

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING SKILLS IN MASTER'S LEVEL ENGLISH AS A
FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS: INSIGHT INTO
THE PROCESS AND PERCEPTIONS FROM STAKEHOLDERS
IN COLOMBIAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the perception of students, graduates and supervisors on students' development of general writing skills and academic writing skills through the completion of the master's thesis in teacher education programs in Colombia. In-depth interviews were conducted and online surveys were completed by participants from seven teacher education programs in this mixed methods study. Also, this study examined the process of writing the thesis through the analyses of drafts from three graduates. The findings of this study show how students' development of academic writing skills is grounded on their initial general writing skills and is realized through the appropriation of the thesis genre. This development follows different paths according to students' writing ability. This study argues that there are factors at the personal, supervision, and program levels that contribute to this development. Similarly, the development of these writing skills has an impact on the individual, their teaching, and their academic communities.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Carmen Elisa and my father, Joselyn Antonio for their support and unconditional love.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

The changing demands of the professional landscape for English teachers in Colombia makes it relevant to look into those aspects of teacher education programs that may contribute more significantly to the preparation of future teachers. The National Bilingual Program 2004-2019 is the latest language policy in Colombia and has captured the attention of scholars from its very inception and continues to generate interest and debate. Along with governmental accreditation, assessment, and professional development programs created to support the implementation of these policies, English language teacher education programs need to review how their curricula contribute to the preparation of professionals for the challenges to come. For many years, the curricula of teacher education programs have accounted for “language, pedagogical and innovation-research skill development” (Cárdenas, 2006, ¶ 2) as their core areas. However, it is necessary, now more than ever, to give due attention and support to student teachers and teachers so they can achieve adequate levels of proficiency in English and knowledge of research to actively engage in communities of practice (Sanchez & Obando, 2008) through reflective observation and intervention on their teaching practices. Among those assignments in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher education programs, it is the master’s thesis assignment that seeks to report a research experience carried out by the students throughout their programs (Pineda & Clavijo, 2003, p. 68). The complexity of this project as

well as the high stakes associated with it is what makes this project a sensitive component of these programs that require further exploration in the Colombian context.

In this chapter, an overview of the language teaching programs, foreign language education policies, as well as educational and EFL research in Colombia is presented along with the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research question, the significance of the study, and its limitations.

The Context

In order to better understand the impact the master's thesis has on the preparation of future scholars willing to contribute to the academic community, it is necessary to understand how English language teacher education programs at the graduate level are structured in Colombia. Beyond EFL teacher education programs' goal to prepare English teachers with advanced levels of competency in English, there are goals specific to master's programs to promote research and its reporting that come together in the master's thesis as a way to build a strong language teaching community. The following section explores some features of EFL master's teacher education programs, recent foreign language policies, and a general overview of educational and EFL research in Colombia.

EFL Master's Teacher Education Programs

At the graduate level, masters' programs designed for professionals in the area of English language teaching tend to include different kinds of emphases: Didactics in English Teaching, Bilingual Education, Applied Linguistics, and Education. These master's programs focus more on the research component through which students are expected to become active members of the teaching community exploring through various lenses issues related to the field of English language teaching and learning in their contexts and to advance new understandings in the field.

This last aspect is really important as teachers are expected to become active contributors to the field by conducting research, publishing articles, and participating actively in their organizations. Some master's programs require applicants to present an idea of the area of thesis research they want to develop throughout the program as requirement for admission. Other programs are more flexible in this regard and allow students to identify the topic of their theses in the first year of the program. Students in these programs are assigned supervisors to guide their projects. The master's thesis is usually an individual project at this level. The research and theoretical foundations components in the curriculum of these programs are usually very strong as they are to contribute to the preparation of the students for the design and implementation of their studies. Due to the limited number of master's programs directly related to English teaching in some areas, English teachers have also pursued studies in master's programs in Education which also include emphasis on English Language teaching. These programs are offered to teachers in all content areas and professionals of various fields, sometimes not directly related to teaching. These programs vary in the requirement to write a thesis to graduate.

Foreign Language Education in Colombia

The general landscape of language education, and specifically foreign language education, has dramatically changed in the last 15 years due to educational reforms and policies. Colombia is a multiethnic and multilingual country in which Spanish is the official language for “public, legal and trade scenarios” (Usma, 2009a, p. 134). There are as well native Amerindian languages and Afro-Colombian (Creole) languages spoken by minority communities that represent 1.5% of the total population as reflected in the last National Census (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE), 2008). These communities speak Spanish as a second language.

The General Education Law (Ministerio de Educacion Nacional, articles 21, 22, 23, 1994) introduced foreign languages in elementary education and defined their goal in secondary education. Later, the Curricular Guidelines for Foreign Languages (Ministerio de Educacion Nacional, 1999) highlighted methodological aspects of foreign language teaching. For quite some time, majority language speakers of Spanish who engaged in learning a foreign language did it in languages such as English, French, German, and Italian (De Mejia, 2005). Despite the importance of English in Colombia, its restricted uses and lack of official status have kept it a foreign language.

It was only when the National Bilingual Program 2004-2019 was presented that language education took a radical turn that has impacted not only schools and universities but foreign language teaching and learning in Colombia (Usma, 2009a, p. 128). The overarching goal of the National Bilingual program is to make Colombian citizens bilingual in Spanish and English according to international standards by 2019 (Ministerio de Educacion Nacional, 2005). The launching of this program required the government to further lay out the basic standards for the competencies in English and issued *The Basic Standards of Foreign Languages: English* (Ministerio de Educacion Nacional, 2006). These new regulations introduce substantial changes that include discourses of bilingualism and second language, bilingualism as only related to Spanish and English but no other languages (indigenous or creole), a new set of standards and tests to assess qualifications for teaching, and communicative competences (Usma, 2009a). It also includes professional development programs for English teachers and guidelines for the accreditation of institutions that teach English (Gonzalez, 2007, p. 310). Needless to say, this National Bilingual program directly impacts the preparation in teacher education programs,

governmental professional development policies and teachers and students at every schooling level.

The academic community in Colombia has focused its attention on this program and scholars have voiced their concerns about several issues. First, the foreign framework [i.e., The Common Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001)] is used as a reference for the standards of language teaching and learning, but is not sufficiently related to the needs of our learners (Ayala & Alvarez, 2005). The program's professional development model is unsuitable for the needs of the teachers (Gonzalez, 2007, p. 326). In general, there is a lack of planning for the improvement of English language learning and teaching that considers the following aspects:

Takes into account local priorities of economic development, respects local knowledge and culture, and accounts for a systematic and structural improvement of the public system based on dissimilar conditions that affect schools, teachers and students in both private and public sectors in the country. (Usma, 2009b, p. 21)

There are many challenges posed by the current English language policy and teacher education programs need to be responsive to this reality by providing adequate preparation of future professionals in the field. Similarly, these programs need to provide the tools to teachers to look into their own practice under the current circumstances, examine its impact on teaching and learning, and report it to the academic community. The master's thesis becomes an opportunity to prepare English teachers to carry out this exploration and report it adequately for dissemination.

Features of EFL Research in the Colombian Educational Context

Miñana (2009) found through his exploration of the historical evolution of educational research in Colombia that pedagogical research has been produced more extensively in the last

10 years within the fields of teaching Spanish, English as a Second Language, Math, Sciences, and Social sciences. One of the reasons for this situation is the increase in the quantity and quality of the final graduating papers in these university programs. The main orientation of these papers is the design, implementation, and evaluation of pedagogical proposals to teach something concrete following an action research approach. The subject of language teaching stands out in the area of classroom research. One important aspect to consider is how the theses at the undergraduate level show a lack of adherence to specific lines of research and a great dispersion that make it hard to identify the bulk of research work of the students at this level (Miñana, 2009). This situation is changing in master's programs where there is a growing tendency to work around stable research groups (Gonzalez, 2007, Miñana, 2009, pp. 64-65). Gonzalez (2007) also pointed out how this change is also perceived in the focus and scope of research when she asserted that "research developed in graduate studies reveals the consolidation of innovative practices through the qualification of data collection and analysis, and the rationalization of teachers' experiences" (p. 316). All universities now see research as paramount to respond to the new demands of current standards of accreditation (Gonzalez, 2007).

Research in teacher education programs. Some EFL teacher education programs have explored their specific experiences structuring the research component of their undergraduate programs (Cardenas & Faustino, 2003) or re-structuring it in master's programs (Pineda & Clavijo, 2003) in an attempt to bring insights to the effort to address this component of the programs. Other studies have focused on issues related to teacher education programs that include the characteristics of an ideal teacher education program (Gonzalez & Quinchia, 2003), the preparation in classroom assessment (Lopez & Bernal, 2009), writing experiences in a

professional development program (Cardenas, 2003), and the experience of a classroom research seminar (Vergara, Hernandez, & Cardenas, 2009).

Research of teacher practitioners. Rainey's (2011) study of the action research topics of active researchers and the preferences of potential researchers in the Colombian context provides an interesting perspective of the trends in this area. Among active researchers, methodology and curriculum are the topics that prevailed in the articles published in selected issues from 2000 to 2009 in a Colombian language teaching journal. On the other hand, potential researchers prefer topics related to students motivation, methodology, curriculum, and learner behaviors. Another finding was that half of the journal articles written by active researchers and reviewed in this study "were carried out collaboratively with two or more colleagues working together" (Rainey, 2011, p. 42).

Statement of the Problem

Most English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher education programs at the master's level in Colombia require students to complete coursework, conduct a research study, and write a thesis. The research and writing processes in this project may sometimes be stressful, exhausting, and difficult for most students but especially for those who do not have the research background or the appropriate linguistic tools required for academic writing in English to successfully navigate and complete the thesis. These projects become one of the factors that contribute to the untimely completion of programs (Obregón, 2001) or the point in these programs when students "are prone to quit their graduate studies" (Pineda & Clavijo, 2003, p. 68). Teacher educators are also involved in the process and face challenges at various levels. In addition to guiding the students in the development of each phase of these projects, they have to deal with the emotional and intellectual pressures students confront. It is especially during the master's thesis that the

process of writing demands specific characteristics and nuances related to the need to master writing skills in English as well as academic writing skills to report research. Research on how students complete the project will allow students, supervisors, and teacher education programs to work out more effective preparation and support.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the process of development of writing skills in English and academic writing skills to report research in the master's thesis. This study also explored the perceptions and attitudes of students, graduates, and teacher educators from EFL teaching programs toward this development in the master's thesis. This study focused on three main aspects:

1. The impact of the process and completion of the master's thesis on the development or refinement of writing skills in English.
2. The impact of the process and completion of the master's thesis on the development or refinement of academic writing skills to report research.
3. The perceptions and attitudes of students, graduates, and supervisors regarding the impact of the master's thesis on the development of writing skills in English and academic writing skills to report research.

Research Question

The following question is posed:

How are academic and general writing skills in English developed and/ or impacted through the process of the master's thesis in EFL teacher education programs in Colombia?

Significance of the Study

This study explored students, graduates, and supervisors perceptions on the development of general writing skills and academic writing skills through the completion of a master's thesis in English Teacher education programs. The study provides master's EFL teacher education programs, teacher educators supervising students writing their theses in English, and university professors in these programs insightful information about students' experiences as they write their theses and gradually develop the writing skills necessary to complete them. The findings of this study can offer a more comprehensive look at the challenges that students and supervisors in these programs face and the conditions that contribute to make this learning experience more enriching and conducive to prepare more skillful future scholars.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to the current study. First, the participants came from only seven EFL master's teacher education programs, leaving out programs that did not respond to the invitation to participate or withdrew from participation prior to starting the data collection. Therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to all the programs in the country by those who participated in it. Second, the study focused on ELT programs at the master's level and not at the undergraduate level. Third, the researcher assumed that the self-reported information provided by participants was truthful and reflected their actual perceptions on the issue.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined for the purposes of this study:

General writing skills: Skills related to the appropriate use of grammar, syntax, vocabulary, punctuation, and structure of the text which includes organization and coherence of the information.

Academic writing skills: Skills related to the appropriate use of information from sources including their selection, elaboration and integration, referencing of source information in-text and in reference list, and formatting of the text. It also considers the rhetoric knowledge of the discipline in relation to issues of voice, claim and argument building, and use of vocabulary.

The master's thesis: A thesis is the written report of a research study conducted as a requirement for graduation in master's programs.

The genre of the master's thesis: The set of standards, norms and conventions that define the characteristics of content and structure of the different components of this type of document.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL): English language learned in a non-English speaking environment.

First language: The students' mother tongue.

Second language learner: A learner whose first language is other than English. It usually refers to both learners in English as a Foreign language and English as a Second language contexts.

Genre appropriation: Acquiring the knowledge of the standards of a genre to gain ownership through active interaction with the texts.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I presented the background for the study and the description of the context. It also included the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research question, the significance of the study, its limitations, and the definition of terms.

Chapter II presents the theoretical framework in which the study is framed along with the review of literature in the area of higher education writing, second language writing development, academic writing development, and the master's thesis.

Chapter III addresses the methodological design for the study and describes the data collection procedures, the participants, the instruments, and the data analysis. It also presents the merging scheme for the qualitative and quantitative data.

Chapter IV presents the data results from the in-depth interviews, the online surveys, and document analyses. Students', graduates', and supervisors' perceptions are synthesized in five main themes in which the data from each group of participants is merged. The results of the analyses of the drafts of the theses from three writers are presented at the end of the chapter.

Chapter V offers the discussion of the main findings through the lenses of the theoretical framework and the literature review. The implications and the limitations of the study are also addressed here. Recommendations for further research are offered here as well.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical constructs and concepts that support the current study, as well as the review of literature. The theoretical framework that guided this study considered a view of learning as social activity, highly situated, and influenced by the environment in which the individuals interact. Therefore, this study integrated the tenets from two closely related theories: sociocultural theory and situated learning theory. This chapter also includes an overview of concepts related to writing development, academic literacy, and the genre of the thesis in an attempt to ground our understanding for the current study. The chapter concludes with the review of those studies that have examined writing in higher education, second language writing development, and second language academic writing to finally focus on the master's thesis.

Sociocultural Theory

The sociocultural theory argues that tools and activity mediate the relationship of people with the world and with themselves and the use of symbolic tools including language and cultural artifacts becomes the way people establish these relationships (Lantolf, 2000). It is also through the “appropriation and eventual self-generation of auxiliary means . . . that enable us to voluntarily organize and control (i.e., mediate) mental activity and bring it to the fore in carrying out practical activity in the material world” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 62). Activity becomes

the final exteriorization of our thinking. Human activity is in Leontiev's (1978) terms doing something to satisfy a biological need or a cultural constructed need. When the need is directed to a specific object it becomes a motive to be "realized in specific actions that are goal oriented . . . and carried out under particular spatial and temporal conditions . . . and through appropriate mediational means" (Lantolf, 2000, p. 8).

People then learn through action and tools and in interaction with others, since "human learning presupposes a specific social nature" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88). It is this interaction of the social component with the cognitive component that constitutes the basis for learning. This interaction happens in this way.

The tool's function is to serve as the conductor of human influence on the object of activity; it is externally oriented; it must lead to changes in objects. It is a means by which human activity is aimed at mastering, and triumphing over, nature. The sign on the other hand, changes nothing in the object of a psychological tool. It is a means of internal activity aimed at mastering oneself; the sign is internally oriented. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 55)

Here the signs refer to language, counting systems, and writing. From this perspective, second language learning is a process that involves the interaction between these two components. Vygotsky (1986) asserted that it is through the use of conceptual systems established in the first language that second language learners acquire a new system of meaning and communication. In this case, the first language becomes the tool that mediates the learning of the second language. Consequently the literacy practices acquired in the former one will impact the literacy practices in the latter. Similar to developing speaking or any other skill, learning to write in a second language is highly impacted by the context, the mediating tools, and interactions at the learners' disposal. For this learning to take place, the support of a more capable peer or expert and the availability of materials are necessary.

The zone of proximal development is another component of the sociocultural theory. It was defined by Vygotsky as that difference between what an individual is able to do alone and what this individual can achieve with the support of a tool or another person. This concept considers “cycles and maturation processes that have already been completed and those processes that are currently in a state of formation” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 87). In the normal development pattern there is an

interaction between maturational and spontaneous experiential factors of the child with the systematic formative influence of the family, the community and the given culture. The latter influence is conveyed predominantly through the symbolic mediators (e.g., writing) and educational systems built around them. (Kozulin, 2002, p. 9)

It is in these educational spaces where these mediators are purposefully articulated through the interaction of the learner with the teacher, the materials, and other learners. Lantolf (2000) also pointed out how it is through imitation and collaboration that people develop expertise (p. 17). For instance, Aljaafreh and Lantolf asserted that the individual’s appropriation of the mediational means in dialogue with other more competent individuals through effective kinds of assistance (i.e., graduated and contingent) describes the potential levels of second language development (as cited in Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 277).

In the context of second language writing, learners’ development of writing is influenced by their writing in the first language and the support of experts in the form of supervisors, tutors, peers, and even proofreaders. Related to the support of more capable peers, the process of scaffolding provides insights on the way this support works. Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) defined this process.

[It] enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts. This scaffolding consists of the adult “controlling” those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner’s capacity,

thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that within his range of competence. The task thus proceeds to a successful completion. (p. 90)

This scaffolding may take different forms in second language writing such as direct instruction and feedback. The degree and quality of this support provided to each learner varies in the same way that the zone of proximal development is different for each learner.

Internalization is the outcome that the learner is expected to achieve as a result of this interaction and mediation. Lantolf (2000) defined internalization as the “reconstruction on the inner, psychological, plane, of socially mediated external forms of goal-directed activity’ (p. 13). Therefore the learner gains control over the activity or appropriates it “as a result of dialogic interaction with other individuals” (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994, p. 467). However, the activity is transformed in the process, never remaining the same. Internalization of language occurs when learners engage in tasks and gradually appropriate language to respond to new tasks which they may perform in different ways.

Situated Learning

Situated learning brings together the individual cognitive approach and the interactional approach by focusing “on performance and learning by an activity system: a collection of people and other systems” (Greeno, 2006, p. 83). Cognition is then examined through the learners’ participation and use of the tools in the activity. One important aspect in situated learning is the idea of distributed cognition and how it happens through “problem solving, planning, and reasoning by a group of people, working together with complex technological artifacts and with material representations they generate during the task” (Greeno, 2006, p. 84). Learning happens at the group level as a result of the interaction and at the individual level through participation in this interaction. This participation refers to the contributions learners make and can be

understood as generation of information structures allowed by each individual's positioning within the activity.

The learners change in this interaction and their identities are defined and redefined continuously. Lave and Wenger (1991) argued that affording learners legitimate peripheral participation through full access and active participation in the practices they are to master leads to their full participation in the community as they become more adept. Therefore, the identity of the learner is constantly shaped by the kind of educational experiences and interactions provided by the educational context. More important is the impact the evolving identity has on future participation and this depends greatly on the level of engagement and personal investment the individual develops in a given learning community (Greeno, Collins, and Resnick, 1996, p. 26).

Another aspect that defines the importance of this view of learning is the consideration of how group or individual learning can be enhanced or hindered depending on "constraints and affordances of the material and social systems with which they interact" (Collins & Greeno, 2010, p. 336). Not only do teachers need to consider the limitations and possibilities to access the materials required to create a successful learning experience, but also the activities they create need to be as authentic as possible. The concept of authenticity in situated learning is related to the characteristics of "the type of tasks or goal-based scenarios in which learners are placed and how these tasks require certain competencies and scaffolding to carry them out" (Collins, 2002, p. 54). These scenarios usually engage learners in problem solving in real-world tasks in an attempt to introduce the world outside of the classroom and the skills necessary to function in it. Learners need to get support as they start and progress in the activities since they are usually challenging. Although it is important for teachers to have a road plan for the activities, they are ultimately shaped and negotiated by the participants in their interaction (Greeno, 2006, p. 87).

Through the development of these activities, participants will learn the basic competencies and how and when to apply them in their intended contexts (Collins & Greeno, 2010, p. 337).

The concept of legitimate peripheral participation applies to the context of second language writing and, more specifically, to second language academic writing since it is through simulated writing tasks such as papers that learners begin their participation in the community of their discipline. Here Wenger's definition of social learning helps clarify this point: "Learning is an interplay between social competence and personal experience. It is a dynamic two-way relationship between people and the social learning systems in which they participate" (2000, p. 227). Many times this social competence is determined by the requirements of academia and the specific disciplines and the personal experience by the exposure to the different genres in school and college.

Within the idea of participation, the communities of practice are relevant in a discussion of writing in higher education and even more as the link to professional work. Wenger (2000) referred to these communities of practice as communities sharing cultural practices and articulating the competences required for active participation. Wenger asserted that these communities of practice define these competences by combining three elements. The first is the idea of understanding what the community is about and adhering to its interest through joint enterprise. The second is mutuality reflecting the idea of interaction and engagement. The third element refers to shared repertoire directly related to the discussion of writing via "communal resources-language, routines, sensibilities, artifacts, tools, stories, styles, etc. To be competent is to have access to this repertoire and be able to use it appropriately" (p. 229). Therefore, in order to contribute to one's community of practice it is necessary to acquire this repertoire (usually through instruction), be willing to interact with other members, and care for the growth and

strengthening of the community. It is the participation of second language learners in graduate writing work at the master's level where they become acquainted with the meaning of being academics and get the resources to achieve legitimate peripheral participation as novices to later become full participants in their disciplines.

Second Language Learning

Second language learning within the sociocultural framework is considered “a semiotic process attributable to participation in socially-mediated activities” (Donato, 2000, p. 45). As such, it is considered not as an individual's endeavor in isolation as in the cognitive acquisition perspective but as one in which the individual interacts with the social impacting knowledge construction. It is through the mediation taking place in instruction in the classroom with teachers and peers that is possible to create zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Another important aspect of this interaction is the consideration of what the learner brings into it. Donato (2000) asserted that “learners bring to interactions their own personal histories replete with values, assumptions, beliefs, rights, duties, and obligations.” (p. 46). The second language classroom is the first place where the learner experiences the language in all its facets in interaction with others. One of these facets is the ability to write which is in turn the focus of the current study and the next section.

Writing Skills

Omaggio Hadley (2001) described the process of learning to write in a second language as a “continuum of activities that range from the more mechanical or formal aspects of ‘writing down’ on the one end to the more complex act of composing on the other” (p. 281). On this continuum, writing develops first through skill-getting activities that focus on understanding the way the language functions (i.e., its grammar, syntax, lexicon, cohesive devices) to skill-using

activities in which learners engage in expression and communication (Rivers as cited in Omaggio Hadley, 2001, p. 281). The ways these activities are structured in instruction highly depend on the purpose and approach to writing. According to Rao (2007), the purpose of writing in EFL teaching is two- fold.

On the one hand, [writing] stimulates thinking, compels students to concentrate and organize their ideas, and cultivates their ability to summarize, analyze, and criticize. On the other hand, it reinforces learning in, thinking in, and reflecting on the English language. (p. 100)

He asserted that all this makes writing difficult because it requires the use of both linguistic and cognitive strategies learners may not be quite certain about. In fact, writing in general is a problem-solving activity that requires cognitive processes of thinking and memory involved with “the problem of content-what to say- and the problem of rhetoric-how to say it” (Kellogg, 2008, p. 2). EFL learners are faced with a challenging task in writing to which language teachers respond by implementing practices from a variety of approaches or teaching orientations.

Writing Skills Instruction in EFL

There have been four main approaches used in EFL instruction: controlled writing, rhetorical writing, process writing and English for specific purposes (ESP) (Bacha, 2002, p. 165). Controlled writing focuses on practice of language patterns and grammatical accuracy. Writing is perceived as an opportunity for the learner to manipulate and transform language forms (Raimes, 1991, p. 408). Rhetorical writing centered on “models of writing above the sentence level and advocated the different rhetorical modes of narration, cause–effect, comparison–contrast, argumentation, etc., and took into account the cultural and linguistic background of the writer” (Bacha, 2002, p. 165). Process writing concentrates on the various things writers do prior to writing (brainstorming), while writing (revising), and until they prepare their final product

(proofreading). This approach is reflected in the instruction through the implementation of practices that “allow their students time and opportunity for selecting topics, generating ideas, writing drafts and revisions, and providing feedback” (Raimes, 1991, p. 410). The English for specific purposes derives from a focus on content as related to the writing tasks common in certain discourse communities. Its implementation in L2 instruction was realized through tasks built around reading and writing in the content from various disciplines (Raimes, 1991, p. 411). Closely related to the latter, English for Academic purposes (EAP) centers around the consideration of the reader or audience of a discourse community that defines certain forms of writing (Raimes, 1991, p. 412). The extent to which any of these approaches impact the process of learning to write in English depends greatly on curricular trends in EFL programs and teachers’ preferences. Hyland (2003) considered these various approaches to writing as perspectives or teaching orientations teachers are likely to adopt in an eclectic way “accommodating their practices to the constraints of their teaching situations and their beliefs about how students learn to write” (p. 2). Hyland (2003) identified seven teaching orientations to writing according to their focus and ways they are enacted in teaching practices. These teaching orientations consider the four approaches formerly described but add three new ones and some features important to the discussion of writing in second language learning. When the focus is on language structures, writing is understood as a product in which language knowledge is attained through imitation and manipulation of models. The teaching orientation to writing as text functions extends to the way paragraphs and texts are structured in the forms of patterns to be remembered and reproduced. This orientation is usually used to prepare L2 learners for college-level academic writing. Writing as creative expression explores learners’ opinions and experiences highlighting their self-discovery. The teaching orientation that looks into the writing

process focuses on learner's cognitive processes as related to planning, writing, drafting, revising and editing and the teacher's role is one of a guide in the process of creating awareness of strategies to write. Teacher's response (feedback) during the writing stages is also an essential part of this teaching orientation to writing. This is considered to be "the dominant approach in L2 writing teaching today" (Hyland, 2003, p. 14). The teaching orientation focused on content looks at the topics learners write about while the teaching orientation focused on genre and context of writing underscore the purpose and audience learners write for. This overview of the teaching orientations to writing defines the varied forms L2 instruction can take and the varied ways they can impact the learner's development of this language skill.

Literacy

Kern (2000) offered a working definition of literacy from a sociocognitive point of view.

For him, literacy is the following:

The use of socially-, historically-, and culturally-situated practices of creating and interpreting meaning through texts. It entails at least a tacit awareness of the relationships between textual conventions and their contexts of use and, ideally, the ability to reflect critically on those relationships. Because it is purpose-sensitive, literacy is dynamic-not static- and variable across and within discourse communities and cultures. It draws on a wide range of cognitive abilities, on knowledge of written and spoken language, on knowledge of genres, and on cultural knowledge. (p. 16)

In order to extend and clarify how this definition actually impacts the classroom, Kern also defined seven principles that highlight how literacy involves interpretation, collaboration, conventions, cultural knowledge, problem solving, reflection and self-reflection, and language use (pp. 16-17). This is particularly important for second language learning contexts in which learners learn formal aspects of the L2 language and discursive processes that organize their thought and expression (p. 17). Texts need to be considered beyond the material realization of language to also include "the social and cognitive processes involved in its realization as an

expressive or communicative act” (Kern, 2000, p. 19). Therefore, regarding language teaching within programs that foster communicative competence, speaking has received special attention while “written communication skills—areas of language ability that are extraordinarily important in academic settings” (p. 19) not much so. This is an important aspect to consider since meaning through language needs “to be worked out, learners should have guided experience in selecting, organizing, and interpreting linguistic clues through the creation and re-creation of discourse” (Widdowson as cited in Kern, 2000, p. 20). This is a key aspect of literacy development that sometimes is overlooked in L2 instruction due to the lack of emphasis on the acts of writing and reading as complementary in language learning in general and in academic writing more specifically. It is the idea of a language learner that knows “to compose is the act of writing, [how to] comprehend in the act of reading, and to learn techniques of reading by writing and techniques of writing by reading” (as quoted in Kern, 2000, p. 20). Kress (2003) explored the way new technologies of the screen have underscored aspects of writing as a visual entity with meaning features conveyed through spacing, indenting, margins, types of fonts, bolding, bullet points, etc., and the use of images (pictures diagrams, charts) to accompany the written text (p. 64). Understanding of these elements and how they determine the way we read and write in various genres turns out to be as important as the decoding for interpreting and producing texts. Lankshear and Knobel (2006) defined literacies as “socially recognized ways of generating, communicating and negotiating meaningful content through the medium of encoded texts within contexts of participating in Discourses (or as members of Discourses)” (p. 72). This definition highlights the social and cultural interaction between participants through the discourses they enact and the texts through which this interaction is structured and developed.

Academic Literacy

Spack (1997) defined academic literacy as “the ability to read and write the various texts assigned in college” (p. 4). Despite this limited scope to only two modes of representation, it somehow establishes the context in which this concept is usually studied. On the other hand, Newman (2002) defined academic literacy as “the set of competencies that lie behind . . . achievement” (p. 5) relating this concept to assessment and success. In this sense academic literacy is the kind of practice that “links individual decisions, motives for these decisions, and their effects within the set of social norms that govern behavior of the members of an academic community” (Newman, 2002, pp. 5-6). Casanave and Li (2008) described literacy practices in graduate school as the way graduate students learn the textual conventions of reading and writing, tacit rules of participation, interpersonal relationships between faculty and students, “and the impact of enculturation and interaction on student and faculty identity” (p. 2). At this level we can see the impact of the social aspect shaping the students’ relationships with the tools and the environment around them. Not only does academic literacy entail students exerting certain cognitive skills but also engaging them as “situated artful actors whose acts of communication occur within semiotics systems” (Berkenkotter & Huckin as quoted in Newman, Trenchs-Parera, & Pujol, 2003, p. 46). These systems determine among other things the kind of agency learners have in front of knowledge. A learner with disciplinary agency will be concerned about receiving and reproducing concepts and procedures while a learner with conceptual agency will adapt and ask questions about the concepts and methods of the discipline (Pickering as cited in Collins & Greeno, 2010, p. 336).

Information literacy is another area that is gaining interest as it focuses on approaching the vast amount of information sources available through the web that the learners have access to

and use in their learning. This type of literacy deals with “ways of deciphering . . . information more . . . wittingly or critically . . . as an effective receiver or producer within the media spaces in question” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 20). Coffin and Donahue (2012) pointed out the focused scope of academic literacies in higher education toward problematizing writing and its pedagogy (Lillis & Scott as cited in Coffin & Donahue, 2012, p. 65). This explains the bulk of studies that have explored academic writing in varied contexts (e.g., nonnative English speakers, English as a Foreign language). All these literacies are practices that become essential to help learners fully and successfully participate in the discourse communities of the classroom and the academia.

Academic Writing Development

Language plays a very important role in learning because it is through oral and written texts that people make sense of their experience. Language becomes the mediating tool of the social experience of the individual leading to new understandings (Vygotsky, 1966). Similarly, learning to teach engages student teachers in interaction with others in “planned activities in classrooms such as observing, planning and teaching lessons, assessing learning, and talking to mentor teachers” (Rosaen & Florio-Ruane, 2008, p. 709). All these activities are part of the teacher’s personal practical knowledge that also includes prior knowledge and “knowledge that is constructed and reconstructed as we live out our stories and retell and relive them through processes of reflection” (Clandinin as quoted in Golombek, 2009, p. 155). Writing, in particular, has the potential to be a very powerful tool for reflection in and on action because it is in and of itself a composition process (Burton, 2009, p. 303).

Writing is “a complex cognitive and social activity and . . . the mental processes involved as well as the contextual knowledge bases that must be tapped are enormous” (Beaufort, 2007, p.

6). Hyland (2003) added to this point the role that instruction plays when he compared the experience of the second language learner to the experience of the native speaker writer,

Learning how to write in a second language is one of the most challenging aspects of second language learning. Perhaps, is not surprising in view of the fact that even for those who speak English as a first language, the ability to write effectively is something that requires extensive and specialized instruction. (p. xiii)

If we add to this that second language learners have to do it in the academic context, it brings up new nuances worth exploring. The challenge for L2 learners is to master both the linguistic components (writing skills in English) of L2 and the writing practices of their discourse community (academic writing skills). On the one hand, the language aspect is complicated by these learners' "struggle with linguistic problems that are due to interference from the mother tongue and the writing cultures of writers' native communities" (Ventola, 1996, p. 160). On the other hand, the knowledge of the discourse communities entails other components equally important that include discourse-community knowledge, subject matter knowledge, genre knowledge, procedural knowledge, and rhetorical knowledge as highlighted by Beaufort (2007) while referring to writing expertise (p. 20). Another aspect to be considered especially at the college level is students' development of critical thinking skills to be able to complete the type of writing assignments required and "manipulate source texts in complex ways beyond simple restatement or recall" (Beaufort, 2007, pp. 25-26). Tardy (2005) expanded this idea by pointing out that graduate student-researchers gradually progress from "'knowledge telling,' in which they write to prove their understanding of existing knowledge, to more complex tasks of 'knowledge transforming,' in which they actively construct new knowledge" (p. 325) while also establishing their identities as novice writers-researchers. Therefore, skills to select, synthesize, and elaborate on information from various sources become essential.

Similarly, it is necessary to possess skills to structure the information in the text and build arguments and claims according the requirements of academic genre (e.g., paper, book review, etc.) and to establish a voice and use of vocabulary according to the rhetorical parameters of the discipline. Academic writing, in general, becomes “a major site in which social positionings are constructed” (Hyland, 2002, p. 1094) within disciplinary communities and the academic writing skills particularly contribute become the vehicle that reflect “the ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding and arguing that define the discourse of [these] communit[ies]” (Bartholomae, 1986, p. 4). As second language learners face academic tasks they are to incorporate “these ways” as they also appropriate the different genres of academia.

From Language Learning to Learning the Academic Genre

The nuances of learning to write in an EFL teaching program go beyond the realm of learning to write in English to include aspects related to academic writing, as student teachers are to develop the skills of the discourse community they are entering. Academic writing is framed within the academic literacies L2 teachers acquire through their programs. One important aspect in this area is genre knowledge. This knowledge is “abstract and schematic, enhanced by repeated, contextualized experiences with texts” (Johns, 1997, p. 21). Therefore, genre categories such as expository prose can be easily differentiated from others and at some point individuals can not only read them but also write them. Johns (1997) pointed out those elements of genre that are shared by readers and writers of a specific genre. They all share knowledge “of a text name, the conventional roles of readers and writers of a text in this genre, standard purposes, context, content, and intertextuality” (p. 37). As EFL teacher education programs emphasize the need to use the target language not only as the means of instruction but also as the way students communicate in the classroom, it is important to see how as they learn to write they go through

many layers of enculturation in which learning the genre of the academic community is one if not the most important features of it.

The Genre of the Thesis

In order to understand the specific demands that writing a thesis has for second language learners in the English language teaching field, it is important to define this genre and understand the difference compared to other types of academic writing tasks these learners encounter in their programs. Bui (2013) identified some of the main features of master's theses. A master's thesis "follows a systematic process where there is a researchable problem, literature to support and contextualize the problem, data collection methods (e.g., sampling, measurement instruments), analysis of the data and discussions and conclusions based on the result of the study" (p. 8). Another important aspect of master's theses is that the focus of the study is applied research usually linked to a current problem and not a more theoretical and broader focus as PhD dissertations may have (Bui, 2013, p. 9). As second language master's students approach the writing of the thesis they encounter a first approximation to the kind of writing common in their disciplines. Tardy (2005) referred to the specific challenges that the master's thesis represent for these novice writers,

A Master's thesis can pose many challenges for students as it is usually their first piece of extended academic writing. It may also be their first attempt at presenting their work to a scholarly audience consisting of more than a single instructor. With few exceptions, students lack previous experience in writing a Master's thesis, or similar genres, and must learn the expectations, procedures, and conventions of the task while carrying it out. (p. 329)

If we add to that the fact that these novice writers are expected to attain a high standard, this becomes a really more arduous task (Dong, 1998, p. 369). Having a better idea of the main characteristics of the thesis genre, it is relevant to explore how the area in which this research is

subscribed (i.e., education) will also determine specific affordances to those writing a thesis in this field.

Educational Research

Anderson and Arsenault (1998) defined educational research as “the disciplined attempt to address questions or solve problems through the collection and analysis of primary data for the purpose of description, explanation, generalization and prediction” (p. 6). In general terms research is perceived as a way to solve problems in the educational activity and find principles and theories. Similarly, Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) stated that the goal of educational research “is to generate knowledge that describes, predicts, improves, and explains processes and practices related to education” (p.10). The improvement of practices is an element that is added along with the production of new knowledge as an outcome of the research enterprise. These elements are highlighted in their definition of research:

A form of inquiry in which (1) key concepts and procedures are carefully defined in such a way that the inquiry can be replicated and possibly refuted, (2) controls are in place to minimize error and bias, (3) the generalizability limits of the study’s results are made explicit, and (4) the results of the study are interpreted in terms of what they contribute to the cumulative body of knowledge about the object of inquiry. (Gall et al. 2007, p. 35)

Another definition was offered by Mertler (2008) in which educational research “involves the application of the scientific method to educational topics, phenomena, or questions in search of answers” (p. 6). The scientific method becomes the scheme that defines the elements and process of the research to be followed. All these conceptualizations of educational research point out to the type of research knowledge that inevitably always reflects certain sets of values and worldviews that determine how it is focused, conducted, and probably implemented (Gall et al., 2007, p.13). Two important factors that determine the relevance of educational research in practice through practitioners, policy makers, and the public in general (Gall et al., 2007, p. 11)

are the scope and focus of the research, which are usually determined by those who conduct the studies (i.e., a detached researcher or a practitioner) (Mertler, 2008, p.7).

Research in EFL Teaching Education Programs

Stover (1986) identified among the assignments that have prevailed in teacher programs for some time the written research papers, essay tests, critical analyses, book reviews, and observation reports. Oftentimes, these assignments usually deal with research at the theoretical level and at some practical level in the observation reports. EFL teacher education programs usually structure two main types of small-scale empirical research projects at the graduate level: classroom research and action research.

In classroom research the student teacher identifies a topic of interest and defines a design methodology to gather and analyze data while also becoming acquainted with and critical of the literature in the area. McKay (2009) identified the common topics in L2 classroom studies. These topics include teachers' and students' beliefs, experiences, and attitudes, students' thought processes, classroom interaction, classroom materials, and classrooms and the social and cultural context (McKay, 2009, pp. 284-286).

On the other hand, action research is a combination of action in the form of interventions and research understood as "the systematic observation and analysis of the development and changes" (Burns, 2009, p. 290) to make further changes if necessary. Burns (2009) identified among the purposes of action research in second language teaching to address problems in the classroom, to investigate a curriculum innovation, and to acquaint teachers with research.

Review of Literature

I turn now to a description of studies that have explored the process of second language writing development and in particular the development of writing skills, academic writing skills,

and related aspects of the writing experience of master's students in international contexts prior to exploring the studies in the Colombian context as a way to place the current study in relation to the existing literature. This survey of the literature is divided in six sections: (a) literature related to aspects of writing in higher education, (b) literature about second language writing development, (c) literature about academic writing, (d) literature about aspects of L2 writer and supervision in the thesis, (e) literature about the sections of the master's thesis and perceptions on writing, and (f) literature about L2 writing in Colombia.

Writing Development in Higher Education

Research on aspects of college writing and development provide important information for understanding the complexity of writing at this level.

Horowitz (1986) conducted a study to examine the characteristics of the writing assignments given to undergraduate students in an American university. Despite the small sample of examination questions and assignment handouts analyzed, Horowitz highlighted an interesting tendency in which students seem to be encouraged to “find, organize, and present data according to fairly explicit instructions” (Horowitz, 1986, p. 455) and not to engage them in creating “personal meaning” yet. This feature of the requirements of writing in undergraduate courses could be contested but still provides a glimpse of this context to better understand the strategies that students may or not develop prior to beginning master's studies.

Other researchers have focused on strategies and ways students approach writing. Lavelle (1993) did extensive work to develop the inventory of Processes in College Composition in which she included the five factors (Reflective-Revision, Elaborative, Procedural, Spontaneous-Impulsive, and Low Self-Efficacy) that represent the writing of students at this level. Lavelle and Zuercher's (2001) study confirmed the main features of these factors and pointed out the need to

create a writing environment in which students get involved with tasks that call for content areas integration, revision, modeling, and scaffolding.

In the area of writing change, there have been efforts to identify reliable measures and to test them over different periods of time. Haswell (2000) defined nine measures to identify writing change in his study of the writing of 64 undergraduate students in a cross-sectional study that looked into their essay writing at the beginning of their freshman year and then again in their junior year. The design of the study was quantitative and included the following measures: mean length of sentences in words, mean length of clauses in words, holistic rating mean, words in final free modifiers, words in introduction, mean coordinated nominal per clause, words in free modifiers, length of essay in words, and words longer than nine letters. Results of the study pointed out significant longitudinal change in eight out of the nine measures defined from the freshman year to the end of junior year. This study offers a set of measures that to a great extent worked well as measures of writing.

Prior (2012) focused her study specifically on the impact of a 1st-year writing composition course on the change of students' writing skills. The researcher used an ex post facto design to establish relationships. Three instruments were used: students' SAT written score to measure writing skills by the time they started college, an essay to be written at the end of the course, and a sample of the course syllabi. The comparison between the score of the first and the second instruments was used in order to determine writing skill after completion of the course. Prior found that there was no significant change in writing skills for either of the subgroups (i.e., race and genre). The review of the courses syllabi was aimed at determining if the courses considered best practices in writing teaching and effective writing components and if they were impacting change in writing skills as well. In this regard, the syllabus components and the

elements of writing were not associated with writing skills change, either. This study shows the limited impact of this writing course on writing skills based on the type of essay students wrote at the end of the course, which Prior acknowledged was not the type of task students had practiced or been taught to do. This limitation of the study points out the need to develop instruments that match the type of writing activities students are familiar to when conducting studies that attempt to determine change in writing skills.

Another study (Rogers, 2008) also explored the factors that impacted the development of writing but over a longer period of time starting in college. Rogers' (2008) study explored the writing trajectories of students from their undergraduate programs and into their first year of professional life over a 5-year period using data from the Stanford Study of Writing. The analysis of the interviews with 40 students focused on determining the factors that fostered writing development and the scoring of 200 pieces of writing sought to identify what knowledge and skills developed through the process. Rogers' (2008) analysis indicated that students develop writing through their interactions with the college curriculum and with others such as mentors, teachers, and peers in which students actively engage in dynamic conversations about their writing and their thinking. Regarding the dialogic interactions that students engaged in with mentors, teachers, and peers, Rogers (2008) found in his study that these interactions were quite specific to the task and writer and sometimes dealt with the writing process and other times with the final products. Rogers (2008) in particular affirmed that the outcome of these dialogic interactions was reflected on "improved final products, and in other cases they reported changes to their writing processes, identities as writers, levels of engagement, understanding of teacher expectations, and confidence in their writing abilities" (p. 271). Students also engage in interaction with the curriculum (i.e., materials, lectures, and instruction) since it is through the

different classes that they are exposed to reading and writing tasks that require them to exert their writing knowledge. Rogers (2008) found that students developed specific knowledge in rhetorical knowledge, writing processes knowledge, genre knowledge, specific content knowledge, and disciplinary methods of critical thinking. This study definitely highlights the value of creating and fostering the type of conditions that make these interactions with mentors, teachers, and peers as meaningful and rich and with the curriculum as coordinated and consistent as possible.

Second Language Writing and Writing Development

Research on second language writing is varied not only on the issues explored but also on the methodologies used. The growth in numbers of students undertaking undergraduate and graduate level degrees in English-speaking countries has triggered researchers' interest in understanding the writing processes of second language learners and the challenges these learners face. One of the issues that tends to be the focus of attention is the identification of effective practices that impact or improve students' writing but tend rely on single aspects of writing that do not consider holistic views of writing; but even when holistic views are considered, they become problematic as they are sometimes not specific enough (Haswell, 2000, p. 308). Cumming's (2001) review of empirical studies on L2 writing identified the features of the texts produced, the composing processes, and the sociocultural contexts of writing as the three aspects mainly studied. This review highlighted the multifaceted nature of research on learning to write in a second language (p. 10).

Another area that has received special attention is the evaluation of writing. One aspect that stands out in this area is the definition of L2 writing profiles. Haswell (2005) argued for more prototypical categorization that allows categories to be graded and proposed 10 essay

writing traits in his study of L1 and L2 teachers' categorization of writing traits of L1 and L2 writers. A quantitative methodology was used to identify the differences in categorization between the two groups. These 10 traits were taken from The Writing Program Administrator s Outcomes (as cited in Haswell, 2005, p. 107) and included audience, documentation, inquiry, integration, purpose, situation, sources, structure, surface, and voice. The consideration of more specific traits of writing expand the scope of the aspects included in what writing is and acknowledges the role of the discourse community in which the writing is produced. This position challenges the predominant use of standardized testing categories (Haswell, 2005, p. 107) such as the "ESL Composition profile" (Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Harfield, & Hughey, 1981) with its five main traits: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.

Researchers of L2 writing have also used quantitative methodologies to explore the changes of writing processes of L2 writers according to their level of writing ability by looking at their writing fluency, complexity of their texts, pausing behaviors, and strategy use (Sasaki, 2000, 2002).

Other studies have focused on factors that influence the development of L2 writing. Chae (2011) examined how Korean college students' knowledge, self-efficacy, strategies, and interest impacted their writing performance while participating in a writing course in three Korean colleges. The study gathered data during 1 semester in three different points from 187 students with language tests, self-efficacy, interest, strategy, and performance measures, and interviews. Findings of this study pointed out that students' interest and self-efficacy do not determine students' writing performance over time but they relate to students' performance at the beginning of the semester. Another aspect in which this study found statistical significance was the relationship between L1 and types of strategy use and L2 and types of strategy use. This study

highlighted the importance of intrapersonal factors such as interest and self-efficacy and background factors such as L1 and L2 writing prior knowledge in the process of L2 writing development in an EFL educational context.

Academic Writing

Research in the area of L2 academic writing development has been conducted not only in English speaking countries like the United States but also in international contexts. Some of these studies are presented here. The context in most of these studies is the academic writing class offered to students in universities at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Braine (2002) examined the acquisition of academic literacy by non-native speakers through his exploration of research in the area. Braine identified through his review that writing is very important in graduate studies but that instructors' focus was more at the global-level errors than on surface ones. Related to the work with theses, the role of advisors determined to a great extent the success of their advisees especially in relation to the conception and writing of the thesis. Appropriate use of learning strategies, social skills, and high proficiency in English are all important for non-native speaker (NNS) graduate students. Braine also pointed out that these graduate students "may need explicit instruction in academic writing, although they appear to become more accomplished writers as they proceed through their course work, research and thesis writing" (p. 65). In his review, Braine points to interesting directions for research that at the time were still just emerging.

In a study of the learning of academic writing as cultural practice, Macbeth (2004) explored the efforts of 19 international students learning the academic conventions of writing in an entry-level composition course in an undergraduate program in an American university. Departing from the idea that academic writing conventions are cultural conventions that cannot

simply be taught but more are the product of the negotiation of competencies, participation, and infrastructure between instructors and students in order to recognize, assess, and use these conventions. The methodological design of the study is teacher research involving the participant observation of the researcher. The data of the study included textbook units, homework assignments, exams, lesson plans, videotaped records of discussions and sessions, conversations, emails, tutorials, and field notes. Findings of the study pinpoint how these novice writers use the linguistics resources they have to start writing sometimes not having “the task ‘in mind’ when they begin an assignment precisely because the ‘task’ is the outcome of learning” (Macbeth, 2004, p. 213). This is due to the lack of referents to the instructions that they are given. But as they read models (of essays in this case), the input they provide allowed them to make their first approximation to reproducing these academic conventions. However, it is the tutorial component of this course that becomes the place where a new virtual curriculum emerged as a space in which the exploration of the insufficiencies of the formal curriculum led to the development of competence of judgment. Macbeth (2004) underscored how, through these tutorials and with “the company of a competent practitioner, students begin to see what the models cannot say—the endless attachments of judgments to conventions and context” (p. 199), thus suggesting moving away from skills curriculum while teaching and learning academic writing to a curriculum of judgment. This study shed light on how novice writers new to the conventions of academic writing may tend to approach tasks, the role that models play in this process with their limitations, and the need of space in which these writers explore their new understandings and misunderstandings of these conventions.

Causarano (2011) conducted a study to explore how students in an English as a Second Language (ESL) class in an American university acquire academic writing through Vygotsky’s

theoretical and methodological framework. Causarano particularly focused on the learning environment and how it impacted this acquisition. This acquisition of academic writing was analyzed through the writers' interaction with the writing tasks, instructors, other second language writers, and environment-writing situations because for this study L2 writers learn and use academic writing "in systematic interaction with the environment in which different constituents played a major role" (Causarano, 2011, p. 83). Four international students were the participants in this study that used a case study design to take an in-depth look at the processes of acquisition of academic writing.

Findings of the study confirm the importance of the relationship between the environment and the learners as part of a system of learning and the role that writer's level of writing in English played on these participants' learning and use of academic writing. Causarano (2011) asserts that processes of academic writing acquisition need to be "seen as a more complex process where linguistic, cognitive, sociocultural, and individual factors play an important role in how international students are able to acquire and use academic writing in English in higher education in the U.S"(p. 220). This study offers interesting insights on how the acquisition of academic writing is directly linked L2 writing ability, the support characteristics of the environment, the demands of the tasks and the individuals' factors of the writers.

Regarding the development of academic writing skills, a study (Gomez, 2013) recently explored the development and demonstration of these skills as well as critical thinking by 10 adult learners; 5 were native speakers of English and the other 5 NNSs, through a 1st-year composition course. The specific academic skills included presentation of ideas, organization, synthesis of information, effective use of information, and systematic documentation of references. A mixed methodology was used in this study that included the quantitative analysis

of pre-course assessments and final exam results and the qualitative analysis of interviews with the participants focused on development progression and perceived ability. The results showed that native speakers can acquire academic skills and critical thinking skills in this 15-week writing course but the level of acquisition was dependent of the initial level of writing skills so those with weaker skills at the beginning were barely able to increase their academic writing skills. For four out of five of the NNSs in the study the gains in academic writing skills were more limited, preventing them to reach an acceptable level. Only one NNS scored acceptable in the initial and kept it in the post writing assignment. Regarding confidence in writing ability to complete future academic assignments as perceived by these participants, all of them expressed their confidence had increased. But in fact the results of the exit writing assignment proved otherwise. Regarding critical thinking skills, some students had gains in some areas of critical thinking but since academic writing is closely linked to writing ability there were students that could not develop them.

This study offers interesting insights into the process of acquisition of academic writing and critical thinking skills for both native speakers and NNSs now that it points out the relationship between the initial levels of writing ability as directly impacting academic writing development. Another important finding is the impact of barriers related to educational background reflected in some of the limitations they had and that included “lack of preparedness, and an overestimation of academic ability” (Gomez, 2013, p. 119). The latter limitation is related to the lack of understanding of the expectations of academic writing.

Similarly, Rahilly (2004) examined the influence of L1 and L2 literacy background along with affective manifestations and cultural differences in the interactions with the environment on the development of academic writing of 21 ESL students from 15 countries enrolled in writing

classes in two community colleges and one adult education program in the United States. Rahilly interviewed these participants to explore their perceptions, feelings, experiences, and opinions about their academic writing learning in these ESL writing classes. Rahilly found that these participants' L1 and L2 previous writing experience was highly correlated to their acquisition of academic writing. In addition to this, it is the need for them "to learn to think and write in new ways that may be quite unfamiliar to them" (p. 174). Regarding affective responses to academic writing, there was, in general terms, a tendency to have a negative emotional response toward it although of different intensity among the participants. The most common emotional response was writing anxiety with its by-product, writer's block and writing resistance. This response seemed to be highly related to "the ESL student's essential self-efficacy, positive attitudes, motivation to learn academic English writing and the feeling that he/she was making progress in writing" (Rahilly, 2004, p. 225). The cultural differences as related to instruction and participation revolved around the mismatch that exists between teachers' and students' expectations in areas such class participation and group work and peer evaluation. This mismatch dealt with how instructors' envisioned their students to interact with instruction by participating, asking questions, expressing opinions, requesting help, engaging in active group work and how these participants envision the class experience to be, and teaching practices they were familiar and comfortable with. In this area, participants' reactions varied according to their particular background and level of proficiency. The findings of this study put up front the importance of keeping in mind the affective issues related to the acquisition of academic English writing by L2 learners. Another aspect equally important was the previous L1 and L2 background of these L2 learners as it may hinder or foster the acquisition process. Similarly, understanding the students'

expectations of instruction and working around them was key to creating a better learning environment in these educational contexts.

Another study (Katznelson, Perpignan, & Rubin, 2001) explored the changes L2 learners went through in academic courses in two Israeli universities. The focus of this study was on the by-products of these courses although changes in writing were also included. The data were collected through two open-ended questions, student interviews, and teachers' reflective journals and aimed at identifying perceived changes related or not to writing in English. Seventy-two students in the three different levels (undergraduate, master's, PhD) were the participants in this study. Katznelson et al. (2001) identified three main categories in their analysis of the data: perceived outcomes in writing in English, perceived outcomes in writing in general, and perceived by-products of writing courses. The perceived outcomes in writing in English were in areas such as grammar and academic writing. Making connections was an area that few students selected. The perceived outcomes in writing in general were in areas like "content and structure" and followed far behind by "expressing ideas coherently," "awareness of self in writing process," and "learning to write." The perceived "by-products" of writing courses that were identified by participants were the acquisition of skills in others areas, "changes in their being," "affective outcomes," "listening to others," and "learning the meaning of learning" (pp. 150-152). These findings pinpoint the impact the writing experience has not only on the acquisition of the target skills of the course but also on writing in general and on the individuals at the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels. These other types of change that writers go through as they engage in writing activity or as in the context explored in this study, writing courses, expand the scope of their influence on students' L2 learning and growing as individuals.

Buckingham (2008), in her study of the development of academic writing competence but with a group of 13 scholars in a university in Turkey, also found that these scholars went through a process of exploration of genre convention focused particularly on linguistic and organizational patterns. Another important finding was that through their exposure to reading they found ways to “enrich their own stock of vocabulary and expressions” (p. 9) that then they would gradually include in their own writing. This study also underscores the fact that in order to reach an expertise level, it is necessary, even for L2 scholars, to carry out independent work over an extended period of time.

A study (Tardy, 2005) looked into the rhetorical knowledge in advanced academic literacy focusing on its nature and role by exploring the writing experience of two L2 writers at the graduate level. Tardy focused on their thesis drafts (for Paul) and drafts of research papers (for Chatri) to keep track of their performed academic literacy and on interviews to explore these participants’ knowledge of literacy (p. 329). The researcher defined these two high-stakes tasks as it was there where she found the most salient leaps in knowledge, or pivotal points as she calls them. The account of Paul’s experience writing his master’s thesis is particularly insightful into the ways this rhetorical knowledge developed for him. Starting with little knowledge of the genre of the thesis and no experience writing texts this lengthy in English, he prepared his first draft. Facing problems with organization, he read papers and a thesis to then adopt a similar organization in his draft. In this first draft, he paid special attention to providing sufficient background information as he saw that in the papers he read but at this point linguistic aspects were his main concern. In this case, Paul adapted the structure and purpose from the papers he read to his first draft. Through feedback from his supervisor on this draft and following drafts, Paul expanded his text by including and reorganizing information in ways more common in

theses. Through this process, he went from an interest in building readers' knowledge to an interest in convincing them of the importance of his study. Chatri's experience working on his research papers also took him to expand his rhetorical knowledge but in relation to this genre. Tardy (2005) was particularly surprised that through their experiences, these two writers began to understand writing as a tool to convince others and not simply to communicate content. Their experiences also highlight the influence of "mentoring and collaboration, identity, disciplinary participation and task exigency" (Tardy, 2005, p. 336) on rhetorical knowledge development. Tardy's study provides a glimpse inside the process of gaining rhetorical knowledge through a high-stakes task such as the master's thesis in which sources of information like papers and the support from supervisors play a decisive role in the completion of the task and ultimately building rhetorical awareness.

Another study (Cheng, 2006) also examined rhetorical awareness, but as related to the analysis of academic criticism in reading and its enactment in writing. Analysis of the reading and writing tasks of one L2 graduate learner in an academic writing class showed that the learner identified indirect criticism as linked to the discipline leading him later to recontextualize this practice of indirect criticism and even include direct criticism in his own writing. Cheng emphasizes the importance of attending to "how learners' trajectories become transformed in the concrete acts of analyzing writing samples by others and producing writing of their own" (2006, p. 303). Here it is possible to see once again the importance of recognizing the power and impact of the interactions L2 learners establish with tools like research papers to build their rhetorical awareness and engagement with the disciplines.

Aspects of Academic Writing

Use of sources. From the aspects of academic writing, use of sources is the area that has received special attention. The studies presented in this section focus on L2 learners' use of sources in general and the last three studies focus particularly on citation practices. Some studies have examined the use of sources by L2 writers in graduate contexts as contributing useful information to understand how this aspect of academic writing is enacted through these writers' experiences.

Davis (2013) explored the experience of three international students in a Pre-master's English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course and then a master's program to identify their source use. Four assignments from four different stages of their process were analyzed to identify features of paraphrasing, attribution, citation and reporting verbs. The length of the drafts went from 600 words in the first draft to 23,000 to 34,000 words in the fourth draft. The section of the drafts that was examined was the literature review since it was the place where more sources were used. Interviews were also conducted by the researcher to learn participants' perceptions of their use of sources and its development. It is important to mention that these three writers were taught and had practice with each of the four aspects of source use examined in this study in their academic classes. Findings indicate that each of these writers progressed differently in the use of sources and did not reach a competent level. The strategies identified to deal with sources included the use of a limited set of reporting verbs, over-citation, and insufficient paraphrasing. This study brings up the need to consider the use of sources as an individual endeavor that each developing writer approaches differently and using different strategies. Besides, even with explicit training on the use of sources, writers may not necessarily transfer these skills to their writing thus requiring further support.

Abasi, Akbari, and Graves (2006) conducted a study with five ESL graduate students in a Canadian university order to examine the level of awareness of their identity as authors according to the way they appropriate sources in their writing. From the perspective that writers make textual decisions that reflect their evolving construction of their identities and self-representation within a specific context, the researchers analyzed syllabi, writing assignments from students, and conducted interviews with them to question their decisions regarding the use of sources. The results of this analysis on the one side pointed to “a significant differential level of awareness of construction of authorial identities between the more experienced and the less experienced groups” (p. 106). On the other side, this awareness was related not only to the identification with the discipline but also to deficiency of resources to construct this identity sometimes leading to plagiarism. Abasi et al. (2006) argued that plagiarism is rooted in students’ educational histories that may have “instilled in them the belief that their role as writers was one of reproducing or transmitting truths” (p. 114) instead of seeing sources as information to be contested. The use of sources is a complex task for many ESL learners that are just scratching the surface of their disciplines thus barely understanding their identities within them.

Some studies addressed in particular one of the features of use of sources in academic writing: citations. Petrić (2007) compared the citation functions of eight low-rated and eight high-rated master’s theses written by L2 writers in Central Europe. Through the analysis of this corpus, Petrić defined a typology of nine rhetorical functions of citations in master’s theses. The findings of the quantitative analysis identified that writers of these high-rated theses used a great variety of rhetorical functions of the citations such as evaluation and application indicating more analytical work while writers of low-rated theses predominantly used citations for attribution purposes of displaying knowledge. This study offers a quite comprehensive typology of

rhetorical functions of citations that serves as a tool for instruction and support of L2 learners to better understand the potential of this feature of academic writing. It also pinpoints the need to create awareness in L2 writers of the possibilities of these resources to articulate new and more critical relationships with the information from sources.

Another study conducted by Mansourizadeh and Ahmad (2011) explored 14 research papers of five experts L2 writers and seven novice L2 writers in the same discipline in a university in Malaysia to identify the citation practices of both groups. The researchers identified three main types of citations (i.e., non-integral, integral-verb controlling, and integral-naming) and six different citation functions. Findings show that expert writers used non-integral citation while synthesizing several sources. On the other hand, novice writers used citation for the function of attribution and many times in isolation. The last finding concurs with the findings of Petrić's (2007) study regarding the tendency for less proficient writers to use citation for the function of attribution.

Samraj (2013) focused on the discussion sections of master's theses and research articles in biology in her study of the use of citations. Findings show that there are more rhetorical functions of the citations in these texts than reported in previous studies. Samraj asserted that "the relationship constructed between the text and previous ones is complex and multi-faceted" (p. 308) where writers not only use citations with attribution or background functions but also engage in creating higher order connections with the information from sources.

Aspects of the Second Language Writer in the Thesis

Literature about features of the second language writers while writing their theses includes aspects such as enculturation, the development of identity and autonomy, and first language influence. Enculturation is an issue that somehow is embedded in graduate education

through the type of assignments students are required to complete. Prior (1991) conducted a study to examine the context of writing in a graduate second language seminar and found that the teacher's response toward written assignments enculturated students into the kind of topics and ways of approaching the reading and writing about research, in other words the type of discourse in the field. The consideration of this potential to enculturate is very important since it is through the type of tasks students need to develop that they, to a great extent, become familiar with the requirements of the scholarly work in their field.

One study explored the phenomenon of identity building from the perspective of second language development in the academic context. Cadman (1997) explored the development of identity in English and discourse in their discipline of NNSs writing their thesis in English. Her work underscores an area that requires attention, as challenges are greater for these students as they undertake their theses in academic and linguistic contexts novel to them. Similarly, Hyland (2002) explored the way a group of L2 undergraduate students constructed themselves and their work in their final research projects. Using a mixed method design, Hyland looked at authorship in academic writing through the students' texts and interview data.

Another important issue is the development of autonomy in the writing thesis process. Sachs (2002) conducted a study to identify correlations between undergraduate and master's students' attitudes toward learning and their writing of the thesis in an education program in Hong Kong. This author developed a path model that considered action-control belief variables (academic ability, knowledge orientation and luck) students had and how they relate to their academic experience and their approach to learning. The findings show how learners who have a deep learning approach are more likely to engage in positive academic experiences which may include their writing of the thesis. This study underscores factors related to the students' self-

efficacy in relation to academic endeavors as relevant and decisive for their successful experience while writing the thesis.

Similarly, Greenbank and Penketh (2009) looked into the factors that determine undergraduate students' levels of autonomy in their dissertations in a university in the United Kingdom. These factors included previous writing experiences, their confidence in their writing skills, and their relationship with their tutors, but more importantly, their ability to achieve their own objectives. Most of these factors deal with prior learning experiences and how they definitely shape the way students approach the thesis. Nevertheless, these two studies identify the need for undergraduate and graduate programs to address more effectively the limitations and strengths students have before embarking in the writing of the thesis.

One last study deals with several of the issues mentioned before and adds the influence of students' native language cultural contexts to the writing process. Wang and Li (2008) studied the challenges and pedagogical needs of a group of graduate NNS students from various backgrounds who were writing their theses and dissertations at a university in Australia. Their research areas included education, information science, law, and others. The challenges of the thesis writing process identified through the interviews fell into three groups. The first challenge dealt with the development of academic writing competence in English that was highly influenced by cultural contexts of previous academic experiences. The second challenge involved the understanding of the writing conventions in English as compared to conventions in the students' native languages. The third challenge entailed the kind of feedback given by supervisors (i.e., on language form) and the one students expected (i.e., on content and structure of the thesis). This study brings to light NNSs' sense of inadequacy of their English to

accomplish tasks according to academic conventions and the role and impact that supervisors have in this process.

These studies highlight how issues of enculturation in the academic field and writing in English are influenced by the support system in the form of supervision and prior and ongoing preparation. Supervision then becomes an important aspect of the writing experience of students while completing their theses and I turn now to some of the studies in this area.

The Supervision of the Thesis

The studies that have addressed the specific features of the supervision of a thesis have looked at the characteristics and aspects of the relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee that are considered essential to understand its complexity. Some studies explore supervision from a more general standpoint but there are some that approach the specific situation of nonnative English speakers.

In a study of the supervision of graduate research students in education and psychology departments in three universities in the United Kingdom, Acker, Hill, and Black (1994) investigated the supervisory styles, students' strategies, and the characteristics of the relationship between the supervisor and the students regarding direction and control. Acker et al. found that the supervisors' approach to supervision tended to fit in the negotiated order model in which the supervisor purposefully adjusts to the specific characteristics of student needs or stage of research than to a technical rationality model focused more on a series of predictable steps for which students can be trained. On the other hand, students developed strategies to deal with the thesis such as accommodating to the circumstances and sometimes becoming extremely independent or coming to terms with the situation to get it done. Supervision is then perceived as

an endeavor in which both the supervisor and the student adapt to the specific characteristics of the situation to define routes of action aimed at the completion of the thesis.

Another study conducted by Dong (1995) addressed the context of thesis and dissertation writing and the advisor's role and relationship with non-native English speaking graduates in the natural sciences. Dong found a great variety of ways in which the advisor assisted graduates during the thesis or dissertation writing and factors affecting the relationship between advisor and advisee. This study also pointed out among several other dimensions the disciplinary enculturation nonnative speakers go through and the academic writing skills they acquire in this writing process. Similarly, McGinty, Koo, and Saeidi (2010), in their cross-country study of research students' perceptions of the role of supervision, found that students realized through their research studies that "they had to learn the dominant cultural protocols for the production of knowledge in the form of a thesis" (McGinty et al., 2010, p. 526).

Another study (Rodrigues, Lehmann, & Fleith, 2005) took a quantitative approach to analyze data from qualitative studies dealing with the interaction between the supervisors and the students to define the main factors that determine the success or failure in the thesis. From the perspective of the supervisors, five factors were derived: exclusivity, consolidated authority, final product sufficiency, partnership/growth and originality/focus. From the supervisee perspective, there were seven factors identified: autonomy/support, safety/excellence, partnership/acquiescence, pragmatism, partnership/adviser's priority, usefulness/informality, and rigor/ self-sufficiency. From the perspective of both parties, three factors were derived: complementary/partnership, advisee's initiative/sharing, individualism/ process denial. In general terms, these factors indicate a shift from an authoritarian and dependent interaction to the building of a partnership in which the advisee's ownership of the project unfolds. Therefore, for

the interaction between advisor and advisee to be productive and enriching, a balance needs to be reached between the expertise and guidance of the advisor and the growing self-sufficiency and rigor of the advisee.

This partnership is pervaded by more complex nuances that include power relationships, students' agency, and their development in the subject matter, though. A small scale study of undergraduate supervision (Hammick & Acker, 1998) pointed out that the gender of the supervisors could have, at some level, an impact on the practices, values, and attitudes of supervisors. Two main aspects in the relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee stand out and they refer to the flow of knowledge and the dynamics of power as linked to gender. However, beyond a consideration of the gender of the supervisor, it is important to understand the contextual aspects of this relationship (high-stakes academic situation) and student's agency in the project. Therefore, the supervisor contributes more than knowledge and expertise; it defines the scope of influence and control that the supervisee may deploy during the conception and development of the thesis.

Another study that also highlights the agency of the students in the writing of the thesis was one conducted by Chang and Strauss (2010). In this study, the perceptions of a small group of Chinese international students prior to thesis writing are analyzed to identify how the relationship with their supervisors developed. Key to this study was the identification of factors affecting the sense of agency that these nonnative speakers of English faced in their academic community. Issues of stereotyping, isolation, legitimacy of former education, and reasoning and intellectual capacity (i.e., to think critically) arose. English academic writing difficulties influenced the supervisory relationship and the lack of agency of these international students. In fact, the findings showed how these last two issues were deemed as defining of the relationship

of these students with their supervisors. This study in particular offers meaningful insights for the supervision of any graduate student regardless of her background since student's agency is central for an enriching and productive interaction with the supervisor and the successful completion of the thesis. In addition, it allows us to look at the challenges of the supervision of nonnative English speakers who are also students writing their thesis in English.

Along with the role of the agency of the supervisee in the process, the role of the specificities of subject matter in the research and writing process needs to be acknowledged. Bengtson (2011), through his exploration of the supervisor and supervisee in higher education in Scandinavia and Great Britain, called for a view of the supervisory dialogue in its personal dimension linked to the pedagogical facilitation but more importantly to a personal manifestation of the subject matter. The supervisory dialogue revolves around ways to approach the thesis and the reasons to do it, but more importantly, on the supervisee's self in the specific subject matter of the research.

From these studies, it is possible to identify that the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee tends to be highly influenced by clearly defined roles that somehow need to be negotiated, adjusted, and accommodated to provide the appropriate space for discovery, creation, and compliance in the thesis writing. These studies also show the relevance of considering the active role of the supervisees in strengthening their ownership of their projects and how supervision positions them in their academic fields.

The Sections of the Master's Thesis

Some studies have explored sections of the master's thesis to identify rhetorical movements, structure, and difficulties for L2 learners. These included the abstract, introduction, and discussion sections.

The abstract is the section that is explored by Ren and Li (2011) in their comparative study of rhetorical moves of L2 novice writers and expert writers in master's theses and research articles, respectively. Twenty-five abstracts of research articles and 25 master's thesis written in English in the area of Applied Linguistics were analyzed keeping in mind the presence and length of five rhetorical moves in abstracts (i.e., introduction, purpose, method, product, and conclusion). Findings indicate that novice writers usually include the five moves plus three new ones called structure, promotion, and limitation in the abstracts of their master's theses with the goal of providing as much information as possible. These writers gave more emphasis to the introduction move than to the product move maybe in their attempt to establish the importance of their study with the first move, or as a reflection of their insecurity of their findings with the shortness of the second move. On the other hand, expert writers of the research articles did not include all the five moves making choices based on their purpose of persuading the readers. These writers place as much importance in the product move as in the introduction move although the former one tends to be the one more likely to be used to show the strength of their studies. These findings point out these novice writers' emergent rhetoric knowledge but still "incomplete appropriation to disciplinary practices" (p. 165).

The structure of the introduction section was explored by Cheung (2012) using Swales' CARS model in the analysis of 43 master's theses in five soft sciences programs (linguistics, physical education, applied psychology, instructional design and technology, education management) in a university in Singapore. The findings show differences in authorial presence and use of citations according to the discipline of the program.

Bitchener and Basturkmen (2006) examined students' and supervisors' perceptions of the discussion of the results section in the master's thesis regarding its function, difficulties while

writing it, and their shared understanding of these difficulties. Four pairs of supervisors and L2 students from two universities in New Zealand were interviewed in order to determine these perceptions. Findings of this study indicate that the supervisors in this study shared an understanding of the role of the discussion of results section while students did not despite having taken the methods course, and the practice and feedback they had received previously. The main difficulties while writing this section were related to grammar and vocabulary, the expression and development of ideas, and the content of this section and its organization. Most of these difficulties were perceived by both students and supervisors with a few differences. There was also little similarity between students' and supervisors' perceptions of those areas that were problematic for students. This study underscores the demands that writing this section or any other section of the master's thesis pose to L2 students that not only involve control over grammar, vocabulary, and organization but also over aspects of the genre of the thesis. In addition to this, it points out the need to establish better ways to support students' in this process and to communicate supervisors' expectations.

Perceptions of Students' Writing Skills

Several studies have explored students' perceptions of students' writing skills regarding specific aspects. McGuire (1989) investigated students' perceptions of their enjoyment of writing, and Wenner and Palkovacs (1997) examined how prepared students were to undertake writing in college. Other studies have focused on teachers' perceptions of students' writing. Hunter-Carsh (1990) investigated instructors' perception of students' ability to deal with content and form; Newkirk, Cameron, and Selfe (1997) examined students' writing weaknesses; and Burrell, Liping, Simpson, and Mendez-Berrueta (1997) explored writing abilities, problems, and institutional testing methods. A few studies have explored the perceptions of both students and

instructors regarding students' writing skills. Friedlander (1981) explored students' basic academic writing skills and confidence in their writing skills and Harley (1991) explored students' writing skills and feedback from instructors. Both of these studies showed the discrepancy between students' and teachers' perceptions of students' writing skills.

