



REVISTA KRONOS

Error analysis of written production at university level

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ABSTRACT Written production is a fundamental tool for writers to demonstrate the ability to convey ideas, opinions, and arguments through a text, paper, or project; then, the significance of written production cannot be overlooked. On that account, the objective of this study was to analyze the challenges 8th semester students from the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages career of a public university deal with when elaborating their Knowledge Integration Projects as the final paper of the Aproximación Diagnóstica subject. For this investigation, the error analysis method was applied as it refers to the process of deconstructing text and encompasses a holistic comprehension of the content. The researchers used 25 written versions of the Knowledge Integration Project for the analysis. The findings evidence that students' most common challenges are related to paragraph and sentence structure, punctuation, and word choice. In addition, it could be stated that students experienced difficulties with the utilization of APA Style, and the presentation of strong counterarguments. Therefore, it is concluded that this topic must be research in depth.

KEYWORDS written discourse, challenges, textual analysis, counterarguments, citation.

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RESUMEN La habilidad de producir textos argumentativos es una herramienta fundamental que el escritor utiliza para demostrar la capacidad de transmitir ideas, opiniones y argumentos a través de un texto, tarea o proyecto escrito. Por lo tanto, no se puede pasar por alto su importancia. El objetivo de este estudio fue analizar los retos que enfrentan los estudiantes de octavo semestre de la carrera de Pedagogía en Lenguas Nacionales y Extranjeras de una universidad pública al momento de elaborar sus Proyectos Integradores de Saberes como trabajo final de la asignatura denominada Aproximación Diagnóstica. Para esta investigación se aplicó el método de análisis de errores, ya que se refiere al proceso de deconstrucción del texto y abarca una comprensión holística del contenido. Para el análisis, los investigadores utilizaron 25 versiones escritas del Proyecto Integrador de Saberes. Los hallazgos muestran que los desafíos más comunes que los estudiantes enfrentan están relacionados con la estructura de párrafos y oraciones, la puntuación y la elección de palabras. Además, podría afirmarse que los estudiantes experimentaron dificultades con la utilización del Estilo APA y la presentación de contraargumentos firmes. Por lo que se concluye que existe la necesidad de seguir investigando sobre este tema.

PALABRAS CLAVE textos argumentativos, desafíos, análisis textual, contraargumentos, citación.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is in agreement with the findings and experiences gathered by the researchers of the project entitled «*Elaboración de una Guía Didáctica para Estudiantes de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (EFL): El Proceso de Contextualización de Palabras para Uso Académico en la Formación de Profesores*»

The main objective of this paper is to analyze what some of the challenges students face when writing their Knowledge Integration Projects are (Proyectos Integradores de Saberes) which is the final task they have to deliver as part of the “*Aproximación Diagnóstica* subject.” This subject is connected to pre-service students’ professional practicum activities which are developed in public and private schools of the Zone 6, Azogues and Cuenca. The participants of this study were 8th semester students from the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages Career of a public university.

The analysis was completed in three stages. First, the researchers collected all the Knowledge Integration Projects students delivered during an academic period (October 2023-March 2024). After that, they performed a thorough literature review to know the type and characteristics of the written discourse students were producing to fulfill this task. Finally, the researchers identified the drawbacks students came across regarding their writing skills.

Once, a brief background of the study has been specified, it is necessary to start discussing some terms and understanding what written discourse involves from the point of view of pragmatics.

The term discourse is used in various ways. According to Adjei (2013) it could be broadly defined as language in its contexts of use. However, as a result of Chomsky’s influence, language has been analyzed as a separate from context. The rationale for a contextualized consideration of language as stated by Flowerdew (2012) is based upon the belief that knowing a language is concerned with more than just grammar and vocabulary; it also includes how to participate in a conversation or how to structure a written text. In accordance with the author, the term discourse can also be used to refer to a particular set of ideas and how they are articulated. In this case, the term refers to a type of specialized knowledge and language used in a particular group, such as technical language.

Subsequently, written discourse according to Beacco et al. (2015) refers to the creation of meaningful sentences that display the extract intended meaning of the writer. It is considered the attempt to explain how we manage to communicate with written language. Written discourse is important for English Language Learners because it is a necessary tool to communicate in a formal setting. Moreover, written discourse involves the structure, coherence, logical development, and range of linguistic resources in a written text. Linguistic resources refer to grammar and vocabulary, and the variety of grammatical structures and vocabulary used correctly to gain maximum points in this area. In this context, it is relevant to speak briefly of writing hence non-English practitioners face a real challenge when writing in English.

