory genre and it outlines the theoretical foundations of the implementation of study programmes. The participation of the public is similar to other policy texts. In this case, participation is via email where teachers and students are invited to take part of the drafting process. However, like in any other policymaking, there is a group of experts who decide what to include and what not.

If we think of policy texts as genre chains (Fairclough, 2003), this is the third in line and it picks up the aims stated in noth the NDP and the NEP. Every educational institution in Mexico refers to its EM to support decisions in terms of the teaching and learning process.

5.2.4 The Institutional Development Plan

The Institutional Development Plan contains 271 pages and it is divided into 11 chapters that describe the actual targets of the institution where this study takes place. It refers to concrete actions to be completed within a given period. The document starts by providing some information about three contexts: national, local (state) and international. It also refers to the philosophy of the institution, which

mirrors the national educational philosophy that is expressed in terms of a sociocultural approach to education. It includes a diagnosis of the results of the institution mainly supported using statistics and it states what the new commitments are. It also includes an analysis of both the weaknesses and the strengths of the educational system. It establishes the strategic aims, the projects, policies and indicators of the institution. The IDP is comparable to the NEP because it is the document that states the commitments in terms of educational goals established in the previous documents (i.e. NDP and EM respectively).

Like with the other documents, participation of the public is conducted via email. Teachers and administrators are invited to participate in its drafting which is in a way guided because feedback is provided on specific sections of the documents. A group of academic experts that work for the institution are the ones who decide what to include and what not.

The IDP is a statutory genre and it establishes the concrete goals to be achieved within a given period. The IDP responds to the goals stated in the NDP and specific outcomes are expected to be accomplished in terms of the national policies set in terms of higher education in Mexico.

To conclude this section, this chain of policy documents is relevant to this study because the different contexts that influence the construction of academic literacy practices contribute to understand how broader ideologies are transferred from one document to another. That is, a top-down process is implicit in this chain of documents even though a consultation process happened in all of them, which serves to guarantee the public that citizens are at the core of good governance.

5.3 Constructing academic literacies through policy documents

I analyse the policy documents described above to establish how academic literacy practices are constructed in particular ways by specific linguistic phenomena, including metaphors, lexical choices, and modality (see section 4.11). I argue that the policy documents display two different ways of conceptualising [academic] literacies: as skills, and as a form of human capital. The first can be connected to the traditional

view of literacy (and its opposite, illiteracy) as the ability to read and write. The second conceives of literacy as the metaphorical *machinery* that will produce the human capital that the country needs; thus, the role of education is highly valued as it is linked with economic growth. In the following two sections, I outline these two different constructions using examples from the policy documents. This is not intended to be a detailed account of every single instance in the text that may relate to academic literacy practices, but rather an exemplification of the patterns I found in my repeated close reading and content analysis of the documents.

5.3.1 Constructing academic literacies as a set of skills

Literacy, in general, when viewed as a set of skills, is primarily considered to be the ability to read and write. Hamilton (2012) argues that this conception reflects a traditional perspective and literacy should be taught since it is something people either possess or do not. In every instance of the concept of illiteracy that occurs in the documents, it is a situated bounded problem usually associated with either high or low levels of achievement and attainment, with numbers, percentages and statistics. I will now look at some of the more specific constructions.

5.3.1.1 Illiteracy as a disease or war

In two of the documents, the EM and the IDP, two metaphors are used to support the discourse that illiteracy carries negative meaning. Illiteracy is a disease or a military opponent that needs to be eliminated:

[1] *Eradicate illiteracy* (EM, p. 123).

Erradicar el analfabetismo.

 [2] *… there are some pending issues such as combating illiteracy (IDP, p.30).*

… pero tiene aún asignaturas pendientes como las de continuar abatiendo la tasa de analfabetismo.

Illiteracy and the metaphor of disease are expressed with the verb *erradicar* (eradicate, extract 1), which means to destroy something. The purpose is to

eliminate illiteracy in the same way it is done with diseases to avoid the spread among the population. Likewise, illiteracy must be combated or fought (extract 2) as people do with wars. This word combat is often associated with illiteracy being a problem that nations have to fight.

Metaphors use observable and strong words such as disease and war and they convey a sense of urgency and immediate response. The two documents are institutional documents, are the ones that use these metaphors. The other documents, the NDP and the NEP, do not use them because the discourse corresponds to a more recent view of literacy, as I will show later. Institutions become active members and they must find ways to finish with illiteracy; therefore, policy documents use metaphors to legitimate the decisions of governments and justify interventions.

Literacy should thus be the ultimate goal of every nation and its population, according to the document, because of the many apparent benefits that being literate in opposition to not being bring to citizens.

5.3.1.2 Illiteracy as geographically bound

Illiteracy is linked with the location of indigenous people who in most cases live in remote and deprived places with little or no access to "formal[9]" education or literacy programmes:

> [3] Regional differences … are related to the educational background of the population because the poorest zones in [name of the state] are at the same time the ones that have major illiteracy problems and attainment gaps (IDP, p.27).

> Las diferencias regionales … se ligan a las características educativas de la población, ya que las zonas más pobres de [nombre del estado] son al mismo tiempo las que presentan mayores problemas de analfabetismo y rezago educativo.

---

[9] Formal is here used as a synonym for basic education.

The argument being made here is that illiteracy is a situated problem specific to a group of people who have limited or no access to education. These people live in certain areas of the country away from the city. Thus, some distance is created between the places that have this problem and the rest that do not. This argument serves as legitimation for the policies in the document. Indigenous people are taken into account because literacy programmes are designed for them because of the apparent disadvantages it brings to a country with high rates of illiterate people.

5.3.1.3 Illiteracy as numbers

Numbers, percentages and statistics are common in policy documents and are used so the public understands literacy easily (see Hamilton, 2012a; Papen, 2015). In the policy documents, numbers are used to demonstrate that illiteracy has either increased or decreased over the years. The purpose is to convince readers of the importance of overcoming illiteracy. The following example illustrates the use of percentages associated with illiteracy,

> *[4] During the last three decades, illiteracy decreased to a remarkable degree as the illiteracy rate is 9.5% of the population, and 35.2% of them are adults over 60 years old (NDP, p.75).*

> En las últimas tres décadas el analfabetismo disminuyó en grado notable, hasta situarse en la actualidad en 9.5% de la población, concentrándose el 35.2% en adultos con edades por arriba de 60 años.

Numbers in this statement serve different purposes. They establish a time frame; they specify the population that has become literate and the percentages reached as well as the age of the literates. Numbers are an important means to inform the public about literacy. Numbers are used as evidence to support this claim, and they are used to illustrate that illiteracy can be measured and compared across nations.

Literacy and the use of numbers show high attainment levels in relation to a specific social group: adults who have completed primary and secondary education, which make up basic education in Mexico (extract 5). Numbers are also associated with the low level of attainment usually linked to indigenous people, who have limited access

to "formal" education (extract 6),

> [5] *During that time [2001] 128,000 adults became literate; 189,000 finished elementary school, and 306,000 secondary* (NEP, p.225).
>
> En ese tiempo [2001] se logró que concluyeran el nivel de alfabetización 128,000 adultos; 189,000 alcanzaron la certificación de la educación primaria, y 306,000 de la secundaria.
>
> [6] *With regards to education, attainment gaps are also notorious: during the last-mid decade, indigenous illiteracy was almost four times higher than the national average* (NDP, p.84).
>
> En el aspecto educativo, los rezagos son también notables: a mediados de la década pasada el analfabetismo entre los indígenas era casi cuatro veces mayor que el índice nacional.

Numbers show both positive and negative results. In the two cases, it seems that the purpose is to persuade the public that literacy is good for the country and that negative results must be avoided. Numbers represent facts that are used "as evidence to support claims" (Papen, 2015, p.62).

> [7] *During the 20th century, our country moved from being an illiterate society to another one in which one out of three Mexicans are in a school (NEP, p. 57).*
>
> En el transcurso del siglo XX nuestro país se convirtio, de una sociedad mayoritariamente analfabeta, a otra en la que practicamente uno de cada tres mexicanos está en la escuela.

The implication here is that literacy is a serious problem that implicitly demands action as stated above. The use of numbers seems to be intended to persuade the reader that something needs to be done to reduce illiteracy rates. Literacy is the ultimate goal of the country to be achieved and illiteracy must be eliminated. This conception draws on literacy as a set of skills that are transferable from one context to another (see Lea & Street, 2006).

5.3.1.4 The obligation of Higher Education

I have argued so far that illiteracy is mainly constructed as a problem that needs to be addressed. The obligation of higher education institutions in this regard is expressed in the EM by the use of modal statements or expressions of deontic modality as shown in the example below,

> [8] *Higher education must reinforce its contributions to society; particularly the ones intended to eradicate poverty, intolerance, violence, illiteracy, hunger, sickness and the deterioration of the environment, by means of an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach (EM, p.28).*

> La educación superior debe reforzar sus funciones de servicio a la sociedad, particularmente aquellas encaminadas a erradicar la pobreza, la intolerancia, la violencia, el analfabetismo, el hambre, las enfermedades y el deterioro del ambiente, mediante un planteamiento interdisciplinario y transdisciplinario.

Illiteracy is often associated with nouns that carry negative meaning as in the extract above, and part of the obligation of higher education institutions is to take responsability for the eradication of illiteracy and design programmes that address this problem from a multidisciplinary perspective.

The second part of the sentence below expresses a probability and the epistemic *will* is used to show what literacy ideally should approach zero percent:

> [9] *In [2025], educational coverage should be 100%, the schooling average of 12 years of age and illiteracy will practically not exist* (NDP, p.73).

> Para entonces [2025] la cobertura en educación deberá ser de 100%; el promedio de escolaridad de 12 años y el analfabetismo prácticamente no existirá.

In conclusion, literacy is constructed around a functional approach and it is considered a set of skills that people either have or do not have. Literacy is constructed as a problem. I now turn to discuss the second construction of literacy as human capital.

5.3.2 Literacy as human capital development

Central to my thesis is the importance of literacy to policies and the discourses around education, which contribute to the understanding of how academic literacy policies work in practice. This relationship is relevant because the discourses on education in relation to academic literacy practices may be obvious, but they are not necessarily stated explicitly in policy documents. The idea that literacy is a form of human capital corresponds to a more recent conception of education that links the development of a country with the human resources necessary to grow economically. This construction overlaps with the previous one discussed in the section above in the sense that both perspectives attach a functional meaning to education; the difference is that this more recent view as discussed in Chapter 3 is linked with the understanding of literacies as competencies or cognitive skills often associated with more discourses around globalisation, knowledge society and technology.

5.3.2.1 Education as a resource

Across the policy documents, the construction of education has moved from a traditional and functional view to a more recent one that sees literacy as the resource that will provide the workforce needed to respond to the demands of the contemporary world. For instance, the following statement suggests that education is not *just* about becoming literate or knowing how to read and write, it also implies other skills:

> [10] *Beyond the traditional literacy, [education] will include the domain of basic knowledge in mathematics, science and technology, physical and sports culture; and civic education, ethics and aesthetics* (NEP, p.72).
>
> Más allá de la alfabetización tradicional, [educación] incluirá el dominio de conocimientos básicos en matemáticas, ciencia y tecnología, cultura física y deportiva; y formación cívica, ética y estética.

Illiteracy is phrased as a binding constraint on economic development; illiteracy is phrased as a negative aspect that prevents society from reaching this development,

[11] High levels of absolute and functional illiteracy persist, insufficient labour and social competences … limit the construction of a new culture to take advantage of the opportunities that the productive, labour, educational and training changes offer (NDP, p.86).

Persisten altas tasas de analfabetismo absoluto y funcional, insuficiencia de competencias laborales y sociales ... limitan la construcción de una nueva cultura para aprovechar las oportunidades que ofrecen los cambios en los ámbitos productivo, laboral, educativo y de capacitación.

Functional illiteracy is overtly mentioned here and the role of literacy that contributes to economic development is evident. As stated by Papen (2015) in relation to the British context, "the lack of literacy is linked to employment and the economy" (p.61). A link between illiteracy and the labour market is also created. This view draws on international discourses such as globalisation, especially economic globalisation, which has influenced the way knowledge is now produced. Globalisation has become an "ideological discourse of change" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 231) as it dictates the norms countries must follow to be part of this so-called process. These changes require people to be trained so they can possess the capacities that are necessary to be part of these changes:

[12] The globalisation process as well as productivity growth and competence force[10] people and communities to develop their individual and collective capacities that allow them to make a positive impact on these changing processes (NEP, p. 221).

El proceso de globalización, así como el crecimiento de la productividad y la competencia, obligan a desarrollar capacidades individuales y colectivas que permitan a las personas y las comunidades insertarse positivamente en los procesos de cambio.

An assumption is stated in this extract since capacities is what individuals need to be equipped with to be part of this process of change. The use of the noun *people* is

---

[10] Obligan is derived from the root oblige but force was used instead as it is closer in meaning.

vague and does not reveal to whom this refers. It could be all citizens in general or it could also target students. It seems to refer to people in general as it includes communities as well. Globalisation becomes an agent that forces people to do something in accordance with the current economic demands.

Globalisation operates within the context of knowledge society. Researchers (e.g. Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) agree that globalisation has meant a shift from industry to knowledge. Thus, the knowledge society becomes central to policy texts and discourses. Extract 13 suggests that in the view of the authors, the knowledge society requires the country to have the "prepared" human capital needed to participate in productive activities:

> [13] The unprecedented challenges of the new knowledge society demands that our country depends on prepared population, so they carry out their productive activities efficiently that allows them to access a higher level of life, and at the same time, this population needs to be responsible, solidarity, participative and critical citizens that a modern democracy requires (NEP, p.9).

> Los retos inéditos que la nueva sociedad del conocimiento plantea a nuestro país, para que cuente con una población preparada para desempeñar eficazmente actividades productivas que le permitan acceder a un alto nivel de vida y que, a la vez, esa población esté constituida por las ciudadanas y los ciudadanos responsables, solidarios, participativos y críticos que una democracia moderna requiere.

This statement may imply that these prepared citizens must be critical, and academic literacy practices play an important role because students can acquire some of these skills by reading and writing academic papers. The text seems to take for granted that by being critical, students would have *access to a higher level of life*. The implicit assumption here is that prepared citizens and being critical is mediated by research and the texts students read and write at university, as I will show later.

The knowledge society also permits economic growth. Peters (2001) argues that it is

"constructed on the assumption that it is the future basis for national competitiveness and success in the global economy and will provide the necessary new jobs for successive waves of 'knowledge workers'" (p. 15). The second part of the first sentence in extract 14 works as a *prediction* because it suggests that future societies need education to succeed.

> *[14] The knowledge society is not an abstraction anymore, but an observable and concrete fact in the dispute for the economic domain; future educated societies are the ones that will succeed and prevail. Therefore, universities must contribute to the training of a new type of human being, aware of his/her role in the knowledge universe, knowledgeable in his/her vocational training and committed with the possibilities to enrich it through the unlimited sources that the internet offers (IDP, p. 15).*

> La sociedad del conocimiento no es ya una abstracción, sino un hecho visible y actuante en la disputa por el dominio económico; las sociedades del futuro que tengan éxito y prevalezcan serán las sociedades integradas por personas educadas. En consecuencia, las universidades deben contribuir a la formación de un nuevo tipo de ser humano, consciente de su papel en el universo del saber, más entendido en los alcances de su formación y comprometido con las posibilidades de enriquecerla a través del acervo sin límites que ofrece la Internet.

Sentence 2, is an example of deontic modality as it shows an obligation or necessity by using the *modal* deben (*must*). It also reflects that knowledge society imposes a demand on higher education institutions because they must prepare a new type of person. However, what this knowledge society can provide to this new citizen is reduced to the benefits of the internet.

5.3.2.2 Technologies

Literacies are intended to operate using technologies that apparently will provide citizens with the tools they need to succeed in life. Digital technologies become the concrete means by which globalisation and the knowledge society are interwoven.

Literacy, through technology becomes both the instruction and learning means that will 'automatically' allow students to be part of the knowledge society. The NDP emphasizes the importance of a national education system that promotes the use of technology and science. This statement is part of a list of aims that are set,

> *[15] To promote the consolidation of a national education system that is supported by science and technology to offer quality and diversified education that strengthens individual capacity and provides students with solid, advanced and pertinent knowledge to ensure they possess the skills and abilities that are required in the contemporary world (NDP, p.87).*

> Impulsar la consolidación de un sistema educativo nacional que se apoye en la ciencia y la tecnología para ofrecer una educación de calidad y diversificada que fortalezca la capacidad individual al proveer a los estudiantes de conocimientos sólidos, pertinentes y de avanzada y asegurar que posean las destrezas y habilidades que se requieren en el mundo contemporáneo.

Technology skills are part of the repertoire students must acquire since this is the type of knowledge needed in today's world. Similarly, the NEP also makes explicit mention of the need to develop the use of new technologies, or *digital literacy.* Extract 16 shows the only mention of this term in the four documents,

> *[16] To guarantee young people and adults the strengthening of basic competencies for work and for a better life, including a continuous, meaningful and useful basic education, training options for and in the job, and digital literacy that allows the intelligent use of technology* (NEP, p. 228).

> Garantice a jóvenes y adultos el fortalecimiento de competencias básicas para el trabajo y para una vida mejor, incluyendo una formación básica continua, significativa y útil; opciones de capacitación para y en el trabajo, así como una alfabetización digital que permita el uso inteligente de la tecnología.

Education by means of literacy is suggested in this extract to bear the responsibility for the development of the country. Education is at the central agenda of the

government, one that connects school literacy with economic growth and prosperity. Education becomes a commodity described in terms of both competencies and skills. The noun *education* is mentioned 153 times in 65 pages of the NDP. I am not aiming to do quantitative analysis here, but this frequency is striking and it illustrates the central role of education in this policy document. The use of metaphors to refer to education is widespread across the documents. For example, words such as *verdadera palanca* (veritable lever), *avenida* (best avenue), *columna vertebral* (backbone), are present and each one is preceded by an adjective:

> [17] *Education is the veritable lever[11] for individual progress, the best avenue for social mobility, and the effective strategy to win our future. Education will be the backbone of my government* (NDP, p. ix).

> La educación es la verdadera palanca para el progreso individual, la mejor avenida para la movilidad social, y la estrategia adecuada para ganar nuestro futuro. La educación será la columna vertebral de mi gobierno.

Each metaphor serves a different function. In sentence 1, the *adjective verdadera* (veritable) may have a strong effect because it works as an intensifier; it is used to mention that education is for individual progress. This metaphor portrays education as a machine that produces human capital. A journey metaphor is used, and *mejor avenida* (best avenue) is used to portray movement; it implies that education is going in certain direction. The second sentence could be seen as showing a stronger effect because the *backbone* serves to support the rest of the rest of the other policies. It seems that this body metaphor is a source to state that education becomes central to this government.

Phrases such as fuente de oportunidades (*source of opportunities*), factor de progreso (*progress factor*), and bien público (*public good*) as well as sets of three terms like calidad de la educación (*quality of education*), educación para todos (*education for all*) and educación de vanguardia (*vanguard[12] education*) are present

---

[11] Palanca can be translated as gearshift when it refers to a vehicle; however, the word lever has been chosen as it stands alone and we can assume it does not refer to that context.

[12] Vanguard seems to be associated with innovation and in the policy documents it is used in this sense.

in the policy documents. The government sets its educational goals based on these three last strategies by means of an *"educational revolution that allows us to increase competitiveness of the country worldwide"* (NDP, p.6). This last metaphor works as a powerful image since a revolution is a historical event that transforms a country.

The use of metaphors here is very effective because it contributes to convincing the public of the role of education by using words people can easily recognize. The combinations of metaphors I have identified here are used to represent education as central to the agenda of this government.

Higher education institutions then are part of a "competition", another metaphor, in the sense that they are urged to provide students with the capacities and skills needed to succeed. The universities that achieve this goal are the ones that *will stand out.* Just like countries, institutions are also part of this race metaphor (Fairclough, 2003).

As suggested earlier, the policy documents introduce a new way of conceptualizing literacy. I have argued that this conception is associated with learning and with labour market and workforce. Education is "what authors think of as human capital" to guarantee a better quality of life,

> *[18] Education constitutes an element that allows population access better life standards and at the same time it is an instrument to reach higher social and gender equity, and better possibilities of participation in the labour market* (IDP, p.27).

> La educación constituye un elemento que permite a la población acceder a mejores estándares de vida, a la vez que es instrumento para alcanzar mayor equidad social y de género, así como mejores posibilidades de incorporación al mercado laboral.

This can be achieved by linking education with industries and in turn to production as illustrated below:

> *[19] Education must be linked to production, providing future workers and*

professionals a basic workplace culture that allows them to see work as a
means of human fulfillment, of solidarity coexistence and as community
service, introducing critical, constructive and responsible views that transform
jobs into personal growth opportunities (NDP, p.71).

La educación debe vincularse con la producción, proporcionando a los futuros
trabajadores y profesionistas una cultura laboral básica que les permita ver el
trabajo como un medio de realización humana, de convivencia solidaria y de
servicio a la comunidad, a la vez que introducir visiones críticas, constructivas
y responsables que transformen los empleos en oportunidades de
crecimiento personal.

Extract 19 shows an example of *deontic modality* as the use of the *modal* verb deben
(*must*) is used. It refers to both workers and professionals and suggests that jobs are
also for personal growth and highlights the importance of being "critical" as
something institutions must deal with in their curriculum.

Education, through the contents of its study programmes and syllabi, is conceived as
the means that "picks up" all these tendencies and incorporates them in the teaching
and learning process.

[20] To satisfy the established demands in the work domain, higher education
systems and the world of work must create and evaluate learning modalities,
transition and evaluation programmes that recognize previous knowledge as
the drive to integrate both theory and work skills (EM, p.9).

A fin de satisfacer las demandas planteadas en el ámbito del trabajo, los
sistemas de educación superior y el mundo del trabajo deben crear y evaluar
conjuntamente modalidades de aprendizaje, programas de transición y
programas de evaluación y reconocimiento previos a los conocimientos
adquiridos, que integren la teoría y la formación en el empleo.

Education is clearly equated with economic goals, and as Bloome (2001) puts it,
schooling becomes defined by its market value. Jones (2004) furthermore adds that
universities become "knowledge markets". The curriculum is established in terms of

competencies, and skills play an important role.

The institutions that succeed are the ones that meet certain criteria and modify certain practices if they want to be part of this competition:

> *[21] Institutions …need to change their teaching-learning paradigms to consider students' education as a permanent process of updating knowledge through their whole lives, assuring them a successful performance to solve the challenges they face in the social surroundings they engage in (IDP, p.40).*

> Las instituciones … que cambien su paradigma de enseñanza-aprendizaje, asumiendo la educación de sus alumnos como un proceso permanente de actualización de conocimientos a lo largo de toda su vida, asegurándoles así un desempeño exitoso en la solución de los retos que enfrente el entorno social en el que se desenvuelvan.

Institutions are required to change their conception of education as it is now considered for life and in constant change. These are the key elements that ensure the capacity of students to be able to respond to the problems they may face in this contemporary world. Another way of constructing academic literacies as human capital is linked to the conception of competencies, which I discuss below.

5.3.2.3 Literacy as competencies

Education policy is constructed around the attainment of competencies. It seems that skills are replaced by the term competencies to illustrate the shift from a more traditional function to a modern one aligned with the recent discourses that dominate policy documents:

> *[22] Education policy should allow Mexicans acquire the knowledge, competencies and abilities, and attitudes and values necessary for their own development and the improvement of the country (NDP, p.81).*

> La política educativa debe lograr que los mexicanos adquieran los conocimientos, competencias y destrezas, así como las actitudes y valores necesarios para su pleno desarrollo y para el mejoramiento de la nación.

An assumption is made here since it is thought that the development of the individual and the success of the country depend on the training students receive at school. As expressed in the extract, this is an obligation of education policy as the *modal* debe (*should)* and the word necesarios *(necessary)* are used to express deontic modality. Acquire in English suggests a commercial transaction which can be linked to Bourdieu's (1993) market metaphor. That is, the link between economic development and education literacy is described as straightforward; however, it is not simple, as some researchers have shown in other contexts. For example, Mulderrig (2007) has argued that education solely cannot be responsible for the development of a country. However, based on the discourses of the policy documents, the function of education is to provide the conditions for the continued development of the economy as it reflects wider demands of the global market.

In relation to this idea of a human capital approach to education, Bell and Stevenson (2006) suggest that the accumulation of skills for actual wealth production is the goal and the impact of globalisation has forced nations to enhance the skills levels of their labour force (p.41). This new function of education is evident because it is also how students would become critical and capable of solving problems:

> *[23] … committed with the solution of regional and national problems* (EM, pp. 34-35).

> … comprometidos en la solución de problemas regionales y nacionales.

> [24] … *to prepare specialists capable of interpreting and applying knowledge to solve the problems that affect their surroundings* (IDP, p. 41).

> … crear especialistas capaces de interpretar y aplicar los conocimientos que se generan en la resolución de los problemas que afectan a sus entornos.

Research plays an important role in the policy documents because it is the means that will allow students to become critical and independent learners:

> *[25] … the introduction of research extensively in all BA programmes as the strategy to promote autonomous, critical and meaningful learning* (EM, p. 57).

… la introducción de la investigación de manera extensiva en todas las licenciaturas, como estrategia para fomentar el aprendizaje autónomo, crítico y significativo.

Research, which is mediated by reading and writing, is portrayed as a categorical assertion. It states that research is the strategy that promotes autonomous and meaningful learning. I will discuss the importance of research in the following chapters.

5.3.2.4 Literacies as language-mediated

As I argued earlier, literacy is mediated by language and because of the different indigenous languages that are spoken in Mexico, the decision to use Spanish as the means of instruction may create problems because it may restrict access for students whose mother tongue is not Spanish. Ideally, bilingual teachers must teach in initial learning so they use both the students' mother tongue and Spanish. Thus, there is an evident need to promote the use of the national language across education. For example, the NEP states that,

> *[26] It is the role of education… to teach the national language, which allows to name the world and strengthen its culture, as well as to teach and enrich the language that allows inhabitants to communicate like Mexicans* (NEP, p. 46).

> A la educación… le compete enseñar la lengua propia, la que le permite nombrar el mundo y fortalecer su cultura, así como enseñar y enriquecer el lenguaje que nos permite comunicarnos como mexicanos.

> *[27] To promote a common language –Spanish- for all Mexicans through the teaching of the national language, without neglecting to protect and promote the development of indigenous languages* (EM, p. XXIX).

> Promover mediante la enseñanza de la lengua nacional —el español— un idioma común para todos los mexicanos, sin menoscabo de proteger y promover el desarrollo de las lenguas indígenas.

Because of the diversity of population in terms of ethnic backgrounds, reference is also made to respecting indigenous languages. Language obviously plays an important role in education, as it is how the teaching-learning process is conducted; however, no explicit mention is made of this function.