More recently, one study (Hart, 2006) explored the perceptions of university students and their English instructors on students' writing and composition skills using survey instruments with both populations. The questionnaires were given to 1,280 freshman students and 48 instructors and descriptive statistics were used to determine the correspondence of instructors and students regarding five writing skills areas that included grammar and mechanics (proofreading and editing), content (including wording and structure), attitude (feelings toward writing), literary considerations (writer's personality and reader's consideration), and the writing process (development, writing, and refining of ideas). Hart found that students' perceptions of these writing skills were significantly different from those of their instructors. In fact, instructors felt students had lower writing skills than students felt they had. The level of disagreement in descending order according to area was grammar and mechanics, writing process, attitude/content, and literary considerations. One statement with which students and instructors agreed was related to students not knowing how to use personal voice. This study highlights how students' perceptions of their writing skills may not really correspond to the standards teachers have regarding writing quality and how this fact could prevent students from seeking the support they need to improve.

Perceptions of L2 Writing in Master's Theses

Two studies have examined the perceptions of L2 students on their experience while writing their theses. Cooley and Lewkowicz (1997) used questionnaires and interviews to

examine the perceptions of students and supervisors regarding the difficulties and needs of postgraduate L2 students writing their theses at a university in Hong Kong. One hundred five supervisors were interviewed and 362 students responded the questionnaires that were sent out. The supervisors identified difficulties in five aspects, presented here in order of importance for these participants: logical development, grammar-surface structure, style, lexis, and grammar-obscuring meaning. The most important problem for these supervisors was logical development and it was related to “students’ failure to organize their ideas, present a logical argument, and maintain coherence over longer stretches of discourse” (p. 120). Students in this study identified similar difficulties. This study offers insights into those areas that students may find challenging as they address the writing of their theses and dissertations. It also highlights the importance of fostering students’ awareness of these problems and providing ways to tackle them through sustained forms of support from programs and supervisors.

A study by Dong (1998) also explored doctoral and master’s students’ and professors’ perceptions on several aspects of the master’s/dissertation writing. One hundred thirty-seven students and 32 professors from 23 departments in two American universities responded the surveys. Aspects of the writing experience examined through the surveys include type of format (i.e., articles or traditional thesis), advisor’s perceived support, advisor-advisee relationship and social networks, language, educational, and cultural differences. Results of the surveys indicated salient differences between nonnative students and native students are sometimes reinforced by several factors that include their language status, research opportunities, limitations in rhetorical knowledge, cultural expectations, lack of social networks, and advisors’ involvement with their projects. The variety of aspects included in this study expands the scope of features considered

relevant when addressing the writing experience of L2 learners as they approach and complete this task.

Second Language Writing in Higher Education in Colombia

Literature about L2 writing at the graduate level in Colombia is quite limited but the following summary provides an overview of the research efforts in this area. Three studies have recently addressed the thesis in undergraduate and master's level ELT programs in the Colombian context. Although their foci and levels of comprehensiveness vary, the studies offer valuable information about aspects of these projects that have been deemed important and sometimes challenging.

One study (Cardenas, Nieto, & Martin, 2005) conducted in an undergraduate foreign language program in Bogota explored the nature of the undergraduate thesis written by students in different stages of their projects and majoring in English, French, and German. This study focused on looking into what motivated students to select the topics of their theses, circumstances surrounding this project, and the relationship between the professional field and the thesis. The main findings of this study show how students usually see pedagogical issues as rich areas of exploration over other areas such as translation, linguistics, and literature. This is highly connected to the impact this area has on their professional practice as language teachers. Other findings underscore the need to establish more opportunities throughout the programs to engage students in research practice since this is an area with which students struggle greatly, as well as a need to strengthen conceptual bases and argumentative skills as stated by some supervisors. This study pinpoints the role that research knowledge and experience in academic writing have for the completion of the undergraduate thesis. However, research and language differ substantially according to the various themes of the undergraduate thesis among these

participants. It is also not clear which aspects related to research are more troublesome for students or what these conceptual bases and argumentative skills refer to in relation to given types of theses.

A dissertation (Barletta, 2007) more recently sought to identify the ideological positions about English language, English learning and teaching, as well as the construction of identities by in-service teachers through a critical discourse analysis of 20 graduate level theses from a 1-year diploma course in an applied linguistics program in Colombia. The main focus of these theses was the design of a course to respond to specific needs of the institutions in which these graduate students worked. The analysis showed the presence of opposing discourses leading to mismatching theoretical and methodological choices in the various components of this particular project. Another important finding is how theory is perceived as ideology free and taken uncritically, leading to little impact on the practices they are intended to improve. One important identity constructed by the authors of these theses is that of a teacher researcher with various degrees of scientificity and knowledgeability through the academic discourse they try to appropriate. This appropriation was highly influenced by the characteristics of the program, the contents and the tasks included, as well as each individual teacher's investment in the thesis. This study brings up compelling insights on the emerging identities of these teacher researchers within the possibilities and constraints of the Colombian context as reflected on the final academic outcome. However, it leaves as an object of further research what teacher researchers think about these issues and, as stated by Barletta (2007, p. 328), how they transcend the completion of the thesis.

Piñeros and Quintero (2006) also explored some undergraduate and master's theses developed in an ELT program to identify conceptualizations of change and pedagogical

knowledge as a result of their authors' gained experiential and academic knowledge and reflected in excerpts from these projects. These theses were used as a source of reflection on academic practices within a teacher education program that can support the identification of ways teachers conceptualize change and innovation in their teaching practices. As such, these master's theses and undergraduate capstone projects were considered only as fragmented testimonies and not as whole entities.

These studies frame theses as complex projects in which teacher researchers encounter various challenges and through which they develop new identities as teacher researchers. The thesis as an academic product becomes a space to unravel ideologies and positions in relation to theories and practice.

The review of the literature shows trends in the goal of research studies conducted in the area of thesis writing and contributes important information regarding areas of exploration that can inform the current study. The main tendencies reflect an interest in exploring aspects of writing within undergraduate and graduate programs usually through students' experience of L2 learners in ESL and EFL contexts. The topics of these studies revolve around the exploration of challenges of L2 writers, the effects of instruction on L2 academic writing classes, and perceptions of writing change and development. The few studies of the master's thesis found either focused on perceived difficulties in L2 students' writing or differences with native speakers. Those studies developed in the Colombian context looked into the challenges of theses and how the kind of discourse used reflects ideologies and emerging identities of their authors. Therefore, there is a need to explore how the thesis writing process and the variety of tasks involved in it contribute to the development of general writing skills in English and academic writing skills to report research in EFL master's teacher education programs in Colombia.

Findings of this study can contribute insightful information to these programs to determine more appropriate ways to approach and support this project for both teacher educators and students. It may as well encourage reflection on the characteristics that this project has in relation to both kinds of skills and its relevance and impact in the students' professional and personal lives.

Summary

Chapter II presents the theoretical framework and the literature review that frame this study. The overview of the main tenets of sociocultural and situated learning provides the basis for the study and the review of literature on second language writing and academic writing highlights the various areas and aspects that have been explored and their findings contribute important insights into the current study. Chapter III presents the methodological design of the study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

After the theoretical framework and review of literature were presented in the previous chapter, this chapter will focus on the research methodology, instruments, and research procedures used in this research as well as the description of the data analysis. The methods and procedures used in the current study were based on the following question:

How are academic and general writing skills in English developed or refined through the process of the master's thesis in EFL teacher education programs in Colombia?

This study explores the perceptions of the main stakeholders in this process: students, graduates, and teacher educators in EFL master's programs regarding the development of general and academic writing skills through the thesis. The main aspects considered are

1. The impact of the process and completion of the master's thesis on the development or refinement of general writing skills in English.
2. The impact of the process and completion of the master's thesis on the development or refinement of academic writing skills to report research.
3. The perceptions and attitudes of students, graduates, and supervisors regarding the impact of the master's thesis on the development of general writing skills in English and academic writing skills to report research.

Design

A mixed methods approach was used in this study. In a mixed methods approach, qualitative and quantitative approaches are combined or integrated to better “capture the trends

and details of a situation” (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006, p. 3). A mixed methods design was used due to two main reasons. On the one hand, there was a need to gather information from populations out of the physical reach of the researcher through an online survey to corroborate the findings from data gathered from a selected group of participants. On the other, due to the nature of the component of analysis of writing development, textual analysis was complemented with the scoring of writing samples. Mixed methods affords a more comprehensive view of the process of general writing skills and academic skills development and the exploration of the participants views on the issue under study. It is also important to note that “many, if not most, empirical studies done in L2 writing use a mixed methodology” (Silva, 2005, p. 10).

The type of mixed method design was QUAL + quan. In this design, the core component is qualitative and the supplemental component is quantitative and both happen simultaneously (Morse & Niehaus, 2009, p. 25). The point of interface of the data from both components took place in the analytic stage when the data from the survey was transformed into narrative and then incorporated in the qualitative analysis. Creswell and Plano-Clark (2011) called this type of design parallel convergent since “the researcher collects and analyzes both quantitative and qualitative data during the same phase of the research process and then merges the two sets of results into an overall interpretation” (p. 77). This study acknowledged the specificity of the conceptualization of validity in each method and attempted to respond to the call of the mixed methods design “to move across a continuum of quantitative and qualitative measures of validation procedures” (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p. 92).

Setting

Sample

The EFL teacher education programs at the master's level from seven universities in Colombia were considered to be the source of most participants for both the qualitative and quantitative components of the study. These universities were selected due to their status in the educational language community and because all are well-established graduate level teacher education programs focusing on the teaching of EFL. Five of the master's programs are fully oriented to English language teaching and the two others are master's programs in education with an emphasis on English language teaching. These two programs were considered since they represented a part of the educational offering for professionals in this field at the graduate level in the country. It is important to mention that the researcher did not study in any of these programs.

The five master's programs in English language teaching share several characteristics that make them appropriate for the purpose of this study. First, research is a very strong component in all of them. This is reflected in the well-defined lines of research and their congruence with the main components of the program. Second, all programs require their students to write a master's thesis in English. Third, the length of the program and the general profile of their students are the same. Fourth, all these programs have a tradition of excellence in the area of EFL language teaching in Colombia. The only differences of the other two programs is that since the master's is in Education with an emphasis on English language teaching, there are no established requirements of English language proficiency to start the program, and that some subjects are taught in Spanish. Both factors definitely have an impact on the experience of these students writing their theses and reflect the reality of their participants which is also worth exploring.

All these master's programs are 4 semesters long and are usually focused on the preparation of teachers to be able to identify problems and propose solutions to educational problems within the educational community, deepen theories of teaching and learning, and contribute to knowledge building through the publication of research conducted throughout the program. The research lines vary from program to program but in general terms include a wide spectrum of areas that include, among others, language teaching and learning, language and technology, language and society, pedagogic innovations, language pedagogy and didactics, linguistic and cognitive processes, communication and interculturality, and educational practices in our context.

Participants

There were three main groups of participants in the current study: Students currently writing their thesis, graduates who already completed a thesis as part of their master's program, and teacher educators (i.e., supervisors) involved in the supervision of students writing their theses in English in these master's programs.

There were 31 participants in the in-depth interviews: 9 students, 14 graduates and 9 supervisors. Four focus groups were conducted with students and supervisors. There were two focus groups with students with a total of 10 participants and two focus groups with supervisors with a total of 7 participants. The two focus groups with graduates did not meet due to logistic problems; instead four in-depth interviews were conducted.

Nineteen students in total were included in the interviews and focus groups. Their ages ranged from 24 to 45 years and there were 13 women and 6 men. These students were Juan, Magdalena, Juana, Claudia, Viviana, Sofia, Alejandro, Magu, Natasha, Sandra, Angelica, Danilo, Mariana, Amelia, Adolfo, Samantha, Daniel, Angela and Guillermo. Of the 13 graduates,

7 were women and 6 were men and the age range was close to that of the students. The graduates that participated in these interviews were Santiago, Juliana, Paula, Pedro, Javier, Nico, Jenny, Dana, Andrea, Jorge, Johanna, Sonia, and Luis. The 16 supervisors were 12 women and 4 men and their age ranged from 35 to 60 years. These supervisors were Karla, Gabriela, Lorena, Nicolas, Luisa, July, Rosario, Laura, Marlen, Manolo, Ariadna, Aida, Licimaco, Mayeya, Camila, and Alberto. The level of English proficiency of all participants in these interviews was quite high and allowed the researcher to conduct all the interviews in English.

These participants belonged to all seven programs and the researcher made sure there was a representative from each program in each category of participants. The EFL teacher education programs in which participants were included for the in-depth interviews and focus groups belonged to seven of the most prestigious universities in the country. Four of these programs are located in Bogota, the capital city of Colombia, and the other three programs are located in other main cities in the country (see Table 1). The main reason for having four programs from Bogota was due to the high concentration of these programs in this city in comparison to other cities in the country. The participants in these interviews were distributed almost evenly between programs in Bogota (23 participants) and from the other three cities (25 participants). Appendix A presents the participants in each group according to program and instrument. The objective of including students, graduates, and supervisors from different programs was to see whether their perspectives and experiences concurred or not. All participants in these interviews and focus groups were selected on the basis of their interest in participating and their availability to give the interviews.

A total of 78 respondents completed the online surveys: 16 supervisors, 25 graduates, and 37 students. The online surveys were available from late March to early August, 2013. There were

respondents from all seven programs in all categories of participants except from University 2 from which no students responded the online survey (see Table 2). Due to the lack of information from most of these programs regarding the number of graduates, students, and supervisors in the last 10 years, which was the timeframe defined for the participants, it is very difficult to estimate the total number of possible respondents. However, the researcher considered the response rate quite acceptable due to the lack of familiarity with this kind of instrument in the research context where this study took place. Since the objective of this survey was never to make generalizations to the populations under study, response rate was not an issue in this study. Nevertheless, the researcher expected to hear the voices from as many participants as possible using the affordances of this instrument.

Table 1

Distribution of the Participants in the Interviews and Focus Groups From the Seven Master's Programs

City 1 U1	City 2 U2	City 3 U3	U4	Bogotá		U7
				U5	U6	
Master's in English language teaching	Master's in English language teaching	Master's in English language teaching	Master's in education with emphasis in English language teaching	Master's in English language teaching	Master's in education with emphasis in English language teaching	Master's in English language teaching
3 interviews supervisors	3 interviews supervisors	1 focus group supervisors	1 interview supervisor	1 interview supervisor	1 focus group supervisors	1 interview supervisor
3 interviews graduates	3 interviews graduates	1 interview graduate	1 interview graduate	1 interview graduate	2 interviews graduates	2 interviews graduates
3 interviews students	3 interviews students	1 focus group students	1 focus group students	1 interview student	1 interview student	1 interview student

Table 2

Distribution of the Respondents of the Online Surveys According to Program

University	Students	Graduates	Supervisors
1	8 (22%)	6 (24%)	4 (25%)
2	0	3 (12%)	2 (13%)
3	9 (24%)	3 (12%)	4 (25%)
4	8 (22%)	6 (24%)	2 (13%)
5	1 (3%)	4 (16%)	1 (6%)
6	7 (19%)	1 (4%)	2 (13%)
7	4 (11%)	2 (8%)	1 (6%)
Total	37	25	16

Two graduates and a student about to defend his thesis were the three participants that submitted the two drafts of their theses for the document analysis. In fact, only two of these participants had been included in the interviews and focus groups. The other one was a former student from one of the supervisors who was willing to share her drafts. The researcher selected the drafts from these participants from a pool of drafts from five participants after identifying three different levels of writing proficiency (see Table 3).

Table 3

Writers of the Drafts of the Thesis According to Level and Program

Participant	Category	MA program in University	Level
Alejandro	Student	3	Proficient writer
Nathalia	Graduate	1	Developing advanced writer
Sonia	Graduate	4	Developing intermediate writer

Timeframe of the Study

The researcher took about 5-1/2 months collecting the data. The researcher visited the four cities in Colombia during the summer of 2013 and completed almost all the interviews and focus groups in this period of time. By the end of August, the researcher stopped collecting data

from surveys and received the last drafts of theses. The researcher spent about other 5 months completing the analysis of the data and completing the final document.

Instruments

Data were gathered using four instruments: in-depth semi-structured interviews, focus groups, online surveys, and document analysis. The semi-structured in-depth interviews, focus groups, and textual analysis of documents were the three main sources of qualitative data in this study. The self-report online surveys and the scoring of the theses drafts were the instruments in the quantitative component.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to have a more direct contact with the participants and it is through this encounter that “knowledge is produced socially in the interaction of the interviewer and interviewee” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 82). Focus groups provided a space for several participants to elaborate and articulate their ideas about a topic through their interaction. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) pointed out the “non-directive interviewing style” was key to engaging participants in the exchange of varied points of view on the subject matter (p. 150). Both types of interviews are quite common in qualitative research and they were considered as sources of rich and thick data for the current study.

The online surveys offered the opportunity to gather information from participants in other locations and teacher education programs. These surveys were self-administered and were intended to “collect data by presenting the questionnaire on a web page” (Alreck & Settle, 2004, p. 36), affording their distribution through the internet. The document analysis of students’ samples of theses drafts provided some insights on the process of writing as recorded in these artifacts. The sequence of the instruments is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Sequence of Instruments

RESEARCH DESIGN						
In-depth Semi-structured interviews (27)			Online Surveys			Document analysis
QUALITATIVE			QUANTITATIVE			QUALITATIVE/ QUANTITATIVE
University 1 3 students 3 graduates 3 supervisors	University 2 3 students 3 graduates 3 supervisors	Universities 5, 6, 7 3 students Universities 3,4, 5 3graduates Universities 4,5,7 3 supervisors	7 universities			Drafts from 3 students various skill levels Student 1-intermediate developing writer Student 2-advanced developing writer Student 3-proficient writer
		For students Actual response 37	For graduates Actual response 25	For supervisors Actual response 16		
Focus groups (4)						
Universities 3 and 6 2 focus groups of students	Universities 3 and 4 2 focus groups of supervisors					
Interviews (4)						
Universities 6 and 7 4 graduates						
Data analysis (codes, categories, themes)			Data analysis (descriptive statistics)			Data analysis (textual analysis) 3 Students-main investigator Data analysis (scoring using rubric) Student 1- raters 1,2 3 Student 3- raters 1, 2, 3 Student 5- raters 1,2, 3
Point of Interface					Point of Interface	

Data Collection Procedures

Gaining Access

In order to locate the participants for the interviews, focus groups, and online surveys, the researcher contacted master’s coordinators in these programs via email to present the study and request their cooperation. When coordinators expressed their interest in participating, the researcher sent them the information with the invitations to participate in the interviews and online surveys (see Appendix B). There were several program coordinators that willingly helped

to gather the participants from their programs. Due to the difficulty to get participants for the interviews in some programs, the researcher got in touch with teachers in these programs who also contacted former students, current students, and teacher educators and invited them to participate. There were times when the researcher directly approached possible candidates in their work sites, especially in programs in other cities.

For the online surveys, some coordinators provided the email information from their graduates, current students, and supervisors to the researcher who then sent the invitation to participate in the surveys. Other program coordinators sent the invitation directly. Another way to distribute the invitation in one of the programs was through social media as suggested by one of the participants in an interview. Since these institutions were the main source of participants and their help was highly appreciated the researcher was open to finding ways to reciprocate their support once the study was completed. In fact, the researcher served as reviewer for one of this program's journals since the time he gathered the data.

Gaining Consent

Once the study was approved by the IRB, the researcher included the corresponding excerpt in all three online surveys (see Appendix C). In the online surveys, this consent was given to the researcher once the survey was submitted. For the in-depth interviews and focus groups, the researcher printed both copies of the informed consent (see Appendix D), took them to the interview, and went through them with each participant, had it signed, and gave them a copy prior to starting asking any of the questions for the interview. All interviews and focus groups were conducted face-to-face except for the interviews with the three participants from University 7 that had to be conducted via Skype due to limitations of mobility. In this case, the researcher read the informed consent with them before beginning the interview. These three

participants were asked to print, sign, and scan the informed consent and send it to the researcher to keep their consent on the record. The procedure of carefully going through the informed consent was intended to make sure that participants “are fully informed about the purpose of the study, that their participation is voluntary, that they understand the extent of their commitment, that their identities will be protected, and that there are minimal risks associated with participating” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 48). All consent forms were collected and kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s home until the end of the study.

In-depth Semi-structured Interviews and Focus Groups

Once the IRB approval was obtained, the researcher sent the invitation to participate in the study to all program coordinators who had formerly agreed to help. In those cases where participants contacted the researcher, he worked with them to schedule the interviews and focus groups in times and locations of their mutual preference and convenience. In other cases, the researcher contacted participants in person in their workplaces and arranged the time and place for these interviews. The questions in the schedule for the interviews and focus groups were tailored to fit the specificities of each category of participants and characteristics of the instrument. For example, questions for the students revolved around the process they were going through which differed from those of the graduates since for them this process was already completed. On the other hand, the core questions for the interviews were way more specific than those for the focus groups which tended to be more general to provide a space for more open discussion (see Appendix E). The semi-structured nature of these interviews allowed the researcher to ask interviewees to elaborate on points they were making as they answered the core questions. These questions included aspects of the master’s thesis in relation to the development

or refinement of general writing skills and academic writing skills in English to report research through the activities related to the process of writing the thesis

The in-depth interviews and focus groups lasted from 20 minutes to 1 hour and were recorded and transcribed in their totality by the researcher. In order to ensure the accuracy of the transcription of the interviews and focus groups, the researcher engaged in member checks with all the participants by sending them the transcript of the interview via email. Nineteen out of the 31 participants replied to this request and reviewed their transcript; some made modifications to the language used and even expanded on some of the answers they gave. The researcher kept in mind these modifications before starting the analysis. These member checks were used to allow participants to “judge the accuracy and credibility of the account” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208).

Online Surveys

A review of the literature in the topic of the current study revealed that the few studies that have included surveys in those studies had a quite different emphasis, which made them unsuitable for the purpose of this study. One study (Torrance, Thomas, & Robinson, 1994) focused on the students’ writing strategies but as they relate to all the assignments they encountered in their social sciences program, while the other two studies focused on the relationship with the supervisor and his role (McGinty, 2010) and aspects supervisors consider important when evaluating a thesis (Hamatani, 1997).

Due to this lack of surveys that directly addressed the development of general writing skills and academic writing skills through the master’s thesis, the researcher designed the three surveys, keeping in mind the same information he included in the interview schedule for the interviews and added appropriate choices for the specific characteristics of the participants (see Appendix F). The survey was reviewed by two professors in the area of academic writing and

two supervisors to account for its content validity and their feedback and recommendations were considered for the preparation of the final online surveys. The types of questions included in the online surveys can be found in Appendix G. These three online surveys were uploaded in Qualtrics, which is a website that includes a survey panel facility that stores and provides support for survey design and research, for respondents to access.

Once these online surveys were approved by the IRB, the invitation to participate in the study including their links were sent out to program coordinators that then sent them to current master's students, graduate students who finished their master program within the last 5 years, and to teacher educators who have been involved in thesis supervision during the same period in the seven universities included in this study. Once the data collection finished in early August, the surveys were locked and reports with the results were downloaded from Qualtrics for their analyses.

Document Analysis

The two drafts from the theses from three writers (i.e., two graduates and one student) were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The first draft reflected the first half of the process including sections such as the introduction, the theoretical framework, the methodology, and the instructional design. It is important to point out that the structure and content of these sections vary according to program and focus of the study. Some programs do not place much emphasis on the literature review and some studies do not have a pedagogical intervention since they are exploratory studies. The second draft was usually a more elaborate version compared to the first draft and included the data analysis, findings and conclusions sections, but was not necessarily the last version of the document. The purpose of the analysis of the two drafts of the theses was two-fold. On the one side, it was to shed some light on the writing process of the

thesis as a complex and evolving text. On the other side, it was to see how and if some of the perceptions and testimonies from the participants materialize in these documents as a reflection of the experience of developing and proficient writers.

Triangulation

In this study, triangulation is understood as the “use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). A variety of participants directly involved in the development of the master’s thesis contributed information from various vantage points. Similarly, the use of a mixed methods design and a variety of instruments added rich and thick data.

The Researcher as a Reflective Practitioner

Throughout the process of designing the study and collecting data, the researcher continuously engaged in purposeful review of the methodological decisions he made. In order to keep track of these reflections, the researcher kept a journal. The objective of this journal was not only to document reactions and new understanding as the researcher completed every stage of the process, but also to keep a record of ways the study needed modifications or alterations and the reasons that motivated those decisions. This journal proved to be very important in the analysis stage because it helped the researcher keep a self-reflexive and critical stance to make sure he was really drawing his interpretations from data and not from his own assumptions and biases.

To this end, the researcher requested peer review and external audits from fellow colleagues who were knowledgeable on the topic of the study and/or were also involved in thesis supervision. Specific moments of the process in which this support was quite useful were when the interview schedules for interviews were prepared, the online surveys were designed, the

rubrics for the analysis of the documents were modified, and the definition of the approach to address the merging of the qualitative and quantitative data was specified in the analysis stage.

Researcher's Positionality

My interest in conducting this study was not related to my own experience writing a master's thesis in one of these programs, but more to my tangential contact with some novice writers facing the challenges to complete a thesis as a requirement for graduation in these master's programs in my country. I also wanted to explore how my experience as a second language learner learning to write academically was somehow mirrored in the experiences of my participants. In fact, I wanted to learn more about the way the writing experience unraveled for them in order to better understand and be able to help, in the future, other novice writers and those who support their writing process as well.

Methodological Limitations

Considering the overarching purpose of the study which was to explore how the master's thesis developed or refined general writing and academic writing skills, it was important to include the experience of as many programs as possible that currently required their graduate students to write a thesis in English. However, there were several limitations regarding access to programs, participants, and some instruments that are worth pointing out.

The researcher contacted via email all the coordinators of master's programs in English language teaching in the country; however, some never replied therefore leaving the program out of the study. Only one program that had initially agreed to participate withdrew from participation only weeks before starting the collection of data. Regarding access to participants for the interviews and the online surveys, it was very difficult to ascertain if all possible participants were sent the invitation in a timely fashion or how many of them actually received

the invitation in the case of programs that did not provide the email information of their students, graduates, and supervisors.

There were three specific limitations to the online surveys. One dealt with the instrument itself which by nature may not be quite common in the context of this study. Another limitation may be technical; dealing with the requirements of the equipment to access the links could have prevented some participants from completing them. The third limitation was related to the presence of the neutral choice in the three types of Likert-type questions included that may not have taken the neutral choice as the mid-point in the progressions but as something else. This something else is hard to determine; therefore, this is a limitation of these questions.

The main limitations of the document analysis were related to the access to the drafts and their scoring. Regarding the access to drafts of the theses for the document analysis, there was the generalized reluctance of the graduates and students to share them with the researcher. This led to working only with those drafts from writers that were available to the researcher. The second limitation dealt with the scoring of the drafts by the raters. The type of checklist used for the scoring of the drafts had an analytical scoring scheme in which the various features of writing were separated for the purpose of the scoring. Perkins (1983) pointed out some of the disadvantages of this type of scoring scheme.

First, there is the problem of an immoderate standard. As with holistic scoring, some graders may try to use an absolute standard of quality, such as published professional writing. Second, the features to be analyzed are isolated from context and are scored separately. Discourse analysis and good sense tell us that a written or spoken text is more than the sum of its parts. Third, the choice of categories can be vague and certainly arbitrary because the categories themselves are determined by the graders, who base their choices on a corpus of professional and student writing. It has already been pointed out that different readers may value different aspects of a composition. (p. 657)

In addition to these disadvantages, it is important to keep in mind that the length of the drafts of the theses analyzed went from 60 pages to 189 pages. After reviewing the checklists returned by the raters, it was also evident that there were problems with the descriptor in the area of vocabulary called “control of taxonomic relations” because it was hard to identify how this could be reflected in the document leading to raters to make an educated guess or simply go for the “Non Applicable” (N/A) ranking as a strategy. The use of N/A also may have been taken in different ways by the raters. In one, the specific aspect was not supposed to happen and the N/A was given. In another, the specific aspect did not happen but it should have been there. In those cases some raters gave the N/A while others gave a score instead. For instance, it happened twice that two raters gave an N/A to a whole component that despite not having been present was assessed in this way. All these factors may have influenced the scoring, thus impacting the inter-rater reliability.

Data Analysis

As it was described in the research design section, the mixed methods design of the current study considered and adapted to the specific types of analysis defined in qualitative and quantitative inquiry before merging the results of both data sets.

In-depth Interviews and Focus Groups

The qualitative data from the in-depth interviews and focus groups were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach (Glesne, 2011; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This kind of approach involves a process of coding and further description of themes. The general trends were defined from individual cases throughout the study and then synthesized for participants in each category (i.e., student, graduate, or teacher educator/supervisor). In the study, the researcher began the process of coding and categorization with the data from the supervisors and completed an initial

definition of themes that later was completed and modified following a constant comparison method of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) as data from students and graduates were coded and categorized. This method of analysis was used because it “assures that all data are systematically compared to all other data in the data set. This assures that all data produced will be analyzed rather than potentially disregarded on thematic grounds” (O’Connor, Netting, & Thomas, 2008, p. 41). This approach to the analysis helped the researcher to capture and explain participants’ statements and define initial “abstract theoretical understanding of the studied experience” (Charmaz, 2010, p. 4). As the analysis advanced and the themes were further developed and strengthened, it was easier for the researcher to describe “the patterns, linkages, and plausible explanations” (Patton, 1999, p. 1191) of the phenomena through the data first and then through established and emergent theories in an attempt to understand how the various variables interrelated and even established a potential framework for further research (Bradley, Curry, & Devers, 2007, p. 1760).

It was interesting to see how the data from each group of participants focused on certain kinds of information that reflected their positioning in front of the process at the moment the interviews took place. For example, supervisors had a more comprehensive overall perception of the whole process and could provide information based on their extensive experience with students they were or had supervised. Graduates had a more general view of the process since they already completed the thesis and in most cases had continued to be involved in academic work which may have been impacted by the skills they developed through the thesis. Students offered a fresh perspective many times influenced by their proximity to the ongoing work and struggle with the different components of the thesis. Due to the extensive amount of data collected, it was necessary to organize the data in Excel tables first and then in diagrams to see

how the main themes and sub-themes were integrated. The following diagram (Figure 1) shows how the researcher inter-related the main themes he identified in the data from the groups of participants.

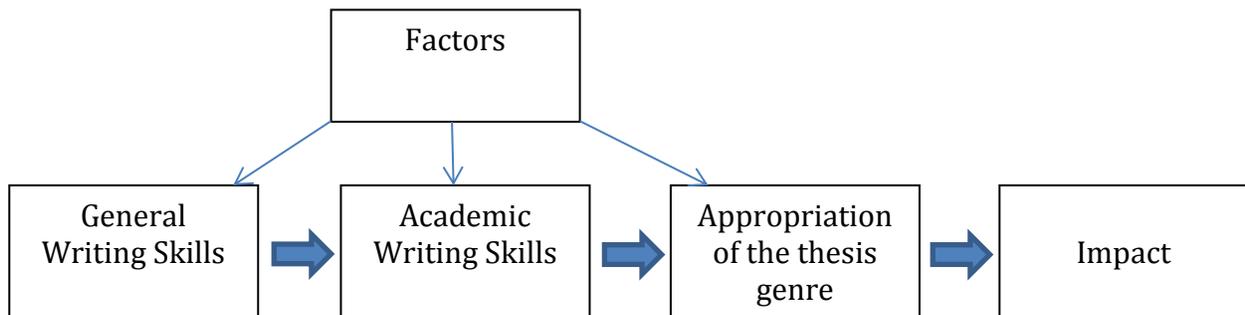


Figure 1. Diagram of main themes.

As the process of analysis became more advanced, the researcher defined and refined the subthemes for each main theme. The complete diagram including the sub-themes is presented in Figure 2. The thematic scheme defined here then was applied to the results of the online surveys whose analysis is now presented.

Online Surveys

The quantitative data from the online surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify major trends in the information for each group. Descriptive statistics are “used to summarize, organize, and reduce large number of observations” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 206). No other statistical analysis was used since the researcher was to compare the information from students, graduates, and supervisors as part of the merging process. The descriptive statistics reports were generated by Qualtrics which is the research suite website where the responses to the online surveys were gathered and stored for this study. The information from these reports then was converted into narrative form in the data transformation

stage (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003) to prepare it for the point of merging in which results from both interviews and online surveys were compared.

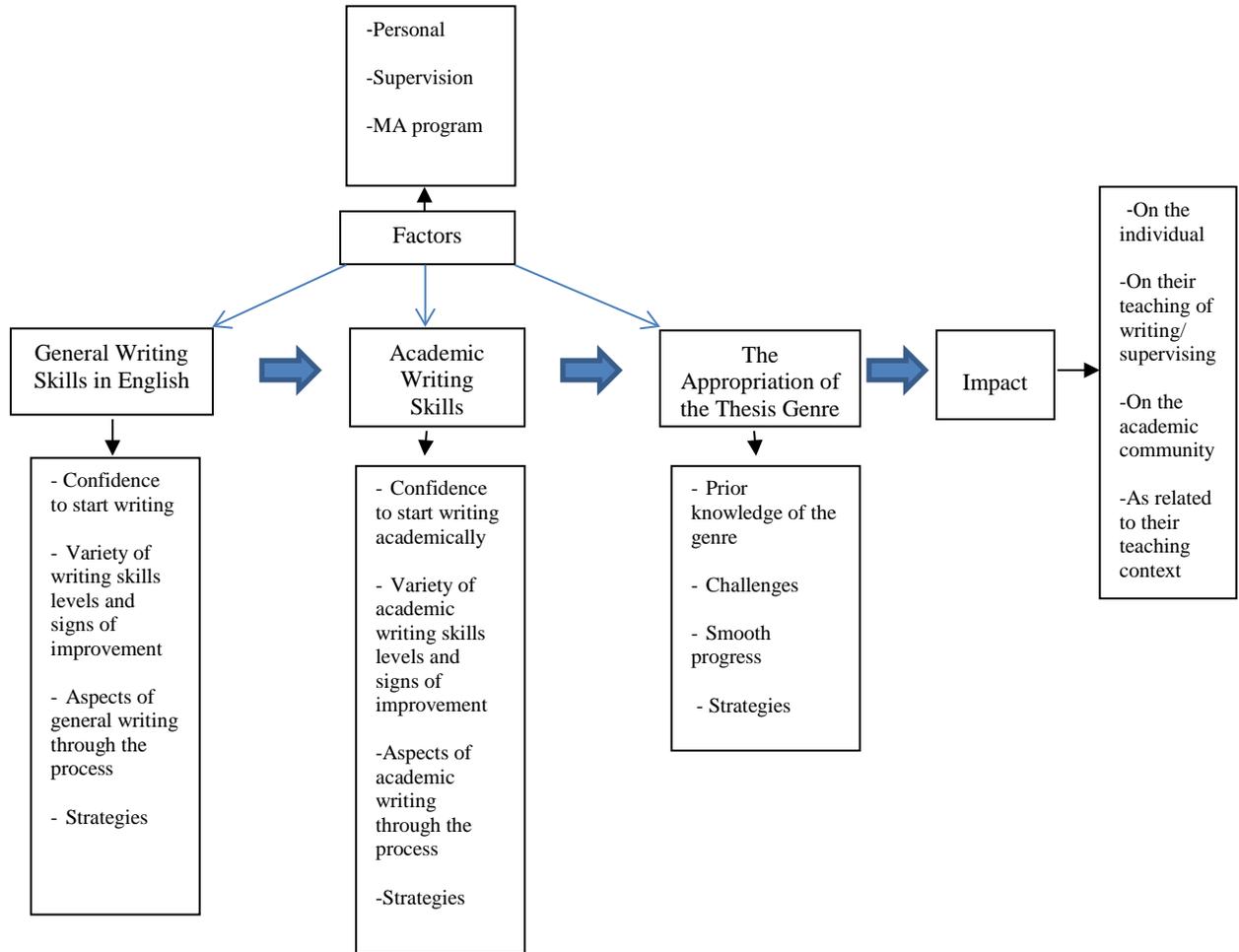


Figure 2. Diagram with themes and subthemes.

The Merging Scheme

Having completed the independent analysis of each data set, the researcher began the merging of the results. Appendix H shows the main information from both sets of data presented on a side-by-side display for each of the five themes. The merging scheme followed the contiguous convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Dantzler et al., 2014). This design is an

extension of the convergent parallel mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano-Clark) in which the researcher uses congruent convergent parallel designs in order to assess intervention outcomes at various population levels. For example, the researcher began the merging with the results of the surveys and interviews for the students for the theme, general writing skills. Then he did the same for the results of graduates and supervisors and afterwards he merged them all. In this way, it could be perceived how a specific aspect impacted each group in particular and, in the merging, how they were interrelated. Appendix I presents the merging scheme for each main theme for all participants. Once the merging was completed for each main theme, the researcher integrated them all for the final merging that constituted the main findings of the study.

Analysis of Documents

After receiving the drafts from the five students and graduates, the researcher went through them to identify writers with different proficiency levels. Despite the small choice of drafts available to the researcher, he could identify writers with quite different levels of writing ability. One writer was labeled an intermediate developing writer because the drafts from this writer exhibited many problems with general English that included not only language but also structure and lexicon. Another writer was labeled an advanced developing writer because there were many aspects of language she handled quite well but there were still others such as lexicon that this writer needed to improve. The word “developing” in the labels for these two writers indicated the evolving nature of their role as writers through this learning process. The third type of writer was labeled a proficient writer because this writer demonstrated outstanding control over most aspects of general English and many of academic writing.

For the qualitative analysis, the researcher read each draft, took notes on salient features in each of the three main areas: general writing skills, academic writing skills, and genre

appropriation. The researcher focused on the first three sections of both drafts since the objective was to observe how these writers developed or refined their general and academic writing skills through the process from draft to draft. Some of the features identified in this textual analysis for each writer are provided in Appendix J. Feedback provided by the supervisor was present in the drafts from two of the writers and used to support this analysis. For the third writer, the researcher contacted him after completing the analysis to confirm or disconfirm some of the findings in a form of member check. Another instance of member check for this analysis was carried out with the two raters of the drafts who were also asked to review the researcher's textual analysis. These raters' familiarity with the drafts was an aspect the researcher felt could contribute to the richness and comprehensiveness of this analysis. In this case, the member check was used to help the researcher attain "a more accurate, objective, and neutral representation of the topic under inquiry" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 42).

For the quantitative analysis of the drafts, the researcher adapted the modified format of the checklist (see Appendix K) used to measure academic literacy applied here to measure academic writing skills and writing skills in English developed by Erling and Richardson (2010) based on the Masus assessment criteria (Bonanno & Jones, 1997). Erling and Richardson analyzed this procedure and found that it was a valid and reliable measure of students who need writing skills development. The researcher took into account the characteristics of the checklist and especially the clarity of the aspects related to academic writing skills and writing skills in English to select it as base tool for the quantitative analysis. However, the researcher decided to modify this checklist adding a set of descriptors for the structure part including information for each one of the sections of the thesis. This decision responded to the need to fit the checklist to the characteristics of the type of text (i.e., the master's thesis) under study and which differed

from the type of text for which the checklist was originally intended (i.e., an argumentative essay). This version of the checklist was reviewed by one professor expert in academic writing and two supervisors. The researcher also shared the new modified version with Dr. Elizabeth Erling, who was one of the scholars who originally worked in the checklist, and received feedback that was later implemented in the final version (see Appendix L).

There were three raters of the drafts of the theses: the researcher and two raters who were current instructors in academic writing and supervisors in one EFL teacher education program in Colombia. The researcher trained the two raters. In this training, the researcher explored in detailed each one of the descriptors included in the checklist and reached agreement on those aspects that seemed hard to score. Later all three raters independently rated the two drafts of the intermediate developing writer and then the researcher analyzed the results in order to determine the coefficient of inter-rater reliability among raters.

The type of statistical analysis used to determine the coefficient of interrater reliability is the intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC). Shrout and Fleiss (1979) defined intra-class correlation coefficient as “the correlation between one measurement (either a single rating or a mean of several ratings) on a target and another measurement obtained on that target” (p. 422). In the case of the current study, there were three measurements done by three raters who scored the same drafts independently. ICC is the appropriate type of statistical analysis because several coders are rating all the subjects (Hallgen, 2012, p. 9). In the current analysis, the ICC was calculated and interpreted in terms of consistency in which the three raters were considered fixed effects (Shrout & Fleiss, 1979, p. 425). The software used to determine this coefficient was the SPSS statistical software version 20.0.

The interrater reliability coefficient for the three raters in the first two drafts was quite low, indicating poor agreement (i.e., 1st Draft: ICC = .149 and 2nd Draft: ICC = .276). But the researcher

expected this coefficient to improve as raters developed more practice with the checklists later with the remaining four drafts. At this point, the researcher sent the drafts from the other two writers to the two raters for their scoring. The completion of the checklists for these last four drafts took the raters around 4 months.

The final interrater reliability coefficient for the three raters in all six drafts was $ICC = .669$ indicating moderate agreement. For detailed information of the results of this analysis and the ICCs for each individual draft along with the percentage of absolute agreement among raters go to Appendix M.

Merging of the Results of the Document Analysis

The researcher followed the same merging scheme for the document analysis as the one used with the data from the interviews and online surveys (see Appendix N). In this case, the researcher went over the results of the scoring of the checklists to identify how each writer did in every aspect. Next, the researcher presented the findings of his textual analysis to finally merge the information from both sets of data. Appendix O shows side-by-side the results of the checklists scoring and the textual analysis for the three writers. The final merging for the data from the three writers identified how each one of them went through the process of developing or refining their general and academic writing skills while writing their theses. The final merging of the results of the textual analysis informed the overall final merging that included the final merging of the findings of the interviews and online surveys in Chapter V. Table 5 presents the general merging scheme for the quantitative and qualitative data from the interviews, online surveys, and document analysis in the study.

Table 5

General Merging Scheme for the Data From Interviews, Online Surveys, and Document Analysis

ONLINE SURVEYS / INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUPS															DOCUMENT ANALYSIS (THESIS DRAFTS)		
GENERAL WRITING SKILLS			ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS			THE APPROPRIATION OF THE THESIS GENRE			FACTORS			IMPACT					
St	Gr	Sup	St	Gr	Sup	St	Gr	Sup	St	Gr	Sup	Stu	Gr	Sup	Inte Dev wri	Adv Dev wri	Prof Wri
Mer & Q & L	Mer QT & QL	Mer QT & QL	Mer QT & L	Mer QT & QL	Mer QT & QL	Mer QT & L	Mer QT & QL	Mer QT & QL	Mer QT & L	Mer QT & QL	Mer QT & QL	Mer QT & L	Mer QT & QL	Mer QT & QL	Mer QT & L	Mer QT & QL	Mer QT & QL
MERGING QUANT & QUAL DATA -Confidence to start writing -Variety of writing skills levels and signs of improvement -Aspects of general writing through the process -Strategies			MERGING QUAN & QUAL DATA -Confidence to start writing academically -Variety of academic writing skills levels and signs of improvement -Aspects of academic writing through the process -Strategies			MERGING QUAN & QUAL DATA -Prior Knowledge of the genre -Challenges -Smooth progress -Strategies			MERGING QUAN & QUAL DATA -Personal -Supervision -Program			MERGING QUAN & QUAL DATA -On the individual -On their teaching -On the academic Community -As related to their teaching/working context			MERGING QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA For -Developing intermediate writer -Developing advanced writer -Proficient writer -General writing skills -Academic Writing skills -The appropriation of the thesis genre		
FINAL MERGING OF THE DATA																	

Summary

Chapter III presented the methodological design, the data collection procedures and the data analysis used in the current study. This chapter carefully described each instrument used and the parameters for the analysis and the merging scheme for the data from both the qualitative and quantitative sets of data. Chapter IV presents the findings of the data analysis.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSES AND RESULTS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the process of development of writing skills in English and academic writing to report research in the master's thesis. This study also explored the perceptions and attitudes of students, graduates, and supervisors from EFL teaching programs toward this development in the master's thesis. Through interviews and online surveys these participants' perceptions were explored while the process was examined through the analysis of a small sample of drafts of theses. The following question guided the exploration of the perceptions of these participants and the process reflected in the documents.

Research Question

How are academic and general writing skills in English developed and/ or impacted through the process of the master's thesis in EFL teacher education programs in Colombia?

This study focused on three main aspects:

1. The impact of the process and completion of the master's thesis on the development or refinement of writing skills in English.
2. The impact of the process and completion of the master's thesis on the development or refinement of academic writing skills to report research.

3. The perceptions and attitudes of students, graduates, and supervisors regarding the impact of the master's thesis on the development of writing skills in English and academic writing skills to report research.

The interviews were coded, categories identified, and the themes that emerged were articulated in a diagram representing the interrelation between these themes. This diagram is presented in Figure 3 and became the backbone for the merging scheme used to integrate the results of the analysis of the data from the interviews with the descriptive analysis of the results of the online surveys.

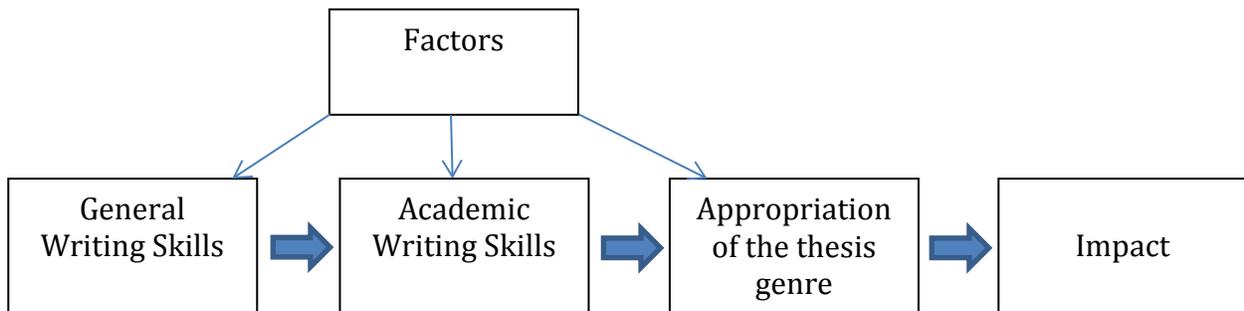


Figure 3. Diagram of the five main themes.

In the first part of this chapter, the findings for each one of these themes will be presented in direct reference to each group of participants. The layout for each theme will include first the analysis of results of the online surveys and then the findings from the interviews. Then both sets of findings are merged for each group of participants and ultimately the findings from the three groups are merged to identify similarities and discrepancies among them. The same structure is used for each one of the five themes. In the last part of this chapter, the findings from the analysis of the documents and their merging will be presented following a similar scheme although in relation to the three types of writers of the drafts of the theses that were identified.

General Writing Skills in English

Students--Initial stage

Quantitative (online survey). The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) defined eight levels of ascending proficiency that go from level A1 for beginners up to level C2 for learners who have mastered the language. The specific descriptors of writing ability were used to help participants place themselves in relation to this skill. The students (N= 38) placed themselves predominantly in the B2 level (44%), however, there was an important percentage of students who placed in the B1 and B1+ levels (35%) and some even in C1 (18%) (see Table 6). Grammar, spelling and punctuation, lexicon and syntax stand out as those aspects of general writing that students identified to be strong or very strong at the beginning of the process. Several students went for the neutral choice. Cohesive devices is the weakest aspect for students (see Table 7). Regarding their level of confidence in their writing skills at the beginning of the process, these students (42%) indicated they felt confident or very confident. Interestingly, 39 % of the students also selected the neutral choice (see Table 8).

Table 6

Level of General Writing Skills According the CEFR Standards at the Beginning of the Process

#	Answer		Response	%
5	A2		1	3%
1	B1		4	11%
6	B1+		9	24%
2	B2		7	18%
7	B2+		10	26%
3	C1		7	18%
4	C2		0	0%
	Total		38	100%

Table 7

Aspects of General Writing at the Beginning of the Process

#	Question	Very Strong	Strong	Neutral	Weak	Very Weak	Total Responses	Mean
1	Grammar	6	22	9	1	0	38	2.13
2	Lexicon	1	15	20	2	0	38	2.61
3	Syntax	2	13	18	5	0	38	2.68
4	Cohesive devices	2	13	13	10	0	38	2.82
5	Spelling and punctuation	3	16	13	5	1	38	2.61

Table 8

Students' Level of Confidence in Their Writing Skills at the Beginning of the Process

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Very Confident	5	13%
2	Confident	11	29%
3	Neutral	15	39%
4	Not very confident	6	16%
5	Not confident at all	1	3%
	Total	38	100%

Qualitative (interviews). Two main groups were identified among the students who participated in the interviews. One group of students had a good level in writing that I will call proficient writer and the other group of students was still developing their writing skills by the time they started their theses that I will call developing writer.

The students in the proficient writer group (Juan, Alejandro, Amelia, and Danilo) affirmed they had pretty good writing skills by the time they started the process. For example, Juan stated “I think I am good writer” (student, personal communication, June 6, 2013) and Alejandro also noted, “I think at the beginning was good already” (student, personal communication, June 14, 2013).

Juan for example pointed out the fact that his writing was very dense and concise which was pointed out by his supervisor to be a strength in his writing. A weakness for a proficient students like Danilo was the fact that his writing was “too wordy “and that he tended to use cliché expressions at the beginning of the process.

A great deal of the students in the interviews could be placed in the developing writer group now that they were overcoming many weaknesses they openly spotted while undertaking the initial tasks of their thesis writing process,

So I think about the writing level. I would say is like an average. There are many things that I still need to work on. (Magu, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

I thought that I was good but I realized that I had so many difficulties and weaknesses in writing skills (Claudia, student, personal communication, July 19, 2013)

Magdalena realized she had problems at the sentence level such a run-on sentences.

Guillermo, Viviana, and Angela reported having problems while writing paragraphs. Regarding aspects of general writing, students like Samantha, Adolfo, and Angela stated that they had problems with grammar while Sofia and Claudia acknowledged having problems with vocabulary. Punctuation was a problem for students like Adolfo and Daniel and prepositions were hard for Guillermo.

However the most important problem for most of the students interviewed was related to coherence and cohesion. Juana, Magu, Sofia, Angelica, Magdalena, Claudia, and Amelia explicitly referred to this aspect as one that was really hard for them,

Cohesion and coherence were a problem for me at the beginning. (Juana, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

So there are different aspects, no in relation of grammar aspects but more in relation to coherence and cohesion. (Magu, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Closely related to the cohesion of the text, Adolfo, Guillermo, Daniel, and Angela referred to the use of connectors as difficult as did Claudia who also brought up her problems learning to make transitions,

I continue having problems with how to relate the paragraphs, how to make a transition, how to make a transition in the text. (Claudia, student, personal communication, July 19, 2013)

The influence of Spanish in their writing was mentioned by Samantha as reflected in her writing in English,

I think that my professor corrected me when he said for example that I write in L1 and this is very difficult. (Samantha, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

Another feature of this influence was punctuation that Mariana identified as recurrent in their early stages of their writing in the thesis,

We tend to write as if we were writing in Spanish, that was our big problem, punctuation, we were struggling a lot, in my case with punctuation and the way we were meant to write in English. (Mariana, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

Magdalena also realized the tendency to “beat around the bush” which she identifies as something related to her lack of structure that later she improved with outlining.

Losing the thread of the ideas was a problem identified by Juana who thought it made her writing really confusing. Students like Magu, and Magdalena also pointed the influence of oral language since they felt they used to write in the way they speak at first,

Actually people, people usually told me that I wrote the way I spoke. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

Regarding the confidence to start writing, some students expressed their feelings in front of the task of writing that vary in strength,

So I was scared, I didn't use to write I think I have always been working in the schools that's why my English level wasn't enough and I think that was challenging for me.(Adolfo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

In my first semester I felt very, very insecure because I knew I had a lot of weaknesses with my writing...It was difficult to start my document, my writing. (Angela, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

I felt confident with my English level and my knowledge in terms of how to structure a text. But it was difficult for me to know how to proceed with that information, how to connect it, how to connect it to my study, that was like the hard part. (Amelia, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

For Magdalena, the writing process somehow helped her realize that she could write but at the beginning she faced insecurity about her skills,

It kind of, kind of like broke that idea of I couldn't write, which was a big, big fear that I had at the very beginning. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

All this information provides a general overview of the challenges students faced regarding their general writing skills at the start. It points out their perceived level of writing ability, those areas in which they had problems and how confident they felt about undertaking writing.

At the Intermediate Level

Quantitative (online survey). For students the awareness of text organization was the most evident aspect in which they perceived improvement. Closely on second and third places were the appropriate uses of vocabulary, clarity in the use of connectors and control over grammar (see Table 9). Among those aspects in which students felt they still needed to work on were cohesive devices, lexicon and syntax (see Table 10). Students identified the writing of the thesis proposal as the most important aspect that helped improve their writing skills in English. The second most important aspects were the feedback from the supervisor and the exposure to models of the theses (see Table 11).

Table 9

Aspects of General Writing Skills in Which Students Perceive Improvement

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Control over grammar	21	62%
2	Appropriate use of vocabulary	23	68%
3	Awareness of text organization	31	91%
4	Clarity in the use of connectors	23	68%
5	Attention to mechanics and punctuation	16	47%
6	Other?	3	9%

Table 10

Aspects to be Improved

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Grammar	14	37%
2	Lexicon	23	61%
3	Syntax	18	47%
4	Cohesive devices	30	79%
5	Spelling and punctuation	14	37%

Table 11

Aspects Related to the Thesis Writing Process That Help the Improvement of General Writing Skills

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Thesis seminars	9	26%
2	Exposure to models of theses	21	62%
3	Writing of the thesis proposal	25	74%
4	Guidance from thesis supervisor	15	44%
5	Feedback from thesis supervisor	21	62%
6	Feedback from others	18	53%
7	Other?	2	6%

Qualitative (interviews). A proficient student like Juan asserted he had been trying new ways of writing and despite his high level of writing he thought his writing had evolved,

Although I said that the writing itself has never been an issue, that doesn't mean that it has not evolved and yes it is a process, of course, the more you write, the better you write. And that's totally true. I didn't begin with zero, from nothing, but still you, of course, it helps, the more you write, the more you practice and the more you learn, and

the more you also try new things, different ways to write, to express yourself and yes you develop, and you start enjoying it. (Juan, student, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Developing writer students like Juana also reported improvement in areas such as grammar and vocabulary. Magu was more aware of what to include in the paragraphs as well as how to monitor her writing by paying more attention to the structure and transitions. Claudia felt she could write better than the way she used to write at the beginning of the process. Magdalena and Viviana acknowledged how some specific aspects of their writing had been impacted through the work they had done in their theses,

Now when I started the Masters, everything started to change because I became more conscious on the writing and the structure of the writing process. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

But through these three semesters that I have been writing for research, it has helped me a lot to improve not just in cohesion and coherence but also my writing skills (Viviana, student, personal communication, August 21, 2013)

Nevertheless, it was clear for some students the persistence of some problems related to coherence and cohesion in general as Juana and Claudia reported and the use of connectors in particular which was still a problem for Viviana,

That's why I said, coherence and cohesion, I still have some problems with that and I think that depends on the topic, sometimes. (Juana, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Another factor that was difficult for me at writing and that still is really hard for me, is like connectors. (Viviana, student, personal communication, August 21, 2013)

Sofia still struggled with going over the same idea over and over again while Claudia still found challenging to relate paragraphs and making transitions in the text. Claudia also needed to work on grammar while Sofia tried to control the influence of Spanish in her writing,

We are still very like thinking about Spanish behind... In writing of course... it has changed a bit. Not a lot. (Sofia, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Among the strategies supervisors suggested students was to ask someone else to proofread writing as was pointed out by Magdalena,

I remember having conversations with my professors, telling them on what they could advise me do, I don't know, proofreading, hiring somebody to proofread myself. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

Juana also relied on asking her supervisor to give her constant feedback on her writing. Students also deployed strategies themselves in order to improve their writing. Among these strategies was to ask someone to proofread their writing and get feedback from them to improve as was stated by Angelica, Sofia, and Natasha,

I ask another person to check my writing. (Natasha, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Sometimes I write and I feel a little unsure and sometimes I ask someone else to take a look at what I have written because I need some kind of reinforcement, someone who has more experience. (Angelica, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Other students appealed to other professors to do that as Sofia and Claudia did. Magu asked foreign teachers to do this proofreading while Viviana resorted to her classmates. Another important strategy to improve their writing was reading to address specific issues students were having in their writing. For example, Viviana read theses to learn about coherence,

I had to start reading about the APA a lot and for sentences construction as well, compound nouns and connectors, well I have been reading some other theses about the same topic, similar topic that I am doing. (Viviana, student, personal communication, August 21, 2013)

Magdalena focused her work on the structure of writing by using strategies like outlining and paragraphing,

Now I learned for example, one of the strategies that I really like to work with is they outlining. I really depend on outlining a lot because it has helped me focus on what it is that I really want, what information I really need to incorporate in my writing. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

Paragraphing was also another strategy that I find super useful, also using of connectors, I mean using a wide variety. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

Angela defined areas of work that gradually she mastered in an attempt to prepare for writing at a more complex level,

I concentrated on, in the basic constructs of sentences, linkers and the organization of the paragraphs. These aspects were first point of my work and in the other semesters I worked about the construction of my thesis or the ideas or my arguments in my thesis but after first time I concentrated in the constructs of sentences, basically. (Angela, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

These were the main strategies used by these students to work on their writing that combine the support of more proficient writers, with reading to learn and defining target structures to improve weak aspects of writing to ultimately appeal to the use of writing strategies to structure writing.

As the process got closer to its end, students realized how the writing process helped them improve, how there was still room for improvement and even those strategies that they had used to cope with their specific weaknesses.

Merging of Quantitative and Qualitative Data for Students

Confidence to start writing. The percentage of students who reported in the online survey feeling confident or very confident of their writing skills definitely surpassed the percentage of students who didn't feel confident in their writing skills. However, the percentage of students that somehow felt they were in the midpoint of the progression was quite important. The testimonies in the interviews interestingly indicate how some students like Angela, Juana, Magu, Adolfo, Daniel, Viviana, and Amelia felt some level of insecurity at the moment to start writing for reasons that went from awareness of their weaknesses in writing to the complexity of putting their ideas down about their topics following the requirements of the thesis genre.

Variety of writing skills levels and aspects of general writing through the process.

Looking at the distribution of the students in the survey, it is clear how they spread from level B1 to C1 indicating that there were students with different levels of writing proficiency. This variety of levels was also evident in the interviews when students acknowledged how strong or weak they felt about their writing skills. Looking at the descriptors of the levels B1 which happened to be one of the levels that some students selected in the online surveys as their level upon beginning to write their theses, it is clear that they could work with descriptions and handle pretty well the use of some basic connectors. In level B1+ the influence of the mother tongue is highlighted although there is clarity on what they are trying to express. Higher control of grammar and clear connection between ideas in the text are some of the characteristics of individuals in levels B2 and C1.

The data from the interviews reflected the presence of some of the weaknesses of second language learners while writing. Some of these students had to deal with problems at the sentence and paragraph level which did not allow them to transmit their ideas clearly usually losing the thread of what they wanted to say. In some cases, this weakness was linked to the strong influence students' mother tongue had on their second language writing and made evident in aspects such as punctuation and length of paragraphs. Closely related was the problem of achieving coherence in the information in longer pieces of texts which was an issue that many students reported having at the beginning and in some cases even in advanced stages of their thesis writing. Cohesive devices as a tool to achieve this coherence still remained an aspect most students needed to work on according to the online surveys.

As students immersed themselves in the writing process they began to realize how they could structure their writing, engage in more continuous writing that would allow them gradually

to master control of their writing in shorter and then longer pieces of text. For some of these students, it was a process in which mastery would take a lot more work and effort. Appropriate use of vocabulary, connectors and control over grammar are the three top aspects in which students felt they perceive improvement in the online surveys concur with the experience of some of the students in the interviews who felt these aspects were also the ones in which they saw the most impact.

Strategies. Among the strategies that students in the interviews used to work on their general writing skills, getting feedback from others through proofreading was one of the most used. Reading to learn about aspects of writing and feedback from the supervisors were other strategies also brought up by these students. These last two strategies were second among the aspects that students in the online surveys considered helped them the most to improve. The one aspect that students considered helped them the most was writing their thesis proposal which interestingly was not mentioned in the interviews.

Graduates--At the Initial Stage

Quantitative (online surveys). In the self-reported placement of graduates (N= 26) according to the CEFR levels, in the initial stage of the process the results showed a skewed distribution with students spreading from B1 level to C2. However, the main concentration (62%) of the students placed themselves in level B2 and B2+ and a few (19%) in level C1 (see Table 12). The graduates deemed to have been strong in all aspects (i.e., lexicon, grammar, syntax, cohesive devices, spelling and punctuation.). Graduates also pointed out cohesive devices as a weak aspect for some of them (see Table 13). Regarding the level of confidence on their writing skills at the beginning of the process, some graduates (46%) indicated they felt confident or very confident but although a much smaller percentage (16%) there were also graduates that

did not feel confident. Interestingly, 31% of the graduates also selected the midpoint choice (see Table 14).

Table 12

Level of General Writing Skills According the CEFR Standards at the Beginning of the Process

#	Answer		Response	%
5	A2		0	0%
1	B1		1	4%
6	B1+		2	8%
2	B2		8	31%
7	B2+		8	31%
3	C1		5	19%
4	C2		2	8%
	Total		26	100%

Table 13

Aspects of General Writing at the Beginning of the Process

#	Question	Very Strong	Strong	Neutral	Weak	Very Weak	Total Responses	Mean
1	Grammar	4	14	8	0	0	26	2.15
2	Lexicon	0	15	8	3	0	26	2.54
3	Syntax	3	12	9	2	0	26	2.38
4	Cohesive devices	3	10	7	5	1	26	2.65
5	Spelling and punctuation	5	10	9	2	0	26	2.31

Table 14

Graduates' Level of Confidence in Their Writing Skills at the Beginning of the Process

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Very Confident		6	23%
2	Confident		6	23%
3	Neutral		8	31%
4	Not very confident		5	19%
5	Not confident at all		1	4%
	Total		26	100%

Qualitative (interviews). The graduates in the proficient writers group were Paula, Pedro, Johanna, and Jorge who affirmed to have had good overall writing skills at the beginning of the process,

I think I had a good level at that moment when I started. (Pedro, graduate, personal communication, June 8, 2013)

So as a whole, [my supervisor] said that I was a good writer. (Jorge, graduate, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

The other graduates could be placed in the developing writer group. Some of them noted their level was not the best at the beginning of their process,

I think that my initial level of writing the skills in English was very poor. (Juliana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

I think that I had many weaknesses in that time. (Sonia, graduate, personal communication, June 25, 2013)

Some of these graduates also referred to aspects of their writing skills in which they felt pretty strong at and others in which they felt weak. Dana could present and support an argument very well and Luis and Jenny had good grammar,

I consider that I had certain skills in writing, yeah, I am able to produce, or to argue a text, or to support a thesis in a written paper. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

I think that I was kind of good at grammar, like no grammar mistakes, no making mistakes and that's it basically. (Luis, graduate, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

Other graduates talked about some weaknesses they had to overcome in their writing process that included a variety of aspects,

So my problem is related to that, punctuation, and identification of dependent and independent clauses, so I had to read about it, it was not the best. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013).

I think my main problem was vocabulary. (Sonia, graduate, personal communication, June 25, 2013)

Juliana had to work at the level of the paragraph with the topic sentence and supporting details. This is an area that Sonia, Javier, and Jenny also had to work on,

I did not connect my ideas, okay, I was repeating the same ideas in the whole paper, I presented the paragraphs in a very messy way, maybe I didn't have a clear structure of how to write using an essay form. (Juliana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Fragments, that was my problem, actually, I had a lot of fragments and I was not familiar with the English style of writing things straightforward and going straight to the point, but I went just around the bushes all the time. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

Several graduates in the interviews brought up problems with coherence and cohesion and aspects related to it such as the use of connectors and organization. Luis and Jenny mentioned coherence and cohesion as one of their weaknesses,

When you write and you go over your writing to find that there is no connection between the parts and the paragraphs and then you have to start all over again, like yeah, that was difficult, I mean like how to make your paper coherent is kind of difficult. (Luis, graduate, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

Coherence and cohesion was also another aspect that I didn't feel very confident with because I was becoming very repetitive with the connectors that I was using. (Jenny, graduate, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

I think that the cohesion, it is hard for me. (Sonia, graduate, personal communication, June 25, 2013)

I think maybe word choice was difficult for me, when I wrote my thesis. I repeated many words all the time and I repeated and repeated ideas, it was difficult to change what I wrote before, it was difficult to change the whole text and I had to change many things about connectors, about syntax, about word choices. (Andrea, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Organization of the ideas was also hard for Jenny and structure for Santiago,

Organization also was a bit difficult, because I think at the beginning my ideas were all over the place. (Jenny, graduate, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

The use of discourse markers, the use of connectors, linking words it's hard because sometimes you don't find the correct connector. It implies that you have to have a clear

idea of what is the relationship between the ideas. (Santiago, graduate, personal communication, July 31, 2013)

The influence of Spanish was impacting Andrea's writing in general,

Since my native language is Spanish, punctuation, it was, that was a problem for me because punctuation in the English is different, we don't use a lot of commas, a lot of things and I tend to do that. (Andrea, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Javier and Johanna also felt this influence in their difficulty to get to the point in what they were writing,

Your native language interferes a lot, and our problem is, you may write sentences in a good way, in terms of structure, but you don't go to the point, you have problems with argumentation, you have problems synthesizing, you have problems concluding, we don't conclude, we never go to the point. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

I didn't specify my point in a more direct way. And maybe that is because it is linked to cultural reasons, the way we try to say things, it is not direct, not solid, so maybe that is one of the aspects. (Johanna, graduate, personal communication, August 1, 2013)

Andrea also reported that her free style of writing led her to avoid paying attention to grammar and punctuation, which became aspects she had to modify later in the process,

I just started my thesis but just writing freely, in a freeway with no punctuation, no limitations about grammar or about meaning. I just wrote . . . I wrote the thesis but . . . Compared to like the final product or the skills I have now, they were different. (Andrea, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Several graduates described how confident they felt to start writing at the beginning of the process. Writing for the first time and in this new format was a challenge,

The hardest thing it was to write because it was as I told you a long time ago, I hadn't written anything, anything in English. So I also teach the language only but I didn't write a paper, so it was the hardest thing for me. (Sonia, graduate, personal communication, June 25, 2013)

At the beginning it was, I mean, a disaster, and the very beginning when I started writing it was awful, you know because, like I told you, I didn't know how to write something like research and then to write was difficult. (Nico, graduate, personal communication, August 2, 2013)

So when I started writing my thesis, at the beginning, it was quite difficult. To start writing was quite difficult (Santiago, graduate, personal communication, July 31, 2013)

I consider that at the beginning, before I started to write my own thesis I was, I thought that it was difficult, impossible, no it is not possible, I'm not going to be able, those were my feelings in that moment, but then I discovered that it is not impossible. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Some other graduates linked this difficulty to a realm beyond having the ideas but more into the means through which they were to transmit them,

My main difficulties probably are like trying to express exactly what I want to because sometimes I had my ideas, my ideas were clear. But in order to put them, to write them in English, that's another thing. (Santiago, graduate, personal communication, July 31, 2013)

I became aware that it was important for me to organize my ideas because it was easier for me to speak, yes, but when I intended to write it was very difficult. (Juliana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

For these graduates undertaking the writing task was overwhelming at first and for some it seemed to be a factor that delayed their process significantly due to the emotional toll it took on them. Issues related to these graduates' levels of self-efficacy to write in the second language and the preparation to undertake writing at this level could better explain this situation.

At the Final Stage

Quantitative (online surveys). In the final stage, the graduates tended to predominantly placed themselves in the B2+ (35%) and C1 (42%) levels of the CEFR (see Table 15). There were also some graduates (15%) in the C2 level. Graduates considered the appropriate use of vocabulary and the awareness of text organization the two top aspects in which they perceived improvement. In third place was the clarity in the use of connectors that was somehow linked to the text organization. Control over grammar and attention to mechanics followed in order (see Table 16). Regarding those aspects of general writing in which graduates felt they still needed to

improve were cohesive devices and lexicon (see Table 17). Graduates considered the feedback from the supervisor to be the most important aspect that helped improve their writing skills in English. In second and third place, graduates considered writing of the thesis proposal and their exposure to models of theses, respectively (see Table 18).

Table 15

Level of General Writing Skills According the CEFR Standards at the end of the Process

#	Answer	Response	%
1	A2	0	0%
2	B1	0	0%
3	B1+	0	0%
4	B2	2	8%
5	B2+	9	35%
6	C1	11	42%
7	C2	4	15%
	Total	26	100%

Table 16

Aspects of General Writing Skills in Which Graduates Perceive Improvement

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Control over grammar	13	52%
2	Appropriate use of vocabulary	21	84%
3	Awareness of text organization	20	80%
4	Clarity in the use of connectors	17	68%
5	Attention to mechanics and punctuation	14	56%
6	Other?	3	12%

Table 17

Aspects to be Improved

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Grammar	5	19%
2	Lexicon	12	46%
3	Syntax	6	23%
4	Cohesive devices	13	50%
5	Spelling and punctuation	4	15%

Table 18

Aspects Related to the Thesis Writing Process That Help the Improvement of General Writing Skills

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Thesis seminars	11	44%
2	Exposure to models of theses	18	72%
3	Writing of the thesis proposal	20	80%
4	Guidance from thesis supervisor	15	60%
5	Feedback from thesis supervisor	21	84%
6	Feedback from others	10	40%
7	Other?	3	12%

Qualitative (interviews). Graduates who were proficient writers had to focus on aspects related to academic writing, as it was the case of Jorge, Dana, and Johanna,

Because I wanted to give my writing a real look of what academic writing is, I just had the motivation of including those devices, you know those transitions phrases that are very typical of academic writing, that was the only thing that I have to pay attention to, to improve my writing. (Jorge, graduate, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

For Pedro the process of the thesis had a far more reaching effect on the way he approached the production and reception of texts,

I think through the process of writing your thesis, first you get organized your mind, the components of a text but having that knowledge helps you organize, I mean is the transmission of ideas, you have to organize that in your mind to be able to reflect it in a document. (Pedro, graduate, personal communication, June 8, 2013)

Other graduates who were still developing their writing skills felt they were improving in aspects such as presenting their ideas more clearly as Sonia stated,

So I began to organize my ideas and I became aware of all of these texts that I need to consider to write better, yes, as a way of brainstorming ideas and then to organize them and narrow the scope for my writings and then I began to revise once and again and I became aware of cohesion patterns, about everything in regards to grammar. (Juliana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Andrea also realized how her skills felt different since aspects such as coherence and cohesion became easier. Nico and Sonia felt their paragraph writing had improved and Nico also felt he knew how to use connectors at the end of the process,

I really learned how to write, I know how to use connectors, I know how to divide paragraphs so that is something that I really learned from my thesis. (Nico, graduate, personal communication, August 2, 2013)

Luis acknowledged how greatly his vocabulary had expanded. Dana also improved making her writing sound less like Spanish and informal as she noted,

She [the supervisor] was asking me to put into a more English language, I was writing as I speak a little bit confusing for me, but at the end I could do the work that she was asking me. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Nevertheless, graduates also perceived there were some areas in which they continued to struggle. For instance, Sonia continued having problems with coherence and cohesion,

I think that I need to improve many things but exactly... I don't know, I think that the cohesion, it is hard for me. (Sonia, graduate, personal communication, June 25, 2013)

Andrea said that even after finishing her thesis and working on her article based on it, she still continued having problems with grammar, vocabulary, style, and organization,

I thought it was the final part, like the final product and that my product could be published in that time but it wasn't like that because I needed to improve it, I needed some revisions to check some things about grammar, word choices and some things about the organization of ideas, so I had to change many things. (Andrea, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Some of the strategies used to approach weaknesses in writing dealt directly with the way the supervisors structured the writing process as was pointed out by Johanna who described the type of scaffolding her supervisor did with her or the support they provided their students in the process as Sonia reported while referring to the way her supervisor helped work in the structure

of her paragraphs. Javier's supervisor suggested him to write as much as he could when he felt inspired to do so,

This is my strategy; this is the one that finally helped me, thanks to my supervisor, just write when you have the ideas, when you feel the inspiration and you are like in the mood to write, write, don't care about anything. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

Suggesting reading was another strategy supervisors used with some graduates, as it was Nico's experience,

Something excellent she did was to give me examples. So for example, I wrote something and she said "no, this is not the way, read this and then you're going to do much better." So through examples I was trying to improve everyday my writing skills. (personal communication, August 2, 2013)

Among the strategies graduates figured out themselves was to ask someone else to proofread their writing as Javier and Johanna did. Sonia also resorted to friends and colleagues to get feedback on her writing as well as content. Self-proof reading was also a strategy that Juliana used in which she repeatedly revised her writings before submitting them. Johanna self evaluated her work consistently before submitting it as well.

