

When written language resembles oral: linguistic competences in the academic discourse of Primary Education degree students

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Abstract

University students must show communication skills in their academic work. The variety of discursive practices that they encounter during their degree often reveals that they have not properly developed these abilities and that they do not possess full linguistic competence. Therefore, in this empirical investigation of a case study carried out with Primary Education degree students (University of La Rioja), the linguistic and discursive competence of the linguistic features of academic practices that use features typical of oral language are analysed using a qualitative methodology. The extensive corpus shows that there are numerous cases of informal register use and that, therefore, the texts do not adapt to the communicative context. The training of students through literacy programmes would solve these deficiencies, although this training should be carried out from a transdisciplinary perspective.

Keywords

Linguistic competence. Oral language. Academic literacy. Initial training.

Quando a língua escrita se aproxima a língua oral: competências linguísticas no discurso acadêmico de alunos do grau de Ensino Primário

Resumo

Os estudantes universitários devem mostrar domínio das habilidades de comunicação em sua atividade acadêmica. As diversas práticas discursivas que enfrentam no desenvolvimento de suas tarefas mostram, em muitas ocasiões, que essas habilidades não foram adequadamente alcançadas e conseqüentemente indicam um conhecimento inadequado da competência linguística. Considerando essa deficiência, na presente pesquisa empírica, baseada num estudo de caso realizado com alunos do curso de licenciatura em Educação Básica (Universidade de La Rioja), analisa-se a competência linguístico-discursiva – com metodologia qualitativa – a partir do estudo das características linguísticas de práticas textuais acadêmicas nas quais fenômenos típicos da linguagem oral são apreciados. O grande *corpus* mostra que há uma profusão de características do registro informal e, portanto, os textos não estão adaptados à situação comunicativa. A formação de alunos por meio de programas de alfabetização poderia solucionar essas deficiências de competência, embora tal instrução deva ser um trabalho desenvolvido a partir de uma perspectiva transdisciplinar.

Palavras-chave

Competência linguística. Linguagem oral. Alfabetização acadêmica. Treino inicial.

Quando se aproxima el lenguaje escrito al oral: competencias lingüísticas en el discurso académico del alumnado del grado en Educación Primaria

Resumen

Los estudiantes universitarios deben mostrar en su actividad académica el dominio de las competencias comunicativas. Las diversas prácticas discursivas a las que se enfrentan en el desarrollo de sus tareas manifiestan en muchas ocasiones que dichas habilidades no se han alcanzado convenientemente y, en consecuencia, indican un inadecuado conocimiento de la competencia lingüística. Teniendo en cuenta esta carencia, en la presente investigación empírica, basada en un estudio de caso realizado con estudiantes del Grado en Educación Primaria (Universidad de La Rioja), se analiza – con metodología cualitativa – la competencia lingüístico-discursiva a partir del estudio de los rasgos lingüísticos de prácticas textuales académicas en las que se aprecian fenómenos propios del lenguaje oral. El amplio corpus muestra que hay profusión de rasgos del registro informal y, por tanto, los textos no se adecuan a la situación comunicativa. La formación del alumnado mediante programas de alfabetización podría solucionar estas insuficiencias competenciales, si bien dicha instrucción debe ser un trabajo planteado desde una perspectiva transdisciplinar.

Palabras clave

Competencia lingüística. Lenguaje oral. Alfabetización académica. Formación inicial.

1 Introduction: when written language resembles oral language in the academic discourse of training students

A statement that may be obvious responds to the need to foster communicative competence (CANALE, 1995; HYMES, 1984) in the context of Higher Education. If this issue is considered a priority –at least implicitly– it must be asked why the necessary measures to improve students' impoverished discursive skills, which correspond to students' communication, cognition, content and culture (QUILES CABRERA; CAIRE, 2013), have not been addressed (MOYANO, 2010, 2018). Not all teachers consider this to be a subject and technique to which time should be devoted, as it is generally accepted that university students have the appropriate basic strategies for mastering the communication skills in which they are already literate (BALLANO; MUÑOZ, 2014, 2015).