To come up with a written product, English language learners rely on their prior knowledge of words and grammatical structures overlooking the socio-cultural factors involved in creating a written text. For that reason, writing has been and is still being researched by scholars from various areas like sociology, ethnography, rhetoric, computer and collaborative learning. Based on the aim and purpose, writing can be organized as a referential, persuasive, literary or expressive rhetorical discourse. A referential discourse emphasizes the matter; persuasive discourse puts an emphasis on the reader; literary discourse emphasizes the language; and an expressive discourse focuses on the writer. However, according to the purpose, the

discourse can also be of comparison/contrast, definition, and cause-effect; and the aim could be explaining, arguing, and exploring (Assadi, 2011).

Thus, the starting point is to identify the type and characteristics of the written tasks done by students as their Knowledge Integration Project, taking into consideration the relevance of the type and structure of language used to imply purpose and context within a specific subject matter; in this specific case the experiences and reflections students presented as part of their pre-professional practicums period.

Regarding the type; the four types of discourse are description, narration, exposition and argumentation. The description type helps the audiences visualize the item or subject by relying on the five senses. Whereas narration aims to tell a story through a narrator, who usually gives an account of an event. Exposition, on the other hand, conveys background information to the audience in a relatively neutral way; and argumentation aims to persuade and convince the audience of an idea or a statement (Berman & Nir, 2014). According to these definitions and reckon with the features and components of the Knowledge Integration Project, we are referring to an expository type of text.

Therefore, now it is pertinent to confer about exposition. There are two broad senses of the word exposition, two distinct terms that are useful in writing. The first one corresponds to a type of discourse, not similar to argument, description, and narration. The second refers to a component of plotting in narrative and dramatic works. Nonetheless, in this study the focus is on exposition as a mode of discourse (Varotsi, 2015).

Then, the term exposition denotes a set of discursive practices from some other families of discursive practices connected to argument, description, and narration. Exposition is explaining, and there are many kinds of explaining skills that we need to develop; for example: the steps and instructions to produce or create something, analyzing the grounds and consequences of a specific behavior, decision or action taken (Weiss & Wodak, 2003).

Hence, exposition represents a guide speakers of a Foreign Language can apply in their written discourse, as well as in the more technical specialized areas, such as education. The basic subtasks are all expository through the particular claims which almost always have to be supported by argument. Writers can follow these steps: first, demonstrate that there is in fact a problem or aspect which could be improved; then, diagnose the problem by clarifying its actual roots, sources and causes; after that, explain the possible actions by imagining the range of solutions eligible to be given serious considerations, deciding which solution or proposal best meet the criteria of success and focusing on the result (Labarta & Dolón, 2005).

In sum, the goal is to present clear and robust persuasive papers for the audience to understand the exposed points clearly; in this specific case, the format of a written report which includes students' experience. Subsequently, Knowledge Integration Projects belong to this type of discourse as the main purpose is for students to share their experiences and findings concerning every day teaching practices in a real context.

Regarding the categories, written discourse can be presented as poetic, expressive, and transactional. Therefore, writers must observe both the category and the type of paper. Now, what is the purpose of the three types of written discourse. The purpose of poetic discourse could be considered as informal, the perception of the writer about experiences, thoughts, dreams, or even imaginary situations. Whereas, the purpose of expressive discourse is to focus on the non-fictional to generate ideas and reflect the author's emotions, usually without presenting facts or arguments; expressive discourse is creative, but not fictional. Blog posts, diary entries, personal letters, and personal essays are examples of the expressive discourse. Otherwise, transactional discourse is an instructional approach that encourages action by presenting a clear, non-ambiguous plan to the reader and is usually written in active voice; then, the main goal is to motivate readers to write (Allington,

2008). Accordingly, the Knowledge Integration Projects fulfill with the characteristics of the transactional discourse category.

Concerning the genres, transactional writing encompasses nonfiction pieces of composition which aims to communicate with others for a specific purpose. The purpose of each text can be defined as to persuade, to argue, to advice, and to inform.