Reading was also a strategy graduates relied on to improve their writing. Dana read about clauses and punctuation, which were weak areas for her. Sonia read extensively about writing too,

In the process I went improving with investigating, looking for the information, reading a lot and I realized that I have improved my writing skills. (Sonia, graduate, personal communication, June 25, 2013)

Jenny focused her reading on figuring out how to deal with vocabulary and cohesion and coherence,

From the very beginning I had to read a lot of samples. So you start getting familiar with how to organize your ideas and how to present your ideas in terms of vocabulary, coherence and cohesion. (Jenny, graduate, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

Some graduates used the strategy of leaving their writing and going back to it after some time. Andrea did it to identify problems while Javier did it to incorporate new things,

It is I write something and I just wait for a couple of days or a week and I read my paper and I see more things to change. (Andrea, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Just come with ideas and then start incorporating, incorporating, delete, delete, incorporate things, put synonyms, more academic words, change verbs, change conjunctions, insert adverbs, these kind of things, so it took time because then you have to leave the document for two or three weeks, come again and start putting things into it. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

Other graduates felt the need to write from the very beginning to avoid getting stuck as Nico did or simply to write a lot as a way of keep improving which was Luis' objective. Santiago used two strategies to work with vocabulary and grammar. On the one hand, Santiago used online dictionaries to confirm the use of every word he was not quite sure how to use. On the other, he purposefully used similar grammatical structures in his documents to avoid making mistakes. These are some of the strategies these graduates used to work and improve their general writing skills.

Merging of Quantitative and Qualitative Data for Graduates

Confidence to start writing. Results in the online survey for graduates' confidence to start writing showed that almost half of them felt confident or very confident but still there were many that placed themselves in the midpoint and a few didn't feel confident. In the interviews, several graduates made it clear how challenging it had been for them to undertake the task at first. The other graduates did not explicitly refer to difficulties to start writing per se somehow reflecting a similar trend that the one seen in the online survey results in which some graduates seemed to have had no major problems to start writing.

Variety of writing skills levels and signs of improvement. Comparing the general writing skills self-placement of graduates in the online surveys in both the initial and final stages it is possible to see how some of them felt they had acquired the skills that allowed them to move up one level (40%) and others even two levels (20%). Those graduates who remained in the same level (40%) usually were in B2, B2+, C1 and C2 levels (see Table 19).

Table 19

Levels of General Writing Skills in English at the Beginning and at the end of the Thesis

Respondent	Level at the beginning	Level at the end	Respondent	Level at the beginning	Level at the end
1	B2+	B2+	14	B2	C1
2	B1+	B2	15	B2	C1
3	C1	C2	16	C1	C1
4	B2	C1	17	B2	B2
5	B1+	B2+	18	C1	C1
6	C1	C1	19	B2+	B2+
7	B2+	B2+	20	B2+	C1
8	C1	C2	21	B2	C1
9	B2+	C1	22	C2	C2
10	B2	B2+	23	B2+	C1
11	B1	B2+	24	C2	C2
12	B2	B2+	25	B2+	B2+
13	B2+	C1			

Graduates in the interviews in the developing writers group also pointed out how through the writing process of the thesis they became stronger at some aspects they had identified as weak at the beginning of their process. In most cases they felt they were improving as the writing task became easier for them. For some graduates, there were aspects in their writing skills that required further work even after they completed their theses. Graduates in the proficient writer group who felt they had good writing skills focused their attention mainly on aspects related to academic writing since they pretty much handled most of the aspects of general writing skills

which may explain why several graduates who stayed in the same levels in the online surveys were usually in the high intermediate and advanced levels.

Aspects of general writing through the process. Despite graduates' perception that they were quite strong in most aspects of general writing skills except cohesive devices in the online surveys, the interviews reflected that these graduates had problems in a wider range of aspects. Apart from graduates in the proficient writer group, the other graduates referred to problems in one or several aspects that went from vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation to a more generalized problem with cohesion and coherence. Some graduates even described how they had to overcome difficulties to write good paragraphs. There were instances of graduates having trouble with the influence of Spanish in their writing that included having a hard time with punctuation and getting to the point. As the writing unfolded in the process, some graduates became aware of ways of structuring their writing, learning to use cohesive devices and achieving better control over grammar. These were three of the top four aspects of general writing skills that were reported as the ones in which these graduates perceived improvement. In the interviews there were no comments regarding the appropriate use of vocabulary, which was the top aspect in the surveys though. Since cohesion and coherence was regarded by a few of the graduates in the interviews as an aspect they needed to continue developing in their writing after the thesis, it was clear the choice of cohesive devices as the aspect to be considered the one to improve by graduates in the online surveys.

Strategies. Some graduates talked about the scaffolding of certain aspects of writing their supervisors did for them as a useful strategy to improve their general writing skills. They also mentioned getting feedback from proofreaders of their writing and reading about aspects of writing as other very common strategies. Graduates in the online surveys considered that

feedback from thesis supervisors and exposure to models of theses were the first and third aspects that helped them improve. The aspect in second position was writing their thesis proposal. Other strategies that graduates used were getting started to write from the very beginning and leaving the manuscript to get a fresher perspective of the writing.

Supervisors--At the Initial Stage

Quantitative (online surveys). The group of supervisors placed their students basically in the levels B1 (56%) and B2 (37%) at the beginning of the process (see Table 20). Regarding the aspects of general writing, supervisors tended to identify as weak aspects, syntax, cohesive devices, grammar, and lexicon. Some supervisors went for the neutral choice in this question (see Table 21). Regarding their students' level of confidence on their writing skills at the beginning of the process, 81% of these supervisors believed that their students felt not very confident in their writing skills by the time they started the thesis writing process (see Table 22).

Table 20

Level of General Writing Skills According the CEFR Standards at the Beginning of the Process

#	Answer		Response	%
5	A2		1	6%
1	B1		4	25%
6	B1+		5	31%
2	B2		5	31%
7	B2+		1	6%
3	C1		0	0%
4	C2		0	0%
	Total		16	100%

Table 21

Aspects of General Writing at the Beginning of the Process

#	Question	Very Strong	Strong	Neutral	Weak	Very Weak	Total Responses	Mean
1	Grammar	0	2	6	8	0	16	3.38
2	Lexicon	0	4	5	7	0	16	3.19
3	Syntax	0	4	3	9	0	16	3.31
4	Cohesive devices	0	1	5	9	1	16	3.63
5	Spelling and punctuation	0	5	5	6	0	16	3.06

Table 22

Students' Level of Confidence in Their Writing Skills at the Beginning of the Process

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Very Confident	0	0%
2	Confident	2	13%
3	Neutral	1	6%
4	Not very confident	13	81%
5	Not confident at all	0	0%
	Total	16	100%

Qualitative (interviews). Supervisors classified students in two main groups. In one group, the students who were quite good writers and in the other group students who had poor writing skills,

We have different levels of proficiency. On the one hand, we have like successful the students, if I could call that, successful writers, let's say. So they are people who really from the very beginning they don't have like many problems in expressing their ideas. So they are like students who are very good when they have to write their theses and they only probably and that they could have is the one of time constraints. On the other hand, we have the students who are which generally have problems to express their ideas in written form. They are usually the ones who have an average proficiency in general in English. (Lorena, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

We have very assorted groups , what I mean is that some of them come with a very good command of English and with let´s say pretty good writing skills and some others come with low levels of English and also with poor writing skills. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

I have varied levels, I have had some students who have had advanced levels . . . , let's say I haven't had that advanced level in a way that they don't make mistakes or something

like this. But at least they can communicate their ideas fairly and they actually get, they manage to communicate their ideas well, there is little correction to make in terms of structure, the way they manage the ideas. This is why I tell you this is like high intermediate to advance, but I haven't had that advanced. But I have had some the students who really, really have very low skills and they find hard to communicate their ideas. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

Students that were quite proficient in English and had good writing skills could express their ideas very well as was mentioned by Lorena. Marlen pointed out how these students usually had good vocabulary and grammar and Rosario praised their good organization and structure. Camila highlighted how some of them may have had some experience living abroad or had undertaken other studies after their undergraduate program. Manolo realized that some of these students had advanced levels or may have been English native speakers. Marlen and Alberto concurred in the fact that maybe students who had poor writing skills constituted the majority of students they had to work with on their theses and even how some students in this group handled certain aspects of general writing but not much of academic writing which was something Laura also noted,

I think that almost 60% or 70% of the students could be labeled as the students with a low level of writing skills, I would say. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

Most of my students have what we could consider a low level of writing skills, what I mean by that is that they know how to write short texts of general English, but the problem is the academic language. (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

I would say they come equipped with an average level of writing. I mean in terms, they are able to produce descriptive texts, however, when it turns to be academic writing the story changes. (Laura, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

July, Luisa, and Mayeya considered that students with low levels of proficiency were the ones that predominated in their contexts,

Usually, the level is very low, usually. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

The level of my students is not so high. They have been struggling to write this final document. (Mayeya, supervisor, personal communication, July 10, 2013)

They have different kinds of background but most of the time, they have a hard time because they have developed much better their oral skills than their writing skills. (Luisa, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

Regarding the students who were developing their writing skills, they tended to have problems at various levels and aspects. At the sentence and paragraph level, problems included basic structure and organization usually influenced by the first language especially when seeing how students wrote and lost the thread of the main idea making their writing really confusing as noted by July, Licimaco, and Rosario,

I think, the fact of understanding that in English you write sentence, sentence. And it's not like in Spanish that you start saying things without a subject and continue and continue until the end, that's what I have seen and coherence. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

But sometimes, there are some paragraphs that probably it is impossible to understand . . . it is because they, you know Spanish speakers, we tend to write long sentences and we do not use punctuation very often as English speakers do and then that is a problem. (Licimaco, supervisor, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

I normally find in that there is a lot of transference from Spanish writing, which is very dense, many ideas in a paragraph and sometimes losing the main idea in a paragraph. (Rosario, supervisor, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

When moving from the paragraph level to longer texts the problem became more complex as coherence and cohesion became the issue along with other aspects of general writing as brought up by Laura, July, Manolo, Gabriela, Karla, and Marlen,

They have problems connecting sentences, they make sentences that are too long and sometimes they don't make sense because they have written so much, they have lost the thread of ideas. (Manolo, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

They have lots of run-on sentences and sometimes it is difficult to understand, even lack of coherence. So they start writing about something and they end up writing about something else. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

Argumentation at the many levels embodies they are not able to connect ideas in a longer texts... perhaps coherent sentences but the discourse doesn't flow or there is not any coherent flow of ideas. (Laura, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

They have some troubles especially on grammar. They are thinking about many, many different things but they are not connecting ideas, they are not making good sentences, they are avoiding many punctuation marks. (Gabriela, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

Organization of paragraphs and coherence and cohesion they need to work a lot on that. Some of them even need to work on spelling and a lot on punctuation. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

Coherence, cohesion, organization in some cases, grammar, and vocabulary. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

Vocabulary was another problem that some students had according to Camila, Manolo, and Lorena,

Depending on the background of the students, we might have more problems with grammar or semantics or collocations or terminology. (Camila , supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

I noticed that they have also like spelling mistakes, even if they have the computer with the spell check. Some punctuation, they also lack that skill, what else? In some cases, wrong words, the vocabulary, of course, this is like, I would say, this is the least things that they make in terms of mistakes. (Lorena, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

It is semantics because you know they get lost in what sometimes they want to express. (Manolo, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

These were main areas in general writing skills in which students usually had problems.

Concerning students' confidence to start writing, Marlen noted that her students lacked confidence and Mayeya felt most students were afraid of writing and usually became the main reason students procrastinated,

When they start writing they don't feel confident at all. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

I have to say that my students that I am advising right now are afraid of writing in English. They have postponed this process for a long time. (Mayeya, supervisor, personal communication, July 10, 2013)

This was in general terms how supervisors perceived their students at the beginning of the process according to the level of general writing skills.

At the Final Stage

Quantitative (online surveys). The distribution of the students at the end of the process seemed to show that there was a significant movement of the students towards the B2 band with 81% been placed there. None of these supervisors placed their students at the C1 or C2 bands neither at the beginning or the end of the process (see Table 23). Supervisors considered attention to mechanics and punctuation and awareness of text organization the top two aspects in which they perceived improvement in their students. On third place was the appropriate use of vocabulary (see Table 24). Regarding those aspects of general writing that supervisors thought their students still needed to work on were cohesive devices, lexicon and syntax (see Table 25). Supervisors considered their feedback to be the aspect that contributed the most to the improvement of their students’ writing skills (see Table 26).

Table 23

Level of General Writing Skills According the CEFR Standards at the end of the Process

#	Answer		Response	%
1	A2		0	0%
2	B1		1	6%
3	B1+		2	13%
4	B2		4	25%
5	B2+		9	56%
6	C1		0	0%
7	C2		0	0%
	Total		16	100%

Table 24

Aspects of General Writing Skills in Which Supervisors Perceive Students' Improvement

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Control over grammar		9	60%
2	Appropriate use of vocabulary		11	73%
3	Awareness of text organization		12	80%
4	Clarity in the use of connectors		7	47%
5	Attention to mechanics and punctuation		12	80%
6	Other?		3	20%

Table 25

Aspects to be Improved

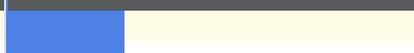
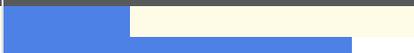
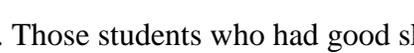
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Grammar		4	25%
2	Lexicon		4	25%
3	Syntax		7	44%
4	Cohesive devices		12	75%
5	Spelling and punctuation		8	50%

Table 26

Aspects Related to the Thesis Writing Process That Help the Improvement of General Writing Skills

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Thesis seminars		4	27%
2	Exposure to models of theses		11	73%
3	Writing of the thesis proposal		13	87%
4	Guidance from thesis supervisor		13	87%
5	Feedback from thesis supervisor		15	100%
6	Feedback from others		6	40%
7	Other?		2	13%

Qualitative (interviews). At the end of the process, supervisors placed their students in different levels of writing performance. Those students who had good skills from the very beginning continued improving as Marlen stated it,

I would say that those who come with a good command of English and those who like reading and writing, they definitely improve a lot or they maintain their level. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

Students in the developing writer group improved a great deal as Gabriela, Manolo,

Marlen, Camila, and Karla affirmed. Gabriela considered that in general terms most students ended up becoming better writers after they went through the whole process of writing their theses. Manolo referred to writing skills in general,

I would say that it does impact; it has an impact on the writing skills the process of the thesis writing because of all the practice they have to go through, because of all the exposure to the language that they have to go through because also the input that they get through reading but also through speaking and the other skills. (Manolo, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

Marlen highlights how students improve expressing ideas in a clearer way.

There is improvement because you can see that they can hardly express a clear idea in written form and at the end, at least they can express it in a clear form. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

Camila referred in particular to aspects such as grammar and coherence and cohesion,

I think that the main impact is on grammar, style, talking about coherence and connectors everything, the use of the standards, how they get familiar with the standards and they know how to say what. (Camila, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

Referring to the work connecting ideas in the text, Karla recognized that some students struggled a lot while others managed to get it,

The others can make it, and when the paper comes back to you, you see, there was improvement, right. Yes, there are other problems, and so but they make it. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

Some supervisors like Manolo, Lorena, Aida, Nicholas, and Luisa acknowledged that there was improvement but also that some problems still remained,

They write a little bit better but they still commit mistakes in the language component. (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

I would say that most of them improve a lot, but some of them still have to continue working on their writing skills. (Luisa, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

They begin and they sometimes remain with these things until, I mean until the end, almost the end of the process. (Lorena, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

They still have some problems, but I think they improve a lot in the whole process. (Manolo, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

July pointed out how some students continued making the same mistakes and Karla went on saying that they came up even with new ones,

For example, sometimes I see that I correct, I start correcting and giving them feedback on the paper and then they write the same mistake. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

Sure, they keep making the mistakes, that's right . . . I sent feedback; supposedly she corrected it and then sent it back with other mistakes. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

July went as far as to say that some students continue writing in the same way they wrote at the beginning of the process and basically someone else fixed everything at the end,

There are cases in which I think they improve, but not because of themselves, but because they ask another person . . . but they are not fully aware of what they are doing, of what they are writing but in most of the cases they do improve, but in some other cases, they just continue writing whatever they want and then they ask a person to proofread. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

The testimonies of supervisors regarding the improvement of students' general writing skills as the process reached its end indicated various level of achievement.

The strategies that these supervisors used with their students to help them improve their general writing skills fell into two categories. Strategies directly related to the type of support they provided and strategies external to the supervision they had suggested or they were aware students used. Regarding the feedback supervisors provided, it varied among supervisors in

general. Some supervisors provided a quite comprehensive type of feedback as it was described by Nicholas, Rosario, and Manolo,

I correct absolutely everything online they send me everything so I use the changes and I include the comments on correct the s third person everything if I think one part should go in another place I tell them that, if they are making assumptions without evidence, I kind of give them the feedback into ways, first about the form and then about the content. (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

I normally do is use the word revising option, insert comments or questions to ask for clarification of ideas , if it is content or making suggestions on best ways to express such and such, or asking them to revise certain ways of expressions or some language they are using, sometimes providing suggestions. Especially at the beginning, providing a lot of suggestions. (Rosario, supervisor, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Tutors help a lot too, because we are correcting all the time, we are doing prove writing, we are always giving advice on not making sentences too long, making ideas more clear, having, you know, paragraphs in this way so that they are not too short, not too long. (Manolo, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

These supervisors focused their feedback on aspects of general writing skills that included grammar, organization, vocabulary as well as content. Karla noted how sometimes she took upon herself the task of teaching students how to write,

So I sometimes need to give them you know English classes, writing classes, composition classes and stuff. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

Other strategies that supervisors suggested were the participation of external people proofreading students' writing and giving feedback as well. Lorena and Manolo encouraged their students to have someone proofread their drafts before submitting them,

I always tell them to have somebody hopefully, I would recommend a native speaker to have a look and proofread their papers. But in most of the cases, I mean, if they cannot do that, at least someone with a C1 level, you know, take a look at their theses and maybe correct basic things. (Manolo, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

That's why we generally advise them to find someone who reads, like peer reading or someone who that's the proof reading of what they write. (Lorena, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

Gabriela and Laura heard how her students also looked for support from classmates and knowledgeable people who reviewed their writing,

They invite another person to look at review the writing papers, especially for the style, and I think it is a very nice idea. They are asking for a native speaker to review, to give some guides the general writing paper. (Gabriela, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

Sometimes they ask a knowledgeable subject around them in their workplace or and knowledgeable subject in their families, yeah, call a relative, husbands, wives and they start asking them for support.” (Laura, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

Some of the strategies described by supervisors implied more or less involvement on their part but they all are intended to support the development of students’ general writing skills.

Merging of Quantitative and Qualitative Data for Supervisors

Confidence to start writing. The majority of supervisors in the online surveys thought their students were not very confident of their general writing skills to start writing. In the interviews, two supervisors talked about their students’ lack of confidence to start writing and how in some cases students postponed doing it sometimes until they were very advanced in the research project.

Variety of writing skills levels and signs of improvement. Supervisors placed most of their students in levels B1, B1+ and B2 at the beginning of their process and in levels B1+, B2, B2+ at the end of the process showing improvement. More in detail, 43% of the supervisors considered their students moved up one level (e.g. from B2 to B2+), 31% of the supervisors considered they moved up two levels (e.g., from B1+ to B2+). For one supervisor their students moved up three levels while for 18% of the supervisors students remained in the initial level. No supervisor placed his or her students in any C level (see Table 27).

Table 27

Students' Levels of General Writing Skills in English at the Beginning and at the end of the Thesis

Respondent	Level at the beginning	Level at the end	Respondent	Level at the beginning	Level at the end
1	B1+	B2+	9	B1	B2
2	B1+	B2+	10	B2	B2+
3	B1+	B2	11	B1	B2
4	B1	B2+	12	B2	B2+
5	B2	B2+	13	B2	B2+
6	B2+	B2+	14	A2	B1
7	B1+	B2+	15	B2	B2
8	B1+	B1+	16	B1	B1+

In the interviews, supervisors identified two main groups of students according to their writing skills level. Those students who handled most of the aspects of general writing that allowed them to transmit their ideas clearly and with hardly any problems. The other group of students, which according to some supervisors represented the biggest group, still had problems controlling one or several aspects of general writing skills such as grammar, lexicon, syntax, cohesion and coherence.

Aspects of general writing through the process. Supervisors in interviews recalled how in some cases they began their work with some students in the developing writer group by directly approaching sentence and paragraph formation. Issues of first language influence sometimes impacted writing at this level and included the use of punctuation. As stretches of language became more complex coherence and cohesion received more attention. Students with the support of their supervisors used different strategies to tackle these problems. Similarly, supervisors in the online surveys identified syntax, cohesive devices, grammar and lexicon as the weakest aspects of general writing for students. Supervisors in the interviews noted how they perceived students improved in each of these aspects. These supervisors felt some students

showed improvement as fewer mistakes were made in the aspects formerly identified. There were students whose improvement was more limited and even in advanced stages of the process continued making the same mistakes though. On the other hand, supervisors in the surveys saw students' attention to mechanics and punctuation, awareness of text organization and appropriate use of vocabulary as the main indicators of students' improvement. Cohesive devices were considered the aspect of general writing skills in which students needed to continue working.

Strategies. Supervisors described two main types of strategies they personally used or suggested to their students. In the first group they talked about the characteristics of their feedback and support and in the second group they mentioned suggesting that students get external feedback on their writing through proofreaders. Supervisors also recalled how their students also looked for support from more proficient L2 speakers to get feedback to improve their general writing skills. For supervisors in the online surveys it was their feedback and guidance that were the most important aspects that helped their students improve these writing skills.

Merging of the Results for Students, Graduates, and Supervisors

Confidence to start writing. According to the online survey, the level of confidence of students and graduates in their writing skills at the beginning of the process indicated that both groups felt confident or very confident. Interestingly, some graduates and students selected the midpoint choice. In this respect, most of these supervisors believed that their students did not feel very confident in their writing skills by the time they started the thesis writing process.

The interviews painted a quite different picture according these participants. Several students had a hard time getting started. Adolfo and Angela felt scared and insecure because they felt their English level was not enough for writing at this level, Amelia found it difficult to put

the information together at the very start, and Magdalena initially doubted her writing skills. The same was the experience of several graduates like Dana who felt it was an impossible task at first, Nico who thought his first writing experience was a disaster, Sonia who thought writing in English was hard, and Santiago who found it very difficult to start writing. The interviews with two supervisors provided some support for the results of the online survey. Mayeya pointed out how difficult it was for students to start writing which leads to continued postponing of it. Marlen also thought that most students lack confidence to start writing.

Variety of writing skills levels and signs of improvement. The results of the students' and graduates' placement according to the CEFR levels in the online survey indicated a variety of levels that extend from A2 to C1 for students and from B1 to C2 for some graduates. However, supervisors placed their students mainly in the B1 and B2 levels at the beginning of the process. Looking at the placement of graduates at the end of the process the tendency was to see a movement toward the B2+, C1, and C2 levels. Supervisors also showed a movement of their students toward higher levels but it did go only as far as B2+ level. No supervisor placed any student on any C level. Regardless of this discrepancy between graduates and supervisors, both groups of participants acknowledged improvement as reflected in the movement toward higher levels in the CEFR scale.

Data from the interviews also clearly showed a variety of levels of writing skills among the participants interviewed and those of the students described by their supervisors. Students with stronger writing skills and students developing their writing skills were the two main groups identified in the participants. Improvement was also evident through participants' accounts of their processes and those of their students in different moments and the impact on their skills.

Aspects of general writing through the process. Those aspects of general writing that graduates and students felt were very strong in at the beginning of the process were grammar and spelling and punctuation. Lexicon, syntax, and cohesive devices were also regarded as strong by many of them. Many of these participants went for the neutral option in this question in the online survey indicating maybe they were just in a midpoint of performance in these aspects. Interestingly, supervisors perceived most of these aspects to be weak in their students although several went for the midpoint choice, too.

In the interviews, some students in the proficient group like Juan, Alejandro, Amelia, and Danilo, and graduates like Paula, Pedro, Johanna, and Jorge, were very sure that they had a very good command of all aspects of general writing at the beginning and that they had to mainly focus on aspects related to academic writing skills which were somehow new for them.

In the developing group some students and graduates shared a great variety of areas in which they felt they had to improve when they started their writing process. Students like Samantha, Adolfo, and Angela, and graduates like Pedro, had few problems with grammar. For example, student Guillermo had to work specifically on prepositions. Lexicon was a problem for students like Claudia and Sofia and graduates like Sonia. Punctuation was a problem for students like Adolfo and Daniel and graduates like Andrea. Syntax was also an aspect that several students and graduates struggled with when they started writing their theses. Student Magdalena, had a problem with run-on sentences which was claimed by supervisor July, to be a very common problem she spotted in her students' writing. At the paragraph level, students like Viviana, Guillermo, and Angela, and graduates like Juliana worked on paragraph writing in order to move into more extensive writing. The testimonies of supervisors like Nicholas, July, Karla,

Lorena, Marlen, Laura, and Camila identified similar problems with their students to the ones described by these students and graduates.

Issues related to text organization like coherence and cohesion predominated among students and graduates and were repeatedly brought up by supervisors. Students like Juana, Magu, Sofia, Angelica, Magdalena, Amelia, Claudia, Adolfo, Guillermo, Daniel, Angela, and Claudia, and graduates like Luis, Jenny, Andrea, Sonia, and Santiago, mentioned the need to work on making their writing more coherent, using connectors appropriately, and making good transitions to help with the flow of ideas. Supervisors like Gabriela, Manolo, Laura, Karla, Marlen, and July referred to varied aspects of text organization that required a lot of work for students. This aspect of general writing stood out for being the one aspect in which participants in all three groups concurred as requiring further work even after completing the thesis, as reflected in the data from the online surveys. In the interviews, students like Juana, Claudia, Viviana, and Sofia continued struggling with coherence and cohesion as also did graduates like Sonia and Andrea who even after finishing the thesis felt weak in this area.

One aspect not captured in the survey that appeared in the interviews as having an impact on students' and graduates' writing when they started writing their theses was the influence of Spanish. Students like Magdalena and Samantha referred to it in relation to the length of sentences, Sofia and Mariana referred to it in relation to punctuation, and for Sofia it was an aspect in which she still needed to work. Magdalena and Juana also linked this influence to beating around the bush while writing or not getting to the point or sometimes losing the thread of ideas, which was an issue that graduates like Javier, Johanna, and Andrea also had. Supervisors like July, Licimaco, and Rosario explicitly referred to this influence while supervisors like Manolo, Gabriela, and July talked about how some students' problem was to

easily lose the thread of ideas and ended up talking about different things. One last aspect some students like Magu and Magdalena and graduates like Dana brought up was the influence of the oral language in their writing, as it seemed to them that they tended to write in the way they spoke. One supervisor, Alberto, mentioned this tendency in some of his students as well.

The students, graduates, and supervisors in the interviews acknowledged how some aspects of writing definitely improved through the process. Students like Magu and Claudia and graduate Andrea perceived in general that their skills were different, felt they could write better, and knew what and how to monitor their writing as well how to structure it better. Others were more specific on the aspect they felt had improved significantly. Student Juana improved her grammar and vocabulary. Graduates also recalled aspects like learning how to use connectors (Nico), expanding vocabulary significantly (Luis), and easy expression of ideas (Sonia). The aspects brought up by these interviewees concurred with those aspects selected by the students, graduates, and supervisors who responded to the online survey as the ones in which they perceived this improvement. In these surveys, appropriate use of vocabulary and awareness of text organization stood out for being the most noticeable feature in which students, graduates and supervisors perceived improvement; supervisors also felt that their students paid more attention to mechanics and punctuation though. In the interviews, supervisors like Marlen referred to students' improvement at expressing their ideas while supervisors like Gabriela and Manolo perceived improvement in more general terms.

Strategies. The strategies used by the students and graduates fell into two main categories. One category included those activities suggested by supervisors and the other category included things students figured out themselves in order to work on their writing skills. In the first category, one strategy widely suggested by supervisors like Lorena and Manolo was

to get external help specifically to proofread students' writing. Students like Angela and Amelia also talked about how their program structured a kind of peer assessment scheme to help each other improve their writing. Some other things supervisors suggested was to write as soon as possible which was something that Nicholas did and to engage actively in reflective writing during the study which was something Gabriela encouraged. Graduate Javier, mentioned how his supervisor encouraged him to write as much as he could when feeling inspired and later fix whatever problems he had on what he had written.

In the category that included strategies, students and graduates came up with on their own. One quite frequently strategy mentioned was to find someone to proofread their writing and give feedback. Students who used it included Angelica, Natasha, Sofia, Claudia, Magu, and Viviana and graduates like Javier, Sonia, and Johanna. Reading about writing or related aspects was also a strategy that students and graduates realized was quite helpful. Graduates like Dana read about clauses and punctuation and Sonia about writing in general to gain more confidence to undertake their writing. Students like Viviana read theses to learn about coherence. Reading theses was an aspect that students and graduates also selected in the online surveys as contributing to the improvement of their writing skills. The surveys also highlighted the positive impact of writing the thesis proposal in this regard, too, as students and graduates placed it first and second in this respect. Students relied also on reviewing and actively using writing strategies like outlining as did students like Magdalena, Claudia, and Guillermo. Some graduates described strategies to avoid feeling overwhelmed by the task of writing as Nico did by writing from the very beginning or to keep their writing going as Javier and Andrea did by continuously leaving and returning to the document to identify problems or to incorporate new things.

Academic Writing Skills

Students--Initial Stage

Quantitative (online surveys). The descriptors of academic written production competence (McMahon & Durán, 2012) based on the CEFR define seven levels starting in level A2 and ascending to level C2. These descriptors were used to help participants identify their level of academic writing ability at the initial and final stages of their theses. Students placed themselves predominantly in the B2 level (47%) while some others in the C1 (24%) and B1 (16%) levels (see Table 28). Students felt pretty strong in most of the aspects of academic writing. Level of formality was the strongest for students closely followed by synthesis of information and control of academic style (see Table 29). Students (45%) felt confident of the academic writing skills by the time they began their writing process in the thesis. But 39% of them went for the midpoint choice though (see Table 30).

Table 28

Level of Academic Writing Skills According the CEFR Standards at the Beginning of the Process

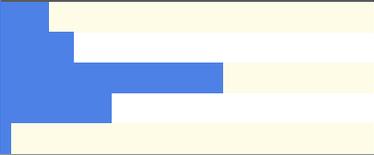
#	Answer		Response	%
1	A2		4	11%
2	B1		6	16%
3	B2		18	47%
4	C1		9	24%
5	C2		1	3%
	Total		38	100%

Table 29

Aspects of Academic Writing at the Beginning of the Process

#	Question	Very Strong	Strong	Neutral	Weak	Very Weak	Total Responses	Mean
1	Synthesis of information from sources	3	13	13	7	2	38	2.79
2	Referencing of sources information	3	8	17	8	2	38	2.95
3	Arguments and claims building	1	9	20	7	1	38	2.95
4	Arguments and claims support	0	13	15	8	2	38	2.97
5	Control of academic writing style	2	12	12	11	1	38	2.92
6	Use of abstract vocabulary and technical terms from the field	2	11	18	6	1	38	2.82
7	Level of formality	2	15	12	9	0	38	2.74
8	Use of modality	0	11	16	9	2	38	3.05

Table 30

Students' Level of Confidence in Their Academic Writing Skills at the Beginning of the Process

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Very Confident	3	8%
2	Confident	14	37%
3	Neutral	15	39%
4	Not very confident	5	13%
5	Not confident at all	1	3%
	Total	38	100%

Qualitative (interviews). Some students identified their level regarding academic writing skills. Danilo and Alejandro stated that they had good academic writing skills from the beginning,

So I consider that when I started my Masters and writing my thesis project, I already had I would say very good academic writing skills” (Danilo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

I didn't have problems with academic writing regarding, getting support from authors, or making my point clear, etc. (Alejandro, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

Other students referred to their previous preparation on academic writing as responsible of how strong they felt about these skills,

I had three semesters of academic writing, let's say, it represents an advantage for me because I knew how to write, I knew how to structure my texts, and I knew how to go over the information that I had. (Amelia, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

I received some courses about academic writing an all those things, so I knew how to write my literature review, it was kind of hard to but it wasn't so hard as the first time, so I knew how to handle that aspect and about the APA norms, style” (Daniel, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

In my case in my undergraduate program I just had one semester of academic writing. It wasn't enough really because when I started the Master's program I have forgotten most of it. (Guillermo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

Magu and Mariana felt in a midpoint level in which there was still room for improvement and Claudia felt her level in academic writing skills was quite low because she did not know much about them,

I would say in the middle, not in the beginning but I cannot say that I was that advanced either because I am not in that level yet, but probably average, in the middle. (Magu, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

But if we think about academic writing, I think I was in need to more practice. (Mariana, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

When I started I felt that I didn't know so much about those aspects, even in Spanish because there were some changes in that part. And in English and Spanish too, so I didn't know. (Claudia, student, personal communication, July 19, 2013)

Other students like Juan, Angelica, and Alejandro felt quite strong in a specific aspect such as elaborating information from sources,

Reading my sources and then taking out what I needed from my sources and then quote them appropriately in the corresponding place. That was not a challenge for me, like in terms of the writing skill, no. (Juan, student, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Usually take like some quotations from experts that are related to my topic, I analyze them and then I see how I can incorporate them into my writing, into my topic and then I use my own ideas. I try to find some match. (Angelica, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

In general terms, students identified several aspects of academic writing as completely or relatively new for them therefore needing some work to master them. The most important aspect of academic writing in which students reported having problems at the beginning of the process was the use of sources. In this aspect there were several problematic areas reported. First, it was the way to elaborate on authors' information that Adolfo and Viviana pointed out as being hard at the beginning,

When I finished to read, for me the most it was difficult to try to say the things, the authors' thoughts in the same words you know. (Viviana, student, personal communication, August 21, 2013)

I think that for me the hardest part was to paraphrase the ideas of other authors because they are well-built and when you are trying to give a different sense do something that is already well-written, it is quite demanding and it was the hardest part. (Adolfo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

Another area, closely related to the former one, was plagiarism, which was a problem for Magdalena, Samantha, and Danilo,

You have to devote a lot of time in synthesizing the information, making the proper citation that you are not committing plagiarism. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

Sometimes professors said that we used plagiarism, yeah, because...so we tried to write on my own, but we take some references about the authors and so we tried to write in my own but maybe, so final, at the end I just finished to use their own words. (Samantha, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

Juan and Angela mentioned the integration of the information from various sources in relation to their topic of the study as more challenging,

The process for me was very difficult, was demanding, was hard because the classification and the organization of the information was very, very difficult. In order to, what information is useful for the document? And how to connect this information in the document in the correct way with the linkers, the correct sentence to avoid plagiarism, was very, very difficult for me. (Angela, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

Maybe the challenge of the ideas themselves, more in the process of taking the information and adapting it and making it useful, in terms of the ideas, in terms of the writing, it was per se not a challenge. (Juan, student, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Magdalena brought up access to sources as a problem for some students as well as computer literacy skills to search information at the beginning of the process. APA formatting was the second aspect of academic writing in which students had to work the most. Citing authors in text was a challenge for Sofia, Magdalena, Viviana, Mariana, Amelia, Danilo, Adolfo, Guillermo, and Angela. Viviana had specific problems with the reference list,

I didn't really have any difficulty because I am very confident when I write but I had heard of the APA style for a long, long time but I never used it before, to be honest, and I have to admit that even right now there are a couple of things that I am not sure how to use. (Danilo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

You know that in academic writing you are required to use the APA style and also it was difficult for me, paraphrasing, also to use the references and to start using the APA was really tough. Also I can see that it was difficult like to avoid using the first person in the writing because you actually have to use words like the researcher or the teacher researcher. (Viviana, student, personal communication, August 21, 2013)

That I also have considered important is about how to quote, I sometimes don't know how to do it, but like it is just because I do something and I stop and then I retake the things, so maybe because of that . (Sofia, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

We have the APA and it is something that is really time-consuming, handling the APA is really difficult. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

Juan, Mariana, and Juana devoted a lot of work to expand their vocabulary,

Specially in terms of Lexis, so vocabulary. I always struggled to make language sound, again scholar, more academic than what you already have. That's the challenge when you're writing professionally. (Juan, student, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

In my case was terminology, I had to learn a lot of words and terms in relation to how to write properly in English in this Masters. We learned some proper vocabulary and it helped us improve in our academic writing, I think so. (Mariana, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

I think that lexicon will always be something that represents a problem for us because you know the language is tangible and that are new theories, new things, new studies, new words and you have to learn that. I think that lexicon is something that you need to learn every day. Yes and keep building. (Juana, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Natasha focused on specialized vocabulary and concepts related to her topic where she felt not quite savvy,

That is the issue, that's the difficulty that I am having now on writing. Because sometimes you found something and the students told you something in the interview and then I found this, how am I going to write it? And sometimes is like you lack of that vocabulary. (Natasha, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Sofia felt that she needed to pay attention the style of academic writing. Claudia and Viviana had to work on their impersonal presence in the text. Making unsupported assumptions was an issue for Juana while Magu concentrated on guiding the reader more carefully through the text.

Regarding the confidence to start writing academically, for some students the idea of writing academically was very challenging even when some aspects of general writing were mastered as was the experience of Danilo,

I didn't really have any difficulty because I am very confident when I write but I had heard of the APA style for a long, long time but I never used it before, to be honest, and I have to admit that even right now there are a couple of things that I am not sure how to use. (Danilo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

Amelia referred to the lack of contact with some of the aspects of academic writing as the reason for not feeling very confident,

I knew how to start a text but the formal things were really difficult for me. And I guess, that's for everybody, we weren't familiar with APA, what was that for us?, especially because in our context, of course, we don't tend to go over those elements frequently. (Amelia, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

Other students described their experience as very hard since the amount of things they had to pay attention was considerable,

For me it was really hard at the beginning, in fact, I have to admit at this moment, it is still hard because, as my partners mentioned, it is really difficult, there is a lot of information, we have to identify what specific information we want to cite, from whom, where was it taken from, it is a lot, a lot of work to do. (Guillermo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

I would say that I was doing my, my subjects on research, and I went through those steps and it was hard, many things like... I was not aware of the APA or APA style. (Sofia, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Natasha in particular referred to the format of the research report as constraining for her despite having adequate academic writing skills,

I knew how to write in English in terms of academic writing. However, it was very difficult to follow the formats that they suggest in order to write a research report.”(Natasha, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

The experience of these students reflected the impact of the lack of training and exposure to aspects of academic writing that otherwise would have made the process easier to face for them.

Intermediate stage

Quantitative (online surveys). The students indicated even improvement in most aspects. Awareness of format requirements was the one aspect in which they improved the most while awareness of the characteristics of the audience and the scope of their claims the ones in

which they perceived the least improvement (see Table 31). Students considered control of the academic style to be the aspect that still requires a great deal of work. However, for students it is the synthesis of information from sources that is the aspect that still required the most work (see Table 32). Students identified exposure to models of theses as the most important factor that helped them improve their academic skills closely followed by reading research studies and writing the thesis proposal. Feedback from supervisor was regarded as the fourth aspect in importance (see Table 33).

Table 31

Aspects of Academic Writing Skills in Which Students Perceive Improvement

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Clarity about the way the different elements fit together in the flow of the argument		19	54%
2	Easiness to paraphrase information from source materials		20	57%
3	Easiness to cite sources in the text		20	57%
4	Easiness to synthesize information from various sources		16	46%
5	Awareness of the type of information to be included in each section of the thesis		22	63%
6	Awareness of how to present information in each section		14	40%
7	Awareness of format requirements (e.g.,APA,)		24	69%
8	Awareness of the characteristics of the audience I am writing for		12	34%
9	Clarity about the way to represent myself in the text		16	46%
10	Clarity about the scope of the claims I make		11	31%
11	Other?		0	0%

Table 32
Aspects to be Improved

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Synthesis of information from sources		26	68%
2	Referencing of sources information		20	53%
3	Arguments and claims building		18	47%
4	Arguments and claims support		18	47%
5	Control of academic writing style		25	66%
6	Use of abstract vocabulary and technical terms from the field		16	42%
7	Level of formality		17	45%
8	Use of modality		12	32%

Table 33

Aspects Related to the Thesis Writing Process That Help the Improvement of Academic Writing Skills

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Thesis seminars		8	23%
2	Writing of the thesis proposal		22	63%
3	Exposure to models of theses		25	71%
4	Reading research studies through the various stages of the thesis		23	66%
5	Guidance from thesis supervisor		17	49%
6	Feedback from thesis supervisor		21	60%
7	Feedback from others		18	51%
8	Other?		1	3%

Qualitative (interviews). Students reported improvement in several areas of academic writing. Samantha and Viviana learned how to paraphrase information from authors,

The reading strategy is good for writing something and anything that we have to use our own words to say something that another author says, it is a progress. (Samantha, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

Magdalena learned how to elaborate on sources in the literature review,

I could also start incorporating quotations, synthesizing, summarizing ideas and that's something I am still working on, I am still writing in the process but it kind of, kind of like broke that idea of I couldn't write. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

Juana recognized how her vocabulary had expanded,

I think the lexicon because I improved a lot because I didn't use a lot of words even in the way I speak, because I just use like all the words that you use when you are speaking, the same way you write sometimes. So you started to be exposed to this kind of literature after you start using those words in your document, so I think I was benefitted. (Juana, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Juan and Mariana referred to the way they improved their academic writing in general through the process,

When you are beginning a research, it is not quite clear, you have to control many different aspects, you are still working on the central question. After each revision, after each check in then you have to change many things, you have to consult new books, I mean, it can be a big problem that increases your level of anxietyThe anxiety of collecting... of the research itself, reading and relating to what you want to write, but also you are not accustomed to using that kind of language when you write, so the more you write, the more familiar you get, the more mechanical it gets, so yes, of course you notice the improvement. (Juan, student, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

We were struggling, especially with the writing and when my advisor gave us feedback, we had to work a lot on that, like to make it more professional, more academic, writing in a more academic way. This is something that we have to take into account and now that we finished, because I finished the process, I can say that the result that it has been very good, yeah, I have improved a lot. (Mariana, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

Juana felt her voice became more visible as she progressed in the document,

Yes, at the beginning it was like invisible, right, as I said you start by describing something so you don't have like your voice there because you're speaking about something that is a part, but then for example, the literature review my voice was more visible. (Juana, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Some students realized that there were aspects in which they needed to work more.

Mariana and Samantha needed to work more on APA formatting in general while Juana,

Guillermo, and Viviana had to work on citing sources,

The APA style, yes, always in my reflection papers always APA style "please, APA style revision" I think we have to work, I have to work on that a lot. (Samantha, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

The APA was, even after the last part of the process, we were struggling a lot to do it in APA style. (Mariana, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

I have to admit at this moment, it is still hard because, as my partners mentioned, it is really difficult, there is a lot of information, we have to identify what specific information we want to cite, from whom, where was it taken from, it is a lot, a lot of work to do. (Guillermo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

In this respect, Sofia was more specific since her problem was learning how to cite secondary sources. Juana, who was in a more advanced stage on her thesis writing, needed to figure out how to give coherence to all parts of her document. Magu, also very close to finishing her thesis, needed to continue continued working on APA, use of sources and reader engagement in her writing.

There were strategies actively used by supervisors in order to help students improve their academic writing skills. Danilo mentioned how his supervisors provided lots of feedback, models, reading and even guidelines to learn how to deal with these skills. This was the same experience of Amelia, Daniel, Guillermo, Adolfo, and Angela since they were all in the same cohort,

The work done by our tutors, both the academic writing one and the one of our thesis, I think it's was very, very detailed, a very detailed process which gave us, I would say a very detailed correction of each part of the process and that gave us a good idea of how to write an academic paper. I knew I could write in academic terms, but I didn't know all those aspects, formal aspects of APA, how to cite authors, how not to fall into the tendency of, what's the word, plagiarism, falling into plagiarism style. (Danilo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

Juana shared how her supervisor showed her how to elaborate on the information from authors. In order to deal with unsupported assumptions some students like Juana and Mariana reported how their supervisors directly requested them to support these assumptions, which proved to be a very effective strategy to overcome this problem,

It's like "remember that you have to support this with this and this" and then it is what Alejandro talked about, it was about the authors that we need to have in our theoretical framework to support our ideas. It is something like "it is a good idea, where is your authors? What is the background to support that?". (Mariana, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

These students also pointed out how this strategy was also used to make them aware of the need to include their voices while elaborating information from sources and even to check APA formatting,

The teacher told us that actually our voice was important, he said "If you want to get started with the literature review using your voice because actually it is you the one developing the thesis but you need to support your ideas with previous studies about that". (Juana, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Juana's supervisor also talked about how modality helped to avoid making overgeneralizations. Supervisors also engaged students in peer assessment activities to proofread drafts before turning them in as reported by Angela and Amelia.

Students also found ways to work on their academic writing skills. Claudia, Angelica, Magdalena and Viviana resorted to external people to proofread their writing,

I had a lot of cooperation from my friends here and they are actually the ones that proofread me... so I have asked them to read from logs, or chapters and they are the ones who have helped me a lot in terms of the writing process. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

So some teachers helped me review my documents or my papers in that moment. (Claudia, student, personal communication, July 19, 2013)

Also I try to do something, it is proofreading. So what I do, for example is that I write a chapter or something that I need to write and what we do at the classroom is that we try to use collaborative learning so I exchange my writing with another person and we try to read and provide feedback and we try to change the mistakes or errors that we could have. (Viviana, student, personal communication, August 21, 2013)

Another strategy was copying in the sense of imitating as Juan did while trying to emulate authors' writing styles. Juana copied the authors' citing and paraphrasing styles she

encountered through her reading. Natasha focused on varying vocabulary to make her writing more engaging,

Because I am a careful reader, the more I read in-depth, in detail, the more I catch as well the style, so I try to copy; I consciously try to copy the style of writing. (Juan, student, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

When you are exposed to those reading materials and those research studies, you start to notice in those sources, so I started to copy. (Juana, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Reading was another very important strategy students used to learn about academic writing skills. Claudia and Angela read about academic writing, Viviana about APA formatting and Sofia about citing sources,

I read models and I read some texts about academic writing. (Claudia, student, personal communication, July 19, 2013)

I had to start reading about the APA a lot and for sentences construction as well, compound nouns and connectors, well I have been reading some other theses about the same topic, similar topic that I am doing. (Viviana, student, personal communication, August 21, 2013)

I think I am better because I have checked more things, more parts, like other books even books about how to cite, see, in a thesis, in an article. (Sofia, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Guillermo continuously referred back to the APA manual in order to make sure his formatting was right. Other students like Juana and Magu read extensively about their topics and in different formats (i.e., articles, books and theses),

Because your writing improves by reading. Since I loved my topic , I started to read a lot about this topic, so I started to learn new words, I started to learn new things, I started to think about writing and to show my understanding so I think the topic is the motivation to write about a topic to improve your writing. (Juana, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

I am reading a lot from recent research studies related to the topic that helped me a lot in understanding deeper the research topic... well, actually I think in the same process of reading to get information for my literature review, I am learning about writing because

you learn vocabulary, you learn new expressions and sometimes I am trying to use those new language structures to enhance my writing style. (Magu, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

It is possible to see here how students become more resourceful to successfully tackle the demands of academic writing.

Merging of Quantitative and Qualitative Data for Students

Confidence to start writing academically. Nearly half of the students in the online surveys felt confident of their academic writing skills. 42% of students marked the midpoint choice and only a few didn't feel confident of these skills. Some of the students in the interviews expressed that even they had a good handle of most academic writing skills, they had to work on aspects such as APA formatting that were somehow new to them. Other students who were less acquainted with academic writing skills felt even more insecure to write academically. One reason they stated was the amount of information they needed to pay attention to, some of which they were just getting to know for the first time.

Variety of academic writing skills levels and aspects of academic writing through the process. Almost half of students placed themselves in level B2 according to the levels of academic writing competence which entailed that they handled a great deal of aspects of academic writing. Some even placed themselves in level C1 and one student chose level C2 which is the highest level. In the interviews several levels of academic writing skills can be identified. One student affirmed she had no problems writing academically. Another student reported having good academic writing skills but later acknowledged not being familiar with the APA style. Some students pointed out how they felt strong about a specific aspect but the majority felt they needed to work on one or some others aspects. There were also students who were not familiar with many of the aspects of academic writing. One important factor for this

disparity in levels was the variety of previous experiences and training with academic writing in former undergraduate programs some of these students reported having or not having had.

One of the aspects in which students reported having the most problems was the use of sources. This aspect included elaboration on authors' information, making their voice more explicit while elaborating on authors' information, avoiding plagiarism, and integrating information from various sources to support a given point. Other aspects brought up by students were the use of APA formatting style, learning and using academic vocabulary, dealing with unsupported assumptions, and guiding the reader in the text. Interestingly, according to the online surveys the aspect in which students felt stronger at the beginning of the writing process was the synthesis of information from sources. Level of formality and control of academic writing style were among the strongest too. It is important to highlight how many students marked the midpoint in many of the aspects in this question probably indicating that these were aspects they were still developing.

Some of these students also reported how through their writing process they learned to deal with many of these aspects. For instance, some students learned how to use sources, to paraphrase, to cite sources, to avoid unsupported assumptions, and to make their voice more evident while elaborating on sources. One student expanded her academic vocabulary. In the online surveys, students felt that awareness of format requirements was the aspect in which they perceived the most improvement. Other top aspects were the ease of paraphrasing information from sources and citing sources.

The one aspect that some students in the interviews pointed out as being one in which they still need to continue working is APA formatting. The aspects that students in the online surveys considered the ones in which they needed to continue working were the synthesis of

information from sources, the control of academic style and the referencing of sources of information. It seems that some of the aspects in which students perceived most improvement are also the ones in which they still need to continue working.

Strategies. Students described some of the strategies that their supervisors used to help them improve their academic writing skills. These strategies included providing feedback, making accessible models, guidelines and providing readings. These students also recalled how their supervisors sometimes addressed directly issues that were problematic for them such as unsupported assumptions, including their voice while elaborating on sources of information and APA formatting. Students also figured out ways of improving. They requested feedback from external people that proofread their writing. Reading about aspects of academic writing that were not quite clear for them was a quite common practice. One last strategy some students mentioned was to imitate other people's writing and referencing styles in their own writing. Reading theses and other research studies as well as writing a research proposal were the three most important aspects related to the process that helped them improve these skills for the students in the online surveys.

Graduates--At the Initial Stage

Quantitative (online surveys). Graduates placed themselves between the B1 and C2 levels, with the majority (62%) in the B2 level at the beginning of the process (see Table 34). Graduates (43%) felt confident of their academic writing skills by the time they began their writing process in the thesis. 38% of them went for the midpoint choice though (see Table 35). Graduates felt pretty strong in most of the aspects of academic writing. Synthesis of information from sources stood out as the strongest aspect for graduates (see Table 36).

Table 34

Level of Academic Writing Skills According the CEFR Standards at the Beginning of the Process

#	Answer	Response	%
1	A2	0	0%
2	B1	4	15%
3	B2	16	62%
4	C1	4	15%
5	C2	2	8%
Total		26	100%

Table 35

Graduates' Level of Confidence in Their Academic Writing Skills at the Beginning of the Process

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Very Confident	2	8%
2	Confident	9	35%
3	Neutral	10	38%
4	Not very confident	5	19%
5	Not confident at all	0	0%
Total		26	100%

Table 36 *Aspects of Academic Writing at the Beginning of the Process*

#	Question	Very Strong	Strong	Neutral	Weak	Very Weak	Total Responses	Mean
1	Synthesis of information from sources	0	14	9	3	0	26	2.58
2	Referencing of sources information	1	7	15	3	0	26	2.77
3	Arguments and claims building	1	8	13	4	0	26	2.77
4	Arguments and claims support	1	7	16	2	0	26	2.73
5	Control of academic writing style	2	6	15	3	0	26	2.73
6	Use of abstract vocabulary and technical terms from the field	0	9	12	5	0	26	2.85
7	Level of formality	2	7	14	3	0	26	2.69
8	Use of modality	0	8	15	3	0	26	2.81

Qualitative (interviews). Some graduates described their level of academic writing skills.

There were some graduates like Luis and Pedro who felt they had good academic writing skills,

Academic writing, yeah, I felt quite comfortable. I had been writing papers, like for all my life studying English, that's more or less 16 or 17 years. And I think I was doing right in terms of academic writing. (Luis, graduate, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

At the beginning, well actually I think it was good because before starting to write my own thesis, I had already worked as a thesis director at an undergraduate program. So I had already taught students how to organize this type of academic writing and I also had a good training at the University. (Pedro, graduate, personal communication, June 8, 2013)

Jorge asserted the only aspect he needed to work on was the use of certain expressions,

I just had the motivation of including those devices, you know those transitions phrases that are very typical of academic writing that was the only thing that I have to pay attention to, to improve my writing. (Jorge, graduate, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Some graduates were quite aware of their limitations in academic writing,

By the time it was not the best probably because I had a certain limitations in writing my thesis... The problems were related to academic writing. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

My academic style was not that strong, it was weak actually. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

So I realized that I was so weak. (Sonia, graduate, personal communication, June 25, 2013)

There were graduates who felt there were areas in which they had no problems in academic writing. Paula felt she was quite strong at the elaboration of information from sources and Santiago at APA formatting,

But you know including my voice and everything, no, I didn't have any problem. (Paula, graduate, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

So I was very familiar with APA. (Santiago, graduate, personal communication, July 31, 2013)

Most graduates identified several aspects of academic writing as completely new for them therefore needing some work to master them. The most important aspect of academic writing in which graduates reported having problems at the beginning of the process was the use of sources. Sonia, Nico, and Jenny pointed out how hard it was for them to elaborate on authors' information at the beginning,

Very low indeed in terms of, not really synthesis, but on elaboration. (Jenny, graduate, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

So I had to study many things about that, to extract the information from other authors. At the beginning of the process it was hard but during the process it was getting easier" (Sonia, graduate, personal communication, June 25, 2013)

Johanna referred in particular to her difficulty to include her voice while elaborating on authors' information,

For example, when I tried to include my own voice, for example, in the literature review, in the data analysis chapters, it is not only presenting what X or Y authors said about that topic or on that study or the findings but it was also about my reaction or my own perception about that, the way to speak up my voice and provide supporting points of view so that what I am saying has a more valid approach or perception. (Johanna, graduate, personal communication, August 1, 2013)

Javier had problems with the integration of the information from various sources,

But then encompassing and trying to fit the theory in the project and finding the right literature and the right fragment, that was difficult. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

Andrea brought up issues related to the reliability, the availability and the integration of sources. The latter one became a problem that significantly impacted the appropriate citation of the sources she used,

I think the organization of ideas, when you want to put everything together , it is difficult because sometimes the information you get from a source is not enough, it is not reliable, for instance many sources from the Internet are not reliable, sometimes you rely on those. (Andrea, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Citing authors in text is an aspect related to APA formatting that was a challenge for Dana, Paula, Pedro, Sonia, Johanna, and Jenny. Dana also had problems specifically with the formatting of the reference list,

It was not easy, absolutely because APA is not the norms that we have, I knew that I had to use APA but I hadn't received any training or any information about those APA . . . that was probably one of the parts that I had to work a lot because it was necessary to read a lot, to identify the process of doing a quotation inside the paper and in the reference list, so it was not easy. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

We know how to write but to do it academically, where you have to cite everybody and the way you do it, that was difficult. That was very difficult because I haven't done anything in a long time, so going back to it, it took me a while, always checking APA. (Paula, graduate, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

There were many things I didn't know, for example, I didn't know the APA style, it was unknown for me, I had to study about that, also how to paraphrase a text. (Sonia, graduate, personal communication, June 25, 2013)

Dana, Javier, and Jenny focused their efforts on working on vocabulary, which they considered to be very specific in academic texts, as did Jorge who worked specifically on transition sentences,

In terms of the use of language, it's was difficult, sometimes I like to use like colloquial language not academic language. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Of course you noticed the difference when you have already elaborated something that is kind of, let's say, academic but it is paraphrasing from other authors, that is easier to put in nicer, sophisticated words but when you come with your own, it is totally different. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

Vocabulary was a little difficult for me in the sense that it had to be academic and I was not familiar with academic language at that time. (Jenny, graduate, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

Another aspect of academic writing skills mentioned was the academic style which was a problem for Johanna,

Something that I had to work a lot in order to improve, it was about academic style, formal writing, especially what it has to do with argumentative style. (Johanna, graduate, personal communication, August 1, 2013)

Dana also had to work on this style which she defined as more objective and Jorge as more neutral and both attempted to achieve it gradually in their writings,

In academic writing, I needed to be more objective about what I was observing, what I was writing. I needed to be careful with the words that I needed to writing on a paper. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

There should be this neutral way of writing so others can understand or other readers can read it without any problem, without making the effort of trying to understand what the writer wanted to say in a particular way. (Jorge, graduate, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Juliana had to work on their impersonal presence in the text by avoiding the use of first person and also using other tools to make her writing more academic and well-structured,

It is much more academic to use the passive voice and other resources, using the linking words, for example, it is very important. Using the connectors . . . and using transition sentences, transition paragraphs and introductory paragraphs and sentences. (Juliana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Dana also struggled with making unsupported assumptions and Javier with the coherence of the text at the micro and macro levels,

Be careful because maybe some teachers are not good about teaching and how do you know about it”, so what evidence do you have about it? So it was necessary for me to start reading and to start confronting my personal perceptions with the study I was, the paper I was writing in that moment. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

When you start the writing of the thesis, the first thing that you start dealing with is how to incorporate literature, like in the body and then making those connections, like being coherent, like in the micro the structure it is difficult and of course it has an effect in the macro as well. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

Regarding graduates' confidence to start writing academically, a couple of graduates pointed out how they felt about their academic writing skills at the beginning of their thesis,

So I really didn't have the skills for research plus I didn't have the skills for academic writing, I didn't. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

I felt confused at the beginning because as I said before, I had plenty of problems when writing. (Juliana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

These graduates identified a variety of aspects in which they either felt quite comfortable or that became a challenge for them as they faced the early stage of their thesis writing.

At the Final Stage

Quantitative (online surveys). By the end of the process, 52% of the graduates moved up to the C1 level and even 20% in the highest level (C2) (see Table 37). Graduates felt improvement in most of the aspects related to academic writing. Clarity about the way the different elements fit together and awareness of the type of information to be included in each section are the top aspects for this group. Awareness of the characteristics of the audience was the one aspect in which least improvement was perceived though (see Table 38). Graduates considered control of the academic style to be the aspect that still required great deal of work. The level of formality was another aspect that required further work and was second (see Table 39). Graduates identified reading research studies through the various stages of the thesis the factor that impacted the most their academic writing skills and feedback from thesis supervisors to be the second most important. In third place, they placed writing of the proposal and exposure to models of theses (see Table 40).

Table 37

Level of Academic Writing Skills According the CEFR Standards at the end of the Process

#	Answer	Response	%
1	A2	0	0%
2	B1	0	0%
3	B2	7	28%
4	C1	13	52%
5	C2	5	20%
	Total	25	100%

Table 38

Aspects of Academic Writing Skills in Which Graduates Perceived Improvement

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Clarity about the way the different elements fit together in the flow of the argument	21	88%
2	Easiness to paraphrase information from source materials	17	71%
3	Easiness to cite sources in the text	19	79%
4	Easiness to synthesize information from various sources	20	83%
5	Awareness of the type of information to be included in each section of the thesis	21	88%
6	Awareness of how to present information in each section	15	63%
7	Awareness of format requirements (e.g.,APA,)	17	71%
8	Awareness of the characteristics of the audience I am writing for	12	50%
9	Clarity about the way to represent myself in the text	18	75%
10	Clarity about the scope of the claims I make	13	54%
11	Other?	0	0%

Table 39

Aspects to be Improved

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Synthesis of information from sources	6	24%
2	Referencing of sources information	6	24%
3	Arguments and claims building	11	44%
4	Arguments and claims support	13	52%
5	Control of academic writing style	17	68%
6	Use of abstract vocabulary and technical terms from the field	6	24%
7	Level of formality	15	60%
8	Use of modality	10	40%

Table 40

Aspects Related to the Thesis Writing Process That Help the Improvement of Academic Writing Skills

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Thesis seminars	10	42%
2	Writing of the thesis proposal	17	71%
3	Exposure to models of theses	17	71%
4	Reading research studies through the various stages of the thesis	19	79%
5	Guidance from thesis supervisor	14	58%
6	Feedback from thesis supervisor	18	75%
7	Feedback from others	8	33%
8	Other?	1	4%

Qualitative (interviews). These graduates reported to have improved in many aspects of academic writing skills. Johanna, Jenny, Juliana, Santiago, and Nico learned how to use sources while writing some sections of the thesis. Jenny, Juliana, and Johanna noted specifically how they realized the way to make their academic voice stronger and more visible,

I had to learn how to put my voice and then a resource, a quote to support what I was saying. I was giving much more importance to what others had said to what I had to say. (Jenny, graduate, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

I look for the authors and I decided to connect my own ideas with the authors' ideas, yes, at the end I managed everything and it was okay for me. (Juliana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

When I tried to include my own voice, for example, in the literature review, in the data analysis chapters, it is not only presenting what X or Y authors said about that topic or on that study or the findings but it was also about my reaction or my own perception about that, the way to speak up my voice and provide supporting points of view so that what I am saying has a more valid approach or perception. So I think in those aspects the tutor gave me like good comments about the way I was improving. (Johanna, graduate, personal communication, August 1, 2013)

Javier talked about how realize about the way to structure the integration of sources,

But then we don't know how to combine criticism and paraphrasing in a good style. I mean using sophisticated vocabulary, sophisticated ways to develop like a paragraph, thesis statement, supporting details, conclusion, in every single paragraph. That's something that you have it more automatic, let's say. I see it easier now. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

Andrea also improved in getting the ideas from sources and integrating them,

It was easy for me to get ideas from different sources and to integrate them, that was easy for me. (Andrea, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Dana and Juliana had clear how to structure their arguments and Dana on how to avoid making unsupported assumptions,

So in this moment I know that I have a thesis, I need to support that thesis but I also need to use some transition paragraphs and also I need to use some introduction paragraphs because in that moment I didn't have any idea about the use of those transitions and introduction paragraphs. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

So it was necessary for me to start reading and to start confronting my personal perceptions with the study I was, the paper I was writing in that moment. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Javier felt he had expanded his use of reporting verbs and connectors by the time he finished his thesis. Jorge became aware of the way to achieve that neutral stance he thought he needed to develop in his academic writing,

I had to begin thinking that I had to write not for me, not to put the way I write but to write for the others to understand, there is a standard way of writing any academic text, that way I perceived it. (Jorge, graduate, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Dana also realized that it was the use of certain type of vocabulary what she needed to use to improve her academic writing style,

In academic writing, I needed to be more objective about what I was observing, what I was writing. I needed to be careful with the words that I needed to writing on a paper. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Johanna reported that even after she finished her thesis the APA style was an aspect, in which she needed to work on more,

I still have some trouble with those aspects that I told you about at the beginning, the APA style for in-text citations like I have to verify if I am doing right, double check. (Johanna, graduate, personal communication, August 1, 2013)

Graduates brought up some of strategies used by supervisors or suggested by them to work on their academic writing skills. Johanna described the way she followed the scaffolding of the writing process her professors and supervisor did for her,

The first step was to follow guidelines or instructions given by the tutors or the professors, my instructors and yes, it was probably good to be careful about reading and understanding those instructions in order to follow the steps, the guidelines indicated and then the second step was to start writing, and drafting. (Johanna, graduate, personal communication, August 1, 2013)

Dana mentioned how explicit her supervisor was regarding plagiarism and how he also requested her to support the assumptions she made in her drafts,

My supervisor was all the time "be careful, be careful about using the same words of the author without quoting that he is or she is the author, so be careful about that situation because that is, that situation is against law in Colombia. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Javier mentioned how some peer assessment practices included in his program helped him clarify some concepts he was quite clearly conveying in his drafts,

We were encouraged to send versions of the thesis of any chapter, or actually any paper that we had to submit for any other course to give it a try with peer feedback. So that another person can see things that we were not able at that moment and then give it to the professor...I was not pedagogical when I was writing and they asked me questions, so I had to expand on the ideas that I didn't have in the paragraphs I was writing. So they ask me for expansion to clarify, to rephrase things that they didn't understand. Based on that I worked and I submitted it. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

There were also strategies graduates devised themselves in order to tackle some problems they were facing with academic writing skills. Getting someone to proofread their writing was a strategy used by Sonia and Johanna,

I had to ask for some people, bilingual people that read my thesis, my document in order to improve, maybe writing. Also the ideas they want to give. (Sonia, graduate, personal communication, June 25, 2013)

I am improving and the feedback says yes I am improving the way I support, the way I use the language, here, something like that. But I need to guarantee that my final paper is going to be excellent. So in my case, I decided to use a proofreading service and that it's something important to mention here because when your paper is proofread by a native speaker and if possible someone who is also an academic". (Johanna, graduate, personal communication, August 1, 2013)

Reading was also an important strategy for these graduates. Andrea read extensively about her topic and Nico had to read to teach a class and later he used what he learned in his own academic writing. Dana and Juliana read about academic writing and Jenny about research,

I had to read a lot about academic writing, I was looking for information in Internet, in different books about academic writing, so I was learning about how to write in English, how to become a better writer in their thesis process. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

I became interested, as well, in reading in regards to academic writing, composition skills as well and the process of writing. (Juliana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

The book that I told you about *How to write research papers* helped me a lot with this, to improve. (Jenny, graduate, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

Johanna kept checking their APA manual as she was writing her documents to make sure she was complying with the requirements and Santiago read many articles to learn how to write his references,

I examined a lot of references in articles from national and international magazines and I confirmed if I was writing them correctly. (Santiago, graduate, personal communication, July 31, 2013)

Copying expressions and varying vocabulary was a strategy used by Jenny. Similarly, Jorge worked on identifying and classifying expressions in articles he read to use them later as necessary while writing,

By reading because I noticed that academics were including those expressions and I said “this is what I really need” so I can complete, I mean, so I can give my writings the ideal look. (Jorge, graduate, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Basically it was like classifying those expressions I’m telling you. And by the time I wanted to say something that was for example, a conclusion or a contrast of ideas or an introduction, then I picked the right expression to give some variety to my writing. (Jorge, graduate, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

As these graduates engaged in the writing process, they used some of these strategies to fulfill the requirements of the academic writing style.

Merging of Quantitative and Qualitative Data for Graduates

Confidence to start writing academically. Nearly half the graduates who responded to the online surveys felt confident of their academic writing skills. A big percentage of graduates also placed themselves in the midpoint and a few did not feel very confident. In the interviews, a couple of graduates voiced their difficulty in undertaking the writing task due to their limitations regarding academic writing.

Variety of academic writing skills levels and signs of improvement. Comparing academic writing competence self-placement of graduates in the online surveys in both the initial and final stages, it is possible to see how some of them felt they had acquired the skills that allowed them to move up one level (40%)- a few to move up two levels (16%). The majority of these graduates (44%) remained in the same level that tended to be levels B2, C1 and C2 (see Table 41).

Table 41

Levels of Academic Writing Competence at the Beginning and at the end of the Thesis

Respondent	Level at the beginning	Level at the end	Respondent	Level at the beginning	Level at the end
1	B2	C1	14	B1	C1
2	B1	B2	15	B2	C1
3	C1	C1	16	C1	C1
4	B2	C1	17	B2	B2
5	C1	C1	18	B2	C1
6	B2	B2	19	B2	B2
7	C1	C2	20	B2	C1
8	B2	C1	21	B2	C1
9	B2	C2	22	C2	C2
10	B1	C1	23	B2	C1
11	B2	B2	24	C2	C2
12	B2	B2	25	B2	B2
13	B2	C2			

Graduates in the interviews reported having different levels of academic writing skills. A couple of graduates who affirmed having no problems with academic writing skills soon after recognized having an aspect that they felt needed more work such as APA formatting or academic expressions. Most graduates felt they needed to work on several aspects and only a few felt they had problems with most of them. This situation could be somehow reflected in the information from the initial placement in which only three graduates placed themselves in level B1. In this level, the main feature is description and hardly any aspect of academic writing skills is included.

Aspects of academic writing through the process. The use of sources is the aspect of academic writing that posed the most challenge for graduates in the interviews. In this aspect several features required special attention for these graduates. On the one hand, elaboration on the information from sources that included both the selection of fragments and the introduction of the voice of the writer and on the other hand, integration of these sources in a coherent way in

the text. Another aspect in which they reported having difficulty was APA formatting for in-text citations and reference list. Other two aspects brought up by the interviews were academic vocabulary and academic writing style. Regarding how strong graduates felt about these aspects in the online surveys, synthesis of information from resources was the one aspect they felt was their strongest aspect. In fact some of graduates claimed to be strong in most of these aspects but the majority marked the midpoint choice in this question.

Graduates in the interviews reported having significantly improved in most of the aspects they struggled with at the beginning. Graduates understood how they could use sources, include their voices and integrate different sources. They also understood how they could structure their arguments better and expanded their repertoire of expressions to improve their academic writing style. Some graduates became more familiar and fluent with APA formatting. The aspects in which graduates who responded to the online surveys perceived the most improvement were clarity of the way the elements fit together, ease to synthesize information from sources and cite sources as well as clarity about the way to represent themselves in the text. These results concur with the information from the interviews.

The one aspect that was considered to be the one in which some graduates in the interviews felt they needed to continue working on was APA formatting. Surprisingly, it was the control of academic style, level of formality and claims building and support the aspects in which graduates in the online surveys felt they needed to continue working on.

Strategies. Some graduates commented on strategies some of their supervisors used to help them improve their academic writing skills such as scaffolding the writing process and directly addressing with them problems like making unsupported assumptions and plagiarism. Graduates also resorted to the feedback on language and content of people proofreading their

writing. Some graduates also read to learn about aspects of academic writing new to them. One last strategy that they also used was to copy expressions and vocabulary they found in research articles in their writing to give it a more academic look. Reading research articles and feedback from supervisor were the two most important aspects related to the process that helped the improvement of these skills for graduates in the online surveys.

Supervisors--At the Initial Stage

Quantitative (online surveys). Supervisors placed their students mainly in the B1 level (63%) and some in the B2 level (31%) at the beginning of the process (see Table 42).

Supervisors felt their students were mainly weak in most aspects of academic writing.

Arguments and claims building as well as synthesis of information from sources were the aspects supervisors considered their students to be the weakest (see Table 43). Supervisors felt the majority of their students (82%) did not feel very confident or confident at all of their academic skills when they began writing their theses (see Table 44).

