

## Introduction

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*In his brief book A importância do ato de ler (1982), Paolo Freire distinguished two meanings of the word 'reading': A literal meaning would be that reading is reading letters, words, books. This kind of reading involves literacy, education, mastery of the written word. But 'reading' also has a metaphorical sense: it is, before and after reading a book, "reading" the world, nature, memory, gestures, feelings, all of which Paolo Freire names with a neologism: palavramundo.*

Roger Chartier.

When we read or write, countless actions, carried out in specific contexts where they acquire meaning and transcendence, are involved. By taking part in them we build an identity as students in a school, professionals in a field of labor, cultural activists, social network users, citizens. It is a well-known fact that these practices are very dynamic, due to changes in their forms and the amount of information we have access to nowadays. We can now become part of universes of possibility, with an abundance of materials. Liberated from ancient limitations, we explore new connections in powerful platforms and somehow overcome uncertainties caused by the misinformation strategies currently on the rise.

According to Chartier,<sup>1</sup> when forms of communication change in their supports and formats, forms of publication and reception, the order of discourse – the relationships between texts, supports and ways of reading – that organize the written culture is disrupted. Faced with this, in schools – where written culture is the uppermost expression of their work – the traditional regimes of pedagogical action welcome renewed strategies for better understanding, achievement and critical discernment in the literate practices of their teachers and students. The recognition of the increasingly closer links between reading and writing practices in school and those that take place beyond the classroom, in the multiple domains of popular culture, also increases. Nevertheless, at least in societies like ours, the privileged role played by educational institutions – at every level – in the development of the ability to *read the world* cannot be overlooked. In this framework, the articles published here provide important clues for reflection and thought from the sociocultural prism of education.

The question about the potential of reading and writing to, in one way or another, produce changes on an individual or collective scale, underlies all analyses of reading and writing. Sometimes, the capacity for transformation is attributed to the virtues and abilities associated

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<sup>1</sup> Chartier, R. (2018) Libros y lecturas. Los desafíos del mundo digital. *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, 64, 119-124. <https://doi.org/10.7440/res64.2018.09>

to the contents of the text. However, the analytical gaze has been increasingly turning toward the practices, the web of relationships that literacy creates through them among different individuals, with the intervention of languages and forms of expression that might even not be textual, with the arts and with the body, weaving a network of social links. Along these lines, a team of researchers spent years delving into the possible performative capacity of reading and writing, in collaborative and transdisciplinary research work conducted in four different social spaces in Buenos Aires. Their work is described by Ana Inés Heras, María Amalia Miano, Ana Rosa Moyano, Mariel Lucía Ferreira, Eliana Verónica Soto, Horacio Cárdenas, Silvina Adriana Esposito, Judith del Valle, María Inés Mori, María Laura Galli, María Victoria Morana and Ana Patricia Schneider in their article “Reading and Writing Practices with a Potential for Transformation. Collaborative Research in School, Hospital, Community and Working-Class Neighborhood Environments”. Based on a comprehensive sociocultural theoretical framework and careful field work, this study shows the complex interweaving of literate practices carried out through an extensive repertoire of resources and interactions so that the participants – including babies and toddlers, regarded as “great readers” – question the world, cope with the structural and institutional limitations that constrain them, and re-create different realities with sensibility, imaginaries, play, and narrative.

For some decades now, the changing dynamics of the publishing industry have been carefully studied to describe their trajectories and repercussions on written culture worldwide. In the article “Publication in confined environments: meanings and questions about in-prison publishing”, María José Rubín addresses this issue from a unique dimension: the emancipating and humanizing capacity of the publication of texts when these represent a conquest under situations of extreme marginalization. Her text underscores the contribution of the much less known, scarcely promoted and even less publicized, fostering of writing and publication of texts outside the predominant commercial circuits, with the authorship of those who are imprisoned and for whom writing has a special symbolic power against the depersonalization and social vacuum they endure. Thus, their publication experiences become a sort of cultural activism, seeking to inscribe their texts on the horizon of enunciation through political-pedagogical writing practices.