- **To persuade.** – in the context of the Knowledge Integration Project, the purpose is for students to support their findings and points of view regarding a specific issue they could identify during their pre-professional practicum experience. Students combine their experience with data collected through observation, and in some cases intervention.
- **To argue.** – transactional texts that argue to get a point across often take the form a review or political flyer. A reviewer might drive a point that they made about a book or film and try to persuade the audience about the legitimate with an evidenced argument. The language of argument may also be used in literature and posters for or against others' views or policies. Argumentative language can also be found in speeches, such as debates and essays.
- **To inform.** - informational texts include leaflets about services and products, newspapers, and magazine articles. Informational transactional writing also includes things like letters and emails that might be sent to friends, updating them about important information. There are other examples of informational texts; nevertheless, in this specific case, students inform their findings during their projects presentation' in a fair.
- **To advise.** – advisory transactional texts give the reader the knowledge they need to come to a decision on something. Advisory texts tend to give different options and are usually more balanced than persuasive texts. They take a lot of research to give the reader all the information they need to come to decide something themselves.

Some considerations when choosing transactional writing are to include plenty of facts to help convince the reader and show them that the writer is knowledgeable on the subject; give the reader a personal opinion to think about, opinions can help back up factual statements and give the text a personal feel; include numbers or true statements and figures where possible to support opinions on a subject (MacDonnchaidh, 2021).

Following the main topic of this study; once the main concepts and definitions have been presented, it is pertinent to emphasize the nature of the subject which is the purpose of this paper. *Aproximación Diagnóstica* is based on a research and data-driven approach. Students who are part of the pre-professional practicums have specifically three roles: observer, teacher, and researcher. The practicum activities start by applying an observation checklist related to the methodologies, strategies, techniques, and activities teachers implement in their classrooms; students-interns must be objective and critical at the same time; knowing the main goal of the observation is to significantly contribute to good practices. In some cases, students are given the opportunity to teach a complete lesson; however, that depends on the policies of the schools. Once, students have identified some difficulties or aspects which could be improved, they reflect on the data they collected through observation and start working on possible actions which could be recommended to pre- and in-service teachers.

One of the key points during this process is teacher-tutor monitoring and guidelines. The teacher of the subject is also in charge of monitoring students-interns during their practicums and the elaboration of the Knowledge Integration Project.

In conclusion, students need to write an expository transactional text in a format of a report which must include their experiences, data related to observation, and strategies

or activities teachers could implement in their practice in order to achieve their lessons' objectives as well as the desired students learning outcomes.

METHOD

The primary method considered was corpus linguistics which focuses on the analysis of both oral and written discourse from a qualitative approach based on error analysis. It was decided to work specifically with textual analysis since data was collected and analyzed from Knowledge Integration Projects which include introduction, justification, problem formulation, methodology, results analysis, and conclusions. On this regard, the researcher contemplated explicit and implicit messages necessary to interpret how pre-professional practicum students use the language to communicate their experiences based on the background, context, and culture of the beneficiaries, students from private and public schools (Jürgens et al., 2024).

The characteristics of textual analysis, which involve examining written messages, deconstructing text, themes, symbols, intention, and the writers' perspectives, justify the decision of the researcher to use this method. The goal of textual analysis is to go beyond a mere descriptive stance and explore the hidden structures and intricate relations within a text. It encompasses a holistic comprehension of the content, wherein the text is read, understood, and interpreted in context to its larger sociocultural historical, or political framework (Deane, 2020).

In today's interconnected and diverse world, textual analysis holds a significant position across several fields due to its ability to decode the complexities within a text. In social studies, scholars use textual analysis to understand human behavior, societal trends, and cultural narratives. It enables them to draw conclusions based on the textual evidence available for study (Caldas & Coulthard, 1996).

Furthermore, textual analysis is a multidimensional research method that provides tools for researchers to gain deep insights into various types of texts. The core of textual analysis lies in the interpretation, comprehension, and contextual understanding of the text. It focuses on understanding the formation of the text, the language used, the delivery of information, the audience's interpretation, and the overall impact created by the text. In a nutshell, textual analysis entails capturing the essence of the text, separating the explicit from the implicit, the said from the unsaid, and uncovering the hidden layers of context and meaning contained within the text (Alejandro & Zhao, 2023).

In this specific study, it could be said that the researchers focused on a qualitative textual analysis. Qualitative textual analysis focuses on the quality rather than the quantity of the information present in the text. This approach is more interpretative and subjective in nature. It attempts to explore the text's meaning, themes, motifs, or symbols in depth (Khan, 2023).

With respect to the texts selected, this study considered 25 Knowledge Integration Projects which were assessed according to the following criteria: clarity of objective, feasibility, alignment with pedagogical principles, implementation strategies, evaluation and reflection. Therefore, the researchers decided to go deeper by analyzing paragraphs and sentences' structure, punctuation, and word choice. Besides the researchers worked on a general interpretation of the quality of the papers.