5.3.2.5 Reading as competencies

Reading is conceived as a competence; however, it is linked to the low levels of reading achievement. Thus, reading is often associated with "dropout" or "failing a subject". Another important feature is that these statements are supported by either "research" or "data information", which according to Hamilton (2012a) contributes to convincing the audience that it is supported by "real evidence". As stated by Papen (2015) "the aim of using scientific terms is to show the reader that the government's policies are grounded in careful consideration of the available expert knowledge" (p.59). However, the statements in my data show some vagueness since no sources are cited. This illustrates policy vagueness, which allows multiple interpretations (see Unger, 2013):

> [28] *Recent data show evidence that students, particularly in marginalized areas, barely attain basic competencies in terms of reading, writing and mathematics as well as in terms of the acquisition of basic concepts in other disciplines (NEP, p.117).*
>
> Datos recientes muestran indicios de que los estudiantes, particularmente en zonas marginadas, alcanzan un escaso desarrollo de las competencias básicas de lectura, escritura y matemáticas, así como debilidad en la adquisición de conceptos básicos de otras disciplinas.

Extract 28 states that this problem is linked to marginalised areas and reading is compared to the lack of learning of basic concepts like illiteracy reported in the first section of this Chapter. Extract 29 also refers to the low results in terms of reading and mathematics, which are not the expected ones in primary education,

> [29] *Available information of school achievement (reading and mathematics) shows that even when significant progress has been made during the last*

years, elementary and secondary education outcomes, in general, are below the expected targets (NEP, p. 115).

La información disponible acerca del aprovechamiento escolar (en lectura y matemáticas) muestra que, aunque se observan avances importantes en los últimos años, los niveles de logro alcanzados en la educación primaria y secundaria, en general, están por debajo de lo que se espera que aprendan los alumnos que cursan estos estudios.

Like the previous extract, this section refers to the low levels of literacy in high school. However, reading is associated with mathematics, not with writing because theses are two of the areas of the PISA test, and these skills are fundamental to students' future studies.

[30] In high school, goals have not been achieved in terms of reading and writing; this situation affects the cognitive skills of the students (IDP, p.105).

A nivel bachillerato, no se han cumplido los ejes transversales en cuanto a lectura y escritura, circunstancia que incide de manera determinante en las habilidades cognitivas de los alumnos.

Reading and writing are then associated with the students' ability to analyse and evaluate what they read in a critical way. A similar view shared by lecturers discussed in Chapter 6.

The following statement shows a direct "call" that highlights the low levels achieved in terms of reading and it is equated with comprehension and mathematics. Thus, the first part of the sentence defines reading comprehension and mathematics as basic competencies. It shows clearly that this "deficiency" is a problem and it is not exclusive of one school, but a "generalized" one.

[31] It is necessary to recognize the insufficient acquisition of basic competencies (reading comprehension and mathematics), whose development is a priority of basic education and the foundation of other educational achievements, it is a generalized problem: it is manifest in every type of school (NEP, p.115).

Es necesario reconocer que la adquisición insuficiente de competencias básicas (en comprensión lectora y matemáticas), cuyo desarrollo es prioridad de la educación básica y fundamento de otros logros educativos, es un problema generalizado: se manifiesta en todos los tipos de escuelas.

Reading, not writing, needs to be promoted among the community and school because apparently, it has not received enough attention,

> [32] *Reading will be promoted among all population groups as a fundamental activity of cultural and educational development from different perspectives (NDP, p. 90).*

> Se fomentará la lectura en todos los grupos de la población como actividad fundamental del desarrollo cultural y educativo en todas sus vertientes.

> [33] *To generate a culture that promotes the interest in reading among the school community and society in general* (NEP, p. 141).

> Generar una cultura de aprecio a la lectura, entre la comunidad escolar y la sociedad en general.

This statement suggests that reading is not promoted or that its promotion has not received enough attention. That is why it is presented as something that needs to be done. The aim is to promote reading among both society and school.

Reading as a competence here means knowing what a text is about, the structure and the function. Reading is not conceived as the ability to decode words anymore, and it demands other cognitive skills as stated in sentence 2 in the extract below. This view reflects this conception of reading as a competence, which will allow students to compete and contribute to the development of the country towards the achievement of other abilities often linked with mathematics:

> [34] *Reading competence still has a fundamental importance in human communication, however it is also transforming. It requires more the capacity to be able to face different types of texts, with purposes, discursive structures and peculiar graphic dispositions. It is being articulated with mathematics, as*

a tool to solve problems through programming languages (NEP, p.49).

La competencia lectora sigue teniendo una importancia fundamental en la comunicación humana, sin embargo está transformándose también. Requiere, cada vez más, la capacidad de poder enfrentarse a diversos tipos de textos, con propósitos, estructuras discursivas y disposiciones gráficas peculiares. Se está articulando con la matemática, como herramienta para resolver problemas mediante lenguajes simbólicos.

Reading is relevant as it is part of communication and it is going through a process of transformation. Reading is once again associated with numeracy and constitutes a "tool" to provide solutions for problems. This may also be a sign of the influence of PISA, which assesses the competencies of 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science.

Reading, writing and numeracy are cognitive competencies and basic communication skills. These are mentioned several times in the policy documents:

> *[35] Basic education curricular reform, for example, emphasizes learning processes, with a new conception of the competencies of reading, writing and mathematics. In higher education, networks have been created that have started to follow these directions* (NEP, p.51).

> La reforma curricular de la primaria, por ejemplo, enfatiza los procesos de aprendizaje, con una nueva concepción de las competencias de lectura, escritura y matemáticas. En educación superior se han creado redes que empiezan a orientarse en esas direcciones.

> *[36] Among the cognitive competencies that are necessary for students to acquire during their studies in basic education are communication basic skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening* (NEP, 124).

> Entre las competencias cognoscitivas fundamentales que es preciso que adquieran los alumnos en su tránsito por la educación básica destacan las habilidades comunicativas básicas: leer, escribir, hablar y escuchar.

> *[37] A good quality basic education is aimed at developing the fundamental cognitive competencies of students such as basic communication skills, reading, writing, verbal communication and listening* (NEP, p.123).

> Una educación básica de buena calidad está orientada al desarrollo de las competencias cognoscitivas fundamentales de los alumnos, entre las que destacan las habilidades comunicativas básicas, es decir, la lectura, la escritura, la comunicación verbal y el saber escuchar.

In extract 35, reading, writing and numeracy are considered as competencies. They are the result of the implementation of one of the reforms discussed in Chapter 3. In extract 36, reading and writing along with speaking and listening are basic communicative abilities and they are linked to primary education mainly.

Quality education, as stated in extract 37, is equated with the acquisition of cognitive competencies; which in turn are used as a synonym for skills. That is, the four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) are presented as a priority for basic education.

Writing and reading are considered basic and instrumental skills along with mathematics that can contribute to lifelong learning,

> *[38] Basic education or lifelong, must have a practical orientation that, in addition to expanding the cultural horizon, opens better job placement opportunities. This is feasible because of the instrumental value attached to the domain of reading and writing, mathematics and other elements of basic education curriculum* (NEP, p.219).

> La educación básica, o para la vida, debe tener una orientación práctica que, además de ampliar el horizonte cultural, abra mejores oportunidades de inserción laboral a quienes se beneficien de ella. Lo anterior es factible por el valor instrumental que tiene el dominio de la lectoescritura, las matemáticas y otros elementos del currículo de la educación básica.

There are many implications in this statement. First, education is portrayed as an obligation by the use of the *deontic modal* deben (*must*). Thus, education must be

practical as it is expected to offer job placement. Then, reading and writing are the instruments to achieve this aim. However, as argued by Christie and Mission (2002), "possession of [education] literacy will not in itself guarantee any individuals the certainty of work, and it is naïve to suggest it will" (p.10).

To summarise, the analysis shows a functional link between education and the economy mainly using fact and prediction (e.g. epistemic modality), which are characteristics of policy texts (Graham, 2001). "Policy texts often appear to be promotional rather than analytical, concerned more to persuade people that these are indeed the only practicable policies than to open up dialogue" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 96).

Writing plays an *absent* role in these policy documents and it is neglected; the emphasis is on reading. When writing is mentioned, it is conceived as a competence that is going through some changes; however, these changes are not explicitly stated:

> *[39] Institutions must transform their conception of the basic skills needed for cultural and educative interaction. Writing will continue to be a fundamental competence, but it needs to be transformed* (NEP, p. 49).

> Las instituciones educativas deberán transformar la concepción predominante de las habilidades básicas para la interacción cultural y educativa. La escritura seguirá siendo una competencia fundamental pero, a la vez, se transforma.

In higher education, reading, not writing, is considered a cognitive skill that along with study habits become a cause for students to fail or drop out. That is, reading is a deficiency that needs to be fought by implementing different measures. Some of them are mentioned in the following extract,

> *[40] The institution has designed workshops on reading comprehension, study skills and cognitive abilities that aim to avoid dropout levels due to academic*

reasons ... .To date, 64% of freshers have received remedial[13] courses that aim to target these academic deficiencies … (IDP, p.114).

También se realizan talleres con las temáticas de comprensión lectora, desarrollo de hábitos de estudio y habilidades cognitivas que buscan evitar, tanto la deserción por razones académicas ... .Actualmente, el 64% de estudiantes de nuevo ingreso reciben cursos de regularización para atender sus deficiencias académicas ...

It is evident that reading, not writing is the key to development and it comes as one of the government's priorities as a National Literacy Programme (NEP, p. 144) is expected to be announced at the time of writing this thesis that will allow the promotion of reading across the country, but it is intended mainly for basic education. Literacy as suggested by Hamilton (2012a) "is a *central symbolic attribution of education*, identified mainly with reading, with books and with literacy culture, which are also good" (p.105, italics in original).

5.4 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have shown that metaphors, lexical choices and modals construct academic literacy practices around two dominant discourses: one that sees literacy as a set of skills, and the other that sees literacy as a form of human capital. Academic literacy practices as a set of skills responds to the traditional conception of literacy as the ability to read and write and it takes place in school settings. However, the policy documents do not stress this conception; it is presented as the background to justify the importance of literacy. Thus, the other conception of education as human capital development is more evident. A transition from the conception of literacy as a set of skills to human capital resource becomes evident. As UNESCO (2006) suggests, "most international organizations abandoned their support for mass literacy campaigns in the 1960's and 1970's and embraced human capital models of education. Increasingly, literacy came to be viewed as a necessary condition for economic growth and national development" (p.153).

---

[13] This type of course gives students the opportunity to acquire the skills they need to work on.

The influence of international ideologies such as that of globalisation, knowledge economy and technologies become evident in the documents since they are part of this social change discourse (Fairclough, 2003) that has dominated policy. Higher education institutions respond to the demands that globalisation imposes because it aims to equate education with economic growth. Education becomes responsible for providing the human capital needed to develop prosperity and competitiveness.

In this chapter, it is evident that students need to be equipped with the competencies needed to contribute to function in today's society. Bernstein (1996) calls this trainability, which places "the emphasis upon 'something' the actor must possess in order for that actor to be appropriately formed and re-formed according to technological, organizational and market contingencies" (p.73). This *something*, which is crucial to succeed in this competitiveness, is the ability to *acquire* the skills and competencies, which are mediated by the use of technology.

In this chapter, literacy is conceived in terms of cognitive skills and competencies, but it seems this responsibility of teaching literacy explicitly is confined to elementary and secondary school. Reading, not writing is highly stressed in the documents and it seems that it responds to broader discourses linked to the participation of Mexico in the PISA assessment, as reading is often associated with numeracy. Thus, if academic literacy combines reading and writing and the idea that "reading and writing occur together as they are considered to be part of a shared field activity" (Bazerman et al., 2005), this is not reflected in the document as the emphasis is placed mainly on reading.

The evaluation of literacy as a "good thing" (Hamilton, 2012a), or as a "tool" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011), that can be "manipulated" or "transformed" to serve its function prevails in the documents. In higher education, little or no mention of literacy as reading or writing practices is made. This may be due to different reasons as it is assumed that students at the undergraduate level already know how to read and write (i.e. Burke, 2008; Krause, 2001) and time in the classroom *should* not be devoted to develop these skills but to teach disciplinary content. However, Monroe (2002) suggests that writing needs to be conceived not as a mechanical skill specific

of an educational level, but a concern of all disciplines at all levels. That is, academics cannot take for granted that students have already "mastered" writing before entering university. The next chapter illustrates how academic literacy practices are constructed by students and lecturers in interviews.

6. Describing reading and writing practices in higher education

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter analysed how academic literacy practices are constructed in the policy documents. Literacy is constructed as both functional and as human capital. As I argued in Chapters 1 and 3, because this thesis is about how academic literacy practices are constructed at different levels of context, this chapter reports how these are constructed in the interviews with both students and lecturers. This thesis thus contributes to the understanding of academic literacies by revealing the different meanings attached to them "from below" by people involved in learning and teaching higher education.

Clark and Ivanič (1997) argue that academic literacy practices are what people make of them. Therefore, I asked my participants about themselves, and about what they read and write for both academic and non-academic purposes. This study, like other work in academic literacies, sees reading and writing as social practices. Additionally, taking a perspective from critical discourse studies (see section 3.9), I argue that these practices shape and are shaped by the contexts in which they are embedded.

I start this chapter by providing some vignettes, as described in Chapter 4, to introduce my participants' self-reported academic literacy practices (6.2 and 6.3). I will illustrate the different discursive constructions of academic literacy practices. I follow Lillis (2001), who gave a profile for each of the mature students she interviewed, in providing brief vignettes for each of my student participants (Donna, Martha, Julia, Fiona, Vanessa, Anne, Megan and Gemma) and the lecturer participants (Oscar, Iris, Jude, Charles and Joel). My purpose is to introduce them so readers can build a picture of what they read and write and how they do it, to serve as a basis for understanding my analysis of the interviews, as exemplified in a more focused way in the interview extracts. These participant reports may of course differ from what they actually do, but their accounts are valuable because they reveal the different meanings they attach to their own and others' practices. I start each vignette by briefly describing the circumstances surrounding the interview.

6.2 Interview vignettes: Students' reading and writing practices outside and inside classroom settings

Donna

Donna is the only student that asked me to meet her at a well-known American coffee shop in the city where this study takes place. It is before 11:00 am; I arrive and decide to wait outside. When she arrives, I offer to buy her a drink. We sit and we start our conversation. It flows so well that neither of us wants to stop chatting. She loves reading and writing. She says she always brings her books in her rucksack. She also reads books on her iPad. She reads when she has time because she works and studies and she is writing her thesis. She usually reads the books she likes for 10 minutes at night. She then reads the Bible for 20 minutes. Donna likes to write stories, poetry, or anything she experiences. She also keeps a diary. As for academic purposes, Donna prefers reading digital books. She writes her notes in her notebook. In addition, just as she used to do in elementary school, she writes the title in red because she likes colours. She uses colours for certain points. If she is in a hurry, she writes notes on the margin, selects the text, and writes a note about it.

Martha

Martha is doing her social service[14] at the institute where she studies, so she asks me to meet her in her boss's office where she spends most of the morning. I am a bit hesitant about the location as students or staff may come and knock on the door because it is the Coordinator's office. Since I do not have access to a better option, we meet there. She is ordering some files and I take advantage of that to start a casual conversation. She reads the Bible in the morning. She reads it on Fridays because this is the day when she goes back to her hometown. She usually reads the other books on Saturdays and Sundays. She says she loves writing. In fact, she keeps a diary. Even when she does not write down everyday events, she writes about the moments she cannot talk about with other people. Regarding her academic reading

---

[14] Social service is a mandatory component for students enrolled in higher education. Students complete 480 hours in a semester either during their last year or right after they finish all their courses.

practices, she also says she likes highlighting the main ideas as she reads. She does not write notes; she just highlights. If she reads for a test, she writes notes down and studies them, but if it is a reading to be shared in class, she just highlights the main ideas.

Julia

I met her at the institute where she studies just before her classes start because she is also doing her social service in the mornings. We have the interview in an empty classroom that happens to be available. We sit and our conversation starts. She tells me she reads about everything, but she enjoys the readings that ´stay with her afterwards´. For instance, she has read some fantasy but she prefers historical novels. She says she likes reading the news and she reads about what UNESCO says because she likes to be informed to be able to talk to people who know about the topic. Julia seems to be an active and enthusiastic reader. However, that has not always been the case. She was asked to read a book and write a summary in high school. She did not do it, instead she copied a summary from the internet and handed it in. Her tutor discovered this action and gave her a book of her choice and she was so captivated by it that her interest in reading changed. She does not read when she wants to but whenever she has time because of the school workload. She reads 30 minutes every day in her bedroom. Julia says her academic reading practices depend on the type of text she is reading.

Fiona

Fiona's interview also took place in the premises of the institute where she studies. She says that her reading routine has changed a lot at university. She says it was very hard for her to read last semester because of her workload. She often reads at weekends because she does not want to stop doing something she really enjoys. She reads in her bedroom, and says she would finish a book in a day, but has to stop when her eyes get tired. She has learned to read on the bus. She did not read on the bus before, but since it is a long journey, she decided to start reading there. She likes writing but she does not keep a diary as such. She usually writes about what troubles

her. Regarding her academic practices, she reads and likes writing notes in the margins.

Vanessa

A friend of hers sets up the interview for me. She is the first Chemistry student I interview. She addresses me in a very 'informal' way, which makes me feel she is happy to have the interview. Vanessa arrives wearing her lab coat as the interview has been scheduled in the institute where she studies. We sit outside in a bench and we start the conversation. She says she likes reading. She reads literature and other books she checks out from the library. She reads them, but it takes her long to finish them. She reads for an hour, but then next day she has something else to do. She is not a consistent reader. She finishes books, but it takes her a long time. Concerning the strategies she adopts when doing academic readings, she says she likes to write down words (key words) or sketch out diagrams. She tries to write the words that help her understand the reading, trying not to copy the exact words from the book.

Anne

I also interviewed Anne at the university department where she studies. She was in her lab coat as well. She was working on her thesis at the time of the interview. She seems very nice, but as soon as we start the interview, I feel her answers are short. I try my best and focus a bit more on her thesis because it seems this is what she wants to talk about, and it works. Once I get her to talk about this topic, she feels a bit more relaxed for the rest of the interview. She likes reading fantasy, science fiction. She reads many journal articles. Anne sometimes in the afternoon, but that is rarely the case since most of the times she reads at night. Anne says she highlights when she reads. She also says she sometimes writes some notes within the text, but most of the times she highlights [important ideas, key words], concepts. She used to write song lyrics long time ago. She wrote them with her boyfriend, but these days she is working on her research project, and this does not leave too much time as for writing anything other than her thesis.

Megan

I met her at a dining area on campus. She arrives in her lab coat and the first question she asks is how long the interview will last. Before I answer, I think to myself she might be in a hurry, so I try to be optimistic and say about 40 min to 1 hour. She says this is ok and I feel quite relieved. She says she has never been interested in writing for non-academic purposes. She admits she does not write any additional texts except the ones she is asked to prepare for academic purposes. She says what she generally does is to read texts starting with the introduction then she looks at the structure of the article. She then reads the introduction part and if there is something specific she needs, she looks for it in the text and does not read everything. She admits that due to her academic duties, she does not read as much as she would like because whenever she has some free time all she wants is to do other type of activities. She says she likes reading novels and short stories.

Gemma

This was my last student interview. It took place on campus near the department where Gemma studies, but the interview took place outside as she was arriving at university from home. She likes reading a lot, especially Mexican literature, and mystery books. She likes international authors very much too. When she reads, she highlights a lot. If she spots something important, she highlights it and she writes it down. She says she has her own books so she has no problem with highlighting them. She also has her notebooks with her own notes, but she likes to highlight what is important, and what is interesting for her from the books or texts. She also takes advantage of commuting time to read as she says that she reads from university to her house and vice versa. She always brings a book with her. Sometimes she also reads at night. She says she likes poetry a lot. She has written some short stories and has participated in some writing contests. She also likes writing in her lab because it is a quiet place with no distractions because everyone is immersed in their own work and they respect each other's space. She also sometimes writes at home whenever she is alone in her bedroom.

These vignettes show that the students I interviewed read and write for different reasons, but particularly for religious purposes (e.g. the Bible) and for leisure (e.g. poems, stories). Only one of the three Education students said she writes her diary on her iPad; the other two students keep a hand-written diary. Most of the practices the students mentioned can be considered as what Clark and Ivanič (1997) call writing for self-generated purposes (e.g. diaries, poems). Many of the reading and writing practices are mediated by the use of digital technologies. Most of the students read on public transportation, which is a relatively new practice for most of them. Most students adopt similar practices when reading academic texts as they would either highlight important information and write down key words or make notes on the margin of the text.

6.3 Lecturers' reading and writing practices outside and inside academia

The lecturers talked about what they usually read and write on a daily basis and for both personal and academic purposes. They report that their lives are mediated by writing as some of them suggest they write and read something every day because of the job they do.

Oscar

Oscar is the first lecturer to be interviewed. After a brief wait, we start the interview at his office. He says he likes reading in the afternoon whenever he has some free time or on weekends. He likes writing in both his house and his office. Sometimes he treats himself and goes to a town outside the city and he goes to a restaurant. He has coffee served all day long and whenever he feels hungry, he orders something to eat. There is a river by the restaurant. He takes a walk, and then he goes back to writing. He now prefers to write on the computer. He has adopted this practice because that is a way to contribute to save paper. He remembers he used to write by hand while doing his MA and his PhD, but now he says writing on the computer facilitates his revision work as he can scroll up and down to check his ideas. He also used to write poetry. Regarding his reading practices, he says he used to read literature and historic novels more now than before as he admits that most of the

readings he does are the ones related to his teaching. He reads books and journals on the different disciplines he teaches. He also reads some newspapers online to know what is going on in the world outside academia.

Iris

I meet Iris at her office. She is sitting at her desk when I arrive. She tells me she has been working at the institution for more than 8 years. She likes writing outside the academic context, as she calls it, everything that is important in her academic and personal life. She keeps a diary and usually writes at night. If something important happened during the day, she writes it down at night when she is alone. Sometimes on weekends, she writes some texts (i.e. poems). In terms of reading, she says she sometimes likes self-help books, but mainly novels and some readings related to her teaching or her PhD course. She prefers to read novels in a print form because she can take a break from spending most of her day on a screen.

Jude

Jude asks me to meet him during his teaching hours. He has his students work on a project while the interview takes place outside the classroom at a breakout area. He says he has been working for more than 11 years. He admits he does not write a lot. He admits he is more a reviewer rather than a reader since he says he reads more academic papers (i.e. coursework, dissertations, and theses) as opposed to non-academic papers. However, he has decided to implement this idea of reading a book before class starts, something which is not common, but he did it because he realised students do not like reading very much. He would read 4 or 5 pages to students before class. He does not write for research purposes because he is not a full-time lecturer. He writes mainly speeches for his boss and every-day documents as part of his other job.

Charles

I contacted him one afternoon when he was teaching a lab class. I introduced myself and we start the conversation in his office. He has been teaching for 15 years and he is in charge of the Research Department in the university. He says he writes on

weekends because he has more time to sit down, think and write. Writing in his office is more difficult because there are many interruptions and it is hard to concentrate. Regarding reading, he says most of the readings he does are academic, physics books, chemistry, mathematics, and engineering. He reads journal articles in both English and Spanish. As for non-academic readings, he reads the news. He also says he likes reading history books and novels. He only reads them when he has free time, and he reads them in this order of preference: academic texts, history books and novels. He reads a lot of digital books but he prefers a print version.

Joel

I meet him in his office next to the lab where he works. He says he has been working for the university for more than 8 years, but for the chemistry programme for five years. He says he writes in his office. His working hours are to work and he does not bring any work home. Regarding his reading, he reads texts related to his discipline as he says he has to keep up to date. He says he takes advantage of automated journal alerts and checks them monthly to decide what is relevant so he can download articles and read them. But he also feels that it is important to read about other topics that have nothing to do with academia. He reads novels and short stories so he has things to talk about when he relates to people outside academia. He says he reads all day long at work as he is always checking his email. He reads at night at home. He prefers to read print books as he says he belongs to the old school. If it is an article, he prints it and then he highlights it, writes notes on it and he does not like to do the same on a screen.

Lecturers read both for work and leisure purposes (i.e. novels or history books). Only Iris keeps a diary. They are almost all keen readers, which may be not surprising for lecturers because they are immersed in academia and reading is part of their academic lives. Lecturers' academic reading practices are mediated by technology as they read on the screen. For leisure purposes, they all prefer to read print books since they read in their free time and prefer to distance themselves from their computer. Having given an overview of the self-reported reading and writing

practices of my participants in general, now I turn to discuss what writing specifically means for them.

6.4 Constructions of academic literacy practices by participants

Broadly, speaking, students and lecturers construct academic literacy practices in a variety of ways: as shaping words on paper, as a set of skills, as a form of apprenticeship, as an enabling critique, and as reading for class preparation. These are key themes generated from the analysis of the interviews. There are a number of parallels here with the constructions found in the policy documents. People construct things in seemingly contradictory ways – and that these different constructions might have come from different parts of the interviews of the same people, or from different people's interviews – but the important thing is that contradictions not only exist, but are expected. In the interviews, I identify these key themes, and how the participants talk about their own and others' academic literacy practices. Participants explicitly or implicitly invoke each of these understandings to various degrees to construct academic literacies in their interviews. That is, academic literacy practices are constructed in terms of their functional purpose.

6.4.1 Writing as shaping words on paper or communicating ideas and knowledge

Learning about how participants construct writing is a major step on the way to understand their constructions of academic literacy practices more broadly. I asked my participants what writing meant for them, and among the social science students there seems to be a lot of consensus around what writing is. All four Education students agree that writing is about synthesizing ideas of one´s own and those of other authors. Martha, for example, says that:

> *[41] To me, it means to shape your ideas. It means to see all your ideas that emerge as a result of the readings you do and based on your experience and see them in a paper* (Martha, EdS[15]).

> Para mí significa plasmar tus ideas. Significa ver concretadas todas aquellas ideas que te vas formando con base en las lecturas, con base en tu

---

[15] Ed stands for Education and Ch for Chemistry. S refers to student participant and L to lecturer.

experiencia y verlas proyectadas en un escrito.

Donna thinks that writing is an opportunity for her to provide her point of view informed by scholars:

> [42] *To me it means to be able to express what I think, everything I think. It has not only been a tool for academic purposes, but also it has helped me in my context, in my everyday life. The truth is that I like learning how to write essays, learning to write what one thinks about what others think. I love writing. I enjoy it. I enjoy writing* (Donna, EdS).

> Para mí significa poder expresar todo lo que pienso, todo lo que siento. No solamente se me hace como una herramienta para la escuela, sino que me ha ayudado mucho en mi contexto, en mi vida cotidiana. La verdad es que aprender a escribir ensayos, aprender a escribir lo que uno piensa acerca de lo que otros opinan pues si me gusta bastante. Además me gusta escribir. Lo disfruto, disfruto escribir.

Fiona defines writing in comparison with spoken language as she mentions written language is permanent and planned. It is also an ongoing process because writers can return to their text and re-write it. She also mentions that writing is a form of dialogue because she can have someone read what she has written and give her feedback:

> [43] *It is to me; it is the easiest communication form that you can have because I feel many times that paper can be as a barrier or a shield. I have written it [a text]. I submit it. It is there (…). I can read to myself, I can delete it, revise it, reorganize it in such a way that I understand it and I can pass it on to another person and say Do you understand it? Does it sound ok? Yes. Perfect. Then, writing to me is the easiest form of communication* (Fiona, EdS).