Many studies on academic literacy (Academic Literacies) have been carried out (CARLINO, 2005; CASSANY; MORALES, 2009). These aim to instruct students on reading and writing methods and practices that enable the adequate expression of

thought, as the development of complex skills is not usually achieved autonomously but instead needs to be taught. Academic literacy is part of continuous and contextualised learning, and offers epistemic tools that enable the appropriate expression of knowledge (CARLINO, 2005, 2013; BOEGLIN, 2008); it considers academic texts to be specific structures that also require proficient language skills through the application of communicative and discursive approaches (HYMES, 1984; VAN DIJK, 1980; MONTOLÍO, 2014; LOMAS, 2015). This language learning is approached from the perspective of language teaching (CASSANY, 1989, 1999; LOMAS; OSORO; TUSÓN, 1993; CANALE, 1995; LOMAS, 2015; LÓPEZ; ENCABO, 2001, 2016; CASSANY *et al.*, 2002; QUILES CABRERA, 2007; PÉREZ; ZAYAS, 2007; CASSANY; MORALES, 2009; MARTÍNEZ EZQUERRO, 2013; QUILES CABRERA; CAIRE, 2013).

During their university degree course, students constantly produce oral and written discourse that shows the development of knowledge and their communicative skill level. These productions should be structurally and linguistically correct compositions. Writing has an epistemic potential as it is not only a means of communication, but also an instrument to develop and transform one's own knowledge (CARLINO, 2003, p. 411). Unfortunately, we often find texts with serious shortcomings of various kinds (normative, cohesive, coherent, presentation, style, etc.) in a context where a deficient command of written expression is accompanied by spelling and normative errors (GRIJELMO, 1998, p. 15).

In this study, we are investigating the lack of adaptation observed in certain academic works. These works take place in a context where cultured language and the formal register are used and where, instead, we find the informal register used, with characteristic linguistic features (lexical reiterations, colloquial stylistic turns, and proliferation of pragmatic, intensifying, deictic connectors, etc.) typical of unplanned discourse resembling oral language (QUILES CABRERA, 2009). It can be seen that students' discourse is removed from the required level of education and that the student has broken certain conventions that mean that the communicative act (work, discourse) is perceived by the interlocutor (teacher) with some degree of failure (their expectations have been broken because the incorrect register has been used). The university student is part of a discursive community - the academic community - that means that they participate in a specific field of knowledge with its own textual and generic

conventions (TEJERINA; SÁNCHEZ, 2009, p. 92). A lack of adaptation between use and context shows the need for the aforementioned linguistic competence to be fostered.

In terms of the linguistic method applied to analyse the aforementioned aspects, we start from the fact that knowledge of notions and techniques of participation in formal discursive culture takes its procedures and resources from language teaching, insofar as it facilitates language learning strategies that develop the communicative skills of text composition. The phases of writing, along with its properties, are based on rhetoric (*elocution*) and normative grammar as sciences that provide techniques for correct instruction. Use must be appropriate for the context, and it is from this approach that we review the contributions of the studies of colloquial Spanish that deal with orality in writing (VIGARA, 1980; BEINHAEUER, 1985; TUSÓN, 1991; GÓMEZ TORREGO, 1992, 2011; BRIZ, 1996, 1998, 2003, 2018; LÁZARO CARRETER, 1997; CASADO VELARDE, 2005, 2015; RAE, 2009, 2010, 2013, 2018; CAMPS; CASTELLÓ, 2013; NARBONA, 2019).

In light of these premises, we highlight the importance of linguistic competence in academic literacy for the initial training of teachers and, in parallel, we illustrate this with a case study focusing on the analysis of linguistic-discursive features present in students' work. We consider this domain to be even more demanding for teachers in training (SÁNCHEZ LISSEN; SÁNCHEZ FRANCO, 2019) since, as future teachers, they will continuously face communicative contexts in which competency models are unavoidable.

2 Methodology

2.1 Theoretical framework

In this study, we analysed linguistic features employed by students in their written work (assignments, reports, exams, etc.) that is inappropriate in formal contexts. Orality indicators are frequent in these works and reflect the everyday language spoken by young people in their informal communication (ZIMMERMANN, 1996). As we know, academic discourse uses the common language in its cultured variety and formal

register, and there is no room for the 'deviations' found in oral speech (BRIZ, 1996). These linguistic relaxations of future teachers stimulate the need to develop communication strategies and to promote metacognitive attitudes.