Table 42

Level of Students' Academic Writing Skills According the CEFR Standards at the Beginning of the Process

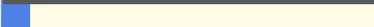
#	Answer		Response	%
1	A2		1	6%
2	B1		10	63%
3	B2		5	31%
4	C1		0	0%
5	C2		0	0%
	Total		16	100%

Table 43
Aspects of Academic Writing at the Beginning of the Process

#	Question	Very Strong	Strong	Neutral	Weak	Very Weak	Total Responses	Mean
1	Synthesis of information from sources	0	1	3	10	2	16	3.81
2	Referencing of sources information	0	1	6	5	4	16	3.75
3	Arguments and claims building	0	0	2	12	2	16	4.00
4	Arguments and claims support	0	0	6	8	2	16	3.75
5	Control of academic writing style	0	0	6	8	2	16	3.75
6	Use of abstract vocabulary and technical terms from the field	1	2	4	8	1	16	3.38
7	Level of formality	1	2	5	6	2	16	3.38
8	Use of modality	0	1	7	6	2	16	3.56

Table 44
Students' Level of Confidence in Their Academic Writing Skills at the Beginning of the Process

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Very Confident	0	0%
2	Confident	2	13%
3	Neutral	1	6%
4	Not very confident	11	69%
5	Not confident at all	2	13%
	Total	16	100%

Qualitative (interviews). Supervisors identified students' level of academic writing skills as not quite high in general terms. Laura, Luisa, Camila, and Alberto described students' academic writing skills level in these terms,

They don't come equipped with the necessary tools or savvy knowledge regarding academic writing. They have too many problems so they struggle a lot . . . they are below zero. No, really. APA let's not even include it here. (Laura, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

But the problem is the academic language. The whole academic genre is a problem for them. (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Academic writing, I would say they have no idea, they have no idea, they need a lot of guidance but they do learn from us. (Luisa, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

They are not very familiar with the standards. The way they should write their conclusions or their findings, the tenses, even the standards for citations, for references everything, it is really hard for them. (Camila, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

The most important aspect of academic writing in which students showed difficulty was the use of sources. In this aspect, it is the elaboration on authors' information, which was particularly hard for students. This area included paraphrasing, selecting quotes and including students' voice. July commented on these aspects and how they were not well differentiated by some students,

They imagine that quoting a person is the same as paraphrasing what the person has already said. So they imagine both things are the same and they start just like "according to" "based on Pepito" they just write what the author has already said, exactly the same words. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

In this respect, Licimaco relates this problem to the lack of training,

They know that they have to use sources, but probably they don't know how. (Licimaco, supervisor, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Problems with paraphrasing were sometimes related to reading comprehension as there were times when the authors' ideas were changed by the students as pointed out by supervisors Nicholas and July,

But very few they miss what the author said, kind of paraphrase, but they switch the idea. (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

Even for example I have had cases in which they quoted what I have written... Yeah, then, I say I didn't say that and it wasn't my purpose and this was not my idea, even with myself. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

Quoting issues included the listing of isolated quotes with no elaboration from the students as reported by supervisors, Karla, Licimaco, and Marlen,

In the theoretical framework, they don't know that they are not supposed to just bring from the sources and copy, bring and copy, so the theoretical framework ends up being something like "according to so and so, blah, blah, blah" and they write the textual citation and then instead of elaborating on the idea, expanding, doing something on their own, they include another one. So it ends up like a quilt, a patched work, a patched work from different authors but no elaboration at all. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

When it comes to reading and interpreting or paraphrasing, there you have the problem. Most of them prefer to quote, to cite and when you start reading, you see that in a page you can find four citations. Then I have to say why you have a collection of cites or quotes when you need to express your voice. So then they say "I find it hard to rephrase or to reword. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

Including students' voice was especially troublesome for students according to supervisors like Aida, Lorena, and Alberto. Lorena linked it to students' fear of using the authors, and Alberto related it to students not accepting and acknowledging the value of authors' knowledge,

What I have found is that they have difficulties especially while mentioning what they have to say in respect to what the authors say. So it is difficult to listen to their voices because they get confused. (Aida, supervisor, personal communication, July 10, 2013)

When they have to present the discussion among authors, let's say in the literature review part, they go into different pieces of writing and they recognize the author but they do not really put their voice in the writing... they write like pieces but they do not really articulate with their own voice as researchers. They feel afraid of doing that that is an attitude that they have at the beginning. (Lorena, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

At the beginning, they are not very comfortable with the idea of quoting people because they think it is their work, it is their project, their dissertation. So they don't feel comfortable with the idea of quoting people in every page. They don't seem to accept that at the beginning. Then, once they recognize that knowledge has been produced by others and they need to give credit to other people. They begin to introduce that then the next step is to have a set of quotes, one after the other without any critical analysis. (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Marlen and Aida identified the integration of information from various sources as a weakness directly connected to the lack of making connections of what students read to their project,

They can find what information they need but when it comes to connecting to what they are doing they find it difficult. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

I have found the use a lot of description, they don't take the insights about the project itself, so it is difficult for them when they just read what they have just researched or investigated but they are not able to say really what they want to say in respect to the project itself. (Aida, supervisor, personal communication, July 10, 2013)

Nicholas also mentioned the reliability of sources as problem to address with students,

Not all of the time the sources that they find are reliable. So they have problems with those sources. (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

Students' lack of previous exposure to APA formatting made this a really new aspect for most of them and even one some of them resisted as reported by Laura,

So for many students, even the ones that I am currently supervising, which have been graduating very recently, they don't know what APA is about, I mean, they are horrible in their management, I mean of rules, they don't know what is that. When they write they say "why aren't you making me do this?". (Laura, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

July, Aida, and Karla also pointed out plagiarism as a common problem, which Laura related to a lack of understanding of how to quote,

Sometimes they commit plagiarism in the sense that we don't know if what they are saying, it is about them or it is about the author they are consulting. (Aida, supervisor, personal communication, July 10, 2013)

But no, apparently, and in some cases when there was something like correct all the time there was plagiarism. I don't know I could not say it is because taking the easy way, I prefer to think that she didn't know how to do it. And then she decided to copy and paste. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

Since they don't have or they are not aware of the use of the APA, they therefore fail to quote correctly and very easily they fall into plagiarism issues. Not all of them, but many of them. (Laura, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

Licimaco also referred to students' lack of consistency while citing sources as a common practice among his students,

The other thing is that usually they have a lot of missing information, the date the year or sometimes they mentioned the author by the last name and some other times they use the name of the authors ... they don't cite the authors name or the last name and they don't care much about the year on the following source, which is the same source, the same author, the same book and they write a different year, so they are not consistent. (Licimaco, supervisor, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Rosario commented on the type of support students needed in order to deal with all these new aspects and Laura on the complexity of the operations students needed to handle,

Normally they need support at the beginning on how to do it, on how to quote, on how not plagiarize, and comment on the things they use and always assuming a critical attitude. (Rosario, supervisor, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

The second thing is that once they are modeled to do that they can somehow use that but then they need more scaffolding on having them, on having them move to the second part, which is providing arguments and discussing or rebutting the arguments or the quotes or the voices from other authors . So they have to run into many operations, yeah, they struggle. (Laura, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

July and Nicholas brought up academic vocabulary as an important aspect in which some students had trouble at the beginning,

Vocabulary, they lack for example academic vocabulary, they don't know how to call things that are academic. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

Because sometimes the other extreme is that if students when you tell them that they have to write academically, they start making it more complex, and sometimes you don't understand what they are saying... they include technical vocabulary. I mean, vocabulary, particularly for language teaching but sometimes not really knowing what they mean and when you read it is kind of confusing what they are saying... not really understanding the concepts that those words they are using mean or support. (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

One last aspect mentioned by Manolo dealt with the organization and it referred to the lack of structure in students' writing. Similarly, Lorena described some problems with coherence and Alberto referred to problems with connectors,

They also have problems of coherence in some aspects because they do not through the writing process by connecting the ideas in a coherent way. That's one of the trends, let's say, tendencies that they have. In terms of, basically those are the main problems, the main situations that I observed and the transitions that they use are not very clear and some of them do not round up the text, the writing at the end. (Lorena, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

The structure of the academic language. It's also problematic. The use for example, the use of connectors, the use of the same rhetoric of the academic text. (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

In terms of confidence to start writing academically, Marlen noted how some of her students felt in this regard,

When they start writing they don't feel confident at all when it comes to citing, they could do it, they learn how to do it, following the APA referencing style. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

This is an overview of most students in the area of academic writing as perceived by these supervisors by the time they started their theses.

At the Final Stage

Quantitative (online surveys). Supervisors indicated that many of these students (63%) moved up to the B2 level and some to the C1 (25%) at the end of the thesis. No supervisor placed students on the C2 level (see Table 45). Supervisors identified as awareness of the type of information to be included in each section as one of the aspects in which improvement was seen. Other aspects in which supervisors saw improvement were ease of citing sources as well as awareness of format requirements. Supervisors also considered clarity about the scope of the claims to be one of the areas in which least improvement was seen (see Table 46). Supervisors

considered control of the academic style and arguments and claims building to be the most important aspects that still required great deal of work for their students (see Table 47).

Supervisors considered their feedback to be the most important factor on their students' academic writing skills, closely followed by writing the thesis proposal and their guidance (see Table 48).

Table 45

Level of Academic Writing Skills According the CEFR Standards at the end of the Process

#	Answer	Response	%
1	A2	0	0%
2	B1	2	13%
3	B2	10	63%
4	C1	4	25%
5	C2	0	0%
	Total	16	100%

Table 46

Aspects of Academic Writing Skills in Which Supervisors Perceive Students' Improvement

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Clarity about the way the different elements fit together in the flow of the argument	11	69%
2	Easiness to paraphrase information from source materials	11	69%
3	Easiness to cite sources in the text	12	75%
4	Easiness to synthesize information from various sources	6	38%
5	Awareness of the type of information to be included in each section of the thesis	14	88%
6	Awareness of how to present information in each section	11	69%
7	Awareness of format requirements (e.g.,APA,)	12	75%
8	Awareness of the characteristics of the audience they are writing for	9	56%
9	Clarity about the way to represent themselves in the text	3	19%
10	Clarity about the scope of the claims they make	4	25%
11	Other?	0	0%

Table 47

Aspects to be Improved

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Synthesis of information from sources	7	44%
2	Referencing of sources information	4	25%
3	Arguments and claims building	12	75%
4	Arguments and claims support	9	56%
5	Control of academic writing style	12	75%
6	Use of abstract vocabulary and technical terms from the field	6	38%
7	Level of formality	5	31%
8	Use of modality	5	31%

Table 48

Aspects Related to the Thesis Writing Process That Help the Improvement of Academic Writing Skills

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Thesis seminars	4	25%
2	Writing of the thesis proposal	14	88%
3	Exposure to models of theses	11	69%
4	Reading research studies through the various stages of the thesis	13	81%
5	Guidance from thesis supervisor	14	88%
6	Feedback from thesis supervisor	16	100%
7	Feedback from others	9	56%
8	Other?	2	13%

Qualitative (interviews). Supervisors acknowledged that their students improved in some aspects of academic writing skills. Nicholas affirmed that his students learned to avoid making unsupported assumptions,

They kind of become aware yeah they say that's true, I cannot say that, and it's probably not all of the teachers the ones that I am mentioning there, so they modify in a certain way in their next papers what they are trying to say they're more conscious about that, the use of words and how they say things in their papers. (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

Karla realized how her students' voice became more evident as the writing process went on. She also pointed out how they made fewer mistakes,

At the beginning, it is hard for all of them, but then it comes eventually as the process goes on and they are aware of what is expected from them, they grasp what they are supposed to do and you see more elaboration, you see them more in the papers. Most of them get to do that. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

In most of the cases they get the idea and they make few mistakes regarding these types of issues, you know. Like citations, like referencing you know, elaboration, but there are some cases in which they need a lot of support on that. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

Rosario described that moment when students' voice became clearer and stronger in the process,

We see that, especially in results, I think when they have to present what they say and relate it somehow to what they think about these results, confront it to theory, confront it to context; I think that's the part where you could see their voice more clearly. (Rosario, supervisor, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Marlen noted how her students became more adept with APA formatting,

When it comes to citing, they could do it, they learn how to do it, following the APA referencing style. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

Alberto affirmed that his students learned to use the information from sources and Camila pointed out her students' increasing awareness of the standards of academic writing,

I think that the main impact is on grammar, style, talking about coherence and connectors everything, the use of the standards, how they get familiar with the standards and they know how to say what. (Camila, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

Some supervisors commented on the improvement in academic writing in general and its limitations. Gabriela reported that her students learned to write academically at the end,

They modify in a certain way in their next papers what they are trying to say they're more conscious about that, the use of words and how they say things in their papers. (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

For some the students it takes the whole year, at the end of the first year they start somehow getting used to writing, to use the academic language. For others it is quite easy. (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

For some of them, you know they get to achieve that academic writing level, good academic writing level, for most of them they still struggle with it, they still have problems with it and in my opinion it is because they don't get training on academic writing. (Manolo, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

The main impact for the new Masters is that they prove that they can make academic writing. It is difficult for them but if from this moment they have the opportunity to write, to study, they can do it. (Gabriela, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

There was an array of strategies that supervisors implemented with their students to help them develop their academic writing skills. Karla and Nicholas focused their efforts in providing throughout feedback and support to their students. Some supervisors sat with their students to explain and show how to do difficult things for them. Laura mentioned in particular the need of providing good models and scaffolding through the process,

They are modeled to do that, they can somehow use that but then they need more scaffolding. (Laura, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

Marlen described how she explained to some students how to elaborate from sources and even how to paraphrase,

What I have done with the students is to take the quote and then we are going to read it, so "What does it tell to you?", and then express the same idea using different words. And I also tell them "you are allowed to use maximum two words, identical words, otherwise you need to use synonyms. Let's say, express of the same with a different structure, basically that is what we do. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

Alberto worked closely with his students on ways to skillfully use the information from sources,

Then I begin to show the need of analyzing what they write, being aware of how they would use that particular knowledge for their particular project and start with that. (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Some supervisors directly approached some of the hardest issues for students by addressing them in a straight forward way. July was quite explicit with their students about topics like plagiarism,

That's part of your job as a supervisor and as soon as you start telling them how it works and that more than three words is plagiarism, so most of them assimilate. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

Other supervisors like Nicholas and July requested their students to support the assumptions they were making while Licimaco and Aida requested students to make their contribution explicit,

If they are making assumptions without evidence, I kind of give them the feedback into ways, first about the form and then about the content. (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

Usually, they start with lots of assumptions. So what I do is that I tell them "well, I understand what you're telling me. Maybe I don't agree but I'm not important enough for you to believe me. Why don't you read this author who maybe can tell you the opposite?". (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

In my feedback, I say it is a very interesting point of view from the authors' point of view, but I just want to see and read what you think about it . . . and they do it, usually, usually, what I say it's for example, "it's you quote one author then meaning on amount, for example, two or three lines in a quote, I mean, you multiply that for three or for four, and that's the voice that I want to hear from you. So if they quote it is like three lines, multiply that three times, nine lines, I say at least you need to write nine lines that comes from you. (Licimaco, supervisor, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

So I have to say "come on, I have here to listen to your voice. You say here that you did this from this reference but I cannot see your contribution to what you are saying here. (Aida, supervisor, personal communication, July 10, 2013)

Other supervisors used guided reading to make students aware of the important features of academic writing. Rosario focused on a variety of academic texts,

Looking at models of writers, normally from academic articles, reports of research, I provide them with a lot of models so they can see how people write and they kind of adapt initially features of those academic styles. (Rosario, supervisor, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Similarly, July gave her students samples of articles written by Colombian writers for them to become familiar with this type of writing,

I also provide them with samples from Colombia, usually articles written by Colombian authors because I think they are much more common place for them. They are easier for them to understand. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

Alberto encouraged his students to explore the structure of the texts they read as part of their program and compare the characteristics of academic writing with general writing,

Then we have a discussion about that to raise awareness of the differences between academic language and general English. Then I began to point out the different texts they have read in the MA course and I show them that what they have reading is academic English... So then raise awareness of the structure of academic texts. (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

In an effort to support students in the selection of sources, Nicholas borrowed books and provided a guide to search for reliable sources,

What I have done is taking my books and give them the books and take a look at this, take a look at this and read, sometimes. I try to help them using the Internet but not every source; I give them like a guide. (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

Some supervisors mentioned a couple of strategies students resorted to while writing their documents. Licimaco mentioned how students tended to imitate the quotes they find in the articles they read,

They just go and I think and just look any other paper that has been written before and then try to imitate or to follow that kind of quoting for example. (Licimaco, supervisor, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

July and Nicholas also pointed out that one strategy they saw their students use was the imitation of the writing style of authors of academic articles they read,

They start "well, I was able to understand how you are supposed to write and now I can do my best"; they try sometimes to imitate that style. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

It's more like they end up reporting what other people have said or using the style of somebody else. (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

Aida referred to students' copying authors' writing style in order to look more serious and interesting,

I also noticed that she was copying very elegant and very academic writing style from other authors. (Aida, supervisor, personal communication, July 10, 2013)

As students reached the end of their theses, a variety of levels of achievement in regards to different aspects of academic writing skills was reflected in the testimonies of these supervisors. The impact of the support these supervisors provided as well as the strategies they knew their students used may have some bearing on the final level their students attained.

Merging of the Qualitative and Quantitative Results for Supervisors

Confidence to start writing academically. Almost all supervisors in the online surveys (82%) thought their students were not confident of their academic writing skills by the time they started writing their theses. Only two supervisors felt they were confident. In the interviews, only one supervisor commented that her students did not feel confident in these skills. However, several supervisors described how their students struggled at the beginning while facing many challenges posed by trying to handle aspects of academic writing skills that were not familiar to them.

Variety of academic writing skills levels and signs of improvement. Looking at the supervisors' placement of their students' academic writing competence in the initial and final stages of their writing process, it is evident that these supervisors overwhelmingly (87.5%) thought that their students acquired the skills to move up to next level. These supervisors placed their students in these levels, (from B1 to B2, 56.25%, from B2 to C1, 25%, from A2 to B1,

6.25%). Only two supervisors did not consider their students could move up to the next level. No supervisor placed his or her students in any C level (see Table 49).

Table 49

Students' Levels of Academic Writing Competence at the Beginning and at the end of the Thesis

Respondent	Level at the beginning	Level at the end	Respondent	Level at the beginning	Level at the end
1	B1	B2	9	B1	B2
2	B1	B2	10	B2	C1
3	B1	B2	11	B1	B1
4	B2	C1	12	B2	B2
5	B2	C1	13	B1	B2
6	B2	C1	14	B1	B2
7	B1	B2	15	B1	B2
8	A2	B1	16	B1	B2

Supervisors in the interviews considered that most of their students did not have a good level in academic writing skills. They saw how their students needed to work on one or several aspects of academic writing as they started developing each one of the components of the thesis. Supervisors' conversation around academic writing focused on the aspects that were really challenging for their students and in ways they or their students dealt with them. This concurs with the fact that more than half of the supervisors placed their students in the B1 level at the beginning which means that they considered their students basically handled description in short texts but not many aspects of academic writing skills.

Aspects of academic writing through the process. The aspects that supervisors in the interviews identified their students had trouble with at the beginning were the use of information from sources, APA formatting, academic vocabulary and style and organization. The first two aspects stood out due to the complexity of operations and variety of stages related to them. Regarding the use of information from sources, supervisors commented how their students

needed to work on selection of sources, then elaboration on the information including their voices and finally on integration of all together. In the elaboration part, students had to work with techniques to paraphrase information and select quotes. In this part, APA formatting became essential for in-text citations. Supervisors in the online surveys identified most aspects of writing skills as weak. From these aspects the ones considered the weakest for students were arguments and claims building and support, synthesis of information from sources, use of abstract vocabulary and control of academic writing style. Except the first one, all the other aspects were also brought up by supervisors in the interviews.

In the interviews, supervisors acknowledged their students improved in several aspects. The most remarkable improvement was in the use of information from sources and in particular the elaboration on information from sources, including students' voices, and becoming more adept in APA formatting of referencing sources. Other aspects in which supervisors realized their students got better were dealing with unsupported assumptions and handling the academic style of writing. According to the online surveys, the aspects in which supervisors perceived improvement were awareness of the type of information to be included in each section, easiness to cite sources, awareness of format requirements, easiness to paraphrase and clarity about the way to structure the argument. Most of these aspects agree with those aspects brought up in the interviews.

In the online surveys, arguments and claims building and support as well as control of academic writing style were the aspects these supervisors need to continue working on after they completed their theses. Similarly, it was the latter aspect in which supervisors in the interviews considered their students needed to continue working since this was the aspect in which some students still had some limitations.

Strategies. Supervisors noted among the strategies they used with their students to improve their academic writing skills were scaffolding of the writing process and providing models and feedback. Sometimes supervisors worked closely with students to show them how to do things and even addressed explicitly with their students difficult aspects such as plagiarism and making unsupported assumptions. Guided reading was a strategy that supervisors used to help students become aware of certain features of academic writing. Supervisors also recalled strategies that some students used to improve their academic writing such as imitating quoting and writing styles they found in research articles they read. Feedback and guidance from supervisor, writing the research proposal and reading research articles were the aspects of the process that contributed the most to the improvement of these skills according to supervisors in the online surveys.

Merging of the Results for Students, Graduates, and Supervisors

Confidence to start writing academically. The results of the online surveys in relation to the level of confidence of graduates' and students' academic writing skills were very similar. Graduates and students felt quite confident in their academic skills although an important group of these respondents selected the midpoint level of confidence. On the other hand, supervisors felt their students were not confident in their academic writing skills when they began their theses. Students like Danilo, Amelia, Guillermo, Sofia, and Natasha, and graduates like Juliana and Javier, in the interviews referred to their struggle to start to write in the format of the thesis due to their lack of expertise in one and sometimes many of the aspects of academic writing skills. Supervisor Marlen noted how her students did not feel confident in particular with APA formatting.

Variety of academic writing skills levels and signs of improvement. In the online surveys, students and graduates initially placed themselves in levels of academic competence that went from A2 to C2 but mainly at the B2 level indicating a great deal of control of many of the aspects of academic writing. Supervisors placed their students in the initial stage mainly in the B1 level and some in B2. No students were placed on the C1 or C2 levels. Graduates placed themselves in levels B2, C1, and C2 at the end of the process but C1 was where the majority stands. For supervisors, most of their students ended up on the B2 level and some few in C1. Regardless of the discrepancy in the perceived level each of these groups defined by the end of the process, both groups recognized how some graduates and students moved up (i.e., graduates sometimes one or two levels and supervisors one level) indicating development of the skills described for it. There were also many graduates who placed themselves at the same level at the end of the thesis, though.

According to the interviews, it was possible to place most students regardless of their writing skills level in a developing stage regarding academic writing skills, although there were some students like Alejandro and Danilo and graduates like Pedro and Luis who had former exposure to direct instruction or training on these skills and were more knowledgeable and capable of handling these aspects. Most students and graduates identified either one, a couple, or several aspects of academic writing as completely new for them therefore needing some work to master them.

Aspects of academic writing through the process. According to the online surveys, students and graduates mainly placed themselves in the midpoint of the scale indicating that they felt right in the middle of feeling strong and weak. Among some graduates and students there was a tendency to indicate that they were strong in some of the aspects like synthesis of

information and level of formality. The use of abstract vocabulary was the weakest for a few graduates and control of academic writing style and modality were the weakest aspects for some students. Arguments and claims building as well as synthesis of information from sources were the aspects supervisors consider their students to be the weakest. However, these supervisors indicated most of their students were weak or very weak in most of the other aspects of academic writing which shows a big discrepancy between graduates' and students' perceptions of their performance in these aspects.

The use of sources, APA formatting, vocabulary, style, voice, assumptions, and structure of the text were the main aspects participants in the interviews pointed out as weak and needing improvement. There were aspects in which some students and graduates felt quite strong from the beginning, too. Students like Juan, Angelica, and Alejandro, and graduates like Paula reported being quite good at elaborating information from sources and a graduate, Santiago, was quite good at APA formatting from the very beginning.

The most important aspect of academic writing in which students and graduates reported having problems at the beginning of the process was the use of sources. In this aspect there were several problematic areas reported. First, it was the way to elaborate on authors' information which students Adolfo and Viviana and graduates Sonia, Nico, and Jenny pointed out as being hard at the beginning. This area included paraphrasing, selecting quotes, and including students' voice. Problems with paraphrasing were sometimes related to reading comprehension as there were times when the authors' ideas were changed by the students as pointed out by supervisors, July and Nicholas. Quoting issues included the listing of isolated quotes with no elaboration from the students as reported by supervisors, Karla, Licimaco, and Marlen. Including students' voice was especially troublesome for students according to supervisors like Lorena who linked it

to students' fear of using the authors reflected in their use of direct quotes to avoid structuring their own understanding of this information, and Alberto who related it to students not accepting and acknowledging the value of authors' knowledge. In this respect, graduate Johanna struggled a lot at first and graduate Jenny pointed out how she felt her academic voice got stronger through the process of writing her thesis. Similarly, supervisor Karla realized how her students' voice became stronger as their writing evolved. Another area, closely related to the former one, was plagiarism, which was a problem for students Magdalena, Samantha, and Danilo. Supervisors like July, Aida, and Karla also pointed it out and supervisor Laura related this problem to a lack of understanding of how to quote. Other students Juan and Angela, and graduate Javier mentioned the integration of the information from various sources in relation to topic of the study as more challenging. Supervisors like Marlen and Aida attributed this weakness to a lack of making connections of what they read to their project. Aspects such as reliability and access to sufficient sources were brought up by graduate Andrea and student Magdalena and the organization of these sources by students Viviana and Adolfo and graduate Andrea. The reliability of sources was also mentioned as a problem to address with students by supervisor Nicholas.

In the intermediate and final stages of thesis writing, some students like Samantha, Viviana, and Magdalena and graduates like Johanna, Juliana, Santiago, Nico, and Jenny reported having improved on the elaboration of information from sources and graduates Andrea and Javier on the integration of these sources. Supervisor Alberto acknowledged how this was an aspect in which he perceived his students improved significantly. This situation concurred with graduates and students who responded to the online surveys and identified ease of citing sources and synthesizing information from various sources as aspects with which they were more likely

to perceive improvement. Other aspects in which they also perceived improvement included awareness of format requirements for many students and clarity about the way the different elements fit together in the flow of the argument for many graduates. Awareness of the information to include in each section was another aspect that both groups identified as well. Supervisors who responded to the online survey identified similar aspects in this regard. Surprisingly, some graduates who responded to the online survey placed synthesis of information from sources as the aspect that they still needed to work on.

APA formatting was the second aspect of academic writing in which students and graduates had to work the most. Citing authors in text was a challenge for students Sofia, Magdalena, Viviana, Mariana, Amelia, Danilo, Adolfo, Guillermo, and Angela, and graduates Dana, Paula, Pedro, Sonia, Johanna, and Jenny. Student Viviana and Graduate Dana had problems specifically with the formatting of references. Students' lack of previous exposure to APA style made this a totally new aspect for most of them and even one some of them resisted as reported by supervisor Laura. Supervisor Licimaco also referred to students' lack of consistency while citing sources as a common practice.

Supervisor Camila highlighted how through the process students became more aware of these APA standards. However, some students like Magu, Samantha, Juana, Guillermo, Sofia, and Viviana and graduates like Javier and Johanna reported APA formatting as an area in which they needed to work more even after completing their theses.

Some students, like Juan, Claudia, Mariana, and Juana and graduates Dana, Javier, and Jenny focused their efforts on working on vocabulary which they considered to be very specific in academic texts. Student Natasha struggled more specifically on specialized vocabulary and concepts related to her topic while graduate Jorge focused on typical transition sentences to give

his writing a more academic tone. By the end of the process of the thesis, graduate Javier felt he had expanded his use of reporting verbs and connectors while student Juana felt she had expanded her vocabulary greatly.

Closely related to the idea of academic tone is the idea of mastering the style of academic writing that for students like Sofia and graduates like Dana and Javier was regarded as more formal while for graduate, Jorge, was regarded as more neutral. Regarding voice and in particular the presence of the author in the text, students like Claudia and Viviana and graduates like Juliana had to work on their impersonal presence in the text. This was also regarded as an aspect requiring much more work by students, graduates, and supervisors who responded to the online surveys who ranked it at the top in this question.

Making unsupported assumptions was an aspect that student Juana and graduate Dana had to work on. By the end of her thesis, graduate Dana asserted she had learned to avoid making these assumptions, which coincides with the views of supervisor Nicholas, who realized how his students improved in this aspect when it was properly pointed out to them. In fact, this aspect as related to arguments and claims building and support was placed in the online surveys by respondents in the three groups among the top aspects that required further work.

Organization of the text was one last aspect brought up by graduates Dana, Javier, and Andrea. In order to directly address the organization of the text, student Magu worked on better guiding the reader through each one of its components. Graduates like Dana and Juliana felt how it became clear to them the way to structure their arguments through their writing process. Supervisor Manolo highlighted how in general terms students' writing at this level was not structured and required work. For example, student Juana felt that even in the advanced stage of her thesis she needed to figure out a way to give coherence to all its sections.

Strategies. Supervisors used some strategies in order to help their students develop their academic writing skills. Some of them involved things they did as part of their support and others they suggested students to do on their own. In the first group, the type of support provided was highlighted by students Angela, Danilo, Adolfo, and Amelia that included lots of feedback on writing, models, reading, and guidelines to develop every section. Graduate Johanna outlined the scaffolding of the writing process provided by her supervisor. Supervisors Nicholas, Karla, and Laura recalled similar practices in their approach to working with these skills. Alberto and Rosario focused on creating awareness of the differences between the thesis and other types of academic and non-academic papers.

Some supervisors took a more direct approach and requested students deal explicitly with some issues. Student Viviana and graduate Dana pointed out how explicit their supervisors were on what constituted plagiarism. This was something supervisor July usually did with her students in order to prevent this from happening. Students Juana and Mariana and graduate Dana described how their supervisors explicitly requested them to support the assumptions they were making which was something that supervisors Nicholas and July usually did with their students, too. Juana and Mariana also mentioned their supervisors' request to include their voices while writing their literature review which was also something that Supervisors Licimaco and Aida recalled doing while addressing this section with their students. Other supervisors even got to show their students how to do things. Student Juana pointed out how her supervisor showed her how to paraphrase information from authors and how the use of modality helped her avoid making overgeneralizations. This was something that supervisor Marlen also considered to be of great use while helping some of her students.

Strategies external to supervision but suggested by some supervisors included encouraging students to do peer assessment of their writing which was something Javier had in his program.

Students also found ways to tackle the demands of academic writing skills. Reading was an important strategy that both students and graduates used. Students like Claudia and Angela and graduate Sonia read about academic writing while student Viviana and graduates Dana and Juliana read about APA formatting. Other students like Magu and Juana and graduates like Andrea read extensively about their topics, which exposed them to a variety of models of academic texts. Continuously reviewing the APA manual was a strategy used by student Guillermo and graduate Johanna to make sure their document complied with the requirements of this kind of formatting.

Another strategy mentioned by some students and graduates was imitation. A student like Juan tried to imitate authors' writing styles, which was also reported by supervisors July, Nicholas, and Aida who identified it as a way for students' writing to be more serious and interesting. A student like Juana imitated authors' citing and paraphrasing styles and graduates like Jenny and Jorge took expressions that they found in the articles they read and used them as necessary while writing. Supervisor Licimaco also realized how his students imitated the formatting of quotes they found in the articles they read with the only drawback of not being consistent.

One last strategy students and graduates used was to ask for external support in the form of people proofreading. Students Angelica, Claudia, Magdalena, and Viviana, and graduates Sonia and Johanna resorted to friends, colleagues, and other knowledgeable people to review their writing.

The Appropriation of the Thesis Genre

Students

Quantitative (online surveys). Students considered the literature review and theoretical framework to be difficult sections. For the students, sections such as the introduction, statement of the problem and methodology got almost similar figures indicating that an even number of participants considered them to be difficult and easy (see Table 50). Students selected difficulty organizing the ideas to be the most important factor that made writing of these sections so difficult. Second in importance for students was lack of understanding of the required content (see Table 51).

Table 50

Degree of Difficulty of the Different Sections of the Thesis

#	Question	Very Difficult	Difficult	Neutral	Easy	Very Easy	Total Responses
1	Introduction	4	11	11	9	2	37
2	Statement of the problem	4	10	12	9	3	38
3	Literature review	6	13	12	3	3	37
4	Theoretical framework	3	11	9	2	2	27
5	Methodology	0	11	9	8	2	30
6	Data Analysis	7	4	5	0	1	17
7	Conclusions and implications	0	3	6	2	1	12

Table 51

Factors That Contribute to this Difficulty

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Lack of understanding of the required content		17	47%
2	Lack of understanding of the lay out of the information in them		14	39%
3	Difficulty organizing the ideas		25	69%
4	Inadequate use of academic jargon		14	39%
5	Problems related to the research process		15	42%

Qualitative (interviews). There were different levels of knowledge about the genre of the thesis by the time these students started writing their theses. Juana knew very little about it and Claudia, Angelica, Danilo, Amelia, and Daniel were quite familiar with this genre and this situation was usually linked to their former and recent experience writing a thesis in their undergraduate programs,

I had some ideas about that because in my undergraduate studies I made similar parts, if it is possible to say that, the thesis has an introduction, theoretical framework but the problem is that I made that study in the undergraduate program but in Spanish. (Claudia, student, personal communication, July 19, 2013)

So at the beginning I was not clueless but I wanted more information. At the beginning I was like, okay, what am I going to do? (Angelica, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

But in terms of how aware, because I read a lot and I have read both literature and research reports, let's say that I already had an idea of what a thesis would look like, let's say, it was not that difficult for me to start the process. (Danilo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

During my undergraduate studies I was very, also accurate and dedicated in my research so I knew before how to write a research report, how to write the paper, what was first what was second. (Amelia, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

In my undergraduate studies, I worked really hard on my thesis. So I knew how to write it, I knew what to write in every single chapter and I think that the dedication on my teachers here in these master's studies and at University X was great. (Daniel, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

While addressing the writing of their theses students pointed out a variety of issues that influenced their appropriation of the thesis genre that went from the conceptualization and definition of the topic of their study to specificities of the writing of each of the sections and their articulation as a whole.

Juana and Sofia started with a big topic and their first problem was to narrow it down and then come up with their research questions,

It was very difficult because I was thinking about different topics and different ideas about the same topics. So that's why I said that just to select an issue among those topics was difficult and to start writing about that even more difficult. (Juana, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

I had to limit, specify what was the aspect of culture as my supervisor said "well, culture is very wide and you have to narrow it. (Sofia, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Magdalena recalled her struggle to define her research question specially when considering the difference between a teaching question and research question,

The research question has been one of most painful processes ever because you would write something and you would like, constructs, so I want to work on this, I want to focus on this and this and this but then they would tell you, that's a classroom question, that's a teaching question, that is not a question. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

Students reported facing sections of the document that became particularly challenging while there were others in which they had a smooth progress. Some students found parts of the introduction quite challenging. Juana had some problems incorporating information about her topic, Mariana had a hard time articulating the rationale of her study, and Sofia needed to revise and redo both her research question and her objectives,

I think that when you start to describe the topic you are going to work in your thesis, it's not difficult because you are like using the same the structure, you are describing something but it gets complicated when you start to connect different like, I don't know if

I can say that, subtopics of those topics to have like the whole meaning of what you are writing. So that's difficult part. (Juana, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

When I had more problems, was with my rationale, yeah and with my theoretical framework, yeah, but especially with my rationale because... It's like, the introduction also because we have to follow some specific steps. (Mariana, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

I started with finding out question, the research question, the objectives and also even that I posted those as my final project, research, I had to read, read, read, do them and redo them. No, this question is not fine; we had to change some words like let's see the notations, views of meaning. (Sofia, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Magu, Guillermo, Sandra and Magdalena considered the literature review to be very hard because of the type of synthesis of information required while Sofia found the difficulty to access updated sources an obstacle to complete this section,

Probably like to get the different points of view of the authors and then to have like a discussion because most of the time, what I thought at the beginning when I was doing the literature review, it was just like to take others' ideas, and put it in the paper but here, there is a discussion that I have to create from my own point of view, with the different theories. (Magu, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Like the part of the literature review, because finding the information that was easy for me. But putting that information, the theories together was the hard part for me. (Guillermo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

Something that I had to improve, everything about reading because every single time that I read I find more information and more information and it is really complex to narrow the information and to select sometimes we focus on something and it is not important. (Sandra, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

The process of synthesizing, the process of ideas matching, that was something really difficult. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

But sometimes books, well, they have very good information but not like they are really well updated. (Sofia, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Other students like Mariana, Magdalena, Alejandro, and Magu felt the theoretical framework was very demanding due to the difficulty of structuring the presentation of the constructs and the massive amount of sources that some of them gathered,

Then the theoretical framework because yes, it's like “remember that you have to support this with this and this . . . We had to work a lot on that. (Mariana, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

It was the theoretical framework, well it was really difficult for us because they were massive. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

The most difficult for me when writing the thesis, the most difficult part was the theoretical framework because it was really time-consuming, in my case it was very extensive and it took me a very long time, but that's why, not because it was hard to find the sources, for example, only time. (Alejandro, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

Right now, I am working in the theoretical framework. So it's kind of ... Let's saying a headache. (Magu, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

From the sections in the last stage of the process Angelica, Samantha, Magu, Sofia and Juana regarded the data analysis part of the thesis as one of the most difficult ones which impacted directly its reporting,

Now I have the information, the data collected and the thing is, what do I do now with all that I had? How can I organize it? I feel lost, I feel lost. (Angelica, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

A weak point, I think it is the data analysis, so we are working we just finished that last semester and we have a lot of problems, a lot of information, transcription. (Samantha, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

I have the data, but finding like how to connect or to get to the answer to the research question so maybe a little bit hard. I consider that it's not easy. Yes, I think like the data analysis is going to be like the hardest part. (Sofia, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

But the problem is when you have all these kind of information and then you need to settle down and say how I am going to follow the process of analysis, so I think we should have more training; I don't know what it is. (Magu, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

At some extent impacting the writing of this section, there were problems some students like Sandra reported having in her data collection or Amelia and Daniel while designing and implementing their pedagogical intervention,

The most difficult part for me was the data collection, it is really difficult, we had to apply several instruments so it takes a lot of time. (Sandra, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

I think that in the first part, it was great but then I started looking for the creation of the workshops, it complicated the things and then when I had to write I felt that I was guessing what I had to write so it was not so pleasant, and it wasn't so nice and I felt like I got lost, I don't know, it was kind of difficult. (Daniel, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

One area that Mariana brought up as very challenging was the articulation of all the sections around the research question in the last stage of their thesis writing process,

There is a lot of information but then oh my goodness, how can I consolidate all that information in those pieces of paper?. (Mariana, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

In more general terms, Natasha pointed out how the requirements of the format of the thesis were very restrictive for her and how little information was provided in her program to know how to write these sections.

There were students who also pointed out sections or subsections they wrote more effortlessly. In the introduction, Sandra felt that the objectives were quite easy and Samantha thought the context was quite simple to write,

The easiest part for me, I think is the objectives, I think I am a little strong on it. (Sandra, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

I think that my strong point is the context, because the place where I work, the professors there have to know the policies of the institution. (Samantha, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

Sofia felt the literature review went smoothly and Alejandro thought the findings were quite easy,

The literature review, I think is fine, it's good, it's easy. (Sofia, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

I think the easiest part for me was to write the findings. (Alejandro, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

Guillermo, Angela, and Adolfo noted that the implementation of the study was one of the components of the whole thesis that they enjoyed the most and even helped them engage more actively in writing,

There is one part of the writing that I like, in the same level of the research, was the one that was connected to the application of my thesis basically because I had to implement it to my students, collect data, and with that data, it was easier for me to write that part. (Guillermo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

I enjoyed my implementation because I created my own material. (Angela, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

The most important part of the process is the implementation because I really enjoy it doing that. (Adolfo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

Strategies that supervisors included as part of their support included providing the structure of each section and direct feedback on their content as reported by Danilo, Guillermo, Mariana, and Sofia,

They gave us a chart with a kind of outline of a complete research thesis explaining to us in very simple words what should be included in every chapter. I think I am speaking on behalf of my classmates, that was maybe the greatest tool that we had from the very beginning because even before we started every single chapter we already knew what we were going to write in that chapter and for me that has been like the guidelines to basically, what is included in that guideline, which is just a two-page outline, is what I have been using to write all my chapters, to be honest. (Danilo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

We were given specific outlines, for the a specific chapters, so it was not too overwhelming for us to see like the whole of the thesis and it was good because we were, we needed to know what we were asked to do at the end of the semester. (Guillermo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

I think we learned while we were working on that and our, in my case, our advisor. My advisor helped me a lot on that but especially with the differences between the findings and conclusions and the analysis. (Mariana, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

Juana and Magu pointed out how their supervisors were really involved in their writing process, guiding, explaining and showing how to do things that were not easy,

Because the teacher all time he gave us like pointers, when you are writing a thesis you have to use this kind of studies in order to organize your chapters and all that . He also gave us an example of theses, “here you have a thesis. He is making a transition from this part to this part and see how this person is organizing the idea. He gave as like models, like a model of how to write a thesis and also bad models and he said "look, do you understand what he's trying to say, yes or no, and this is because this happens”, he also told us about the use of many things like modality, overgeneralizations. (Juana, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

My advisor said “until you finish with the literature review, let's put that on hold, maybe when you finish with this you go to the analysis again, probably you will make some changes because of the theory that you already discussed and you already understood in a deeper way. (Magu, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Students also found ways to learn about the thesis genre. Natasha, Claudia, Angelica, Magu, and Alejandro read theses. Some of them tried to read theses from graduates of their own departments,

I just followed, I followed other theses that my partners just gave me so that I could, as I told you, I didn't have any idea of how to write it. So I read more than four theses on how to write it, on what content or parts they had and the way to write it, the academic language they use to do that in that specific genre. (Natasha, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

For example I analyzed how the researchers wrote the introduction, or wrote the conclusions. So I. I... in this moment, I am reading some models or some theses in English from the university. (Claudia, student, personal communication, July 19, 2013)

I think I have to read other theses and see what other people have done. (Angelica, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Students also read about how to write complete sections or specific aspects of them.

Claudia read to learn how to write the research question and later how to write the introduction and Natasha read to learn about categorization for her data analysis section,

Reading models of my topic, how the research... how to write the question, how to make an introduction. I read models and I read some texts about academic writing. (Claudia, student, personal communication, July 19, 2013)

Other students also resorted to other people for support. For example, Mariana worked with her classmates to solve doubts and even understand how things were to be done and Sandra asked for help to her friends,

In our cohort we were always working with each other, helping each other and we worked a lot and if we had any doubts in regards to the thesis. (Mariana, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

I use a lot of examples, little help from professors and other people, friends, especially. (Sandra, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

Students faced the challenges of appropriating the thesis genre sometimes with lots of support from their programs and supervisors and sometimes with less, make them to become in some cases quite resourceful to find ways to learn what they needed in order to complete each and every one of the sections of the thesis.

Merging of the Qualitative and Quantitative Results for Students

Prior knowledge of the genre. There were students who had a good idea of the genre of the thesis due to their former preparation in their undergraduate programs. Other students knew about the name of the sections but not much about their content and structure. This concurred with students in the online surveys who considered the lack of understanding of the required content as the second most important factor that made writing the different sections difficult. One student in the interviews affirmed not knowing much about this genre when she began writing.

Challenges. Approaching the task of writing the thesis was linked to the design and development of the study. For some students, there were challenges at various levels. Some

students struggled with the definition of their topics, their research questions which directly impacted when they started their writing process. Once they had clear what they wanted to do and began writing the different sections of their thesis, they faced different issues. Some students did not know how to organize the information in the introduction or had focused problems writing parts of it such as the rationale or the objectives. Regarding the organization of the information, it was the factor that contributed the most to their difficulty writing the sections according to the students in the online surveys. These students also considered the introduction as the second hardest section. Some of the students in the interviews had problems with the literature review mainly due to their lack of experience with the synthesis of information from sources. In fact this is the section that students in the online surveys considered to be the hardest. Other students found the theoretical framework to be quite demanding due to the amount of information they had to handle to present their constructs. For those students who had already reached the last part of the thesis, it was the data analysis section that gave them a hard time. The difficulty in writing this section was directly linked to the students' organization and expertise dealing with the data. One last challenging aspect that was brought up by one student was the articulation of all the sections around the research question; in a way giving coherence to the whole thesis.

Smooth progress. Some students also pointed out how some sections went quite smoothly. Parts of the introduction that were for some students in the interviews quite easy were the objectives and the setting. This section was considered the easiest for students in the online surveys despite having also been placed as one of the most difficult for some students. Two students felt the literature review and the findings were not that difficult. However, the section that some students found quite easy was the description of their intervention as it was connected

to the implementation that in most cases as reported was an aspect of the thesis that students particularly enjoyed.

Graduates

Quantitative (online surveys). Graduates considered the data analysis, literature review and theoretical framework sections to be difficult. Graduates also considered the introduction, methodology and conclusions and implications to be the easiest (see Table 52). Graduates considered difficulty organizing the ideas to be the most important factor that made writing of these sections so difficult. Second in importance for graduates was problems related to the research process and third was the lack of understanding of the required content (see Table 53).

Table 52

Degree of Difficulty of the Different Sections of the Thesis

#	Question	Very Difficult	Difficult	Neutral	Easy	Very Easy	Total Responses	Mean
1	Introduction	0	7	9	9	0	25	3.08
2	Statement of the problem	2	9	10	3	1	25	2.68
3	Literature review	0	13	7	5	0	25	2.68
4	Theoretical framework	1	12	6	5	1	25	2.72
5	Methodology	2	7	7	8	1	25	2.96
6	Data Analysis	5	12	4	3	1	25	2.32
7	Conclusions and implications	4	4	9	8	0	25	2.84

Table 53

Factors That Contributed to This Difficulty

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Lack of understanding of the required content		8	36%
2	Lack of understanding of the lay out of the information in them		7	32%
3	Difficulty organizing the ideas		18	82%
4	Inadequate use of academic jargon		8	36%
5	Problems related to the research process		10	45%

Qualitative (interviews). Some graduates pointed out how they felt about their level of academic writing skills. Jorge, Luis, Nico, and Santiago said they had not much knowledge about the thesis genre prior to beginning their writing,

At the beginning I wasn't really familiar with any of them [components of the thesis]. (Jorge, graduate, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

I wasn't any familiar because this was my first time that I was writing a piece of research, so there were many new things to me. (Luis, graduate, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

I didn't know like I told you that was my first experience writing a thesis. (Nico, graduate, personal communication, August 2, 2013)

At the beginning I was kind of a little confused, I have the impression that I had to do something that was out of my mind, at the beginning because I have another intention. But anyway I could do it. (Santiago, graduate, personal communication, July 31, 2013)

Johanna said she had some knowledge about it while Pedro affirmed they knew about the content and structure of this document due to former teaching and learning experiences,

Yeah maybe I knew about the general structure, but there were some aspects that I needed to review and learn because in this case it is in two ways. First, it is in English and then, it was action research. It was a very specific type of research, qualitative research. I had already studied a specialization in education but it was a bit different. So yeah, I had to consider some new aspects about the general structure and the content in each section. (Johanna, graduate, personal communication, August 1, 2013)

And then I also started teaching how to develop this type of documents at another university at the undergraduate program and then after that I did my specialization in

which I had this experience of writing another academic report and then the Masters and then I also taught at a graduate program how to develop this type of documents. (Pedro, graduate, personal communication, June 8, 2013)

Among the aspects of writing the thesis that were particularly challenging for these graduates, it was the definition of the research question or problem the first one some encountered in this process. Paula had to work on narrowing down her topic and consequently her question while Jenny had a hard time with her question even until advanced stages of her thesis,

When you start you have so many ideas and you want to do everything and really you need to learn that you can't, that you really have to focus on something specific that will lead you to what you want. (Paula, graduate, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

I think I finished my first semester and I didn't have a clear question. Especially because it was too wide, so there were many aspects that had to be considered. So I had to narrow it, narrow it and learn how to narrow it and how to word it. So it would sound, so it wouldn't sound biased. And that it would sound achievable, and obviously that it would be relevant in the field. That was hard...even when I was about to turn in my thesis I had to reword my question because it was still a little bit biased, it was still wide. (Jenny, graduate, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

Dana had a hard time at first understanding the idea of identifying a research problem and Andrea struggled with several questions before she defined the one she wanted to explore,

One aspect which was very difficult for me was to understand the situation of having a problem yeah because sometimes okay, you need to have a problem but what is a problem? Yeah? I didn't have any idea about what is a problem, a problem is a question? Is a question a problem?. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

I had to change the research question like five times (laughter) . . . I think like five times, so it was difficult at the beginning to organize the whole paper, because once you have the idea, it is easy for you. (Andrea, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Closely linked to the research question or problem were the objectives of the study which became a problem for Sonia and Nico,

When I thought about the topic that it was about my research project, it was different in the process because I had to change many times things. For example, the objectives, also

I had to find out many information that I didn't expect to” (Sonia, graduate, personal communication, June 25, 2013)

Regarding the sections of the thesis, the introduction posed a challenge to Jenny, who did not know how to organize the information,

Since we hadn't been given any structure on how to organize for example the introduction, I was writing too much. (Jenny, graduate, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

Nico and Santiago found the literature review to be very difficult. The theoretical framework was hard for Javier who felt fitting coherently the theory into his study was quite complex,

That was difficult, that was difficult, of course. When I started just building up, all the material that I had read and I had collected the literature, I think that happens to everybody, but little by little, if you are seriously working on it, if you really know what you are going to do that is going to be somehow easy. (Nico, graduate, personal communication, August 2, 2013)

The literature review and the theoretical framework, the problem there was to put everything together which is not an easy task, like coming with all the constructs, all the concepts and make them fit into a coherent unity, that's complicated, but.. in the macro structure of the whole thing. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

The second chapter has to do with the literature review, the theoretical framework, so reading a lot of articles, texts, authors, paraphrasing those ideas to construct your theoretical framework was hard, it was hard and it took time. (Santiago, graduate, personal communication, July 31, 2013)

Data analysis was considered a very difficult section by Jenny, Santiago, Andrea, and Nico. Triangulation of the data was one of the aspects of this section that was particularly hard to grasp for most of them,

So the hardest, definitely the data analysis. The data analysis because of the methodology we had to follow, the triangulation, because I was not familiar with any, any of the rules, any of the different methodologies. (Jenny, graduate, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

A lot of information, how can I organize those ideas and put them in a piece of paper in a clear way? So that part is hard. So it took a lot of time . . . the data analysis. (Santiago, graduate, personal communication, July 31, 2013)

I realized that I had some problems with data analysis, it's was not so elaborated so I had to change it. (Andrea, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Once you have to triangulate information it is going to be difficult. So I didn't know how to do it. (Nico, graduate, personal communication, August 2, 2013)

The last section of the thesis was also difficult for some graduates. Santiago, Javier, and Paula had to work a lot on their conclusions and implications,

The latest parts were the conclusions, in each chapter, as I finished each chapter I had to write general conclusions, so that was also, it took time. It was time-consuming because writing the conclusions is not repeating the same ideas but trying to highlight the main ideas and connect the general and key ideas. (Santiago, graduate, personal communication, July 31, 2013)

When you come to the findings and conclusions, all those things, the implications and everything that comes from your own, it is when I really had . . . And it was the first comment that everybody, they told me, in terms of content is really interesting , but there is a huge difference in the style that you're using in these chapters, which are not actually you words as such and the ones that you came up with, that aren't your own, the style is totally different. I had to work a lot on that. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

We have problems at the beginning because you get all the data and you want to analyze it, but you don't, at first we try to put everything together analyzing, get the implications, everything together. So it becomes kind of messy, so we need to learn how to separate data here and implications on the other side. So here we have to work a little, to learn that here it is just information and here it is implication, not to mix them. Yeah, but I think I was able to, you know, to do it. (Paula, graduate, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

The connection of all the parts of the thesis was also a challenge that Luis had to face in the last stage of his writing,

The other ones were much more complicated, like trying to, to find the right connection between all the parts. There should be connections between the objectives and the research question, even the title, the title is something that you are going to change 100 times before the perfect one, okay, like it was basically the coherence of the parts. (Luis, graduate, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

In more general terms, two graduates pointed out the difficulties they had while writing the different sections and changing their research topic. Juliana referred to the lack of information about the structure of the information in the sections and Johanna about the modifications to her study,

So it was quite difficult for me to organize every one of the sections in the book, yes, because academic writing is something different from free writing. (Juliana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

At the beginning I had that trouble because, well, my research experience is unique I think. I needed to change topic and population, for example, change my teaching context and after working on a specific topic I wanted to work on, since I changed my population and the context so I needed to change my topic and my research. (Johanna, graduate, personal communication, August 1, 2013)

The sections that some graduates felt they wrote more easily were the introduction, literature review and methodology. Santiago had no problems writing the introduction,

The introduction was okay probably because I had started thinking and refining these ideas in the introduction like defining the scope, the object of the study, the field of the study, the objectives, it was easy. (Santiago, graduate, personal communication, July 31, 2013)

Referring to specific parts of this section, Luis and Andrea felt the description of the problem and setting was very easy,

I would say the descriptive part of my thesis was easy. It did not require much critical thinking . . . the description of the problem, the setting. (Luis, graduate, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

The statement of the problem because I had a clear idea. (Andrea, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Jenny felt the literature review went very smoothly for her, The easiest ones were the introduction, definitely, and the literature review, because once I got the structure I knew I had to do and basically I had everything that I needed, I just had to organize it. (Jenny, graduate, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

Sonia pointed out that finding the sources was quite easy and Andrea had no problem getting the ideas from various sources and integrating them in this section,

I think to find out the information because in Bogota there are too many libraries where I can find the information and also about the topic that I was working, there are a lot of literature about this. (Sonia, graduate, personal communication, June 25, 2013)

Something that was easy for me, I think, it was easy for me to get ideas from different sources and to integrate them, that was easy for me. (Andrea, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

The methodology section posed no major challenges for Santiago,

Then I just described the didactic intervention, how I designed and created the didactic units in Moodle. That was not so hard. (Santiago, graduate, personal communication, July 31, 2013)

Graduates also referred to some of strategies used by their supervisors to help them learn about the thesis genre. Jorge and Javier mentioned how their supervisors suggested them to read theses,

It means that I had to begin reading other theses, just to see how they were developed. That was something that my supervisor advised me to do you know and I began doing it. (Jorge, graduate, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

We were encouraged to go and see others' theses projects, so that we could see maybe what it was, but they didn't have like a set of guidelines for us to include things. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

Dana recalled her supervisor working closely with her to help her understand how to make connections between theory and her findings and the research question in the last chapter of her thesis,

Also my supervisor, I don't know, he was a good guy, because she was always asking me "ok, don't forget that you need to support what you are observing, it is not because you want to write about it but because it is necessary to have like the theory to support it", that was it, and she also said "don't forget that the data analysis part is the most exciting part because in that part is when you have the possibility to write about what you are observing but also what you understand about the problem that you posed in that moment. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Santiago and Jenny noted how they received information about the structure and content they needed to include in each section,

I was informed of what information to include in each of these sections, in the introduction, in the literature review, in the methodology, yeah. (Santiago, graduate, personal communication, July 31, 2013)

Something that really accelerated my writing was, okay, receiving clear, a clear structure on how to write each one of the chapters. (Jenny, graduate, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

Reading was a strategy several graduates came up with to learn about the content and structure of the sections of the thesis. Johanna and Dana felt reading theses helped them gain clarity about this,

So I was reading, I was reading different theses we had in the Masters office, so I was reading, identifying that the problem was the situation that I had in my context. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

A final strategy was to read other theses, both in a local or national even international contexts and try to see the structure of the specific samples and the models so that you have an example to follow. (Johanna, graduate, personal communication, August 1, 2013)

Dana also read articles and papers to familiarize with the vocabulary and structure of some sections,

I read a lot about different theses and I had the possibility to use Internet. It was like the way that I used to identify how I should organize my findings or the discussion of my findings. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Research was also a topic Jenny read about to learn more about she had to do in her thesis and Andrea and Jenny read about data analysis in order to prepare to do it and write this section,

I had to read about data analysis as such because I wasn't sure about some parts of it. (Andrea, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

And when I understood how to interpret data then that also helped me but it took me a while to understand and actually I did it after I read several books on data analysis. (Jenny, graduate, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

These graduates received support from their supervisors and they also resorted to other strategies to learn about the genre of the thesis. These strategies were mainly meant to tackle specific problems these graduates encountered as they progressed in their writing of the different sections of the thesis.

Merging of the Qualitative and Quantitative Results for Graduates

Prior knowledge of the genre. Some graduates in the interviews felt they were not really familiar with the thesis genre. One of the reasons for this was the lack of exposure to a similar project in their undergraduate programs or any other type of research project. One graduate had some idea of the genre but it was related to her experience writing a thesis in her first language. Another graduate had good knowledge of the genre due to his former work supervising theses at the undergraduate level.

Challenges. Some graduates in the interviews reported having problems identifying their topics or narrowing them down before starting any writing. One graduate faced problems writing the objectives and another did not know what information to include and how to organize it while writing the introduction. In fact, in the online surveys graduates considered the difficulty in organizing their ideas as the main factor that contributed to the problems in writing the different sections. Some graduates in the interviews also felt that the literature review and the theoretical framework were difficult sections for them. In fact both of these sections were considered third and second in terms of difficulty for graduates in the online surveys but it was data analysis what they determined to be the hardest section. Several graduates in the interviews also pointed out how data analysis was one of the hardest sections due to amount of data they had to handle and the lack of understanding of how to do the triangulation of these data. Some graduates also brought up the difficulty of writing the conclusion and implications because they had problems

either identifying and connecting the big ideas of the study or using the appropriate style. One graduate also referred to his difficulty in giving coherence to his whole document at the end of the writing process.

Smooth progress. A couple of graduates mentioned how effortless it was for them to write the introduction or some parts of it such as the description of the problem and the setting. Other graduates felt the literature review went easy because either they knew exactly what to do or because some parts related to building it were not difficult for them such as accessing the sources or integrating the information from various sources. Another section that was also considered easy by one graduate in the interviews was the methodology. From these sections, the introduction and methodology were also among the easiest sections for graduates in the online surveys. Conclusions and implications was the other section considered quite easy for these respondents.

Supervisors

Quantitative (online surveys). Supervisors considered the data analysis, literature review and theoretical framework to be the most difficult sections (see Table 54). Supervisors determined difficulty organizing the ideas to be the most important factor that made writing of these sections so difficult. Second in importance for supervisors was the lack of understanding of the required content (see Table 55).

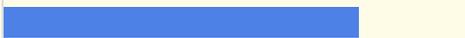
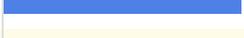
Table 54

Degree of Difficulty of the Different Sections of the Thesis

#	Question	Very Difficult	Difficult	Neutral	Easy	Very Easy	Total Responses	Mean
1	Introduction	1	7	3	5	0	16	2.75
2	Statement of the problem	5	7	3	1	0	16	2.00
3	Literature review	2	10	3	1	0	16	2.19
4	Theoretical framework	2	9	3	2	0	16	2.31
5	Methodology	0	7	6	3	0	16	2.75
6	Data Analysis	7	8	1	0	0	16	1.63
7	Conclusions and implications	3	8	3	2	0	16	2.25

Table 55

Factors That Contributed to This Difficulty

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Lack of understanding of the required content		12 75%
2	Lack of understanding of the lay out of the information in them		7 44%
3	Difficulty organizing the ideas		15 94%
4	Inadequate use of academic jargon		8 50%
5	Problems related to the research process		9 56%

Qualitative (interviews). Some supervisors referred to their students' knowledge about the thesis genre,

At the very beginning they are not very clear. (Licimaco, supervisor, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

They are not familiar, yeah, therefore when they are not familiar; they generally wait for their teachers' instruction. (Laura, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

Supervisors also brought up issues students have while appropriating the genre of the thesis. These issues ranged from problems conceptualizing the idea of the study they wanted to conduct to writing specific sections in the document.

Aida described her students' first conceptualizations of their studies as very ambitious which required them to work a lot in order to narrow them down,

The problem with the second one is that maybe she wanted to solve a problem that is not, that is very big, that is very ambitious, she wanted to change the whole curriculum and I told her that she had to narrow it. So, sometimes is a problem that they don't know what they really want. (Aida, supervisor, personal communication, July 10, 2013)

Nicholas also referred to the problems students had defining their research questions to their difficulty to move away from their teaching mindset and more into a researcher mindset,

Other thing is that because they are very good teachers their research proposals are not research proposals are pedagogical proposals . . . so they think in pedagogical terms, it's not really in research terms . . . it's like what will they say in the books changing your teacher's hat for the researcher's hat because they are always thinking about solving students problems in one of the skills, that's what they have in their mind and then most of the supervisors we say their thinking in pedagogical terms, what about the research component? What is it that this new that you're going to do in your project? They start . . . suffering. (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

Gabriela and Ariadna also referred to some of her students' difficulty to define their topics,

It is very difficult for them to begin writing a paper, to define what is the real topic they want to investigate. (Gabriela, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

I have noticed is that they don't have clear ideas of what they want to do, yes, so they start to read many things but they don't have the idea, the clear idea of the project. (Ariadna, supervisor, personal communication, July 10, 2013)

Regarding sections of the thesis in particular, Rosario found the introduction pretty hard for her students because it was there where they had to include the conceptualization of their research idea and this was usually a challenge for many and considered that having the clarity

about the question or problem students wanted to explore helped their writing process because it engaged them in a more focused effort,

I think the most difficult think it's actually the conceptual part more than the writing part. And as they progress clarifying what they really want to do, then the writing comes easily. (Rosario, supervisor, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Luisa, Laura, and Lorena also found this section to be difficult for their students. One of the reasons for this difficulty for Luisa was that students simply wrote many disorganized ideas,

The introduction, they have a hard time making the introduction because they digress, they speak, they tell you a lot of ideas and they don't organize their ideas very well. (Luisa, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

It is time to put them together and say for example, write your justification, in which all your paragraphs are connected supporting the pertinence of your study, I mean, the result is not a very promising one. That is what happens, the main problem they have is at that particular instance basically yeah... mostly in the ones that they have to produce a lot of argumentation, namely introduction, justification, theoretical framework. (Laura, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

This problem of presenting, having the idea that the introduction is a list of, a list of things that the reader will find in the text but the person is not presenting the concern, they don't give the relevance to the research concern. (Lorena, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

July noted how the justification became a problem for some of her students,

Well the justification is difficult for them because they don't understand that they need to explain why their project is important. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

The literature review was a section that Marlen and July considered hard usually because it was challenging for students to synthesize the information from various sources,

They suffer during the literature review. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

The problem with the lit review is that they don't really know . . . we always tell them "remember that you are supposed to read but then you are supposed to elaborate on what the author has already said but they don't really know how to do it, so that's the problem with the theoretical framework but once they get accustomed to that and they start like

working on that, maybe they can understand and they can do it. But I think that the biggest problem is in the data analysis part. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

Aida considered the problem with this section was the difficulty students had to make connections between the information and their topics while Alberto considered it was the fact that this task was really time consuming due to the amount of sources they sometimes found,

They don't take the insights about the project itself, so it is difficult for them when they just read what they have just researched or investigated but they are not able to say really what they want to say in respect to the project itself. (Aida, supervisor, personal communication, July 10, 2013)

The review of literature in general is very slow ... until the moment in which they start collecting data, this is another moment in which the process goes slow, data collection is slow. (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Laura thought the theoretical framework was quite complex for most of her students,

They have to write the theoretical framework for that they need to read a lot and they need to write from that, so sometimes they don't know how to manage all that information and put it together to write. So once they get the idea, once they grasp what to do with that, they write, well at the beginning it's hard but they end up doing it. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

The data analysis was considered a very hard section for students according to Alberto, Nicholas, July, Laura, Lorena, Marlen, and Karla. Some of the reasons for this difficulty included the lack of a clear approach to deal with the data as Karla and Lorena asserted or with the triangulation of the data as Alberto pointed out. July also commented on the difficulty students had to make connections with theory while writing this section,

That's another issue because in the analysis, I mean, it is getting all that data that they have collected and finding something in there, that also takes a lot of time because it is helping them understand, first of all, what to do with that data, all that amount of information that they have, then how to interpret that information, sometimes, and it think it is normal, they are not supposed to know if they are new researchers. They don't have that idea. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

The most difficult part for them, I would say is the data analysis. (Lorena, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

Then there comes the moment in which they make, start making sense of their data, that's another moment in which at the beginning they go slowly until they find the way with our help. (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Another thing that also happens is when they make the analysis of data, they make it somehow too superficial. (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

But I think that the biggest problem is in the data analysis part. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

The main problem they have is at that particular instance basically yeah... mostly in the ones that they have to produce a lot of argumentation. Namely introduction, justification, theoretical framework ... so then when they come to data analysis then, well, the result is practically the same. (Laura, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

There is another chapter that they hate, the data analysis. For them it is really hard to identify, to name the categories, they can identify patterns and then they get stuck. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

Alberto and Licimaco considered the conclusions to be quite hard for his students

because at this point of the project they were dealing with a lot of information and usually they were quite tired,

Some of them do not know how to draw conclusions from the different data collection spaces and techniques and it is doing this triangulation process sometimes painful but we lead them. (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

The hardest thing is probably the conclusion because I think they get, they have a lot of information that they don't know what to conclude, probably that is the most difficult part for them. And also I think that is the part that is written at the end of the study I'm probably they are tired, exhausted and they don't want to. (Licimaco, supervisor, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Supervisors mentioned other more general aspects while reflecting on their students' experience writing the different sections of the thesis. Nicholas and Licimaco referred to the lack of congruence of the information in the sections and the research questions,

Because it is the first one, there is no articulation between sections like the literature review, the theoretical framework with what they are proposing to do in their study, it's like an inventory, a list, a catalog but not really telling me why they are selecting those authors and how they are to support what they are planning to do with their theses. (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

They usually mix everything up like for example, like they have like objectives sometimes they have general objectives and they have the questions, like they main questions, and sometimes the main question is not related to the main objectives. (Licimaco, supervisor, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Manolo was more specific to referring to some students' problems writing the sections that many times reflected a lack of connection between the ideas presented and awareness of the reader while building their arguments making the texts sometimes incomprehensible,

One problem that I see is, yeah, the writing, they know exactly how to state the goals, the general objectives and the different components of the research. The main problem is their writing, they do not connect their ideas, they know what they want to do, so in my opinion I think they need to be more organized in their writing. (Manolo, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

These supervisors also referred to some sections they perceived to be quite effortless for their students. Rosario and Laura considered the methodology to be easy to write,

Results are normally easy to write, methodology too because there is a lot of reading, commenting on how, it is kind of a narration there. (Rosario, supervisor, personal communication, June, 2013)

The research design chapter as I tell them, it is the easiest chapter to write because there is not a lot of argumentation, so it is a lot of description and supporting why you are using this instrument but that's it. (Laura, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

The instructional design was a section students wrote very easily according to Lorena,

I noticed that the easiest for them is the instructional design. (Lorena, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

The conclusions and implications were regarded as easy as well by Laura due to the fact that there was a lot of description in them,

The conclusions and the pedagogical implications are or is another easy chapter as well. (Laura, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

Strategies that supervisors used to support their students while completing the different sections of the thesis varied in degree of involvement and engagement with students' projects. Nicholas and Marlen accompanied their students' process closely and provided their students with the structure and basic content of each of the sections,

I usually give them the structure and I tell them okay a paper includes this, you need an introduction you need literature review, you need a theoretical framework and somehow they follow this scheme and in that way it works and at the end they internalize that scheme, they know how to make the sequence. (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

Accompanying them implies guiding them in identifying the problem, in stating the question, in formulating the objectives, in looking for the information for the literature review, the sources for the literature review, we do help them and also in guiding them when writing. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

Lorena and Camila affirmed their programs provided the structure or some guidelines for the development of the sections,

It is a very supported process. Then I can say that yes, they have a clear idea of what they have to do in each chapter and they know that all the steps are a process from the very first semester. (Lorena, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

So they are very familiar with that and I would say that the main problem is style, like how to use the words like the best sentences, how to connect them , but they know and they are given the guidelines to write the paper and we go through the standards according to the APA and well they just need more practice. (Camila, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

Making good models available to students and encourage reading was a strategy that Alberto, Karla and Marlen used,

We somehow show them examples of other dissertations that other students have written, good examples, so that they read again and find inspiration without us telling directly what to do.” (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

You explain to them, you give them models, you show them examples of articles, we make them read. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

I would say giving them models, exposing them to read other students', master students' theses could help. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

Supervisors also described practices that they found useful to help their students deal with the sections of the thesis. Marlen encouraged her students to work with other students with sources in similar topics for the theoretical framework and Lorena suggested her students to develop an annotated bibliography to organize their information,

You have two or three a students working on reading skills, why is it that you're working separately, so you have three or two sources, then you can share those sources and the other student can give you other two sources and then you got eight sources in a second. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

From the very beginning of the process, we generally advise them or suggest them, first of all that the sources that they find for writing their theoretical aspects in their concern even in first semester in which we develop an annotated bibliography so we can go into a process of organizing groups for theoretical constructs. (Lorena, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

Luisa described the work she did to help students to articulate different components that became a challenge for some of them. For instance, she suggested connecting the theoretical framework with the research question or the objectives with the findings and conclusions,

We, the advisors, have to do a lot of work but at the end they still need a lot of practice, a lot of recommendations from us because we teach them how to connect the objectives with the findings and they generally don't do it. And with conclusions we try to help them connect the theoretical framework and the research question with the conclusions because with that theory they can arrive to some conclusions after having done the whole work. (Luisa, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

These supervisors referred to the different strategies they displayed while working with students as they appropriated the genre of the thesis. Some supervisors focused on providing general guidelines to write each one of the sections while others became more involved in the writing process by showing how to deal with specific sections or scaffolding the process.

Merging of the Qualitative and Quantitative Results for Supervisors

Prior knowledge of the genre. Some supervisors in the interviews noted how some of their students had very limited knowledge of the thesis genre and how sometimes these students expected to be guided in the process. Supervisors in these interviews tended to focus on this group of students as the predominant kind of student they faced in their supervision.

Challenges. Some supervisors brought up students' problems conceptualizing and identifying their research topics as one usually encountered at the beginning of the process. One of these supervisors referred to this issue as grounded in the difficulty some students have to think in research terms instead of pedagogical terms. While addressing the sections of the thesis, some supervisors mentioned how the introduction became a problem for students because it was here when they first tried to articulate their ideas of the project. Another factor that contributed to the difficulty of writing this section was the lack of organization of the ideas. This situation concurred with supervisors in the online surveys who also considered difficulty organizing the ideas and lack of understanding of the content of the sections as the most important factors contributing to the difficulty of writing the sections of the thesis. The literature review and the theoretical framework were other sections supervisors in the interviews felt were specially challenging for students due to the difficulty they had elaborating on authors' information, making connection to their research topics and dealing with the amount of sources they found. These two sections were the second and third most difficult sections for students according to the supervisors in the online surveys. Data analysis was regarded the hardest one. Many of the supervisors in the interviews also noted how the data analysis was by far the hardest of the sections because students felt overwhelmed with the amount of their data, problems triangulating the data and making the necessary connections with theory. One last difficult section for students

was the conclusions and implications usually due to amount of information they needed to keep in mind to write it. A couple of supervisors focused on students' writing of the different sections in more general terms and mentioned how there were students who had problems articulating the information in the sections with the main question or questions they were trying to answer with the study.

Smooth progress. Some supervisors also talked about sections that tended to be easy to write for their students. The methodology and in particular the pedagogic intervention included in it were quite effortless because they mainly required description as noted by a couple of supervisors. The methodology was one the least difficult sections according to the online surveys too. The conclusions and implications section was also regarded not difficult for the use of description as stated by one supervisor interviewed.