> Es para mi, es la forma de comunicarme mas fácil que puedo tener porque muchas veces siento que si el papel puede ser hasta como lo quiera ver como una barrera o como un escudo. Yo ya lo escribí, te lo entrego, ahí está (...). El

hecho que lo puedo leer para mí, lo puedo borrar, corregir, restructurarlo de tal forma que yo lo entienda y también yo lo puedo pasar a otra persona y decir ¿Entiendes? ¿Suena bien? Sí. Perfecto. Entonces escribir para mí es la forma más fácil de comunicarme.

This extract shows an explicit evaluation of writing, which illustrates the seeming contradiction with commonly held views of writing as something difficult. Fiona feels that writing is not as much of a struggle as many students seem to think.

Similarly, Chemistry students share this view of writing as a way to "express ideas" as illustrated. These statements show clear agreement between the participants about writing. Their conception is linked to the traditional institutional discourse of writing as an art. Like Martha in extract 41 (above), Gemma also uses the word plasmar (*shape)*, which in Spanish is also used to describe what painters do. This suggests that writing is an art that (at least metaphorically) implies some sort of physical effort. This student hesitates about her response, which may indicate she has not previously reflected on this concept.

> *[44] Well, to shape your ideas, to shape on paper what you, well regardless of what you do, what you are asked to eh (…). Well, I do not know, it can also help you to remember certain things that you learned and not to forget them (.) eh (.) Well, your own ideas* (Gemma, ChS).

> Pues plasmar, más que nada tus ideas, plasmar sobre el papel lo que tu, bueno independientemente de lo que haga uno, se le pida, eh (...). Pues no sé también te puede ayudar a recordar ciertas cosas que aprendiste y no olvidarlas (.) eh (.). Pues es más que nada, tus propias ideas.

Vanessa sees writing as some sort of dialogue between the writer and the reader and, like Fiona (extract 43, above), compares it with speaking.

> *[45] To me it is to describe, writing is to describe in a written way so that another person understands when she/he reads it. It is like talking but it has to be in an understandable way for the reader* (Vanessa, ChS).

> Para mi pues es describir de forma, si redactar es describir de forma escrita

algo para que otra persona lo entienda cuando lo lea. Es como platicar pero si tiene que ser de forma entendible para el que lo va a leer.

Participants agree that writing both *shapes ideas in school* and *in every day contexts*. These conceptions of writing might be linked to the types of assignments they write and the purpose they write them for.

While the students link writing and ideas in more abstract ways, the lecturers; on the other hand, define the act of writing in relation to doing research mainly because this is one of the means they use to communicate their ideas:

> *[46] I think that the act of writing is to shape a series of symbols that reflect ideas of thought. And in scientific terms, it reflects knowledge, right? It reflects knowledge. To write is to express symbols in any kind of writing, knowledge that is the result of doing research. In this case, in education, writing is used to analyse the processes of teaching and learning that take place, giving, looking for solutions to the problems. Writing is to shape knowledge as written symbols* (Oscar, EdL).

> Yo creo que desde el acto de escribir que es plasmar una serie de símbolos que reflejan las ideas del pensamiento. Y en términos científicos refleja conocimiento, ¿no? Refleja conocimiento. Redactar es plasmar los símbolos en escritura de cualquier tipo, los conocimientos que son producto de cuando hacemos investigación y analizas un fenómeno. En este caso en educación, escribir es analizar los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje que ocurren, dándole buscando soluciones a las problemáticas. Escribir es plasmar conocimiento en símbolos en la escritura.

The act of writing suggests some kind of process, but quite a short one (an act is usually over quickly). The term *symbols* may suggest that language is symbolic in relation to meaning (compare Saussure's language and parole), but could also mean the more mechanical aspects of putting characters and digits on paper, which is what is happening on the surface. The last half of Oscar´s statement is process-oriented. Like Martha and Gemma (above), Oscar keeps coming back to plasmar (*shape*) to

define writing. However, this Education lecturer does not use the noun *ideas* as students do; he uses the word *knowledge* instead. That is, for him writing shapes knowledge in academic settings mainly for research purposes. The lecturer mentions *knowledge* several times in this extract to emphasise the link between knowledge and research as he says, "knowledge is the result of research". He also acknowledges that writing allows them to identify problems and find solutions to them. This is a common conception of writing identified by both lecturers and students in this discipline.

Similarly, other lecturers link their response with some features of what they presumably see as good academic writing. For example, Jude says that:

> *[47] To me, it is a form of communication (…) ideas have to be precise, clear; simple that carry the message that we want to get across in academic terms.* (Jude, EdL).

> Para mí es una forma de comunicarnos (…) las ideas tienen que ser precisas, claras, sencillas que lleven el mensaje que queremos llevar sobretodo en términos académicos.

This lecturer uses the word comunicarnos "to communicate" because there is a focus on the relationship between a writer and a reader, which is not as evident in the student definitions, apart from Vanessa and Fiona. Another lecturer, Joel, also refers to the importance of research. Even though he does not mention the word, he uses the word *scientific* and he replaces the word *research* by using the expression "*the work that you have done*".

> *[48] To write means to express in a paper all the work that you have done and you have to consider certain things. The first one is that it should contain the information you wrote, which is complicated, and make it accessible for people. It becomes a very complicated thing because you have to write in a scientific language that is not too lofty because no one will be interested or not so basic because they will not take you seriously* (Joel, ChL).

Escribir significa plasmar en un documento todo el trabajo que has realizado con y tienes que tener en consideración varias cosas. La primera de ellas es que sea un condensado que contenga la información que hiciste; lo cual se complica y además que sea accesible para el conocimiento de la gente. Entonces se convierte en una cosa muy complicada porque tienes que escribir en un lenguaje científico que no puede ser extremadamente elevado porque a nadie le va a interesar ni extremadamente básico porque entonces te toman como que les estas tomando el pelo.

Joel also defines writing in relation to the audience and discusses idea of conveying information in an accessible way, as opposed to making claims and arguments that speak to scholars in the field. The negotiation of this distinction underlies contemporary social science notions of good academic writing.

Iris is the only lecturer that expresses a more "global" definition of writing as she refers to the academic, the research and the personal purposes of writing as illustrated below,

[49] *To me writing is to announce an idea that I have about something in either academic or research terms or even something personal* (Iris, EdL).

Para mí escribir es dar a conocer una idea que tenga en alguna cosa ya sea en la parte académica o en la parte de la investigación o en cuestiones hasta personales.

She also mentions the implied relationship between writer and reader, which in this case is one-way communication.

The construction of writing in terms of creation/shaping is found in the student interviews, but also used by one lecturer. The idea that writing is a form of communication is also prevalent among the students. However, the lecturers, understandably perhaps, additionally make the link to research. Lecturers, regardless of the discipline, define writing by linking it to research. They claim the former is the result of the latter. Lea (2008) in relation to the British context, argues that, "writing is conceptualized in terms of epistemology—rather than cognitive skill—and what

counts as knowledge in the different contexts of the academy" (p. 227). My participants draw mainly on their everyday academic experience to define writing in relation to *knowledge* and *research*. Education lecturers in particular refer to writing in relation to the solution of problems. That is, writing allows them to identify a problem and provide solutions.

6.4.2 Academic literacy practices as a set of skills that have (not) been acquired at school

In section 3.4, I draw on scholars (i.e. Lea & Street, 2006; Lea, 2008; Street, 2010) who suggest that if academic literacy practices are primarily thought of as study skills, and knowledge is thought to be transferred from one context to another. This study skills model is too simplistic in its understanding of knowledge transfer. The emphasis is on what might be considered surface level features of written language, such as grammar and punctuation. As an analyst, I can interpret what my participants say from two different contexts. Students refer to writing as a set of skills when they talk about 1) previous schooling practices in high school and 2) what "good writing" entails at university because of previous schooling practices. Lecturers, on the other hand, tend to construct academic literacies as a problem.

6.4.3 Previous schooling experiences

The construction of academic literacy practices linked to previous schooling seems to influence students' current actual practices because they have been familiar with these conventions for many years even though these practices may differ from context to context.

Students acknowledge that their writing practices in high school mainly emphasised memorization of concepts and reproduction of knowledge. Julia says that:

> [50] I think I was never taught how to think; it was more a reproduction of ideas because they would tell us "write an essay" on I do not know maybe the water cycle. You would read about the topic and would take the main ideas and those words were then put in your text as part of, but we would not

reflect on why this [the water cycle] happened; it was just reproduction (Julia, EdS).

Creo que nunca tuve un acercamiento como pensar, era más reproducción de ideas porque por lo general nos decían "haz un ensayo" de no sé el proceso del agua. Entonces tú te ponías a leer y sacabas las ideas importantes y las pasabas a tu texto como parte de, pero no te ponías a reflexionar el por qué ocurría eso, sino era mera reproducción.

Julia's statement might suggest she feels differently about writing now. She uses a quite strong claim "never taught" and mitigation *"just reproduction"*. This might imply she thinks these tasks were trivial. Saying they did not reflect on why they were learning something could also be a sign of her negative views about writing at school. This relates to writing as a skill because writing was considered as a repetition of words.

Martha refers to reproduction and memorisation of concepts. She also uses a quite strong contrastive *"but rather"* which might suggest that her view of writing is negative:

[51] (…) in my opinion, they just asked us to memorize concepts. For instance, in biology, just concepts, but they will not ask us to analyse what biology is; but rather concepts and memorization (Martha, EdS).

(…) desde mi punto de vista más nos ponían a memorizar conceptos. Por ejemplo, en biología, nada más puro concepto, pero no nos ponían a analizar por qué la biología, sino más conceptos y memorización.

This student compares two different processes: memorization and analysis. She feels she was not taught how to reason or analyse information, instead, she suggests that she has been asked to repeat or learn things by heart instead of analysing them. Learning concepts is often associated with a traditional curriculum in which memorization was considered vital for learning; literacy practices are a set of decontextualized skills from this point of view. Memorization and repetition were two of the common strategies employed. Learning was commonly thought to take

place by rote memorization of concepts and information that students would later "parrot" in objective tests (i.e. multiple-choice tests).

Writing in high school seems not to impose a high demand on these students because they do not consider it difficult. Of course this may be because they are now university students, and seemingly academically quite capable. Vanessa says that writing was part of her school culture. She says that it is teachers who have students write. She considers writing at that stage was an ongoing process as she was learning how to write. She uses *yet* to suggest she was in the process of learning to do it.

> [52] *It was easier. They would ask you to write in high school; they asked you to write, but we did not write well* yet *(Vanessa, ChS).*
>
> Fue más sencillo. Pero yo siento que en el bachillerato si te piden que redactes, pero todavía redactamos no muy bien.

Writing is also constructed as something that needs to follow a rhetorical structure, but writing seems to have been neglected in high school. Megan also refers to redundancy as she suggests that it did not matter if repetition took place:

> [53] *We did not worry about following the structure of a good piece of writing; you could have repeated certain passages (Megan, ChS).*
>
> No nos preocupábamos por darle una estructura de una buena redacción; incluso podías haber repetido ciertas palabras.

Both Education and Chemistry students acknowledge that writing at university is *"more technical"* (Anne, ChS) or *"scientific" (Martha, EdS)* as *"the discipline, the formality is higher"* (Megan, ChS) because *"students have to show a greater knowledge"* (Megan, ChS) because university demands that they *"analyse and reflect"* (Martha, EdS) and *"become critical"* (Julia, EdS)*.

These students' accounts of their experiences and opinions show their awareness of the changes they have gone through as they have progressed from high school to undergraduate courses. Kember (2001) argues that students have a set of beliefs about the nature of knowledge and about the teaching and learning based on their

previous experience, which sometimes differ from the ones they encounter in higher education (p.205). This seems to be the case for most of my participants. This can also be linked to *habitus* which is "what one has acquired, but which has become durably incorporated into the body in the form of permanent dispositions" (Bourdieu, 1993, p.86).

Students are learning the conventions of the discourse communities they are entering. They claim, later in the interviews, that writing a research proposal or writing a thesis (as in the case of the Chemistry students) has allowed them to understand what is expected of them in terms of writing.

Students construct academic literacies as a set of mechanical skills by suggesting that writing at school was based on defining concepts and memorizing them. This suggests that for the students, what they understand by academic writing varies according to the level they are studying since they see writing in high school as less demanding than at university. They were asked to write texts at school, but the emphasis was on correct spelling and grammar, which I now turn to discuss.

6.4.4 Writing as spelling and grammar

Students linked their academic literacy practices with the correct use of language in terms of spelling and grammar. This is particularly noticeable in Martha's interview; she seems to place particular weight on spelling and the use of accents. These are mechanical aspects of writing, which may be important, but should arguably be secondary to content and the organization of ideas. She also mentions that her writing process has not been easy. She uses the word *difficult* three times in one short segment of the interview:

> [54] *I find it difficult because sometimes one or two words do not go together or one or two verbs or maybe I do not write accents correctly that is what is difficult for me. If I were to write for the sake of writing, I would write but I do need someone to check my spelling. That is what is difficult for me (Martha, EdS).*

A mí se me dificulta por ejemplo en la parte de la redacción que a lo mejor una, dos palabras que no van bien, que uno o dos verbos o que a lo mejor no acentuó bien es la parte que se me dificulta, pero si fuera por escribir, escribo, pero si necesito alguien que me revise mi ortografía. Es la parte que se me dificulta.

This is reminiscent of Clark & Ivanič (1997)'s findings, who in their study of UK higher education found that "spelling is often equated with education" (p. 196) and it becomes a "pre-requisite of academic success" (p.201).

Similarly, another student constructs academic literacies as mechanical skills as she refers to the surface level of writing. When I asked why she wrote at university, she replied:

[55] *Well, I think one of the most important [reasons] is to check the writing. Well, grammar, spelling (Anne, ChS).*

Pues yo creo que una de las más importantes es para ver la redacción. Este, pues sí toda la gramática, ortografía.

Gemma also refers to the emphasis given to spelling and grammar when writing in high school in opposition to content and argument:

 [56] *It was just basic concepts, spelling, and grammar. That is what I remember (Gemma, ChS).*

Nada más repasar conceptos básicos, ortografía, gramática. Es lo que recuerdo.

These examples illustrate one of the different perspectives from which students construct academic literacies. They associate academic writing with surface aspects of language such as grammar and spelling which are often linked with the conception of academic literacies as a set of skills. This relates to their pre-university schooling, where writing instruction particularly emphasizes these mechanical aspects. They also have other perspectives related to critical and process orientations. This complexity of their perspective suggests that students are aware of the different

functions of academic literacies.

6.4.5 Lecturers' views: writing as a problem

The lecturers among my participants construct academic literacy practices as a "problem" (which also relates to the findings studies by Ivanič, 1998; Lillis, 2001; Lillis & Turner, 2001). Joel claims that,

> [57] *Writing is a complex process and students do not know how to write (Joel, ChL).*

> Escribir es un proceso complejo y los estudiantes no saben cómo escribir.

This is one example among several across the interviews in which the lecturers seem to view the students as poor writers. This statement seems to relate to stereotypes about linguistic behaviours. Lecturers do not mean that students are not able to put pen to paper/fingers to a keyboard. However, it is common to hear people (including teachers) talking about "not knowing how to write". I have argued elsewhere (Hidalgo-Avilés, 2006) that students in this particular context and across the country are not provided with any kind of "fix-it" courses to solve their "problems".

The lecturers generally agree that the difficulties students face are linked to previous educational experiences, as can be seen from the following extract:

> [58] *I: Why do students have these difficulties?*

> *O: It is one of the challenges[16] of the Mexican educational system; the Mexican educational system. The bad (writing) habits that have been instilled in us over time (Oscar, EdL).*

> *I: ¿Por qué los estudiantes tienen estas dificultades?*

> *O: Yo creo que son los vicios del sistema educativo Mexicano; el sistema educativo Mexicano. Los vicios que venimos arrastrando.*

---

[16] The participant uses the word *vicios*, which can be translated as 'vices' but I decided to use the word challenges as I consider it to be closer in meaning to the original idea.

This is linked to the poor state of the education system or what has been called the "literacy crisis" in contexts where students have difficulties with literacy as stated in the policy documents analysis. Even though the government has expended effort in addressing reading and writing in basic education, this does not mean it is up to the required standard (from the perspective of the lecturers). What the government has been doing may not have worked, when it comes to preparing students for the writing required of them at university.

The difficulties students face at university may be related to the types of texts students find at university, which may differ enormously from the ones they have written in the past. The demands they face now are probably greater; as some of my participants suggest, lecturers are more demanding than their teachers. As Hyland (2007) writes, students "bring different identities, understandings, and habits of meaning-making to their learning, and teachers cannot assume that students' previous learning experiences will provide them with appropriate writing schemata for their studies" (p.149). Iris seems to share this view, and suggests that students' previous schooling may differ:

> [59] *Students come from different backgrounds and they have not been asked to write the types of texts they write at university (Iris, EdL).*
>
> Los estudiantes vienen de diferentes contextos y no les han pedido escribir los textos que escriben en la universidad.

Iris recognises that students write different types of texts according to the level they are studying. However, teachers expect students to be familiar with some of the elements of academic writing.

Based on the interviews, it seems that teachers expect students to have already mastered writing at university. However, at the same time, lecturers realise that their students lack some academic writing skills.

> [60] *We take for granted that they [students] know how to write, but they do not (Jude, EdL).*
>
> Damos por hecho que ellos saben cómo escribir, pero no.

Oscar uses an impersonal construction, possibly as a way of distancing or to avoid ascribing agency. He seems rather disappointed and uses pero (*but*) to contrast his expectations with what he gets from students:

> [61] *One assumes they are good writers, but they do not really know how to write. They write, copy parts from the text and that is what you get, but you never get an introduction; you cannot see their argument, their reflections. Because it is important to know why this matters for their training; how to use it; how to employ it; how it relates to real life (Oscar, EdL).*

> Uno da por hecho que son buenos escritores y en realidad no saben escribir. Te pueden plasmar, copian partes del texto y eso es lo que te ponen, pero nunca te ponen una introducción, no se ve su diálogo, sus reflexiones. Porque es importante saber eso para qué les sirve para su formación, cómo emplearlo, cómo lo relaciona con la vida real.

Above I have shown how student participants construct their academic literacy practices as a set of skills and correct use of language. Lecturers, on the other hand, construct them as a problem. I will now move on to look at the construction of academic literacy practices as an apprenticeship to the academy.

6.4.6 Student writing as an apprenticeship to the academy

Multiple discourses inform participants' understanding of academic literacies. Students construct academic literacy practices as apprenticeship to the academy in addition to skills: they have been immersed in the discipline they are studying and they learn to write by becoming familiar with the conventions and their lecturers' expectations. I understand apprenticeship as learning that is socially situated. Lave and Wenger (1991) distinguish this from "informal education" (critiqued by Lave 2011), which in turn is often contrasted with formal education that takes place in school settings. That is, expertise is the result of active socialization in the field of work by receiving guidance from an expert (Downey, Dalidowicz & Mason, 2015). In this sense, my participants "have learned to write by writing" as they are active members of a community of practice.

When I asked students what they have learned from the writing they have done in university, they referred to writing as a process that takes time and practice to master.

> [62] I see it [writing process] in a different way. However, this is not the result of a semester; it is something that has been built during my undergraduate studies. At the beginning, they would tell us "write" and I would write, but then you get the hang of writing[17], which is what I liked the most (Martha, EdS).

> Entonces como que lo veo ahora diferente. Pero esto no es algo que se haya construido yo ahorita, sino que se construyó a lo largo de toda la licenciatura. Porque al principio nos decían 'escriban', y así escribía, pero ya después le vas agarrando la esencia de la escritura es lo que más me ha gustado.

Martha talks about perseverance, as novice writers go through different stages before they learn the conventions of their discipline. Martha also discusses the tendency of student writers to copy to achieve mastery. These are common processes students face once they are immersed in the writing culture of their disciplines. They realize that writing is not just the mastery of a skill, but that their academic literacy practices respond to epistemological issues that are learned by becoming accultured in the discipline they are studying.

Julia mentions the importance of having gained experience in writing citations and references, paraphrasing and making sure writing has unity so the text does not break. She thinks these are skills she needs to organize her texts.

> [63] In general terms, I've learned the structure; writing (.) in terms of content, I've learned to cite, to write references, to paraphrase, to link ideas so my text flows, I have also learned to be coherent because sometimes you have a very good idea but this idea does not look good so you have to use certain words (Julia, EdS).

---

[17] Martha uses the word esencia which could be translated into essence to refer to the core of writing. I have decided to use the idiom *to get the hang of something* because it more closely illustrates what I think the student really means.

Y así de manera general pues también he aprendido la estructura, la redacción (.) de contenido pues aprendí a citar, hacer bibliografía a parafrasear a ir como ligando las ideas para que no se vea todo tu texto cortado, también este a darle coherencia porque a veces tú tienes una idea muy buena pero ya escrita no se ve bien, entonces tienes que ponerle palabritas para que se vea bien.

Julia's conception of coherence is linked to the idea that texts flow. Writing is a process that is acquired as students get immersed in the culture of university and copying practices.

In addition, two of the students reflect on the importance of their text being reader-friendly for "the other" or "the person" who is going to read it as shown below:

[64] I have learned to improve my writing because my writing did not flow and I understood what I had written but the others did not. And when you write something you have to make sure others understand it, right? Because what is the point of writing to myself? We are conducting research to create new knowledge (Donna, EdS).

Este más que nada afinar lo que estaba escribiendo porque yo solía escribir como muy enredado y yo entendía, pero los demás no. Y cuando tú escribes tienes que hacer que los demás te entiendan ¿no? O sea, porque de nada sirve que yo escriba para mí si se supone que lo que estamos haciendo con investigación es crear conocimiento.

This student comments on the idea that academic writing is done so that others read the text. Even when in institutional contexts, the reader is usually the teacher; this student knows she is writing for somebody else. She also shows a rather sophisticated attitude towards her own work by seeing academic writing as the means to produce knowledge.

Writing for an audience for which the text is produced is an important feature of academic writing. Vanessa suggests that she writes to convey meaning. To achieve this condition, she needs to write clearly and develop one idea at a time instead of

trying to discuss many ideas in one paragraph, as she apparently used to do in the past. When I asked what she had learned at university in terms of academic writing, she says that,

> [65] *To be clear, not to, to write something I know about, but the other person will not understand. There are times when you want to explain everything or write ideas as they come to your mind, but if someone is going to read it, and if it is not clear (…) Well, that is something I have learned to be clearer because we sometimes write lots of things that do not go, they are superflous (Vanessa, ChS).*

> Ser más clara, no dar, exactamente en eso no escribir algo que solamente yo sé y que después otra persona no lo va a entender. Hay veces que uno quiere explicar todo y o como piensa, pero pues si después otra persona lo va a leer y si estamos medios enredados en nuestros pensamientos pues no (…) Bueno es lo que yo he aprendido que no, ser más claro porque hay veces que ponemos muchas cosas que no van, van de sobra.

Vanessa states that there is both a reference to the reader, and a very limited sense of what could be wrong or right, but also seems to be suggesting that writing is not a straightforward process. However, when asked about the use of the assignments they had written, only one student mentioned she did not find them useful:

> [66] *What do you do so that a student assimilates it when you ask him to write an essay? But the essay has to be the way you want it to be; not like the way he wants it to be. So, we are talking about a behaviourist education (.). I do not like homework because someone asks me to do something, but if someone says "read this" and we will discuss in class, I'm happy to have the opportunity to express, to say what I think and feel, but just like that, homework is not something I particularly like (Donna, EdS).*

> ¿Cómo haces que tu alumno lo asimile cuando le pides un ensayo? pero el ensayo que lo haga como tú quieres, no como el ensayo que él también quiere? Entonces hablamos otra vez de una educación conductista (.). O sea,

a mí no me gustan las tareas porque yo tengo que hacer lo que me están pidiendo, pero si alguien me pide "lee esto" y vamos hablar en clase, yo encantadísima porque tienes la oportunidad de expresarte, de decir lo que piensas, sientes a partir del texto, pero como tal así, en si las tareas no es algo que yo haga como con mucho gusto.

Donna appears to be looking at this from the perspective of a lecturer; she is an education student. She starts her answer by posing a very powerful question. She uses the personal pronoun *you* as her argumentative device to show her *disappointment* about writing assignments. She suggests that being told what type of text to write is something she does not find useful. She may be implying that it is necessary to give students the freedom to choose the type of assignment they want to write instead of imposing anything on them.

6.4.7 Academic literacy practices as an enabling critique

As I argue in a number of places earlier in this thesis, academic writing is a social practice that is influenced by the context in which it takes place. From this perspective, issues of identity and power are studied as well as different perceptions and interpretations of disciplinary expectations (Ivanič & Lea, 2006). My participants construct academic literacy practices as a way of becoming critical and solving problems, which I have called enabling critique, and this is one of several perspectives I discuss as stated above.

6.4.7.1 Solving problems

Education students construct academic literacy practices as a process of problem solving: they find that writing at university has allowed them to identify problems and solve them. For example, Fiona says that writing at university has allowed her to solve problems she has identified in previous school settings:

> [67] *Why do I write in university? Well, many times or most of the times it is to propose improvement to something that at any point I did not like or that is taking place and affects the majority of people, not only myself. For example, I have written proposals that have solved problems that I had in elementary*

school and that they are still present, so I said "now it is time for me to do something" (Fiona, EdS).

¿Para qué escribo en la universidad? Pues es que muchas veces o la gran mayoría es para proponer mejoras ante algo que en algún momento no me gusto o que se está suscitando quizás no a mí, pero si a una gran mayoría. Por ejemplo, a partir de propuestas que he hecho he resuelto problemas que tuve en la primaria y que se vienen presentando "entonces dije ahora es cuando yo puedo hacer algo".

Julia does not focus on solving problems, but she says she writes to "transmit" her ideas. These ideas are, however, the result of conducting research:

[68] I think that at university they ask you to write to see if you are able to transmit your ideas in a written form. For example, in our BA programme which has a research approach. People have to know how to transmit what they think and I think writing is a good means because you will not always be in front of someone you can talk to. Sometimes it is important to be able to express ideas in a written form. In addition, writing helps to understand how people think, so I think that is the reason why lecturers ask us to write an essay, to see how we think, how we reflect about a topic because as I say it is easy to talk but to put it into words is totally different (Julia, EdS).

Creo que en la universidad te piden que escribas para ver si puedes transmitir tus ideas de manera escrita. Y por ejemplo más en nuestra carrera que tiene un enfoque de investigación. Las personas tienen que saber transmitir lo que piensan y creo que la escritura es un buen medio porque no siempre vas a estar de frente con alguien para poder hablar. A veces es importante pues poderte relacionar igual de manera escrita y pues también creo que la escritura sirve para entender cómo piensan las personas, entonces creo que a veces ese es el fin de los profesores al pedirte un ensayo, ver qué piensas, como lo reflexionas porque como le digo es muy fácil hablar, pero ya plasmarlo en letras es totalmente diferente.