The analysis of orality features uses literacy (specifically, of teachers in training) as its general framework, and considers academic texts to be specific structures that require competent language skills from a communicative approach and through discursive learning that addresses the didactics of language. The textual process is a complex task that must be carried out in a processual and planned manner (ALVAR EZQUERRA et al., 1999; MARTÍNEZ DE SOUSA, 2000; SERRANO, 2002a, 2002b; REYES, 2008; REGUEIRO; SÁEZ, 2013). In classical rhetoric, this organisation corresponds to the artistic parts or phases of textual composition (memory and activity belong to oral skills). The models proposed by the new rhetoric or didactics of written expression indicate the improvement of the process, above all in analysing the specific communication context, in the use of drafts, in revisions and in the elocution or verbal formulation of the discourse already advocated in the classic literature (LAUSBERG, 1987; ALBADALEJO, 1989; MORTARA GARAVELLI, 1991; SPANG, 2005).

These approaches make up the discursive methodological framework applied in students' competence training. Their aim, as we have indicated, is to ensure that teachers in training adequately develop their language skills. In the following sections, we show the methodology applied to obtain and organise the corpus data, as well as the profile of the informants and the type of samples analysed.

2.2 Context and participants

Bearing in mind that the aim of this research is to collect a real corpus of data extracted from written tasks carried out by the students, we included two academic years and various works, thus ensuring a *continuum* of discursive elaboration in a general and realistic context. We offer, therefore, works that are analysed in the usual development of the subject. More specifically, in order to analyse the features of oral language, we have collected and emptied the samples or academic tasks written by the 160 informants that make up the two groups of students in the Primary Education degree's second year subject, "Didactics of the Spanish Language and its Literature",

during the 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 academic years. The reason why no comparative study is shown between the two groups (80 students each year) is that no notable differences in language usage were observed. Both year groups therefore constitute a single group for the purposes of calculating variables.

In terms of the students' characteristics, 94 were female (59%) and 66 male (41%). 148 students were 19 to 21 years old (92.5%), 8 were 26 to 27 years old (5%), and 4 were 40 to 44 years old (2.5%). There were 20 students in the second round of enrolment. The results were as follows: 20% passed, 4 obtained outstanding grades, 30 notable grades, and the rest passed. These were heterogeneous groups in which, roughly speaking, three subgroups could be observed: highly involved students (those with the best results, the oldest students and those with a proven reading habit), moderately committed students (those who passed) and students who were not very interested (those who did not like the degree and had other academic expectations that they were not able to meet due to the low marks obtained in EBAU). In relation to reading habits, it should be noted that encouraging reading not only contributes to increasing education in values, broadening knowledge, training critical and responsible people (CARIDE; CARBALLO; GRADÁILLE, 2018), and becoming more familiar with other life experiences (MARTOS NÚÑEZ; RÖSING, 2009), it is also an essential tool for improving written expression (LÓPEZ VALERO; ENCABO, 2016). This can be seen in the results obtained.

The *instrument* used for collecting samples during the two academic years was, as indicated above, work completed during the course. Structurally, these were *individual questionnaires with open answers*. The 320 samples came from two works from each student in which an expository-argumentative discourse was mainly developed. Although we collected the aforementioned number of exercises, it must be specified that they were considered as if they were 160 samples (the number of students) to calculate their features, since each informant contributed their work as a larger unit of discursive production. The first activity corresponded to reviewing an article in Language Didactics, and the second to a questionnaire of five reflective questions on reading habits and skills and, likewise, to the development of a proposal for didactic intervention based on reading a novel. The large sample offers complete material from the perspective of academic discursive linguistics because it includes the

students writing a text in which they combine specific reflections with scientific knowledge of the subject from a proposal of educational intervention. The extensive corpus was recorded and analysed as the relevant corrections were made.

In this way, we determine the informant population's most frequent and characteristic linguistic features that resemble oral language. Given the nature of the research in this case study, we focus on *qualitative methodology* based on studying and contextualising, in the identified cases, the samples to describe their characteristics in relation to the specificity of the features of the written composition in the formal academic context and in the informants' linguistic-discursive competence. The analysis that we carry out, therefore, corresponds to a descriptive case study that puts us in direct relation to the reality of two similar and specific groups of students, which does not mean that it can initially be extrapolated to other fields. However, if we take into account that "the question of generalising studies [...] does not lie in a probabilistic sample taken from a population to which the results can be extended, but rather in the development of a theory that can be transferred to other cases" (MARTÍNEZ CARAZO, 2006, p. 173), we understand that the data taken and the tasks allow us to apply the research to other groups and contexts of a similar nature, which could be contrasted and, therefore, would offer more information that would complement this line of research.