RESULTS

With the aim of providing well-organized data, the results are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Common threats students struggle coping with when writing their Knowledge Integration Project

Paragraph structure	
Main idea	One of the aspects students struggle with is staying focused on the main idea and avoid introducing information that does not contribute to the overall argument or exposition.
Connection of ideas	Absence of a focus is another challenge. Students fail to connect the ideas among paragraphs and do not consider the required length, topic sentence, and appropriate structure.
Logical arrangement of ideas	Students who are in the higher levels and take the <i>Aproximación Diagnóstica</i> subject have already approved six levels of English; nevertheless, when it comes to write they are unable to communicate their ideas clearly and logically.
Supporting sentences	Even though, 8 th semester students have received the necessary tools to be able to communicate at least at a B2 level; however, they still encounter complications to stay on topic when writing a paragraph. It is common to see they get distracted and tend to change subjects in the same paragraph.
Sentence structure	
Subject-verb-agreement	It could be observed that there is a lack of balance in the sentences; considering that the subject and the verb of a sentence must agree with one another in number whether they are singular or plural. Surprisingly enough, the most common misused verbs are the ones related to third singular persons in simple present tense.
Sentence fragments	Students omit basic norms or rules when writing. For example, the subject or the verb.
Run-on sentences	This is one of the most common cases encountered when reading a piece of writing. Students often find it complex to join two independent clauses correctly.
Wordiness	Students use more words than necessary to convey meaning and this makes writing unclear. Besides, students fail to identify long phrases that can be replaced with a single word, and eliminate words that are weak, nonessential or have the same meaning.
Punctuation	
Semicolon	Regardless they B2 English Level, students still do not feel confident when selection the correct punctuation in their writing assignments. Hence, it is relevant to remember that semicolons are used to separate listed terms that are not just single words but already contain punctuation such as commas and dashes.

Comma before because	One of the most discussed doubts has been the use of comma before the subordinating conjunction because. Then, students must consider rules such as the use of comma before because when it connects two clauses in a sentence.
Colon	A colon is a stop in function and therefore can be used only at the end of a complete statement. Nonetheless, students tend to break up a verb and its object with a colon.
Placing end marks correctly	Regardless the simplicity of this punctuation rules, it is common to see that students place punctuation marks such as periods, commas, and question marks before the quotation marks. Then, students must follow the rules, all the above-mentioned punctuation marks must be placed inside the quotation marks.
Word choice	
Words with similar meanings but different connotation	When writing complete academic type documents, students have the tendency to select words wrongly. Some examples are inferred instead of imply, or between instead of among.
Translation errors and collocations	It is just understandable that non-native speakers think in their native language and translate words or phrases literally into English because they sound natural.
Using a pronoun readers cannot tell who or what it refers to	This type of confusion is mostly noticed between paragraphs. Students finish one idea and start a new paragraph with a personal pronoun, possessive adjective or demonstrative pronoun deducting that it is easy for readers to find the connection. Additionally, the demonstrative pronoun does not agree in number with its noun.

Note. – the table presents the most relevant findings as part of the analysis of the Knowledge Integration Project papers. Data was organized in an Excel spreadsheet and in the MAXQDA software.

Along with the aspects mentioned in Table 1, it could be identified that students find it complicated to choose the library or online resources for research; considering that if they want to produce a writing project that is well-researched, they need to search for the proper sources. This is aligned with improper use of citation and inadequate academic referencing (Borg, 2000). Despite the fact that the participants of this study belong to 8th semester and have been exposed to academic writing and the use of the APA (American Psychological Association) norms, they still do not find it easy to apply them in academic writing. Proper citation is a fundamental aspect of academic writing, and failure to cite sources correctly can result in plagiarism (Rezeki, 2018).

Equally, students' academic writing papers lack clarity and precision. They fail to express their ideas in a clear, concise manner which make it complicated to understand by the audience. Also, when it comes to address counterarguments, failing to consider alternative viewpoints weakens the overall argument and can undermine the credibility of the paper. Finally, reading some Knowledge Integration Projects gives the impression that students submitted a first draft without thorough revision since it is typical to detect grammatical errors, clarity of expression, and coherence of arguments; this evidence the absence of proof reading or peer-feedback (Mitra, 2024).