This idea of *transmitting knowledge* does not mean students write for reproduction purposes as they may have done in the past. Rather, this student stresses the idea that writing is used to express ideas and thoughts for research purposes. She also highlights that writing is difficult as opposed to other previous comments that state that writing was the easiest way of communication.

Julia further suggests that writing is linked to research. They are expected to identify a problem and write a proposal that offers a solution:

> *[69] Most of the courses are based on that: to identify a problem, define it and then you design your proposal or whatever (Julia, EdS).*
>
> Entonces la gran mayoría de los semestres de las asignaturas se basan en eso saber un problema, definirlo, entonces a partir de eso, este pues ya haces tú propuesta o lo que sea.

Julia finishes her comment by saying that they are capable of addressing problems by designing any type of solution that responds these problems. She is not using the phrase lo que sea (*whatever*) pejoratively; she means that they have been trained to solve any type of situation.

The education lecturers I interviewed expect students to identify problems and be able to solve them as they believe that using the knowledge students are learning is more important than learning things by heart.

> *[70] To me, it is more enriching that students are capable of applying knowledge rather than memorizing it. This is something we are trying to promote in the programme. We want them to become education professionals capable of solving some educational problems and propose things (Iris, EdL).*
>
> Para mí es más enriquecedor el hecho que el alumno no memorice los conocimientos, sino que tengan una aplicación en algo. Estamos generando en la licenciatura el que sean profesionales en la educación que puedan solventar algunos problemas educativos y proponer cosas.

Iris first takes an individual position using the personal pronoun *me*. She then switches to use the pronoun *we* to highlight that this practice - identifying and solving problems - is part of what the BA programme has established as a common ground. She aligns herself more closely with the aspect that is intrinsically valuable to the student (a style of learning), and then switches to *we* when she is talking about something that is again more connected with employability, although she does link the two functions, namely applying knowledge and solving educational problems. It seems that writing is the *"tool"* that students need to demonstrate their abilities to respond to problems, and at the same time, it is something they will need in their future jobs once they graduate. Even when lecturers point out that students need to be critical, in the end the purpose is the same.

Oscar also acknowledges that students need to write to identify problems and propose solutions to them. The lecturer uses the pronoun *you* as if the lecturer were addressing the students directly, but then switches to *they* halfway:

> *[71] You are the chosen ones, you have to identify, you have to identify what problems are out there, analyse them (.) and that is what they do; they propose projects in indigenous communities (Oscar, EdL).*

> Ustedes son los seleccionados, entonces tiene que revisar, tienen que revisar que problemas hay, donde pueden intervenir, tienen que atender los problemas reales, analicen la problemática (.) y eso es lo que hacen ellos luego proponen proyectos de comunidades indígenas.

6.4.7.2 Writing to become critical

While students focus on solving problems, both students and lecturers also conceptualise this as a process of becoming critical. In the following extract, Charles, for example, states that:

> *[72] We want students to develop their critique; and be original. It is important for students to know how to write so in the future when they have to write the kind of reports they are likely to write in any company or job they will know how to do it (Charles, ChL).*

Queremos que los estudiantes se vuelvan críticos y que sean originales. Es importante que los estudiantes sepan cómo escribir para que en el futuro cuando tengan que escribir los reportes en las compañías o en el trabajo que tengan que hacer.

Charles identifies two functions of writing. He refers to the "demands" of society, which entails that students must be able to write the type of report their future jobs will demand, in other words, for employability as suggested in the policy documents analysed in the previous chapter. This seems a very different goal from developing critique and originality; however, it is interesting that they make this link.

Similar to what students suggest, lecturers also expect students to become critical because of the readings they do. In addition, they also expect them to reflect their understanding of their readings in the texts they write:

> [73] It is important that they read but that they also critique what they read so they can then transfer that critique into their writing (Jude, EdL).

> Es importante que lean pero que también critiquen lo que leen para que eso se vea reflejado cuando escriben.

Oscar lists some of his expectations in terms of academic writing. He says he wants students to develop abilities that have to do with analysis, selecting information, reflection, the elaboration of new ideas and he finishes by saying,

> [74] The essay is a short text; a small example so they can do this [he points a thesis on his desk] thesis, journals, and this is a short essay that prepares them to write the research project (Oscar, EdL).

> El ensayo es un pequeño escrito, un pequeño ejemplo para que ellos puedan realizar esto, tesis, capítulos, journals. O sea, pero ese es un pequeño ensayo que los va preparando para que pronto además vayan desarrollando el proyecto.

This last statement also illustrates what Nesi and Gardner (2012) found in their study in the sense that some texts belong to a "group of texts"; these essays written by

students in early levels become part of larger pieces of writing. This lecturer expects students to extend their short pieces of writing into larger texts because the research project is part of a process that takes place during the semester.

Only one of the lecturers talks of writing as a competence that involves not just skills but also attitudes and values. This may be linked to the theoretical framework that supports the education model of the institution, which adopts a competency-based approach. Oscar says that,

> [75] *Writing becomes a competence; it is a competence and it implies attitudinal, conceptual and procedural abilities (Oscar, EdL).*
>
> La escritura se convierte en una competencia; es una competencia e implica habilidades actitudinales, conceptuales y procedimentales.

This account reveals that in this case, Education lecturers have a clear understanding of the theoretical framework that supports their teaching practice. This is linked to the discussion in the previous chapter, in which I identify in the policy documents the construction of writing as a competence that students need to develop. Several participants identified reading as central to higher education.

6.5 Reading as preparation for class

Students construct their academic literacy practices in terms of the types of readings they do and the different purposes attached to this practice. When I asked students about their reading practices, their responses vary not only in terms of the readings they do, but also on the purpose and the course they read for. They say that they read research articles. For example, Gemma recognises that the types of readings they do depend on the course.

> [76] *Well, it depends on the module; most of them were books related with, well with the course, they would suggest a bibliography. Even in English or (.) the lecturer would give us some material, but they were mainly books and a reading list related to the programme. It is in the fifth semester more or less,*

in the fifth semester; when doing the research project, you are asked to read

certain research articles from international scientific journals (Gemma, ChS).

Pues igual dependiendo la materia, la mayoría eran libros relacionados con,

pues con la materia con la que ibas a estar, te sugerían cierta bibliografía.

Incluso en inglés o (.) o el profesor proporcionaba pues algún material, pero si

eran más que nada libros didácticos y pues bibliografía relacionada con la

carrera. Es a partir de quinto semestre cuando en el desarrollo de tu proyecto

de investigación que se te pide leer ciertos artículos de revistas científicas

internacionales.

As the extracts above and below show, students distinguish to a certain extent

between textbooks, academic monographs, and manuals. However, it is not entirely

clear whether they are aware of their different functions within research practice

(aside from being used for their education). As in the previous account, Megan also

uses the word scientific to equate journal articles with what is called *artículos*

científicos in Spanish. She mentions that they are asked to read these articles during

the last semesters of the programme. She overtly articulates what the typical

readings are done at the end of the BA programme.

[77] *Reading, well reference, reference books, books, chemistry books and*

articles. In the last semesters, eighth and ninth, teachers, well topics are more

specialized and we have to read research articles (Megan, ChS).

Lectura pues también solamente, pues de consulta, lectura de consulta,

libros, libros de química y artículos. En los últimos semestres, más octavo y

noveno los profesores pues ya los temas son más avanzados y pues hay que

consultar más artículos científicos*.*

Anne also refers to the research articles they are asked to read when she says, "*well,*

just scientific texts, textbooks and articles. Yes, they give us many articles". She uses

the adver*b just* to encapsulate the type of readings they are asked to do, but she also

seems to be aware of the greater academic legitimacy given to this type of text as

opposed to textbooks, for example. Based on my participants' responses, which may

of course not be representative, the most common source of reading material for undergraduate science students is the textbook, followed by photocopied readings (chapters from other textbooks) and journal articles.

Fiona in an informal way refers to another common practice in this context. This is when she says *"I remember that they [lectures] would arrive with a 'bunch of copies' and they [classmates] asked are they for a topic? For tomorrow? Yes. Give us more time"*.

Reference is here made to photocopies, as it is common in Mexico to provide students at the beginning of the semester with the readings they are expected to do during the course. This may be because of the limited resources students have access to in the library or because this facilitates students' work. However as acknowledged by Megan, this practice really depends on the lecturer,

> *[78] Most of the times they give us the bibliography and you also look for some others, but most of the times lecturers give you the articles or they give you the basic list of references for the course (Megan, ChS).*

> La mayoría de las veces nos dan la bibliografía y tú también tienes que buscar algunos, pero la mayor parte del tiempo los maestros te dan los artículos o te dan las referencias que usan como la base del curso.

Contrary to what has been claimed by Jackson, Meyer and Parkinson (2006), with reference to the South African context, it seems that these students are instructed to read research articles even at undergraduate level. However, in Chemistry a mismatch exists between the most prominent genre assigned as reading (textbooks, journal articles) and the most frequent written tasks assigned (laboratory report). As we learn from the students' accounts and the analysis of the assignments in the next chapter, students are asked mainly to write exercises for class preparation.

Academics acknowledge that they encourage students to read "reliable" sources such as journals and books that are available through the digital library. For example, Charles says that,

[79] And since most of the lecturers in Chemistry are researchers, we all are on the same page throughout the programme. That is why it is important for students to look for reliable sources and ignore the ones that are not (Charles, ChL).

Y como la mayoría de los profesores de química somos investigadores pues todos los mantenemos en la misma dinámica a lo largo de su carrera. Por eso se nos hace importante que los alumnos vayan cada vez más acercándose a fuentes fidedignas de información y dejen las otras fuentes que a lo mejor no tienen tanta validez arbitrada.

However, some lecturers recognize that students are not particularly interested in reading. This is a quite stereotypical view, which is in line with an autonomous ideology of literacy that considers that reading, and writing is something either students possess or not:

[80] They do not have a reading habit, so it is difficult for them to adapt and then in first semester they take seven modules and they have to read for all the modules so it is complicated for them (Iris, EdL).

Tienen poco hábito hacia la lectura, entonces de entrada si les cuesta trabajo poder adaptarse y siendo que en primer semestre llevan siete materias en todas les dejan leer pues de repente se les complica.

This lecturer is critical of students' reading practices: reading at university is more demanding and more frequent in comparison with previous schooling practices. This account reveals that reading is also conceived as functional. It suggests that students read, but it seems that they do not understand what they read. Lecturers expect students to reflect the readings done in the text they produce as if knowledge could be transferred automatically. One of the lecturers below points this out,

[81] Before writing comes reading, right? Because in order to write we have to read and the most serious problem that I have found, and I work hard, is that we have lost the ability of reading; that is to say, if you are capable of reading but you are not capable of understanding what you read. That is the first

thing that I have encountered; that is, when expressing something it is evident that you are not capable of expressing anything if you didn't even understand what you are going to write (Joel, ChL).

Antes de escribir viene la parte de leer, ¿no? porque para escribir hay que leer y el problema más grave que yo he encontrado y me esmero mucho es que hemos perdido la habilidad de lo que leemos, es decir si eres capaz de leer, pero no eres capaz de entender lo que leíste. Esa es la primera parte que yo he encontrado, es decir, al momento de plasmar tú algo, pues evidentemente no eres capaz de plasmar nada si ni siquiera entendiste lo que vas a escribir.

6.5.1 Linking reading and writing

Students construct reading and writing as closely linked. Anne states that reading serves two functions; one is connected with assessment and is perhaps more institutional in nature, evidencing that they have read. Gemma's position is arguably more about the pedagogical/developmental function of reading:

[82] That you have understood what you read at least to reinforce what you have read (Anne, ChS).

Para ver que tú hayas entendido lo que leíste al menos para como reforzar lo que se lee.

[83] I think that it is not to see the information from the point of view of the lecturer, but that you are able to understand it or the way you understand it (…) so I think that writing is important because (.) it is the way to understand maybe or how the topic was understood and remember about it (Gemma, ChS).

Pues yo creo que es más que nada para no tanto ver la información que se vea desde un punto de vista del profesor, si no que tú también lo puedas asimilar o a la manera en la que tú lo entiendes (...) entonces yo creo que la escritura en el alumno si es importante, porque (.) es la manera de entenderse tal vez o en como entendió el tema y de recordarlo.

This comment is similar to what Education students mentioned; as it is a common belief that teachers expect students to transfer the readings they do, as argued before. Likewise, Gemma states that writing is the means to show the readings they have done and how skilfull they are to incorporate the reading into their writing.

Gemma's account is reminiscent of Clark and Ivanič's (1997) findings, as they explain that "one of the purposes of writing is as evidence of understanding that takes place in school and college to show the teacher or examiner what you know and what you think" (p.117).

Similar to the previous discussion of knowledge transfer and writing at university, lecturers expect students to transfer the information they read into their writing. However, Hardy and Clughen (2012) who write about the British context, state that this transition is an "abrupt change from the limited and directed reading and supported writing practices in pre-higher education to largely independent reading and writing in higher education where they are expected to read widely" (p.46). Reading at university, from this point of view, may require students to develop skills that they have not been trained in before. In addition, Charles's account illustrates that reading a journal article demands other tasks than *just* understanding the main ideas:

> *[84] The reading of a chemistry book [he takes a textbook off the shelf and shows it to me as he goes through the explanation] implies that the student has to read. He/she has to understand examples, he/she has to practice and do the exercises, he/she has to even sometimes draw diagrams, he/she has to use sources such as the periodic table, his/her calculator, he/she has to read his/her book and programme. Therefore, this to me is a complete reading of a textbook. It does not mean to sit and read and think about the paragraphs that are written there. In this broad sense of what a technical reading is; I think for my students I cannot say how many of them like it or not, but I think it is more difficult for them to read. For them it is easier to read a novel, read a story, read a comment on a social network. I am sure they love that, but the other type of reading implies more work. They have to do it because it is part*

of their development at university, but I think they do not like it as much as
they like a reading for pleasure (Charles, ChL).

La lectura de un libro de química implica que el alumno tiene que leer, tiene
que comprender ejemplos, tiene que practicar y resolver ejercicios, tiene que
a veces hacer también diagramas, tiene que ocupar herramientas como tabla
periódica, como su calculadora, como tablas constantes y tiene a veces hasta
que utilizar la computadora, tiene que leer su libro y tiene que programar.
Entonces eso para mí sería una lectura completa de un libro técnico. No
significa solo el hecho de sentarse a leer y recapacitar sobre los párrafos que
estén ahí escritos. Y en ese sentido amplio de lo que significa una lectura
técnica yo creo que mis alumnos, no podría cuantificar cuantos les gusta o no
les gusta, pero este creo que les cuesta más trabajo. Entonces para ellos es
más sencillo leer una novela, leer una historieta, leer un comentario de una
red social, estoy seguro que les gusta, les encanta leerlo pero la otra lectura
implica más desarrollo, más trabajo. Entonces este lo tiene que hacer porque
es parte de su desarrollo en la universidad, pero creo que no les agrada tanto
como la lectura ocasional.

In contrast to Ivanič et al.'s findings (2009) in relation to the Bristish context, which
are that "across all levels, reading was perceived to be less of a potential 'problem'
for students than writing" (p.102). In this context it seems that these lecturers
consider reading as a "problem" because 1) students do not like reading and 2) they
do not understand what they read as they do not translate the readings into the
writing they do.

6.6 Conclusions

This chapter illustrates some of the main constructions of academic literacy practices
by students and lectures. Students in both disciplines construct writing as a skill and
discuss its importance in relation to the demands of higher education. Students
agree that writing allows them to solve problems and do research. The lecturers'
constructions are based on the idea that writing is difficult but it also thought to
allow students to become critical and solve problems. In relation to the reading

students do at university, which is mainly research articles, students are also expected to transfer their reading into their writing.

The various self-reported writing and reading practices of undergraduate students in the two disciplines are reflected in the extracts in this chapter. The first construction defines writing as shaping words in paper. It becomes evident that reading and writing are constructed as skills with an emphasis on correct spelling and grammar derived mainly from previous schooling practices. The perspective that considers academic literacies as a set of skills is often associated with the autonomous ideology suggested by Street (1995). Hyland (2011b) draws on this view and says that one of the implications of academic writing from this perspective is to consider writing as a "deficiency" often attributed to poor schooling.

Another construction is that students become familiar with the conventions of the discipline they engage in at university. They learn that writing goes beyond the surface level of sentences. They realize that writing is different from their previous experiences. As Carlino (2010) states, "literacy practices in universities are new and challenging to undergraduates, for they differ greatly from modes of reading and writing required in high school" (p. 284). Students need to become familiar with the conventions of their disciplines as they become members of a new writing culture. As Hyland (2011a) suggests, "students learn what counts as good writing through an understanding of their discipline and the conventions and genres regarded as effective means of representing knowledge in that discipline" (p.3).

Students and lecturers also construct academic literacy practices as enabling critique, which is linked with the previous views, because it only applies once students become familiar with the requirements of academic writing at university. They become aware that academic literacy practices are more demanding and that they are required to take a critical approach. They are expected to solve problems and become critical. Students are learning to analyze the texts they read and interact at university as they are learning the language of their disciplines and the different ways of arguing.

Both students and lecturers also construct academic literacy practices as they recognize the importance of reading, and it is considered a problem: lecturers suggest that students do not like reading and it is difficult for them to transfer the readings they do into their writing. As Peredo (2001) suggests, "the reading practices in high school are more reflexive and the reading done in higher education is more specialized" (p.89), and it seems students should meet these lectures' expectations according to these different educational levels. This practice serves two purposes according to this lecturer. One is that students develop cognitive skills and the other is that they "grasp" that knowledge and integrate it to the essays students write.

The analysis presented in this chapter shows that academic literacy practices and the different meanings attached to them is similar in the two disciplines. In both disciplines, academic writing is the means by which students demonstrate understanding and knowledge. Thus, it is important to train students to improve their writing skills. Johns (1997) and Tardy (2010) suggest that lecturers or teachers of academic writing need to prepare students to become researchers in each writing situation so they become familiar with the conventions and expectations of their disciplines. This chapter has highlighted the need for lecturers to be aware that previous schooling practices may influence their actual writing practices as shown by my results. It is important to treat academic writing not as a problem, as something students can do or cannot do, but as a way to enable students to develop their critique and to solve problems. In the following chapter, I analyse the students and lecturers' perspectives of the types of assignments students write.

7. Students and lecturers' perceptions about writing assignments

7.1 Introduction

In this final analysis chapter, I explore how the academic literacy practices around student assignments are constructed in interviews with students and lecturers. As I discussed in Chapter 3, I drew on Lillis' (2001) talk around the text approach to conduct the interviews. The results of this chapter emerge from discussing the assignments with their writers and main readers to understand how they view them. I argue that while students write a wide range of assignments (7.2) for different purposes, the labels they and their lecturers use to refer to some of them (especially essays) are not necessarily compatible with the definitions of assignment genres described in existing scholarly literature. For instance, Education students write what they call ensayos (*essays*), but this can refer to three different types of assignments. There is a lot of variability and confusion around what labels to use for different assignments, and I explore this further using data from the interviews, but also the contextual knowledge I gained from reviewing syllabi and assignment briefs, as well as the students' assignments themselves. Writing for class discussion reflects a common practice in Mexico in which students read on the topic assigned and then write a text that is used to discuss in class (7.3). Furthermore, writing for occupational purposes reflects broader ideologies around academic literacy practices when students are asked to write to meet the expectations of hypothetical workplaces (7.4). Writing for research purposes seems to be informed by the discourse around research in higher education and the need to train students to become critical, which is also one of the aspects stressed in the policy documents in Chapter 5. Students' writing is permeated by the research they do and is linked to a need to develop the competences they require in today's world (7.5).

7.2 Writing assignments in higher education reported by students

I have argued that in Mexico, as in most other contexts, academic writing is central to higher education. Therefore, it is not surprising that students write a variety of

texts along their studies. The assignment types shown in Table 5 below are the names given by students to the texts they have written during four years of study at university, ordered alphabetically.

Table 6 Students´ labels for assignments

Education	Chemistry
Concept maps-mapas conceptuales *Double-entry tables*-tablas de doble entrada *Essays*-ensayos *Program evaluation* -evaluación de programas *Mind maps*-mapas mentales R*esearch projects* -proyectos de investigación *Research proposals*-propuestas de investigación *Summaries*-resúmenes *Training courses*-cursos de capacitación	*Essays*-ensayos *Lab reports*-prácticas de laboratorio R*esearch projects* -proyectos de investigación *Summaries*-resúmenes

Education students say they write a wide range of assignments. They are asked to write essays, research proposals, research projects, lesson plans, evaluation programmes as Julia describes in the following extract:

> *[85] Essays, summaries, research proposals, projects. I did not mention it, but we have also been asked to design training courses, evaluation programmes that evaluate the courses we designed, [mind & concept] maps, double-entry tables (Julia, EdL).*

Ensayos, resúmenes, anteproyectos, proyectos. Bueno ahí ya no metí, pero también nos han hecho hacer cursos de capacitación, programas de evaluación evaluando los cursos de capacitación, mapas, cuadros.

Education students write different assignments; however, they agree that writing essays is the most common assignment in their programme. My participants use this label to refer to three different types of texts. Julia, for example, identifies two types of assignments under this label:

[86] Yes, they ask us to write essays because they ask you to write essays on movies and essays on the readings we do, but essays is what they ask us to write most (Julia, EdS).

Pero si son más ensayos lo que nos piden, porque te piden ensayos de películas o el ensayo de la lectura tal, pero si lo que predomina son más los ensayos.

The first type Julia mentions is a review on a movie that students watch and then write a report. Teachers bring a video to the classroom (a movie for entertainment rather than a documentary or instructional resource) and the whole class watches it. After watching the video, students write a report and discuss it in class. The purpose is to create links between the contents of the topic they are studying (e.g. Behaviourism in this case) and the movie.

The second type of "essay" is a report of the readings students do and illustrates how most classes work in Mexico in higher education in this institution. Students are given a copy of the syllabus at the beginning of the term; it usually contains a weekly plan with the topics to be discussed and the reading list. Lecturers choose from a variety of teaching methods and types of classes and assessment (e.g., lectures delivered by the lecturer themselves, or a series of presentations by different students each week followed by comments from the lecturer). One of these formats is a modified version, and it involves the teachers asking students either to look up some concepts related to the topic or to read an article on the topic. In either case, students have to write a text that is later used in class to start a discussion. They talk

about the main ideas from the reading and share them in class.

While the students use the label ensayo *(essay)* for this assignment type, I have called it *writing for class discussion* to distinguish it from the assignments that are not used in class in this way. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, I analysed the rhetorical structure of these texts by reading them several times having in mind the communicative purpose of the text. I do not present the detailed results of my analysis here because of space reasons. I realized that these assignments do not necessarily follow the three or five-part structure considered to be typical of an essay in other higher education writing instruction contexts (see Kusel, 1992). Unlike such essays, this type of assignment does not require students to develop a thesis. It is a report of the reading done or some definitions of concepts as explained above.

The third type of assignment to which students sometimes attach the label ensayo (*essay*) is more recognizable as equivalent to an essay in other educational contexts. These assignments follow a three-part structure: introduction, development (the term used for body in the Mexican context) and conclusion. Based on my experience as a lecturer in higher education, they are usually written for summative purposes and are handed in at the end of the term. Where this applies, they are not traditionally called essays, but rather trabajo final (*final paper*). In this case, students write them individually or in pairs, and the tutor gives them the topic. This type of essay is not written in response to a question or a prompt. Lecturers set a specific topic and students write about it. This type of essay has, however, recently been introduced as a means for students to demonstrate critical skills and to develop an argument, as shown in some of the syllabi I collected for contextual information (see Chapter 2). It is stated as one of the ways to assess knowledge in the Education Model (p.111). This seems to be an example of successful policy implementation because of some of the implications identified in the policy documents (i.e. human capital).

7.2.1 Students´views

The next extract shows that Fiona knows that the type of assignment she writes is "*not an essay, but a reflection*" as she refers to the specific case of the review they

write of the film they watch. When I asked what piece of writing was typical in her programme, she replies:

> *[87] Essays, maybe we sometimes do not write an essay, but a reflection. So, you watch a movie and they ask you to write a reflection. You do not get to write an essay, but a reflection, so I feel that is what they ask us to write the most, essays and reflections (Fiona, EdS).*

> Ensayos, quizás a veces no llegamos a escribir un ensayo, pero si una reflexión, entonces ves la película por tiempos y te piden una reflexión. No llegas al ensayo, pero es una reflexión, entonces yo siento que es lo que más nos piden escribir ensayos y reflexiones.

Fiona's response shows some uncertainty, as evidenced by her use of the epistemic modality marker quizás (*maybe*). This suggests some confusion around the assignment genres she labels ensayo *(essay)* and reflexión *(reflection)*. At the end of her response, she uses the positioning marker yo siento (*I feel*), which somewhat hedges her claim that essays and reflections are the two types of assignments they mainly write in Education.

For instance, Martha clearly illustrates that an essay depends on the instructions tutors give. Her statement also shows another important aspect of writing an essay in this context: students feel writing an essay allows them to express their point of view:

> *[88] I: What's the length of an essay?*

> *M: From 12 to 15 pages. Well, it depends; it depends. Some teachers ask for one page. Some others say 12, 15. So, in my opinion essays are written from your own critical perspective, but some tutors have a different opinion about what an essay is.*

> *I: So, is it different from tutor to tutor?*

> *M: Yes (Martha, EdS).*

> I: ¿De qué extensión es un ensayo que escribes?

M: De 12 a 15 cuartillas. Bueno depende, es que depende. Algunos maestros nos dicen es de una cuartilla. Hay otros que dicen 12, 15. Entonces yo desde mi punto de vista el ensayo tiene que ver pues desde tu crítica, pero los maestros tienen una forma de ver el ensayo.

I: ¿Entonces es diferente entre maestro y maestro?

M: Sí.

For students, an essay "allows them to express their voice" because they think that writing an essay is an opportunity for them to give their opinion as well as different teacher expectations. In the following extracts, the same student says that she prefers writing essays because she can express her point of view,

> *[89] I like essays better because it is where you can give your critique from your own perspective. For example, you can express your opinion on an educational problem or an education reform; you can give your point of view. Then, well, for the essay a lecturer would ask us to include an introduction, categories and based on that we would analyse and at the end the conclusions, but all these elements fit together in one text with subheadings* (Martha, EdS).

> A mí me gustan más los ensayos porque es donde tú puedes dar una parte crítica desde tu perspectiva. Una problemática ya sea de educación o una reforma educativa puedes dar tu punto de vista. Entonces, bueno para el ensayo una maestra nos pedía que pusiéramos introducción, categorías y con base en ello fuéramos analizando y por último las conclusiones pero esas tenían que ir unidas unas con otras para hacer un solo texto aunque tenía divisiones.

Martha also prefers writing essays because they allow her to position herself in relation to the authors she has read. She is in some ways conforming to the idea of becoming a critical researcher. She thinks, however, that writing an essay is something challenging as at the end of the sentence she uses the word pero (*but*) to reinforce that she prefers writing something that is not imposed:

[90] (…) I like essays more because it is here where you can say I do not agree with this part, or this is perfect; I like it. I like writing, but writing my own things (Martha, EdS).