Paloma Prado and María Guadalupe Pérez Martínez address different angles and perspectives aimed at the teaching and learning of writing, as well as its evaluation. In their text “Challenges of providing feedback on writing: A case study in language teaching in middle school education in Mexico”, they describe the dimensions, elements and modalities of the feedback that teachers conduct on the final papers of the Spanish class in the third grade of secondary school. The authors show the weak link between the teachers’ feedback and the specificities of the school’s curricular objectives, which they interpret as a limitation in the development of academic literacy in that school.

As it is well known, literacy is a right that enables the exercise of other rights and makes some types of social and personal development possible. Within the processes associated with literacy, reading comprehension is an important indicator, and social mediation constitutes an essential resource for the acquisition of that competency. In the article “Between letters and children: mediating literacy development”, Luis Felipe Gómez, Ma. Guadalupe Valdés and Ma. de Lourdes Centeno show media interventions designed from a sociocultural constructivist approach in a psychoeducational community care center for disadvantaged populations. In their analysis of intervention cases one can identify many possible ways to conduct educational mediation, and appreciate its scope and limitations.

A similar issue is addressed in “Factors associated to public secondary school learners’ reading comprehension”, by Magally Guadalupe Sánchez and Jesús Izquierdo, who describe a large inventory of factors that specialized literature has used to understand what determines the development of reading comprehension. To assess the impact of academic, sociocultural and personal factors that intervene in school environments, the authors report a study conducted with students in the third grade of secondary school grouped in two categories of performance in this competency based on results of the Planea Test applied in 2016 and 2017. Their findings inform on the motivations, objectives, supports, type of readings, strategies of comprehension and interpretation of texts, and the preferences and mediations of their family and school environment, data whose knowledge is essential for schools, educators, and parents.

In “Publication practices in discipline-oriented fields as perceived by researchers in a public university in Mexico”, Margarita Méndez-Ochaita, Alma Carrasco and Mara Serrano explore the tensions in discipline literacy when conducting processes of public communication of science. The authors argue that writing and publishing scientific texts, as well as the subsequent institutional processes of evaluation, editing, and publication, constitute forms of belonging to communities in which performance is governed both by the conventions of scientific discourse in general and by the specificities of the particular disciplinary field to which they are ascribed. At any rate, publication practices are ascribed implicitly to a Mertonian scientific *ethos* that specifies their selfless, communal and universal character, as well as the organized skepticism that rules their methodological strategies. However, that affiliation contrasts with the demands of competitiveness and productivity to which researchers are now subjected, as well as their academic training trajectories, which add different evaluation factors that have progressively taken root in the realm of academic publication.

In the text “In-school writing practices with students of Spanish Literature: a description of the training of literate subjects”, Luz Eugenia Aguilar and Gilberto Fregoso carry out a genealogical procedure to look into the formation of students of the Bachelors’ degree in Spanish Literature through experiences from their childhood and adolescence. The retrieval of different types of situated practices of reading and writing and the meaning given to them in regard to

the development of skills that result in their formation as literate individuals reveals a huge universe linked to the generation, organization, and production of knowledge in the sociocultural context of schools, and opens a door to imagine diversified ways of educational feedback on this subject.

Academic writing skills are crucial in any professional training. This is especially true in the case of the Bachelor's degree in Journalism, given the essentially communicative nature of the field. Óscar Vázquez, Diana Cervantes, Thelma García and Dalia Gómez are interested in the "Matching characteristics in students of Journalism with skills for academic writing". The authors opted for identifying common traits among students who show talent for academic writing through indicators that, although they are extraordinarily broad and diversified, may be gathered in two large groups: environmental and intrapersonal catalyzers. The results show a coincidence of elements that seem to strengthen each other, as well as a lack of determinisms due to family conditions, which offers a very useful insight for parents and educators at all levels of teaching.