DISCUSSION

Academic writing is a formal style of writing used by university students, instructors, and researchers. It is different from everyday writing as it has certain features, a specific format, uses more academic words, and complex sentences, and the argument is logically progressed taking into consideration the audience for whom it is written. Moreover, the language used in academic writing should be clear and precise to ensure that the reader can easily understand the meaning and avoid any bias or ambiguity (Wilson, 2022).

In the study entitled “Academic Writing Difficulties Encountered by University EFL Learners,” the findings revealed that both graduate and undergraduate students have some problems in academic writing choosing the appropriate academic words, difficulty in developing a thesis statement, organizing ideas, and writing coherent paragraphs were the most significant challenges; whereas, using grammar and mechanics of writing have a little negative impact in their academic writing. It can be inferred that the method of teaching which mainly focused on the end product and lack of practice were the main reasons behind those challenges (Aldabbus & Almansouri, 2022).

Although, the study mentioned above was conducted in another continent, specifically at the University of Benghazi, in Libia; a certain number of coincidences can be remarked. The present study raises the drawbacks students face when writing their Knowledge Integration Projects as the final product of their pre-professional practicums and the *Aproximación Diagnóstica* subject; and certainly, teachers assume students already have the necessary competences in written discourse to compose a strong paper. Nonetheless, students still need to work on some basic aspects to improve their written discourse.

A previous study that stands out was developed in three public universities of Ecuador: University of Guayaquil, University of Cuenca, and Technical University of Machala. In the third chapter of the book, the authors analyzed data to identify the most common errors of the written discourse of beginning level Ecuadorian students. The results shown that the most common errors in the written production of students from the three universities were related to grammar: redundancy/word misuse/word order, and errors related to the formal aspect (Soto et al., 2020).

Some of the characteristics of the participants from the last study are similar to the ones of this paper as both studies were conducted in public universities in Ecuador. Unfortunately, it can be evidenced that students written discourse development requires extra attention so that students could not only present a satisfactory final product, but also demonstrate their competences as future teacher-researchers.

Finally, it is worth to mention the study “Identification of Challenges in teaching writing to Ecuadorian EFL Students,” as it highlights the usefulness of the present one. After conducted structures interviews to ten Ecuadorian EFL teachers at higher level of education, the findings of the study suggested that challenges in teaching writing were student-related factors that include English language competency, Spanish language interference and students’ lack of motivation to write in English (Tamayo & Cajas, 2020).

To sum up, written discourse corresponds to the skills necessary to structure a written text effectively; hence, considering that students from the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages career need to present their Knowledge Integration Projects as their final project for the *Aproximación Diagnóstica* subject, it was absolutely necessary to generate this analysis which will definitely make a contribution to students writing skills improvement and to teachers who can further research about possible strategies to be implemented in their lessons.

CONCLUSIONS

This study was based on the analysis of 25 Knowledge Integration Projects from 8th semester students belonging to the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages career of a public university. Thanks to the collaboration and support of the authorities, teachers, and students; the researchers were able to access to the written version of the projects. Subsequently, it was stated that the projects' type of discourse was exposition and the category corresponded to transactional discourse. Once a thorough literature review was completed, the researchers could identify that the most common concerns students experienced when writing their Knowledge Integration projects are related to paragraph and sentence structure, punctuation, and word choice. In regard to paragraph structure, students have difficulties with staying focus on the topic, connecting the ideas among paragraphs, communicating ideas clearly and logically, and changing subjects in the same paragraph. Concerning sentence structure, students get confused with subject-verb-agreement, sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and wordiness. With respect to punctuation, the most common difficulties are related to the use of semicolon, coma before because, colon, and incorrect use of end marks. In relation to word choice, it was found that students have dilemmas with the use of words with similar meaning but different connotation, translation and collocations, and use of pronouns.

Additionally, it was noticed that students need to be familiar to a greater extent with the APA Norms in order to avoid plagiarism and to be able to present a project with proper research sources which can support their statements, ideas, and points of view; yet with strong counterarguments to assure the credibility of the paper.

Finally, this paper opens the window to further studies as it presents a starting point of the current challenges students confront to demonstrate their written discourse skills; consequently, teacher-researchers can investigate and identify the most effective strategies to guide students during the elaboration of their Knowledge Integration Projects.

CONTRIBUCIONES DE LOS AUTORES

Martha Lucía Lara Freire: redacción de objetivos, introducción, recolección y análisis de datos, redacción de los resultados y discusión del manuscrito conclusiones, recomendaciones y resumen; revisión y edición del manuscrito. Envíos a la revista.

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La autora declara que no existe implicaciones éticas.

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