(…) si me gusta porque más los ensayos porque es la parte donde puedes manifestar, decir esta parte no concuerdo; me parece perfecto; me parece bien pero escribir como tal me gusta pero escribir cosas mías.

Donna seems to share some of Martha's ideas in the sense that they are both aware of the importance of creating an argument supported by previous studies. However, Donna has a different way of asserting her role as she thinks she can bring something to the writing she does by linking her argument with her own experience:

[91] You must observe what others say, but the contribution is yours. That is, you can make some judgements. You can write about what you think, what others think, what you have found in your everyday life, and the contribution is easier to write (Donna, EdS).

En ellos tienes que observar lo que dicen los demás, pero el aporte es tuyo. O sea tú puedes emitir un juicio. Puedes hablar acerca de lo que piensas, de lo que piensan los demás, lo que has encontrado en tu vida cotidiana y el aporte se me hace como más sencillo plasmarlo.

Donna explains the process she follows when writing. The first thing she does is to write down her own ideas. She then connects them with something she has experienced in the past. She finishes her essay by linking her own ideas with her personal and professional life as they are usually asked to write "a reflection" or "an opinion".

[92] When I write an essay, the first thing I write is what I think, because if I start citing authors or if I start writing the introduction, it does not work. If they tell me "you're going to write about the drop-out rates of outstanding students in elementary school", I start "Outstanding children are like this". I start writing what I think. In addition, I use this structure to write my essay. Based on what I believe and think I start writing my essay, to try to find the

"point". I describe it, analyse it and I start writing my argument and at the end I finish by something that has had an impact in my personal and professional life. At the end, I write my introduction. That is how I write my essay (Donna, EdS).

Cuando yo escribo un ensayo lo primero que escribo es lo que pienso porque si empiezo a meter autores, o empiezo hacer la introducción no me funciona. Si me dicen "vas a escribir acerca de la deserción en la escuela primaria en niños sobresalientes". Entonces comienzo a escribir "Los niños sobresalientes son así", comienzo a escribir lo que yo creo, lo que yo pienso. Y a partir de eso comienzo a estructurar mis ensayos. A partir de lo que creo y pienso comienzo a escribir mi ensayo, buscar encuentro el meollo del asunto, lo describo, lo analizo y comienzo a discutir con mis autores y al final termino con algo que impacte con mi vida personal y profesional. Y al final redacto mi introducción. Así es como los estructuro.

During the interviews, Donna stressed that writing to her is an easy activity. She says she writes academic papers based on her own experience, which may mean that writing to her is not an endeovour, but an opportunity to share with others what she thinks.

The concept of personal opinion in academic writing is somewhat contentious because lecturers expect students to express their opinion based on what they have read, as I will show below. However, students confuse informed opinion with personal opinion based merely on their experiences. Myers (2006) analyses the use of "in my opinion" in undergraduate essays in the UK, and concludes that it serves different functions in the texts and that there are several constrains in different genres. It seems that the function of expressing an opinion is in terms of the structure of the text in the sense that "it comes at the end, after one has done the required review. In this view, opinion is something added on, earned by the work of discussing other people's ideas" (p.69).

Chemistry students agree that they are asked to write lab reports, projects and summaries. Gemma acknowledges that lab reports and projects are what she has

written:

> *[93] In the BA, basically, we write lab reports (.) There were some lecturers*
> *that asked us to write certain research projects (.), but it was basically*
> *projects and lab reports that they asked us to write in our BA programme*
> *(Gemma, ChS).*

> Pues más que nada en la licenciatura, son reportes de práctica (.) Incluso pues
> había algunos profesores que nos pedían pues elaborar ciertos trabajos de
> investigación (.) Pero eran más que nada, proyectos, y reportes de práctica
> eso es más lo que se nos pedía en toda la carrera.

My four participants stated that lab reports are the typical assignment that they
wrote during their studies, from the very first semester. This confirms previous
findings that the laboratory report is the most important genre of writing assigned to
science students (Jackson, Meyer & Parkinson, 2006). Only one of the students
mentioned essays as part of the assignments they are asked to write:

> *[94] Well, lots of essays, lots of lab reports, summaries, that is basically what*
> *they asked us to write (.)(Anne, ChS).*

> Pues también muchos ensayos, muchas prácticas de laboratorio, resúmenes,
> pues si prácticamente eso es lo que más nos pedían (.)

Anne also mentions that lab reports are the most common and typical assignment
Chemistry students write in their discipline. This word serves to hedge what would
otherwise be absolute statements, possibly indicating the students' hesitancy to
make strong claims (particularly given they knew of my identity as a lecturer).

7.2.2 Lecturers talking about students' voices

Education lecturers' responses match Education students' views because the written
assignments they ask students to write are mainly essays and research projects.
When I asked these lecturers what type of assignments they ask their students to
write, Oscar says:

> *[95] Well, regularly the most important pieces of work are essays and the*

development of a research project. That is the most important piece of work, and if they want to include diagrams, concept maps, charts they are free to do it. I have no problem with that, but the most relevant thing for me is the essay. I also ask them to write a project sometimes (Oscar, EdL).

Pues por lo regular los trabajos más fuertes son los ensayos y el desarrollo de un proyecto de investigación. Eso ya es lo más fuerte ya si ellos quieren incluir diagramas, mapas conceptuales, esquemas lo pueden hacer abiertamente. No hay ningún problema, pero lo más relevante para mi es el ensayo. El proyecto a veces llego a pedirles.

This lecturer mentions other types of assignments (i.e. diagrams, concept maps, charts); however, he considers that essays are the most important types of text students write. As I mention above, there is some confusion about the labels used for the assignments students write. While Education lecturers name an essay a list of concepts students look up; Chemistry lecturers call it a reflection. In both cases, the labels used lead to confusion. Lecturers say that what students do is to copy and paste concepts or definitions without even writing the reference where they obtained the information.

Iris agrees that essays are the typical assignment she asks students to write. She suggests essays give students the opportunity to learn more about the topic they are studying. Iris suggests that essays allow students to demonstrate knowledge, but learning itself takes place because students have to read from different sources on a given topic. Iris also states that this type of learning can be more significant, and students can benefit more from writing an essay than sitting a test. She is implicitly criticizing tests because, from her point of view, learning associated with tests is not permanent:

[96] I do not give students tests. I prefer they write essays so they can do something else, something that sticks with them, right? (Iris, EdL).

Yo no hago exámenes. Me gusta más que entreguen una construcción de ensayos para que pueda hacer algo más, que se quede en ellos, ¿no?

Participants' views on the types of assignments students write vary from student to student and from lecturer to lecturer. Chemistry lecturers provide a different view of what students write: the two lecturers mentioned presentations, essays, and reflections respectively. Joel describes how he uses oral presentations in his course because he thinks they allow students to grasp the main ideas of texts:

> *[97] In the BA programme students do a ten-minute presentation about a topic and you can find 2000 references easily in the last year. In addition, the aim is that they learn how to summarize and extract the parts that are relevant, right? That is the first thing that is important to me. The texts they usually write are related to the design of methods of analysis, which is the method I teach. They have to take into account that the references cannot be 10 years old (.) They have to propose new things, so it is related to the search of an analysis method and I generally focus on a problem in particular so they do not get lost in that world of information, which is what happens (Joel, ChL).*

> En la licenciatura principalmente es hacer una presentación en 10 minutos de un tema que te puedes encontrar tranquilamente 2000 referencias en el último año. Y esa parte que en la mente aprendan a sintetizar y tomar las partes que realmente te interesan, ¿cierto? Eso es lo primero que me interesa. Los trabajos que suelen escribir están relacionados con el diseño de métodos de análisis que es el método que a mí me toca, pero tiene que tener; tienen que tomar en cuenta que la referencia no puede tener más de 10 años (.) Incluso tu proponer cosas nuevas, entonces va relacionado a eso la búsqueda de métodos de análisis y generalmente se los enfoco a un problema en particular para que no se pierdan en ese mundo de información, que es lo que suelen hacer.

Joel also highlights the importance of using updated sources when preparing oral presentations because the purpose of oral presentations is that students propose new alternatives. This lecturer acknowledges that writing for research purposes implies using recent sources, in particular because they can allow students develop informed arguments.

Charles says he asks students to write reflections and essays. He uses the term reflection to refer to a type of assignment in which students look up for concepts and definitions linked to the topic they are learning:

> *[98] Reflections about the concepts that we study in the module, very specific (.) Sometimes I ask them to write essays so they link previous modules that are related with this one, which is the last module of physical chemistry, so that they apply that knowledge and demonstrate it in an essay (…). Above all, it is important that they express in an essay their previous knowledge, and how it relates to the contents of the new module (Charles, ChL).*

> Reflexiones acerca de conceptos que manejamos en la materia, muy específicos (.) A veces les pido que escriban ensayos acerca de cómo las materias previas se relacionan con la, esta que es la última de la serie de fisicoquímicas, que apliquen el conocimiento, que lo muestren en un ensayo (…). Sobretodo eso que ellos expresen a través de un ensayo cómo sus conocimientos previos se relacionan con la materia actual.

Students bring these definitions to the classroom and the class develops around the discussion of these terms. This is the same type of practice that takes place in Education and what I have called writing for class discussion as I will discuss later on.

It seems that Chemistry lecturers use the term reflection to refer to an assignment in which students write definitions of concepts linked to the topic they are studying. Charles also mentions the importance of *previous knowledge*. He thinks writing an essay is a great opportunity for students to demonstrate knowledge and link it with previous modules students have studied and that relate to the contents of the new module students are taking.

The types of assignments not only show discipline variation , but they also reflect the texts students have been trained.Education students are expected to be able to solve problems and Chemistry students should meet the expectations of the industries they are likely to work, as explained below (see also the reference to the apprenticeship model in Chapter 6).

As stated by Hyland (2007) "by enabling teachers to ground their courses in the texts that students will need to write in occupational, academic, or social contexts, they help guide learners to participate effectively in the world outside the ESL classroom" (p. 149). This statement refers to a different context, the ESL classroom; however, this is relevant here because students' assignments relate to different purposes. The implications of these aspirations, and the difference between how lecturers and students talk about assignments will be further discussed in the conclusions to this chapter, below. Students in this particular context write for class discussion, to conduct research and for occupational purposes.

7.3 Functions of writing

I have argued that writing is central to higher education because students have to demonstrate knowledge attainment and understanding of the modules they are taking. Writing serves different purposes depending on the type of assignments students write as shown in the analysis of the talk around the text interview data.

7.3.1 Writing for class discussion

I have already explained above that to have students look up concepts and definitions that are later used in class is a common practice, or an assignment type I have called *writing for class discussion*. This information is expected to be written down and is usually handed in for formative assessment purposes. This type of practice may take the form of a summary, a mind map or a concept map, or a double-entry table. The following example is a summary of basic concepts:

Text 11 Summary

> *In the following reading report some concepts and ideas about the problem of the quantitative approach, its elements, the importance of the approach in the achievement of objectives as well as some criteria to assess the importance of research are discussed.*
>
> *BASIC CONCEPTS*
>
> *• The statement of the problem: The approach and its elements are very important because they provide the guidelines and basic research components; additional results are key to understanding. The first conclusion of the study is to evaluate what happened with*

the approach.

•Research objectives: They are intended to highlight what is drawn in the investigation and should be expressed clearly, as these are study guides.

En el siguiente reporte de lectura se analizan algunos conceptos e ideas acerca del planteamiento del problema cuantitativo, sus elementos, la importancia del planteamiento dentro del cumplimiento de los objetivos, así como algunos criterios para poder evaluar la importancia de la investigación.

CONCEPTOS BÁSICOS

El planteamiento del problema: El planteamiento y sus elementos son muy importantes porque proveen las directrices y los componentes fundamentales de la investigación; además, resultan claves para entender resultados. La primera conclusión de un estudio es evaluar qué ocurrió con el planteamiento.

● *Objetivos de estudio: Tienen la finalidad de señalar lo que se aspira en la investigación y deben expresarse con claridad, pues son las guías de estudio.*

Both disciplines share this feature; based on the data, it seems this practice is more common in Education than in Chemistry. Martha and Fiona describe this practice as follows,

[99] So, what lecturers demand from us is that we have to read, and they want us to do an analysis of it [the reading] and how we envision it now, and how useful that information is going to be for us. So, we may think about it, but we have to write an essay, a summary, and an analysis. It is more common in essays (Martha, EdS).

Entonces lo que los maestros buscan es nosotros ya leímos y que nosotros hagamos un análisis de ello y como nosotros proyectamos hoy en día y como va a servir entonces todo esto a lo mejor es pensado, pero tenemos que proyectarlo en un ensayo, en un resumen, en un análisis. Se dá más en los ensayos.

[100] Everything they ask for has to be written down and then you have to talk about what you wrote; that is, the class develops based on what you previously wrote (Fiona, EdS).

Todo te lo piden por escrito y después tienes que hablar lo que escribiste, o sea la clase se hace en función de lo que escribiste.

Vanessa explained to me that lecturers have them look for information on the topic they are learning. When I asked her whether they discussed that information in class, she replies:

> [101] *Yes, we discuss the information that each of us brings to class, if someone brings something different from the rest of the class; we discuss the information that is different. Yes we discuss (Vanessa, ChS).*
>
> Si lo discutimos la información que lleva cada quien, si hasta que ya alguien lleva algo diferente, discutimos más o menos lo que llevamos de diferente. Si discutimos.

Lecturers' perceptions about the development of this practice are similar to what students describe: students read, they write a text (i.e. summary, mind map) and they bring it to class to discuss:

> [102] *And they have to do the reading, so they read it; they do no more than three, four or five pages. They have to write the main ideas and a reflection about what they can reflect about that, right? And they bring that to class and we discuss it, we discuss, we have plenaries, teamwork, pair work and everybody discusses and argues; they support their argument, so that is what the texts are for* (Oscar, EdL).
>
> Y ellos tienen que hacer la lectura, entonces lo leen, hacen tres, cuatro ó cinco hojas no más. Tienen que plasmar las ideas centrales y una reflexión de lo que puedan reflexionar acerca de eso, ¿no? y eso ya lo traen a la clase y lo discutimos, entonces lo discutimos se hacen plenarias, se hacen equipos, se hacen parejas y todo mundo discute y argumenta, sustenta entonces para eso son esos escritos.

Writing for class discussion consists of the three stages that Oscar describes above: Students do the reading, write down main ideas and a reflection and they discuss that information in class. Therefore, writing for class discussion takes two forms: 1)

looking up concepts and definitions and 2) writing a report of the readings students do. The purpose of the former is to demonstrate knowledge and understanding, since students have to explain concepts. The latter seems to work at a higher knowledge level since students have to show their ability to synthesize and analyse as well as argue a topic. Oscar describes this last function as follows,

> [103] So, the purpose is that they develop these cognitive competencies very well and that they grasp, they grasp this knowledge. They transfer this knowledge into their writing; that is why the purpose of the essay is to achieve this, so they improve their ability (Oscar, EdL).

> Entonces la finalidad es que ellos desarrollen bien esas competencias cognitivas y la otra es que se apoderen, si se apoderen de ese conocimiento, lo integren por eso esos ensayos van para allá igual va para que mejoren su habilidad.

A similar idea discussed by one of the Chemistry lecturers is that they expect students to "transfer" the knowledge from the readings into their writing assignments.

Lecturers also think that this type of practice – writing for class discussion – makes students read. Joel also refers to this type of writing because he expects students to grasp the readings they do:

> [104] And I ask them to read because, first it gives me a record of the way in which they think or understand the information and on the other hand, it gives me the evidence that they are working. At the end, I have the evidence and the interpretation as a form of evaluation of the development of my module. Because if they talked, well it [information] gets lost, right? I have the information as a way, on one hand, as feedback or as the evidence of what they are learning and if they write, I can correct, on the other hand, I have the support of what they do and I can evaluate (Joel, ChL).

> Y les pido que escriban porque primero me da un registro de la forma en que ellos piensan o interpretan la información por una parte y en segunda me da

una evidencia de que están trabajando, entonces al final yo tengo la evidencia y la interpretación a manera de evaluación de todo el desarrollo de mi curso. Si porque si ellos hablaran pues se pierde, ¿no? La información la tengo a manera de por un lado de retroalimentación o de evidenciar lo que ellos están aprendiendo y si ellos escriben por un lado puedo corregir, por otro, tengo el sustento de lo que ellos van manifestando y puedo evaluar.

This lecturer uses this type of assignment as a form of "control" because he refers to evidence several times using different words (i.e. record, feedback). This practice shows that lecturers keep a file of students' work as that is part of a new culture of accountability in schools, which involves recording what students do in case evidence is required at some later point.

7.3.2 Writing for occupational purposes

The purpose of this section is to report on the description of assignments that can generally be considered as writing for occupational or professional purposes. This is when students write the type of assignments that they are likely to write once they graduate as opposed to assignments that exist as genres solely within higher education. These types of assignments ostensibly prepare students for employment. This function becomes more evident in the case of Chemistry students by writing lab reports. The lab report resembles the kind of writing students may encounter once they graduate and when working for a company. Lecturers acknowledge that the format students use is similar to the one they are likely to encounter when working for a company. Students state that it is important to know how to write these reports to a high standard,

> [105] I think it is important that we know the correct way to report the results because that is what we do, that is what we do, so the way we do it either right or wrong may have an impact in our future job or in the postgraduate programme. The importance of reporting things correctly and knowing that we are doing them [lab reports] in the right way (Melissa, ChS).
>
> Pues creo (.) que es importante que nosotros sepamos la manera correcta de

reportar los resultados porque finalmente es a lo que nos dedicamos, es lo que hacemos, entonces el impacto que tenga que nosotros lo hagamos bien o mal, tendrá en nuestro futuro trabajo o en el posgrado. La importancia de reportar bien las cosas y de principalmente de saber pues bien lo que uno está haciendo.

Students seem to do a good job of abstracting the transferable skills from these tasks. Melissa knows she is being trained to write reports accurately according to possible future employers' expectations. The reports they write at university respond to institutional demands, but they use a similar format to texts they are likely to find outside university.

Gemma thinks the writing she does at university helps her to meet both purposes: conducting experiments and the administrative aspects of being a professional scientist,

> *[106] I do not know (.) well the enterprise or where you are going to work it is not just the practical work, but it also implies an administrative part as well, so (.) I think it prepares you (.) to do it right and better, so I think it is important to write, read and everything during the BA programme (Gemma, ChS).*

> No sé (.) pues en la empresa o donde gustes trabajar pues no nada más va ser el trabajo práctico, sino también yo creo que implica o es muy importante lo administrativo también, entonces (.) creo que te va preparando más que nada hacerlo bien y mejor, entonces yo creo que si nos sirve bastante lo que te piden escribir, leer y todo durante la licenciatura.

These students are aware that writing serves different purposes: it prepares them to write lab reports that they are likely to find in the workplace. As stated by Ivanič, et al. (2009) who write in relation to the UK context and different disciplines, "the text is similar to one which would be used in the students' future careers, and completing the format is therefore a literacy practice related to the workplace" (p.87).

The structure of the lab reports students write at university also warrants some

discussion. Linked to this practice is the format students complete for the lab report. I found that the structure students follow is similar to that of the research article. However, as Jackson, Meyer and Parkinson (2006) explain with reference to the South African context, "a difference between student laboratory reports and research articles is that the findings of the laboratory report are not expected to be new or to extend accepted facts or to deviate from them" (p.264). Students base the practice on laboratory manuals or the *cookbook* manual (Jackson, Myer & Parkinson, 2006, p.264) because as Megan says all they have to do is "*follow the recipe by using the ingredients*".

> *[107] Yes, it is a replica of what, it is like a kitchen recipe; the ingredients are the reactives, and then the material and the procedure. It is like a kitchen recipe* (Megan, ChS).

> Si es una réplica de lo que, son como una receta de cocina, viene los ingredientes que son los reactivos, viene el material y viene como hacerlo. Es como una receta de cocina.

> *[108] A recipe as they say, a procedure. Yes, it is established. Sometimes, we just vary the amounts at the moment, and if something comes up, we modify it at the moment, but we practically follow the procedure* (Vanessa, ChS).

> Una receta como así lo dicen, un procedimiento. Si ya está establecido. Hay veces que nadamás no sé podríamos variar las cantidades al momento, algun imprevisto que haya si se cambia al momento, pero sí prácticamente seguimos los procedimientos.

Students use a format that is repeated over the years; they seem to "replicate" the same practices repeatedly. They follow a format that contains the elements below,

> *[109] (…) normally they ask you to have a cover, the name of the university, the department, the team's names, a table of contents, introduction, for example, the development, the experiment and all that, conclusions. That is the structure they ask us to follow and the questionnaire. And some lecturers say, "you know I also want the list of tables or I also want key words". But the*

basic structure is the same for all the subjects practically. Yes, from first
semester it is the same structure (Anne, ChS).

(...) normalmente te piden pues que tenga portada que el nombre de la
universidad, el instituto, los nombres de los integrantes del equipo, un índice,
introducción, por ejemplo desarrollo, la parte experimental y todo eso, las
conclusiones. Es como lo que generalmente te piden y este los cuestionarios.
Y pues ya algunos doctores pues sabes que también quiero también el índice
de las tablas o también quiero que me pongas las palabras clave, pero la
estructura básica es la misma prácticamente para todas las materias. Sí,
desde el primer semestre es la misma estructura.

Students are introduced to this lab report format in their first year, and are expected
to produce assignments that report a lab practice using this structure during the rest
of their studies.

Education students state that the types of texts they have written have prepared
them to meet the expectations of employers when working in real settings. Donna
who is already working, and when asked whether the types of assignments she has
written contribute to her training, she states that,

[110] *Yes, all of them: the organization and the research papers. There are*
some others like the Training paper. All of them have had an impact on my
work. Now, I study and work. I have realized and I remember what teachers
said. I think they gave us the tools we need to offer the service that you have
to give (Donna, EdS).

Sí, todos. Tanto el de organización, el de investigación. Hay algunos otros de
Capacitación. Todos han impactado en la parte laboral. Ahora estudio y
trabajo. Y me he dado cuenta y me acuerdo de lo que dicen los maestros. Yo
creo que nos dieron las herramientas suficientes para salir del cascarón y
ofrecer un servicio que te corresponde dar.

Donna suggests that she has been trained to respond to the world of work and do
what she has to do as an education professional. Writing has allowed her to be ready

and do what she is supposed to do.

Writing and the types of assignments they have written have allowed the students I interviewed to put into practice what they have learned in class. Fiona has had the chance to actually be a syllabus designer assistant while doing her social service. She had the chance to participate in the curriculum design of an engineering programme. When I asked whether these assignments contributed to her training, she said:

> [111] *In what way? Well, that issue of not getting just the theory in a classroom and what the teacher says, I research, I look for more information. In the future, I know that I can do something out there. For example, concerning writing, it helps a lot. I am doing my social service and I have to check all the syllabi in the university, so we have to. For example, an engineering programme did not design its objectives in terms of learning objectives. An objective, they see it or maybe they do not see it. Therefore, when we are approaching that reality that has to do with the administration of all the programmes of the university we say, "I was taught this way, it contains this and this, and this objective won't be achieved at the end. Objectives are designed in this way, you´re going in a different direction". So, designing objectives, you can spend a long time because writing objectives is very difficult. We have the notion and I know it was hard to do, but maybe I will achieve my goal and I can contribute some way or at least some orientation. It contributes largely, greatly* (Fiona, EdS).

> ¿De qué forma? Pues esa parte de no quedarme solo con lo teórico en un salón de clases y con lo que el professor me dice yo llego a investigar, no me quedo con eso. El día de mañana, por ejemplo, sé que puedo acercarme allá afuera y puedo hacer algo. Por ejemplo, en cuestión de redacción mucho ahorita lo que estoy haciendo en mi servicio de hecho es revisar todos los programas de estudio de toda la universidad, entonces nosotros tenemos. Por ejemplo, mencionaba no, una ingeniería un objetivo realmente no lo hacen como objetivo de aprendizaje; un objetivo ellos lo ven o no lo ven quizás, entonces al momento de ya acercarnos con esa realidad que por

ejemplo es la administración de todos los programas de la universidad decimos no es que a mi me ensañaron que lleva esto y lleva el otro y este no va a lograr el fin, asi si planteas el objetivo, te vas ir por otros lados y no vas a llegar, entonces desde ahi desde plantear un objetivo de trabajo muchas veces nos podemos tardar, es lo más difícil que se puede hacer: plantear nuestro objetivo y entonces pues si mínimo tenemos la noción, la noción y sé que en algún momento me costo trabajo y quizás lo logre y puedo ahora aportarle a alguien como hacerlo o mínimo una orientación entonces contribuye en gran medida, impresionantemente.

Fiona summarises the different purposes of writing assignments throughout her years at university. She thinks she has learned how to provide guidance when writing learning objectives. She adopts a positive vision and shows confidence in talking about this topic with a teacher's footing despite being a student. This may be in part because of the activities she does as part of her social service.

7.3.3 Writing for research purposes

Writing for research purposes seems to play an important role in students' academic lives. They write research proposals and research projects in both programmes. Fiona states that her programme emphasises both theory and practice. That is, they study concepts in the first semesters and then move to do research.

> [112] The BA programme is divided into two stages; the first semester essays, reflections they go hand in hand and then once you have some theoretical background you write projects. There we see the link between reality and theory. To link them is difficult, but if you did not read the theory (…) you could not have written an essay, have made an oral presentation; the project is more complex and I support it with reality and theory (Fiona, EdS).

> Bueno pero fíjese que la carrera se divide como en dos etapas; los primeros semestres en ensayos, reflexiones no, van de la mano y ya después ya que tienes cuestiones teóricas ya ahora si escribe proyectos, entonces ahí es el vínculo de la realidad con lo teórico, entonces hacer ese vincula a veces si

cuesta trabajo (.) pero ese teórico no solo lo leíste, pudiste hacer un ensayo con él, una exposición, entonces el proyecto pues es como que algo más complejo y así cierto lo sustento con la realidad y aparte con lo teórico.

Writing a research project gives students the opportunity to build on their research skills. As stated by one of the lecturers, this result of at least three semesters starts with a proposal and it is completed by a research project as lecturers report. Martha, for instance, has spent some time in the setting where the research she is working on takes place. She thinks this experience is rewarding and she seems to show greater knowledge of the field:

[113] *For instance, the research project we are doing with Dr. [name of the tutor]. He asked us to write a text because he conducted a qualitative study. He asks us to go to the context and see what an ethnographic study is; we have to study the towns. I liked that part a lot because we went to the field and it is not [just] how you perceive it, but what it actually is. I cannot say I think they [participants] bent over because I was there. No, no. They bent over. That is, the action that they actually did* (Martha, EdS).

Por ejemplo, de la investigación con el Dr. [nombre del maestro] que estuvimos trabajando. Él nos pidió hacer un escrito porque él hizo una investigación cualitativa. Entonces nos pide más el ir al contexto, ver como es un estudio etnográfico, tenemos que estudiar a los pueblos. Esa parte me gustó muchísimo porque íbamos al campo y no es lo que tú percibes, sino lo que es. No puedo decir es que yo creo que se agacharon porque yo estaba ahí. No, no. Se agachó. O sea, como tal la acción que estuvieron realizando.