3 Results and data analysis

To organise the corpus of oral language features, we start from the approach that normative grammar and discourse analysis studies provide on the phenomena and characteristics of colloquial language (BEINHAUER, 1985; BRIZ, 1996, 1998; GÓMEZ TORREGO, 2011), that of our analysed texts. We have already indicated that one of the concerns of the discourses examined is their feature of "proximity to the colloquial oral language", something unsuitable for academic contexts, which shows an inadequate use of the required register in the formal sphere and indicates that the student has not adapted to the communicative situation. The interrelations between spoken and written language emerge as modes of verbalisation determined by the conditions of

communication, and should never be practised in our field of study. BRIZ (1998, p. 25) indicates that in the registers:

[The] communicative context regulates and determines, to some degree, interlocutors' linguistic and extralinguistic behaviour, which tends to try to accommodate, to a greater or lesser degree, their daily communicative acts to the situation at hand. For example, students do not talk to their friends outside of the classroom in the same way that they talk to their teacher during class.

3.1 Classification of the samples' linguistic features

To organise the colloquial features of the samples that make up the corpus, we have established three groups that correspond to linguistic-discursive levels (we have not included punctuation marks or typographical issues). As indicated above, we have computed the resources collected in each student's two works as a single unit (each informant contributes data that constitutes a stylistic continuum) and we evaluate the presence of the nine traits in the double sample of the 160 informants. Thus, Fig. 1 offers the sum of the items recorded in production (understood to be the sum of tasks as a unit, that is, 160 samples) of each student.

Figure 1 – Sample features results

| Sample features (oral language/informal register) | | Number/percentage of students who use them | |
|---|---|--|------|
| Morphosyntactic level | Pragmatic connectors | 160 | 100% |
| | Intensifiers | 140 | 87% |
| | Attenuators | 143 | 89% |
| | Deictics | 160 | 100% |
| | Temporary relations | 150 | 93% |
| Structural level: organisation of discourse | Concatenation of statements, paraphrases, few subordinate links and hyperbatons | 160 | 100% |
| Lexical-semantic level | Lexical poverty | 160 | 100% |
| | Linguistic Reiteration | 160 | 100% |
| | Lexicon | 140 | 87% |

Source: Own preparation (2020).

3.2 Use of oral language resources

Below, we provide examples of linguistic-discursive features extracted from the samples or texts that correspond to phenomena indicating the oral contamination typical

of the colloquial register. The works have been numbered based on the university's register of the informants, i.e. from 1 to 80 (2018/2019 academic year) and from 81 to 160 (2017/2018 academic year).

a) *Linguistic features at the morphosyntactic level*

1. *Pragmatic connectives*. The most frequent pragmatic connective found was 'es que' [you see], which has a double meaning as it not only links statements but also links statements with the speech act: no me gustan los libros es que nunca los acabo [I don't like books, you see I never finish them] (94); me gusta leer, lo que pasa es que no tengo tiempo para leer [I like reading but I don't have time to read you see] (140).

2. *Intensifiers*. These are rhetorical strategies that seem to imply more than what is actually being said. A variety of resources are used:

- Redundancies: la terminé *toda entera* [I finished it *completely*] (1); *solemos* hacer de manera muy *habitual* [we *tend* to do it very *regularly*] (20); siempre *aprendes nuevas cosas* [you always *learn new things*] (82).
- Consecutive synonyms: *normal* y *corriente* [*normal* and *ordinary*] (1); *utilizar* y *emplear* [*to use* and *to utilise*] (30); *llame su atención* y *les atraiga* [*to draw their attention* and *to attract them*] (49); *entretenida* y *amena* [*entertaining* and *amusing*] (66); *muestren* y *reflejen* [*to show* and *to reflect*] (67); *entendido* y *comprendido* [*understood* and *recognised*] (67); *disfrutar* y *gozar* [*to enjoy* and *to like*] (93); *a todos* y *cada uno de los que hay* [*to each* and *every one of them*] (128).
- Adverbs or adverbial phrases: *realmente* [*really*] (43); *personalmente* [*personally*] (57); *claramente* [*clearly*] (64); *sinceramente* [*sincerely*] (80); *a decir verdad* [*to tell you the truth*] (131); *de verdad* me gustaba leer [I *actually* used to like to read (159).