Merging of the Results for Students, Graduates, and Supervisors

Prior knowledge of the genre. Interviews with some students and graduates allowed the identification of three levels of prior knowledge of the thesis genre. Student Juana and graduates Jorge, Luis, Nico, and Santiago had no knowledge of this genre. Supervisors Licimaco and Laura considered many of their students to not have much knowledge of this genre when they started their theses. Graduate Johanna had some knowledge of the thesis genre. Students Angelica, Claudia, Amelia, Danilo, and Daniel, and graduate Pedro had good knowledge of this genre. Most of the participants in this last group had a clear understanding of the structure and content of each of sections by the time they started writing their thesis. Some of them mentioned their involvement supervising theses or teaching writing at the undergraduate level or their recent completion of a thesis in their undergraduate programs.

Challenges. Participants from the three groups pointed out aspects of the research process and specificities of the different sections of the thesis as challenging during the writing process. Defining the topic of the study was quite difficult for students Juana and Sofia and graduate Paula. Some of the reasons for this difficulty included the topic being too wide. Supervisor Aida concurred with this reason as being the most common among those students who had this problem. Supervisors Gabriela and Ariadna also brought up the fact that some students did not have clarity about what they wanted to research and kept wandering around different topics which delayed the research and writing processes. In this regard, supervisor Rosario asserted that having this clarity definitely helped the writing process. This particular challenge could be included in the third factor that impacted the difficulty of writing these sections which was problems related to the research process according to the online surveys.

Once the topic was defined, there were issues related to identifying the research question or problem. This was a problem for student Magdalena and graduates Dana, Andrea, and Jenny. Supervisor Nicholas considered the tendency to define questions or problems from a teacher's perspective instead of a researcher's perspective as one of the reasons for this difficulty.

Dealing with writing specific sections of the thesis, there were two problematic areas identified while writing the introduction. Student Sofia and graduates Sonia and Nico had problems defining the objectives of their studies and student Mariana struggled writing the rationale of her study. In relation to the latter, supervisor Rosario referred to the difficulty some students had in conceptualizing their research idea for the first time in writing and that was why the introduction was particularly hard for many. Supervisors Laura, Lorena, and Luisa also considered the introduction to be quite difficult for students.

Regarding writing other sections of the thesis, there was general agreement about those sections which were hard for students to write. Students Guillermo, Magu, Sandra, Sofia, and Magdalena and graduates Nico and Santiago had a hard time writing the literature review. Supervisors Marlen and July attributed this difficulty to the challenge it implied for students to select, synthesize, and integrate information from various sources, which was something some graduates and students also brought up in the interviews. Supervisors Alberto and Aida added the large amount of sources students sometimes found and the difficulty in making connections between this information and the topics they were exploring.

The theoretical framework was challenging for students Mariana, Magdalena, Alejandro, and Magu and graduate Javier. Supervisor Laura also considered this section to be difficult for her students. Two of the reasons for this difficulty were the large amount of information and the complexity of trying to coherently fit theory into the projects. Students Magdalena and Sofia brought up the limited access to sources in their cases as a factor that made it hard for them to write this section as well as the literature review.

Students Angelica, Samantha, Magu, Sofia, and Juana, and graduates Jenny, Santiago, Andrea, and Nico found the data analysis to be very hard for them. Some of reasons for this difficulty were the lack of information on how to deal with the huge amount of data that students gathered in some cases, how to analyze these data, and how to carry out the triangulation of the information. Supervisors Alberto, Nicholas, July, Laura, Lorena, Marlen, and Karla also mentioned these reasons to explain the difficulty in writing this section. Supervisor July added the intricacy of making connections between the theory and the data.

The conclusion and implications section was difficult for graduates Santiago, Javier, and Paula. Supervisors Licimaco and Alberto also considered the conclusions section to be

challenging because students had a hard time drawing conclusions from their data and also at that point they were somehow overwhelmed with all the information they had and were quite tired.

The online surveys showed similar results regarding sections that were considered the hardest for students. The literature review, theoretical framework, and data analysis sections were noted as the hardest sections to write by students, graduates, and supervisors. The introduction and the methodology were sometimes hard for students, too. Supervisors thought students also had a hard time with the conclusions and implications.

Looking at the writing of the sections in a more general way, student Natasha referred to the lack of ideas on how to write the sections when she began her writing process. Graduates Juana and Jorge referred to the lack of knowledge of the structure of each section and graduate Johanna on their content. Supervisor Manolo saw this problem reflected in students' lack of connection between the ideas they were presenting and supervisors Nicholas and Licimaco saw it in the lack of congruence between the information in the sections and the research questions guiding the study. The online surveys confirmed these problems since difficulty organizing ideas and lack of understanding of the required content were the two main factors contributing to the difficulty of writing the sections. Third noted by the three groups of participants were problems related to the research process. The interviews provided more examples of problems related to this area. In addition to the problems some students reported having while defining the topic and research question or problem, other students like Amelia and Daniel faced problems with the design of their pedagogical interventions and Sandra with her data collection.

The articulation of all the sections was also a challenge for student Mariana and graduate Luis. This articulation involved consolidating all chapters after finishing writing each one and giving coherence to the whole document.

Smooth progress. Graduate Santiago found the introduction to be quite easy. More specific elements of the introduction that were considered quite straightforward to write were the objectives, according to student Sandra, and the description of the setting and problem for student Samantha and graduates Luis and Andrea.

The literature review was easy for graduate Jenny. Graduate Andrea found getting ideas from sources and integrating them quite effortless. Finding the sources as an early activity to build the literature review was regarded easy by student Guillermo and graduate Sonia. Writing the methodology was not difficult for graduate Santiago, nor was writing the findings for student Alejandro. Supervisors Rosario and Laura concurred with the perception that the methodology and conclusions sections were easy. Supervisor Lorena considered the instructional design to be particularly easy as well. In the online surveys, the introduction, and the methodology were also the sections that students and graduates selected as easy.

Strategies. Two types of strategies were brought up by participants in the interviews: on the one hand were those strategies used by supervisors to help students become familiar with the thesis genre and in particular with the structure and content of each one of the sections of the thesis. On the other hand were those strategies students devised themselves as a way to gain deeper understanding of the genre and support them while writing the different sections of the document.

In the first group of strategies, students like Danilo, Guillermo, Mariana, and Sofia and graduates like Santiago and Jenny recalled the way their supervisors provided detailed

information about the structure and content of each section and later feedback on their writing of the sections. Students Magu and Juana described the thorough scaffolding of the writing process her supervisor did for them. Supervisors Nicholas and Marlen referred to similar practices as characteristic of the type of support they provided their students in this respect. Supervisors Camila and Lorena also noted the support their programs provided through guidelines to write the different sections. Suggesting reading to students was another strategy supervisors used. Graduates Jorge and Javier mentioned how their supervisors suggested that they read theses. Supervisors Alberto, Marlen, and Karla made good models available to students as well as suggested reading in order to work with difficult areas. Other supervisors provided more direct help to address difficulties students encountered in the process. Graduate Dana described how her supervisor helped her understand the kind of connections she was expected to make in the last chapter between theory and her research question. Supervisor Luisa recalled the work she did with students to help them make connections in sections like the theoretical framework, the findings, and the conclusions. Supervisor Marlen also referred to the support system she encouraged her students to engage in with their peers or to address similar topics or issues as they wrote the different sections.

In the second group of strategies, reading was the one that prevailed among students and graduates. Students like Magu, Angelica, Natasha, Claudia, and Alejandro and graduates Johanna and Dana read theses as a way to get acquainted with what they were expected to write. Reading articles was also used by student Claudia and graduates Dana, Jenny, and Paula to familiarize themselves with the vocabulary, structure, and the style of writing. Focused reading to address the writing of specific sections or issues of the research was also quite common. Graduate Jenny read about research in general; student Claudia read to learn how to write the

research question, and student Natasha about categorization. Regarding sections of the thesis, student Claudia read about how to write the introduction and graduates Jenny and Andrea read about data analysis.

Factors That Contribute to the Writing Experience

Students

Quantitative (online surveys). Students considered their writing skills in English to positively impact their academic writing skills (see Table 56). The three most important aspects that accelerated or slowed down the writing process for students were the appropriate knowledge of academic writing skills to report research, interest in the topic and support and guidance from the supervisor (see Table 57).

Table 56

The Impact of General Writing Skills on Academic Writing Skills

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Very Positively	17	45%
2	Positively	19	50%
3	Neutral	1	3%
4	Negatively	1	3%
5	Very Negatively	0	0%
	Total	38	100%

Table 57

Aspects That Contributed to Accelerate or Slow Down the Writing Process

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Appropriate writing skills in English	17	45%
2	Appropriate knowledge of academic writing skills to report research	24	63%
3	Interest in the topic	24	63%
4	Support and guidance from supervisor	24	63%
5	Support and guidance from peers and others	19	50%
6	Completing the research study	15	39%
7	Other?	0	0%

Qualitative (interviews). There were factors in several areas that impacted students' writing experience through the time they completed their theses. Factors can be classified in three main areas, personal, supervision and MA program related.

Students like Sofia identified other activities as directly impacting their writing,

Because . . . especially because . . . of other duties that I do, . . . Time constraints, work . . . yeah, it is time consuming. Indeed and mostly because I spent my activities out of the process of doing my thesis. See I know how it is and I have been delayed on it. (Sofia, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Students' dispositions were also regarded as important while engaging in the writing process. Sofia referred to discipline, commitment and autonomy and openness to feedback as essential,

I would say that writing needs discipline, writing needs commitment, and also sometimes I consider that the person who is helping you needs to push you more. I don't know maybe because we are not in the culture that we do things autonomously, so writing if not also something . . . When you do writing you do it autonomously or you need to be pushed by someone. (Sofia, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Because I don't believe what I do is always correct. I am very open to others' views, others' recommendations, more from the experienced ones or the experts that and from the ones who are just in my side. (Sofia, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)
Viviana also pointed out the importance of being autonomous,

You have to be autonomous to learn how to write, because there is not a clue, nobody is going to give you, nobody is going to give you “This is what you have follow this and you will be successful”, no you have to try until you learn. (Viviana, student, personal communication, August 21, 2013)

Magu mentioned her goal oriented mentality as important in completing this project,

Well I think I am that kind of person that works by putting specific goals, so my goal is to finish all this process of my thesis by the end of July. So I have to if I want to graduate the next coming semester. (Magu, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Students also related their success writing as related to aspects linked to their background. Among the aspects mentioned by these students stood out the preparation in academic writing, teaching opportunities, reading background, and L1 exposure to writing. Natasha referred to an academic writing course she took prior to the thesis and Magdalena to her experience teaching her students to write,

Because I had taken academic writing before I started the Master’s degree. (Natasha, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

I had to teach some courses to teach the TOEFL course throughout the whole year and it was really useful for me, the writing section, the writing tips of the course were not only for the students or for the candidates to take the test but it was actually something really good for me. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

Alejandro noted how his extensive and intensive reading gave him tools to write and Juan referred to how his reflective stance in front of his reading helped him figure out how to structure his writing,

Because I read both extensively and intensively I honestly and it may seem that I am showing off, I didn't have any problems writing the thesis. (Alejandro, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

I am a careful reader so I do pay a lot of attention to the way texts are written. (Juan, student, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Other students also referred to the problems they had due to their lack of writing exposure and training in both L1 and L2,

It is difficult to get a good writing level or skill because you are taught just to make sentences or short paragraphs but academic writing is really different to what we are used to. (Viviana, student, personal communication, August 21, 2013)

We are not, in our area used to write and not even to read. (Sofia, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

But also in terms of writing, we do not write a lot, I mean, yeah, especially in English, not even in Spanish. We do not write a lot and we do not write a lot these types of texts. (Juan, student, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Natasha pointed out her resistance to the requirements of the genre as a factor that has slowed down her process,

I learned more on the experiences of teaching, through doing the research but I didn't enjoy the way I had to report. (Natasha, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Regarding supervision related aspects, students referred to the quality of the guidance and support provided by their supervisors as really important. Some students talked about how the support and guidance they received contributed in a major way to their writing process. Danilo noted how detailed the feedback he received was and Daniel described the supporting environment surrounding the completion of his and his classmates' projects,

The work done by our tutors, both the academic writing one and the one of our thesis, I think it's was very, very detailed, a very detailed process which gave us, I would say a very detailed correction of each part of the process and that gave us a good idea of how to write an academic paper. (Danilo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

But when you come to the class and you know that your teacher is paying attention to you, your classmates help you, it helps you to realize about the aspects that you need to correct and to focus on. (Daniel, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

Juan referred to how enriching his experience with his supervisor was and Magu about the kind of close relationship she established with her supervisor,

It's been a great process with her and the discussions and the comments are very constructive and enriching, if you can say that and yeah, I do appreciate and I do respect her as well. And I have learned a lot from her. (Juan, student, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

I think more than a supervisor. He is like a friend because he was my teacher from the first semester. (Magu, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Other students described less positive experiences with the guidance and support they received throughout their theses, Magdalena referred to the amount of feedback received,

The feedback we received on the writing process was not good, it was not good... my advisor, they really didn't give me feedback. I mean there was no feedback, I don't understand why. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

These students also described how difficult the process was and how much control the supervisor exerted and how she felt about it,

It was emotionally and mentally, it has been I really, really painful process and well zero guidance. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

It is like; you have to do what you supervisor tells you to do. (Natasha, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Natasha brought up her supervisor's the level of English as impacting the quality of feedback she provided and Juan talked in general about teachers' academic production as not necessarily linked to models to follow,

The supervisor doesn't know English so much there in the department but English is not her stuff. Well, of course, she cannot correct the way that it should, so the way I write in English is better than the way she writes. (Natasha, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

I don't think, necessarily, the documents written by professors do not achieve the expectations that I particularly I'm expecting that doesn't mean the texts are not good. It is only that they may not be my style or I consider that that professor could write better because maybe I heard that person so I know that the way his or her spoken abilities are much better than the result I can read. (Juan, student, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Students also referred to their MA programs and how they contributed to make the writing experience more or less easy for them. The support to learn to write academically was mentioned by Angelica and Angela,

At the beginning, we were taught some classes about academic writing. We got some information about how to do things in writing theses so I felt happy at that time with that information because I didn't have that clear as I wanted. (Angelica, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

It is my first academic writing class. It was an impact because I could realize my weaknesses in my writing. Another impact in my class is the permanent, the permanent interaction among the students and teachers. This was on a strategy, a very good strategy to improve because we are interaction all the time, and speaking and writing and our opinions are very important. (Angela, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

Other students like Alejandro mentioned the lack of preparation for the different sections of the thesis and Magdalena how providing guidelines to write the thesis was not widespread practice,

Regarding how to write the content of my thesis, I don't think, maybe I am wrong, any form of training in how to write... I don't recall any formal training in how to, for example, how to write a finding from start. (Alejandro, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

They used to give us some guidelines, but depending on the professor. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

Students also talked about the connection of the classes with the experience of learning to write academically,

When we started the Master's program from the first semester, our professors started encouraging us and they taught us how to do paraphrasing, citations and references and we received a lot of training in that. (Magu, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Well they were really good, the readings, the presentations, all the projects, the, pedagogical interventions help a lot to construct a better writing, of course. But through writing, even short paragraphs, see? Even throughout the projects, the oral presentations, the projects that we had to hand in other subjects, of course. Also reading, reading and

rewriting also for the presentations it helped me a lot. (Sofia, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

I think the fact that this professor asked us to write research- like, if you like, helped me, personally a lot to consolidate writing skills for the actual final paper. (Alejandro, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

Merging of the Qualitative and Quantitative Results for Students

Personal. According to the interviews, the personal factors that affected students' writing experience could be classified in three groups: factors that are related to their work, their individual dispositions, and their writing and reading background.

One student referred to the way her duties did not let her devote more time to her thesis. This and other students pointed out also the importance of having certain dispositions in order to advance and complete the writing of their theses. Autonomy, commitment, responsibility, goal-oriented mentality and openness to feedback were some of the dispositions mentioned.

The appropriate knowledge of writing skills in English was the third and knowledge of academic writing skills was first among aspects that contributed to accelerate or slow down the writing process of these students according to the online surveys. The importance of general writing skills while learning academic writing skills was also evident as 94% of the respondents to these surveys recognized how the former ones positively impacted the latter ones.

Writing background was another important factor that contributed to make the writing go more smoothly or not. One student felt her taking a course on academic writing prior to the thesis made writing less an issue, and she could focus on other aspects. Other students recognized that their lack of experience writing either in English or Spanish made it hard for them to engage in writing.

Two students in the interviews also referred to their background and approach to reading as key while addressing the writing of their theses and one student noted how her experience teaching a course that included teaching writing worked in her favor to learn how to approach her writing. One last student talked about her perception of the characteristics of the research report as very constraining for her and this made her resist it, therefore affecting her engagement with the task.

Supervision. Supervision-related factors included the quality of guidance and support and supervisors' English level and writing expertise. Some students in the interviews described how enriching and helpful their experience was with the guidance and support they received from their supervisors while others pointed out how difficult this experience was for them since they either had no support from their supervisors or because the amount of control the supervisor exerted over the process was too much. Support and guidance from a supervisor was one of the most important factors contributing to accelerate or slow down the process according to respondents to the online surveys as well. Two students also brought up their supervisors' and teachers' level of English and academic production as factors that sometimes impacted the way they perceived their supervisors' feedback on their writing.

Program. Regarding the MA program, students pointed out factors dealing with providing academic writing preparation and the connection of the other classes in the program with the thesis. Students who had some kind of preparation in academic writing appreciated this training as it actually helped them to develop the skills to write each component of their theses. Other students pointed out how the lack of this preparation negatively impacted their writing experience. Students acknowledged how the work in some classes in the program contributed

directly to learn, reinforce and expand their knowledge and expertise on certain skills that they had to use while writing their theses. They felt this connection.

Graduates

Quantitative (online surveys). Most graduates (60%) considered their writing skills in English to very positively impact their academic writing skills (see Table 58). Among the aspects that accelerated or slowed down the writing process for graduates were having appropriate writing skills in English, the support and guidance from the supervisor and interest in the topic (see Table 59).

Table 58
The Impact of General Writing Skills on Academic Writing Skills

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Very Postively	15	60%
2	Positively	7	28%
3	Neutral	2	8%
4	Negatively	1	4%
5	Very Negatively	0	0%
	Total	25	100%

Table 59
Aspects That Contributed to Accelerate or Slow Down the Writing Process

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Appropriate writing skills in English	17	68%
2	Appropriate knowledge of academic writing skills to report research	15	60%
3	Interest in the topic	17	68%
4	Support and guidance from supervisor	17	68%
5	Support and guidance from peers and others	5	20%
6	Completing the research study	15	60%
7	Other?	2	8%

Qualitative (interviews). Some graduates referred to personal factors that impacted the writing of their theses. Time constraints due to obligations and work were an issue for Sonia and Paula,

Because in that moment I worked and also now, but the problem is that to dedicate the time to write so, for writing you need to have the space, the appropriate time to think, to find inspiration, maybe. (Sonia, graduate, personal communication, June 25, 2013)

For me writing is personal. I need my space, my time I like to write at nighttime, very late at night so it is very difficult when you work. Maybe in that point you get stuck because you get all your research done but when you get to the point of writing you have to relax and get into it, the feeling for me. That was the problem. (Paula, graduate, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Johanna pointed out how her being reflective helped her be more confident in her writing,

I am reflective, introspective so I like reading what I write and interact with my paper or with what I am saying, self-assess what I am doing, compare with what I have done and what others have said, what others have done related to this. So I think that it is an ongoing process, a very individual and independent process and so I think it makes me feel a bit more confident. (Johanna, graduate, personal communication, August 1, 2013)

Jenny referred to the importance of autonomy and drive to approach the thesis,

So it was more like self-discovery, self-driven activity. (Jenny, graduate, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

Other graduates also talked about their own drive to write but as related to completing this project,

If I start doing this because I am going to invest time and money, I am going to get it as soon as I finish I am going to graduate." And that thought, that challenge pushed me to do it and that's why I did it. (Nico, graduate, personal communication, August 2, 2013)

But at the end, I think it was necessary to finish that process. So that is that thing that inspired me to finish that. (Sonia, graduate, personal communication, June 25, 2013)

My interest and concern to do a good thesis, a professional one, a very good one. The topic, I enjoyed the topic because I like the topic. (Santiago, graduate, personal communication, July 31, 2013)

Graduates referred to their background in academic writing and as writers in their mother tongue. Pedro talked about his preparation in a prior specialization program as key for him,

We had already written a previous academic document in a specialization program, so we had previous training and previous experience and then we came to the master's thesis and we took advantage of all that we had already developed. (Pedro, graduate, personal communication, June 8, 2013)

Dana noted her previous writing experience in her mother tongue,

I had been a good writer in Spanish so that was not difficult for me. I knew, in this moment I know I am able to read a text and I am able to write about the text, not using the same words probably using the same ideas. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Santiago and Nico commented on the lack of preparation they had in their undergraduate programs and even their second language learning as having a negative impact on their writing,

In my undergraduate program I didn't write any thesis, I mean the only thing that I had written was, you know, essays and papers but to write a master's thesis, you know, it is going to be more difficult because you are going to write down your ideas on this paper, not only to write others' ideas but your own ideas. (Nico, graduate, personal communication, August 2, 2013)

I haven't developed my writing skills before the master's thesis program, the master's thesis because in high school and at the University I didn't work on that very much. I got some composition classes in my bachelor like two semesters but the point is that we don't develop the habit, the custom of writing and writing. So, sometimes the teacher gave us some materials, but we didn't apply that very often. So we just wrote some essays for the class, for the purpose of the class. (Santiago, graduate, personal communication, July 31, 2013)

Graduates mentioned the quality of the guidance and support provided by their supervisors as another very important factor in their experience writing their theses. Some graduates acknowledged the great support they had while writing their theses,

I had some problems, I could overcome those problems in that moment so it was not difficult for me, because I was reading and I had the support of my director in that moment. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

My supervisor was quite helpful, she was, she was really, really helpful all along the process, even in extra times, I mean times that were not devoted to the elaboration of the thesis, she was all the time available. (Luis, graduate, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

Especially my tutor, she was sitting down by me and saying "you have to do it like this... Look this is a thing that I wrote, check it and then tell me how I did it" and that was the way. (Nico, graduate, personal communication, August 2, 2013)

I personally think it is just the guidance that you receive because when we start, we don't really know anything. So if the person maybe, they may know but they don't really guide you, then it doesn't help. But if they guide you, not giving you the answers, but making you reflect about what you want then you get it. So I think I was lucky. (Paula, graduate, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Juliana, on the other hand, commented on her difficult experience working with a supervisor that did not support her throughout the process,

On the one hand I had to correct many things of my research project, on the other hand I have to correct many things about my writing style, yes?, So it was so difficult for me because I had to pay attention to two different aspects and as I said before, I was very disappointed because my thesis advisor didn't pay attention to that. And actually, he didn't support me in many of the corrections on my thesis, this project. Not at the end. And he didn't come to my final defense. (Juliana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Other graduates referred to specific areas in which they received feedback. Santiago and Andrea noted how their supervisors focused on the content in their feedback,

It was my director who helped me with my thesis but it's was more like.. The organization of the ideas, the meaning, more than grammar, more than style, those things those style things and you don't pay too much attention to, so it was more like meaning, it was the content. (Andrea, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Basically, the tutor's feedback was not very referred to the writing, but general ideas. Her main points were the ideas, the concepts, things like that but not in the writing style, not much. (Santiago, graduate, personal communication, July 31, 2013)

Graduates pointed out how their background on academic writing and the structure

of their programs made a significant impact on their thesis writing. Pedro, Sonia and Johanna recalled how useful it was for them to have a class in academic writing in their master's programs,

In the Master's program, I remember we had a module which was called academic writing and in that part of the program, we were trained, taught, trained to do this, develop different documents. We tried to practice this idea of writing efficient introductions and efficient transitions, and conclusions. That was transferred into the writing of the thesis. (Pedro, graduate, personal communication, June 8, 2013)

I think the academic writing classes were so helpful for me. Definitely because the material given in those classes were so supportive for my research project because the teacher gave me tools to start writing, so I think they were so useful. (Sonia, graduate, personal communication, June 25, 2013)

We had two important courses. One was about research in general. So each semester we had a course related to research from the very first semester we had research in general and we moved into other research courses. The first two semesters a course called professional language. (Johanna, graduate, personal communication, August 1, 2013)

Javier and Santiago talked about some problems in the type of expectations programs had and the preparation their master's programs provided,

The master's program took for granted that we had all that knowledge, that we knew how to come up with an outline, with a draft and stuff. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

Some consideration is that University and masters programs in TEFL need to be conscious that students need to have some guidelines about writing, there is a necessity. (Santiago, graduate, personal communication, July 31, 2013)

Pedro and Jenny noted the way they built their theses throughout their programs and Andrea the interconnection of her classes with this project,

But academically speaking something that helped me a lot in fulfilling the purposes was that we developed the thesis along the course of the master's program. From the very beginning we were having tutorials sessions with the professor and we were working all along the time of the program. (Pedro, graduate, personal communication, June 8, 2013)

In the second semester, well, we started writing the introduction and the literature review, but there was no structure. But then when I got into the third semester, they gave us a

structure for both: for the literature review and the structure for the introduction. (Jenny, graduate, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

Because my teachers helped me with many things regarding pedagogy, research, instructional materials, of course, it helped me a lot with the writing process of my thesis. (Andrea, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Dana's and Juliana's experience was quite different. They pointed out the disconnect in their programs regarding the work and preparation with some aspects of general and academic writing in the different classes,

Not at the Master's program. It is more difficult for us because they kind of feedback we received from professors, it is not in regards to grammar, or form. It is in regard to content but as I did not do it in a very good way, it was impossible for them to understand the things that I wanted to mean. (Juliana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

We had the possibility to write some papers, some reflective papers, some reaction papers as well, but the teachers gave us like the criteria to write those papers but no one of them was asking us to follow some a specific norms. So in that moment we didn't have any idea how to write those papers. We wrote those papers and the teachers gave us some feedback but it was not like "you need to follow APA", No. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Merging of the Qualitative and Quantitative Results for Graduates

Personal. Graduates talked about factors related to time availability, dispositions toward the writing task and their writing background in their undergraduate programs. Time constraints was the factor related to work that a couple of graduates mentioned as really important when they were writing their theses. Autonomy and reflectiveness were two of the dispositions that some graduates recognized as important to complete each of the components of their theses. Several graduates brought up their drive to finish their theses as the factor that helped them to complete their theses. One of the graduates in this last group also mentioned how much he enjoyed his topic and how this also motivated him to advance in his project. In fact, interest in

the topic was one of the three most important aspects that contributed to accelerate the writing process according to the results of the online surveys.

The results of the online surveys placed having appropriate writing skills in English as the most important aspect contributing to accelerate or slow down the writing process for these graduates. Similarly, 88% of the respondents to the online surveys considered that the general writing skills had a positive impact on the academic writing skills in which the former ones became in a way the foundation on which the latter ones rest.

Graduates also referred to their writing background as a factor that made the task easier. A graduate who had training on academic writing in a previous program to the master's felt writing was effortless as it was in a way for another graduate who had previous experience writing in her native language. Other graduates pointed out how their lack of former experience writing academically in their undergraduate programs made writing really difficult when they started their theses.

Supervision. Graduates talked about the quality of the guidance and support by their supervisors as the one most important factor related to the supervision. Several graduates described their positive experiences with supervisors that were both knowledgeable and knew how to guide their writing and research processes. Sometimes this guidance was only focused on the research component which left some graduates with writing problems on their own to find ways to solve them. One graduate also described the hard times she had with her supervisor who hardly gave her any support throughout her thesis process. Support and guidance from the supervisor was also regarded one of the three most important aspects that contributed to the writing process according to the graduates in the online surveys.

Program. In relation to master's programs, some graduates talked about the preparation in academic writing and the connection or disconnection of the different classes of the program with the thesis. Regarding the support to academic writing, several graduates noted how their master's program included classes on academic writing that prepared them to face the challenges of the thesis. Some graduates also mentioned how they did not have this support and how this in a way became in a disadvantage for them.

These graduates also mentioned how their MA programs were structured in a way that they could gradually build the different components of the thesis. Other graduates talked about the total disconnect of what they were doing in the other classes of their programs with their theses. There was a lack of consistency in the type of texts they had to write and the norms they were expected to follow with the ones they were required to master by the time they started writing their theses.

Supervisors

Quantitative (online surveys). Some supervisors thought that their students' writing skills positively impacted their academic writing skills but there were others who thought they negatively impacted their academic skills and others went for the neutral choice in this regard (see Table 60). Supervisors considered the three most important aspects that accelerated or slowed down their students' writing process, their support and guidance, appropriate writing skills and knowledge of academic writing skills to report research (see Table 61).

Table 60

The Impact of General Writing Skills on Academic Writing Skills

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Very Positively		1	6%
2	Positively		6	38%
3	Neutral		5	31%
4	Negatively		4	25%
5	Very Negatively		0	0%
	Total		16	100%

Table 61

Aspects That Contributed to Accelerate or Slow Down the Writing Process

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Appropriate writing skills in English		14	88%
2	Appropriate knowledge of academic writing skills to report research		13	81%
3	Interest in the topic		6	38%
4	Support and guidance from supervisor		15	94%
5	Support and guidance from peers and others		6	38%
6	Completing the research study		8	50%
7	Other?		2	13%

Qualitative (interviews). Supervisors identified a great deal of personal factors as well as others related to the supervision and the master’s programs directly impacting their students experience writing their theses. In the personal area, factors such as time constraints specially related to work and family obligations stood out as the most predominant among these supervisors’ students. Alberto, Manolo, and Luisa referred to the amount of things students had to do along with their theses,

Because of their work, they are teaching and studying. They have a lot of work and that happened to me twice. Two students from this city, they had a lot of work and they couldn’t finish. (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

They also have to work on the modules in the Master’s program and all of them are demanding too "This is the Master’s program and we have to be demanding from them to accomplish certain goals”, so it is time-consuming, the tasks and the duties they have to

comply with, they are very time-consuming and their theses too. And in addition to that, they have their jobs. (Manolo, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

The aspects that slow down the process is their job, because they have a lot of occupations. (Luisa, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

Supervisors also talked about students' specific characteristics that contributed or hindered their writing process. Karla noted how lack of commitment impeded moving forward and Laura the value of self-discipline,

She made up excuses and she failed a lot and she had many absences and then she sent the work. I don't know probably if she had been more constant, she had had a better process herself perhaps that could have been better. From the very beginning, she had serious commitment problems also. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

The self-discipline that the student undertakes when he or she decides, wants to become a graduate student, and wants to achieve the target goal. (Laura, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

These supervisors commented on the significance of their students' writing background in regards to previous writing training, exposure and proficiency in L2, and learning skills. July and Marlen noted the advantage of students who had academic writing preparation in their undergraduate programs and Alberto the advantage of having done a thesis in their undergraduate programs,

I think that students who have had previous courses in academic writing, it helps, the ones who have taken those courses or have already taken those courses in their undergraduate programs it may help a lot. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

That those who study at the [x] University, they receive something that is not called academic writing, but writing. So they don't suffer. But there are many from some other universities and they say that they never were taught writing. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

They do have problems in general English because I think in their initial studies, in their undergraduate studies, they are not asked to write a dissertation, a thesis most of them.

And they are not used to write long texts in academic language. (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Laura, Alberto and Rosario referred to students' L2 exposure through reading as positive to learning to figure out the way to write their theses,

The amount of exposure to the L2 that the student takes or it works with . So the more a student reads and sees models from journal articles, from other theses, the more prone the student is to work this out. (Laura, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

Those students, who read more, are the ones who are more prone to develop this academic skill, this academic style. (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Those who read a lot are stronger also, but they also don't write in English and Spanish either, you know. (Rosario, supervisor, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Other supervisors linked their students' initial level to their successful or unsuccessful thesis experiences. For Nicholas those students who began with a good level tended to be quite successful,

More common that those successful ones were successful from the very beginning, so they knew how to write already or they have certain idea of how to write when they started the Master's program... in terms of language they were probably more devoted to improving by themselves, autonomous. (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

Nicholas expanded on this by referring to how students with a good level tended to transfer skills from their general English writing to their academic writing,

I think that the people that have had that exposure and that they were good at general English, they don't suffer too much from transferring those skills to academic skills, probably what they need to know is more like about the research part because the writing, they already can handle. (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

Alberto considered this was usually the case but not always,

One of my students who finished his proposal, his dissertation, a year and a half ago, he really surprised me, a very clever student who came with a lot of autonomy, skills, and everything. I needed to help him but not so much. Whereas I had other students which

oral English was absolutely perfect and she had serious difficulties in writing. (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Licimaco, Marlen, and July referred to cases where it was not necessarily the students with good level at the beginning the ones who made significant progress and became quite successful,

I have seen is that those students that they don't have or that don't master the writing the skills, I mean they go a step by step, and if they incorporate the feedback, they keep trying and they do it. (Licimaco, supervisor, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

There are some students that being weak, they are very persistent and committed and they show improvement. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

We have a student who has a very high English level and they wrote very good in English and then you are going to tell them about academic writing and they incorporate your feedback but sometimes they say “Why? I am good enough with what I do so why do I have to do it the way you want me to do it?” and sometimes it is the opposite with the other students who don't have a good level when they wrote in English. As they don't know how to write in general English so they pay attention to every single thing that you tell them. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

One aspect that several supervisors brought up was the importance of the students' goals to determine how invested they were to write and complete their theses. Laura and Marlen described the type of goals of the students they had supervised,

The panorama of those students who have clearly defined professional academic domains and the second, this other group of the students who just wanted to run the Masters for not only personal, but professional and economic reasons. Ensuring a master's program, having or conducting a master's program will give me better salary benefits and better conditions. The second group of the students is not interested in pursuing studies therefore not interested in more scholarly writing. (Laura, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

Many of the students come here because they need to qualify themselves, to learn more about the field but they also want to be promoted somehow in their jobs. There is a socio-economic relation behind doing the research project and taking this program. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

Regarding the latter group, July noted their primary motivation,

Many of them are doing the MA because of that, they are not thinking about what I am going to develop these research skills. “I am going to learn and I am going to help my students”, no, they don’t think about that, they think about the money that most likely they are going to make. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

In terms of the support these supervisors directly provided, they described the type of feedback they provided while others referred to the way they engaged their students into writing. Some supervisors took a more comprehensive approach while giving feedback including both form and content to their students as described by Nicholas and Rosario,

I correct absolutely everything online. They send me everything so I use the changes and I include the comments on correct the s third person everything if I think one part should go in another place I tell them that, if they are making assumptions without evidence, I kind of give them the feedback into ways, first about the form and then about the content” (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

So there is feedback regarding the content and to the form, so they normally respond very positively. (Rosario, supervisor, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Supervisors also pointed out the work they had to do with their students in both general and academic writing skills. Alberto referred to the way supervisors needed to transition from a focus on general to academic writing in the process and Karla how she sometimes assumed the responsibility of teaching her students to write,

The first things they write the tutors have a lot of work because you start correcting the style, the use of grammar and all of this and correcting the message, correcting the critical approach, the text etc. in those first tutorials it is a sort of a transition between their general English and the academic language. (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

So I sometimes need to give them you know English classes, writing classes, composition classes and stuff. So the tutorial sessions become something else because on the one hand, you need to guide them on the research project and on the other hand, you need to help them and teach them how to make a decent paper. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

Other supervisors like July, Karla and Marlen even acknowledged having written parts of their students in their attempt to help their students finish their theses,

So she has done many things but now that we are working on her thesis that has been very, very hard... because she doesn't know how to write... and she knows how to explain it, and she knows how to talk about the results...but now that we are writing the results sometimes I end up just writing complete paragraphs for her because I want her to finish. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

Not only paragraphs, I would say complete pages because I have to rewrite everything if I want to get it done, I need to help them more than needed as I told you. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

I don't know if I mentioned that for those students with a very low, low, low degree or level of writing skills, the supervisor has to rewrite the whole thesis, sometimes. Out of the 20 that I have supervised I would say five. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

Regarding another type of involvement in their students' projects, Lorena noted her approach and Licimaco highlighted the importance of building rapport with his students,

You have to be with the student, with the candidate, you have to be there for him or for her and it is like... first of all, there must be like empathy and you need to really be part of that process, like to be with the person helping, really assessing all the process. (Lorena, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

I don't know at the very beginning they need to receive rapport and the need to get used to the director of the thesis 'style and then everything moves like nice. (Licimaco, supervisor, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Camila mentioned how the feedback sometimes impacted her students in different ways,

Our feedback, it makes them lose motivation sometimes. Because when you read a paper and you make corrections, three or four times, sometimes they get so frustrated that they take longer to make the corrections because they are so overwhelmed for all the kind of things that you suggest, that they lose their motivation...And when they get good feedback, when they see that they are in the right track they feel more motivated, they work harder and faster so they finish earlier. I think our feedback is very, very important. (Camila, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

Some supervisors talked about the way they delivered their feedback and how it improved its effectiveness. Licimaco preferred to support his written feedback with oral feedback sessions and Marlen sometimes preferred to sit with her students to work on their writing,

Because usually what I do is this, read the paper and I have my notes in there in the paper and I sit down with them... And I usually explain what I want... and they have the time to ask if they don't understand. (Licimaco, supervisor, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

It is not easy for us, as been supervisors, sometimes to read and interpret what they have written, so that's when I work with them. I always like to do that face to face. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

Other supervisors like July focused only on the research component and occasionally in the writing and Mayeya definitely did not deal with the writing process,

So I tell them if you want to work with me and I tell them since the very beginning "we are going to work in this way and I am sorry I cannot give you feedback, for example in terms, I am going to give you a lot of feedback in terms of research and doing the research study but in terms of academic writing. I am going to try to do my best, but that's not my job. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

So I am only worried about their final academic paper, almost at the end of the process because it is their responsibility to assume their own writing. I, as a supervisor, am not in charge of correcting their writing. (Mayeya, supervisor, personal communication, July 10, 2013)

Supervisors also commented on how their programs prepared students to write academically and how connected the programs were with the process carried out while students were writing their theses. Manolo, Karla, Lorena, and Camila talked about the limitations in the preparation of their students in academic writing in their programs,

For most of them they still struggle with it, they still have problems with it and in my opinion it is because they don't get training on academic writing. (Manolo, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

Although they have a module here in the Master's program, we have a module entitled "academic writing" so they tend to apply that course, I think for some it is not enough if they stay with what they received in the module, which is like 16 hours for some of them it is not enough. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

This is a concern that the program has then we have had for, in many locations they have academic writing as a subject, which is elective, they improve these skills. When they do not take the course or the course is not offered then we see the problem. (Lorena, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

They always think that they should have some kind of course devoted to standards for academic writing and as a matter of fact, they, when they have the elective they always ask for, most of the time they ask for academic writing. (Camila, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

In this program, they are supposed to attend four sessions of academic writing in second semester, then other four sessions in the third and the fourth semester. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

Lorena, July and Manolo described how their programs provided preparation and practice necessary to start or accompany the writing process,

It's a very hard program, it's time-consuming, that is what they have to do in the University like in being present there, in their classes, but they also have to invest many hours reading and writing and like inquiring about their own concerns, their research concerns and then that input is the one that gives them more tools for them to write. So they have like sources for writing, models and they have so what I see is that these, all these sources are the ones who, the ones that help them there, they are the main tools that they have to start improving their writing skills. (Lorena, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

While they are in the MA anyway they need to read a lot of papers, to read and to write, to read a lot of articles and to write different papers for all the teachers that they have and usually the teacher provide them with feedback ... that also helps and also the feedback from the tutor, the person who is guiding them. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

They practice a lot while they are doing different papers, they just don't work on the thesis, they also work on many other papers that they need to turn in, so that gives them a lot of practice and vocabulary and expressions related to education in EFL. (Manolo, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

Licimaco referred to some problems in his program providing information about source referencing standards,

We don't have like the guidelines here at the Master's program that they can follow exactly like how to quote or how to give the credit to those sources in their papers. (Licimaco, supervisor, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Merging of the Qualitative and Quantitative Results for Supervisors

Personal. Supervisors identified personal factors mainly related to time constraints, dispositions toward writing, writing and reading background, L2 exposure and L2 initial proficiency, and students' goals as impacting their students' experience writing their theses. Some supervisors referred to work and study related activities that students had to deal with while writing their theses that limited the amount of time they could devote to writing. Other supervisors brought up those dispositions their students had that helped them engage actively in their projects that included commitment and self-discipline. Supervisors also perceived the big impact that having former preparation in academic writing had for students, especially at the undergraduate level.

Appropriate writing skills in English were the second most important aspect that contributed to accelerating the writing process in the online surveys. These supervisors also considered that their students' writing skills did not necessarily positively impact their students' academic writing skills.

Reading background was also a factor that positively impacted students' writing as it was for some the initial level of proficiency in L2. However, some supervisors also noted that initial L2 proficiency was not a factor that equated with success writing and completing the thesis. These supervisors acknowledged how some students with poor writing skills at the beginning went step by step and managed to improve and finished their theses.

One last factor dealt with the individuals' goals for undertaking the master's program. Supervisors perceived that the reasons why students studied the master's determined how invested they were to learn to write, do research and report it. When students only sought monetary rewards or promotion, supervisors felt not much involvement was to be expected

which was not the case for those students who really wanted to learn and grow professionally in their contexts.

Supervision. Supervisors referred to their supervision styles in relation to the kind of support and guidance they provided. Some supervisors provided quite comprehensive feedback and support to the writing and research components of the thesis. These supervisors noted their involvement with their students and their projects. Some supervisors helped their students make the transition from general to academic writing skills. Others considered creating good rapport and being part of the process and closely working with students as essential for the relationship they wanted to build with them. A few supervisors felt so involved and responsible for their students' final product that they ended up writing parts for their students in an attempt to help them finish their theses. On the other hand, there were other supervisors who focused mainly on the research component, sometimes providing limited or no support to the writing aspects of the thesis. Still, supervisors in the online surveys considered the support and guidance from a supervisor as the most important aspect that contributed to accelerating the writing process, indicating their awareness of the role they played in their students' projects.

Program. Preparation in academic writing and connection of the subjects with the thesis were two factors related to the master's programs that supervisors brought up in the interviews. Several supervisors voiced their concerns about the limited preparation their programs provided their students in academic writing and how even when happening it was not sufficient or adequate to give their students the tools to face the demands of the thesis. There were supervisors who noted how their programs' assignments and activities provided preparation and practice along the process that was to a certain extent connected to the work they had to do in their theses.

Merging of the Results for Students, Graduates, and Supervisors

Personal. Personal factors that impacted students writing experience deal with duties with work or study, individual dispositions toward the task, L2 proficiency, writing and reading background, and goals.

Student Sofia and graduates Sonia and Paula referred to the time constraints they had while writing due to work and studies. Supervisors Alberto, Manolo, and Luisa also talked about these constraints as something their students had to face. Regarding dispositions toward the task of writing, autonomy and self-discipline were mentioned as key to advance in the process by students Sofia and Viviana, graduate Jenny, and supervisor Laura. Student Magu talked about her goal-oriented mentality and graduate Johanna talked about her reflectiveness as essential in their writing. Commitment was regarded as very important for supervisor Karla and the drive to finish the program was important for graduates Nico, Sonia, and Santiago.

Students, graduates, and supervisors who responded to the online surveys considered appropriate writing skills in English the top aspect that contributed to accelerate the writing process. In this regard, students and graduates in these surveys considered that general writing skills had a positive or very positive impact on their academic writing skills. However, supervisors were divided in how positive and negative this impact really was, possibly indicating that acquiring academic writing skills was harder for those students with poor general writing skills at the beginning.

Student Natasha and graduate Pedro felt they had an advantage when they started their theses due to their former preparation on academic writing. The opposite was true for graduates Nico and Santiago whose lack of this preparation in their undergraduate programs put them at a disadvantage when they started writing their theses. Supervisors July, Marlen, and Alberto

agreed with the importance of this preparation in undergraduate programs and they related it to the existence or lack thereof of the requirement to write a thesis in those programs. Former exposure to L1 or L2 writing was quite limited for students Sofia and Viviana. Graduate Dana had more extensive writing exposure in her mother tongue and this helped her to write in English. Similarly, reading exposure was a factor that helped students Alejandro and Juan figured out how to write in English. Supervisors Laura, Alberto, and Rosario also referred to the importance of this reading exposure for writing. Supervisor Nicholas considered initial level of proficiency was a factor that usually determined the success of the students writing their theses. Other supervisors like Alberto, Licimaco, July, and Marlen felt that this was not always the case since there were times students with poor skills were more open to feedback, followed it, gradually developed the skills, and successfully completed their theses.

Personal goals to undertake the master's program directly determined the type of investment in the task of doing the research study and writing its report in the thesis was mentioned by supervisors Laura, Marlen and July. They identified how when the students' goal was to learn and grow as professional and future scholars, they really improved and benefited from the process. Nevertheless, if the goal was to obtain a promotion and monetary increase, students' investment in the task tended to be quite limited.

Supervision. The quality of guidance and support was the most important factor related to the supervision for the participants in the interviews and for respondents in the online surveys that considered it one of the most important aspects that contributed to accelerating the writing process. Student Danilo, Juan, and Daniel and graduates Dana, Nico, Paula, and Luis commented on the detailed work with feedback and the support system created by their supervisors. Supervisors Nicholas, Alberto, and Rosario described how comprehensive their feedback was

and Karla how she sometimes took the time to teach their students to write. Student Magu referred to the close relationship she established with her supervisor that is in a way the kind of relationship that supervisors Lorena and Licimaco tried to establish with their students. Students Magdalena and Natasha and graduate Juliana commented on the difficult experience they had while writing their theses due to the lack of support they had in the process. Graduates Santiago and Andrea noted how the feedback they received tended to be limited to content and not so much writing, which was the kind of support provided by supervisors July and Mayeya. Supervisors Camila, Licimaco, and Marlen talked specifically about the impact of feedback and effective ways they used to deliver it.

Program. Students Angelica and Angela and graduates Pedro, Sonia, and Johanna recalled how useful it was for them to have academic writing instruction in their master's programs. Students Alejandro and Magdalena commented on the lack of preparation for writing in their programs and graduates Javier and Santiago referred to the assumptions these programs had regarding the actual level of students' academic writing skills as the cause of this situation. Supervisors Manolo, Karla, Lorena, and Camila acknowledged the importance of the academic writing component to help prepare their students for the demands of the thesis but recognized the limitations of their programs in this regard and the need to address them.

The way the different classes supported the work of the thesis was a factor that students Magu, Alejandro, and Sofia and graduates Pedro, Jenny, and Andrea mentioned as really helpful as they moved through the different stages of their theses. Supervisors Lorena, July, and Manolo described how their programs had a similar approach to support the work with the thesis. Graduates Dana and Juliana noted how their experience in their program was different since they did not feel that there was any connection between the work done in the classes with the thesis.

In this regard, supervisor Licimaco referred to the lack of consistency and uniformity in the referencing standards required in his program as an example of this disconnect.

Impact of Writing the Thesis

Students

Quantitative (online surveys). Students considered writing research articles as the type of academic work they were more interested in doing after completing the thesis. Students also included theoretical articles and book chapters among other favorite types of academic work (see Table 62). The group of students still felt quite confident (47%) to undertake this type of academic work although some of them (39%) went for the neutral choice and some even expressed their not being very confident (see Table 63).

Table 62

Types of Academic Work Students are Interested in Undertaking After Thesis

	Answer		Response	%
1	Writing theoretical articles		14	37%
2	Writing research articles		27	71%
3	Writing book reviews		5	13%
4	Writing book chapters		8	21%
5	Writing books		14	37%
6	Other?		1	3%
7	None		2	5%

Table 63

Level of Confidence to Undertake These Types of Academic Work

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Very Confident		2	6%
2	Confident		17	47%
3	Neutral		14	39%
4	Not very confident		3	8%
5	Not confident at all		0	0%
	Total		36	100%

Qualitative (interviews). Students acknowledged the impact writing the thesis had on their lives. Some students talked about ways they had changed. Daniel talked about changes in his personality and becoming more organized while Guillermo said he became a more critical reader,

For example with the creation of the workshops and some applications that I did, I could see that, then I started thinking in a different way so I changed many aspects from my personality and maybe from many other things. It is not only writing, when you are writing you become more organized than you were before and I don't know you start applying many different things from writing to your life. (Daniel, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

But now I am more critical as I said, yes, it is not just reading, identify the ideas, taking a position about that information, yes, or saying no, it could be different or I don't agree or something. (Guillermo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

Some students like Magdalena, Claudia, and Magu felt more confident on their ability to write,

It kind of, kind of like broke that idea of I couldn't write, which was a big, big fear that I had at the very beginning. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

I realized that I feel more comfortable about how to write an academic paper and I would like to continue writing and be better in that aspect. (Claudia, student, personal communication, July 19, 2013)

I'm getting confidence now. (Magu, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Magdalena also commented on her feeling different as a teacher,

Because I am not the same teacher I used to be two years ago, but I think that that is a never ending process, you have to keep your eyes open, you are teaching, and then suddenly you think of an idea "I would really like to work maybe on vocabulary, or maybe I will like to work on this", I mean just start developing that as a habit, it becomes part of you. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

Students also noticed how other language skills had developed through their experience writing their theses. Angela and Viviana referred to improvement of their speaking and reading skills and Guillermo to writing in his first language,

I feel comfortable and confident because I have improved my English level in writing and speaking and the other skills in this course. (Angela, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

I can tell you about writing is that it also helps to improve on speaking, you know, because you write, you have to search for lots of words in order to give your paper, your document like a nice overview, so what happens sometimes when you read a lot to write, you get with a lot of vocabulary, you know a lot of vocabulary and that helps you at speaking, you know, writing is connected with reading and speaking because sometimes I can feel that I have some words in my vocabulary that I didn't have like one year and half ago. (Viviana, student, personal communication, August 21, 2013)

And also that I can transfer this into other aspects, not only writing theses, I have realized also that my writing in Spanish has improved in that aspect too in the same aspects. (Guillermo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

The impact that the thesis had in some students was also reflected in their interest in continuing developing their writing, doing research and even helping others learn how to write.

Some students like Mariana, Angela, and Viviana stated their interest in keeping working on their writing skills,

I can say that the result that it has been very good, yeah, I have improved a lot, I can't deny it, but I know that there is a process, a process ahead to work on. So yeah, I agree that definitely we have improved but we are going to continue doing it. (Mariana, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

I am really motivated to follow my writing in the future. I know that I need more training, more practice and I think this is a process, it is a hard process, but in that moment I feel very motivated to write in the future. (Angela, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

I was wondering if I can go there and ask if they can teach me like writing in academic style because maybe you can learn on your own but sometimes you also need someone that can guide you, like advise you what you have to do, what is wrong, what is not, so that is a solution I was thinking because of course if you really like what you are doing, you really want also to improve. (Viviana, student, personal communication, August 21, 2013)

Danilo and Guillermo definitely wanted to continue doing research and they also wanted to help others do so,

I feel that I grew both of as a researcher, let's say and as a writer per se, I think that the persona I was able to develop in academic terms is much stronger now than before and in my personal case, I feel really willing and confident to start carrying out new research processes. (Danilo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

I feel empowered to help other people do it too, that's something that I can say. (Danilo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

I would be willing to start a new project, I mean, leaving aside the other part that at this point we are exhausted, I would do it but more because I have the information and I remember the things of all this process. (Guillermo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

I really want to continue doing this, I feel confident enough, I have realized that I have the knowledge in order to help other people to carry out a project or an investigation, or research. (Daniel, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

Reaching a deeper understanding was an impact that Juana and Angelica expressed as it was clearer for her how the writing process was different for them as they got close to the end,

You know you have acquired competence and you use it and you think in-depth about what you are writing and you are very careful with the structures that you use and you try to make things work together. (Juana, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

I would like to write more so that I can apply what I have learned but I feel much better, I have more, I mean the ideas are clear for me in many aspects concerning writing” (Angelica, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Some students seemed to have gained a clear understanding of what good writing entails as they referred to how clear it was for them other people’s issues in their writing,

When I read what they have written in English, I might perceive, I'm not talking about the ideas I am talking about the writing, I might perceive in some of them like that mismatch between what I know they can do in Spanish and the way the text in English sounds. (Juan, student, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

So sometimes what happens is that the other teachers, well the other people just write in the way their ideas come to their minds but they don’t have that specific style that English requires. (Viviana, student, personal communication, August 21, 2013)

I need to accept that that I have improved after this process. Now, I have realized that I am more critical when reading some others’ work, yes, I can see aspects, identify missing information, like say “hey, what is the support of this, this idea is nice but what is the

support for this”, or “this is something incomplete”. (Guillermo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

I am aware of it and also when I see a text, when someone else asked me to revise it, the writing part I, I say "these is like this, better change for another word, I don't find the connection between the first second and the third, the ideas are very spread, they are very mixed, what is the final idea or the final objective? I don't see it. "I feel I can say it. (Sofia, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Juana, Claudia, and Viviana perceived and somehow conceptualized differences between writing in their first language and in English,

You know we are Spanish speakers and we think different in Spanish and we have to transfer that into another language. So when you think about something and you want to transfer that in the foreign language, it's difficult because you have to deconstruct what you think into a new structure that it's in the foreign-language. (Juana, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

In English you must say or write the things simple, but so clear but in Spanish it is completely different. (Claudia, student, personal communication, July 19, 2013)

But in English, it is the opposite, you have to write directly the ideas that you want to say. (Viviana, student, personal communication, August 21, 2013)

Some students also pointed out the sense of achievement they felt for moving close to completing their theses,

The best example of satisfaction that we have, the final product, no matter how far we are to that moment of the thesis, we know each one of us, that what it's on the paper and what has happened in our classes, was done because we wanted to do it and we carried out the process, I mean by ourselves with our effort, investing our time, investing maybe our money, so I think that satisfaction or feeling that, everything that is on paper is based on what you did. (Danilo, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

The last impact for me is the result, the result that is my document that is a valuable result for me because I could write my own document, my thesis. (Angela, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

After you have finished writing our thesis, you feel much better about you, your skills, and not only about the topic, this is different things that you learn when you finish a thesis, yeah, then things that, after that will be easier because your skills are in the higher point, the highest point. (Angelica, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Students like Amelia and Natasha did not feel really compelled to continue writing because they still felt overwhelmed by the writing process or because they lost the interest in writing because of it too,

Not that much because I am really tired and in this moment I feel overwhelmed, I have to admit it because there is a lot of information that I still have to process from a year ago, so I still need to digest it, but the preparation I have received here makes me feel comfortable and confident with my role as a researcher in any institution. (Amelia, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

I mean it was like the excitement was gone, so now that I am writing everything, I don't enjoy writing this research report to tell you the truth. (Natasha, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Another area in which the impact of writing the thesis could be observed was in these students' experiences teaching writing in their own classes. Daniel referred to how the work he did with writing with his students was different because of his process with the thesis and Sofia how what she was doing in her own thesis could help her students,

You start assimilating those things in order to put them into practice and that is a big impact because everybody can see that, it is not only you, your students and you start looking at your students in a different way and you know what they are doing, how they are doing it and then you start learning how they do things and how you try to help them. (Daniel, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

Of course, also I can help them in doing projects very connected to my topic and then to recommend some sources and then work on the writing part, of course. That will help a lot and it will be good for me to do those to the students. I feel stronger, of course. (Sofia, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Amelia also noted how a strategy such as peer assessment that she used while working on her thesis was going to be replicated in her own teaching in the near future,

This writing process has been really enriching for me, not only as a professional teacher but also as a person because it was, but we have just mentioned, this peer feedback... so it is like we been involved in this new culture of other person can evaluate me, not only my teacher and it is something that you can lead to your professional field, as a teacher in your classroom. (Amelia, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

Sometimes the impact of completing the thesis was reflected in the contributions students had done or were willing to do in the academic community. Students like Alejandro, Magu, Viviana, Angelica, and Angela talked about their willingness to write articles and continue producing knowledge,

I will continue working hard on it because I definitely want to continue producing knowledge in our area and of course, making it public through writing. (Alejandro, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

Well, I think this is an excellent opportunity that I have to improve my academic writing because I am really interested in writing articles. I am producing information. I have already published three articles and that is one of my weaknesses that I consider because right now to be a teacher and especially at the University level, you need to produce, to produce to do lectures. (Magu, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

I would really like to continue writing about my research project and not just about the thesis but maybe articles or something different because I really love research as I told you and I know that research implies writing, it is academic writing. (Viviana, student, personal communication, August 21, 2013)

I think that I would feel ready and may be willing to do some more academic things because this is my field and it is a need for teachers to do that. (Angelica, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

I hope to write my article in the future. (Angela, student, personal communication, June 22, 2013)

Some students had seen these contributions materialized in articles they had published or were about publishing,

Even today I want to keep working about that and keep writing about that, I wrote two articles. (Juana, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

So I did some articles, of course and also I did a presentation based on it, but those articles come from my pedagogical intervention even a small-scale research, a small study in a short term, like six months or one year. (Sofia, student, personal communication, May 28, 2013)

Now I feel confident about writing academically and given my results in the Masters, I still feel confident. I submitted an article for a Journal here in Columbia. (Alejandro, student, personal communication, June 14, 2013)

Some students also described how the impact of the thesis depended in a great extent on the characteristics of their teaching or working contexts. On the one hand, they mentioned how the support system and their job specifications in these institutions determined what they could do with all they had learned once they finished their theses. Magdalena referred to how the institution where she worked was involved with action research and how this could mean opportunities to continue doing research,

Maybe something related to action research, the institution in this moment, I'm not working on that because I am busy with my Masters, but I can tell that they're trying to do a big effort. (Magdalena, student, personal communication, June 24, 2013)

Viviana and Natasha commented on how to continue writing was part of their job descriptions and therefore it was expected from them to do it,

If you want to get recognized in a research community, you have to write, of course, for example, if you are going to do another master's here in Colombia for example, if you want to get good job opportunities at universities or being a professor it is mandatory that sometimes you have to write articles for newspapers or magazines or something on Internet. (Viviana, student, personal communication, August 21, 2013)

I know that after this I have to write. It's another thing "you have" and I don't like it so much, I have to do it because they are asking now in our University to have a master and then I have to do it just because I want my diploma and after that if I want to have a doctoral study, I have to have a lot of publications. (Natasha, student, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

On the other hand, Juan noted his interest in continuing writing as part of his professional development. However, his teaching position limited the opportunities for him to do it,

That's part of being a professor well, ideally that should be part of it. And again it is necessary because you have to keep writing, to keep your level, to maintain your level. But although I know that it is important, be an integral part of my professional life, it doesn't necessarily match what I will be required in my professional life. Unless I am appointed in a research position where I necessarily need to keep developing those skills, otherwise if I keep in the teaching area, of course those skills tend to become secondary because they are not the main aspect of your work profile. (Juan, student, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Merging of the Qualitative and Quantitative Results for Students

Individual. The impact of writing the thesis on the individual could be perceived in five main aspects: perception of change, development of other skills, willingness to continue working on writing, sense of achievement, and awareness of features of writing. Regarding the perception of change, one student felt his personality had changed and another thought he had become more critical. Other students perceived the change in a boots in their confidence to write in English and there was one student that felt different as teacher. About half the students in the online surveys felt confident to undertake different types of academic work when they finished their theses.

The development of other skills such as reading and speaking was an impact that a couple of students identified while writing in his first language was an impact that another student experienced. The experience writing the thesis also triggered in some students the interest in continuing improving these skills. There were a couple of students who felt really motivated to conduct research and even help others to learn to write. A couple of students did not feel like continuing writing because they felt overwhelmed by the writing process they went through, though.

There were students who considered getting close to completing their theses a real achievement for them since they felt proud of what they had accomplished. Awareness of the writing process was also an aspect that some students achieved sometimes reflected in the way they could conceptualize this process. Other times it was reflected when they assessed features of other people's writing and when they talked about the differences of writing in English and in their first language.

On their teaching of writing. Some students also mentioned how through the process of writing their theses they were able to gradually and sometimes simultaneously implement what they were learning about the writing process with their own students in their classrooms while teaching writing. One student also noted how a strategy such as peer assessment was a strategy she was willing to try out with her students as she realized its value when she used it as part of her writing process in her thesis.

On the academic community. One major impact of writing the thesis for some students was their willingness to continue writing and contributing to their academic communities. Several students shared their interest in writing articles sometimes related to their theses while other students talked about their success in publishing articles in journals. Research articles were the favorite type of academic work that students were willing to undertake after the thesis in the online surveys.

As related to their teaching context. Some students brought up the role that the support system and specific job specifications in their teaching contexts played in determining the impact of what they could do with what they had learned while writing their theses. One student noted how the place where she worked actively supported action research. Other students who were working in universities referred to how in these contexts it was highly encouraged to write and they could and had to develop research projects and report them in journals. One student also pointed out how the characteristics of his teaching position somehow limited the possibilities he had to undertake these kind of projects.

Graduates

Quantitative (online surveys). Graduates considered writing research articles as the type of academic work they had been more interested in doing after completing the thesis. Graduates

also included theoretical articles and book chapters among other favorite types of academic work (see Table 64). The graduates felt very and quite confident in undertaking any type of academic work after finishing their theses (see Table 65).

Table 64

Types of Academic Work Graduates Were Interested in Undertaking After Thesis

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Writing theoretical articles	9	36%
2	Writing research articles	24	96%
3	Writing book reviews	6	24%
4	Writing book chapters	9	36%
5	Writing books	8	32%
6	Other?	3	12%
7	None	0	0%

Table 65

Level of Confidence to Undertake These Types of Academic Work

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Very Confident	5	20%
2	Confident	16	64%
3	Neutral	4	16%
4	Not very confident	0	0%
5	Not confident at all	0	0%
	Total	25	100%

Qualitative (interviews). *On The Individual.* Some graduates acknowledged the way the thesis impacted them in various ways. This impact was not only felt at a personal level but also on their teaching, and their academic communities. One aspect that they mentioned was how they felt they had changed. Dana felt she became a better observer and Andrea became more open to other perceptions and ways of doing things,

So I consider that nowadays I am a different observer, I consider that I am a good observer. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

The Master's program helped me like to change the way I saw teaching too because sometimes you think you are doing things well the right way but you realize when you study more you realize it is not the way it is, that are more perceptions, there are more

ways of doing things, more materials, more things to explore. (Andrea, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Juliana felt the thesis experience made her change her personality as she was able to learn to write and Santiago felt he had gained confidence to write which directly impacted his view of himself as an academic person,

The main impact was in my personality ..., [writing] was one of my main interests and I wanted to do it in a very good way because I have always liked writing and actually I write very well in my mother tongue. .. it was not the same. Let's say that my ideas were okay, yes, my ideas because I consider that my ideas are very valid and I wanted to bring my ideas but when I was writing it was kind of odd. (Juliana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

I gained a lot of confidence, yes, it was probably one of the best rewards of that academic exercise because you gain confidence in yourself and you learn many things. You gain many things in knowledge, personal growth, in academic growth, you read a lot of authors, you broaden your mind to other research methods. (Santiago, graduate, personal communication, July 31, 2013)

Other graduates mentioned how writing the thesis contributed to improving or developing other skills. Pedro and Luis realized their reading had improved,

The transference from certain skills, let's say, in writing to the skill of reading. (Pedro, graduate, personal communication, June 8, 2013)

I guess, doing writing also improves a little bit reading comprehension. That's something I need to improve. (Luis, graduate, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

Pedro also pointed out how learning to write helped approach academic reading in a more efficient way and Karla added the development of higher thinking skills,

It facilitates reading as well, because, you know that in the introduction you will find the main statement and if you read that part, and you find it interesting and it matches what you're looking for, you go on. Also, in order to find main points before actually reading in detail, you can read the introduction and the conclusion. If this is relevant for my research I will take it into account and I will go into it in detail or I will just discard it. (Pedro, graduate, personal communication, June 8, 2013)

But I think, me writing my thesis, I think it helped me a lot because, you know, I read a lot academically, academic readings and it somehow improves the way you write and just

become more educated... it develops other skills, you know, the higher thinking skills, the more you read, the more you write. They are connected. (Paula, graduate, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Graduates also realized about certain features of writing through their writing experience.

Writing for others was something that Juliana understood was important as it was for Luis to expand his choice of words to give variety to his writing,

Because I became aware I was writing for someone and that person was going to read me. So I needed to make myself understood. (Juliana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

A good piece of writing must have a quite good choice of words, like use as many synonyms as possible. Don't you rely on the same words and the same expressions and the idea is to give your message. (Luis, graduate, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

Pedro had clear how the writer needed to structure the type of engagement of the reader with world outside and then the world of thesis as he progressed through the different sections of the thesis,

How to make introductions more efficient, what information elements do they contain in order to engage the reader, take the reader from the outer world into the world of the thesis we are writing. So in order to generate that interaction with the reader and also in conclusions because you know it is important that in the conclusion you go from the general, highlight the main idea you were discussing and also draw some of the pedagogical implications of what you did and take the reader out to the real world again. (Pedro, graduate, personal communication, June 8, 2013)

Javier also understood what for him was a paradigm of academic writing and how it made academic writing elitist,

Not everybody can read academic as well. Because they start like complicating things, that's a paradigm that academic writing has as well, like put it simple in terms of structures but complicate it in terms of statement and content, yeah, so that it becomes like an elite, not everybody can read it. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

When graduates looked at other people's writing, it was clear for them some of the problems they had,

That we usually tend to write informally, like we were writing an e-mail, a simple e-mail, or as if we were like doing a simple abstract. But then we don't know how to combine criticism and paraphrasing in a good style. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

It is interesting, but I think the problem here that we have is that people don't know how to write so it is very difficult for them to get the feeling of how to write in English because they want to get their ideas across but they can't and it's in English. They don't follow the model they just can't. You know, sometimes the structure, but it is difficult, but it is interesting though because they do want to do it. And after a while they understand. And I think they improve, you know, they are able to produce something interesting because they do have a lot to say. (Paula, graduate, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Several graduates referred to how writing their theses impacted their writing skills both general and academic. Jorge, Nico, Dana, Javier, and Luis acknowledged improvement in this regard,

After you write a thesis, you are a lot better prepared to continue writing any paper because a thesis is very long, you have to write many pages but then when you begin writing any other document, it is not that many number of pages that you have to write but because you have experience with the thesis, you think that writing an article is much easier. (Jorge, graduate, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

But something that is a big impact is that I really learned how to write, I know how to use connectors, I know how to divide paragraphs so that is something that I really learned from my thesis. (Nico, graduate, personal communication, August 2, 2013)

But in terms of academic writing I feel more confident because I have more literature and more ways to argument, to support, to contradict, let's say, to support I have more literature. It gives you more confidence, the fact of having knowledge and experience give you more... that you know some little tips to write better. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

I consider that it has a great, big impact. Yeah because I consider that if I hadn't written the thesis probably today I was not able to write a different paper. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Jenny felt her writer's voice was stronger when she finished her thesis,

So in a way it's my voice, it is my thinking the one I want to prove so I know it has to be stronger than all the references and authors that I use. So yes, it is strengthening that and if I had the chance to do it again I know that it is going to be easier for me to express my ideas and obviously to support them with good references. (Jenny, graduate, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

Juliana felt very proud of completing her thesis and the work she did in it,

So I decided to sit down and do everything by myself and if you read my thesis, you can see it is a good job. (Juliana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

On the other hand, Paula talked about her experience writing the thesis as one she wanted to erase from her life because it was very exhausting for her,

To be honest as I told you at the beginning, I erased that part of my life... because it was exhausting, it was just too much work and sometimes you feel that you do all that work and it's pointless. (Paula, graduate, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Some graduates who were or became supervisors of theses at the undergraduate level or continued teaching English implemented what they were learning or had learned directly while writing their theses with their students as noted by Dana, Luis, Sonia, and Juliana,

So they go to read different authors and then like they organize the information but they don't connect the paper, those theories with the purpose of the study. So that was something I also learned by means of reading the theories and by means of writing my own thesis. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

I mean what I learned immediately transmitted to my students, like this is new, I learned this, I am going to practice this and then I am going to give it to someone else. (Luis, graduate, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

I think that it was helpful for me because after my graduation, I had to advise some research projects in the University that I am working now, so I think that I could help students in this process and also I could give the tools that I received in the moment I had to write. So I definitely I think it was very useful for my profession, for my job, so I think it's good. (Sonia, graduate, personal communication, June 25, 2013)

Maybe it was clearer, now you could see the problems they had and you could help them and guide them better. (Juliana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Graduates also referred to how writing their theses encouraged them to try to publish articles and contribute to their academic communities. Dana, Sonia, and Pedro talked about their interest in publishing articles they wrote and Andrea about her idea of writing a book,

I have written different articles. I have not published in indexed journals but I have different, here in the University, I have had the possibility to publish my articles. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

I took two or three documents of what I have written a long on the course of the Masters, I refined them and I submitted them to an editorial committee in order to publish them at university's journal. (Pedro, graduate, personal communication, June 8, 2013)

I want to keep writing; actually I would like to write a book, an English book or something like that. (Andrea, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

For other graduates, publishing articles had been a reality. Jorge, Juliana, Andrea, and Javier talked about their success publishing articles,

I have written like three papers. (Jorge, graduate, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

I am happy because now I see my article, my thesis that was turned into an article, and I see like different the way that I cite authors, the way I use the things, the theory, the research part is more organized now. I am happy with the product that I've reached at the end. It is a process and it takes time and a lot of patience, but it was worth it. (Andrea, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

I turned my thesis into an article. And now I got an article. (Andrea, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

That actually after the research I published an article... It took me a lot but I received good feedback. It was great. I got it published after a year and a half ago. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

Juliana became involved in journal of her university after she finished her thesis,

I had the opportunity to work with the Journal and of course to read, revise some of the articles and it is interesting to see how students, people write, how readers, read and evaluate. (Juliana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Some teaching contexts were more or less supportive of conducting research and writing as it was pointed out by Jenny and Pedro,

We have talked about doing action research, but it is just a plan, it is a long-term plan because at the moment we are more focused on how to improve the teaching practice, but yes, it is something that will be coming soon, I know. (Jenny, graduate, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

I got a job at an editorial house, a publishing house and it was full-time and of course it is part of applying what you know but I didn't have enough time, the resources, the environment to continue developing this type of research or documents. (Pedro, graduate, personal communication, June 8, 2013)

Other contexts required these graduates to continue writing as part of their job responsibilities as noted by Nico, Javier, Paula, and Dana,

And like I told you I haven't written, but I have to write at the University. (Nico, graduate, personal communication, August 2, 2013)

Now that I am a research kind of advisor of some other teachers that I have to write for my job duties things. (Javier, graduate, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

Now I have to publish. But I haven't had the time, the energy or the interest. (Paula, graduate, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Public universities have certain levels, so I entered as in a level. If I wanted to move into a different level, I needed to write. (Dana, graduate, personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Merging of the Qualitative and Quantitative Results for Graduates

On the individual. Graduates felt the impact of writing the thesis in changes they experienced, in the development of other skills, awareness of features of writing, and improvement in general and academic writing skills. Opening to new ways of doing things and becoming a better observer were changes some graduates perceived. One student felt her personality had changed because she learned to write, which was always a weakness for her as a language learner, and another student felt more confident in his academic skills. According to the online surveys most graduates felt confident or very confident to undertake academic works when they finished their theses.

Development of other skills was brought up by some graduates who felt for example that their reading skills had improved while another graduate had improved her higher thinking skills as well, as a result of the writing process in the thesis. Awareness of features of writing was another aspect in which graduates perceived the impact of the work they did in their theses. One student talked about her understanding of writing for others and another student understood the importance of varying vocabulary in his writing. Other students also described the type of engagement of the reader through each of the components of the thesis and the characteristics of the form and the content in academic writing. Sometimes the clarity of the features of writing that these graduates had achieved was reflected in the way some graduates identified issues in other people's writing.

One important aspect in which several graduates saw the impact of writing the thesis was in the improvement of their general English and academic writing skills. One graduate also felt that her writer's voice was stronger by the time she finished her thesis. One graduate recognized the huge achievement that it was for her to complete her thesis. But there was also a graduate that definitely wanted to erase this experience from her memory because she felt it was exhausting and at some level pointless.

On their supervision of undergraduate students. Graduates described how what they learned while they were writing their theses impacted what they did with students they were supervising in undergraduate programs. These graduates used similar strategies that they had used and developed in their own theses to guide their students' writing and research processes.