Martha acknowledges that they conduct research because it is part of the contents of the programme. It seems she follows what her lecturer asked her to do, but she later agrees that she has enjoyed spending time in the towns she has visited and has learned how to write a report for an ethnographic study. There is a close relationship between writing and doing in Martha's answer here, which links the texts the student participants write with their broader academic practices.

My data reveals that doing research is an important aspect of the practices of both lecturers and students as discussed above. Both lecturers and students are well aware of the importance of doing research in academia. Lecturers that hold a full-time position are expected to conduct research as part of their academic duties. And since the students-participants are final-year students, all of them are working on their thesis. Chemistry students, for example, are writing their thesis because they either hold a grant[18] to do it (another measure that attempts to promote research among students) or because they want to pursue a postgraduate programme. It seems they are already aware of the demands of the academia and know that to be part of this community it is advisable to write a thesis. Vanessa argues that doing research is important,

> *[114] Yes, because teachers are very demanding. They make many corrections. Because they all hold a PhD, it is important to write well. Since the focus is on research, you have to write articles or the thesis. Therefore, you have to know how to write well. They emphasize that (Vanessa, ChS).*

> Sí porque son muy exigentes los maestros. Si te hacen muchas correcciones. Como son todos igual doctores pues si es importante que sepas escribir bien. Y más ahorita como va enfocado a la investigación pues si tienes que escribir artículos o la tesis pues si tienes que saber escribir bien. Si es importante que sepas escribir bien, si nos hacían hincapié en eso.

Vanessa seems to have accepted that having a PhD influences the lecturers' attitudes. She creates her argument by linking lecturers' PhD degrees with the importance of writing well. However, she does not explain what assumptions lead her to believe that the importance of writing well follows from her lecturers having a degree. She may link this belief with the fact that lecturers who hold a PhD degree write for publishing purposes, which may lead to expectations about good writing

---

[18] In recent years, the Ministry of Education introduced an initiative that consists of awarding a grant to students who decide to write a thesis to obtain their degree. They can either stay in their own university or spend 5 or 6 months in a different university where a co-supervisor works with them to finish writing up the thesis.

practices. Writing research projects is a synonym for writing a thesis. The following extracts illustrate the value given to writing a thesis:

> [115] It opens many doors when doing a postgraduate programme. I am not sure if I want to pursue a postgraduate degree now, but if I do it one day, doors are opened by writing a thesis (Anne, ChS).

> Me abre muchas puertas para hacer posgrados. Entonces ahorita no estoy tan segura de si quiero hacer un posgrado todavía al menos inmediato, pero si algún día llego hacerlo tengo las puertas abiertas con la tesis.

Writing a thesis is an eye opener to students and it is here that they realise the importance of learning how to write. It seems that it helps them make sense of what the lecturers have told them about structure, citations, writing references, as the following extracts show:

> [116] Well, I think that what we are writing the thesis because your supervisor teaches you to write well; you learn a lot by writing the thesis because they teach you how to write well. Well, I think it is only now that I am learning how to write (Vanessa, ChS).

> Pues yo creo que ahorita que estamos haciendo la tesis porque ya este pues si te enseña directamente tu asesor como redactar, pues si aprendes bastante yo creo que ahorita en el trabajo de tesis ya te enseñan a escribir bien. Bueno yo digo que es donde estoy aprendiendo más a redactar, ahorita.

> [117] During my BA studies. Well I think that my research project is what encloses everything we have learnt. For my experimental project we have to review literature, read research articles and I think it has been a very important training for me because the reports we write, what we write every semester is what I consider the most important thing I have written so far (Megan, ChS).

> Durante la licenciatura pues creo que lo más representativo de mi trabajo que engloba todo lo que aprendimos pues van siendo nuestros avances de proyecto, de proyecto experimental en esos avances pues nosotros tenemos

que revisar bibliografía, como artículos científicos y creo que eso ha sido una formación muy importante para mí porque esos reportes que hacemos, que hacíamos cada semestre son pues es lo más importante que yo podría decir que he escrito durante la carrera.

Megan seems to be saying that each semester's writing surpasses the previous in importance, and it becomes more demanding.

Writing for research purposes at university serves different purposes at different levels. My participants talk about higher-level cognitive skills such as being critical and demonstrating research skills, but they also refer to lower-level things such as learning how to uses tenses, as Vanessa explains in the next extract. When I asked what she had learned, she replied:

> [118] *To start with, I learnt to use tenses, sometimes you use present, sometimes past and you have to be homogenous; in some others, I have learned to use linking words. I think linking words are important so you do not repeat words. That is what I have (.) (Vanessa, ChS).*

> Para empezar pues si manejar los tiempos, no en algunas partes hablas en presente, en algunas hablas en pasado, pues tienes que ser homogéneo, en algunas otras pues los enlaces o sea yo creo que los enlaces son para no repetir mucho. Es lo que me han (.).

It seems Vanessa believes it is only at this stage that students put into practice the research skills they have been trained in.

7.4 Conclusions

I have argued in this chapter that writing is central to both academic programmes. As I already showed in the previous chapter, my participants recognise that writing plays a very important role at university because it is the means by which students demonstrate understanding and knowledge. It is also by writing that they show their abilities to conduct research. However, in terms of the actual assignments students write, I found that Education students write a greater variety of texts whereas

Chemistry students write mainly lab reports. This matches previous findings that suggest that the laboratory report is the most important genre of writing assigned to science students (e.g. Braine, 1989; Jackson, Meyer & Parkinson, 2006). Essays are among the most common assignments Education students write, but it seems that there are three different types of texts students write under this label. Similarly, Roux (2008) reports that Mexican students have different conceptions of what an essay is. This is not exclusive to this particular context: for instance, Ivanič et al. (2009) in their study in the UK report that "students moving from unit to unit and from course to course could often get different and confusing messages … in relation to the common practice of asking students to write 'an essay'" (p.78). This reveals that students and lecturers have different conceptions about what an essay is as these previous studies have shown, but also that using labels to assignments without providing explicit explanations of what an essay *does* may be particularly risky because students are getting mixed messages even within the same discipline.

My participants write for three main purposes at university. The main role for writing in Education is to demonstrate knowledge and understanding by means of writing and reading for class discussion. Students are asked to read a text before class takes place and have to "report" what they read in a text so they can discuss it later in class. The class develops around the text based on the comments made by students and the lecturer. With Fairclough's (1989) claim in mind that social practices are always embedded in a broader cultural context, these texts are written mainly for homework and students are used to doing homework since they started primary school.

The second purpose identified by my participants is writing for occupational purposes. This function of writing becomes more evident in the case of Chemistry students. They write lab reports that are likely to encounter at workplace once they graduate. The intention is that students become familiar with both the format and the content of the lab report for employability purposes as found in the analysis of the policy documents. However, students see this assignment as a replica since they follow the instructions of a manual and report the results and this is not what they would do in their jobs.

My participants also write for research purposes. Education students become aware that by conducting research they can contribute to the world of knowledge. Some of them become members of the context where the research takes place, creating a clearer link between the theories, they are learning about, and their practice as future educational professionals because they conduct ethnographic research. The purpose is that students develop critical thinking and their abilities to identify and solve problems. Chemistry students; on the other hand, have a different view of the importance of research (and what constitutes research).

The main commonality and probably the most striking finding is that students seem to find that writing a thesis allows them to see their studies in a more holistic light, and to realise the purpose of the various tasks they have been asked to do. The thesis seems to help them actually put into practice what they have learned in terms of content and form. They understand that writing a thesis is a process, which requires them to become critical and analytical. The function of this type of assignment as stated by Nesi and Gardner (2012), is "to report on research conducted independently by students, individually or in teams, and to demonstrate familiarity with and expertise in the research methods of the discipline" (p. 137). Students embrace this practice in both programmes because it is both meaningful and useful.

8. Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I have examined how academic literacy practices are constructed in policy documents, in interviews with both students and teachers and in talk around texts written by students. I have discussed the different discourses and perspectives evident in policy documents and in students and lecturers' accounts. I show how the social context at different levels influences the academic literacy practices of students in two disciplines in a Mexican institution. I further show that adopting a critical discourse analysis approach (Fairclough 2001, 2003) to describe the different contexts that shape and are shaped by the reading and writing practices of undergraduate students can illuminate our understanding as researchers of the different ways academic literacy practices are constructed. I highlight how adopting this approach reveals aspects of ideology and power that permeate the way participants talk about academic literacy practices. My findings are potentially important for policy makers, researchers and lecturers, and students interested in the role of policy and practice of academic literacy practices. In this concluding chapter, I start by presenting a summary of the findings in 8.2. I link discourses of policy documents and my participants´perspective in 8.3. I discuss my contributions to the field in section 8.4. I describe some limitations and the potential for further research in section 8.5. Finally, in section 8.6, I state some recommendations.

8.2 Summary of findings

In Chapters 5 and 6 I demonstrate how academic literacy practices are discursively constructed, which was my overall objective in this thesis. I show that the social, political, institutional and disciplinary contexts, which I describe in Chapter 2, influence academic literacy practices. It is also evident that what I describe in Chapter 2 as dominant discourses, such as discourse of globalisation, dictate or at least influence the type of education and student that society demands. In the policy documents, academic literacy practices are constructed as a set of skills and as a form of human capital. As I show in Chapter 5, policymakers suggest that academic

literacies are something students must possess. There is a strong emphasis on reading; this may be a result of the influence of international agencies as it is one of the aspects of the PISA assessment. Writing is left aside, presumably because it is believed that writing is developed during students' education and because students are expected to already have "mastered" writing when they enter university. However, this seems contradictory, since most of the students' academic practices are assessed by or at least involve writing.

However, a more recent discourse, which aligns schooling with economic goals, becomes evident in the four policy documents. Academic literacy practices are constructed as human capital in a model, which posits generalizable skills that are expected to be transferred from school to the workplace. Institutions become markets of education that produce the type of students needed to contribute to the economic growth of the state and the country respectively.

In the interviews, academic literacies are constructed principally as:

1. shaping words on paper

2. a set of skills

3. apprenticeship

4. enabling critique

5. focusing on reading

With regard to shaping ideas on paper (1), I show that there is a mismatch between students and teachers' perceptions about the role of writing as they provide different conceptions of what writing is. The perception of academic literacies as a set of skills (2) is linked to previous school practices of my student participants; they acknowledge that writing was merely the repetition and memorization of contents. Writing is considered as an individual attribute and the focus is on grammatical accuracy. Writing as an apprenticeship (3) is what happens when students enter university and become aware that they need to follow the conventions of the discipline they write for. Academic literacy practices are constructed as

apprenticeship because students have gone from a more traditional and functional approach to academic literacies to a more demanding one that requires them to analyse and be critical of what they read and write. I show how previous schooling practices have influenced the students' writing as they have been trained to summarize and copy texts. They have also been trained to learn concepts by heart rather than to develop independent arguments. Writing as enabling critique (4) is also linked to the actual practices students engage in as they are expected to conduct research to solve problems. Students realise that writing at university is more demanding because they are expected to develop analysis and evaluation skills rather than to memorise concepts. Finally, lecturers expect students to transfer the readings they do into their writing (5), and when students are not able to do this they attribute this to poor schooling.

Some students among my participants also write at least partly in preparation for occupational purposes because, being Chemistry students, they write mainly lab reports which prepares them for their future workplace if they stay in the field. Students learn to write the type of lab reports they are likely to encounter when they work in industry. Students become actively engaged in research through their written assignments; they identify this as one of the strands of their programme in both disciplines. While Education students conduct qualitative studies using ethnography as mentioned in section 7.3.3, Chemistry students develop experimental studies inside a lab.

Writing a thesis (the equivalent of a UK dissertation), is an important milestone for the students; they understand that writing longer pieces of text is challenging and demanding. This was a commonality between the two disciplines because students learn to understand the importance of writing a coherent text or "having a sequence", as they called it, by doing a larger piece of research. That is, it is up to this stage that students can see that a research project is made up of different parts. It is at this point that they understand that the complexity of texts differs between the semesters and that they serve different functions. They also acknowledge how their reading flows into their writing; some of them come to understand that reading is more than comprehension and the simple decoding of words. However, the

traditional understanding of reading and writing as something which is used to transmit information prevails; a number of the students see the writing they do as having the primary purpose of communicating their ideas to readers (teachers), alongside multiple other perspectives. Students see their thesis as an opportunity that allows them to put into practice what they have learnt. It is in this stage that students become aware that writing serves a very important purpose as it is used not only to convey information, but also to critically evaluate and also learn something about their topic. Students who have written reading reports and essays realize that writing a whole piece of research allows them to expand their understanding of writing in their disciplines. They move away from describing concepts to creating links between theory and practice.

As I mention above, I show that the most frequent genre Education students write is labelled as "essay", which has a number of different meanings attached to it, while Chemistry students tend to write something that is more coherently referred to by the label "lab report". Students learn to write essays based on their personal opinion, which usually lacks a strong theoretical component even when they are expected to provide support in the form of argument ad example as "evidence" to support their claims. Students are receiving mixed messages about what an essay is. There are some contradictions regarding the students' writing practices as some lecturers demand attributed opinion and evidence of the claims students make. Others allow students to write their own interpretations without acknowledging authors even when attribution is typical of tertiary level academic writing (Hewings, 2004).

8.3 Linking discourses of policy documents and participants' perspectives

The analysis of what students say about their assignments in Chapter 7, by means of investigation into their assignments, shows that they write for class discussion, occupational and research purposes. These last two purposes relate to the human capital conception of academic literacy practices and are common in other research contexts reported in the scholarly literature. Writing for occupational purposes is

linked to writing for apprenticeship, which is supported by a skills driven curriculum of employability, which aims to create links between university and enterprises. Based on this human capital development model, it would appear that students are trained to respond to international demands in which competitiveness is at the center.

Writing for class discussion seems to respond to a more traditional understanding of academic literacy practices. Writing for class discussion is a common and important practice in this institution because it is part of the teaching and learning processes of my participants, but it is not widely reported in other contexts in the literature. The purpose seems to be a way of keeping control of the readings students do instead of promoting academic literacy skills such as analysis and evaluation to discuss the readings in class. This practice, however, seems not to be a rewarding experience for students because they concentrate more on the product (the report they have to hand in) because it is part of summative assessment rather than on the development of these academic literacy skills university demands. Writing for class discussion requires students to read and reproduce the contents of the readings they are given because they focus on concepts and definitions.

I show the way a single institution translates understandings of dominant discourses, which are not necessarily hegemonic everywhere, as every context differs from one to another. It becomes evident that the discourses of globalisation and the knowledge economy have been influential in shaping policy paradigms, strategies and policies in and across different fields of social practice as discussed by Jessop (2008).

8.4 Contributions

My findings, as summarized in section 8.2, are potentially important for policy makers, researchers, lecturers and students interested in Mexican higher education specifically, or more generally in the role of policy and practice in academic literacies research. My last research question, which is more methodological, illustrates my contribution to the field:

To what extent can triangulated analysis contribute to understanding students' academic literacy practices?

Triangulation by means of policy documents, analysis of interviews with students and lecturers and talk around assignments is a valuable form of analysis since it allows me to approach my investigation from different angles. I bring together the documents, the texts and the voices of both students and lecturers involved. That is, a triangulated approach allowed me to show how academic literacy practices are constructed in different sources of data and at different levels of analysis. Triangulation has been used on policy and education in other contexts. For example, Unger (2013) writes about language policy and education in Scotland, and Mulderrig (2007) in higher education in England. It has not been applied to higher education in Mexico, or to the discursive construction of academic literacy practices.

Policy makers could potentially benefit from my findings because I challenge the underlying assumptions found in the policy documents. That is, if academic writing plays a central role in higher education, it is important to make it explicit in policy documents, which does not currently happen. Policy, like literacy, is not a "thing" or a monolithic unit; it is a complex of relationships at different levels of context, which embody a certain form of power.

At the contextual level, policy documents constitute the official discourse of the country, the state, the institution tied to particular ideologies that serve certain purposes. Policy documents reproduce discourses that shape educational contexts. Policy makers need to be aware of the importance of describing what writing means in today's world. If academic writing is central to higher education as it is commonly described in the literature, and as my own experience certainly bears out, it does not appear to be in the policy texts at present.

For researchers and lecturers, this thesis shows that despite the efforts to claim that students are prepared to meet the demands of the globalised world, the fact that lecturers privilege traditional writing practices may not necessarily help students to develop the competencies needed for the development of the country.

Conducting an analysis of long documents has been particularly challenging as most studies have analysed short documents. I have illustrated the analysis by carrying out a thematic content analysis that identified the salient themes that contribute to the construction of academic literacies in my data, and where appropriate have augmented this with more detailed linguistic analysis. A second challenge was to choose a framework that describes the construction of academic literacies as few studies have attempted to link policy and practice. Many studies analyse policy while ignoring practice because of the difficulties it imposes. This type of approach shows that critical discourse analysis is useful in revealing how academic literacy practices are constructed. The findings reveal that these discourses are not always realistic, as policies impose ideas that do not necessarily mirror the actual academic literacies students engage with.

8.4.1 Insights for me as a researcher and teacher of academic writing

This research has also helped me understand the important role we as lecturers play when setting assignments given that these may respond to personal decisions rather than contribute to students' training. The choices we make about the texts we ask our students to write determine the type of knowledge we promote.

I have also realised that some lecturers often focus their attention on spelling and grammar. This reflects a traditional and functional conception of academic literacies. It is time to readdress this important aspect of academic writing and contribute to a *new* writing culture that privileges critical thinking. I believe that *talk around the text* (Lillis, 2001, 2011) is very helpful as dialogue is at the centre of this pedagogy. I have adopted this approach with my students soon after I encountered it because just like me, they struggle with writing. I have also shared it with my colleagues as we have learned that there are multiple academic writing practices.

This research has shown that it is not just the social context that influences academic literacy practices but also what students and lecturers make of them. It is time as Lillis and Scott (2007) suggest, to move from a normative view of academic literacies to a "transformative" one in order to examine what is understood by

"transformation" in contemporary higher education (Lillis, Harrington, Lea, & Mitchell, 2015, p.5).

For students, their own reading and writing practices have to be more than the recitation of facts from the beginning of their study years so that they can move from knowledge display to discipline knowledge by adopting a critical stance.

I have attempted to provide evidence of the relationship between different contexts in which academic literacy practices are constructed. Furthermore, I have highlighted the connection with the events of power that shape the country, the economy, education, the disciplines and how these discourses are translated into institutions and their reading and writing practices. Academic literacy practices can adopt different nuances since they seem to be considered the means that will facilitate the students' insertion in the market.

8.5 Limitations and further research

It is evident that writing is coming to be more central to higher education in Mexico. It has become the means by which students demonstrate knowledge attainment. It is evident also that students are aware of the benefits and importance of reading and writing in their studies. However, this thesis is not an ethnographic classroom-based study. I did not look at the trajectories of reading and writing practices of my students' participants. Future research would benefit by incorporating observations of their trajectories.

Understanding of academic literacy practices is improving in Mexico. Carlino (2010) states that, "Latin American and Spanish universities have recently begun to address students' academic literacy needs" (p. 495). Thus, this type of research is important because it shows the distance between public policies and local practices. While policies are influenced or respond to global demands, these are far from the reality that is experienced inside an institution and in classrooms. It is important to go back to basics and explore what students are reading and writing in previous educational levels as this influences students' actual practices and their conceptions of what reading and writing entail. It would be relevant to develop a national study that looks

into this. This doctorate has given me the "platform" to write a research project and apply for funding, as I am a full-time researcher in a public university. I have been involved in a national project before, so I have the experience and now the knowledge to attain this. Having characterized the reading and writing practices, it would illustrate how genres vary and progress according to the different education levels. The objective is to propose more "smooth" transitions from one level to another.

Combining CDS and academic literacies has been particularly challenging because the former focuses on texts and the latter on practices. However, by bringing them together both contextual and textual analyses can be conducted.

Using CDS to analyse academic literacy practices has given me some added value because I have referred to the context of production, reception and interpretation of policy documents to show that these practices are shaped by different meanings attached to them: to become an active and competent member of contemporary societies.

8.6 Recommendations

This study has also illustrated that it is important to make academic literacies explicit in policy documents as reading and writing practices, which mediate education. The focus should switch from correctness to raising awareness of the importance of reasoning and critical thinking as the means to help students develop solid arguments by bringing together texts and practices. It is time to focus our attention on learning and meaning making instead of dominant discourses. However, because these discourses are likely to continue to reproduce these traditional views, it would be important to be clear about what is meant when discussing academic literacy practices. It is important also to think of literacy as a permanent academic goal rather than a functional skill that is transferable from one context to another. Academic literacies are by their very nature part of students' experiences at university. Higher education institutions cannot take for granted that students already know how to read and write in ways that meet the expectations of their and instructions when they enter university.

References

Alcántara, A. (2011, January). Algunos saldos de la política educativa en la primera década del siglo XXI. *Campus Milenio*. Retrieved from http://www.ses.unam.mx/publicaciones/articulos.php?proceso=visualiza&idart=959

Ashwin, P., & Smith, K. (2015). Researcher creations? The positioning of policy texts in higher education research. *Higher Education*, *69*(6), 1007-1018.

Bache, I. (2003). Governing through governance: education policy control under New Labour. *Political Studies*, *51* (2), 300-314.

Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. Michael Holquist (Ed.). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Ball, S. (1993). What is policy? Texts, trajectories and toolboxes. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, *13*(2), 10-17.

Ball, S. (1998). Big policies/small world: an introduction to international perspectives in education policy. *Comparative education*, *34*(2), 119-130.

Ball, S. (2015). What is policy? 21years later: reflections on the possibilities of policy research. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, 36 (3), 306-313.

Barton, D. (2001). Directions for literacy research: Analysing language and social practices in a Textually Mediated World. *Language and Education, 15*(2), 92-104.

Barton, D. (2007). *Literacy. An introduction to the ecology of written language*. Oxford, Kingdom: Blackwell.

Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. (1998). *Local literacies: A study of reading and writing in on community*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. (2000). Introduction. In D. Barton, M. Hamilton & R. Ivanič (Eds.), *Situated literacies. Reading and writing in context (pp.7-15).* London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Bashiruddin, A. (2013). Reflections on translating qualitative research data: Experiences from Pakistan. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *23*(3), 357-367.

Bazerman, C., Little, J., Bethel, L., Chavkin, T., Fouquette, D., & Garufis, J. (2005). *Reference guide to Writing Accross the Curriculum [e-book]*. La Fayette, IN: Parlor Press. Retrieved from https://wac.colostate.edu/books/bazerman_wac/

Bell, L., & Stevenson, H. (2006). *Education policy. Process, themes and impact*. Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Bernstein, B. (1996). *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity*. London, United Kingdom: Taylor and Francis.

Bloome, D. (2001). Boundaries on construction of literacy in secondary classrooms: Envisioning reading and writing in a democratic and just society. In E. Moje & D. O'Brien (Eds.), *Constructions of literacy: Studies of teaching and learning in and out of secondary schools* (pp.173-183). London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Botello, J., & Davila, M. (2012). Technological gap: The education case of the state of Puebla, Mexico. *Journal of Communication and Computer, 10*, 1312-1320.

Bourdieu, P. (1993). *Language and Symbolic power*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Braine, G. (1989). Writing in science and technology: An analysis of assignments from ten undergraduate courses. *English for Specific Purposes, 8*(1), 3-15.

Bridgeman, B., & Carlson, S. (1984). Survey of academic writing tasks. *Written Communication, 1*(2), 247-280.

Brown, P., & Lauder, H. (2006). Globalisation, knowledge and the myth of the magnet economy. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, *4*(1), 25-57.

Brown, P., Lauder, H., & Ashton, D. (2008). Education, globalisation, and the future of the knowledge economy. *European Educational Research Journal*, *7*(2), 131-156.

Burke, P. (2008). Writing, power and voice: access to and participation to higher education. *Changing English: Studies in culture and education*, *15*(2), 199-210.

Carlino, P. (2010). Reading and writing in the social sciences in Argentine universities. In C. Bazerman, R. Krut, K. Lunsford, S. McCleod, S. Null, P. Rogers & A. Stansell (Eds.), *Traditions of writing research* (pp. 283–296). New York, NY: Routledge.

Carroll, J., & Dunkeblau, H. (2011) Preparing ESL students for "real" college writing: A glimpse of common writing tasks ESL students encounter at one community college. *Teaching English in the two-year college*, *38*(3), 271-281.

Castelló, M. & Donahue, C. (2012). Introduction. In M. Castelló & C. Donahue (Eds.), *University Writing. Selves and texts in Academic Societies (pp.xiii-xxvii)*. Bingley, United Kingdom: Emerald.

Chitez, M., & Kruse, O. (2012). Writing cultures and genres in higher education. In M. Castelló & C. Donahue (Eds.), *University Writing. Selves and texts in Academic Societies (pp.151-176)*. Bingley, United Kingdom: Emerald.

Christie, F., & Misson, R. (2002). *Literacy and Schooling*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Cicourel, A. (1974). *Cognitive Sociology*. Harmondsworth, United Kingdom: Penguin.

Clark, R., & Ivanič, R. (1997). *The politics of writing*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Coffin, C., & Donohue, J. (2012). Academic literacies and systemic functional linguistics: How do they relate? *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 11*(1), 64-75.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, J. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research. Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell. J. (2007). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. (2009). *Research Design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Croker. R. (2009). An introduction to qualitative research. In J. Heigham & R. Croker (Eds.), *Qualitative research in Applied Linguistics. A practical introduction (pp.3-24)*. New York, NY: Palgrave.

Dale, R. (1999). Specifying globalisation effects on national policy: a focus on the mechanisms. *Journal of Education Policy*, *14* (1), 1-17.

Davies, J. (2009). A space for play: crossing boundaries and learning online. In V. Carrignton and M. Robinson (Eds.), *Digital Literacies* (pp. 27-42). London, United Kingdom: Sage.

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2008). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp.1-44). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Downey, G., Dalidowicz, M., & Mason, P. (2015). Apprenticeship as method: embodied learning in ethnographic practice. *Qualitative Research*, *15*(2),183-200.

Eblen, C. (1983). Writing across the curriculum: A survey of a university faculty's views and classroom practices. *Research in the Teaching of English, 17*(4), 343-348.

Echávarri, J. (2013). Education through ICT policies in developing countries: the case of Mexico. *ICICTE Proceedings* (pp.12-23). University of Manchester, UK. Retrieved from http://www.icicte.org/Proceedings2013/Papers%202013/SP2-Echavarri.pdf

Edmondson, J. (2002). Asking different questions: Critical analyses and reading research. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *37*(1), 113-119.

Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. New York, NY: Longman.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press.

Fairclough, N. (1993). Critical dscourse analysis and the marketization of public discourse: The universities. *Discourse & Society*, *4*(2), 133-168.

Fairclough, N. (2001).The discourse of new Labour: critical discourse analysis. In M. Wetherall, S. Taylor & S. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse as data. A guide for analysis* (pp.229-266). London, United Kingdom: Sage.

Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analyzing Discourse*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Fairclough, N. (2005). Discourse Analysis in Organization Studies: The Case for Critical Realism. Organization Studies, 26(6), 915-939.