3. *Mitigations*. These constitute a conversational strategy that mitigates the significative force of a word or an action: no me hacía *mucha* gracia leerlos [I wasn't *very* happy to read them] (64); no dedicó *tanto* tiempo *como* debería [I didn't spend as *much* time on it as I should have] (67); sé *más* o *menos* lo que les gusta [I know *more*

or less what they like] (106); es *poco* divertido [it's *not much* fun] (143); *de manera no obligada, leerlo poco a poco* [in a non-obligatory way, reading it *little by little*] (154).

4. *Deictics*. Personal deixis corresponds to the egocentric character of colloquial speech. The presence of the *speaking self* is manifested repeatedly; it extols and elevates the image, sometimes to the detriment of the *you* – it is the *personalisation of the self* (BRIZ, 1996, p. 56). We can see emphasising sequences through the use of the first person: *si yo soy sincero* [if I am being honest] (5); *yo diría que* [I would say] (28); *que yo recuerde* [from what I remember] (86); *yo al ser tan pequeña* [me being so small] (89); *los escogía personalmente según mi propio gusto* [I chose them myself, according to my own taste] (126); *me motivó a mí* [I encouraged myself] (137).

We also find the personal deictic displaced. This is the case with the use of the impersonal *tú* [you] (the informal second person singular instead of the formal third person singular *usted*); the *yo* [I] appears latent under the mask of the *tú* itself in an attempt to attenuate its role:

For me, reading is like music, but better. Music fills the silences and accompanies you at every point in your life (in both the good and bad times). However, you give meaning to words when you read. They are there, but it is you who reads them and gives them meaning. (26).

This egocentric character that is typical of the oral informal register corresponds to the *I, here, now* (before you) and constitutes a recurrent personal, spatial and temporal deictic centre. As for space, consider the following examples: *aquí* podrían exponer los libros [*here*, books could be presented] (40); *se llevan los argumentos a esta clase* [the arguments are presented to *this class*] (50); En relación con el tiempo, hallamos los ejemplos *del día a día* [In terms of time, we find *day to day* examples] (56); *a día de hoy* [*today*] (97); *hoy en día* [*nowadays*] (151).

5. *Temporal relations*. Temporary displacements towards the present are recorded in an attempt to show the facts from the perspective of now: *el problema es que nunca los acababa* [the problem *is* that I never finished them] (44); *en Primaria se da por encima* [in Primary it *is* higher] (110).

b) Structural resources. Formulation and organisation of the discourse

The lack of planning and absence of knowledge on adequacy needed to establish textual production lead to unconventional syntax and a grammatical structure characterised by the concatenation of sentences, paraphrases, few subordinate links, short and uncoordinated paragraphs, and the use of hyperbatons. These features correlate with direct discourse, which lacks planning and contains disorganised information. Consider the following examples:

There are students who have better reading abilities, either because they have read and they like it or because an interest in reading has already been awakened in them and it has got them hooked, and they already have a reading style that they like, but for those who are just beginning and don't have this interest it is important to start with short, fun and entertaining stories and above all to make them see that reading is important. Providing books about their interests and that are age-appropriate that the reader can identify with and that make their imagination soar. It is important that the student is able to identify with what's on the page and, above all, to make sure that they are hooked from the beginning. (38).

Showing them how important reading is to have a richer vocabulary to develop their memory, to not make so many spelling mistakes and above all to enjoy themselves and have fun. Also, encouraging them so that they are the ones who choose a book to read because there are books of many types and some might like adventure books but they might scare others etc. What is truly important is to start from something small and try different registers to see which one they truly enjoy. (59).

c) Linguistic features at the lexical-semantic level

Lexical poverty is a characteristic feature of colloquial language, i.e., the intended communicative goal is achieved with scarce lexical resources. At this level, the reduction and selection of common vocabulary stands out, as well as the use of polysemic units and explanatory periphrases and paraphrases that cover the speaker's lexical deficiencies. The main features are:

1. *Lexical poverty*. Broad and semantically vague terms are used, e.g. versatile words (*verba omnibus*) that are either polysemic nouns (*cosa* [thing], *cuestión* [question], etc.) or verbs (*hacer* [to do], *poner* [to put], *dar* [to give], etc.). Here are some examples: visto así la *cosa* cambia [seen in this way, *things* change] (123); no dicen qué *cosa* les ha gustado [they do not say which *thing* they liked] (143); *hacen* una ficha [they *make* a

card] (1); 'un resumen [a summary] (6); una reflexión [a reflection] (31); unas actividades [some activities] (1); una lectura [a reading] (36); una encuesta [a survey] (37); una lista [a list] (60); unas preguntas [some questions] (80); una carta [a letter] (95); *ponen* los nombres [they *put* the names] (7); deberes [duties] (136); y *dan* el tema [and they *give* the theme] (13); the role of the work [el papel de la obra] (105).