The mediation exerted by reading and writing practices carried out through digital technological supports has been a recurring subject of research, as well as that related to the deficiencies in the linguistic and communicative standards often found in the writing of students who start their higher education. To analyze the characteristics of the use of technological resources to write academic texts, in the article "Academic literacy in higher education: the case of the State University of Sonora", Nadia Denise Hernández, Lilián Ivetthe Salado and Alfonso Vargas examine the distinctive features of the teachers' mediation in that university, the students' evaluation of their own writing practices, and the knowledge they have about the norms of academic writing. Based on this, they discern the rationales that channel academic writing practices in the university, both those recognized as desirable and those regarded as breaking norms expressly established.

It is not unusual to find studies on the perceptions, evaluations and skills of students' reading and writing practices. Less frequent is research work interested in the conceptions teachers have about them and those that underlie the curricular design of academic programs in the educational institutions into which teachers and students are incorporated. In the article "Conceptions of reading and writing in a graduate degree program in Architecture: an approach from the perspective of Academic Literacy", Jéssica Franco distinguishes the models implicit in the reading and writing processes of these actors of education in this academic context. She finds that, rather than being univocal or excluding each other, different and even opposed beliefs and models hybridize each other, while having little to do with the disciplinary specificities of the subjects and educational experiences included in the curricula.

Without a doubt, the development of academic literacy in an intercultural environment gives specific characteristics to educational actions. In the context of higher education for *mes-*

*tizo* populations in urban environments, the participation of students from indigenous ethnic groups poses a great challenge for the development of literacies, since it brings into play of a set of norms, values, identities, and cultural worldviews. In the text “Cultural artifacts for the development of the academic literacy of indigenous college students”, Juan Carlos Silas and Karla Susana Lombardi present an intervention supported by cultural artifacts as mediating agents for the development of academic literacy in indigenous students who experience asymmetries in the legitimacy granted to their different forms of perception, and the disadvantages they suffer under the apparent cultural and ideological neutrality of the educational institution.

It has been widely documented that higher education students have problems regarding their reading comprehension as well as their oral and written communication. However, students from indigenous ethnic groups face even greater difficulty when they are enrolled in institutions that, on the whole, still operate under norms, regulations and standards that are out of touch with the ways of expression and understanding of their cultures of origin. Furthermore, they also have to adapt to homogeneous performance criteria established for all the students, as well as to a scarcity of pedagogical actions of modeling and feedback. In the article “Literacy development in indigenous university students through self-regulation and metacognition”, Ruth Belinda Bustos Córdova and Ivett García Montero reconstruct the academic trajectories of young indigenous students in college to detect associated metacognition and self-regulation processes that act as powerful psychological mediators, both cognitive and affective. The data obtained in this study show that the ability to recognize one’s own knowledge allows young indigenous students to have greater self-regulation of their learning.

With a methodological orientation, the article “Reading and writing practices and habits in college students: building a data collection instrument” by Juana Eugenia Silva and Dafne Rodríguez, presents the design criteria of a data gathering instrument based on the review of questionnaires of studies on this subject previously applied by different national and international public bodies. Three dimensions were considered to design this instrument: access to reading, reading and writing practices, and reading and writing habits. Its application to students in 92 academic programs provided a first approach to the object researched: the relationships college students have with reading and with writing.

Plagiarism when writing a text is unethical behavior. Sadly, its use in college environments seems to be growing, as are the ways to identify it. But essentially corrective methods have a limited educational reach. Edrei del Carmen Izquierdo, Deneb Elí Magaña and Román Alberto Quijano inquire into the perception of students on this practice in the article “Students’ attitudes towards plagiarism and awareness to avoid it”. Based on a thorough bibliographic review, and despite the ambiguity this concept still has for a univocal signification, the authors show through their research with students in the Public Accounting major of a public university that this behavior can be predicted – and therefore discouraged – through an increased awareness

among the students about what plagiarism is, the acquisition of the competencies needed to avoid it, and how easy they find to commit it without facing any consequences. With these data, education can assume a central role to cope with the challenge that plagiarism represents for academic writing.