Fairclough, N. (2007). Introduction. In N. Fairclough, G. Cortese & P. Ardizzone (Eds.), *Discourse and contemporary social change (pp.9-24)*. Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang.

Fairclough, N. (2015). *Language and power* (3rd ed.). Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Fairclough, N., & Wodak, R. (2008). The Bologna process and the knowledge-based economy: a critical discourse analysis approach. In B. Jessop, N. Fairclough & R. Wodak (Eds.), *Education and the knowledge-based economy in Europe* (pp.109-126). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense publishers.

Fortour-Olivier, B. (2014). La reforma integral de la educación básica y la formación de maestros. *Perfiles Educativos*, *143*, 46-55.

Freeman, D. (2009). What makes research 'qualitative'?. In J. Heigham & R. Croker (Eds), *Qualitative research in Applied Linguistics. A practical introduction (pp.25-44)*. New York, NY: Palgrave.

Graham, P. (2001). Space: irrealis objects in technology policy and their role in a new political economy. *Discourse & Society, 12*(6), 761-788.

Guerrero, I. (2013). Technology and literacy: towards a situated comprehension of a Mexican teacher's actions. In J. Kalman & B. Street (Eds.), *Literacy and numeracy in Latin America* (pp.167-183). New York, NY: Routledge.

Halliday, (1991). The notion of 'context' in language education. University of Tasmania, Language Education: Interaction and Development. Proceedings of the International Conference, Vietnam, 30 March - 1 April 1992, ed. Thao Le & Mike McCausland.

Hamilton, M. (2010). The social context of literacy. In N. Hughes & I. Schwab (Eds.), *Teaching adult literacy. Principles and Practice* (pp. 7-28). Milton Keynes, United Kingdom: Open University Press.

Hamilton, M. (2012a). *Literacy and the politics of representation*. Abindon, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Hamilton, M. (2012b). The effects of the literacy policy environment on local sites of learning. *Language and Education, 26*(2), 169-182.

Hardy, C., & Boulton, H. (2012). Writing at school. In L. Clughen & C. Hardy (Eds.), *Writing in the disciplines: building supportive cultures for student writing in UK higher education* (pp.1-23). Bingley, United Kingdom: Emerald.

Hardy, C., & Clughen, L. (2012). Writing at university: student and staff expectations and experiences. In L. Clughen & C. Hardy (Eds.), *Writing in the disciplines: building supportive cultures for student writing in UK higher education (pp.25-53).* Bingley, United Kingdom: Emerald.

Heath, S. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Heigham, J., & Croker, R. (2009). *Qualitative Research in Applied Linguistics. A practical introduction*. New York, NY: Palgrave.

Hewings, A. (2004). Developing discipline-specific writing: An analysis of undergraduate geography essays. In L. Ravelli & R. Ellis (Eds.), *Analysing Academic Writing* (pp. 131-152). London, United Kingdom: Continuum.

Hidalgo-Avilés, H. (2006). Students' and lecturers' beliefs and expectations regarding essays and essay introductions: a genre-analytic qualitative study of academic literacy. (Unpublished MPhil thesis). University of Essex. United Kingdom.

Horowitz, D. (1986). What professors actually require: Academic tasks for the ESL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly, 20*(3), 445-462.

Hyland, K. (2006). Disciplinary differences: Language variation in academic discourses. In K. Hyland & M. Bondi (Eds.), *Academic discourse across disciplines* (pp. 17-45). Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang.

Hyland, K. (2007). Genre pedagogy: Language, literacy and L2 writing instruction. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 16*(3), 148-164.

Hyland, K. (2011a). Disciplinary Specificity: discourse, context and ESP. In D. Belcher, A. Johns & B. Paltridge (Eds.), *New directions in English for specific purposes research* (pp.6-24). Michigan, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Hyland, K. (2011b).Writing in the university: education, knowledge and reputation. *Language Teaching*.1-18. doi:10.1017/S0261444811000036

Ivanič, R. (1998). *Writing and identity: The discoursal construction of identity in academic writing*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.

Ivanič, R., & Lea, M. (2006). New contexts, new challenges, the teaching of writing in UK higher education. In L. Ganobcsik-Williams (Ed.), *Teaching academic writing in UK higher education. Theories, practices and models* (pp. 6-14). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ivanič, R., Edwards, R., Satchwell, C., & Smith, J. (2007). Possibilities for pedagogy in Further Education: Harnessing the abundance of literacy. *British Educational Research Journal*, *33*(5), 703-721.

Ivanič, R., Edwards, R., Barton, D., Martin-Jones, M., Mannion, G., Miller, K., Satchwell, C., & Smith, J. (2009). *Improving learning in college. Rethinking literacies across the curriculum.* London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Jackson, L., Meyer, W. & Parkinson, J. (2006). A study of the writing tasks and reading assigned to undergraduate science students at a South African university. *English for Specific Purposes, 25*(3), 260–281.

Jessop, B. (2008). Introduction. In B. Jessop, N., Fairclough & R. Wodak (Eds.), *Education and the knowledge-based economy in Europe* (pp.1-12). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense publishers.

Johns, A. (1997). *Text, role and context*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Jones, J. (2004). Learning to write in the disciplines: the application of systemic functional linguistic theory to the teaching and research of student writing. In L. Ravelli & R. Ellis (Eds.), *Analysing academic writing: contextualized frameworks* (pp. 254-274). London, United Kingdom: Continuum.

Jones, T. (2013). *Understanding education policy. The 'Four education orientation' framework*. Armidale, Australia: Springer.

Kalantzis, M., & Cope, B. (1993). Histories of pedagogy, cultures of schooling. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *The powers of literacy. A genre approach to teaching writing* (pp. 38-62). London, United Kingdom: The Falmer Press.

Kalman, J., & Street, B. (2013). Introduction: Literacy and numeracy in Latin America. Local perspectives and beyond. In J. Kalman & B. Street (Eds.). *Literacy and numeracy in Latin America* (pp.1-15). New York, NY: Routledge.

Kember, D. (2001). Beliefs about knowledge and the process of teaching and learning as a factor in adjusting to study in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, *26*(2), 205-221.

Koller, V. (2012). How to analyse collective identity in discourse- textual and contextual parameters. *Critical approaches to discourse analysis across disciplines*, *5*(2), 19-38.

Krause, K. (2001). The university essay writing experience. *Higher Education Research and Development*, *20*(2), 147–168.

Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis. An introduction to its methodology* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kruse, O. (2013). Perspectives on academic writing in European higher education: Genres, practices, and competences. *Revista de Docencia Universitaria*, *11*(1), 37-58.

Kusel, P. (1992). Rhetorical approaches to the study and composition of academic essays. *System*, *20*(4), 457-469.

Lankshear, C., & Knobel, M. (2011). *New Literacies*. Maidenhead, United Kingdom: Open University Press.

Lave, J. (2011). *Apprenticeship in critical ethnographic practice*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning*. Legitimate peripheral participation.New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Lazaraton, A. (2009). Discourse analysis. In J. Heighman & R. Croker (Eds.), *Qualitative research in Applied Linguistics. A practical introduction* (pp.242-262). New York, NY: Palgrave.

Lea, M., & Street, B. (1998). Student writing in higher education: an academic literacies approach. *Studies in Higher Education, 23*(2), 157-172.

Lea, M., & Street, B. (2006). The "academic literacies" model: theory and applications. *Theory into Practice*, *45*(4), 368-377. doi:10.1207/s15430421tip4504_11

Lea, M. (2008). Academic literacies in theory and practice. In B. Street & N. Hornberger (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education* (2nd ed., pp.227-238). New York, NY: Springer.

Levinson, B., Sutton, M., & Winstead, T. (2009). Education policy as a practice of power. *Educational Policy*, *23*(6), 767-795.

Light, R. (2003). *Making the most of college*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lillis, T. (2001). *Student writing: access, regulation and desire*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Lillis, T. (2003). Student writing as academic literacies: Drawing on Bakhtin to move from critique to design. *Language and Education*, *17*(3), 192-207.

Lillis, T. (2006). Moving towards an'academic literacies' pedagogy: Dialogues of participation. In L. Ganobcsik-Williams (Ed.), *Teaching academic writing in UK higher education (pp.* 30–45). Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lillis, T., & Turner, J. (2001). Student writing in higher education: contemporary confusion, traditional concerns. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *6*(1), 57-68.

Lillis, T., & Scott, M. (2007). Defining academic literacies research: issues of epistemology, ideology and strategy. *Journal of Applied Linguistics, 4*(1), 5-32.

Lillis, T. (2011). Ligitimizing dialogue as textual and ideological goal in academic writing for assessment and publication. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, *10*(4), 401-432.

Lillis, T., Harrington, K., Lea, M., & Mitchell, S. (2015). Working with academic literacies: case studies towards transformative practice [e-book]. Retrieved from http://wac.colostate.edu/books/lillis.

Longacre, R. (1996). The Grammar of discourse. New York, NY: Springer.

López Bonilla, G. (2013). Prácticas disciplinares, prácticas escolares: Qué son las disciplinas académicas y cómo se relacionan con la educación formal en las ciencias y en las humanidades. *Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa*, *18*(57), 383-412.

Malinowski, B. (1923). The problem of meaning in primitive languages. In C. Ogden and I. Richards (Eds.), *The Meaning of Meaning*. London, United Kingdom: Kegan Paul.

Maybin, J. (2000). The new literacy studies. Context, intertextuality and discourse. In D. Barton, M. Hamilton & R. Ivanič (Eds), *Situated literacies: reading and writing in context* (pp.197-209). London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Melzer, D. (2003). Assignments across the curriculum: A survey of college writing. *Language and Learning across the disciplines*, *6*(1), 86-110. Retrieved from http: // wac.colostate.edu/atd/archives.cfm

Melzer, D. (2009). Writing assignments across the curriculum: A national study of college writing. *College Composition and Communication, 61*(2), 240-261.

Monroe, J. (2002). Global cultures, local writing: collaborative contexts: the Cornell consortium for Writing in the Disciplines. *Language and learning across disciplines*, *5*(3), 11-27. Retrieved from http://wac.colostate.edu/llad/v5n3/monroe.pdf

Moreno, P. (2004). La política educativa de Vicente Fox (2001-2006). *Tiempo de Educar, 5*(10), 9-35. Retrieved from http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=31101002

Mulderrig, J. (2007). Textual strategies of representation and legitimation in New Labour policy discourse. In A. Green, G. Rikowski & H. Raduntz (Eds.), *Renewing dialogues in Marxism and education* (pp. 135-150). New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

Mulderrig, J. (2008). Using keywords analysis in CDA: evolving discourses of the knowledge economy in education. In B. Jessop, N. Fairclough & R. Wodak (Eds.), *Education and the knowledge-based economy in Europe (pp.149-170).* Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Mulderrig, J. (2011). Manufacturing consent: a corpus-based critical discourse analysis of New Labour's educational governance. *Journal of Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *43*(6), 562-578.

Mulderrig, J. (2012). The hegemony of inclusion: a corpus-based critical discourse analysis of deixis in education policy. *Discourse & Society*, *23*(6), 701-728.

Myers, G. (2006). 'In my opinion': the place of personal views in undergraduate essays. In M. Hewings (Ed.), *Academic writing in context: implications and applications* (pp. 63-78). London, United Kingdom: Continuum.

Nesi, H., & Gardner, S. (2012). *Genres across the disciplines. Student writing in higher education*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge Applied Linguistics.

OECD (2002). *PISA 2000 Technical Report*. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/programmeforinternationalstudentassess mentpisa /33688233.pdf

OECD-CERI (2003). Revisión nacional de investigación y desarrollo educativo. Reporte de los examinadores sobre México. *Nuevos Retos para la Investigación Educativa*. Retrieved from https://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/32496490.pdf

OECD (2013). Education policy outlook. Mexico. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/mexico/EDUCATION%20POLICY%20OUTLOOK%20MEXI CO_EN.pdf

Ostler, S. (1980). A survey of academic needs for advanced EFL. *TESOL Quarterly*, *16*(4), 489-502.

Paltridge, B. (2012). *Discourse analysis. An introduction* (2nd ed.). London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Papen, U. (2015). *Literacy and education: policy, practice and public opinion*. Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge

Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Peredo, A. (2001). Las habilidades de la lectura y la escolaridad. *Perfiles Educativos*, *94*(23), 57-69.

Peters, N. (2001). National education policy constructions of the 'knowledge economy': towards a critique. *Journal of Educational Inquiry*, *2*(1), 1-22.

Presidencia de la República de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos (2001). Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2001-2006. Retrieved from http://bibliotecadigital.conevyt.org.mx

Punch, K. (2009). Introduction to research methods in Education. London, United Kingdom: Sage.

Reisigl, M. & Wodak, R. (2001). Discourse and discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and antisemitism. London:United Kingdom: Routledge.

Rex, L., Bunn, M., Davila, B., Dickinson, H. Carpenter, A., Gerben, C., Orzulak, M., & Thomson, H. (2010). A review of discourse analysis in literacy research. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *45*(1), 94-115.

Rizvi, F., & Lingard, B. (2010). *Globalizing education policy*. Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Robertson, S. (2008). Embracing the global: Crisis and the creation of a new semiotic order to secure Europe's knowledge-based economy. In B. Jessop, Fairclough, N. & R. Wodak (Eds.), *Education and the knowledge-based economy in Europe* (pp. 89-108). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense publishers.

Rockwell, E. (2013). Preambles, questions, and commentaries: Teaching genres and the oral mediation of literacy. In J. Kalman & B. Street (Eds.), *Literacy and Numeracy in Latin America* (pp.184-199). New York, NY: Routledge.

Rogers, R. (2003). A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Special Education Referral process: A case study. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*. *24(2)*, 139-158.

Rogers, R. (2011). Critical approaches to discourse analysis in educational research. In R. Rogers (Ed.), *An introduction to critical discourse analysis in education* (2nd ed., pp. 1-20). New York, NY: Routledge.

Rogers, R., Malancharuvil-Berkes, E., Mosley, M., Hui, D., & O'Garro, J. (2005). Critical discourse analysis in education: A review of the literature. R*eview of Educational Research, 75(3),* 365-416*.*

Rose, M. (1983). Remedial writing courses: A critique and a proposal. *College English*, *45*(1), 109-126.

Roux, R. (2008). Práctica de alfabetización académica: lo que los estudiantes dicen de la lectura y la escritura en la Universidad. En E. Narvaez y S. Cadena (Eds.), *Los desafíos de la lectura y la escritura en la educación superior: caminos posibles (pp*. 127-155). Colombia: Universidad Autónoma de Occidente.

Russell, D., Lea, M., Parker, J., Street, B., & Donahue, T. (2009). Exploring notions of genre in "academic literacies" and "writing across the curriculum": Approaches across countries and contexts. In C. Bazerman, A. Bonini & D. Figueiredo (Eds.), *Genre in a changing world* (pp. 395-423). Retrieved from http:// wac.colostate.edu

Russell, D., & Cortes, V. (2012). Academic and scientific texts: the same or different communities? In M. Castelló & C. Donahue (Eds.), *University writing selves and texts in academic societies* (pp. 3-17). Bingley, United Kingdom: Emerald.

Saldaña, T. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage

Samraj, B. (2002). Texts and contextual layers: academic writing in content courses. In A. Johns (Ed.), *Genre in the classroom. Multiple perspectives (pp.163-176)*. New Jersey, NY: Lawrence.

Savski, K. (2015). Slovene language policy in time and space. The trajectory of a language strategy from inception to implementation. (Unpublished PhD thesis). Lancaster University. United Kingdom.

Secretaría de Educación Pública. (2001). *Plan Nacional de Educación 2000-2006. Retrieved from* http://www.sep.gob.mx

Secretaría de Educación Pública (2006). Plan de estudios 2006. Educación básica. Secundaria. SEP: Mexico.

Secretaría de Educación Pública (2011). Plan de estudios 2011. SEP: Mexico.

Silverman, R. (2009). *Doing Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). London, United Kingdom: Sage.

Street, B. (1995). *Social Literacies*. London: United Kingdom: Longman.

Street, B. (2010). Academic literacies approaches to genre'? V SIGET Simposio Internacional de Etudos de Generos Textuales. *Revista Brasileira de Lingüística Aplicada,10* (2), 347-361. doi:10.1590/S1984-63982010000200004

Sullivan, J. (2013). Skype: An appropriate method of data collection for qualitative interviews? *The Hilltop Review*, 6(1). Retrieved from http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/hilltopreview/vol6/iss1/10

Sunderland, J. (2010). *Research questions in Linguistics*. In L. Litosseliti (Ed.), *Research methods in Linguistics* (pp. 9-28). London, United Kingdom: Continuum.

Tardy, C. (2010). Writing for the world: Wikipedia as an introduction to academic writing. *English Teaching Forum*, *48*(1), pp. 12-27

Tatto, M., Schmelkes, S., Guevara, M., & Tapia, M. (2006). Implementing reform amidst resistance: The regulation of teacher education and work in Mexico. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *45*(4-5), 267-278.

Tatto, M. (2012). The reach and possibilities of educational reform for the rural poor in Mexico. In M. Tatto, J. Bruner, J. Chang, G. Cramfield (Eds.), *Learning and doing policy analysis in education: Examining diverse approaches to increasing educational access* (pp.233–252). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Taylor, S. (1997). Critical policy analysis: exploring contexts, texts and consequences. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, *18*(1), 23-35.

Taylor, S. (2004) Researching educational policy and change in 'new times': using critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Education Policy*, *19*(4), 433-445.

Titscher, S., Meyer, M., Wodak. R., & Vetter, E. (2000). *Methods of text and discourse analysis*. London, United Kingdom: Sage.

Tusting, K. (2013). Literacy studies as linguistic ethnography. Working papers in

urban language & literacies. Paper 105, 1-15.

UAEH (2000a). Plan de estudios de Educación. Mexico.

UAEH (2000b). Plan de estudios de Química. Mexico.

UAEH (2001). Modelo Educativo. México. Retrieved from http:// www.uaeh.edu.mx

UAEH (2011). Plan institucional de desarrollo. México. Retrieved from http://
        www.uaeh.edu.mx

UNESCO (2003). Literacy, a UNESCO perspective. Retrieved from
        http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001318/131817eo.pdf

Unger, J. (2013). *The discursive construction of the Scots language*. Amsterdam,
        Netherlands: John Benjamins.

van Dijk, T. (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. London, United Kingdom:
        Sage.

van Dijk, T. (2009). *Discourse and context: A sociocognitive approach*. Cambridge,
        United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Varela-Petito, G. (2012). System and policy in the planning of higher education in
        Mexico. *Creative Education*, 3, 980-985. doi:10.4236/ce.2012.326148

Vidovich, L., & Currie, J. (2011). Governance and trust in higher education. *Studies in
        Higher Education*, *36*(1), 43-56.

Williams, C. (2009). Legal English and the 'modal revolution'. In R. Salkie, P. Busuttil &
        J. van der Auwera (Eds.), *Modality in English: Theory and Description* (pp. 199-
        210). Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter.

Wingate, U. (2006). Doing away with 'study skills'. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *11*
        (4), 457-469.

Wingate, U. (2012). Using academic literacies and genre-based methods for
        academic writing instruction: A 'literacy' journey. *Journal of English for
        academic purposes*, *11*(1), 26-37.

Wingate, U., & Tribble, C. (2012). The best of both worlds? Towards an English for
        academic purposes/academic Literacies writing pedagogy. *Studies in Higher
        Education, 37(4), 481-495.*

Woodside-Jiron*, H. (2011).* Language, power, and participation: Using critical
        discourse analysis to make sense of public policy. In R. Rogers (Ed.), *An
        Introduction to critical Discourse analysis in education* (2nd ed., pp. 154-182).
        London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Wodak*, R.* (2001). What CDA is about. In R. Wodak . & M. Meyer (Eds.), Methods of
        Critical Discourse Analysis. London: United Kingdom: Sage Publications.

Wodak, R. (2008). Discourse studies: important terms and concepts. In R. Wodak & M. Krzyzanowski (Eds.), *Qualitative discourse analysis in the sciences*. Basignstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave.

Wodak, R., DeCilia, R., Reisigl, M. & Liebhart, K. (2009). *The Discursive construction of national identity* (2nd. ed). Edinburgh, United Kingdom: Edinburgh University Press

Wodak, R., & Fairclough, N. (2010). Recontextualizing European higher education policies: the case of Austria and Romania.*Critical Discourse Studies*, *7*(1), 19-40.

Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (2015) (Eds.), Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis (3rd. ed.). London: United Kingdom: Sage Publications.

Zorrilla, M., & Barba, B. (2008). Reforma Educativa en México. Decentralización y nuevos actors. *Revista Electrónica Sinéctica*. 30, 1-30. Retrieved http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=99819167001

Appendix 1 Ethics documentation

Informatio Sheet- Lecturers

February 2014

Literacy practices in the disciplines in a Mexican institution: context, texts, roles and functions

As part of my Doctoral studies in the Department of Linguistics and English Language at Lancaster University, United Kingdom, I am doing research at your university. The aim of my study is to find out more about the academic writing and reading students do during their studies. I will be conducting interviews and collecting several documents relevant to my study.

I have approached you because you are a teacher and I would like to find out more about your students' reading and writing. The study will be conducted in two phases, and if you agree to take part, it is important that you participate in both phases.

In the first phase, I will ask you to share with me the syllabi of the modules you teach, any guidelines and hand-outs you have given your students about how to write an assignment and any other texts you think are important in helping students to learn about reading and writing at university. Then I will invite you to an interview of approximately 1-2 hours to discuss some of these documents as well as some of the texts written by your students having previously obtained their authorisation.

I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time up to three months after the data is collected. If you want

to withdraw after three months your data will remain in the study. At every stage, your name will remain confidential and documents will be anonymised. The data will be kept securely encrypted and will be used in my PhD thesis and for academic purposes only, for example, conference presentations, publications, or teaching. Please be aware that there is a small risk that you could be associated with the documents you provide for my research if you have previously put them online with your name attached.

If you choose not to participate in the study, your decision will have no detrimental effect on your relationship with the university in any way.

If you have any queries about the study, please feel free to contact me at h.hidalgoaviles@lancaster.ac.uk, or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Johann Unger, who can be contacted at Lancaster University, Bailrigg, Lancaster, United Kingdom, LA1 4YL; by email j.unger@lancaster.ac.uk or by phone on +44 (0) 1524 592591. If at any stage of the study you wish to speak to an independent person about this project, you are welcome to contact the Head of Department, Professor Elena Semino at e.semino@lancaster.ac.uk or by phone on +44 (0) 1524 594176.

Hilda Hidalgo Aviles

h.hidalgoaviles@lancaster.ac.uk

Information Sheet- Students

February 2014

Literacy practices in the disciplines in a Mexican institution: context, texts, roles and functions

As part of my Doctoral studies in the Department of Linguistics and English Language at Lancaster University, United Kingdom, I am doing research at your university. The aim of my study is to find out more about the academic writing and reading students do during their studies. I will be conducting interviews and collecting several documents relevant to my study.

I have approached you because you are a student and I would like to find out more about your reading and writing. The study will be conducted in two phases, and if you agree to take part, it is important that you participate in both phases.

In the first phase, I will ask you to share with me some of the marked assignments you have written during your studies and any resources or information you have received about academic writing and reading. Then I will invite you to an interview of approximately 1 hour to discuss some of these texts. I would also like to discuss your assignments with your tutor, with your permission.

I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time up to three months after the data is collected. If you want to withdraw after three months your data will remain in the study. At every stage, your name will remain confidential and documents will be anonymised. The data will be kept securely encrypted and will be used in my PhD thesis and for academic purposes only, for example, conference presentations, publications, or teaching.

Please be aware that there is a small risk that you could be associated with the documents you provide for my research if you have previously put them online with your name attached.

If you choose not to participate in the study, your decision will have no detrimental effect on your relationship with the university in any way.

If you have any queries about the study, please feel free to contact me at h.hidalgoaviles@lancaster.ac.uk, or my thesis supervisor, Dr Johann Unger, who can be contacted at Lancaster University, Bailrigg, Lancaster, United Kingdom, LA1 4YL; by email at j.unger@lancaster.ac.uk or by phone on +44 (0)1524 592591. If at any stage of the study you wish to speak to an independent person about this project, you are welcome to contact the Head of Department, Professor Elena Semino at e.semino@lancaster.ac.uk or by phone on +44 (0)1524 594176.

Hilda Hidalgo Aviles

h.hidalgoaviles@lancaster.ac.uk

UNIVERSITY OF LANCASTER

Department of Linguistics and English Language

Consent Form

Project title: Literacy practices in the disciplines in a Mexican institution: contexts, texts, roles and function.

Please tick all that apply:

☐ I have read and had explained to me by Hilda Hidalgo Aviles the Information sheet relating to this project.

☐ I have received a copy of this Consent Form and of the accompanying Information Sheet.

☐ I have had explained to me the purposes of the project and what will be required of me, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to the arrangements described in the Information Sheet in so far as they relate to my participation.

☐ For students only:I grant the researcher permission to discuss my marked assignments with my tutor.

☐ I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project up to three months after my data is collected. However, I understand that after the research has been conducted the anonymized extracts of my texts and/or documents and interview transcript may be used in conference presentations, publications and for teaching purposes.

☐ I agree that I may be contacted by email about my data after the two main phases of the research are complete.

Name

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 3 Students' interview guide

I.   Introduction

I would ask some general questions such as:

What semester are you in?

What is the best thing you have ever written?

Then I would move to these questions:

What can you tell me about the reading and writing you did at school before entering university?

If I ask you to think about the writing you did in high school, what would you say? What do you remember?

If I ask you to think about the reading you did in high school, what would you say? What do you remember?

What about the writing you do at university? What can you tell me?

Is it different from before?

What does writing mean for you?

What is writing for you?

Do you like writing?

When do you write?

Where do you write?

Who do you write with?

What do you do when you write?

What is the role of writing in this programme? (Is writing relevant for this program? Why?)

Is it important to know how to write in the programme you are studying? Why

In your current studies, what types of writing have you produced?

In this current term, what types of writing have you produced?

Among the pieces of writing that you have to produce at university, which is the one that seems to you the most representative of your discipline of study? Why?

Among the pieces of writing you have to produce which ones are crucial for your degree success?

Has the writing you done contributed to your education? If so, how?

What have you learned from the writing you have done?

Is writing easy for you?

When you have to produce a piece of writing at the university, what aspects of writing seems to you to be the most difficult? Easy?

Does you teacher provide you with any guidelines? If so, how? What type of guidelines?

When you're asked to write a paper are you provided with guidelines?

What parts of writing are you good at?

What else do you write in addition to academic pieces?

Reading Cluster

What do you usually read?

When do you read?

Do you like reading?

What do you do when you read?

When do you read?

What other readings do you do in addition to academic readings?

II. Looking at the texts

Why did you choose these texts?

What is it? Why?

Can you tell me what you did when you wrote them?

When did you start?

How long did it take you to write it?

Did it change a lot in the course of writing?

Would you do it differently?

Was it (pointing the text) difficult/easy to write? Why?

In what ways is this type of text relevant to your discipline?

What did you learn from writing it?

More specific questions

I notice you include a list of references, but the authors are not cited in the texts, why?