Inexpressive adjectives offer unqualified qualifiers, that is, semantically "semi-empty" qualifiers thanks to their frequent use and broad meaning. These are fashionable versatile words that indicate a scarce idiomatic repertoire. Generally speaking, these words are: *pequeño* [small], *interesante* [interesting], *especial* [special], *importante* [important], *bueno* [good], *malo* [bad], *fundamental* [fundamental], *grande* [big], *bonito* [small], *feo* [ugly], *pesado* [heavy], *extenso* [extensive], *sencillo* [simple], *enorme* [enormous], *esencial* [essential] and *considerable* [considerable].

2. *Linguistic repetition*. The poorly planned speech and emphatic value of the oral register contribute to the inelegant repetition of words, a feature we found in all the samples. Consider these examples:

Students in the initial classes can start happily reading via imitation and if they see us read, their professors or their parents, they will be encouraged to read too. (5).

I like to read, but I don't just like to read anything. I am more interested in reading a novel in the narrative genre and I have never really enjoyed reading detective models. I like reading historical novels. (35).

Verbal circumlocutions were also recorded: *ponerme a ello* [getting on with it] (11); *eso se hacía notar* [this was taken note of] (8); *entré en contacto* [I came into contact] (13); *fue siendo un bebé* [it was when I was a baby] (22); *dar lugar a la imaginación* [it gave rise to the imagination] (25); *van cumpliendo una edad* [they are reaching an age] (31); *el hecho de investigar sobre leer* [the fact of researching about reading] (45); *doy con alguno* [I find some] (50); *se va haciendo consciente* [it is becoming more aware] (139).

3. The lexicon is open (of an eclectic nature) and includes contemporary features, special language terms and, above all, slang. There are many words that shift from youthful jargon to the colloquial register. Some examples include: *una lectura que me marcó* [a reading that touched me] (28); *fui una fanática de esa escritora* [I was a

fan of that writer] (18); la profesora sabía *manejar* las clases [the teacher knew how to *handle* the classes] (32). The recurrent use of terms that are often heard in the media (written production is an activity that is closely linked to metacognitive reflection and metalinguistics) provokes semantic shifts: tengo *indicios* de lectura [I have a *touch* of scholarship about me] (38); es mejor no *implantar* nunca un libro [it is better never to *plant* a book] (72); me tiene que *engancha*r y despertar mi interés [it has to *get me hooked* and awaken my interest] (147).

There are also colloquial words: que les *pique* la intriga y se lancen a leerlo [let them *get hooked* and start reading it] (4); siempre había algún *espabilado* que leía más rápido [there were always some *know-it-all* who read faster] (7); me gustaba un *montón* leer [I liked to read a *tonne*] (34); no me he *parado* a buscar un libro [I didn't *quit* looking for a book] (38); dejar que *campe a sus anchas* [give them *free rein*] (87); espero que se me *pase* ese *agobio* [I hope that this *malarkey* will *blow over*] (99); la lectura obligatoria *tira para atrás* [compulsory reading is *off putting*] (103); cuando llegábamos se daba *y punto* [when we arrived it was done, *full stop*] (129); me encantó aunque era *de esperar* [I loved it but *that was a sure thing anyway*] (146).

There is also a tendency to intensify, in some cases even to use hyperbole: me hicieron el peor regalo *de la historia* [I was given the *worst gift ever*] (4). See this fragment, among many others:

But the main basis is for the teacher to show a huge interest in reading, to show them that reading can be exciting, that their imagination is limitless, that they can discover their own, strange worlds with a special connection to the story told. (30).

In short, we found colloquial uses of language that indicate rushed planning, and was sometimes inappropriately expressive, that also demonstrate a lack of textual organisation and adaptation.