On the academic community. Conducting research projects and publishing articles was a goal for several graduates in the interviews. For other graduates publishing was something they were familiar with and wanted to continue doing. One graduate noted her interest in writing a

book too. Writing research articles was the preferred type of academic work that graduates were interested in undertaking when they finished their theses according to the online surveys.

As related to their teaching context. Some contexts were more supportive of continuing doing research and writing academically according to some graduates. Universities were regarded as the contexts in which these graduates felt really engaged to write. In fact, these graduates commented how writing was one of responsibilities for teachers in these places.

Supervisors

Quantitative (online surveys). Supervisors considered writing research articles as the type of academic work their students were more interested in doing after completing their theses. A few supervisors went for the *None* option in this question (see Table 66). Half of the supervisors felt their students were quite confident to undertake these types of academic works but a few (25%) felt some of their students were not confident (see Table 67).

Table 66

Types of Academic Work Students are Interested in Undertaking After Thesis

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Writing theoretical articles	2	13%
2	Writing research articles	14	88%
3	Writing book reviews	1	6%
4	Writing book chapters	0	0%
5	Writing books	1	6%
6	Other?	0	0%
7	None	3	19%

Table 67

Students' Level of Confidence to Undertake These Types of Academic Work

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Very Confident		0	0%
2	Confident		8	50%
3	Neutral		4	25%
4	Not very confident		3	19%
5	Not confident at all		1	6%
	Total		16	100%

Qualitative (interviews). Supervisors acknowledged how the process of writing their theses impacted their students. They perceived change in different forms as Karla, Marlen, and Lorena pointed out,

I received this beautiful letter from one of my tutees telling me that it was hard but she had learned a lot, thanking me for everything I had done in telling me that now she was different. She saw that process in a different way. I can tell that yes, they improve, they change, their minds change at least and they see research and writing this kind of work in a different way. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

Because even if they don't continue further developing those academic writing skills, they change, they are not the same subjects that we received the first semester because they have become more reflective, they become more critical, so they pay more attention to what they bring to their classrooms. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

So it is really, really rewarding to see the way they grow. It is a great opportunity for them to see themselves, the way they change the way they evolve as persons and as professionals. (Lorena, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

These supervisors also perceived their students developed other language skills. Laura talked about students' improvement of their reading skills and Luisa and Manolo mentioned the improvement of speaking as well,

The impact of writing this academic thesis has on their, not only on their writing skills, but I think that it also has an impact on the reading skills because this is a reading to writing and a writing to reading process. (Laura, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

More than their writing the skills they improve their oral skills because when they defend their theses, that's when we realize how much they have improved especially speaking skills. (Luisa, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

Because of all the exposure to the language that they have to go through because also the input that they get through reading but also through speaking and the other skills because I would say it is an integration of the skills that finally have an impact on the writing, not just reading. (Manolo, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

Regarding improvement in their writing skills, Karla and Nicholas mentioned how they had perceived real improvement when they went over students' final theses,

As the paper goes on and the process advances, I see that they improve somehow and now when they finish the thesis and the final paper comes to me seems it has been a process of coming back and forth, it is most of the time good product. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

I think that they despite of the trouble that they had they learn how to do it'. (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

Manolo recognized students improved a great deal but pointed out that there were still aspects, in which they needed to improve,

I think all the things they do in the master's program help improving their writing skills for the thesis. They still have some problems, but I think they improve a lot in the whole process. (Manolo, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

These supervisors also talked about how their students started implementing what they had learned through the thesis writing process with their students and even they had changed the way they approached their students,

They [the students] start doing the same thing, I think that in a way they start assimilating the feedback because then they start telling their students the same thing "you know you're supposed to write in this way, why do you do this? Etc. etc. so I think in that way they are showing how they were able to assimilate. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

For example, many teachers have said that their vision of teaching was completely transformed and also that they are like new human beings that they used to pay attention to be very demanding, very serious and to leave people somehow alone to survive. They

become more affectionate with their students; they care more about their students. (Marlen, supervisor, personal communication, July 18, 2013)

Supervisors referred to their students' reluctance to continue writing as it was noted by Alberto, Rosario, Camila, July, and Licimaco,

But I have to say that not all the students want to publish a paper after they finished the dissertation project. (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Because they are kind of, here, writing is still seen as something from the elite so people don't write so much, this is for scientists and very famous people who write in these journals. (Rosario, supervisor, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

It is just a few of our graduates who continue writing or publishing or working on the theses they started. (Camila, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

If we analyze the number of students that continue doing something in terms of research, in terms of writing, I think that the percentages are very low, I don't know how many graduates, let's say 50 because there are not too many and out of those 50 I would say that maybe 5 or 7 continue working on research, the others are just in their schools. Maybe they are doing a good job. I really don't know but they are not doing writing or research. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

Rosario also pointed out how in order to continue writing those students in writing needed to continue getting support to do it,

They are confident but they normally need a tutor, a supervisor or somebody in their context to push them. (Rosario, supervisor, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

However, there were students who were willing to continue writing and participating in conferences as noted by Laura and Alberto or have actually written articles as Karla recalled,

Whereas the first group of students . . . wants to write papers, are interested and enthusiastic, that was the word, enthusiastic about going to conferences and living the academia, you know generally graduate life, going to conferences, publishing papers. (Laura, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

They continue teaching, they continue participating in conferences and they tend to have an active academic life. (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Some of them have even written articles for magazines or something. They are more confident than when they started. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

Supervisors referred to how those students willing to participate in their academic community publishing articles were sometimes discouraged by the requirements of journals,

I think they feel confident but they get discouraged because of the standards of the journals. So, sometimes they still have grammar problems or sometimes they still have problems organizing the paper. So even though they feel that they can do it and they do it, they send them and they get rejected because of not fulfilling with certain things, so in that case, they get discouraged. (Nicholas, supervisor, personal communication, May 24, 2013)

One of the problems is that they are dealing with another kind of text which is an academic text that needs to comply with the publication policies of the Journal and that's completely different texts... especially in being able to summarize the information in the number of pages the Journal demands. This is basically the main problem. (Alberto, supervisor, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

Supervisors also talked about how their students' contexts highly influenced what their students could do with the skills they developed through the thesis. Universities seemed to be spaces in which writing was highly encouraged as pointed out by July, Lorena, and Luisa,

Those students who work at universities are the ones who become more motivated to continue doing research and to continue writing and presenting their achievements in seminars. (Luisa, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

I have noticed that some of them continue working on that, doing it scholarly, they really find motivated to work on research, in different aspects, if they belong to a University, if they work for a university they continue doing that because, not only because they like it but because they have to. (Lorena, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

Those students who work at universities are the ones who become more motivated to continue doing research and to continue writing and presenting their achievements in seminars. (Luisa, supervisor, personal communication, June 13, 2013)

July, Lorena, Karla, and Rosario also brought up how students who were teachers in public schools were less involved or engaged with writing because it was not a priority in these contexts,

Usually teachers who work in schools, in high schools or rural schools they tend not to pay attention to writing or academic writing. (July, supervisor, personal communication, May 29, 2013)

The other ones that are not really pressed to do that, they do not continue. It depends on the purpose they have for finishing their Master's program. If they are public schools teachers, they generally finish and if they are interested they go into a doctoral program, but if they are not interested they just continue teaching. Because they do it for having an upgrade in their paying scale so they just stop there. (Lorena, supervisor, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

Some of our students are working for the government and you know that in the government, the more you study, the more you get paid. So you can reach better positions and benefits and stuff. Some unfortunately, some of them take these studies for that. (Karla, supervisor, personal communication, June 5, 2013)

They don't kind feel the need to do that, they work in public schools and writing there is not something they should do, still is not part of their context, professional needs. (Rosario, supervisor, personal communication, June 7, 2013)

Merging of the Qualitative and Quantitative Results for Supervisors

On the individual. Some of the aspects in which supervisors perceived the impact of the thesis were in actual change, development of other language skills and improvement in writing. Several supervisors mentioned how their students changed their views about writing and research and became more reflective. Another aspect in which supervisors saw an impact was in the development of other language skills such as reading and speaking.

A couple of supervisors acknowledged how their students actually improved their writing skills through the process of the thesis. Another supervisor also pointed out this improvement but recognized that there were sometimes areas in which they needed to continue working.

On their teaching of writing. Supervisors were aware of the way their students were implementing what they were learning through the process of writing their theses, which indicated the assimilation of the feedback they were providing. A supervisor even noted how

sometimes their students' vision of teaching changed as it changed the way they approached their students.

On the academic community. Some supervisors noted how the process of writing the thesis made most students reluctant to continue writing and in those cases when that happened for a small group of students, they sometimes required further support. The form of participation in the academic community that a couple of supervisors mentioned was attending professional conferences. Half of the supervisors who responded to the online surveys thought students who finished their theses felt confident to undertake academic work but there were some who felt they were not very confident to do it.

There are few students who published articles but there were a few other students interested in continuing writing and publishing who were discouraged by the requirements of the journals some supervisors asserted. Research articles were considered by supervisors in the online surveys to be the preferred type of academic work their students were interested in undertaking after completing their theses.

As related to their students' teaching context. The context in which students worked highly determined what they could do after they finished their theses some supervisors stated. Two main contexts were defined. Supervisors felt that universities were the most supportive environments to engage students who finished their theses to continue conducting research and writing academically. On the other hand, students who worked in public schools were less likely to engage in academic projects after completing the thesis since in these spaces research and publishing were not priorities and therefore not strongly supported and encouraged.

Merging of the Results for Students, Graduates, and Supervisors

On the individual. The impact of writing the thesis at the individual level could be perceived in changes students perceived in themselves, the development of other skills, awareness of features of writing, improvement of writing skills, and the feeling of achievement or disappointment after completing the thesis.

Student Daniel and graduate Juliana felt their personality changed as a result of the process of writing their theses. Student Guillermo felt he was more critical and graduates Dana and Andrea became better observers and more open to try new ways of doing things. Student Magdalena felt she was a different teacher as a result of her experience with the thesis. Supervisors like Karla, Marlen, and Lorena also saw how some of their students became more reflective and more professional. Students Magdalena, Claudia, and Magu and graduate Santiago gained more confidence in their ability to write in English. Most of the graduates felt confident and very confident about undertaking academic work after the thesis while about half of the students and supervisors thought students were confident in this regard in the online surveys.

Students Angela and Viviana and graduates Pedro and Luis felt they had improved their reading skills and some also mentioned speaking skills. Student Guillermo felt his writing in his first language was positively impacted, too, and graduate Karla felt that she had developed higher thinking skills in the process. Supervisors concurred with this perception. Supervisor Laura realized her students improved their reading skills and supervisors Manolo and Luisa included the development of speaking skills as well.

Students Mariana, Angela and Viviana felt very motivated in continuing to work on their writing skills and Danilo and Guillermo wanted to continue doing research and helping others do research and report it.

Students Juana and Angelica and graduates Luis, Juliana, Javier, and Pedro reached new understandings about the process and main features of writing through their work writing their theses. Students Juan, Viviana, Guillermo, and Sofia and graduates Javier and Paula described another form in which these new understandings were evident for them. It was through the assessment of other people's writing since then it became clear for them what was missing or how it could be improved somehow replicating the process they went through to learn to write this type of text. Students Juana, Claudia, and Viviana also mentioned how there were some differences that became evident between writing in their first language and in English.

Graduates Jorge, Nico, Dana, Javier, and Luis acknowledged their improvement in both general and academic writing skills and graduate Jenny how her writer's voice became stronger as a result of the process of the thesis. Supervisors Karla, Nicholas, and Manolo also noted how they could perceive improvement in these areas in their students.

Students Danilo, Angela, and Angelica and graduate Juliana pointed out their sense of achievement as they got closer to finishing or when they finished their theses since they felt it a great accomplishment in their academic lives. On the other hand, students Amelia and Natasha and graduate Paula felt so overwhelmed with the writing process that they lost interest in writing and even wanted to erase that part of their lives.

On their teaching of writing and supervision. The impact of what students and graduates had learned through the process of the thesis made its way into their classrooms and their work as supervisors. Students Daniel and Sofia referred to how what they were learning in their writing process for their theses was immediately implemented in their classes while teaching writing. Student Amelia also talked about her intention to actively include a peer assessment strategy to help students proofread their writing since it was a useful strategy she was

encouraged to use while writing her thesis. Graduates Dana, Luis, Sonia, and Juliana transferred what they had learned through their theses to the supervision of other students writing their thesis in undergraduate programs. Supervisors July and Marlen also acknowledged the way some of their students implemented what they were learning with them with their own students, which for them indicated that they had assimilated their feedback.

On the academic community. Some students like Alejandro, Magu, Viviana, Angelica, and Angela and graduates Dana, Sonia, and Pedro expressed their willingness to continue writing research articles after finishing their theses. In fact, this type of academic work was considered the favorite type of academic work to be undertaken after completing the thesis for students, graduates, and supervisors in the online surveys. According to the online surveys, graduates felt more confident to undertake writing works than students. There were students like Juana, Sofia, and Alejandro and graduates like Jorge, Juliana, Andrea, and Javier who talked about their success at publishing articles. Supervisors Alberto, Rosario, Camila, July, and Licimaco talked more of a very limited group of students really interested in continuing to conduct studies and report them. One of the reasons for this situation according to supervisors Nicholas and Alberto was the requirements of the journals that tended to discourage these students from trying to publish in them. Supervisors Laura and Alberto noted that among other ways students kept connected to their academic communities was attending and participating in professional conferences.

As related to the teaching contexts. Students, graduates, and supervisors identified two main teaching contexts and both determined the possibilities that students who finished their theses had to continue conducting research and reporting it. Students Viviana and Natasha and graduates Nico, Javier, Paula, and Dana talked about how universities not only encouraged

actively engaging in this kind of academic activities but also that such engagement was usually part of the job responsibilities of their teachers. Supervisors July, Lorena, and Luisa concurred with this assessment. Supervisors like July, Lorena, Karla, and Rosario also mentioned that when students taught in public schools, the support and encouragement to continue these academic endeavors was almost non-existent since it was not a priority in these contexts. Other contexts like language institutes and private schools were more open to support this type of academic activities as noted by student Magdalena and graduate Jenny.

Document Analysis—Thesis Drafts

In the following section, the results of the analyses of the drafts of the theses from three writers are presented. These three writers were classified in three levels of writing ability by the researcher after he completed the textual analysis of the first drafts. These three levels are: intermediate developing writer, advanced developing writer and proficient writer. The first draft comes from a middle stage of the writing process while the second belongs to the last stage of the process without necessarily being the final draft. Two types of analyses were completed for each of the two drafts of each writer: A textual analysis and the scoring of the drafts using a checklist by three raters.

Textual Analysis

The researcher carried out this analysis. He read the six drafts in order to identify general features of general writing, academic writing and genre appropriation in them (To see specific information about the topic of the studies and some examples of the features identified go to Appendix P.) Once this analysis was completed the researcher shared it with the rater who had already finished scoring the drafts as a form of peer audit.

Scoring of the drafts of the thesis. In this analysis of the drafts, three raters completed a checklist for each one of the drafts that included aspects of general writing skills, academic writing skills and the genre of the thesis. Once these checklists were completed, the researcher conducted the analysis of interrater reliability coefficient (ICC) that showed substantial agreement ICC= .669 among the three raters in the whole set of drafts. The researcher also examined each of the drafts to identify the interrater reliability coefficient and the percentage of absolute agreement among raters. This analysis showed that the coefficient varied from draft to draft and that the level of agreement between raters was not the same looking at each draft individually.

Looking at the Intra-rater Correlation coefficient in each draft (see Table 68), it remained pretty low in the first two drafts scored for the intermediate developing writer. Then, this level increased substantially in the first draft for the advanced developing writer. However, this coefficient went down again in the second draft of the same writer. The coefficient for the two drafts of the advanced remained quite low.

Table 68

Record of Inter-rater Reliability Coefficients for Each Draft

Writer	Inter-rater reliability coefficient	
	Draft 1	Draft 2
Intermediate Developing Writer	ICC= .148 (Poor)	ICC= .276 (Poor)
Advanced Developing Writer	ICC= .534 (Moderate)	ICC= .286 (Poor)
Proficient Writer	ICC= .145 (Poor)	ICC= .285 (Poor)

The results of the percentage of absolute agreement among raters (see Table 69) indicate that rating 1 and 3 and 2 and 3 was quite acceptable in the drafts of the first two writers. The situation changed dramatically in the last draft of the third writer where rater 1 and rater 2 did not

agree in any score and there was very little correspondence between rater 2 and 3 as well. On the contrary, rater 1 and rater 3's level of agreement was very high in this writer's second draft.

Table 69

Percentage of Absolute Agreement Among Raters in Each Draft

Writer	Draft	Raters 1-2	Raters 2-3	Raters 3-1
Intermediate	1	60.0	60.0	58.5
Developing Writer	2	47.5	55.0	63.4
Advanced	1	45.9	50.0	60.5
Developing Writer	2	35.1	59.5	59.0
Proficient	1	2.6	40.0	35.6
Writer	2	0	5.0	83.0

This variance could be the result of the characteristics of the rater and how they played a role in how the tool (i.e., checklist) was used. Nevertheless, the results of the scoring of the checklists provide useful information on how individual aspects are perceived by these raters. In the next section, the results and analysis of the scoring of the checklists followed by the textual analysis of the writing are presented for each component: general writing skills, academic writing skills and appropriation of the thesis genre (For more information of the main results from the checklists scoring and textual analysis go to Appendix O.) Then, both analyses are merged for each writer. At the end of this section, the results for the three writers are merged to show trends along the three levels of ability defined here.

Intermediate Developing Writer

General writing skills. Quantitative (rubric scoring). Three main aspects of general writing skills that were included in the checklist were vocabulary, grammar and mechanics. Most scores in these aspects were 1s and 2s indicating that there were major problems and some problems, respectively, in each particular item. Regarding vocabulary this writer kept having problems in almost all areas. Similarly, many aspects of grammar received the same scores in the

second draft. Mechanics as related to punctuation and word processing were aspects that improved a bit from the first to the second draft (see Table 70).

Table 70

Results of the Scoring of the First and Second Drafts by the Three Raters for the Aspects of General Writing

Descriptor	DRAFT 1						DRAFT 2					
	Rater 1	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 3	Rater 1	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 3
C. Control of academic writing style – does the grammar and vocabulary conform to appropriate patterns of written academic English												
1. Appropriate use of abstract vocabulary	1	1.75	2	1.42	2	2.0	3	2.37	2	1.57	2	2.0
2. Appropriate use of technical terms from the field	2		2		2		2		2			
3. Appropriate use of collocation	2		2		2		2		2			
4. Appropriate level of formality and ‘objectivity’	2		1		2		2		1			
5. Appropriate use of modality, interpersonal metaphor and other evaluative language	2		1		2		3		1			
6. Appropriate use of noun groups and grammatical metaphor	1		1		2		2		1			
7. Control of taxonomic relations	2		N/A		n/a		3		N/A			
8. Control of reference chains and other cohesive devices	2		1		2		2		2			
D. Grammatical correctness												
1. Correctly formed clause structures	2	1.71	1	1.85	2	2.0	2	2.42	1	1.85	2	2.14
2. Correct subject-verb agreement	1		2		2		2					
3. Correctly formed tense choice	1		2		2		3		2			
4. Correctly formed passives	2		2		2		2		2			
5. Correctly formed modality	2		2		2		3		2			
6. Correct use of articles	2		2		2		3		2			
7. Correct use of conjuncts, adjuncts and disjuncts	2		2		2		2		2			
E. Qualities of presentation												
1. Punctuation use generally correct	1	1.5	1	1.75	2	2.5	2	2.5	2	2.25	2	2.75
2. Spelling generally correct	2		2		3		2		3			
3. Capitals, italics etc. used correctly	2		2		2		3		2		3	
4. Word processing appropriate	1		2		3		3		3		3	

Qualitative (textual analysis). In the first draft of the thesis for this writer, some of the problems that stood out included word choice, prepositions, awkward structures, and subject-verb agreement. Long chains of sentences connected by conjunctions and run-on sentences were

recurrent aspects in this draft. In the second draft, many of these problems remained or even became more frequent as it was the case of word choice, prepositions and awkward structures and new ones became more evident such as structures influenced by Spanish, and the use of the passive voice. Regarding vocabulary, there was a better selection of words in the second draft than in the first one. Another aspect that improved in several parts of the draft was the use of long chain of sentences. Paragraphs were shorter in comparison to the first draft and the use of connectors increased significantly although there were instances when the same connectors were used or new ones were not used accurately. It is evident that this writer was still getting a hold of her writing sometimes trying out some structures and not being particularly thoughtful about vocabulary choices, connectors and prepositions making evident that as she was writing she was realizing better ways of expressing herself through the feedback she was getting.

Academic writing skills. Quantitative (rubric scoring). The aspects of academic writing that were included in the checklist dealt with relevance of the information to the topic, elaboration from sources, and appropriate citation of sources. Relevance of the information and interpretation and transference of information from research were items in which little to no improvement was observed. One item in which all raters granted unanimously no improvement was related to plagiarism which for them was quite predominant in some parts of the drafts. The one item in which more improvement was perceived by two of the raters was that related to the referencing in the text (see Table 71)

Table 71

Results of the Scoring of the First and Second Drafts by the Three Raters for the Aspects of Academic Writing

Descriptor	DRAFT 1						DRAFT 2					
	Rater 1	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 3	Rater 1	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 3
A. Use of source material and personal experience – is information taken from research and experience correct and/or appropriate for the task?												
1. Used relevant information from reading (i.e., to the topic studied)	2	1.5	2	1.3	2	1.3	3	2.0	2	1.5	2	1.83
2. Irrelevant information is avoided	2		1		2		2		1		2	
3. Information from research or personal experience is interpreted and transferred correctly	2		1		1		2		1		2	
4. Text is free from plagiarism/information is integrated with own words and ideas	1		1		1		1		1		1	
5. Recognition of various perspectives in the field	1		2		1		1		3		2	
6. Accurate referencing in text, bibliography or reference list is correct (APA style)	1		1		1		3		1		2	

Qualitative (textual analysis). In the first draft, this writer provided no support with theory for some of the assertions she was making. Some of the quotes from sources were used without any connection or elaboration and there were times when no citation was included. In those times where sources were cited, basic rules for citing were hardly considered such as including the page numbers. Including the information from sources also seemed like a list with no explanation of their connection. There were times when it was difficult to see when an author’s information was being introduced or the connection with the writer’s ideas. In the second draft of the thesis, there were still cases of unsupported assertions and the tendency to state things as facts instead of possibilities through the use of modality. The list of disconnected quotes was replaced by more elaborated paragraphs that included an extra comment on the information although quite limited most of the times. An effort in making transitions between sections was clear although some problems remained. The writer tried to follow APA citation

requirements in this draft although it is not consistent and there were problems in introducing long quotes. There were also times when chunks of language resembled text taken from another source without proper citation.

Appropriation of the thesis. *Quantitative (rubric scoring).* The revised checklist included a description of the four sections (i.e., introduction, theoretical framework, methodological design and instructional intervention) with their components. The introduction still had some problems when comparing the first and the second draft but two of the raters saw improvement in the rationale and the description of the context of the study. In the theoretical framework there was a slight improvement for one of the raters in relation to the presentation and the description of the constructs. All three raters saw improvement in the linking of the constructs to the study and their overview. The methodology and instructional design sections did not show significant improvement since most scores remained the same except for the presentation of samples of the intervention (see Table 72).

Table 72
Results of the Scoring of the First and Second Drafts by the Three Raters for the Three Sections of the Thesis

Descriptor	DRAFT 1						DRAFT 2					
	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg
<i>B. Structure and development of text – is the structure and development of each section of the thesis appropriate to the task and its context?</i>												
<i>Introduction</i>												
The introduction engages with the task and orientates to how the research question(s) is (are) grounded and approached	2	1.6	2	2	2	1.8	2	2.0	2	2.0	2	2.4
A clear rationale to conduct the study is presented	1		2		2		2		2		3	
A comprehensive description of the context supports the need to conduct the study	1		2		2		2		2		3	
All research questions or problems are linked to the rationale and context presented	2		2		2		2		2		2	
A clear overview of the project introduces the basic content of the sections to provide a clear flow of the document	2		2		1		2		2		2	

Table 72 (con't)

Descriptor	DRAFT 1						DRAFT 2					
	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg
<i>The theoretical framework</i>												
The theoretical framework clearly and sufficiently presents the pertinent constructs for the study	2	1.6	2	1.6	2	1.2	3	2.8	2	2.0	2	2.0
A brief description of the theoretical constructs to be explored is presented	1		2		1		3		2		2	
Each construct is sufficiently developed to lay out the main tenets	2		2		1		2		2		1	
Each construct is linked to the study	2		1		1		3		2		3	
An overview of the theoretical constructs included is given	1		1		1		3		2		2	
<i>The methodology</i>												
The methodology section clearly and sufficiently lays out the rationale for the methodological design and the instruments used	2	1.5	2	1.0	2	2	2	2.0	2	1.3	2	2.25
The methodological design is clearly defined and supported with literature	1		1		2		2		1		2	
Instruments are carefully described	2		1		2		2		1		2	
Samples of the instruments are provided in the main text or in appendices at the end	1		N/A		2		2		N/A		3	
<i>The Instructional design</i>												
The methodological section clearly and sufficiently presents the instructional intervention used	2	2	2	2	2	1.3	2	2.3	2	2.0	2	2.6
A clear overview of the instructional intervention is given	2		2		1		2		2		3	
Samples of the intervention are provided in the main text or in appendices at the end	2		2		1		3		2		3	

Qualitative (textual analysis). The introduction, the theoretical framework and the methodology were the three sections of the thesis that could be compared as they were present in both the first and last drafts analyzed here. In the first draft, the introduction tried to place the reader in the context of the problematic situation however making direct assumptions to explain the reasons behind it. It gave a general glance to the document by presenting the need to explore the topic, the description of the tool to address the issue, the context of the study, its justification and what readers are expected to find in the rest of the document. In the second draft the

introduction did not change significantly although long paragraphs were divided presenting the information better. Besides, the writer made an effort to take some distance from the study which was something that did not happen in the first draft where there were times when she explicitly presented how the study was linked to her own experience. There were still some assertions about the situation that were not really supported making the case of the study weak. The theoretical framework in the first draft attempted to present a collection of topics the writer considered to be relevant to her study. In this draft, different sections were included with reference to information from several authors that were sometimes taken literally from the original source without citation or clear differentiation between the words of the author and those of the writer. A format that predominated in this section was sets of bullets with information. These sections were not linked or explicitly connected to the purpose of the study. In the second draft, the effort to introduce how the concepts that are going to be introduced related to the topic of the study was more evident. There were times when some of the definitions, as was the case with speaking, were more writer's interpretation than a definition taken from the literature. The writer also attempted to elaborate more on the authors' information by making connections with the information and coming up with paragraphs instead of just bullet points with information. Paragraphs to introduce information in the following sections are now included to guide the reader on the concepts to expect. There were some topics included in this theoretical framework that may not have been directly related to the specific study conducted. The methodology and instructional design in the first draft included a set of topics also presented as bullet points and sets of excerpts of information from other sources that were intended to support the type of intervention used and the methodological design and the description of the activities to be included in the study. In the second draft, the instructional design and methodology are more

elaborated. There is a reference to the type of approach considered for design of the intervention taken from the theoretical framework that somehow found its way into this section. While describing the specific type of activities, the writer referred to other authors' information to support her choice of activities but somehow fell in the listing without clearly identifying what information came from the author or from her own elaboration.

Merging of Qualitative and Quantitative Data for the Intermediate Developing Writer

General writing skills. There is a correspondence of the textual analysis with the scoring of the checklists by the three scores. Both pointed out major problems with vocabulary and grammar in both the first and second drafts. In general word choice is the main problem related to vocabulary. This problem seemed to be due to the influence of Spanish. This influence was also perceived in some of the awkward structures, long sentences and run-on sentences found in the text. There were also other problems with basic grammar and prepositions. The textual analysis showed how in the second draft, sentences were kept shorter and paragraphs more concrete. There was also an improvement in the way ideas were connected through a variety of cohesive devices. There were some instances when these devices were not used very appropriately, though.

Academic writing skills. The three aspects of academic writing that were found in the textual analysis also received low scores by the raters. Relevance of the information may be related to the quantity and variety of constructs in the theoretical framework that according to the textual analysis may be due to their direct relevance to the topic of the study. Regarding the little improvement in the interpretation and transference of information from sources by the raters it could be due to the presence still in the second draft of long excerpts that seemed to be taken from a source without any referencing (i.e., plagiarism). Through the textual analysis, it could be

seen that there were parts in which the writer had elaborated on the information from sources but it was not something observed all over the text. An effort was also seen in creating a flow and connection of the information in each section of the thesis. There is improvement in the referencing of the sources although there was no consistency in the text.

Appropriation of the thesis. The introduction was a section in which the writer seemed to have a pretty good idea of its content but seemed to be too compartmentalized. Raters did not perceive much improvement between first and second drafts in any of the three sections. The textual analysis showed that in the second draft the writer was detached as she attempted to distance herself from the study, but that shorter paragraphs made it easier to develop the ideas. One of the issues in the introduction was the assumptions the writer was making in order to justify her study. Most of them could be said to be based on her experience therefore leading to generalizations without any support from literature. Although the raters did not grant much improvement to the literature review, the textual analysis indicated that there was a significant improvement as the writer moved from lists of disconnected information to more elaborated paragraphs that were now introduced, helping the reader follow the flow of ideas. Here the issue may lie in the relevance of all the topics included in the problem to be addressed in the study. The methodology and instructional intervention went through a similar process in which the writer elaborated more on the information. However, there was no consistency in the two sections. In the second draft, it is interesting to see how the writer considered it important to introduce sources from the literature in the field to support the methodological design and the instruments to be used in her study.

Advanced Developing Writer

General writing skills. Quantitative (rubric scoring). This writer moved in the mid 2s range indicating that she had some problems with grammar and vocabulary. Mechanics and punctuation was the lowest of the three areas. From the first draft to the second draft there is a little improvement in these three areas. It barely went up one decimal in vocabulary and mechanics and punctuation areas when we look at the average of the scores from the three raters (e.g., vocabulary (2.39 to 2.53). In the grammar area, this writer even went down two decimals. This writer's general writing skills are just fair according to the results of the scoring of the checklists (see Table 73).

Qualitative (textual analysis). This writer had some few word choice problems that included the use of informal words to the use of collocations and words that did not fit the particular context. Prepositions occasionally were not accurate. Few problems with subject and verb agreement were also found. There were also problems with missing subjects, coordination structures. One of the most important problems was related to the length of sentences that was basically extended by the endless use of commas and semi colons. Sometimes a lack of coherence was evident in sections such as the theoretical framework where main concepts were listed but not interrelated with one another. In the second draft, the writer was definitely more fluent and most of the feedback given in the former draft was implemented. There were still some problems with word choice influenced by the informal use of the language, the first language (e.g., the authors maintains..., formation in schools) or simply words used incorrectly (e.g. interviews proof). Prepositions remained the biggest problem overall. Sentences were still quite long and commas and semi colons were used frequently instead of periods. There were minor problems with subject-verb agreement. In general terms, the writer's ideas were clear and

an effort was clear in giving coherence to each one of the sections. There were a few instances of paragraphs that required better organization, though.

Table 73

Results of the Scoring of the First and Second Drafts by the Three Raters for the Aspects of General Writing

Descriptor	DRAFT 1						DRAFT 2					
	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg
C. Control of academic writing style – does the grammar and vocabulary conform to appropriate patterns of written academic English												
1. Appropriate use of abstract vocabulary	2	2.37	2	2.57	2	2.25	2	2.37	2	2.85	2	2.37
2. Appropriate use of technical terms from the field	2		3		2		2		3			
3. Appropriate use of collocation	3		3		3		3		3			
4. Appropriate level of formality and ‘objectivity’	2		3		2		2		3			
5. Appropriate use of modality, interpersonal metaphor and other evaluative language	2		3		2		2		2			
6. Appropriate use of noun groups and grammatical metaphor	3		3		3		3		3			
7. Control of taxonomic relations	3		NA		2		3		NA			
8. Control of reference chains and other cohesive devices	2		1		2		2		3			
D. Grammatical correctness												
1. Correctly formed clause structures	2	2.57	1	2.71	2	2.57	2	2.14	1	2.71	2	2.42
2. Correct subject-verb agreement	3		3		2		3		3			
3. Correctly formed tense choice	3		3		3		2		3			
4. Correctly formed passives	2		3		2		2		3			
5. Correctly formed modality	2		3		3		2		3			
6. Correct use of articles	3		3		3		2		3			
7. Correct use of conjuncts, adjuncts and disjuncts	2		3		3		2		3			
E. Qualities of presentation												
1. Punctuation use generally correct	2	2.25	1	1.75	2	2.5	2	2.5	1	1.75	2	2.5
2. Spelling generally correct	3		3		3		3		3			
3. Capitals, italics etc. used correctly	2		2		3		3		2			
4. Word processing appropriate	2		1		2		2		1			

Academic writing skills. Quantitative (rubric scoring). This writer started in the first draft with serious problems with the transference of information from sources, attributing authorship (i.e., plagiarism) and referencing going from the level of major problems (1) to the

level in which she has some problems (2) but not quite there yet in any of these areas. Relevance of the information and the recognition of various perspectives were in level 2. According to the scoring of the second draft, this writer reached the level 2 in the average from the raters in this area as an overall and in areas that were very weak before such as transference of information from sources and attributing authorship. The only area that in average did not get to the level 2 individually (i.e., 1.66) was following appropriate referencing (see Table 74).

Table 74

Results of the Scoring of the First and Second Drafts by the Three Raters for the Aspects of Academic Writing

Descriptor	DRAFT 1						DRAFT 2					
	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg
<i>A. Use of source material and personal experience – is information taken from research and experience correct and/or appropriate for the task?</i>												
1. Used relevant information from reading (i.e., to the topic studied)	2	2.16	3	1.83	2	1.33	2	2.16	3	2.16	3	2.16
2. Irrelevant information is avoided	2		2		1		2		2			
3. Information from research or personal experience is interpreted and transferred correctly	2		1		1		2		2			
4. Text is free from plagiarism/information is integrated with own words and ideas	3		1		1		3		2			
5. Recognition of various perspectives in the field	2		3		2		2		3			
6. Accurate referencing in text, bibliography or reference list is correct (APA style)	2		1		1		2		1			

Qualitative (textual analysis). The writer was clear about the idea of using information from sources to present the concepts that she deemed relevant for her argument in the first draft. There was an attempt to make use of the information from sources; however, there were times when the information from the authors was left standing alone without any elaboration. Besides, there was no linkage between the ideas from these sources. The writer tried to quote these sources but there were problems in the referencing style that included writing the last and first names of the author of a source, missing the page number for direct quotes, including a full

reference in the text, and omitting the quotation marks at the end of a quote. It seemed to be an attempt to experiment with these referencing requirements. Acronyms were presented incorrectly and a table with definitions was included without any connection or elaboration in the text. In the second draft, the writer made an effort to keep in mind the citation of sources and there was improvement in in-text citations of sources from authors but as the writer advanced in the document there was lack of consistency in considering these citation requirements. There was still overuse of quotations from sources that sometimes did not include the quotation marks and hardly ever the page numbers. There was an instance of a quote from a source without page number that in this second draft had no quotation marks anymore seemly looking as the writer's words. However when this information was compared to the original it matched perfectly which became an example of plagiarism. Although there was more elaboration on the information from sources especially in the theoretical framework section, it did not happen all the time. Acronyms were still not properly introduced. Similarly, there were still instances when the writer made general assertions that were not supported with any kind of source. Diagrams articulating the main features of some of the constructs were included to help summarize the most important points.

Appropriation of the thesis genre. Quantitative (rubric scoring). Regarding the structure and content of the information in the introduction this writer was in level 2 showing she had some problems; however, the worst aspect in this section was the overview of the information at the end of the section. The area that had the most problems seemed to be the theoretical framework because the three raters gave to most of the aspects 1s. The methodology was practically in level 2 in all the descriptors except in the description of the instruments. The scoring of the second draft showed significant improvement in the introduction reaching for two

of the raters the level 3 in all areas except the overview of the information. The theoretical framework went from almost a generalized 1 in the first draft in all descriptors to get a quite strong 2. The methodology also improved significantly reaching 3s in all areas but the description of the instruments (see Table 75). The drafts from this writer did not include an instructional intervention because she did not implement one in her study.

Table 75

Results of the Scoring of the First and Second Drafts by the Three Raters for the Three Sections of the Thesis

Descriptor	DRAFT 1						DRAFT 2					
	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg
B. Structure and development of text – is the structure and development of each section of the thesis appropriate to the task and its context?												
Introduction												
The introduction engages with the task and orientates to how the research question(s) is (are) grounded and approached	2	1.6	2	2.0	2	2.0	2	1.8	3	3	3	2.8
A clear rationale to conduct the study is presented	2		2		2		2	3	3			
A comprehensive description of the context supports the need to conduct the study	2		2		2		2	3	3			
All research questions or problems are linked to the rationale and context presented	1		2		2		2	3	3			
A clear overview of the project introduces the basic content of the sections to provide a clear flow of the document	1		NA		2		1	NA	2			
The theoretical framework												
The theoretical framework clearly and sufficiently presents the pertinent constructs for the study	1	1.2	2	1.4	1	1.0	2	1.8	2	2.0	2	1.8
A brief description of the theoretical constructs to be explored is presented	1		2		1		2		2		2	
Each construct is sufficiently developed to lay out the main tenets	1		1		1		2		2		2	
Each construct is linked to the study	2		1		1		2		2		2	
An overview of the theoretical constructs included is given	1		1		1		1		2		1	

Table 75 (con't)

Descriptor	DRAFT 1						DRAFT 2					
	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg
<i>The methodology</i>												
The methodology section clearly and sufficiently lays out the rationale for the methodological design and the instruments used	2	1.75	2	2.0	2	1.75	2	2.25	3	2.75	3	2.75
The methodological design is clearly defined and supported with literature	2		2		2		2		3			
Instruments are carefully described	1		2		1		2		2			
Samples of the instruments are provided in the main text or in appendices at the end (when applicable)	2		2		2		3		3			
<i>The instructional Design</i>												
The methodological section clearly and sufficiently presents the instructional intervention used	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
A clear overview of the instructional intervention is given	N/A		N/A		N/A		1		N/A			
Samples of the intervention are provided in the main text or in appendices at the end (when applicable)	N/A		N/A		N/A		2		N/A			

Qualitative (textual analysis). In the first draft, the writer had clarity of what she needed to do in the introduction. She also knew the importance of supporting her argument about her study with literature. However, these sources did not serve this purpose clearly and directly or the ideas were not fully developed. The two research questions included did not fully correspond to the argument she presented in the introduction. In the theoretical framework, there was not a clear introduction to the way the different concepts to be presented were linked to the study. It was more like inventory of definitions and concepts without elaboration. In the research design, the writer included some sources to support and explain her research design but they were also not connected. The writer did not start from presenting her methodological epistemology and instead used her methodological design (i.e., case study) as the one determining it. The instruments were introduced but specific information about the form they were going to take in

this study was not given. Looking at the second draft, it was clear that the writer kept in mind the feedback given in the first draft. The introduction definitely identified the importance of the study and the justification highlighted the need of conducting it although its connection with the language policies was not fully developed. The research questions were now more directly connected with the argument presented in the introduction. The state of the art or literature review was now included but it was not fully developed. In this section, the main trend of studies in this area was mentioned but no support with any reference to any of these studies was presented. Only one study was included here. The elaboration on the sources that supported each one of the concepts included in the theoretical framework improved significantly. However, instead of making reference to language learners in general in this elaboration, the writer many times brought the experience of the students in this study which may be more appropriate for the data analysis or the findings sections. At the end of this framework, the writer wrote an overview of some of the constructs presented, and although a bit general, it showed her interest in wrapping up this section and connecting its contents. The research design was a bit more elaborated including a more comprehensive description of the context, the research design and the instruments. Although a very nice diagram was included to present the research cycle, the writer failed to include an explanation of how this cycle was going to be developed in the study.

Merging of Qualitative and Quantitative Data for the Advanced Developing Writer

General writing skills. This writer definitely had problems with grammar, lexicon and punctuation that were identified in both types of analyses presented above. Some of the problems that stood out and remained even in the second draft were the choice of prepositions and word choice. The latter improved but still was present but as indicated in the textual analysis the choice of words may be influenced by the first language. There were still problems with

grammar maybe as a result of writing more despite having improved as a result of the feedback included in the first draft. The length of sentences improved in some parts of the document by including more periods to separate ideas instead of the endless chains of sentences followed by commas. This may be a reason the scores in the aspect of punctuation remained quite low in the checklists. Regardless of the interference of these grammatical and lexical problems, this writer managed to structure her ideas quite well and give a nice flow to her arguments.

Academic writing skills. This writer was aware of the need to include information from sources as reflected in the presence of information from scholars however she did not attempt to make any elaborations of this information, much less any kind of connection between these pieces of information. Closely connected was the use of appropriate ways of referencing the information from these sources or the lack of consistency in their use. Sometimes the lack of attention to the quotation marks left information just hanging in there with no clear marker of where it ended, for example leading to consider this plagiarism. This concurs with the low scores in these three areas in the first draft. The second draft shows in both the scoring and textual analysis an improvement in the use of sources with more elaboration on the information and attention to quote sources following APA formatting. However, through the textual analysis it was possible to see that the writer was more carefully paying attention to all these aspects in the first half of the document because as one moves toward the end of the document, problems of inconsistency of referencing appear again and even instances that information from sources are bluntly appropriated as in the example described in the textual analysis above. This writer is definitely gaining confidence in the use of sources and her referencing but maybe her lack of attention is getting in her way to reach to the next level.

Appropriation of the thesis genre. This writer showed she knew what she was supposed to do in the introduction regarding content however by looking at the textual analysis the main problem was the interrelation between the information from the parts and the parts with the research question. In the second draft a significant improvement was observed not only in the checklist but as well in the textual analysis where it was possible to see that the arguments were linked to the research questions. Only some information about policy was kind of disconnected. The theoretical framework was the section with lowest scores from all sections scored. The textual analysis shows that it was also the disconnect between the definitions that later in the second draft improved, showing more elaboration on the information from the sources; the only problem was the connection that she was making with the experiences from her students as related to the concepts and definitions, which was more a move for the discussion section and not in this section of the document. In the second draft, the literature review was present but the writer basically mentioned the trends in the research but included only one study to support it. Maybe she thought this was enough or it was just still a work in progress. In general the improvement was reflected in the scores this section received in the second draft as well. The scores of the methodology section also improved in several aspects, some even got 3s in the second draft and the textual analysis showed that the description of the methodological design was better structured and supported and more information was included for the instruments. This writer improved the coherence of the information in each of these sections; however, the theoretical framework and literature review sections still required more work.

Proficient Writer

General writing skills. Quantitative (rubric scoring). This writer received most 3s and 4s in all the descriptors in the areas of vocabulary, grammar and punctuation. In the first draft,

two of the raters gave him 3s in vocabulary than later went up to 4s in the second draft for one of them. Grammar got 4s for two raters in both drafts. One rater gave this writer 3s in both drafts (see Table 76).

Table 76

Results of the Scoring of the First and Second Drafts by the Three Raters for the Aspects of General Writing

Descriptor	DRAFT 1						DRAFT 2					
	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg
C. Control of academic writing style – does the grammar and vocabulary conform to appropriate patterns of written academic English												
1. Appropriate use of abstract vocabulary	4	4.0	3	3.0	3	3.12	4	4.0	3	3.0	4	3.87
2. Appropriate use of technical terms from the field	4		3		3		4		3		4	
3. Appropriate use of collocation	4		3		3		4		3		4	
4. Appropriate level of formality and 'objectivity'	4		3		3		4		3		3	
5. Appropriate use of modality, interpersonal metaphor and other evaluative language	4		3		3		4		3		4	
6. Appropriate use of noun groups and grammatical metaphor	4		3		3		4		3		4	
7. Control of taxonomic relations	4		NA		3		4		NA		4	
8. Control of reference chains and other cohesive devices	4		3		4		4		3		4	
D. Grammatical correctness												
1. Correctly formed clause structures	4	4.0	3	3.0	3	3.85	4	4.0	3	3.0	4	4.0
2. Correct subject-verb agreement	4		3		4		4		3		4	
3. Correctly formed tense choice	4		3		4		4		3		4	
4. Correctly formed passives	4		3		4		4		3		4	
5. Correctly formed modality	4		3		4		4		3		4	
6. Correct use of articles	4		3		4		4		3		4	
7. Correct use of conjuncts, adjuncts and disjuncts	4		3		4		4		3		4	
E. Qualities of presentation												
1. Punctuation use generally correct	3	3.75	3	3.0	4	4.0	4	4.0	3	3.0	4	4.0
2. Spelling generally correct	4		3		4		4		3		4	
3. Capitals, italics etc. used correctly	4		3		4		4		3		4	
4. Word processing appropriate	4		3		4		4		3		4	

Qualitative (textual analysis). This writer had an excellent control of grammar and his vocabulary is varied and quite sophisticated. There was also variety of structures and the ideas

presented followed a clear flow. There were minor mistakes with the use of some words and prepositions but in general terms this writer was quite accurate in this regard.

In the second draft, several additions and modifications were made that improved the clarity of some ideas. For example, there were changes in some words to give the text a more scholarly and precise tone as in, “the study sought to produce...” in the first draft to “the study aimed at producing...” in the second. Some connectors were also changed.

Academic writing skills. Quantitative (rubric scoring). This writer received 3s and 4s in all the aspects of academic writing from two raters. However, one rater gave him 2s in both drafts in most aspects except in transference of information and including various perspectives in the field that were given 3s (see Table 77).

Table 77

Results of the Scoring of the First and Second Drafts by the Three Raters for the Aspects of Academic Writing

Descriptor	DRAFT 1						DRAFT 2					
	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg
A. Use of source material and personal experience – is information taken from research and experience correct and/or appropriate for the task?												
1. Used relevant information from reading (i.e., to the topic studied)	3	3.5	2	2.33	4	3.5	3	3.66	2	2.33	4	3.83
2. Irrelevant information is avoided	3		2		3		3					
3. Information from research or personal experience is interpreted and transferred correctly	4		3		4		4					
4. Text is free from plagiarism/information is integrated with own words and ideas	4		2		3		4					
5. Recognition of various perspectives in the field	4		3		4		4					
6. Accurate referencing in text, bibliography or reference list is correct (APA style)	3		2		3		4					

Qualitative (textual analysis). In the first draft the writer did a very good job integrating and elaborating on the information from sources. Although his citation of sources was quite

accurate, there were a few problems such as including long quotes and introducing information from secondary sources. It was especially outstanding the way this writer elaborated on the information from sources, making clear connections between the ideas and the topic of the study. Regarding the use of academic vocabulary, this writer handled a good variety of expressions that made the text sound quite academic and knowledgeable of the research jargon. There were just some little problems in the way the writer dealt with some of the information from sources when he was being explicit about it as in: “The researchers whose studies I am using in this theoretical framework seem to agree that...” or “The format of the taxonomy is not replicated here but the information has been copied verbatim.” or “Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) have provided a definition of motivation which is worth quoting in its entirety.”. The writer could have simply relied on the resources of citation for this purpose. This writer did a good job introducing the information to come with transition and concluding paragraphs indicating an understanding of the way writers should prepare and guide the reader in this type of document. Some tables were taken from some sources and included in the text but no page number was included. Although a great deal of attention was paid to formatting the document according to APA formatting, there were still some problems especially with headings and subheadings.

In the second draft, the writer reinforced his presence in several parts of the document by explicitly showing it as in “I will close the theoretical revision by referring ...” The writer also varied the way he introduced the information from authors by changing the structures he used. One example of this is “Freeman understands development as gaining constant...” in draft 1 to “Development is understood as gaining constant awareness...” in draft 2. The writer reduced considerably the reference to the authors as he was presenting their ideas maybe to avoid the redundancy especially in long sections devote to explain their constructs in detail. The writer

also avoided making explicit processes as “ the writer says...” or “ It can inferred , based on what Brown presents, that evaluation is the single most ...” and instead elaborated on the information as in “Evaluation is the single most important component in the curriculum as it gives...”. The writer also varied the way he introduced the contribution from different authors by using connecting words such as “Furthermore” and “Additionally”. The writer only overlooked a couple of times some requirements of citation. For instance, the introduction of a quote no longer than 37 words in a stand-alone paragraph. However, the citation of sources was a very strong area for this writer. He solved some the problems he had in the first draft in this aspect that included providing complete information about the sources of tables and their corresponding labeling. Besides the writer also avoided the explanation of processes he had gone through as he elaborated on the information. The formatting of the document was quite accurate, especially observing the APA requirements for headings and subheadings.

Appropriation of the thesis genre. Quantitative (rubric scoring). This writer received 4s and 3s in the introduction except in the overview of the information that was not present in the first draft. The literature review got 2s or NA in several aspects in the first draft by two of the raters. The third rater gave 2s in the aspects of locating the study, a logical sequence and the final overview but they turned into 3s and 4s except in the final overview that still received 2. The theoretical framework received 3s and 4s except for one rater that gave the general overview a 2 in the first draft. The methodology also got 3s and 4s. The instructional design that in this study was a professional development plan got 3s and 4s for two raters. The third rater gave all the aspects 2s in both drafts (see Table 78).

Table 78

Results of the Scoring of the First and Second Drafts by the Three Raters for the Three Sections of the Thesis

Descriptor	DRAFT 1						DRAFT 2					
	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg
B. Structure and development of text – is the structure and development of each section of the thesis appropriate to the task and its context?												
Introduction												
The introduction engages with the task and orientates to how the research question(s) is (are) grounded and approached	N/A	4	3	3.0	3	2.6	4	4.0	3	3.0	4	3.8
A clear rationale to conduct the study is presented	4		3		3		4		3		4	
A comprehensive description of the context supports the need to conduct the study	4		3		3		4		3		4	
All research questions or problems are linked to the rationale and context presented	4		3		3		4		3		4	
A clear overview of the project introduces the basic content of the sections to provide a clear flow of the document	N/A		NA		1		4		NA		3	
The literature Review												
The literature review clearly and sufficiently locates the study within the realm of the literature in the subject area	2	2.4	NA	NA	2	2.6	3	2.8	NA	NA	3	3.4
A brief description of the structure of the review is given	2		NA		3		3		NA		4	
All parts have a logical sequence(from general to more specific)	2		NA		2		2		NA		4	
Information from literature on a given aspect starts with the authors' ideas and gradually introduces the writer's understanding and connection to the main issue of the study	3		NA		4		3		NA		4	
An overview of the main aspects brought up in the literature gathered is given and the gap in literature pointed out	3		NA		2		3		NA		2	
The theoretical framework												
The theoretical framework clearly and sufficiently presents the pertinent constructs for the study	4	4.0	3	3.0	3	3.0	4	4.0	3	3.0	4	3.8
A brief description of the theoretical constructs to be explored is presented	4		3		3		4		3		4	
Each construct is sufficiently developed to lay out the main tenets	4		3		3		4		3		4	
Each construct is linked to the study	4		3		4		4		3		4	
An overview of the theoretical constructs included is given	4		3		2		4		3		3	

Table 78 (con't)

Descriptor	DRAFT 1						DRAFT 2					
	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg	Rater 1	Avg	Rater 2	Avg	Rater 3	Avg
<i>The methodology</i>												
The methodology section clearly and sufficiently lays out the rationale for the methodological design and the instruments used	4	4.0	3	3.0	3	3.25	4	4.0	3	3.0	4	4.0
The methodological design is clearly defined and supported with literature	4		3		3		4		3		4	
Instruments are carefully described	4		3		4		4		3		4	
Samples of the instruments are provided in the main text or in appendices at the end (when applicable)	4		3		3		4		3		4	
<i>The instructional Design</i>												
The methodological section clearly and sufficiently presents the instructional intervention used	4	4.0	2	2.0	3	3.0	4	4.0	2	2.0	4	4.0
A clear overview of the instructional intervention is given	4		2		3		4		2		4	
Samples of the intervention are provided in the main text or in appendices at the end (when applicable)	4		2		3		4		2		4	

Qualitative (textual analysis). The introduction component did not include the introductory section which may have been the result of a decision to write it once the rest of the document was completed. The rationale of the study was clearly presented and supported with information from literature and the description for the context and problem was quite comprehensive and concrete. The theoretical framework section was quite extensive because it was divided into two big sections that included the theoretical background of the approach of the professional development program explored on the one hand and the aspects covered in the program on the other. One interesting aspect of this theoretical framework was the way the writer integrated the information from scholars with conceptual and methodological decisions the writer made while designing and implementing the program. For example, the writer presented the characteristics of professional development some authors had defined, and then he presented

how these characteristics were or not considered in his particular study. It seemed that the writer felt that he could combine theory and methodological features as it is reflected in the way he laid out the information in this section. The methodology section was clearly supported with theory as were the methodological approach and instruments to be used in the study. In this section the writer also described the participants and research stages. The writer thoroughly presented the diagnostic stage in which he based the design of the program which he also supported with the information he included in the theoretical framework. This writer showed very good understanding of the content and structure of each of the sections he included so far in the first draft.

In the second draft, the writer included an introductory section that placed the reader in the context and problem and how it was approached in the study. By including the findings and conclusions in it, the writer turned it into an extended version of the abstract. In the description of the context, a paragraph about the city where the study was conducted was eliminated probably because the writer considered this information was not relevant. The other parts of the introduction remained basically the same. At the beginning of the theoretical framework, the writer included a paragraph presenting all the elements which was something he failed to do in the first draft. The theoretical framework is the one area that changed the most from the ones presented in the first draft but these changes were more related to parts of the text that were removed. The most important example of this deals with the connections that the writer made between the information from theory and how that information had shaped decisions he made in the design and research process. The theoretical constructs were sometimes also presented more concisely. In the methodology section, a description of the stages of the action research as related

to the program and a description of the participants' main subjects in their program of studies were added. All the workshops used in the professional development program were presented.

Merging of Qualitative and Quantitative Data for the Proficient Writer

General writing skills. This writer definitely had excellent control over all the aspects of general writing skills. He still had few minor problems with some words that in the second draft were changed. New connectors were included in the second draft giving more variety to the document. In general terms, this writer could be placed at the advanced level as he received scores between the 3s and 4s in both drafts.

Academic writing skills. Elaboration from sources can be said to be one of this writer's strengths as he made clear connections with the information, giving the document a nice flow. Not only did he introduce the information in each section, but also wrapped it up, really guiding the reader through the documents. Regarding academic vocabulary, the writer included a variety of expressions that made his document sound quite scholarly. His use of APA citation style improved from the first to the second draft dramatically. This could have been the result of careful proofreading. The areas that were given 2s by the score 2 in both drafts were use of relevant information, avoiding irrelevant information and APA formatting, and they remained there while the other two raters kept their scores in the 3s and 4s. The second rater shared with the researcher the reason for these scores in these aspects of academic writing. The rater commented that this writer had included way too much information that she personally considered irrelevant.

Appropriation of the thesis. The introduction and methodology sections remained almost the same from the first to the second draft with only a few additions of information in the second draft indicating a clear understanding of the content and structure of these two sections

from the beginning. These two sections also received scores of 3s and 4s in both drafts. The theoretical framework was a quite extensive section including a lot of information at first because the writer had complete paragraphs in which he explained how the source had been contributed to his study. In the second draft these long paragraphs disappeared considerably, shortening this section. When the researcher asked this writer later through email communication about this move, the writer told the researcher that it had been a suggestion from his supervisor who explained this information should not be included in this section. This is an interesting example of the way this writer thought the sources he used should be explicitly connected to the presentation of the sources in the theoretical framework. The literature review was included inside the theoretical framework but it only included three studies that were fully described which may have been the reason for two raters to give 2s and even Non Applicable to this section. One reason for such short literature review may have been that the parameters defined by the program or supervisor allowed this section to be this short. This writer had a good idea of the content and structure of most of the sections of the thesis but still learned through the process about a feature of the theoretical framework that was not that transparent to him.

Merging of the Findings From the Three Writers

General writing skills. The intermediate developing writer showed many problems in grammar, lexicon, and structure at the beginning of the process, but as the process continued, were partially fixed, usually as a direct response to the feedback provided by the supervisor. The problems were also focused at the sentence and paragraph level. Some structure and word choice problems were directly related to the first language interference. Coherence of ideas was also a challenge but through the consistent use of connectors, this writer improved this aspect in several parts of the document. As the writer writes more, it is more likely she makes new mistakes, even

some that were already corrected in similar structures. The advanced developing writer managed to structure her ideas better. However, there were three aspects that stood out that impacted to some degree the reading of her drafts. Word choice was a problem and this choice was usually influenced by her first language, Spanish. Some problems with grammar (e.g., word order) appeared every now and then. The third problem was related to punctuation. She tended to write very long sentences. These problems, however, did not affect the understanding of her ideas and she managed to give and keep a really good flow throughout the document. This writer also implemented most of the corrections included in the feedback from the first draft in the second draft. The proficient writer did not have problems with grammar, structure, punctuation, or vocabulary. His writing was clear and the ideas were articulated quite well in most cases. Regardless of the fact that he had no problem with word choice, he made some modifications in the second draft to some words and expressions to make the text sound more academic.

Academic writing skills. The intermediate developing writer seemed to have a very superficial knowledge of academic skills in relation to the use of sources. There were many instances of long excerpts from sources included in the drafts with no attribution to the authors. There were other times when this information was included as bullet points. There was no elaboration about those sources in any of those cases. In the second draft, she made an effort to correct some of these problems as a result of the feedback from her supervisor, turning some of long lists of bullet points into paragraphs and sometimes providing comments elaborating on the information. Citation of the sources using APA formatting when present was good but there was no consistency in the whole draft. There were some sections that still looked copied from the source because the change of language was quite evident but no source was included. Sometimes the information was paraphrased, but the idea was not quite clear. This writer seemed to be

reconciling with the requirements of academic writing but needs to still practice more. The advanced proficient writer also had problems with the use of information from sources and citation. However, these problems were different. She included information from sources but did not elaborate on them. It was just a set of paragraphs with the information. These paragraphs were not connected, either. This writer knew the basics of APA citation but failed to use it throughout the entire document. The second draft improved in these aspects when the writer added elaboration to the information from sources and connected it. The proficient writer handled very well most of the aspects of academic writing. He knew how to use sources. He included direct quotes, paraphrased information, and did it effortlessly. He cited sources using APA formatting, and the few problems he had in the first draft were corrected in the second draft.

Appropriation of the thesis. The intermediate and advanced developing writers shared an understanding of the content of the introduction. However, the information was very compartmentalized with no connection between the parts. One difference between these two writers was that the intermediate developing writer included many assumptions that were not supported with any evidence. For the advanced developing writer, her problem was the lack of connection of the information in the introduction with the research questions. The proficient writer had no problems with the introduction. He included relevant information in an organized and fluid way.

The theoretical framework represented a challenge for the intermediate and advanced developing writers. For the intermediate writer, the challenge was understanding that just including information from sources indiscriminately without proper referencing and as bullet points sometimes was not a way to present a discussion of the theoretical constructs supporting

the study. For the advanced developing writer, the problem was in the elaboration from the information from sources. She improved this in the second draft significantly. The literature review included in the second draft was very general, describing trends but with the support of only one source. For the proficient writer, the theoretical framework was quite extensive, including a lot of information. The theory was properly presented; however, through the process he realized that it was not necessary to include the explanation of the way the information from each source impacted the study.

The methodology was also very compartmentalized and with no connections between the pieces of information included in the drafts of the intermediate developing writer. She knew she had to support her design and instruments with sources and she did it well in the second draft. The advanced developing writer's methodology was well structured, just needing more detailed description of the instruments for the second draft. The proficient writer did a very good job in the methodology section, providing plenty of information about the pilot study, the program he implemented, and the instruments he used in the study. In general terms, there were some differences in the way these writers implemented the knowledge they had of the content and structure of these sections of their theses. The proficient writer had a very good idea of the content and structure of all the sections and very skillfully presented each of them, with the only exception being those explanations of the use of the sources in his study that later he had to remove. Both the intermediate and advanced developing writers seemed to know in general terms the content they needed to include in each section; however, their lack of familiarity with the way this information was supposed to be structured and linked resulted in problems evident in their drafts. Sometimes the problems could have been related to a superficial understanding of what each component of the sections was aimed at doing and how it was supposed to do it. The

analyses of the drafts provide interesting insights into the starting points for these writers and the way the process of the thesis supports the development of general writing skills and academic writing skills and the appropriation of the thesis genre.

Summary

In this chapter the researcher presented the data gathered through the interviews, online surveys and the analyses of the drafts of the theses. The data from interviews and the online surveys were presented for each of the five main themes: general writing skills, academic writing skills, the appropriation of the thesis genre, factors and impact. Each main theme was explored according to the perspectives of students, graduates and supervisors and then all were merged. In the last part of the chapter, the results of the analyses of the drafts of the theses were presented for the three writers. Chapter V presents the discussion of these findings relative to the theoretical framework and literature review presented in chapter II. It also presents the implications of the study, the limitations and the recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

Chapter I introduced the study by presenting the background and context of teacher education programs for English teaching in Colombia. The research question guiding the study was presented as it was the statement of purpose, the significance of the study, the anticipated limitations and the definition of terms.

Chapter II presented the theoretical framework and incorporated the relevant literature in higher education writing, second language writing, academic writing, and the master's thesis in the international and Colombian contexts.

Chapter III addressed the research methodology and the procedures for conducting this study. Data collection and data analysis were described including the merging scheme used.

Chapter IV presented the findings of the interviews, online surveys, and the document analyses. Each of the themes identified in the analysis were explored from the perspectives of the students, graduates, and supervisors involved in the writing of a thesis in English as part of the requirements of master's English language teaching programs in Colombia. The analyses of the drafts of the theses from three writers were also presented.

Chapter V presents a thorough discussion of the findings in relation to the research question posed in this study and supported on the theoretical framework and literature review

presented in Chapter II. The implications of the study and recommendations for further research are also presented here.

Discussion of the Research Question

How are academic and general writing skills in English developed and/ or impacted through the process of the master's thesis in EFL teacher education programs in Colombia?

In order to answer this question, the researcher went through the findings of the merging of the data from interviews and online surveys in each of the five main themes for all the participants. The product of the final merging was the identification of three leading findings that are supported with the results of the document analysis. These three findings build together the answer for the research question posed in this study.

Finding 1

Students go through a process of accommodation to the writing task through interaction by deploying the already acquired general writing and academic skills and learning and implementing new ones according to their initial level and following different development paths.

Accommodation through interaction. As students face the task to start writing their theses, they approach it according to the level of confidence they have in their general writing skills and academic writing skills. Sometimes their familiarity with the genre plays an important role, as it will add to the daunting task ahead of them. If we add to this, the problems that some students may have defining the topic of their studies or the specific questions they want to explore, then the thesis turns into a quite demanding endeavor for many. Some students and graduates faced self-efficacy issues at first when they felt writing was “just impossible” while others kept postponing doing it probably for the same reason. Rahilly (2004) also found that self-efficacy along with motivation and positive attitudes impacted the ESL students' affective

responses to academic writing in her study. Paltridge and Starfield (2007) referred to these as psycho-affective issues that affect second language students' ability to write because they may not feel competent (p. 44). There were also some others that started writing through their field work or just from the beginning to avoid getting blocked. Kroll (1990) referred to this challenge while describing the situation of English-as-a-second-language students, "ESL students must learn to create written products that demonstrate mastery over contextually appropriate formats for the rhetorical presentation of ideas as well as mastery in all areas of language, a Herculean task given the possibilities of error" (p. 140). The task is definitely challenging for most students.

The idea of accommodation falls within the Vygostky's (1978) zone of proximal development as each individual follows a certain path to learning according to his/her potential and through the interaction with the tools available to him/her. The outcome of this interaction is gradual internalization (Lantolf, 2000). It is worth it to bring up the idea that in certain contexts accommodation could be perceived as violent, as suggested by Bartholomae (1986), because it implies that "the students locate themselves in a discourse that is not 'naturally' immediately theirs"(p. 12).

The testimonies of the students, graduates, and supervisors in this study indicate that all students managed to accommodate to the task with varying degrees of effort. Regardless of the initial level of writing ability, writing the thesis was a learning experience in which even the most proficient writer developed new understandings about writing. For students whose level was not very high, writing the thesis became a multilayered process in which they tried to keep up with the various stages of the process while working on different fronts. One front for some was one or several issues related to general writing skills such as grammar, punctuation, lexicon, or coherence and cohesion. Another front was appropriately handling aspects of academic

writing skills like citation practices, use of sources, avoiding unsupported assumptions, and including their voice appropriately. One last front was dealing with the requirements of the thesis genre regarding content and structure of each one of the sections. These students worked on all these fronts simultaneously sometimes more successfully than others, usually in direct relationship with the support they got from their supervisors, programs, and peers and through their interaction with tools like texts, models, and guidelines. When the supervisors and other sources of feedback were present, they helped learners move within familiar and new frameworks of mind to approach new skills and the new genre (Vygotsky, 1978).

Focused areas of attention. One interesting finding was to see how students and graduates usually identified one or two areas that were really challenging for them as they undertook the writing of their thesis. General writing skills that were problematic for most students and graduates, and also confirmed by the supervisor, were coherence and cohesion. The academic writing skills hardest to master were the use of sources, and in particular the elaboration of information from sources that included several aspects: Identification of the sources, the elaboration on the information which involves the appearance of the voice of the writer, and their integration of these sources in the text. Similarly, there were sections of the thesis that posed more challenges than others. The theoretical framework, in which most use of sources is expected, and data analysis were the sections that students, graduates, and supervisors identified as more challenging for students. It was very rare to find students and graduates that claimed to have had problems in all areas of general and academic writing skills. However, in the few cases where students or graduates had many issues, they acknowledged the difficulty they went through, but how rewarding was the experience of learning to write and complete the thesis.

Strategies. As part of this process of accommodation, learners either requested or found ways to work on those areas in which they had problems or felt quite weak. Reading as a way of learning about writing, academic writing, and the thesis is a very effective strategy for students. Eschholz (1980) asserted that when students read texts that have the characteristics of the texts they are expected to emulate, they are able to identify those features of the text that they did not know how to produce. Macbeth (2004) suggested that the use of models for some students served the purpose of giving “them something to do, and without this doing, there can be no progress toward discovering the insufficiency of the model and eventually learning writing as a practice” (p. 137). Resorting to other more knowledgeable people to proofread and give feedback on their writing was also widely used as these students, graduates, and supervisors acknowledged. These are all examples of tools used-either material such as books, articles, and theses or people proving feedback mediating the process of learning to write (Vygotsky, 1978).

Trial and error. Trial and error as a strategy was identified in the analysis of documents. This was particularly clear in relation to academic writing skills such as the use of information from sources and in the content and structure of the information included in the sections of the thesis. For example, they would include information from sources using bullet points and sometimes taking complete pages from articles or books to illustrate a given concept or theory. They realized later that was not enough; they were supposed to transform or transfer that information including their voice. This concurs with the experience of many of the students and graduates who pointed out how difficult it had been for them to do this at the beginning of their process. In relation to the content and structure of the information in each section, some writers included information that at times was not linked to each other or the research question. They kind of knew what they had to include; however, they did not know how to structure it or keep in

mind their research questions. In this regard, students and graduates referred to different degrees of awareness of the content and structure of the different sections of the thesis by the time they started which may explain the different ways they tried to learn about it. It seems that they were expecting to see if the first approach was right, but as the feedback showed, sometimes it was not, as was reflected in the textual analysis of the drafts from the three writers in this study. For example, in the theoretical framework section, the intermediate developing writer included information in a long list of bullet points; the advanced developing writer summarized the information from each source but did not elaborate on it; and the proficient writer included sections in which he explained how he had use every source specifically in his study. All of them, in a way, showed their understanding of what they had to do and include in this section. This understanding was then confirmed or disconfirmed by their supervisors. Here it is evident the importance of the feedback in this process as it is through this feedback that learners get clarification (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

Imitation. Imitation of citation styles and expressions was a strategy identified by supervisors and acknowledged by some students and graduates in order to tackle problems in the areas of referencing and vocabulary. In the case of the imitation of referencing styles of citations, it can be seen as an early attempt to appear to be academic or what Bartholomae (1985) referred to as carrying “off the bluff, since speaking and writing will most certainly be required long before the skill is learned” (p. 135). This is the situation of many of these novice writers: Writing a text of the magnitude and complexity such as the thesis. Observing the use of expressions and sophisticated vocabulary by students with different levels of ability seemed to serve a similar purpose. In fact some of these students and graduates recognized that varying the vocabulary they used and using those expressions scholars usually use helped them sound more “scholarly”

or “academic” in the case of both developing and more advanced writers. Buckingham (2008) also found in his study of the development of writing competence of L2 scholars how they felt that through reading they were enriching their vocabulary base for later use in their writing. Some supervisors pointed out some of the problems of this imitation practice when carelessly executed, as one of them referred to the way a student completely changed the idea of the author. Schleppegrell (2002) related this practice to problems at the conceptual level and even to a kind of disorganized thinking (p. 141).

From teacher to researcher to writer. Part of this accommodation is the fact that students in a master’s program need to somehow move away from their teacher role. The first instance happens when they define the topic of their studies that initially tended to be highly influenced by the perspective of their own teaching. Some supervisors pointed out this situation as did the students and graduates regarding the need to put on “the research hat”. Although not this explicitly, the situation of assuming the writer persona was noted as these students were, in most cases, asked to conform to the requirements of academia in style and rigor. Some students and graduates assumed these roles quite successfully; in those cases, it was their interest and goal to continue in academic work. These students and graduates are successfully making their way through the legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991). For some others, possibly due to other goals they may have, it was more a task to complete than really becoming enculturated in their disciplines.

Different paths of development. The perceptions of students, graduates, and supervisors, regarding the students’ thesis writing experience, shed light on the variety of paths of writing skills development that students go through as they complete the thesis. Although it is difficult to make clean-cut profiles of writing ability, these participants’ testimonies and the

drafts from the three writers that were analyzed provided information to approximate a definition of three levels of writing ability: intermediate developing writer, advanced developing writer, and proficient writer. Those students in the intermediate developing group were those whose writing skills were still quite low because they had some major problems at the sentence and paragraph levels including some issues with grammar, lexicon, and coherence and cohesion. Regarding academic writing skills, they were also not familiar with the requirements for the use of information from sources, their referencing, and their integration in the text. The thesis genre was also relatively an unexplored land unless they had to write a thesis as part of their undergraduate programs. The students in the advanced developing writer group could handle the presentation of their arguments with some minor problems with grammar and lexicon. However, for some, achieving coherence and cohesion in their texts was sometimes hard. These students' academic writing skills were still in the development stage. Sometimes their knowledge and awareness of the requirements of source use and referencing was not reflected in their texts, showing a lack of consistency in their use or lack of integration as a whole when addressing the particular research questions. Their familiarity with the thesis genre depended on their previous exposure to a thesis in their former programs. However, as they learned through the process those features of this genre, they managed to comply with most of them in relation to content; however, structure as related to achieving coherence in text, required further work. The students in the proficient writer group had no issues with grammar, lexicon, or coherence. However, they felt the need to work on expanding their vocabulary to make their writing sound more academic. Academic writing skills were for some proficient writers also quite an unfamiliar territory unless they had formerly been engaged in academic work. Otherwise, even for them, it was a challenging task to become familiar with writing skills and implement them appropriately. There

were also those proficient writers who were quite confident using sources, integrating them, and referencing them in their texts. These writers were sometimes familiar with the thesis genre or, in the cases where they were not, they could easily make connections to the knowledge they had with the research report they had been exposed to through research articles they had read. In general terms, they knew the content and structure of the information of the sections of the thesis. These writers would care more about scholar-related issues such as strengthening their presence or voice in their writing. In order to represent more specific features of general writing skills, academic writing skills, and the appropriation of the thesis genre through the paths that each type of writer took, three points in the process have been identified (i.e., beginning, intermediate, and final stages). These features can be seen in more detail in Table 79.