Who decides the structure of the lab report (reporte de practica)?

Was it hard to fit the work into that structure?

Which section was problematic?

Appendix 4 Lecturers' interview guide

II. Introduction

I would ask some general questions such as:

How long have you been working for this university?

For the programme?

What courses do you teach?

What was the last thing you wrote?

Then I would move to these questions:

When do you write?

Where do you usually write?

Who reads what you write?

What does writing mean for you?

What is writing for you?

Is writing relevant for this programme? Why?

Is it important for students to know how to write in this programme?

What types of writing do you ask students to produce?

Among the pieces of writing that you ask students to produce at university, which is the one that seems the most representative of the discipline of study? Why?

Among the pieces of writing that you ask students to produce which one is typical?

Which kind of writing is assigned most often?

Which is crucial to degree success?

What pieces of writing seems to you to be the most difficult for students? Easy?

What aspects of writing seem to be the most difficult for your students?

What aspects of writing seem to be the easiest?

Do you provide your students with any guidelines? If so, how? What type of guidelines?

Reading Cluster

What type of texts do you ask students to read?

Do you provide students with a list of readings to do?

What have you been asked to read? Printed books? Journals? Chapters?

Do your students read for work? For pleasure?

What aspects are more difficult for them when they read?

What do they get out of the readings they do?

II. Looking at the texts

In what ways is this type of text relevant to the discipline?

To what extent does this text contribute to the students' degree success?

What was the purpose of writing it?

How was this text written?

What do you think your students learn from writing this type of text?

More specific questions

Do you ask students to include references in the texts they write? If so, how many?

Do you expect your students to include references in the texts they write?

How do you expect them to integrate them in the text?

Appendix 2 Translated interview transcript

Interview Fiona

I: Thank you very much for accepting the interview. Can you tell me what is the best you have written during your BA programme?

F: The best I have written I think are essays in first semester because in high school I did not write an essay, not even with the specifications provided by the teacher. So, to learn what an essay is, the structure and everything. At the beginning, it was like and "how am I going to do it?" Later it was like, I said this is my vocation and I feel it was like my hands would write on their own. And I liked it very much because we learned about history from the point of view of education and to know that many of the things we live now is thanks to what we did or we did not do in history. So, I liked writing essays a lot. That is what I have enjoyed the most. I did not find some essays I wrote for Education Theories, but they were written based on a movie, so I couldn't track them. I couldn't track them but I also liked that because we watched a movie from a certain view and when one is immersed in what education is and you see Education Theories in a movie it implies a double job, that is, to work and understand. Comprehension is the best because what I see maybe it is traditional, but maybe it makes sense. I liked that translation, to express it on paper, well it was typed, but to express that and generate that link of ideas and in first semester it is complex, not complicated, complex. But I like the BA programme and I feel that it happens on its own.

I: OK. You've just mentioned something you did not do in high school, but if I ask you to remember what you wrote in high school, what can you tell me?

F: In high school, uh for example the only extensive writing we did, to call it somehow, was projects, but these projects were Chemistry and Physics, so writing changes a lot. For example, I also said to myself, this is my course because I remember that for the Physics projects the teacher would ask for a social element, an environment or biological element, and the Physics and Chemistry element. So, if your project was to make some cream, you had to write the social factor. Well, how it would contribute to society; the biological, the environment, physical what you are looking, the changes everything. So, in a way I would extend the social, but the benefits, but with regards to the physical-mathematics I wanted to extend my writing but not, so the teacher told me "few students have understood what I mean by social factor and you give more of what I thought you could give and we need that in the projects. To give that social domain. So, I said, what are you going to study? "Because you could cover the social aspect with us". I said "no, no I don't like the mathematics part I like the social one; I am going to study Education". In addition, he says, "you're right." "Really?" He says, "yes". I remember that my history teacher said that this programme is three things: read a lot, write a lot and talk a lot. And form first semester you say "an essay", but you had already studied all the topics, but when writing your essay, it was like go back to the books and say what was done in Mesopotamia and it changes the vision because one does not see it like Education in Mesopotamia, for example. The teacher's topic was didactics so we had to translate

the text because no book will be on didactics so you had to translate the text and say "here it is didactics" It does not say Mesopotamic didactics, but 'this is didactics'. Therefore, what the teacher said it was didactics; you could see it in the texts and I said, "here it is". For example, the study plan, when are we going to find a study plan in Greek? No, but the configuration of the subjects, the contents are in the study plan, so I liked writing a lot. I feel a basic test for this BA programme is having passed the essays. Once they say "an essay" you say "yes" and you develop that skill and you say "I'm going to write what I want to write".

I: Ah, OK. And regarding reading, what did you read in high school?

F: I have always read, all my life. I have always had a book to read, always, always. I remember that from elementary school, reading corner, always a book to read. In high school, in secondary school the same. I started high school and had not taken any literature classes, but we took some subjects that were called universal art and Mexican art, so they asked us to write a reading report, main characters, support characters, and we had to read a book for every exam. For example, in universal art, they asked us to read The Odyssey, The Iliad, that kind of books, but our teacher told us "the fragmented version, don't worry" then you say 'well', so they give you the children's version, but I went beyond that and I would read the teenager version because it was really interesting. In Mexican Art, we read Popol Vuh. So, we started to read Genesis so for many of us was like "I have never read the Bible" but you realize that you can read about everything and it is part of the culture to read about everything; you classify what you like; what is good, and so we said "why not to read the Bible as a literary text". So, we opened Genesis. Genesis and we read it and everything. That was part of universal art. In Mexican art, as I told you, we read The Popol Vuh, I can't remember what other texts we read, but always, always reading. And they go hand in hand, I feel reading and writing, but writing is difficult for many people, to write it. But as far as I remember I have always liked writing and reading. Now it is like elementary and secondary at the same time, that is, writing is in the middle. So, if I write it is because I have read or because I know something and then I have to read what I wrote and it is like another job to read what I wrote.

I: And the writing you do at university is it different from what you did in high school?

F: Ummm, maybe it is not difficult, but it is more specialized because now we talk about education, so it is specialized and how can I say it? It requires a lot of detail. I sometimes feel it is like a prescription, if you write it wrong your patient, so it also happens to us. Many lecturers tell us "don't rush your writing. Can you do it?" That happens in first semester because we write about the *wonders* of education and the teacher asks, "can you do it? How would you do it? No, it is not an ideal, you've told me it is ideal now write something you can do and that is real". And that is very hard to do because it is nice to write and let ideas fly, but here in the BA programme, you write to do for example a project, you have to be careful that you don't write ideals. Many times, your writing on paper sounds and looks good, but then when they tell us for the second partial exam you have to hand in a project, a real project. You have to restructure it because you realize you cannot do it. So, it is very different, very different, very, very different and now that I am in eighth semester I see that you

don't have to pass the theory for the sake of passing it. In eighth semester, we say "we studied this in second semester and you wrote about it, right?" Oh yes, we don't see the point of what we wrote and we see it to pass the exam, to pass another semester and it stays there but you can use it later. It is very different because writing makes sense.

I: What is writing for you?

F: It is the easiest way of communication that can exist because I feel sometimes that the paper can be a barrier or a shield. I wrote it, I hand it in; it is there. So, writing to me, I find speaking more difficult than writing, writing is easy for me. The fact is that I can read to myself, I can delete it, correct, restructure it in such a way that I understand it and I can give it to another person and say "do you understand it? Does it sound OK?". "Yes, perfect". So, writing to me is the easiest way of communication totally and it does not stop there; it turns into something. However, for example a chat can go, but I am looking at my first semester texts, and they stay, it stays on paper, writing is for me the easiest way of communication.

I: When do you write?

F: For academic purposes, I read every day because I do homework every day. And it is not because I have homework every day, but because I do homework in advance or if something is not clear in class, maybe the topic was not fully developed and if they ask me about it, I search more information about it. And I cannot search on the computer, read an article and do nothing; I have to write something, key words, do a concept map something that helps me understand my notes, but I have to write because that is the way I learn, and I have to write it.

For example, I remember that when I have a test or semesters later, I remember my notes or what the lecturer wrote on the board or what he said. I linked it with what he wrote, what he said and what he wrote, so to me the day I break one of my two hands I do not know what I will do, no, no, no. I feel that my notes are something personal and something I value.

I: Where do you write?

F: In my room, but personal issues, for example. If I am angry, I write. If I have a problem with my parents, with my brothers and I cannot talk about it, I get it off my chest by writing. Maybe I will tear it off, but it is out. Homework issues I have my desk and my table to write.

For example, I cannot write my essays when there are people around, that is, it has to be early morning because where I live it is noisy, so it is my ideas and I write and it flows and I don't sleep, I can spend hours writing.

I: Do you write by hand or on the screen?

F: Ah, that is interesting because for example in first semester I wrote my drafts by hand, and then I would write them on the computer but I said "I´m wasting my time". And the time to write my thesis will come, and I cannot write it by hand, I

have to do it, I have to learn to do it. So, little by little, I started to write directly on the computer and what I do is to write some ideas on paper. For example, I write an idea and I tick it, things like that, but I write directly on the screen and I do it as if I were writing by hand. It was hard at the beginning, but that was in first semester. And I said "I have to write directly on the screen". Every time texts were longer, so I can now write directly on the screen.

I: Do you think that you don't have time to write?

F: Maybe it depends on the topic, most of the time it flows. For example, but what I do is that I always check my writing; I always go back to my writing. For example, it is ready to print and I print it. It happened to me in Seminar for my second partial exam, I revised and "that's nasty. I´m missing a preposition, or things like that, maybe a full stop would work better here" and if I like what I read I feel satisfied with it. I am satisfied with what I write most of the times, but as they say after some time we see our mistakes.

I: Do you think it is important for your programme to learn how to write?

F: Yes, yes totally because everything they ask for has to be written, and they ask then; you have to talk about what you wrote, that is, the class develops based on what you wrote. So if you did not write it well or you couldn't express what you wanted, when it comes to discuss about it you can use your own notes, yes it is essential to write a lot.

I: What have you been asked to write so far?

F: Well, it is based on projects, proposals, you have to write that. Always. They told us from first semester "why are you here?" "Well, to study". Let's rephrase it, "why are you studying education?" "To solve education problems", "well that's true". So, most of the semesters, our subjects are based on that, identify a problem, define it, so then you make a proposal or whatever, so everything is written down. Did I answer your question?

I: Yes, what you have been asked to write.

F: Oh yes, basically projects, proposals based on an education problem, so in every subject. I don't remember a subject in which we have not written. In fact, evaluation is like that, first partial exam is a theory-based exam, second partial exam some progress of your proposal and third exam, your final project. Most of the times, they ask you to write essays and proposals.

I: Why do you write in university?

F: Why do I write in university? Well, many times or most of the times to propose improvements to something that at any point I did not like or that is taking place and affects the majority, not only myself. For example, from proposals that I have writtem, I have solved problems that I had in elementary school and that they are still present. So I said, "Now it is time for me to do something". In addition, the same for secondary, high school, so form kindergarten. I like to know all the levels because

I don't know where I will be working in the future, so I have to know all the levels because in every level there is something, so I write for my ideas to be written down and maybe tomorrow I would say "yes, I had this idea" and maybe I can apply it, for example. Or if I don't write it down I will forget it, right? It won't be on draft, nothing so it is a dead idea; it won't bear fruit, so that is way I write it down.

I: So, you relate your writing with experiences you have lived?

F: Yes, because it is the opportunity, maybe before starting the BA programme, I said, "how can I do this?", but the programme gives you the methodology, maybe the structure. You have a proposal and maybe someone can buy it. It must have a structure; it must bring it. Therefore, the programme gives us that, to structure something we probably said but did not write it down, we did not structure it; we didn't do it.

I: Among the texts you´ve written which ones do you think are typical of this programme?

F: Essays, maybe we sometimes don't write essays, but a reflection. So you watch a film and they ask you to write a reflection. You don't get to write an essay, but a reflection, so I feel that is what they ask us to write most, essays and reflection. The BA programme is divided in two stages; the first semesters essays, reflections, they go hand in hand and then once you have some theoretical background, you write projects. There is the link between reality and theory. To link them is difficult because if you didn't read the theory and you said what is this for? Maybe tomorrow that you have a great idea, but they ask you, "Where did you get it from?" "I came up with it". "No, where did you get it from? Support it". So, you have to remember the time when you read the theory, but that theory you just read it, maybe you could have written an essay, have made an oral presentation, the project is more complex and I support it with reality and theory.

I: When you are asked to write something, do they give you guidelines?

F: Mainly for the format. For example, for the essays they tell us the topic is this, you choose the title, format issues, font, font size, margins. But they give us lots of freedom to express ourselves and when they give you your mark, it is not based on what you wrote, but based on the format requirements, and that it has the statement of the problem, a development, a conclusion, that you are capable of doing this, but not based on how you wrote about the topic. With regards to how you write about the topic, how you discuss it, how you reflect on it there are no guidelines as such. We can say that there is freedom to write.

 I: I have noticed they ask you to write a reflection, what do you learn from that reflection?"

F: Sometimes it is the hardest part of the text. I've noticed that with some of my classmates because many times they always ask, "how did you like the reflection?" "Very well" but the reflection goes beyond that, "what did you learn as a BA student, or in the future as a professional". To me writing the reflection is what I enjoy the most because you have to draw on what the authors said, what is there. But the

reflection is mine, that is where I can do and undo the text and do and undo my words and say this is what I think, what I would like, that I think it is right or wrong; that is, I don't care about what teachers think, what my classmates think, it is mine. So, when I write the reflection it is difficult for me when they set a page limit, maximum 15 pages, one is for the cover, another one for the references, another for the introduction, development like 3 or 4 and one for conclusions, one for reflection. So, it is difficult for me because I did the body, the way I wrote it is the way I would discuss and I cannot discuss in person, so when I have to put everything in the conclusions it is difficult for me to keep it short. I think I have to go straight to the point when I want to say, "Read me". I want to say this and this, but yes I like reflections most.

I: What is the difference between conclusion and reflection?

F: Conclusion? As a teacher told us "say what you have said" and that is true; it is like that. For the introduction say what you're going to do, but you do it until the end because you know what you're going to say, so for the conclusion is the same. And the reflection is mine; that is personal, what I think.

I: I find it interesting because this is something that is not privileged in other subject areas, but when you say "it is mine", "it is personal", but in a way is the result of?

F: Exactly. It is supported because I have written this, and this. For example, many of our essays are about lesson plans. I remember I wrote many cultures. I mentioned arts, sports and it is included, but it happens that some cultures privilege some things, so that goes in the reflection; it is not a conclusion "whether the Greek included sports in their subjects" "thanks for bringing it up, but you have already written that", so there is a change.

I: Do you write something else in addition to the academic texts?

F: No, I don't write like personal issues, but for example something I like a lot is I love handcrafted notebooks, so I have two notebooks; one is for phrases from films that I liked, and not in function of personal growth, but phrases that I liked and from books. If I find something from books, a phrase that I liked or that makes me reflect and I say "wow, yes this is true", I write it in another notebook, and when I write it I tell my mom "wait". I remember there is phrase that says that, so I go to my notebooks and I know where the phrase is and I say "I took it from that book" and that is the only thing I write.

I: With regards to reading, you have mentioned you like reading, when do you read?

F: My reading routine changed a lot at university. I have to say that. For example, last semester was very difficult for me to find time to read for pleasure because I had lots of work. So, I had time to read late at night. So, it was hard for me because of my eyes; they hurt or I would start to cry late at night, so it was hard. But most of the times, I write on weekends and I say I am going to forget about my homework and I am going to do what I like. So, I go down to my bedroom and I read and read until my eyes get tired otherwise I would finish the book. I also read on the bus. I learned how to read on the bus. I couldn't read on the bus before, but I said "it is a long journey I

am going to read" and it is where I read. For example, I have read a book for a week and a half on the bus, but it is where I read.

I: And are you asked to read here at university?

F: Oh yes, a lot, a lot but it is different as I tell you I love my BA programme, so it has never been hard for me to read. I remember that they [lecturers] would arrive with a 'bunch of copies' and they [classmates] asked, is this for a topic?" For tomorrow?", "Yes", "Give us more time". The reading goes so fast and many times they would say the readings are hard, but I feel readings are for a specific time, age, space. I remember for example that for Sociology or Philosophy we studied complex terms many of which we had not heard before or the way the topic was dealt with was complex. Therefore, that was not a reading for the bus it was a reading for you to do in your space where you do your homework and it was line by line trying to link everything. For example, I remember I would write some comments on the margins of those difficult readings, but I feel previous knowledge helps you a lot, previous knowledge to be able to translate and interpret what they want to convey. Something that seems unclear and when it comes the time to interpret you say, "This is it; I have experienced it every day, I experience it every day". I remember a reading about the types of knowledge and whether the subject met the object, the three models led to the subject or there was a relation, subject-knowledge and knowledge-subject. So, that sounds so easy, but it was written in a very complex language. In addition, the lecturer explained it to us S an arrow that went from S to C; C to S and an arrow that linked S and C and then you say, "Is this all the reading?" Therefore, when reading it you would say, "it is very easy". It is very useful that you have read in advance, even the context that surrounds you is important to understand the readings.

I: When did you become interested in reading?

F: Well, I remember. My mother started to read as a habit recently, but she was the one that motivated us to read, when we were children. We always went to Children's book fairs, so the emphasis was on the game aspect, the picturesque, puppets and everything, so my love for reading started when I learned how to read, when I started to read. The best thing that could ever happen to me in kindergarten was to learn how to read. I tell my mom, I remember many things when I was a year and a half, but it is like episodic memory because they are events that marked me and I remember almost everything in kindergarten. I was like 5 years old. My mother says "you remember things when you were 4 years old". I started kindergarten when I was 3 and a half, so to me the fact that I was taught how to read was the best. It is a method that is not used anymore. Now people think that to read is to copy to children. I was taught using a syllable method, so I remember that it was a poster where you could stick drawings. I don't remember what the family was called, but they had a dog Dodo, the cat Tito, so it was just words with two very simple syllables. Father Pepe, mom Ana, Ema, Ema was her name. Children, Ana and so it was very simple to read, very simple. Books were similar, it was not copying, maybe the first time, but then you had to read and write at the same time, so we traced words. So, it was like fun. Or they asked you to link, you had an airplane and you had to write airplane or things like that were very simple. I didn't have to write lines and lines of

the same word; it was basically reading and writing. So, we wrote sentences and those sentences turned into stories because we linked them. So, I have always liked reading and I think it is thanks to kindergarten.

I: Did you attend a private school?

F: Yes, it was a private kindergarten; well in fact I have always gone to private schools except for high school and university, so yes I have attended a private school.

I: It makes a difference.

F: Yes.

I: Now we are going to look at your texts, what can you tell me about it? Is this a project?

F: Yes, we had to design and plan an educational institution. So, in a way writing was easy because we had a book and the book told us what the mission was and what we needed to write about it, so everything was easy and when we wrote it was putting things together. For the second partial exam, we had to hand in the vision and objectives, and for the final exam we had to hand in everything. So, when it was time to write about it. Well it happened to me that I said "no, no, I am not getting my ideas across, that it was a remedial center". So, I would go back and "I don't want this to be my objective; with these strategies I am not achieving this objective", so I would modify the strategies. So, it was difficult to do it "do it thinking of maybe one day tomorrow someone can see it and someone can buy it". So, "to write it in a way that". So, it was hard because it was a different kind of writing for me. I feel it was a new subject for me. We took them from sixth to ninth semester. We choose when to take it. I chose it last semester in seventh and I didn't like it. I am good at administrating, but I don't like numbers full-time, so when I said "I have to link my programme with finances" I said "how do I do it?" So, it was the most difficult part for me. So, it was like "Fiona, focus on a real context and if in the near future you have two pesos for the land and it costs two millions". Then, the financial part was very difficult and everything was strategic.

I: Is this about a film?

F: This is the example I told you about. We watched this film in first semester and we wrote an essay, but based on the traditional role of the teacher, not on traditionalism at school. A teacher arrives and breaks with traditionalism and that goes against the school´s culture and we studied that from first semester. And last semester we studied that in an optional module about administrative and management education models. So it was like take that essay off your mind that you did in first semester and now approach it from a different point of view with a different structure and everything. So, it is again, like a film that can be used by lecturers, so it is a question of "you're near graduation, so focus" because you're going to arrive to a context where you won't find a fragmented library". In this university we have theories, we have models; it is like a whole and "Now solve it", and it is approached from this view of administration and management. We did that in education management.

I: Did you write it in pairs?

F: This classmate found writing difficult. She then entered in a comfort zone because if it is in pairs and I know somebody else is going to do the work for me. So, for example what I did was like "how do I link it?" "Well, we can write this" and like she helped me with linking ideas. She gave me ideas, so I didn't write just my own because we sometimes do that and then is like "how do I write it?" So, another person supports you, "what do you want to say?; write this, yes you´re right; do you remember what happened?" and you would write it. "Don't forget about this; we are going to write it here" that was like the support.

I: And when you do something individually, do you ask somebody else to read it for you?

F: No, no rarely but when I am stuck," how do I say it?" But I have to be stuck to tell my mom "I'm going to read this to you, but concentrate, please" because she is painting and she says "what did you say?" "Mom, I need you to concentrate, please". What am I going when my mom is not around?" I told myself that when I was in second semester because my mom goes to bed early and as I told you I write at night. So, I have to take myself out of my person and say Fiona is on one side and I am another person "let's see if it is clear". So, it is very rare or I read it aloud and my mom "what are you saying?" "No, no, I'm here". I'll read it to you at the end because my mom likes to know what I am doing at university, but she won't tell me "write this or delete this".

I: Is this for the same subject?

F: This is a life project I did it in Human development in fifth semester, but the teacher asked for it, so the only thing I did was to change the name of the module because we already had it, but he told us to resubmit it, but I wrote it for human development. Another text that I liked is to write about myself. I said, "when am I going to finish it?". Yes, it was hard to finish it. And when I presented it, it was like "how am I going to present it in 10 minutes?" For me it was like two minutes. No, I couldn't present it in 10 minutes. In fact, my mom told me "I would like to read it" and I said "No, maybe no because you are my mom and like my mom you may feel guilty or you're going to put on your mom's role". I didn't read that one to her.

I: This is another one, is this for research seminar?

F: Yes, this is my topic that I worked in one semester. It is the compilation of everything.

I: And this one?

F: That one was for Education planning. We had to write an analysis about what it is being proposed for elementary education, in basic education. Adopting a macro perspective starting from the national development plans, and how that influenced what is being proposed in education. And we did the analysis based on the function of. It sounds good to say a strategic-education model, that is, it sounds good, but reality at schools is different. So, the module is about that. The lecturer wanted to

link that, and say "you can talk about what happens above (macro level)", but when you approach elementary schools, what is going on it is like "now what do I do?" That's reality.

I: And what about these ones? Are these essays?

F: Yes, they are essays. They are part of the History of Education subject that I told you about in first semester. We can say it is my first encounter. I don't have these ones in an electronic version, just a printed version because my memory stick was formatted, so I was lucky to have a hard copy.

I: What is the contribution of these assignments to your degree?

F: What is the contribution? Well, that issue of not getting just the theory in a classroom and what the teacher says, I research, I look for more information. In the future, I know that I can do something out there. For example, with regards to writing, it helps a lot. I am doing my social service and I have to check all the syllabi in the university, so we have to. For example, an engineering programme does not design its objectives in terms of learning objectives. An objective, they see it or maybe they don't see it as. So, when we are approaching that reality that has to do with the administration of all the programmes of the university we say "I was taught this way and it contains this and this and this objective won't be achieved at the end. Objectives are designed in this way, you´re going in a different direction". So, designing objectives, you can spend a long time because writing objectives is very difficult. So, we have the notion and I know it was hard to do, but maybe I will achieve my goal and I can contribute some way or at least some orientation. It contributes to a great extent or enormously.

I: What have you learned?

F: Well, I think my first learning is with regards to as I told you; time is gold and I have learned to write directly, so that helps a lot. What I have learned in terms of maybe cognoscitive is to do my own structures. I mean I am in control of my own knowledge; the knowledge you [teacher] gave me I can use it in the way I want to have in mind my knowledge reality, what it is. That is what I have learned. Because we can repeat it and repeat it, but when we do these types of texts it is how I translated it. Like some people say "I have swallowed it" and I hand it products. That is what I have learned.

I: This one has a mark, but it doesn't have any comments, what aspects does your teacher evaluate?

F: Ah, that is another issue. During that time, I hope this doesn't reach the lecturer. I think the teacher would mark just the first essay. He marked the first essay and there was a rubric that was based on the form, if the font, typos and don't know what else. The rumour is that he would open the essay and if he came across with something wrong on the first page, he would mark the page based on that. And he would just read the introduction and conclusion and he would read and he would also give mark based on the number of pages, how heavy the text was. I never paid attention to that; I was careful about the form, but I never said like "I´m going to write a nice

introduction and conclusion", no I did that because I liked it. Yes, I liked doing that, I tried to do it the best I could, so the development, I'm not lying, I had my notes with all the cultures because he also marked chronological order. So, I write all the cultures in order and when I was done with one, I would tick it and that is the way I would write my development. And for the introduction and conclusion I did the same, but on one of my classmates' essay I saw he would mark spelling, typos, but nothing in terms of content, nothing, nothing. They would have written that the Sumerians invented the smoke machine and the teacher won't even notice.

I: Are there any other cases?

F: No, no. Yes wrote comments. For example, for Education Theories essays, comments were based on the reflection, but reflection in the development, how you ended or how you started, so the mark was based on how you developed the topic, how you were creating your argument, why? Because the lecturer would say "I don't want" because the topic was the essay "I don't want you to tell me the Paidocentrism, Paidocentrism was portrayed like this on the film" and full stop. "We discussed personality theories, personality theories. I want something else because I have also seen the movie". So, what we did was to link everything and that is what she marked. Maybe I cannot call it an in-depth analysis, to reach that in-depth analysis implied we didn't have isolated knowledge, so I could understand the first topic that we studied but it was until the last one that I could link everything. So, I liked the way she graded us because it implied a major effort and the rest of the texts are based on that.

I: Finally, references, do they tell you about how many to use?

F: In first semester, yes they told us they wanted a certain amount of references. In fact, one of the aspects of the rubric was not to abuse the number of references, but they told us to use APA format. And in first semester when we had not had any contact with APA before, it was like "Oh my God", but I had written my index cards in elementary school, so they later taught us how to cite. Up to now, I can say I have not learned how to cite correctly because some tell us to cite in this way and others tell us to cite in a different way. Even when I have downloaded the APA manual, it is not that clear, so we can say that is a weakness of the BA programme because when you want to look for information on how to cite, sometimes reality is different or maybe I translate it differently, maybe that is the drawback of my texts.

I: Do lecturers ask you to include citations?

F: Yes, because as I am telling you "if you say this, support it" so this is basic and essential.

I: And is it ok if you take information form web pages?

F: Yes, we are special about the use of citations; it is part of our training [formación] that they have made us special. If I see an assignment with Wikipedia written on it, I don't read it. If it says [name of website], I don't read it. So that is something that they emphasise a lot, to be careful about the sources.

I: Do you want to add something else?

F: No, I think I've said a lot.