4 Discussion and final considerations

Well-written discourse is a complex skill that requires precise techniques and constant practice. From the research we have carried out, we discovered the need to train university students in promoting communication skills within the epistemic

framework of academic literacy. One issue that may not be taken into account by teachers from levels prior to the university level (GUTIÉRREZ RIVERO; GAVIÑO RODRÍGUEZ, 2020) is that the tasks become more complex as one advances through the educational stages. Papers must be written academically, i.e. they not only require competent language skills (spelling rules, grammar, lexicon, etc.), but also require knowledge of the guidelines that regulate the chosen genre, control of the writing process and adaptation of all its communicative constituents. In the students' discursive tasks, it can be observed that, in general, they do not know (and do not apply) the requirements of the speech act context since they do not respect its characteristics; when writing, it is not enough to only know the subject, it is also necessary to know the situational variables that condition the discourse. Textual practices must form the value of good written communication, which depends essentially on the purpose, context and reader, as well as on a competency in linguistic skills (which require a verbal formulation specific to scientific discourse), as indicated above.

In the academic works, we have observed abundant linguistic features belonging to conversational oral language, the use of which is typical of informal contexts in which spontaneity predominates. The phenomena recorded show a constant lack of adaptation to the communicative context, since the work carried out in the academic field requires the use of cultured language. The works analysed indicate little planning (the phases of discursive production are neglected) and use features of the informal conversational register (pragmatic colloquial connectors, intensifiers, attenuators, mainly personal deictics, concatenated statements, poor lexicon and constant repetitions).

This widespread use in academic practices leads us to reflect on the possible influence of the discursive models practised in everyday informal oral communication in a colloquial register. These students' paradigms (CAMPOS F.-FÍGARES, 2016; PALMER; CAMPOS F.-FÍGARES, 2019) come from literary readings (note that ICT is ideal for encouraging reading, ROMERO OLIVA; HEREDIA PONCE; TRIGO IBÁÑEZ, 2020, p. 106) and academic ones, from other written texts (newspapers, magazines, comics, personal notes, etc.) and from computer media. Many academics warn of the danger of digital spaces as harmful models for language practices, but the problem does not lie in their habitual use in these media because, as we have indicated,

adequate discursive training selects the precise usage (MARTÍNEZ EZQUERRO, 2019, p. 126) demanded by the situation:

En el caso de la comunicación en la cibergalaxia, es manifiesto que el cambio de registro y el nivel de lengua utilizados ad hoc por el emisor son elementos impuestos por el contexto que preservan de la amenaza en su uso generalizado. Las personas que poseen un conocimiento deficitario de la lengua lo demostrarán tanto en canales orales como impresos (o escritos) y en cualquier situación, circunstancia que siempre ha existido y que no ha supuesto un peligro para nuestro idioma que, además, se halla respaldado por la normativa.

Furthermore, poor reading habits hinder the consequent possibilities of developing and promoting the skills of written expression. Communicative competence must be developed as “[...] herramienta imprescindible de [la] futura actividad docente” (MARTÍNEZ EZQUERRO, 2012, p. 94), as well as training in the promotion of linguistic-discursive skills. The planning of strategies and methods provided by academic literacy allows the student to achieve better results in all subjects. Training programmes to accompany the discursive peculiarities of each field of knowledge would be necessary because textual production is not a problem that should be solved exclusively by teachers in the language field. The promotion of these skills is directly linked to the development of thought and, therefore, to learning in all disciplines. Coordinated methods should be applied to strengthen these skills that are transversal to all branches of knowledge, and they should be supported by institutional policies. On the other hand, students would write appropriate discourse if a process of diagnosis-prescription-evaluation were carried out, a method that would help establish the acquisition of the level of competences in order to make decisions on the most appropriate teaching strategies.

The value of this study's results must be considered with limitations. The data obtained from the samples have not sought to generalise the results, as they could be applied to all courses, although we consider that their analysis is more effective in the first two academic years because deficiencies are detected earlier and, in this way, the corresponding training measures can be applied (JUNGES; KETZER; OLIVEIRA, 2018) through literacy programmes. We have tried to offer a space for reflection on the appropriate use of the written language and the development of the linguistic-discursive competence of future teachers and, on the other hand, we have highlighted the need to programme explicit training that solves the aforementioned deficiencies. The development of communicative competence models could well be approached from a transdisciplinary perspective.

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