One aspect related to students' second language acquisition process that also affects this development path is the influence that students' first language (i.e., Spanish) had on several aspects of these students' and graduates' writing skills. Some of these aspects included punctuation, length of sentences, word order, and word choice. One aspect that some students and graduates mentioned was the idea of "beating around the bush" while they were writing which some of them viewed as a characteristic of writing in their first language. The degree of the interference of the first language (Ventola, 1996) in these students' and graduates' writing varied according to their level of proficiency and became an aspect harder to control for some students and graduates than for others.

Table 79

Developmental Paths of Writers With Three Levels of Writing Ability

Level of writing ability	Area	Initial stage	Intermediate stage	Final stage
Intermediate Developing Writer	General Writing skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Weak language skills -problems at the sentence, paragraph levels -Lack of coherence -Not much variety of vocabulary -Use of the same connectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Awareness of language problems is evident -Improvement at the sentence and paragraph level -Lack of coherence (flow between parts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Control over the sentence and paragraph level -Increase variety in the use of vocabulary/ connectors -Grammar and lexicon problems usually remain (prepositions, word choice) -Problems with coherence remain
	Academic writing skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Summarizing skills are mastered -No idea of referencing requirements -Taking information from sources sometimes not giving credit -No elaboration from information from sources - Similar patterns are used to introduce source information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Attempts are made to include citations -Referencing is inconsistently accurate -Information from sources is taken in big chunks -Information is presented in bullet points -When citation is included hardly ever any elaboration is included 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Certain patterns for citation and paraphrasing are more consistent -Elaboration on the information Improves but it is hardly kept through the document -Information included in bullet points is transformed into paragraph format -Paraphrasing skills still developing , presence of patchwriting
	Appropriation of the thesis Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Little or no awareness of the thesis genre -Disconnect of the information in each section -There is no flow between the sections -There is no introduction of the information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sections are now introduced following similar patterns -Transitions are included -Information is properly placed but lacks coherence in the section 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sections of the document adhere to the format -Information in each section is introduced and concluded. -There are times when the information does not really have direct relation to the study or research question

Table 79 (con't)

Advanced developing Writer	General Writing skills	-Good language skills -Grammar and lexical problems are minor, sometimes related to word order, word choice and prepositions -Lack of coherence In parts of the text	-Improvement in word choice, grammar and word order -Coherence improves but still needs work	-More variety in vocabulary and structures - Minor problems with word choice remain -Problems with coherence at the micro and macro level text remain
	Academic writing skills	-Awareness of the need to use sources -Paraphrasing of the information from sources is good -Some idea of the requirements of referencing -No elaboration from information from sources - Similar patterns are used to introduce source information	- Elaboration on the information Improves -Referencing is accurate in general terms with few exceptions - variety of expressions to introduce sources	-Source information is clearly integrated in the text by using a variety of forms- direct quotes, and paraphrasing -referencing is highly accurate
	Appropriation of the thesis Genre	-some idea of the content of the sections -Information in each section is disconnected	-Content of the sections gradually becomes more integrated -information in each section is introduced and concluded.	-Sections of the document adhere to the format
Proficient Writer	General Writing skills	-Good command of grammar, vocabulary and coherence	-Introduction of new expressions and more sophisticated vocabulary	-No problems with language
	Academic writing skills	-some knowledge of referencing requirements but lack of consistency -Good use of information from sources	-Referencing of sources improves	-Excellent integration of information from sources and referencing is accurate
	Appropriation of the thesis Genre	-Awareness of content and structure of each section of the thesis -Some problems with the quantity and quality of the information included	-Lacking Information and details are added	-Each section complies with the requirements of content and structure

Improvement. Students', graduates', and supervisors' perceptions of writing level at the end of the thesis in the online surveys concurred in the fact that most of them perceived improvement in relation to the initial level they had defined. Nevertheless, these groups of participants did not agree in the final level of students' writing competence. The online survey results showed a tendency among students and graduates to perceive they had achieved higher levels of proficiency over the levels than the levels their supervisors had defined for them. This finding agrees with the findings of Friedlander's (1981), Harley's (1991), and Hart's (2006) studies that also pointed out the discrepancy between the perceptions of both students and instructors regarding students' writing skills.

In general terms, most students and graduates perceived this improvement in a variety of ways. For some it was awareness of features of the writing process or writing in general. For others it was the clarity of what they have to do to write well. For example, a graduate talked about how he needed to take the reader from the outer world to the thesis in the introduction and then take the reader through the pedagogical implications to the real world in the conclusions. This realization of the purpose of these sections could fit within Johns' (1997) idea of an individual's evolving theory of literacy that reflects new understandings and conceptualizations of writing as a result of practice (p. 3).

Most students and graduates felt that their initial level of proficiency greatly impacted how easy or hard the experience of learning to write academically was for them while writing the thesis. This concurs with Causarano's (2011) and Gomez's (2013) findings that the writer's initial level of writing influenced their learning and use of academic writing. There were some supervisors that recalled a few cases in which students' initial levels of writing ability did not necessarily have any direct relationship with the ability to improve and acquire the skills required

to complete the thesis, though. They commented on the experience they had with some students with poor writing skills at the beginning of the process and how they carefully implemented the feedback given and followed the suggestions provided through each stage of the process and finally managed to improve and complete their projects successfully.

Finding 2

There is a variety of factors that contribute to the development of general writing skills and academic writing skills as students engage in the writing experience of the thesis that include personal factors, factors related to the supervision, and factors related to the program.

Dispositions. Several participants mentioned how certain dispositions they possessed were very important factors in their successful completion of their theses. Some of these dispositions included autonomy, self-discipline, reflectiveness, and a goal-oriented mentality. Kellogg (2006) commented in relation to expert writers how “[e]xperienced writers learn to self-regulate their emotions and behavior to stay on task and complete the work by losing themselves in their work, engineering their work environment, adhering to a work schedule, and practicing motivational rituals” (p. 395). In a way, these novice writers needed to self-regulate to engage productively in their writing. Closely related was the students’ commitment to their studies and the drive to finish the program. The latter dispositions were closely related to their motivation to undertake and complete their master’s programs and sometimes their interest to really learn to write academically.

Background. Some participants also acknowledged how their previous reading and writing exposure provided the tools to know how to write academically, how to structure their writing, and the content of the sections in the thesis. Johns (1997) asserted that “readers and writers of texts are influenced by their past educational experiences, by their experiences with

the genre, by culture, by content, by context, and by many other factors” (p. 98). Participants in the study referred to the problems students faced due to their lack of involvement with writing as part of their professional lives. Prior writing knowledge was also found to be related to writing performance in Chae’s (2011) study, especially related to students’ strategy use. Other participants mentioned the benefits of having an “extensive reading background” to have more tools to write.

Several students and graduates pointed out the positive impact that their preparation in academic writing in their undergraduate and master’s programs had on their readiness to undertake the writing of their theses.

Supervision support. The kind of support that was provided by the supervisors greatly contributed to the kind of writing experience these students and graduates had with the thesis. Some of the most important aspects were related to the feedback provided, the way the drafting process was approached and the kind of scaffolding articulated throughout the process. One last aspect in this area was the supervisor’s involvement with their students’ projects.

Feedback. Hyland and Hyland (2006) talked about feedback from the sociocultural perspective as “important in providing students with the rhetorical choices central to new academic and professional literacy skills and as a way to assisting students in negotiating access to new knowledge and practices”(p. 2). Feedback provided through supervision according to the participants in this study varied in quality and degree of effectiveness in students’ development or refinement of writing skills. Some supervisors provided quite comprehensive feedback and support through the process of the thesis, while others concentrated on either content or form. The problem with the last group was with those students who did not have a good level of

writing and received no help in this regard. These students were expected to figure out things by themselves with the risk of taking a very long time or withdrawing from the program.

Although the type feedback reported usually was written, there were cases when it was a combination of written and oral feedback. Those supervisors who reported using this combination found this strategy quite effective with those students who were having lots of issues writing their theses. They recalled their meeting with them to go over the written feedback and sometimes to engage in conversations about it and regarded these meetings as very productive for their students. In the same line of direct feedback, some students, graduates, and supervisors recalled addressing difficult topics such as making unsupported assumptions or using appropriate information from sources explicitly with their students and having these conversations whenever it was needed. These last two approaches to giving feedback may fall into the dialogical interactions that Rogers (2008) found are so important for the writing processes of students in college and beyond.

Part of the work some supervisors did with some of these students included providing help on completing certain tasks such as paraphrasing texts, sometimes even showing them how to do it to prepare students to use information from sources. This practice was common among some supervisors when they realized students were having trouble understanding how to do things. This kind of support was then removed for students to continue their work independently (Vygotsky, 1978). Sometimes this scaffolding consisted in guidelines and manuals that supervisors prepared to guide students' process, especially dealing with academic writing and the genre of thesis.

In general terms, the process of drafting developed through the thesis highly impacted the development that students could achieve through the process of writing the thesis and their

awareness of features of writing that need to be considered to make their writing better. Those students who constantly received timely feedback on their drafts could engage more actively in the improvement of their skills. This was not the case for some students who were left on their own, hardly receiving any feedback. Another interesting issue was the focus of attention of the supervisor while looking at the drafts. Some supervisors focused on the form, others on the content, and some others focused on both form and content.

Involvement. Some students and graduates highlighted the importance of establishing a good relationship with their supervisors as important for their processes writing the thesis. Supervisors that actively engaged with their students' projects and valued their projects had a powerful impact on their students' success in the thesis. The opposite was also true for some students and graduates who felt neglected throughout the whole process, having to rely on other professors and people to make it until the end. Here, the affective factors related to the sense of worth and relevance of the students' projects determined many times students' perception of their own ability to complete their theses. Self-efficacy as the "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3) can be highly impacted by the interest the supervisor demonstrates toward their students' projects.

One interesting aspect of the involvement of the supervisors with their projects was the experience of some supervisors who acknowledged that there were times when they wrote part of their students' texts as they realized the students with poor skills could not do it by themselves. One reason stated by them was their interest in helping their students finish their theses.

Program alignment. The alignment of the curriculum of the masters' program and the support to writing in its classes positively impacted the preparation of these students and

graduates to write their theses. Some students, graduates, and supervisors described how their programs were sometimes aligned with the completion of each of the sections. In those cases, the thesis was built through the program and students felt supported along the way. One student brought up how his methodology class was structured in such a way that it somehow mirrored the research project and research report students were expected to conduct and write for the thesis, making him feel much more prepared for his own thesis. There were also students and graduates that recalled how professors in other classes emphasized (or not) the use of academic standards that they were expected to deploy in the writing of their theses. The idea of considering this alignment or at least requiring students to conform to the requirements of writing in all subjects could help prepare them gradually for the writing they were expected to do in the thesis. In a way it would take advantage of the interactions (Rogers, 2008) that students have with their programs' curricula to build the reading and writing skills they will need for the thesis.

Finding 3

The process of development of the general and academic writing skills has an impact on students at the individual level, on their teaching practice, and on their academic communities, but it is also related to their current and future teaching contexts.

Change. Students go through some changes as a result of the experience of writing the thesis at the personal and professional levels. Some students expressed how the experience writing the thesis impacted them as teachers and individuals.

There were students and graduates who affirmed having changed as teachers or become better observers. Some even felt their personalities had changed. This change in the person could be explained using one of Marton, Dall'Alba, and Beaty's (1993) six conceptions of learning that they called "learning as changing as a person." They explained this conception of learning as

related to the change when a person feels more capable implying “a fundamental change from seeing oneself as an object of what is happening [] to seeing oneself as an agent of what is happening” (p. 293). Similarly, Katznelson et al. (2001) found that the L2 students in their study perceived among the “by-products” of their writing process “changes in their being” along with “the acquisition of skills in other areas.” The participants in the current study also experience the latter.

Some students and graduates also changed their perceptions on writing as a result of the process. Some became more confident in their writing skills. Among these participants, there were some who realized how their writer’s voice was stronger and felt ready contribute to communities. This finding relates to Tardy’s (2005) study in which novice writers-researchers went from “knowledge telling” to “knowledge transforming,” establishing their identities. There were a couple of students and graduates who affirmed having lost their interest in writing and continuing to do research as a result of the intensity of the task or due to exigency of the requirements of academic writing and the thesis.

Direct impact in the classroom. Students recognized how their process of learning to write the thesis found its way into their own classrooms. These students and graduates referred to their experience, implementing with their own students what they were learning in their theses. Some participants mentioned replicating what their supervisors were doing to help them with their students while teaching them how to write in English and sometimes even to write their thesis in their undergraduate programs.

Developing expertise and interest. Some students reached different levels of appropriation of the genre of the thesis that determined the degree of expertise and confidence they achieved by the end of the thesis process to continue conducting research and reporting it.

Some felt very compelled to continue undertaking academic work. However, some acknowledged the difficulties that they could face while learning new academic genres such as the research article. Other students, graduates, and supervisors referred to the weight that individual goals had on students' interest in really developing their skills and learning to write academically. Some said that if their motivation to undertake the master's program was to get a promotion or economic benefits, it would be very likely they did not really care about developing the skills or learning the nuances of the academic genres through their classes or the thesis. Here it is clear to see how if the goal is not oriented to complete the task and benefit from the process, it is not very likely to lead to learning.

Workplace support systems. The impact of the writing skills developed while writing the thesis was determined by the support system that surrounded the students as they completed the thesis and the context in which the students worked after completing the thesis. Students and graduates referred to the specific context where they were working while they wrote the thesis as determining the impact that learning to write had for them. Two main contexts were identified: public schools and universities. Those students working in schools may feel less interested in developing their skills and continuing writing since writing academically was not among the tasks they were going to perform when they finished their programs. On the other hand, students working in universities talked about the importance of writing in these contexts. There, writing articles and publishing was highly appreciated and even a requirement for employment and promotion. Here it is possible to appreciate how the context defines the conditions and opportunities these individuals have to engage in writing and grow as writers using the skills they develop by writing their theses in their master's programs.

The complexity of capturing how the thesis contributes to the development of students' general writing skills and academic skills is reflected in the variety of components that make up the answer offered here in response to the research question,

How are academic and general writing skills in English developed and/ or impacted through the process of the master's thesis in EFL teacher education programs in Colombia?

Academic writing skills are grounded on students' general writing skills and are developed or refined through the writing of the different components of the thesis, appropriating the understanding of the main features of the thesis. There is a variety of factors that contribute to this development that include personal factors, factors related to the supervision, and factors related to the program. This development has an impact on students at the individual level, on their teaching practice, and on their academic community, but it is also related to their current and future teaching contexts.

Findings Linked to the Theoretical Framework

In order to see how the theoretical component related to the findings, the three main aspects that were the focus of this study are reviewed now in more detail.

The Impact of the Process and Completion of the Master's Thesis on the Development or Refinement of Writing Skills in English

The results of the study showed that these students developed their general writing skills through the interaction they established with tools at their disposal and the support they received through the process of writing their theses. Here it is possible to see how the interaction with tools and other more knowledgeable people contribute to construct knowledge and acquire skills. The extent of this development or refinement is influenced by their initial language proficiency and the quality of the feedback. Another important factor is the students' reading and writing

background as it determines the level of preparedness to undertake the task of writing. The context of previous instruction and preparation therefore also provides the conditions for this development.

The Impact of the Process and Completion of the Master's Thesis on the Development or Refinement of Academic Writing Skills to Report Research.

The development of academic writing skills is grounded also in students' general writing skills, making it in some cases quite challenging. For many students and graduates in this study, some of the problems and strengths in their general writing transferred to their learning of academic writing skills. It seems that these students and graduates more explicitly sought the support of artifacts in the form of models (i.e., research articles, theses, etc.) to support the acquisition of these skills. The way these models worked as support for the development of academic skills varied with the way they were used for the development of general writing skills, though. With academic writing skills, the students felt these models could be appropriated directly by imitation and sometimes in a sort of trial-and-error approach in which they approximated the standards sometimes without full understanding and involvement. The genre of the thesis provided the context in which academic writing skills were enacted and developed, also posing challenges due to its complexity in comparison to other academic assignments they had been exposed to in their programs.

The Perceptions and Attitudes of Students, Graduates, and Supervisors Regarding the Impact of the Master's Thesis on the Development of Writing Skills in English and Academic Writing Skills to Report Research

The insightful perceptions of the students, graduates, and supervisors in this study contributed to provide quite a comprehensive idea of the way students developed or refined both type of skills through the writing process of the master's thesis. These students and graduates

went through different paths of development as they approached the task of writing their thesis. These paths varied as did the level of writing ability they achieved as they completed their thesis. For most participants, not only was the support to their writing process important prior to and during the master's program, but also how learning to write academically in the thesis gave them the tools to have access to the discourse of their disciplines. The analysis of the drafts of the three writers provided an invaluable support to the testimonies of these participants. Through them it was possible to see how the general writing skills and the academic skills changed as the knowledge of the different components of the thesis was appropriated.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have the following implications for EFL teacher education programs in Colombia. As the requirements of programs accentuate the importance of conducting research and reporting it according to the requirements of academia, it is imperative to reflect about how the writing process is accompanied and supported through the curriculum and support units there defined.

There are several implications for English language teaching education programs and teacher educators supervising students writing their theses in English.

First, the study does support the importance of providing appropriate support to students according to their language proficiency and writing ability. It is clear that not all of these students shared the same strengths and weaknesses and therefore needed varied levels of support and guidance. Supervisors need to respond to the needs they perceive in their students by providing guidance and feedback on content and language as necessary. Teacher educators teaching other subjects in the master's programs can also undertake the task of providing more

timely and frequent feedback on their students' writing so supervisors are not the only source students have, especially when faced with a task as complex as the thesis.

Second, this study illustrates the positive impact of an alignment of courses in the program with the development of the thesis. This alignment could be related to the progression of the courses in direct relation to the development of the thesis as some participants felt this was the key to their successful completion of their theses in programs that followed this curricular scheme. All participants also brought up the benefit of having preparation in academic writing as part of their master's program. One last aspect is the importance of sharing similar standards in writing in the different courses in the program so that students are gradually prepared to undertake the writing of their theses. This will contribute to making this writing experience less stressful and demanding for these students.

Third, this study does show how the master's thesis is actually the way these novice writers and more proficient writers can learn the discourse of their academic discipline necessary for their participation in it. It is clear that not all these participants have as a goal to become active members of their academic community, but for those who do, it is important to establish networks of support for research and scholar writing after graduating from these programs. These networks could encourage these master's graduates to keep writing and developing their writing skills since, as some participants acknowledged, they still felt they had room to improve. Besides, they knew that there are academic genres quite foreign to them that they need to master if they really want to continue conducting research and reporting it.

Fourth, this study does present some aspects of supervision that contributed substantially to the development of students' writing skills and some others that did not. These master's teacher education programs can review their supervisors' preparation programs as well as

practices to identify those practices that have been more effective for the goal of supporting and accompanying students in their journey to write their theses.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future studies can be conducted to better understand how the master's thesis impacts students' development of their general writing skills and academic skills. A longitudinal study following several students in their writing process through the whole master's program can shed some light on how these skills are specifically developed and what paths of development can be identified. In the same study, it would be possible to explore feedback and support practices of supervisors to identify best practices and even how students perceive and implement this feedback.

Another study can examine how the characteristics of curricula of EFL teacher education programs align with and contribute to the preparation of students to write their theses. This study can also review support materials and explore the influence of other composition and academic writing classes in students' writing development.

The impact of learning to write academically through the thesis can be further explored following the scholarly trajectories of several graduates. This study could look at their professional production including research article writing, work-related writing, and/or further postgraduate level writing.

A future study can examine how master's students in EFL teacher education programs in other countries develop these writing skills through their master's thesis to see how their perceptions and processes relate (or not) to the one of students, graduates, or supervisors from the EFL teacher education programs in Colombia here included. This study can replicate the design of the current study including in-depth interviews, surveys, and document analysis. A new

survey can be designed using the one designed for this study with necessary adjustments made from the findings of the qualitative data.

There is another component of the master's thesis that can be studied to expand the understanding of the challenges of writing a thesis that was discussed by some participants in this study. This is the research component that is necessary to design, conduct, and report the study. It would be interesting to see how these programs approach this component and how it could impact the writing experience.

At another educational level, a future study can examine how the process of the thesis in EFL undergraduate programs in Colombia is structured and how it contributes (or not) to building the writing skills of students to continue further studies.

Limitations of the Study

This study had limitations that constrained the research. Although originally intended to include all EFL teacher education programs in Colombia, it was only those programs and/or their students, graduates, and supervisors that graciously accepted the invitation to participate that were included here. The data from these participants revealed many similarities in the experiences of supervisors, graduates, and supervisors coming from these programs.

One important limitation of studies that include self-reported information and interviews is that the subjects are impacted by their being participants in a study and the current study is no exception. This impact is what is called the Hawthorne effect (Franke & Kaul, 1978). These participants' perceptions and opinions may or may not necessarily reflect their actual thinking. However, the researcher assumed that the participants were being truthful.

In addition to the limitations of the online surveys outlined in Chapter III, the difficulty of having access general numbers of students and graduates from all these programs was considered

by universities to be quite sensitive information. The lack of these data made it hard to determine an estimate of the potential population that could have responded to the online surveys for all three groups, therefore making it impossible to define the response rate for these surveys.

The limited number of drafts that the researcher managed to get voluntarily from graduates or students made it difficult to have a big pool of drafts from which to select the ones to be analyzed. Along with this, there was no control over the drafts that the writers submitted so the researcher assumed they were a representation of their actual work reflecting the two stages specified. Only one of the writers that offered her drafts was not part of the participants in the interviews or focus groups. However, she had completed her thesis in one of the programs included and confirmed having completed the online survey. Besides, the researcher also contacted her to request some general off the record information about her perceptions about her writing process in order for him to determine if there were major differences between her experience and that of other graduates in the study. This information was not included in this study but confirmed that her drafts were representative of the work completed by students in these programs.

One important limitation of the rating of the checklists already mentioned in the methodological limitations was there were two descriptors that the raters found hard to score. Another limitation was the growing variance between two of the raters. This variance has some possible explanations. One is that it is harder to achieve consistency in the scoring in the extremes of writing ability. Another explanation is that the instrument used may not be appropriate to measure the complexity and length of a master's thesis. One last explanation could be that the standards of writing quality that these raters considered exceptional were so different that their use of the checklist varied, as can be seen in this study.

One last limitation is the researcher's biases as related to his expectations regarding the development of writing based on his experience as an English language teacher and as a second language learner still in the process of learning to write academically himself. The researcher implemented some strategies to reduce these biases by keeping a reflective stance and establishing peer audits and member checks whenever possible.

Transferability of the Findings

It is clear that the interest of this study is not to generalize the findings presented here; however, it is possible to consider their transferability to contexts in which participants with similar characteristics are engaged in processes of writing academically and/or reporting research. These contexts include all those teacher education programs in which second language learners are not only developing their English language skills but are required to conduct a study and report it following the standards of academic writing.

As it was mentioned previously, EFL teacher education programs at the undergraduate level can benefit from learning about the complexity of the language problems students face as they engage in writing tasks in graduate programs to strengthen the students' work with general writing and academic writing. This study also pinpoints some of the areas of general and academic writing skills that need more emphasis through instruction and practice. EFL master's programs can review how the development of the master's thesis is linked (or not) to what is happening in the coursework students complete and how the supervision is framed around clear and comprehensive parameters that guide the support provided to students for the development and completion of their theses.

Undergraduate and graduate programs in English speaking countries that increasingly attract second language learners can profit from this overview of the challenges these learners

face as they approach academic writing in these programs to provide the appropriate support prior or in the early stages of their programs to guarantee these students' success. At the doctoral level, second language learners also face these challenges but as related to the completion of their dissertations and their supervisors can use this information to better focus students' efforts to deal with general or academic language issues prior to undertaking their final research projects.

A New Approach to Academic Literacy

The findings in this study bring up the necessity to approach academic literacy in undergraduate and master's EFL teacher education programs in ways that are responsive to the characteristics of these second language learners to provide the support to the development of general writing skills along with academic writing skills. This support implies, but it is not limited to, providing the preparation and training in general and academic writing skills through carefully tailored classes that address those problematic areas for second language learners at this level, and continuous and timely feedback on students' writing and research assignments. Attention should also be paid to creating learning spaces and providing access to tools that guide students as they encounter and appropriate different kinds of academic genres including the thesis and the research article.

These programs can also establish a common set of standards of academic writing that all subject area professors follow in their assignments in an attempt to gradually prepare students throughout their programs for the challenge of thesis. Academic literacy needs to be gradually built and nourished through instruction in these programs and later supported with the supervisory work of teacher educators involved with students writing their theses in English.

EFL teacher education programs can also establish new outlets to disseminate research conducted by graduate students and/or found groups of novice researchers that can attract and engage graduates from these programs to pursue new research and writing projects that serve to continue to build and enhance their research and writing skills.

One last aspect that requires consideration is how second language teaching practices in general distribute even attention to the work and development of all language skills including writing. This will contribute to a more comprehensive preparation of these second language learners to undertake any academic task in English.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

In-depth interviews

MA program in University	Role	Participant	MA program in University	Role	Participant	MA program in University	Role	Participant
1	Supervisor	Nicolas	2	Supervisor	Alberto	7	Supervisor	Laura
1	Supervisor	July	2	Supervisor	Karla	5	Supervisor	Lorena
1	Supervisor	Licimaco	2	Supervisor	Rosario	4	Supervisor	Marlen
1	Graduate	Dana	2	Graduate	Pedro	3	Graduate	Luis
1	Graduate	Juliana	2	Graduate	Paula	5	Graduate	Javier
1	Graduate	Andrea	2	Graduate	Jorge	4	Graduate	Sonia
1	Student	Magu	2	Student	Juan	5	Student	Magdalena
1	Student	Juana	2	Student	Angelica	7	Student	Viviana
1	Student	Sofia	2	Student	Natasha	6	Student	Claudia

Total: 27 interviews

MA program in University	Role	Participant
6	Graduate	Santiago
	Graduate	Nico
7	Graduate	Johanna
	Graduate	Jenny

Total: 4 interviews

Focus groups

MA program in University	Role	MA program in University	Role
3	Supervisors	3	Students
Gabriela Manolo Luisa Camila		Alejandro Mariana Sandra Samantha	
6	Supervisors	4	Students
Aida Ariadna Mayeya		Daniel Adolfo Angela Danilo Guillermo Amelia	

Total: 4 focus groups

APPENDIX B

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION IN STUDY- INTERVIEWS

Call for participation in study- Interviews and Focus groups

Topic: Research Invitation- interviews & focus groups

Julio Cesar Gomez, Principal Investigator from the University of Alabama, is conducting a study called “The development of writing skills in Masters level English as a Foreign Language teacher education programs: Insight into the process and perceptions from stakeholders in Colombian universities”. He wishes to find out how / if academic and every-day writing skills in English are developed and / or impacted through the process of the master’s thesis.

Taking part in this study involves giving an interview that may last from 45 minutes to one hour or participating in a focus group (i.e., group interview) that may last from one hour to one hour and a half. Graduates or students in advanced stages of their thesis writing may be asked to share two drafts of their theses for analysis, but this is optional. These interviews and focus groups include questions about your current experience writing your master’s thesis or you past experience writing your master’s thesis or your experience supervising master’s students writing their theses.

The investigator needs nine participants from our EFL master’s program for the in-depth interviews. Three current students who are completing their master’s thesis in English including a research component, three graduates who have completed a thesis with the same characteristics and three teacher educators who have been involved in the supervision of students writing their master’s theses in English.

Regarding the focus groups, the investigator would like to have at least 6 participants from a given group to conduct them. A focus group includes only participants with the same characteristics (i.e., students, graduates or supervisors). In case, you are interested in participating in the in-depth interviews but the places have been already filled, you may be asked to participate in a focus group. Please make clear in your email if this is an option that you would consider.

If you are interested in participating in these interviews or focus groups, please write to the principal investigator to his email jucego69@yahoo.com. You can also contact the investigator in this email in order to ask further questions about the study and what your participation entails prior to making a decision.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IS COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY. You are free not to participate or stop participating any time during the interview or focus group.

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT EXCERPT IN ONLINE SURVEYS

Informed Consent Excerpt in Online Surveys

This questionnaire is intended to determine your perceptions of the development or refinement of writing skills in English and academic writing skills to report research through your experience writing your thesis in English. There are no correct or incorrect answers, only your opinion. Your responses are kept confidential and anonymous. Completion of the following survey indicates your agreement to take part in this research study. Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX D
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

AAHRPP DOCUMENT #192

**UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM**

Informed Consent for a Non-Medical Study

The development of writing skills in Masters level English as a Foreign Language teacher education programs: Insight into the process and perceptions from stakeholders in Colombian universities.

Julio Gomez, Doctoral Student, Curriculum and Instruction Department.

You are being asked to take part in a research study. This study is called “The development of writing skills in Masters level English as a Foreign Language teacher education programs: Insight into the process and perceptions from stakeholders in Colombian universities”. The study is being done by Julio Gomez, who is a doctoral candidate at the University of Alabama. Mr. Gomez is being supervised by Professor Miguel Mantero who is a professor of the curriculum and instruction department at the University of Alabama.

What is this study about? What is the investigator trying to learn?

This study is being done to find out your perceptions and attitudes about the process of the master’s thesis.

Why is this study important or useful?

This knowledge is important because an examination of these perceptions and attitudes will contribute to a better understanding of the impact this project has on the development of writing skills.

Why have I been asked to be in this study?

You have been asked to be in this study because you are currently writing your master’s thesis or have already completed a master’s thesis or have supervised master’s theses that include a research study and are written in English as a requirement for graduation in an EFL teacher education program.

How many people will be in this study?

About 70 other people will be in this study.

What will I be asked to do in this study?

If you meet the criteria and agree to be in this study, you will be asked to give an interview to the researcher or participate in a focus group or share drafts of your thesis and feedback from your writing process.

How much time will I spend being this study?

The interview and focus group should take from forty five minutes to an hour. In case further interviews are required it will be requested at the end of the first interview.

Will being in this study cost me anything?

The only cost to you from this study is your time.

Will I be compensated for being in this study?

You will not be compensated for being in this study.

What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?

There are no foreseen risks to participants, but there are reasons you may not want to participate. For example, you might incur stress when being interviewed.

What are the benefits (good things) that may happen if I am in this study?

While I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research, participants usually enjoy being interviewed.

How will my privacy be protected?

Participants' identities will be kept confidential by using a pseudonym of your choice. Such information will remain the same in presentations and publications, unless otherwise specified by a participant.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

All data and artifacts will be stored in a locked file cabinet until no longer needed in the researcher's apartment in locked cabinets and personal computer files will be password protected. The only person who will have access to these data is the principal investigator. When data are no longer needed, they will be destroyed by shredding when in paper form or by deleting in electronic form.

What are the alternatives to being in this study? Do I have other choices?

The alternative to being in this study is not to participate.

What are my rights as a participant in this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. It is your free choice. You can refuse to be in it at all. Your decision whether or not to participate or leave the study any time will not affect your relationship with the College of Education at the University of Alabama.

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board (“the IRB”) is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and that the study is being carried out as planned.

Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

If you have questions about the study right now, please ask them. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study later on, please call Julio Gomez at 1- 205-000-0000 (US) or 310-000000 (Colombia) or contact at @crimson.ua.edu or Miguel Mantero at 1-205-000-0000 or contact at @bamaed.ua.edu .

If you have questions about your rights as a person in a research study, call Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University, at 205-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066.

You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach website at http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html or email us at participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu.

After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website or you may ask the investigator for a copy of it and mail it to the University Office for Research Compliance, Box 870127, 358 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0104.

I have read this consent form. I have had a chance to ask questions. I agree to take part in it. I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

In-depth interviews questions

Students

1. How would you define your level of writing skills in English by the time you began your thesis?
2. How confident did you feel about your writing skills in English to start writing your thesis?
3. What aspects of your writing proficiency (grammar, lexicon, syntax, cohesive devices, spelling and punctuation, etc.) were strong or weak by the time you started writing your thesis?
4. How is the thesis writing process impacting your writing skills in English? Can you recall any examples of this?
5. Which aspects are gradually improving through your thesis writing experience? Which aspects are improving through your research experience? Which aspects are improving through other assignments in your program?
6. How different is your level of writing skills from the one you had at the beginning of this project? How can you perceive this?
7. How would you define your level of academic writing skills to report research by the time you began your thesis?
8. What aspects of your academic writing (synthesis of information, use of source material, arguments and claims building, control of academic writing style, etc.) were pretty strong or weak by the time you started writing your thesis?
9. How is the thesis writing process impacting your academic writing skills to report your research study? Can you recall any examples of this?
10. Which aspects are gradually improving through your thesis writing experience? Which aspects are improving through your research experience? Which aspects are improving through other assignments in your program?
11. How confident do you feel about completing each part of the thesis manuscript?
12. What problems (if any) have become evident as you progressed through the process of writing your thesis? How have you solved these problems?
13. How do your writing skills in English and your academic writing skills to report your research study relate to each other (if they did)?
14. How is the process of writing your thesis impacting your research study?
15. How is conducting the study contributing or hindering your writing process?
16. How long do you expect to take writing your thesis? What aspects are contributing to accelerate or slow down writing it?
17. How confident do you feel to undertake other academic works? Which types of academic works are you interested in undertaking?
18. How is your work in your thesis preparing you or not to continue writing scholarly papers?
19. What aspects of your academic writing still need work? What aspects of your writing skills in English still need work (if any)?

Graduates

1. How would you define your level of writing skills in English by the time you began your thesis?
2. How confident did you feel about your writing skills in English to start writing your thesis?
3. What aspects of your writing proficiency (grammar, lexicon, syntax, cohesive devices, spelling and punctuation, etc.) were strong or weak by the time you started writing your thesis?
4. How did the thesis writing process impact your writing skills in English? Can you recall any examples of this?
5. Which aspects gradually improved through your thesis writing experience? Which aspects improved through your research experience? Which aspects improved through other assignments in your program?
6. How different was your level of writing skills by the end of the thesis? How could you perceive that?
7. How would you define your level of academic writing skills to report research by the time you began your thesis?
8. What aspects of your academic writing (synthesis of information, use of source material, arguments and claims building, control of academic writing style, etc.) were pretty strong or weak by the time you started writing your thesis?
9. How did the thesis writing process impact your academic writing skills to report your research study? Can you recall any examples of this?
10. Which aspects gradually improved through your thesis writing experience? Which aspects improved through your research experience? Which aspects improved through other assignments in your program?
11. How confident did you feel about completing each part of the thesis manuscript?
12. What problems (if any) became evident as you progressed through the process of writing your thesis? How did you solve those problems?
13. How did your writing skills in English and your academic writing skills to report your research study relate to each other (if they did)?
14. How did the process of writing your thesis impact your research study (if it did it)?
15. How did conducting the study contribute or hinder your writing process?
16. How long did it take you to complete writing your thesis? What aspects contributed to accelerate or slow down writing it?
17. How confident do you feel to undertake other academic works? Which types of academic works are you interested in undertaking?
18. How do you feel your work in your thesis prepared you or not to continue writing scholarly papers?
19. What aspects of your academic writing still need work? What aspects of your writing skills in English still need work (if any)?

Teacher Educators / Supervisors

1. How would you define the level of writing skills in English of most of your supervisees by the time they began their theses?
2. How confident do your supervisees feel about their writing skills in English to start writing their theses?
3. What aspects of your supervisees' writing proficiency (grammar, lexicon, syntax, cohesive devices, spelling and punctuation, etc.) are strong or weak by the time they start writing their theses?
4. How does the thesis writing process impact your supervisees' writing skills in English? Can you recall any examples of this?
5. Which aspects gradually improved through your supervisees' thesis writing experience?
Which aspects improve through your supervisees' research experience? Which aspects improve through other assignments in the program?
6. How different is usually your supervisees' level of writing skills by the end of their theses? How could you perceive that?
7. How would you define your supervisees' level of academic writing skills to report research by the time they begin their theses?
8. What aspects of your supervisees' academic writing (synthesis of information, use of source material, arguments and claims building, control of academic writing style, etc.) are pretty strong or weak by the time they start writing their theses?
9. How does the thesis writing process impact your supervisees' academic writing skills to report their research study? Can you recall any examples of this?
10. Which aspects gradually improve through their thesis writing experience?
Which aspects improve through their research experience? Which aspects improve through other assignments in the program?
11. How confident are your supervisees about completing each part of the thesis manuscript?
12. What problems (if any) became evident as they progress through the process of writing their theses? How did they solve those problems?
13. How do their writing skills in English and their academic writing skills to report their research study relate to each other (if they did)?
14. How does the process of writing their theses impact their research study (if it does it)?
15. How does conducting the study contribute or hinder their writing process?
16. How long does it usually take your supervisees to complete writing their theses?
What aspects contribute to accelerate or slow down writing it?
17. How confident are your supervisees to undertake other academic works after graduating? Which types of academic works are they interested in undertaking?
18. How do you feel the work writing their theses prepare your supervisees or not to continue writing scholarly papers?
19. What aspects of your supervisees' academic writing skills to report research still need work? What aspects of their writing skills in English still need work (if any)?

Focus groups questions

Students

1. How is the thesis writing process impacting your writing skills in English? Can you recall any examples of this?
2. What aspects of your academic writing (synthesis of information, use of source material, arguments and claims building, control of academic writing style, etc.) have become clearer as you write your theses, if the case they have?
3. What problems (if any) have become evident as you advance through the process of writing your thesis? How have you solved these problems?
4. How do your writing skills in English and your academic writing skills relate to each other (if they do)?
5. How is the process of writing your thesis impacting your research study or vice versa?
6. How do you think the writing of your thesis will impact future writing in your field?

Graduates

1. How did the thesis writing process impact your writing skills in English? Can you recall any examples of this?
2. What aspects of your academic writing (synthesis of information, use of source material, arguments and claims building, control of academic writing style, etc.) became clearer as you wrote your theses, if the case they did?
3. What problems (if any) become evident as you advanced through the process of writing your thesis? How did you solve these problems?
4. How did your writing skills in English and your academic writing skills relate to each other (if they do)?
5. How did the process of writing your thesis impact your research study or vice versa?
6. How did you think the writing of your thesis impact your writing experiences in your field after completing your theses?

Teacher Educators / Supervisors

1. How did the thesis writing process impact your students' writing skills in English? Can you recall any examples of this?
2. What aspects of your students' academic writing (synthesis of information, use of source material, arguments and claims building, control of academic writing style, etc.) become clearer as they write their theses, if the case they do?
3. What problems (if any) become evident as your students advance through the process of writing their theses? How do they solve these problems?
4. How do your students' writing skills in English and their academic writing skills relate to each other (if they do)?
5. How does the process of writing their theses impact their research studies or vice versa?
6. How do you think the writing of their theses impact your students' writing experiences in their field after completing their theses?

APPENDIX F
ONLINE SURVEYS

ONLINE SURVEYS

Students

Teacher Education Survey - Students

Teacher Education Survey This questionnaire is intended to determine your perceptions of the development or refinement of writing skills in English and academic writing skills to report research through your experience writing your thesis in English. There are no correct or incorrect answers, only your opinion. Your responses are kept confidential and anonymous. Completion of the following survey indicates your agreement to take part in this research study. Thank you for your time.

Are you writing your thesis in English?

- Yes
- No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Does your thesis include a research component?

- Yes
- No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Are you writing a master's thesis in the area of teaching English as a foreign language?

- Yes
- No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Please check your level of writing skills in English by the time you began your thesis? Please go to this link to quickly go over the descriptors for each level [Descriptors for writing in the CEFR](#) (See Appendix E)

B1

- B2
- C1
- C2
- A2
- B1+
- B2+

Please indicate how confident you felt about your writing skills in English by the time you began your thesis

- Very Confident
- Confident
- Neutral
- Not very confident
- Not confident at all

Answer If Please indicate how confident you felt about your writing... Very Confident Is Selected

In case you felt very confident, please indicate those aspects prior to the thesis that helped you improve your writing skills in English

- Writing courses
- Exposure to models of good writing
- Exposure to a variety of genres
- Writing assignments for various classes
- Guidance of English teachers
- Feedback from English teachers
- Feedback from content teachers
- Feedback from others
- Other? _____

Please indicate how strong or weak you consider to be each of the following aspects of your writing skills in English by the time you started writing your thesis?

	Very Strong	Strong	Neutral	Weak	Very Weak
Grammar	<input type="radio"/>				
Lexicon	<input type="radio"/>				
Syntax	<input type="radio"/>				
Cohesive devices	<input type="radio"/>				
Spelling and punctuation	<input type="radio"/>				

Have you perceived improvement in your writing skills in English through the process of thesis writing?

- Yes
 No

Answer If Did you perceive refinement in your writing skills ... No Is Selected

Have you perceived refinement in your writing skills in English through the process of thesis writing?

- Yes
 No

Answer If Did you perceive refinement in your writing skills ... Yes Is Selected

Please indicate those aspects that reflect how you can perceive this improvement or refinement

- Control over grammar
 Appropriate use of vocabulary
 Awareness of text organization
 Clarity in the use of connectors
 Attention to mechanics and punctuation
 Other? _____

Answer If Did you perceive improvement in your academic writin... Yes Is Selected

Please indicate those aspects related to your thesis writing process that have helped you improve or refine your writing skills in English

- Thesis seminars
- Exposure to models of theses
- Writing of the thesis proposal
- Guidance from thesis supervisor
- Feedback from thesis supervisor
- Feedback from others
- Other? _____

Answer If Did you perceive improvement in your academic writin... No Is Selected

If not, were your writing skills in English at the appropriate level for this assignment?

- Yes
- No

Answer If If not, did you already have a very good level of writing... Yes Is Selected

Please indicate those aspects prior to writing your thesis that helped you improve your writing skills in English

- Writing courses
- Exposure to models of good writing
- Exposure to a variety of genres
- Writing assignments for various classes
- Guidance of English teachers
- Feedback from English teachers
- Feedback from content teachers
- Feedback from others
- Other? _____

Please indicate those aspects of your writing skills in English that you are still working on, if any

- Grammar
- Lexicon
- Syntax
- Cohesive devices
- Spelling and punctuation

Please indicate your level of academic writing skills by the time you began your thesis? Please go to this link to quickly go over the descriptors for each level [Descriptors of levels of academic writing competence](#) (See Appendix F)

- A2
- B1
- B2
- C1
- C2

Please indicate how confident you felt about your academic writing skills to report research by the time you began your thesis?

- Very Confident
- Confident
- Neutral
- Not very confident
- Not confident at all

Please indicate how strong or weak you consider to be each of the following aspects of your academic writing skills to report research by the time you began writing your thesis?

	Very Strong	Strong	Neutral	Weak	Very Weak
Synthesis of information from sources	<input type="radio"/>				
Referencing of sources information	<input type="radio"/>				
Arguments and claims building	<input type="radio"/>				
Arguments and claims support	<input type="radio"/>				
Control of academic writing style	<input type="radio"/>				
Use of abstract vocabulary and technical terms from the field	<input type="radio"/>				
Level of formality	<input type="radio"/>				
Use of modality	<input type="radio"/>				

Have you perceived improvement in your academic writing skills to report research through the process of thesis writing?

- Yes
- No

Answer If Did you perceive refinement in your academic writing... No Is Selected

Have you perceived refinement in your academic writing skills to report research through the process of thesis writing?

- Yes
- No

Answer If Did you perceive refinement in your academic writing... Yes Is Selected

Please indicate those aspects that reflect how you can perceive this improvement or refinement

- Clarity about the way the different elements fit together in the flow of the argument
- Easiness to paraphrase information from source materials
- Easiness to cite sources in the text
- Easiness to synthesize information from various sources
- Awareness of the type of information to be included in each section of the thesis
- Awareness of how to present information in each section
- Awareness of format requirements (e.g.,APA,)
- Awareness of the characteristics of the audience I am writing for
- Clarity about the way to represent myself in the text
- Clarity about the scope of the claims I make
- Other? _____

Answer If Did you perceive refinement in your academic writing... Yes Is Selected

Please indicate those aspects related to your thesis writing process that have helped you improve or refine the academic writing skills to report research

- Thesis seminars
- Writing of the thesis proposal
- Exposure to models of theses
- Reading research studies through the various stages of the thesis
- Guidance from thesis supervisor
- Feedback from thesis supervisor
- Feedback from others
- Other? _____

Answer If Did you perceive refinement in your academic writing... No Is Selected

If not, did you already master the academic writing skills to report research prior to beginning your thesis?

- Yes
- No

Answer If If not, did you already master academic writing skills to... Yes Is Selected

Please indicate those aspects prior to your thesis writing process that helped you master the academic writing skills to report research

- Academic writing workshops or courses
- Exposure to research studies
- Writing of other research projects
- Writing of theoretical papers
- Feedback from content teachers
- Other? _____

Please indicate the parts of your thesis that you have written up to this moment

- Introduction
- Statement of the problem
- Literature review
- Theoretical framework
- Methodology
- Data Analysis
- Conclusions and implications
- None

Please indicate how easy or difficult it has been to write each of the sections of your thesis

	Very Difficult	Difficult	Neutral	Easy	Very Easy
Introduction	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Statement of	<input type="checkbox"/>				

the problem					
Literature review	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Theoretical framework	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Methodology	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Data Analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Conclusions and implications	<input type="checkbox"/>				

In case you have had any difficulty writing any of these sections, what factors may contribute to this difficulty?

- Lack of understanding of the required content
- Lack of understanding of the lay out of the information in them
- Difficulty organizing the ideas
- Inadequate use of academic jargon
- Problems related to the research process

Please indicate those aspects of your academic writing skills to report research that you are still working on, if any?

- Synthesis of information from sources
- Referencing of sources information
- Arguments and claims building
- Arguments and claims support
- Control of academic writing style
- Use of abstract vocabulary and technical terms from the field
- Level of formality
- Use of modality

Please indicate how positively or negatively your writing skills in English have impacted your academic writing skills to report research

- Very Postively
- Positively
- Neutral
- Negatively
- Very Negatively

Please indicate those aspects that have contributed to accelerate or slow down the process of writing your thesis?

- Appropriate writing skills in English
- Appropriate knowledge of academic writing skills to report research
- Interest in the topic
- Support and guidance from supervisor
- Support and guidance from peers and others

- Completing the research study
- Other? _____

Please indicate the types of academic works you are interested in undertaking in the future

- Writing theoretical articles
- Writing research articles
- Writing book reviews
- Writing book chapters
- Writing books
- Other? _____
- None

In case you are interested in undertaking any of these works, please indicate how confident you feel to do it.

- Very Confident
- Confident
- Neutral
- Not very confident
- Not confident at all

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Where are you doing your master's thesis in English?

- Universidad de Caldas
- Universidad del Norte
- Universidad Distrital
- Universidad Externado
- Universidad Libre
- Universidad Pedagogica
- Universidad Pedagogica y Technologica de Colombia (UPTC)
- Other? _____

Please indicate how long you expect to take to complete writing your thesis

- 6 months or less
- A year
- Year and a half
- Two years
- More than two years

Please indicate the research design you are using in your thesis?

- Qualitative
- Quantitative
- Mixed Methods (Both quantitative and qualitative research methods)

Select the general topic of your thesis

- Assessment
- Grammar
- Learning Strategies
- Material design
- Pragmatics
- Pronunciation
- Reading
- Semantics
- Speaking
- Study Skills
- Technology
- Vocabulary
- Writing
- Other? _____

Comments: Please express any additional opinions you have about your perceptions about the development of language and inquiry through the thesis in the space provided below. Thank you. Your responses will help us improve teacher education programs in our area.

Graduates

Teacher Education Survey - Graduates

Teacher Education Survey This questionnaire is intended to determine your perceptions of the development or refinement of writing skills in English and academic writing skills to report research through your experience writing your thesis in English. There are no correct or incorrect answers, only your opinion. Your responses are kept confidential and anonymous. Completion of the following survey indicates your agreement to take part in this research study. Thank you for your time.

Did you write your thesis in English?

Yes

No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Did your thesis include a research component?

Yes

No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Did you write a master's thesis in the area of teaching English as a foreign language?

Yes

No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Please check your level of writing skills in English by the time you began your thesis? Please go to this link to quickly go over the descriptors for each level. Descriptors for writing in the CEFR (Appendix E)

B1

B2

C1

C2

A2

B1+

B2+

Please indicate how confident you felt about your writing skills in English by the time you began your thesis

- Very Confident
- Confident
- Neutral
- Not very confident
- Not confident at all

Answer If Please indicate how confident you felt about your writing... Very Confident Is Selected

In case you felt very confident, please indicate those aspects prior to the thesis that helped you improve your writing skills in English

- Writing courses
- Exposure to models of good writing
- Exposure to a variety of genres
- Writing assignments for various classes
- Guidance of English teachers
- Feedback from English teachers
- Feedback from content teachers
- Feedback from others
- Other? _____

Please indicate how strong or weak you consider to be each of the following aspects of your writing skills in English by the time you started writing your thesis?

	Very Strong	Strong	Neutral	Weak	Very Weak
Grammar	<input type="radio"/>				
Lexicon	<input type="radio"/>				
Syntax	<input type="radio"/>				
Cohesive devices	<input type="radio"/>				
Spelling and punctuation	<input type="radio"/>				

Did you perceive improvement in your writing skills in English through the process of thesis writing?

- Yes
- No

Answer If Did you perceive refinement in your writing skills ... No Is Selected

Did you perceive refinement in your writing skills in English through the process of thesis writing?

- Yes
- No

Answer If Did you perceive refinement in your writing skills ... Yes Is Selected

Please indicate those aspects that reflect how you could perceive this improvement or refinement

- Control over grammar
- Appropriate use of vocabulary
- Awareness of text organization
- Clarity in the use of connectors
- Attention to mechanics and punctuation
- Other? _____

Answer If Did you perceive improvement in your academic writin... Yes Is Selected

Please indicate those aspects related to your thesis writing process that helped you improve or refine your writing skills in English

- Thesis seminars
- Exposure to models of theses
- Writing of the thesis proposal
- Guidance from thesis supervisor
- Feedback from thesis supervisor
- Feedback from others
- Other? _____

Answer If Did you perceive improvement in your academic writin... No Is Selected

If not, were your writing skills in English at the appropriate level for this assignment?

- Yes
- No

Answer If If not, did you already have a very good level of writing... Yes Is Selected

Please indicate those aspects prior to writing your thesis that helped you improve your writing skills in English

- Writing courses
- Exposure to models of good writing

- Exposure to a variety of genres
- Writing assignments for various classes
- Guidance of English teachers
- Feedback from English teachers
- Feedback from content teachers
- Feedback from others
- Other? _____

Please check your level of writing skills in English by the time you ended your thesis? Please go to this link to quickly go over the descriptors for each level. Descriptors for writing in the CEFR (Appendix E) E

- A2
- B1
- B1+
- B2
- B2+
- C1
- C2

Please indicate those aspects of your writing skills in English that still need work, if any

- Grammar
- Lexicon
- Syntax
- Cohesive devices
- Spelling and punctuation

Please indicate your level of academic writing skills by the time you began your thesis? Please go to this link to quickly go over the descriptors for each level Descriptors of levels of academic writing competence (See Appendix F)

- A2
- B1
- B2
- C1
- C2

Please indicate how confident you felt about your academic writing skills to report research by the time you began your thesis?

- Very Confident
- Confident
- Neutral
- Not very confident
- Not confident at all

Please indicate how strong or weak you consider to be each of the following aspects of your academic writing skills to report research by the time you began writing your thesis?

	Very Strong	Strong	Neutral	Weak	Very Weak
Synthesis of information from sources	<input type="radio"/>				
Referencing of sources information	<input type="radio"/>				
Arguments and claims building	<input type="radio"/>				
Arguments and claims support	<input type="radio"/>				
Control of academic writing style	<input type="radio"/>				
Use of abstract vocabulary and technical terms from the field	<input type="radio"/>				
Level of formality	<input type="radio"/>				
Use of modality	<input type="radio"/>				

Did you perceive improvement in your academic writing skills to report research through the process of thesis writing?

- Yes
 No

Answer If Did you perceive refinement in your academic writing... No Is Selected

Did you perceive refinement in your academic writing skills to report research through the process of thesis writing?

- Yes
 No

Answer If Did you perceive refinement in your academic writing... Yes Is Selected

Please indicate those aspects that reflect how you could you perceive this improvement or refinement

- Clarity about the way the different elements fit together in the flow of the argument
- Easiness to paraphrase information from source materials
- Easiness to cite sources in the text
- Easiness to synthesize information from various sources
- Awareness of the type of information to be included in each section of the thesis
- Awareness of how to present information in each section

- Awareness of format requirements (e.g.,APA,)
- Awareness of the characteristics of the audience I am writing for
- Clarity about the way to represent myself in the text
- Clarity about the scope of the claims I make
- Other? _____

Answer If Did you perceive refinement in your academic writing... Yes Is Selected

Please indicate those aspects related to your thesis writing process that helped you improve or refine the academic writing skills to report research

- Thesis seminars
- Writing of the thesis proposal
- Exposure to models of theses
- Reading research studies through the various stages of the thesis
- Guidance from thesis supervisor
- Feedback from thesis supervisor
- Feedback from others
- Other? _____

Answer If Did you perceive refinement in your academic writing... No Is Selected

If not, did you already master the academic writing skills to report research prior to beginning your thesis?

- Yes
- No

Answer If If not, did you already master academic writing skills to... Yes Is Selected

Please indicate those aspects prior to your thesis writing process that helped you master the academic writing skills to report research

- Academic writing workshops or courses
- Exposure to research studies
- Writing of other research projects
- Writing of theoretical papers
- Feedback from content teachers
- Other? _____

Please indicate how easy or difficult was it to write each of the sections of your thesis

	Very Difficult	Difficult	Neutral	Easy	Very Easy
Introduction	<input type="radio"/>				
Statement of the problem	<input type="radio"/>				
Literature review	<input type="radio"/>				
Theoretical framework	<input type="radio"/>				
Methodology	<input type="radio"/>				
Data Analysis	<input type="radio"/>				
Conclusions and implications	<input type="radio"/>				

In case you had any difficulty writing any of these sections, what factors may have contributed to this difficulty?

- Lack of understanding of the required content
- Lack of understanding of the lay out of the information in them
- Difficulty organizing the ideas
- Inadequate use of academic jargon
- Problems related to the research process

Please indicate your level of academic writing skills by the time you ended your thesis? Please go to this link to quickly go over the descriptors for each level [Descriptors of levels of academic writing competence](#) (See Appendix F)

- A2
- B1
- B2
- C1
- C2

Please indicate those aspects of your academic writing skills to report research that still need work, if any?

- Synthesis of information from sources
- Referencing of sources information
- Arguments and claims building
- Arguments and claims support
- Control of academic writing style
- Use of abstract vocabulary and technical terms from the field
- Level of formality
- Use of modality

Please indicate how positively or negatively your writing skills in English impacted your academic writing skills to report research

- Very Postively
- Positively
- Neutral
- Negatively
- Very Negatively

Please indicate those aspects that contributed to accelerate or slow down the process of writing your thesis?

- Appropriate writing skills in English
- Appropriate knowledge of academic writing skills to report research
- Interest in the topic
- Support and guidance from supervisor
- Support and guidance from peers and others
- Completing the research study
- Other? _____

Please indicate the types of academic works you are interested in undertaking in the future

- Writing theoretical articles
- Writing research articles
- Writing book reviews
- Writing book chapters
- Writing books
- Other? _____
- None

In case you are interested in undertaking any of these works, please indicate how confident you feel to do it.

- Very Confident
- Confident
- Neutral
- Not very confident
- Not confident at all

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Where did you complete your master's thesis in English?

- Universidad de Caldas
- Universidad del Norte
- Universidad Distrital
- Universidad Externado
- Universidad Libre
- Universidad Pedagógica
- Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia (UPTC)
- Other? _____

When did you complete your master's thesis in English?

- Before 2002
- 2002
- 2003
- 2004
- 2005
- 2006
- 2007
- 2008
- 2009
- 2010
- 2011
- 2012
- 2013

Please indicate how long it took you to finish writing your thesis

- 6 months or less
- A year
- Year and a half
- Two years
- More than two years

What research design did you use in your thesis?

- Qualitative
- Quantitative
- Mixed Methods (Both quantitative and qualitative research methods)

Please select the general topic that you researched about in your master's thesis

- Assessment
- Grammar
- Learning Strategies
- Material design
- Pragmatics
- Pronunciation
- Reading
- Semantics
- Speaking
- Study Skills
- Technology
- Vocabulary
- Writing
- Other? _____

Comments: Please express any additional opinions you have about your perceptions about the development of language and inquiry through the thesis in the space provided below.

Thank you. Your responses will help us improve teacher education programs in our area.

Teacher Educators / Supervisors

Teacher Education Survey This questionnaire is intended to determine your perceptions of the development or refinement of writing skills in English and academic writing skills to report research through your experience supervising students writing their theses in English. There are no correct or incorrect answers, only your opinion. Your responses are kept confidential and anonymous. Completion of the following survey indicates your agreement to take part in this research study. Thank you for your time.

Have you supervised students writing their master's theses in English?

- Yes
- No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Have these theses you have supervised included a research component?

- Yes
- No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Have these theses been done in topics related to the area of teaching English as a foreign language?

- Yes
- No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Please check the average level of writing skills in English of your students by the time they begin their theses. Please go to this link to go over the descriptors for each level [Descriptors for writing in the CEFR](#) (Appendix E)

- B1
- B2
- C1
- C2
- A2
- B1+
- B2+

Please indicate how confident you think your students feel about their writing skills in English by the time they begin their theses

- Very Confident
- Confident
- Neutral
- Not very confident
- Not confident at all

Answer If Please indicate how confident you felt about your writing... Very Confident Is Selected

In case you think your students feel confident or very confident, please indicate those aspects prior to the thesis that may have helped them improve their writing skills in English

- Writing courses
- Exposure to models of good writing
- Exposure to a variety of genres
- Writing assignments for various classes
- Guidance of English teachers
- Feedback from English teachers
- Feedback from content teachers
- Feedback from others
- Other? _____

Please indicate how strong or weak you would consider each of the following aspects of your students' writing skills in English by the time they begin writing their theses

	Very Strong	Strong	Neutral	Weak	Very Weak
Grammar	<input type="radio"/>				
Lexicon	<input type="radio"/>				
Syntax	<input type="radio"/>				
Cohesive devices	<input type="radio"/>				
Spelling and punctuation	<input type="radio"/>				

Have you perceived improvement or refinement in your students' writing skills in English through the process of thesis writing?

- Yes
- No

Answer If Did you perceive refinement in your writing skills ... Yes Is Selected

Please indicate those aspects that reflect how you can perceive this improvement or refinement

- Control over grammar
- Appropriate use of vocabulary
- Awareness of text organization
- Clarity in the use of connectors
- Attention to mechanics and punctuation
- Other? _____

Answer If Did you perceive improvement in your academic writin... Yes Is Selected

Please indicate those aspects related to the thesis writing process that may have helped your students improve or refine their writing skills in English

- Thesis seminars
- Exposure to models of theses
- Writing of the thesis proposal
- Guidance from thesis supervisor
- Feedback from thesis supervisor
- Feedback from others
- Other? _____

Answer If Did you perceive improvement in your academic writin... No Is Selected

If not, are your students' writing skills in English usually at the appropriate level for this assignment?

- Yes
- No

Answer If If not, did you already have a very good level of writing... Yes Is Selected

Please indicate those aspects prior to your students' thesis writing that may have helped them improve their writing skills in English

- Writing courses
- Exposure to models of good writing
- Exposure to a variety of genres
- Writing assignments for various classes
- Guidance of English teachers
- Feedback from English teachers
- Feedback from content teachers

- Feedback from others
- Other? _____

Please check the average level of your students' writing skills in English by the time they end their theses? Please go to this link to go over the descriptors for each level Descriptors for writing in the CEFR (Appendix E)

- A2
- B1
- B1+
- B2
- B2+
- C1
- C2

Please indicate those aspects of your students' writing skills in English that they still need to work on after they complete their theses, if any

- Grammar
- Lexicon
- Syntax
- Cohesive devices
- Spelling and punctuation

Please check the average level of your students' academic writing skills to report research by the time they begin their theses Please go to this link to go over the descriptors for each level Descriptors of levels of academic writing competence (See Appendix F)

- A2
- B1
- B2
- C1
- C2

Please indicate how confident your students feel about their academic writing skills to report research by the time they begin their theses

- Very Confident
- Confident
- Neutral
- Not very confident
- Not confident at all

Please indicate how you would consider each of the following aspects of your students' academic writing skills to report research by the time they start writing their theses

	Very Strong	Strong	Neutral	Weak	Very Weak
Synthesis of information from sources	<input type="radio"/>				
Referencing of sources information	<input type="radio"/>				
Arguments and claims building	<input type="radio"/>				
Arguments and claims support	<input type="radio"/>				
Control of academic writing style	<input type="radio"/>				
Use of abstract vocabulary and technical terms from the field	<input type="radio"/>				
Level of formality	<input type="radio"/>				
Use of modality	<input type="radio"/>				

Do you perceive improvement or refinement in your students' academic writing skills to report research through the process of thesis writing?

- Yes
- No

Answer If Did you perceive refinement in your academic writing... Yes Is Selected

Please indicate those aspects that reflect how you could you perceive this improvement or refinement

- Clarity about the way the different elements fit together in the flow of the argument
- Easiness to paraphrase information from source materials
- Easiness to cite sources in the text
- Easiness to synthesize information from various sources
- Awareness of the type of information to be included in each section of the thesis

- Awareness of how to present information in each section
- Awareness of format requirements (e.g.,APA,)
- Awareness of the characteristics of the audience I am writing for
- Clarity about the way to represent myself in the text
- Clarity about the scope of the claims I make
- Other? _____

Answer If Did you perceive refinement in your academic writing... Yes Is Selected

Please indicate those aspects related to the thesis writing process that may have helped your students improve or refine the academic writing skills to report research

- Thesis seminars
- Writing of the thesis proposal
- Exposure to models of theses
- Reading research studies through the various stages of the thesis
- Guidance from thesis supervisor
- Feedback from thesis supervisor
- Feedback from others
- Other? _____

Answer If Did you perceive refinement in your academic writing... No Is Selected

If not, do your students already master the academic writing skills to report research prior to beginning your thesis?

- Yes
- No

Answer If If not, did you already master academic writing skills to... Yes Is Selected

Please indicate those aspects prior to your students' thesis writing process that may have helped your students master the academic writing skills to report research

- Academic writing workshops or courses
- Exposure to research studies
- Writing of other research projects
- Writing of theoretical papers
- Feedback from content teachers
- Other? _____

Please indicate how easy or difficult it is to write each of the following sections of the thesis for your students

	Very Difficult	Difficult	Neutral	Easy	Very Easy
Introduction	<input type="radio"/>				
Statement of the problem	<input type="radio"/>				
Literature review	<input type="radio"/>				
Theoretical framework	<input type="radio"/>				
Methodology	<input type="radio"/>				
Data Analysis	<input type="radio"/>				
Conclusions and implications	<input type="radio"/>				

In case your students usually have difficulty writing any of these sections, what factors may contribute to this difficulty?

- Lack of understanding of the required content
- Lack of understanding of the lay out of the information in them
- Difficulty organizing the ideas
- Inadequate use of academic jargon
- Problems related to the research process

Please check the average level of your students' academic writing skills to report research by the time they finish their theses. Please go to this link to quickly go over the descriptors for each level: Descriptors of levels of academic writing competence (See Appendix F)

- A2
- B1
- B2
- C1
- C2

Please indicate those aspects of your students' academic writing skills to report research that they still need work on even after completing the thesis, if any?

- Synthesis of information from sources
- Referencing of sources information
- Arguments and claims building
- Arguments and claims support
- Control of academic writing style
- Use of abstract vocabulary and technical terms from the field
- Level of formality
- Use of modality

Please indicate how positively or negatively your students' writing skills in English impact their academic writing skills to report research

- Very Positively
- Positively
- Neutral
- Negatively
- Very Negatively

Please indicate those aspects that contribute to accelerate or slow down your students' process of writing their theses?

- Appropriate writing skills in English
- Appropriate knowledge of academic writing skills to report research
- Interest in the topic
- Support and guidance from supervisor
- Support and guidance from peers and others
- Completing the research study
- Other? _____

Please indicate the types of academic works your students are usually interested in undertaking after completing their theses

- Writing theoretical articles
- Writing research articles
- Writing book reviews
- Writing book chapters
- Writing books
- Other? _____
- None

In case your students are interested in undertaking any of these works, please indicate how confident they feel to do it.

- Very Confident
- Confident
- Neutral
- Not very confident
- Not confident at all

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

How many theses have you supervised at the master's level?

- 1-3
- 4-7
- 8-12
- 13 or more

Where do you supervise students who write their master's theses in English?

- Universidad de Caldas
- Universidad del Norte
- Universidad Distrital
- Universidad Externado
- Universidad Libre
- Universidad Pedagógica
- Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia (UPTC)
- Other? _____

Please indicate how long your students usually take to write their theses

- 6 months or less
- A year
- Year and a half
- Two years
- More than two years

What research design do you subscribe to while supervising theses?

- Qualitative
- Quantitative
- Mixed Methods (Both quantitative and qualitative research methods)

Select the three most popular topics your students research about in their master's theses

- Assessment
- Grammar
- Learning Strategies
- Material design
- Pragmatics
- Pronunciation
- Reading
- Semantics
- Speaking
- Study Skills
- Technology
- Vocabulary
- Writing
- Other? _____

Comments: Please express any additional opinions you have about your perceptions about the development of language and inquiry through the thesis in the space provided below. Thank you. Your responses will help us improve teacher education programs in our area.

APPENDIX G

TYPES OF QUESTIONS INCLUDED IN THE ONLINE SURVEYS

Types of questions included in the online surveys

Single answer

Does your thesis include a research component?

- Yes
- No

Multiple choice- single answer

Please indicate the research design you are using in your thesis?

- Qualitative
- Quantitative
- Mixed Methods (Both quantitative and qualitative research methods)

Multiple choice- multiple answer

Please indicate those aspects prior to writing your thesis that helped you improve your writing skills in English

- Writing courses
- Exposure to models of good writing
- Exposure to a variety of genres
- Writing assignments for various classes
- Guidance of English teachers
- Feedback from English teachers
- Feedback from content teachers
- Feedback from others
- Other? _____

5-point Likert - Single answer

Please indicate how confident you felt about your academic writing skills to report research by the time you began your thesis?

- Very Confident
- Confident
- Neutral
- Not very confident
- Not confident at all

5-point Likert-single answer in a matrix

Please indicate how strong or weak you consider to be each of the following aspects of your writing skills in English by the time you started writing your thesis?

	Very Strong	Strong	Neutral	Weak	Very Weak
Grammar	<input type="radio"/>				
Lexicon	<input type="radio"/>				
Syntax	<input type="radio"/>				
Cohesive devices	<input type="radio"/>				
Spelling and punctuation	<input type="radio"/>				

Please indicate how easy or difficult it has been to write each of the sections of your thesis

	Very Difficult	Difficult	Neutral	Easy	Very Easy
Introduction	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Statement of the problem	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Literature review	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Theoretical framework	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Methodology	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Data Analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Conclusions and implications	<input type="checkbox"/>				

In the three 5-point Likert questions included in the survey, the option Neutral was taken as the mid-point in the progression. For example, in relation to the question about confidence the subject considers the neutral choice as being in the middle point in which the subject feels neither confident nor not confident.

Open-ended

Comments: Please express any additional opinions you have about your perceptions about the development of language and inquiry through the thesis in the space provided below.