In another analysis of the same issue, María Cristina Sánchez and Martín Sánchez delve into the relationships between plagiaristic practices and the forms and modalities for teaching academic-scientific writing in graduate degree programs. Their article “The use of citation and reference resources in the writing of post-graduate theses and its relationship with textual plagiarism” shows that there is still much work to be done both in the design of plans of study and in educational dynamics so that students can write a graduate thesis, an argumentative text that requires using multiple resources for the attribution of knowledge involved not only in the mastery of disciplinary contents, but also in information management skills and the use of different linguistic resources.

We find a similar line of argumentation in the article “Didactic resources for the stimulation of metacognitive processes in academic writing” written by Martha Ávila, where she examines academic literacy through an analysis of the inadequacies found in academic texts written by graduate students in their graduation theses. She underscores the recurring problems that take place in the linguistic-communicative adequacy of the texts, in their formal structure and in the publication norms that must be observed. The author highlights the formal review processes, frequently unenthusiastic or limited to basic and unspecific issues. She remarks that the errors made by the students constitute useful indicators for professors and students to propose educational strategies aimed at solving the inadequacies identified. Added to that, the author includes detailed methodological suggestions for meta-cognitive stimulation in the self-review of academic texts, which are useful and necessary in a college education.

Critical capacity, in its countless meanings, is recognized as a skill that is closely linked to literate practices. In any of its possible definitions, it involves the ability to inscribe and interpret a given type of text in the framework of the social, political and cultural context in which it was produced, as a background for its possible readings. In the peculiar contexts created in the so-called virtual social networks, critical capacity in the reading practices associated faces particular challenges due to the type of information management that takes place there. In the article “Critical literacy in social networks: a case study of students in the Department of Anthropology of the Autonomous University of the State of Mexico”, Claudia Benhumea and Juan Jesús Velasco inquire into critical literacy on Facebook, considering its relevance as an daily and recurring vehicle to search for news of interest to its users. Through a study aimed at identifying the forms of recognition, emotions and positions of the students before discursive practices in different formats and genres found in this social network, the authors show the coexistence of dissimilar interpretations and values that govern the decisions and interactions of students with the information selected and read there.

Continuing with this subject, the text “Towards a critical literacy with a gender approach in the teaching of literature”, Karla Canett, Laura Fierro and Lilia Martínez put up for discussion the pertinence of integrating a gender perspective in the framework of critical literacy as a formative transversal component in all the curricular subjects. To this end, the authors advance a model for the analysis of texts in the subject of Literature in high school, designed to identify and question patriarchal belief systems and values underlying the texts, as well as disguised forms of gender inequality and injustice.

This brings us closer to experiences with popular culture and the resources that readers mobilize on their own, which include the article that closes this section, “Being, having, and reading: are these key elements in shaping the vernacular reading practices of middle-high school students?” In it, Alma Karina Galindo describes those elements that, from the dimension of subjectivity, guide the daily recreational reading practices, apart from institutional or work demands. The author is concerned mainly with inquiring into the role played by reading capital and reading identity in conjunction with certain propitiating elements of the forms acquired by reading practices, among which are those with an affective and emotional component. These factors act in an interconnected way and have a special influence in sociocultural socialization environments outside the school.

As it can be seen, in the space for academic discussion that *Diálogos sobre Educación* constitutes, reading and writing practices occupy a fundamental place in the task of not only *reading the world*, but also imagining and modeling a better one. The articles presented here show the remarkable evolution that has taken place in the disciplines and categories of analysis to understand these cultural practices, always under a continuous tension between materials, devices, social conventions, institutional strategies, patterns of meaning and performance of individuals situated in a given space and context. George Steiner asserted that in the domain of writing, even in its most trivial manifestations, there are underlying conventions, power relationships and, therefore, a civilizing project. Following his insight, we may argue that through educational research the essentially human character of literate practices and their infinite capacity to bring together a vast constellation of concerns, knowledge, art, science, and values, stimulates us to rethink processes of social development and institutional management, and inspires us to participate responsibly in facing the challenges associated with it.