APPENDIX H

MAIN FINDINGS INTERVIEWS AND ONLINE SURVEYS

GENERAL WRITING SKILLS	
<p style="text-align: center;">Surveys</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Level of confidence to start to write</u></p> <p>Students and graduates-quite confident Supervisors- students are not very confident</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Writing skills levels and signs of improvement</u></p> <p>Levels in CEFR</p> <p><u>at the beginning</u> Students A1- C1 Graduates B1-C1 Supervisors A2-B1</p> <p><u>At the end of the process</u> Graduates B2-C2 Supervisors B1-B2</p> <p><u>Aspects of writing</u> (Grammar, syntax, lexicon, cohesive devices, spelling)</p> <p>Students and graduates- all quite strong Supervisors-all quite weak</p> <p><u>How improvement is perceived</u></p> <p>Students, graduates and supervisors- text organization and vocabulary, Students and graduates-use of connectors Supervisors- punctuation</p> <p><u>Aspects of the process that contributed to improvement</u> Students-research proposal, reading theses, supervisor feedback Graduates- supervisor feedback, research proposal, reading theses Supervisors-supervisor feedback and guidance, research proposal and reading theses</p> <p><u>Still need more work</u> Students, graduates and supervisors-cohesive devices Students and graduates-lexicon and syntax Supervisors-punctuation and syntax</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Interviews</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Level of confidence to start to write</u></p> <p>Students and graduates-hard time to get started Supervisors- students lack confidence, poor writing skills compared to oral skills</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Writing skills levels and signs of improvement</u> <u>At the beginning</u></p> <p><u>Proficient</u> Strengths-good writing skills, concise, good grammar Weaknesses-too wordy</p> <p><u>Developing</u> Weaknesses- sentence and paragraph level, grammar, vocabulary, coherence and cohesion, influence of Spanish, oral language influence</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>At the intermediate and final stages</u></p> <p><u>Proficient</u> Keep improving, trying new ways of writing</p> <p><u>Developing</u> Improvement -Students: Vocabulary and grammar Awareness of what to include and how to include it (organization) What to control and monitor in the writing -Graduates: Expressing ideas, use of connectors, vocabulary expansion -Supervisors : Expressing ideas, grammar, coherence and cohesion</p> <p><u>Strategies</u> -From supervisors Get someone to proofread writing, encourage to write soon and when inspired, encourage to write reflectively while conducting the study -From students and graduates Get feedback from proofreaders, reading, using writing strategies, leaving and returning to the document</p> <p><u>Persistence of some mistakes</u> -Students: Organization- Coherence and cohesion –use of connectors, transitions. Grammar, influence of Spanish -Graduates: Organization- Coherence and cohesion, grammar, vocabulary -Supervisors: Organization</p>

ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS

Surveys	Interviews
<p><u>Level of confidence to start to write academically</u> Students and graduates-some quite confident but many in midpoint Supervisors- students are not very confident</p> <p><u>Academic writing skills levels and signs of improvement</u> Levels in CEFR <u>At the beginning</u> Students A2- C2 Graduates B1-C2 Supervisors A2-B2 <u>At the end of the process</u> Graduates B2-C2 Supervisors B1-C1</p> <p><u>Aspects of academic writing skills</u> (Synthesis of information from sources, referencing of sources information, arguments and claims building and support, control of academic writing style, use of abstract vocabulary) Students and graduates- some quite strong but most in the midpoint Supervisors-all quite weak</p> <p><u>How improvement is perceived</u> Students, graduates and supervisors- awareness of information in each section and format requirements Students and supervisors- easiness to cite and synthesize information from sources Graduates-clarity about how to make the argument flow and easiness to cite and synthesize</p> <p><u>Aspects of the process that contributed to improvement</u> Students- reading theses and research articles, proposal Graduates- reading research articles, supervisor feedback Supervisors-supervisor feedback, proposal and reading research articles</p> <p><u>Still need more work</u> Students, graduates and supervisors- control of academic writing style Students-synthesis of information from sources and referencing Graduates-level of formality and arguments and claims building and support Supervisors- arguments and claims building and support and synthesis of information from sources</p>	<p><u>Academic writing skills levels and signs of improvement</u></p> <p align="center"><u>At the beginning</u></p> <p>-Some students and graduates good academic writing skills -Most developing one or several aspects of academic writing skills</p> <p>Weaknesses- use of sources (elaboration and integration of information from sources, APA formatting, plagiarism), organization, vocabulary, academic writing style and making claims.</p> <p align="center"><u>At the intermediate and final stages</u></p> <p>Improvement -Students: Vocabulary and elaboration from information of sources -Graduates: Synthesis of information from sources, avoiding unsupported assumptions, structure of the text and vocabulary, stronger academic voice -Supervisors: Use of sources and awareness of format requirements, avoid making unsupported assumptions, voice gets stronger</p> <p>Strategies -From supervisors Get someone to proofread writing, feedback and models, scaffold writing process, explicitly request to support assumptions and include their voice, create awareness of the characteristics of the thesis, be explicit about plagiarism and showing how to do things (e.g., paraphrasing or synthesizing information)</p> <p>-From students and graduates Get feedback from proofreaders, reading, imitating style and using expressions from models, reviewing APA manual regularly</p> <p>Persistence of some problems -Students: APA formatting for citations, coherence in the whole document, synthesis of information from sources -Graduates: APA formatting</p>

THE APPROPRIATION OF THE THESIS GENRE

Surveys	Interviews
<u>Degree of difficulty of the different sections of the thesis</u>	<u>Prior knowledge of the genre</u>
<p>Students - Difficult: Literature review, introduction, theoretical framework - Easy: introduction, methodology</p> <p>Graduates - Difficult: Data analysis, theoretical framework, literature review - Easy: introduction, methodology, conclusions and implications</p> <p>Supervisors - Difficult: Literature review, theoretical framework, data analysis - Easy: introduction</p>	<p>-No Knowledge about the genre -Limited knowledge of the genre -Good knowledge of the genre</p>
<u>Factors that contribute to this difficulty</u>	<u>Challenges</u>
<p>Students-Difficulty organizing the ideas, lack of understanding of the required content, problems related to the research process</p> <p>Graduates -Difficulty organizing the ideas, problems related to the research process, lack of understanding of the required content</p> <p>Supervisors -Difficulty organizing the ideas, lack of understanding of the required content, problems related to the research process</p>	<p>Defining aspects of the thesis -The topic -too wide, no idea what they want to explore -The research question -teaching vs. research</p> <p>Dealing with the specificities of the sections. -Introduction -The objectives, the rationale -Literature review - select, synthesize and integrate information, big amount of sources -Theoretical framework - big amount of information, fitting theory coherently with project, limited access to source -Data analysis- lack of information on how to deal with the data, how to analyze these data, how to carry out the triangulation of the data - the intricacy of making connections between the theory and the data -Methodology- research design, design of pedagogical intervention -The conclusions and implications</p> <p>Issues with writing -Preparation for writing the sections -No idea how to write the sections, lack of knowledge of the structure and content of the sections -Problems perceived while writing the sections – Lack of connection between the ideas, lack of congruence between the information in the sections and the research questions</p> <p>Coherence of all sections -Articulation of the information of all sections and the research questions</p>
	<u>Smooth progress</u>
	<p>-Introduction -Literature review -Methodology</p>
	<u>Strategies</u>
	<p>-From supervisors -Information about the structure and content of each section -Scaffolding of the process and feedback -Suggesting reading and providing models to students -Working with students on difficulties -Encourage peer support practices</p> <p>-From students and graduates -Reading theses and articles -Reading about research and the sections of the thesis</p>

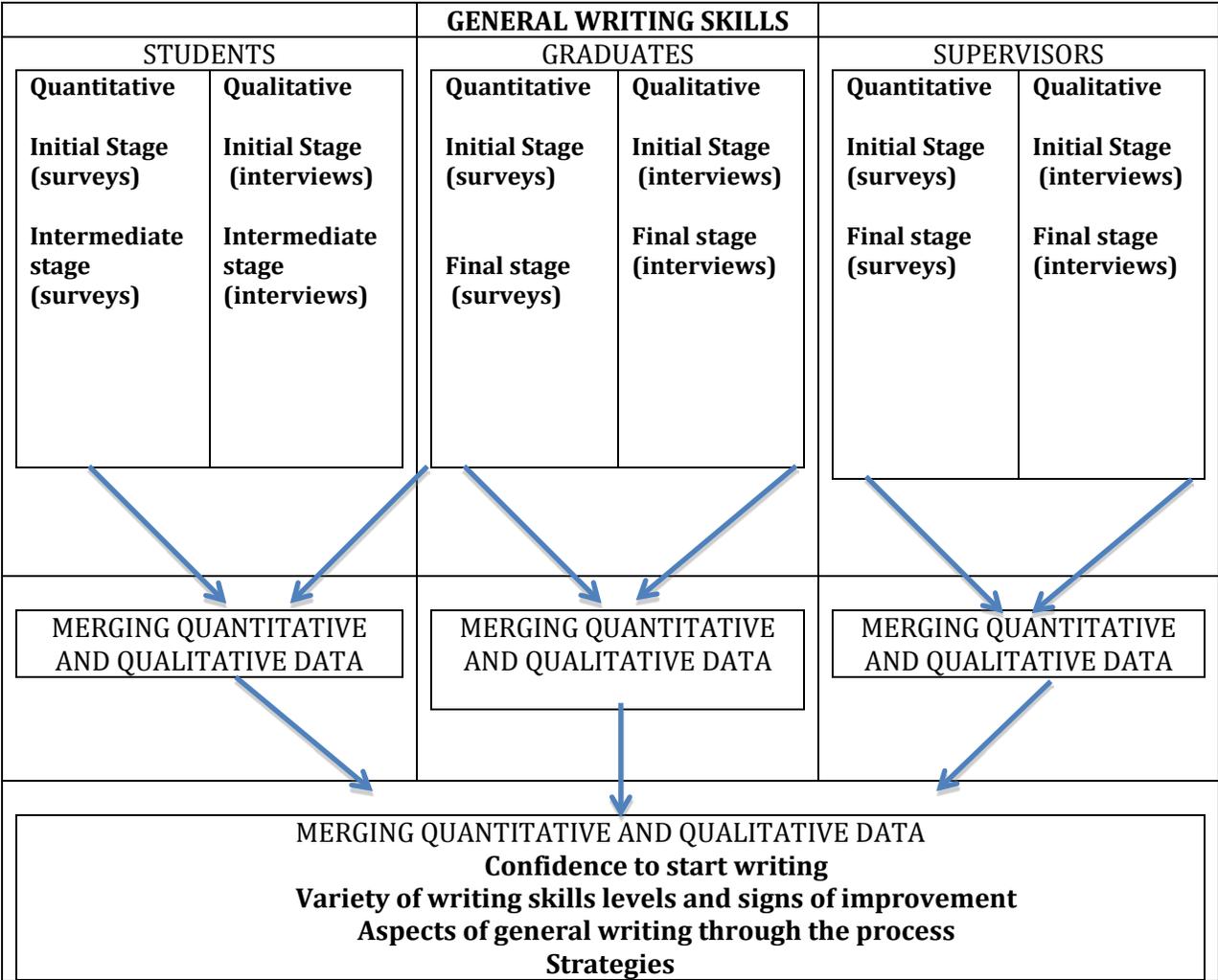
FACTORS THAT IMPACT THE WRITING PROCESS

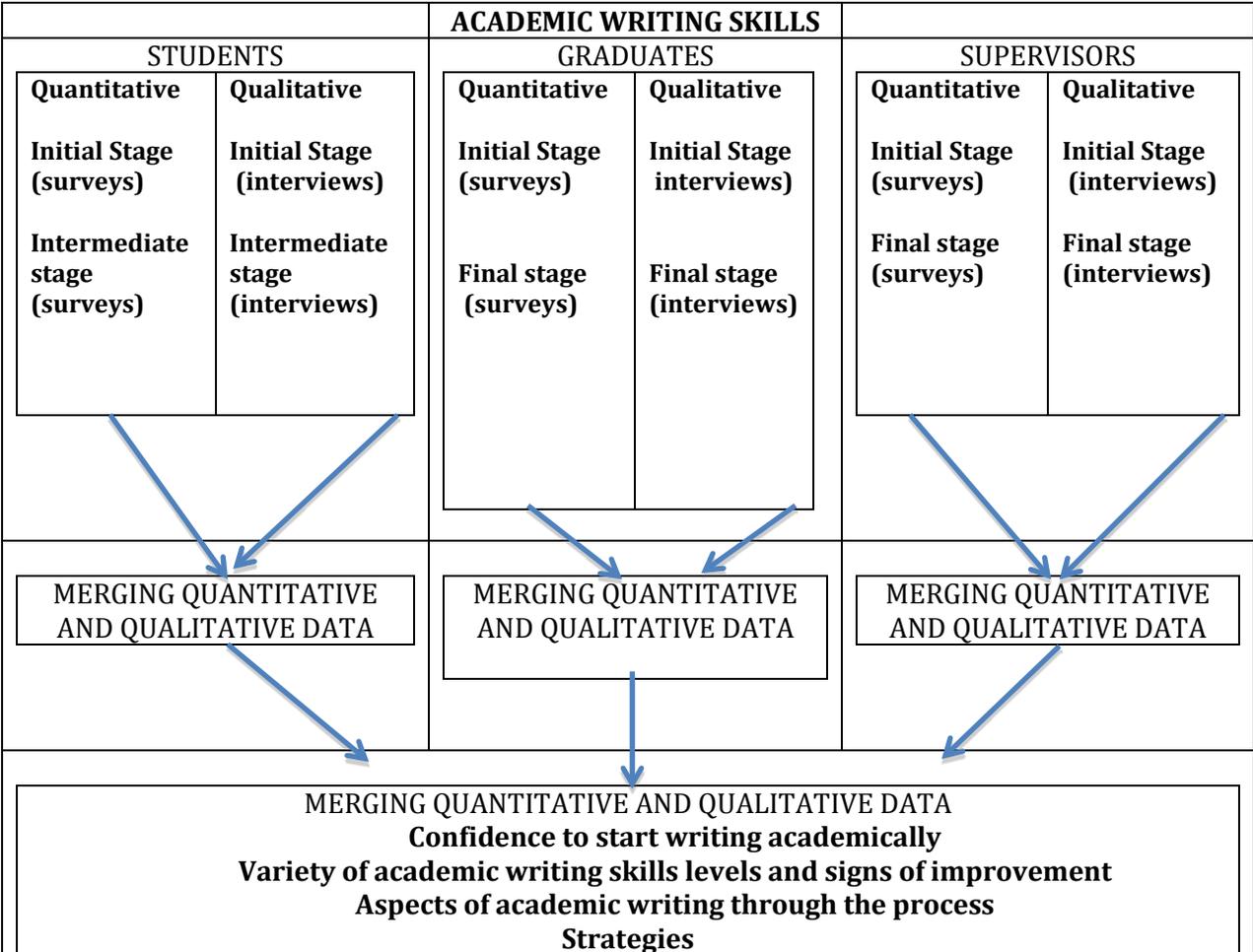
Surveys	Interviews <u>Personal</u>
<p align="center"><u>Impact of general writing skills on academic writing skills</u></p> <p>Students – Positively and very positively (95%)</p> <p>Graduates - Positively and very positively (88%)</p> <p>Supervisors - Positively and very positively (44%) Neutral (31%) Negatively (25%)</p> <p align="center"><u>Aspects that contributed to accelerate or slow down the writing process</u></p> <p>Students- # 1 Appropriate knowledge of academic writing skills to report research, interest in the topic, support and guidance from supervisor #2 Support and guidance from peers and others #3 Appropriate writing skills in English</p> <p>Graduates -# 1 Appropriate writing skills in English, interest in the topic, support and guidance from supervisor #2 Appropriate knowledge of academic writing skills to report research and completing the research study</p> <p>Supervisors # 1 Support and guidance from supervisor #2 Appropriate writing skills in English #3 Appropriate knowledge of academic writing skills to report research</p>	<p>Work/study related -Time constraints</p> <p>Dispositions -Discipline -Commitment -Autonomy -Openness to feedback -Goal oriented mentality -Reflectiveness</p> <p>Background -Preparation in academic writing in undergraduate programs -L1 and L2 writing exposure and training -Reading background -Writing teaching experiences -L2 proficiency</p> <p>Goals -Professional growth -Promotion -Salary raise</p> <p align="center"><u>Supervision</u></p> <p>Quality of Guidance and support -Type of feedback Comprehensive (both language and content) Focused (usually on content) -Supporting environment Supervisor’s involvement Follow-up Close relationship with supervisor -Supervisor’s English level and writing expertise</p> <p align="center"><u>Master’s Program</u></p> <p>Academic writing preparation -Teaching academic writing -Guidelines to write the thesis</p> <p>Connection of the program with the thesis -Structure of the program develops thesis gradually -Standards of academic writing are widespread and supported in all classes -Assignments of the classes mirrored components of the thesis</p>

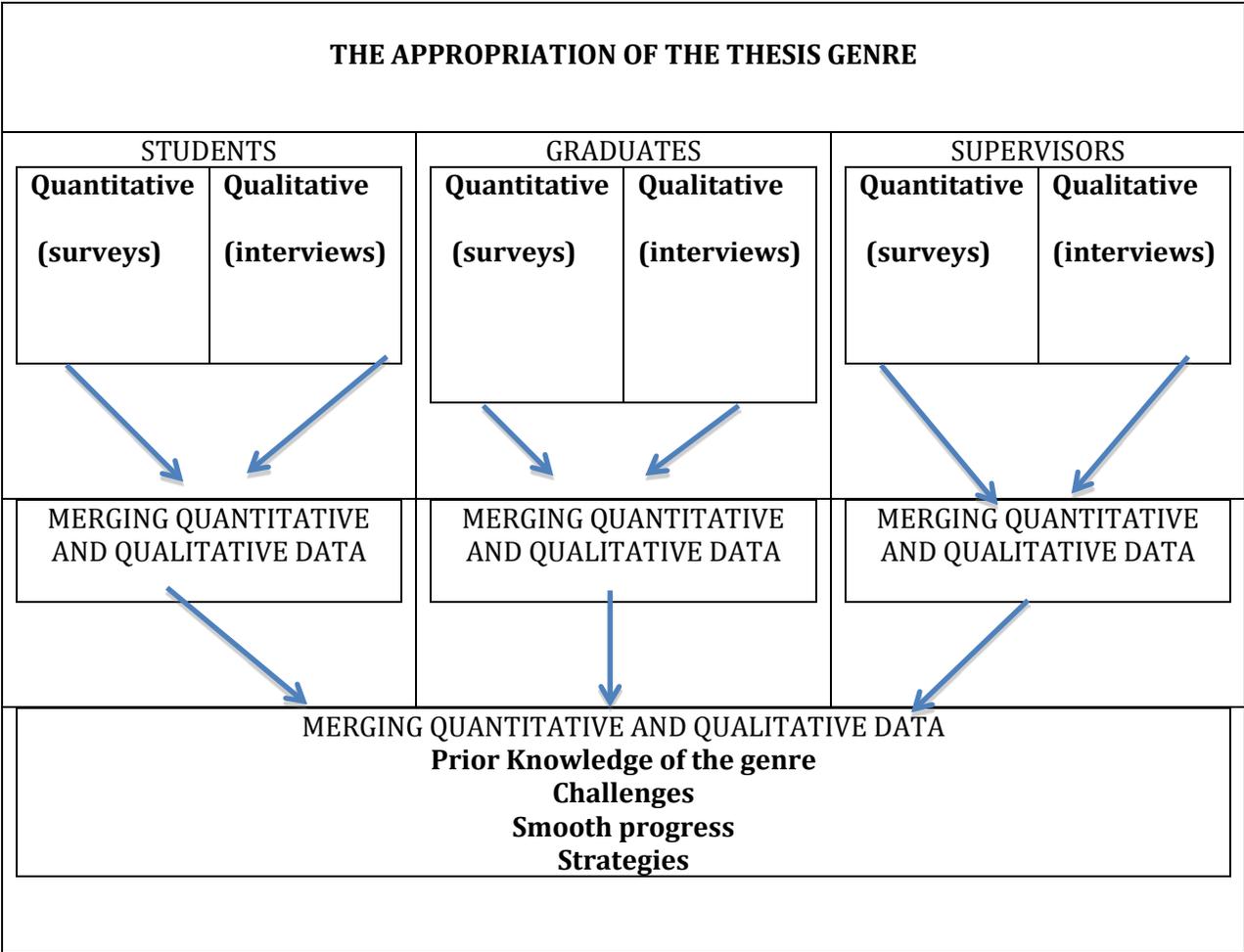
IMPACT OF WRITING THE THESIS

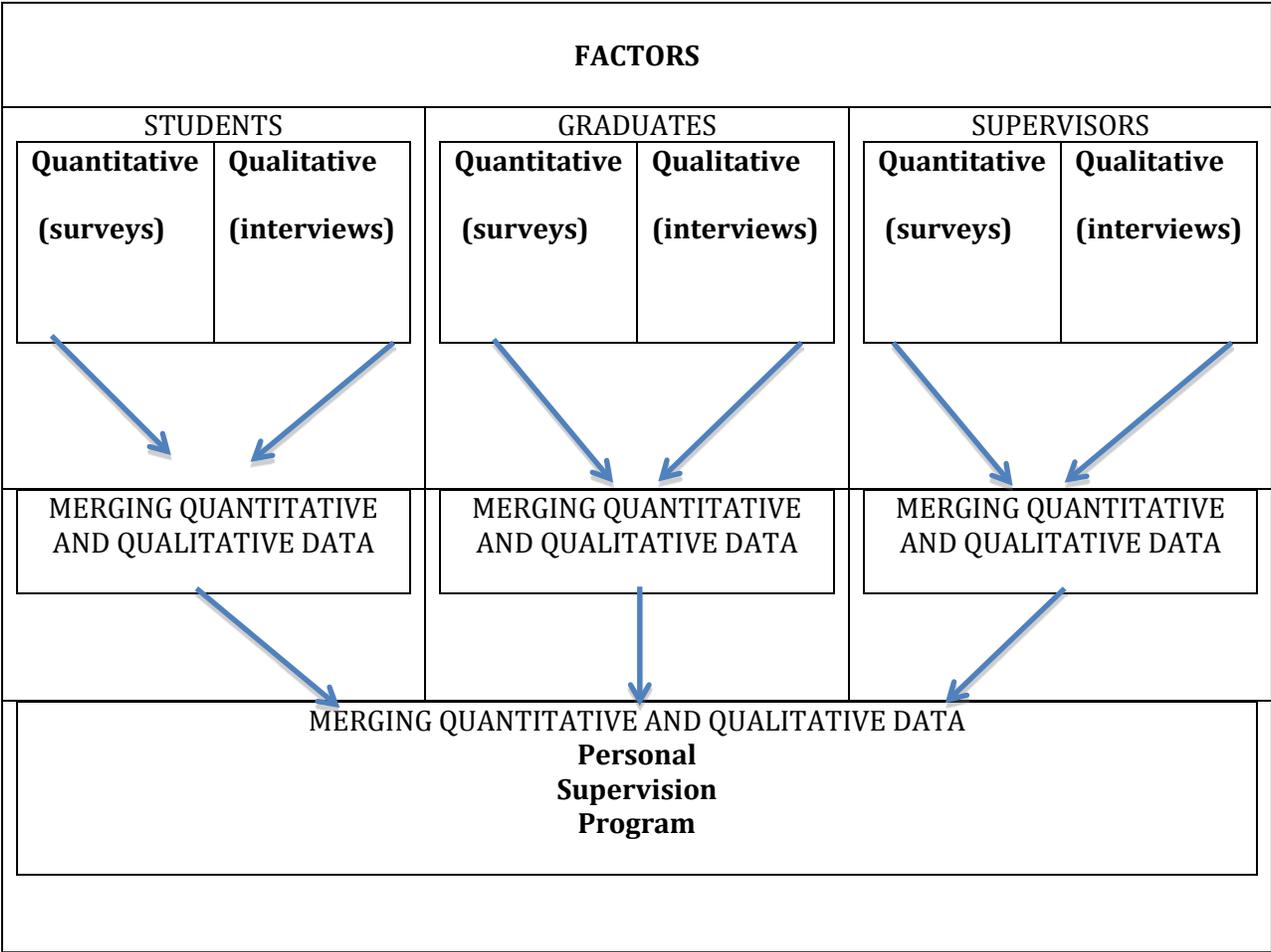
Surveys	Interviews
<p align="center"><u>Level of confidence to undertake academic work</u></p> <p>Students – Confident and very confident (53%) Neutral (39%) Not very confident (8%)</p> <p>Graduates – Confident and very confident (84%) Neutral (16%)</p> <p>Supervisors – Confident (50%) Neutral (25%) Not very confident (25%)</p> <p align="center"><u>Types of academic work students are interested in undertaking after thesis</u></p> <p>Students- Writing research articles Graduates - Writing research articles Supervisors - Writing research articles</p>	<p align="center"><u>On the individual</u></p> <p>Change -Personality, more organized, more critical, more confident in writing skills, a different teacher, better observer, more reflective and professional</p> <p>Development of other skills -Reading skills -Speaking skills -Higher thinking skills -Writing in L1</p> <p>Interest in continuing -Improving writing -Helping others conduct research and report it</p> <p>Understanding of features of writing -The writing process -Differences between writing in L1 and L2 -Writing for a reader -Lexical variety -Engagement of the reader</p> <p>Improvement in writing - General writing skills - Academic writing skills - Writer’s voice</p> <p align="center"><u>On their teaching or supervising</u></p> <p>-Teaching writing in English -Supervising students writing theses in undergraduate programs</p> <p align="center"><u>On the academic community</u></p> <p>A goal to publish research articles -opportunities -requirements A reality with the publication of articles Participation in conferences</p> <p align="center"><u>Depending on the teaching context</u></p> <p>Support systems -Universities -Public schools -Language institutes</p> <p>Job descriptions and requirements -Research and publication requirements -Teaching positions</p>

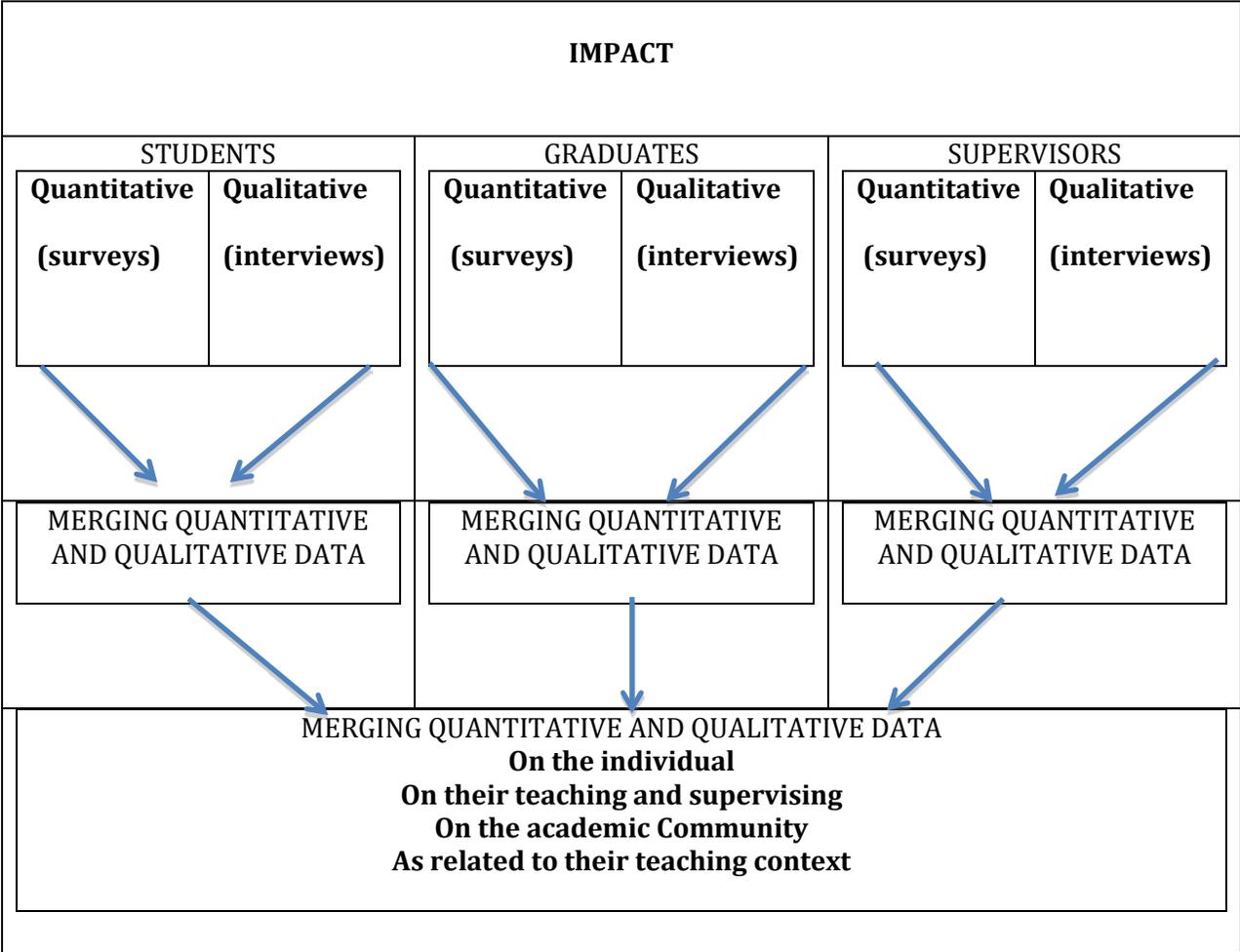
APPENDIX I
MERGING SCHEME FOR EACH THEME











APPENDIX J
TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE THESES DRAFTS

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE THESES DRAFTS

Intermediate Developing Writer

General Writing Skills

First draft

Problems with word choice, prepositions, awkward structures and subject agreement. Long chains of sentences connected with conjunctions.

Second draft

Many of the grammar problems remained and new ones appeared such as structures influenced by Spanish. Better selection of words, some instances of shorter sentences. Use of connectors increased although sometimes with some problems.

Academic Writing Skills

First draft

Many unsupported assertions, some information from sources was used without any elaboration and usually lacking the citation. The direct quotes did not include page number when citation was included. Some information was introduced without making clear if it was the writer's or someone else's ideas.

Second draft

There were still some unsupported assertions. Those times when long lists of quotes were included was replaced by paragraphs, sometimes with some elaboration. Transitions were included now to wrap up and prepare the reader for the following sections. The writer paid more attention to the APA style although it was not consistent in the entire document.

The appropriation of the thesis genre

irst draft

The introduction does a good job placing the reader in the context and presenting the problems. Although there were some assertions about the problematic situation that were not supported. In the theoretical framework the writer included basically list of bullets with general information and this information was not linked to the study. The methodology tried to include information to support the research design but the bullet format did not help to present the information clearly.

Second draft

In this draft, the introduction did not change much but it was divided a bit better. The theoretical framework improved since the writer tried to elaborate on the information while dealing with the concepts and also created connections between them. The methodology and the instructional design were more elaborated although some problems remained with the bullet format in some parts.

General Writing Skills

First draft

The writer had some few word choice problems that included the use of informal words to the use of collocations and words that did not fit the particular context. Prepositions occasionally were not accurate. There were also problems with missing subjects, and coordination structures. The most important problem was related to the length of sentences that was basically extended by the endless use of commas and semi colons.

Second draft

There were still some problems with word choice influenced by the informal use of the language, the first language or simply words used incorrectly. Prepositions remained the biggest problem all over the document. Sentences were still quite long and commas and semi colons were used frequently instead of periods. In general terms, the writer's ideas were clear and an effort was clear in giving coherence to each one of the sections. There were still few instances of paragraphs that required better organization.

Academic Writing Skills

First draft

There were times when the information from the authors was left standing alone without any elaboration. Besides, there was no linkage between the ideas from these sources. The writer tried to quote these sources but there were problems in the referencing style that included writing the last and first names of the author of a source, missing to include the page number for direct quotes, including a full reference in the text, and omitting the quotation marks at the end of a quote. Acronyms were presented incorrectly and a table with definitions was included without any connection or elaboration in the text.

Second draft

The writer made an effort to keep in mind the citation of sources and there was improvement in in-text citations of sources from authors but as the writer advanced in the document there was lack of consistency in considering these citation requirements. There was still overuse of quotations from sources that sometimes not even included the quotation marks and hardly ever the page numbers. Although there was more elaboration on the information from sources especially in the theoretical framework section, it did not happen all the time. Diagrams articulating the main features of some of the constructs were included to help summarize the most important points.

The appropriation of the thesis genre

First draft

The writer had clarity about what she needed to do in the introduction. She also knew the importance of supporting her argument about her study with literature. However, these sources did not serve this purpose clearly and directly or the ideas were not fully developed. The two research questions included did not fully correspond to the argument she presented in the introduction. In the theoretical framework, there was not a clear introduction to the way the different concepts to be presented were linked to the study. It was more like inventory of definitions and concepts without elaboration. In the research design, the writer included some sources to support and explain her research design but they were also not connected. The instruments were introduced but specific information about the form they were going to take in this study was not given.

Second draft

The introduction was definitely more focused although there was only one aspect that was not fully developed (i.e., the connection of the study with language policies). The research questions were now more directly connected with the argument presented in the introduction. The State of the art or literature review was now included but it was not fully developed. In this section, the main trend of studies in this area was mentioned but no support with any reference to any of these studies was presented. Only one study was included here. The elaboration on the sources that supported each one of the concepts included in the theoretical framework improved significantly. However, instead of making reference to language learners in general in this elaboration, the writer many times brought the experience of the students in this study which may be more appropriate for the data analysis or the findings sections. At the end of this framework, the writer wrote an overview of some of the constructs presented although a bit general it showed her interest in wrapping up this section and connecting its contents. The research design was a bit more elaborated including a more comprehensive description of the context, the research design and the instruments.

Proficient Writer

General Writing Skills

First draft

Excellent control of grammar and his vocabulary is varied and quite sophisticated. There was also variety of structures and the ideas presented followed a clear flow. There were minor mistakes with the use of some words and prepositions but in general terms this writer was quite accurate in this regard.

Second draft

Several additions and modifications were made that improved the clarity of some ideas. For example, there were changes in some words to give the text a more scholar and precise tone Some connectors were also changed.

Academic Writing Skills

First draft

The writer did a very good job integrating and elaborating on the information from sources. Although his citation of sources was quite accurate, there were a few problems while including long quotes and introducing information from secondary sources. It was especially outstanding the way this writer elaborated on the information from sources, making clear connections between the ideas and the topic of the study. Regarding the use of academic vocabulary, this writer handled a good variety of expressions. The writer was explicit about some processes he went through while dealing with the information from sources. Good job introducing the information to come with transition and concluding paragraphs indicating an understanding of the way writers should prepare and guide the reader in this type of documents. Some tables were taken from some sources and included in the text but no page number was included. Although a great deal of attention was paid to formatting the document according to the APA style, there were still some problems especially with headings and subheadings.

Second draft

The writer reinforced his presence in several parts of the document by explicitly showing it. The writer also varied the way he introduced the information from authors by changing the structures he used. The writer reduced considerably the reference to the authors as he was presenting their ideas. The writer also avoided making explicit processes and instead elaborated on the information. The writer only overlooked a couple of times some requirements of citation. However, the citation of sources was a very strong area for this writer. He included complete information about the sources of tables and their corresponding labeling The formatting of the document was quite accurate, especially observing the APA requirements for headings and subheadings.

The appropriation of the thesis genre

First draft

The introduction component did not include the introductory section but the rationale of the study was clearly presented and supported with information from literature and the description for the context and problem was quite comprehensive and concrete. The theoretical framework section was quite extensive. In this section, the writer integrated the information from scholars with conceptual and methodological decisions the writer made while designing and implementing the program. The methodology section was clearly supported with theory as were the methodological approach and instruments to be used in the study. In this section the writer also described the participants and research stages. This writer showed very good understanding of the content and structure of each of the sections he included so far in the first draft.

Second draft

The writer included an introductory section that placed the reader in the context and problem and how it was approached in the study. The other parts of the introduction remained basically the same except a paragraph expanding on the information about the city where the study took place. At the beginning of the theoretical framework, the writer included a paragraph presenting all the elements which was something he failed to do in the first draft. The theoretical framework is the one area that changed the most. These changes were more related to parts of the text in which connections were made between the information from theory and how that information had shaped the writer's decisions that were removed. In the methodology section, a description of the stages of the action research as related to the program and a description of the participants' main subjects in their program of studies were added. All the workshops used in the professional development program were presented.

APPENDIX K
MASUS (ORIGINAL CHECKLIST)

MASUS (Measuring the Academic Skills of University Students)

4 = very good/hardly any problems/mainly accurate/largely appropriate.

3 = good/minor problems/some inaccuracies/some inappropriacies.

2 = only fair/some problems/often inaccurate/often inappropriate.

1 = poor/major problems/inaccurate/inappropriate.

Criteria	Comments
A. Use of source material and personal experience – is information taken from study, research and experience correct and/or appropriate for the task?	4 3 2 1
1. Used relevant information from reading	
2. Irrelevant information from course material is avoided	
3. Information from course material and other research or personal experience is interpreted and transferred correctly	
4. Text is free from plagiarism/information is integrated with your own words and ideas	
5. Recognition of various perspectives in the field	
6. Accurate referencing in text, bibliography or reference list is correct	
B. Structure and development of text – is the structure and development of the answer clear and appropriate to the task and its context?	4 3 2 1
1. Introduction engages with the task and orientates to how the argument will be presented	
2. Text structure is appropriate to the task	
3. Claims build up the argument	
4. Conflicting arguments are presented, addressed and effectively managed	
5. Evidence and other experience is used that supports the claims in the argument	
6. Beginnings of paragraphs and sentences orientate to the argument	
7. Information flow in the argument is linked (argument moves between high level generalisations and low level details and examples)	
8. Statement of conclusion follows from argument & relates to title	
C. Control of academic writing style – does the grammar conform to appropriate patterns of written academic English	4 3 2 1
1. Appropriate use of abstract vocabulary	
2. Appropriate use of technical terms from the field	
3. Appropriate use of collocation	
4. Appropriate level of formality and 'objectivity'	
5. Appropriate use of modality, interpersonal metaphor and other evaluative language	
6. Appropriate use of noun groups and grammatical metaphor	
7. Control of taxonomic relations	
8. Control of reference chains and other cohesive devices	
D. Grammatical correctness	4 3 2 1
1. Correctly formed clause structures	
2. Correct subject-verb agreement	
3. Correctly formed tense choice	
4. Correctly formed passives	
5. Correctly formed modality	
6. Correct use of articles	
7. Correct use of conjuncts, adjuncts and disjuncts	
E. Qualities of presentation	4 3 2 1
1. Punctuation use generally correct	
2. Spelling generally correct	
3. Capitals, italics etc. used correctly	
4. Word processing appropriate	

APPENDIX L
MASUS (ADAPTED CHECKLIST)

MASUS (Measuring the Academic Skills of University Students)

4 = very good/hardly any problems/mainly accurate/largely appropriate.

3 = good/minor problems/some inaccuracies/some inappropriacies.

2 = only fair/some problems/often inaccurate/often inappropriate.

1 = poor/major problems/inaccurate/inappropriate.

N/A= Non applicable

Criteria	Comments
A. Use of source material and personal experience – is information taken from research and experience correct and/or appropriate for the task?	4 3 2 1 N/A
1. Used relevant information from reading (i.e., to the topic studied)	
2. Irrelevant information is avoided	
3. Information from research or personal experience is interpreted and transferred correctly	
4. Text is free from plagiarism/information is integrated with own words and ideas	
5. Recognition of various perspectives in the field	
6. Accurate referencing in text, bibliography or reference list is correct (APA style)	
B. Structure and development of text – is the structure and development of each section of the thesis appropriate to the task and its context?	4 3 2 1 N/A
1. The introduction engages with the task and orientates to how the research question(s) is (are) grounded and approached A clear rationale to conduct the study is presented A comprehensive description of the context supports the need to conduct the study All research questions or problems are linked to the rationale and context presented A clear overview of the project introduces the basic content of the sections to provide a clear flow of the document	
2. The literature review clearly and sufficiently locates the study within the realm of the literature in the subject area A brief description of the structure of the review is given All parts have a logical sequence(from general to more specific) Information from literature on a given aspect starts with the authors' ideas and gradually introduces the writer's understanding and connection to the main issue of the study An overview of the main aspects brought up in the literature gathered is given and the gap in literature pointed out	
3. The theoretical framework clearly and sufficiently presents the pertinent constructs for the study A brief description of the theoretical constructs to be explored is presented Each construct is sufficiently developed to lay out the main tenets Each construct is linked to the study An overview of the theoretical constructs included is given	
4. The methodology section clearly and sufficiently lays out the rationale for the methodological design and the instruments used The methodological design is clearly defined and supported with literature Instruments are carefully described Samples of the instruments are provided in the main text or in appendices at the end (when applicable)	
5. The methodological section clearly and sufficiently presents the instructional intervention used A clear overview of the instructional intervention is given Samples of the intervention are provided in the main text or in appendices at the end (when applicable)	
6. The data analysis section clearly and sufficiently presents the results from each one of the instruments used and its analysis A clear description of the type(s) of data analysis used is(are) presented Results from each instrument are presented in appropriate formats Results are clearly explained An overview of the main results is provided	
7. The discussion/ conclusion section purposefully connects the findings with theory and implications for future research are sound and appropriate An overview of the main findings is presented Each finding is supported with relevant theory Implications for further research are linked to the findings of the study	

Criteria	Comments
Implications are linked to possible limitations of the study (when applicable)	
Concluding remarks connect the research problems/questions to the findings of the study	
C. Control of academic writing style – does the grammar and vocabulary conform to appropriate patterns of written academic English	4 3 2 1 N/A
1. Appropriate use of abstract vocabulary (e.g., good, successful, etc)	
2. Appropriate use of technical terms from the field (e.g., competence, skill, proficiency)	
3. Appropriate use of collocation (e.g., do exercises, conduct a study)	
4. Appropriate level of formality and 'objectivity'	
5. Appropriate use of modality, interpersonal metaphor and other evaluative language	
6. Appropriate use of noun groups and grammatical metaphor (e.g., English teaching,)	
7. Control of taxonomic relations (i.e., hierarchies)	
8. Control of reference chains and other cohesive devices	
D. Grammatical correctness	4 3 2 1 N/A
1. Correctly formed clause structures	
2. Correct subject-verb agreement	
3. Correctly formed tense choice	
4. Correctly formed passives	
5. Correctly formed modality	
6. Correct use of articles	
7. Correct use of conjuncts, adjuncts and disjuncts (e.g., usually, frankly, then, respectively)	
E. Qualities of presentation	4 3 2 1 N/A
1. Punctuation use generally correct	
2. Spelling generally correct	
3. Capitals, italics etc. used correctly	
4. Word processing appropriate (margins, spacing, letter size and style, etc)	

The checklist is based on the MASUS checklist designed by Bonnano & Jones (1997) and influenced by the work of Erling & Richardson (2010).

APPENDIX M

STATISTICS INTERRATER RELIABILITY COEFFICIENT-ICC

Intra-Class Correlation Coefficient (ICC) for the three raters in all drafts

Reliability

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	232	88.5
	Excluded ^a	30	11.5
	Total	262	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.859	3

Intraclass Correlation Coefficient

	Intraclass Correlation ^a	95% Confidence Interval		F Test with True Value 0			
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Value	df1	df2	Sig
Single Measures	.669 ^b	.609	.724	7.076	231	462	.000
Average Measures	.859 ^c	.824	.887	7.076	231	462	.000

Two-way mixed effects model where people effects are random and measures effects are fixed.

a. Type C intraclass correlation coefficients using a consistency definition-the between-measure variance is excluded from the denominator variance.

b. The estimator is the same, whether the interaction effect is present or not.

c. This estimate is computed assuming the interaction effect is absent, because it is not estimable otherwise.

Percentage of absolute agreement among raters in all drafts

Frequencies

		Statistics		
		diffmater1_2	diffmater2_3	diffmater3_1
N	Valid	233	233	251
	Missing	29	29	11

Frequency Table

		diffmater1_2			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-2.00	1	.4	.4	.4
	-1.00	38	14.5	16.3	16.7
	.00	74	28.2	31.8	48.5
	1.00	108	41.2	46.4	94.8
	2.00	12	4.6	5.2	100.0
	Total		233	88.9	100.0
Missing	System	29	11.1		
Total		262	100.0		

		Diffmater2_3			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-2.00	8	3.1	3.4	3.4
	-1.00	87	33.2	37.3	40.8
	.00	104	39.7	44.6	85.4
	1.00	34	13.0	14.6	100.0
	Total		233	88.9	100.0
Missing	System	29	11.1		
Total		262	100.0		

diffater3_1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-2.00	3	1.1	1.2	1.2
	-1.00	54	20.6	21.5	22.7
	.00	151	57.6	60.2	82.9
	1.00	40	15.3	15.9	98.8
	2.00	3	1.1	1.2	100.0
	Total		251	95.8	100.0
Missing	System	11	4.2		
Total		262	100.0		

Percentage of absolute agreement among raters and Intra-Class Correlation Coefficient (ICC) for the three raters in each draft

Student 1 Draft 1

Frequencies

Statistics

diffmater1_2

N	Valid	40
	Missing	2

diffmater1_2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-1.00	8	19.0	20.0	20.0
	.00	24	57.1	60.0	80.0
	1.00	8	19.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	40	95.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	4.8		
Total		42	100.0		

Frequencies

Statistics

diffmater2_3

N	Valid	40
	Missing	2

diffmater2_3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-1.00	10	23.8	25.0	25.0
	.00	24	57.1	60.0	85.0
	1.00	6	14.3	15.0	100.0
	Total	40	95.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	4.8		
Total		42	100.0		

Frequencies

Statistics

diffmater3_1

N	Valid	41
	Missing	1

diffmater3_1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-1.00	6	14.3	14.6	14.6
	.00	24	57.1	58.5	73.2
	1.00	11	26.2	26.8	100.0
	Total	41	97.6	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.4		
Total		42	100.0		

Reliability

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	40	95.2
	Excluded ^a	2	4.8
	Total	42	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.343	3

Intraclass Correlation Coefficient

	Intraclass Correlation ^a	95% Confidence Interval		F Test with True Value 0			
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Value	df1	df2	Sig
Single Measures	.148 ^b	-.034	.362	1.521	39	78	.059
Average Measures	.343 ^c	-.111	.630	1.521	39	78	.059

Two-way mixed effects model where people effects are random and measures effects are fixed.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	40	95.2
	Excluded ^a	2	4.8
	Total	42	100.0

- a. Type C intraclass correlation coefficients using a consistency definition-the between-measure variance is excluded from the denominator variance.
- b. The estimator is the same, whether the interaction effect is present or not.
- c. This estimate is computed assuming the interaction effect is absent, because it is not estimable otherwise.

Student 1 Draft 2

Frequencies

Statistics

diffmater1_2

N	Valid	40
	Missing	2

diffmater1_2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-2.00	1	2.4	2.5	2.5
	.00	19	45.2	47.5	50.0
	1.00	18	42.9	45.0	95.0
	2.00	2	4.8	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	95.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	4.8		
Total		42	100.0		

Frequencies

Statistics

diffmater2_3

N	Valid	40
	Missing	2

diffmater2_3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-1.00	16	38.1	40.0	40.0
	.00	22	52.4	55.0	95.0
	1.00	2	4.8	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	95.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	4.8		
Total		42	100.0		

Frequencies

Statistics

diffmater3_1

N	Valid	41
	Missing	1

diffmater3_1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-1.00	10	23.8	24.4	24.4
	.00	26	61.9	63.4	87.8
	1.00	5	11.9	12.2	100.0
	Total	41	97.6	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.4		
Total		42	100.0		

Reliability

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	40	95.2
	Excluded ^a	2	4.8
	Total	42	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.533	3

Intraclass Correlation Coefficient

	Intraclass Correlation ^a	95% Confidence Interval		F Test with True Value 0			
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Value	df1	df2	Sig
Single Measures	.276 ^b	.082	.484	2.143	39	78	.002
Average Measures	.533 ^c	.211	.738	2.143	39	78	.002

Two-way mixed effects model where people effects are random and measures effects are fixed.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	40	95.2
	Excluded ^a	2	4.8
	Total	42	100.0

- a. Type C intraclass correlation coefficients using a consistency definition-the between-measure variance is excluded from the denominator variance.
- b. The estimator is the same, whether the interaction effect is present or not.
- c. This estimate is computed assuming the interaction effect is absent, because it is not estimable otherwise.

Student 2 Draft 1

Frequencies

Statistics

diffmater1_2

N	Valid	37
	Missing	5

diffmater1_2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-1.00	12	28.6	32.4	32.4
	.00	17	40.5	45.9	78.4
	1.00	7	16.7	18.9	97.3
	2.00	1	2.4	2.7	100.0
Total		37	88.1	100.0	
Missing	System	5	11.9		
Total		42	100.0		

Frequencies

Statistics

diffmater2_3

N	Valid	36
	Missing	6

diffmater2_3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-1.00	4	9.5	11.1	11.1
	.00	18	42.9	50.0	61.1
	1.00	14	33.3	38.9	100.0
Total		36	85.7	100.0	
Missing	System	6	14.3		
Total		42	100.0		

Frequencies

Statistics

diffmater3_1

N	Valid	38
	Missing	4

diffmater3_1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-2.00	1	2.4	2.6	2.6
	-1.00	9	21.4	23.7	26.3
	.00	23	54.8	60.5	86.8
	1.00	5	11.9	13.2	100.0
	Total	38	90.5	100.0	
Missing	System	4	9.5		
Total		42	100.0		

Reliability
Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	36	85.7
	Excluded ^a	6	14.3
	Total	42	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.775	3

Intraclass Correlation Coefficient

	Intraclass Correlation ^a	95% Confidence Interval		F Test with True Value 0			
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Value	df1	df2	Sig
Single Measures	.534 ^b	.341	.705	4.441	35	70	.000
Average Measures	.775 ^c	.609	.878	4.441	35	70	.000

Two-way mixed effects model where people effects are random and measures effects are fixed.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	36	85.7
	Excluded ^a	6	14.3
	Total	42	100.0

- a. Type C intraclass correlation coefficients using a consistency definition-the between-measure variance is excluded from the denominator variance.
- b. The estimator is the same, whether the interaction effect is present or not.
- c. This estimate is computed assuming the interaction effect is absent, because it is not estimable otherwise.

Student 2 Draft 2

Frequencies

Statistics

diffmater1_2

N	Valid	37
	Missing	5

diffmater1_2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-1.00	18	42.9	48.6	48.6
	.00	13	31.0	35.1	83.8
	1.00	6	14.3	16.2	100.0
	Total	37	88.1	100.0	
Missing	System	5	11.9		
Total		42	100.0		

Frequencies

Statistics

diffmater2_3

N	Valid	37
	Missing	5

diffmater2_3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-2.00	1	2.4	2.7	2.7
	-1.00	4	9.5	10.8	13.5
	.00	22	52.4	59.5	73.0
	1.00	10	23.8	27.0	100.0
Total		37	88.1	100.0	
Missing	System	5	11.9		
Total		42	100.0		

Frequencies

Statistics

diffmater3_1

N	Valid	39
	Missing	3

diffmater3_1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-1.00	4	9.5	10.3	10.3
	.00	23	54.8	59.0	69.2
	1.00	12	28.6	30.8	100.0
	Total	39	92.9	100.0	
Missing	System	3	7.1		
Total		42	100.0		

Reliability

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	37	88.1
	Excluded ^a	5	11.9
	Total	42	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.546	3

Intraclass Correlation Coefficient

	Intraclass Correlation ^a	95% Confidence Interval		F Test with True Value 0			
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Value	df1	df2	Sig
Single Measures	.286 ^b	.084	.501	2.201	36	72	.002
Average Measures	.546 ^c	.216	.751	2.201	36	72	.002

Two-way mixed effects model where people effects are random and measures effects are fixed.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	37	88.1
	Excluded ^a	5	11.9
	Total	42	100.0

- a. Type C intraclass correlation coefficients using a consistency definition-the between-measure variance is excluded from the denominator variance.
- b. The estimator is the same, whether the interaction effect is present or not.
- c. This estimate is computed assuming the interaction effect is absent, because it is not estimable otherwise.

Student 3 Draft 1

Frequencies

Statistics

difframer1_2

N	Valid	39
	Missing	8

difframer1_2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	1	2.1	2.6	2.6
	1.00	34	72.3	87.2	89.7
	2.00	4	8.5	10.3	100.0
	Total	39	83.0	100.0	
Missing	System	8	17.0		
Total		47	100.0		

Frequencies

Statistics

difframer2_3

N	Valid	40
	Missing	7

difframer2_3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-2.00	1	2.1	2.5	2.5
	-1.00	21	44.7	52.5	55.0
	.00	16	34.0	40.0	95.0
	1.00	2	4.3	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	85.1	100.0	
Missing	System	7	14.9		
Total		47	100.0		

Frequencies

Statistics

difframer3_1

N	Valid	45
	Missing	2

diffater3_1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-2.00	2	4.3	4.4	4.4
	-1.00	21	44.7	46.7	51.1
	.00	16	34.0	35.6	86.7
	1.00	4	8.5	8.9	95.6
	2.00	2	4.3	4.4	100.0
	Total	45	95.7	100.0	
Missing	System	2	4.3		
Total		47	100.0		

Reliability

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	39	83.0
	Excluded ^a	8	17.0
	Total	47	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.337	3

Intraclass Correlation Coefficient

	Intraclass Correlation ^a	95% Confidence Interval		F Test with True Value 0			
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Value	df1	df2	Sig
Single Measures	.145 ^b	-.039	.362	1.508	38	76	.065
Average Measures	.337 ^c	-.128	.630	1.508	38	76	.065

Two-way mixed effects model where people effects are random and measures effects are fixed.

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	39	83.0
	Excluded ^a	8	17.0
	Total	47	100.0

- a. Type C intraclass correlation coefficients using a consistency definition-the between-measure variance is excluded from the denominator variance.
- b. The estimator is the same, whether the interaction effect is present or not.
- c. This estimate is computed assuming the interaction effect is absent, because it is not estimable otherwise.

Student 3 Draft 2

Frequencies

Statistics

diffmater1_2

N	Valid	40
	Missing	7

diffmater1_2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	35	74.5	87.5	87.5
	2.00	5	10.6	12.5	100.0
	Total	40	85.1	100.0	
Missing	System	7	14.9		
Total		47	100.0		

Frequencies

Statistics

diffmater2_3

N	Valid	40
	Missing	7

diffmater2_3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-2.00	6	12.8	15.0	15.0
	-1.00	32	68.1	80.0	95.0
	.00	2	4.3	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	85.1	100.0	
Missing	System	7	14.9		
Total		47	100.0		

Frequencies

Statistics

diffmater3_1

N	Valid	47
	Missing	0

difftrater3_1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-1.00	4	8.5	8.5	8.5
	.00	39	83.0	83.0	91.5
	1.00	3	6.4	6.4	97.9
	2.00	1	2.1	2.1	100.0
	Total	47	100.0	100.0	

Reliability

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	40	85.1
	Excluded ^a	7	14.9
	Total	47	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.544	3

Intraclass Correlation Coefficient

	Intraclass Correlation ^a	95% Confidence Interval		F Test with True Value 0			
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Value	df1	df2	Sig
Single Measures	.285 ^b	.090	.492	2.194	39	78	.002
Average Measures	.544 ^c	.230	.744	2.194	39	78	.002

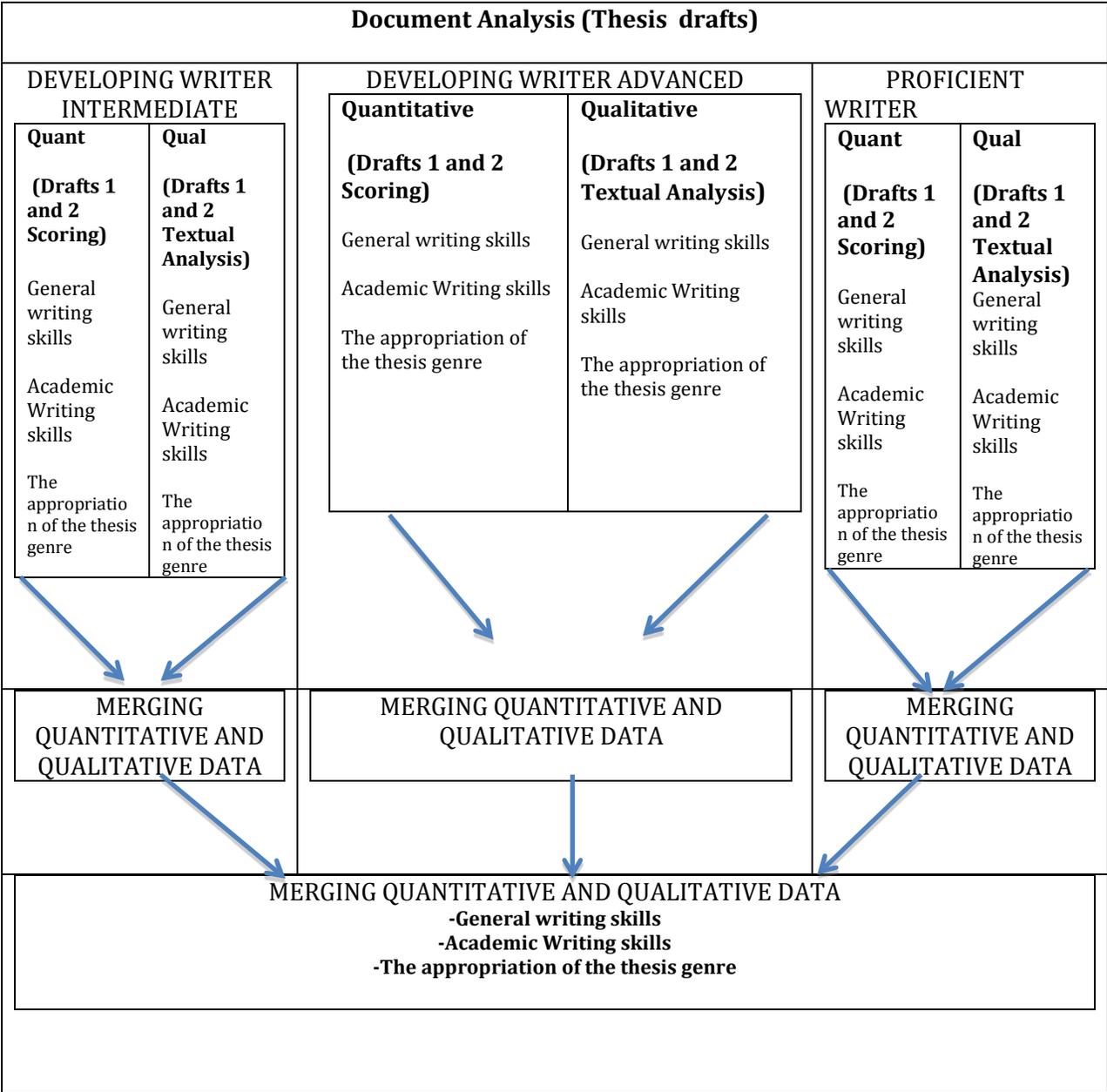
Two-way mixed effects model where people effects are random and measures effects are fixed.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	40	85.1
	Excluded ^a	7	14.9
	Total	47	100.0

- a. Type C intraclass correlation coefficients using a consistency definition-the between-measure variance is excluded from the denominator variance.
- b. The estimator is the same, whether the interaction effect is present or not.
- c. This estimate is computed assuming the interaction effect is absent, because it is not estimable otherwise.

APPENDIX N
MERGING SCHEME FOR DRAFTS ANALYSES



APPENDIX O
THE ANALYSIS OF THE THESES DRAFTS

THE ANALYSIS OF THESE DRAFTS

Checklist Scoring

- 1- poor/major problems/inaccurate/inappropriate
 2-only fair/some problems/often inaccurate/often inappropriate
 3-good/minor problems/some inaccuracies/some inappropriacies.
 4-very good/hardly any problems/mainly accurate/largely appropriate.

General Writing Skills

Area	Intermediate Developing Writer		Advanced Developing Writer		Proficient Writer	
	1	2	1	2	1	2
Draft	1	2	1	2	1	2
Vocabulary	1.72	1.98	2.39	2.53	3.37	3.62
Grammar	1.85	2.13	2.61	2.42	3.61	3.66
Mechanics & punctuation	1.91	2.5	2.16	2.25	3.58	3.66

Academic Writing Skills

Area	Intermediate Developing Writer		Advanced Developing Writer		Proficient Writer	
	1	2	1	2	1	2
Draft	1	2	1	2	1	2
Overall Use of source material	1.36	1.77	1.77	2.16	3.11	3.27
Information interpreted and transferred correctly	1.3	1.66	1.33	2.0	3.66	3.66
Text is free from plagiarism	1.0	1.0	1.66	2.33	3.0	3.33
Accurate referencing in text and ref. list	1.0	2.0	1.33	1.66	2.66	3.33

The appropriation of the thesis genre

Area	Intermediate Developing Writer		Advanced Developing Writer		Proficient Writer	
	1	2	1	2	1	2
Draft	1	2	1	2	1	2
Introduction	1.80	2.13	1.86	2.53	3.2	3.6
theoretical framework	1.46	2.26	1.2	1.86	3.33	3.6
Methodology	1.5	1.83	1.83	2.58	3.41	3.66
Instructional design	1.76	2.3	NA	NA	3.0	3.33

Textual Analysis

Intermediate Developing Writer

General Writing Skills

First draft

Problems with word choice, prepositions, awkward structures and subject agreement. Long chains of sentences connected with conjunctions.

Second draft

Many of the grammar problems remained and new ones appeared such as structures influenced by Spanish. Better selection of words, some instances of shorter sentences. Use of connectors increased although sometimes with some problems.

Academic Writing Skills

First draft

Many unsupported assertions, some information from sources was used without any elaboration and usually lacking the citation. The direct quotes did not include page number when citation was included. Some information was introduced without making clear if it was the writer's or someone else's ideas.

Second draft

There were still some unsupported assertions. Those times when long lists of quotes were included was replaced by paragraphs, sometimes with some elaboration. Transitions were included now to wrap up and prepare the reader for the following sections. The writer paid more attention to the APA style although it was not consistent in the entire document.

The appropriation of the thesis genre

First draft

The introduction does a good job placing the reader in the context and presenting the problems. Although there were some assertions about the problematic situation that were not supported. In the theoretical framework the writer included basically list of bullets with general information and this information was not linked to the study. The methodology tried to include information to support the research design but the bullet format did not help to present the information clearly.

Second draft

In this draft, the introduction did not change much but it was divided a bit better. The theoretical framework improved since the writer tried to elaborate on the information while dealing with the concepts and also created connections between them. The methodology and the instructional design were more elaborated although some problems remained with the bullet format in some parts.

THE ANALYSIS OF THESE DRAFTS

Textual Analysis Advanced Developing Writer

General Writing Skills

First draft

The writer had some few word choice problems that included the use of informal words to the use of collocations and words that did not fit the particular context. Prepositions occasionally were not accurate. There were also problems with missing subjects, and coordination structures. The most important problem was related to the length of sentences that was basically extended by the endless use of commas and semi colons.

Second draft

There were still some problems with word choice influenced by the informal use of the language, the first language or simply words used incorrectly. Prepositions remained the biggest problem all over the document. Sentences were still quite long and commas and semi colons were used frequently instead of periods. In general terms, the writer's ideas were clear and an effort was clear in giving coherence to each one of the sections. There were still few instances of paragraphs that required better organization.

Academic Writing Skills

First draft

There were times when the information from the authors was left standing alone without any elaboration. Besides, there was no linkage between the ideas from these sources. The writer tried to quote these sources but there were problems in the referencing style that included writing the last and first names of the author of a source, missing to include the page number for direct quotes, including a full reference in the text, and omitting the quotation marks at the end of a quote. Acronyms were presented incorrectly and a table with definitions was included without any connection or elaboration in the text.

Second draft

The writer made an effort to keep in mind the citation of sources and there was improvement in in-text citations of sources from authors but as the writer advanced in the document there was lack of consistency in considering these citation requirements. There was still overuse of quotations from sources that sometimes not even included the quotation marks and hardly ever the page numbers. Although there was more elaboration on the information from sources especially in the theoretical framework section, it did not happen all the time. Diagrams articulating the main features of some of the constructs were included to help summarize the most important points.

The appropriation of the thesis genre

First draft

The writer had clarity about what she needed to do in the introduction. She also knew the importance of supporting her argument about her study with literature. However, these sources did not serve this purpose clearly and directly or the ideas were not fully developed. The two research questions included did not fully correspond to the argument she presented in the introduction. In the theoretical framework, there was not a clear introduction to the way the different concepts to be presented were linked to the study. It was more like inventory of definitions and concepts without elaboration. In the research design, the writer included some sources to support and explain her research design but they were also not connected. The instruments were introduced but specific information about the form they were going to take in this study was not given.

Second draft

The introduction was definitely more focused although there was only one aspect that was not fully developed (i.e., the connection of the study with language policies). The research questions were now more directly connected with the argument presented in the introduction. The State of the art or literature review was now included but it was not fully developed. In this section, the main trend of studies in this area was mentioned but no support with any reference to any of these studies was presented. Only one study was included here. The elaboration on the sources that supported each one of the concepts included in the theoretical framework improved significantly. However, instead of making reference to language learners in general in this elaboration, the writer many times brought the experience of the students in this study which may be more appropriate for the data analysis or the findings sections. At the end of this framework, the writer wrote an overview of some of the constructs presented although a bit general it showed her interest in wrapping up this section and connecting its contents. The research design was a bit more elaborated including a more comprehensive description of the context, the research design and the instruments.

Textual Analysis
Proficient Writer

General Writing Skills

First draft

Excellent control of grammar and his vocabulary is varied and quite sophisticated. There was also variety of structures and the ideas presented followed a clear flow. There were minor mistakes with the use of some words and prepositions but in general terms this writer was quite accurate in this regard.

Second draft

Several additions and modifications were made that improved the clarity of some ideas. For example, there were changes in some words to give the text a more scholar and precise tone Some connectors were also changed.

Academic Writing Skills

First draft

The writer did a very good job integrating and elaborating on the information from sources. Although his citation of sources was quite accurate, there were a few problems while including long quotes and introducing information from secondary sources. It was especially outstanding the way this writer elaborated on the information from sources, making clear connections between the ideas and the topic of the study. Regarding the use of academic vocabulary, this writer handled a good variety of expressions. The writer was explicit about some processes he went through while dealing with the information from sources. Good job introducing the information to come with transition and concluding paragraphs indicating an understanding of the way writers should prepare and guide the reader in this type of documents. Some tables were taken from some sources and included in the text but no page number was included. Although a great deal of attention was paid to formatting the document according to the APA style, there were still some problems especially with headings and subheadings.

Second draft

The writer reinforced his presence in several parts of the document by explicitly showing it. The writer also varied the way he introduced the information from authors by changing the structures he used. The writer reduced considerably the reference to the authors as he was presenting their ideas. The writer also avoided making explicit processes and instead elaborated on the information. The writer only overlooked a couple of times some requirements of citation. However, the citation of sources was a very strong area for this writer. He included complete information about the sources of tables and their corresponding labeling The formatting of the document was quite accurate, especially observing the APA requirements for headings and subheadings.

The appropriation of the thesis genre

First draft

The introduction component did not include the introductory section but the rationale of the study was clearly presented and supported with information from literature and the description for the context and problem was quite comprehensive and concrete. The theoretical framework section was quite extensive. In this section, the writer integrated the information from scholars with conceptual and methodological decisions the writer made while designing and implementing the program. The methodology section was clearly supported with theory as were the methodological approach and instruments to be used in the study. In this section the writer also described the participants and research stages. This writer showed very good understanding of the content and structure of each of the sections he included so far in the first draft.

Second draft

The writer included an introductory section that placed the reader in the context and problem and how it was approached in the study. The other parts of the introduction remained basically the same except a paragraph expanding on the information about the city where the study took place. At the beginning of the theoretical framework, the writer included a paragraph presenting all the elements which was something he failed to do in the first draft. The theoretical framework is the one area that changed the most. These changes were more related to parts of the text in which connections were made between the information from theory and how that information had shaped the writer's decisions that were removed. In the methodology section, a description of the stages of the action research as related to the program and a description of the participants' main subjects in their program of studies were added. All the workshops used in the professional development program were presented.

APPENDIX P

EXAMPLES OF FEATURES OF THE TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Intermediate Developing Writer

Overall research study description: In this study the researcher designed an instructional intervention that included a variety of workshops in topics of interest for a group of students in ninth grade in a private school in order to explore how they contributed to the development of their oral fluency. The researcher used questionnaires to identify students' topics of interest and two interviews to identify first the students' level and second to see student's oral fluency improvement after the implementation of the speaking workshops.

Draft 1	Draft 2
General English	General English
<p><u>Referents</u></p> <p>ninth graders which they have been studied English during his whole academic life</p> <p><u>Grammar</u></p> <p>they do not feel confident for participating <i>instead of to participate</i> teaching English by conversations students motivate to participate in oral way</p> <p><u>Missing subjects</u></p> <p>On the other hand, is viewed as the easiest...</p> <p><u>Word choice</u></p> <p>this project pretends to implement The expectative is that the last workshop they do not participate in oral activities because they do not feel concerned in the class The place where the research is accomplished is... learners show motivated in improving The real-life topics about their daily lives and their interests, let students wake up their attention</p> <p><u>Prepositions</u></p> <p>I have found that teaching English in school has been addressed in to teach some a topic that is concerned or known for students Speaking implies to think the grammar</p> <p><u>Unclear structures</u></p> <p>The time is spent working in imitations of pronunciation but not in oral interaction, teachers' classes are addressed by drilling the communicative language that let students repeat.</p>	<p><u>Grammar</u></p> <p>in this case, the teacher, shows interested in the contexts</p> <p><u>Word choice</u></p> <p>topics in classes that may be call their attention some students fear the critics <i>instead of criticism</i> improvement of fluency comes implicit into the conversations they also can hear others' opinions</p> <p><u>Prepositions</u></p> <p>Students may feel more confident and motivated speaking about the main result is that students feel listened and understood. make students get fluency without paying attention in little mistakes</p> <p><u>Unclear structures</u></p> <p>this paper will investigate the improvement of fluency among particular speaking exercises</p> <p>Fluency is important in oral interaction because with its characteristics it gives a meaning of the message</p>

Academic English	Academic English
<p><u>In-text citation</u></p> <p>According to Harmer (2005), interaction is “the heart of the communication”.</p> <p><u>Lists of concepts with no elaboration</u></p> <p>WHAT MAKES SPEAKING DIFFICULT?</p> <p>McCarthy (1997) mentions some characteristics that may make speaking easy or difficult:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Clustering. Fluent speech is phrasal. Learners can organize their output both cognitively and physically. 2.Redundancy. Through the redundancy of language, learners can be clearer in the ideas they express. 3.Reduced forms. Learners must know the contractions, elisions, reduced vowels, etc in order to apply them in their speech.... <p><u>Information from sources is presented without any elaboration</u></p> <p>According to Fillmore (1979), fluency can be defined in two ways: the first definition is “the ability to fill time with talk” or “talk without significant pauses for an extended period” (p.) This ability must be unconscious and the quality of the talk is less important than the quantity. The second definition is “the ability to have appropriate things to say in a wide range of contexts”.</p> <p><u>Information presented with no reference to any source</u></p> <p>These are the components of communicative competence (CC) that are related to the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Organizational competence (grammatical and discourse) •Pragmatic competence (functional and sociolinguistic) •Psychomotor skills 	<p><u>In-text citation</u></p> <p>Correct citations</p> <p>Luoma (2001) states that “speaking scores are relevant to establish the rate, in which the examinees will speak the language being tested” (p. 30).</p> <p>Incorrect citation</p> <p>Richards (1990, p 67) noted that “the conversation class is something of an enigma in language teaching”.</p> <p><u>List of concepts turned into a paragraph without much elaboration</u></p> <p>WHAT MAKES SPEAKING DIFFICULT</p> <p>McCarthy (1997, p. 326) mentions some characteristics that may make speaking easy or difficult. Some of them are: clustering, redundancy, reduced forms, performance variables, colloquial language, and rate of delivery. They help learners in speaking improvement.</p> <p>Clustering refers that fluent speech is phrasal so that learners can organize their output both cognitively and physically. In redundancy of language, students can be clearer in the ideas they express. The reduced forms are useful because learners must know the contractions, elisions, reduced vowels, etc., in order to apply them in their speech.</p> <p><u>Acronyms are spelled out in later appearances</u></p> <p>In addition, English as foreign language teachers (EFLT) can make</p> <p><u>Assertions without support</u></p> <p>This is a new way for ninth graders who do not find the answer in adults about some questions of their interest</p> <p>Speaking implies to think the grammar in a brief space of time and make use of this in oral way; fluency is the complement to express the ideas or the intention of the speaker.</p>

Advanced Developing Writer

Overall research study description: In this study the researcher explored students' beliefs regarding English language learning in a public school in a small town. The researcher used a case study design including 21 students in 10th grade and gathered data through life narratives, student journals and focus groups.

Draft 1	Draft 2
General English	General English
<p><u>Word choice</u></p> <p>to deep about the knowledge it is regarding to the individual's beliefs <i>instead of</i> it is connected to the individual's beliefs</p> <p><u>Prepositions</u></p> <p>to be explored because its relevant <i>instead of</i> to be explored because of its relevant how they read the world they are living <i>instead of</i> how they read the world they are living in be aware about <i>instead of</i> aware of</p> <p><u>Subject and verb agreement</u></p> <p>Bandura (1986) introduce the real <i>instead of</i> Bandura (1986) introduces the real</p> <p><u>Missing subjects</u></p> <p>This project is also important because is the first research <i>instead of</i> because it is the first research</p> <p><u>Coordination structures</u></p> <p>which consists of exploring those reasons and help students to <i>instead of</i> which consists of exploring those reasons and helping students to</p> <p><u>Structure</u></p> <p>about what implies to learn a language different from the native one <i>instead of</i> what learning a language different from the native one implies</p> <p><u>Long sentences</u></p> <p>New ways of working in the educational field during the last few decades; for instance, the "Revolución Educativa" promoted by MEN in our country, English Standards according to the Common European Framework, Bilingual Colombia in 2019, thus, the language teaching field is facing many variables that teachers must hold consider to be successful in their work; as it can be seen, a wide spectrum of demands is in front of language teaching; teachers are called to be researchers, because, may be, this is one of the best ways to deepen about the knowledge of our context and to provide alternatives to improve teaching practices based on students' reality.</p>	<p><u>Word choice</u></p> <p>Education context <i>instead of</i> educational context Interchange <i>instead of</i> exchange Formation <i>instead of</i> education Get over <i>instead of</i> overcome</p> <p><u>Prepositions</u></p> <p>Search of <i>instead of</i> search for</p> <p><u>Structure</u></p> <p>Very explored construct <i>instead of</i> a construct that has been explore widely Beliefs are looked as <i>instead of</i> beliefs are seen</p> <p><u>Long sentences</u></p> <p>Moreover, this research project centers its attention in a population that comes from a rural area; they have a different milieu, as a result, this characteristic contributes to the importance and validity of this type of study because many of the research studies in this field of beliefs have been focused just on teachers or university students who are involved within the English learning as a professional option, in contrast, this current research, explores beliefs with a population that differs from traditionally chosen populations for this kind of studies; this fact may provide new findings and awareness at the end of the research process as a contribution to our own academic context.</p>

Academic English	Academic English
<p><u>In-text citation</u></p> <p>For instance, Vélez, G. (2003). "English in Colombia: a sociolinguistic profile". <i>World Englishes</i>, vol. 22, No.2 mentions some important considerations about social and cultural characteristics of English in our country.</p> <p>McGroarty, M (2003) claims..</p> <p>Gremmo also emphasizes..</p> <p>Wenden (1999) refers to beliefs a system of related ideas, some accepted without question, and others validated by their experience", also Wenden (1986),...</p> <p><u>Acronyms were presented incorrectly</u></p> <p>the ideal goals that MEN (Ministerio de Educación Nacional)</p> <p><u>Information from sources is included without proper citation</u></p> <p>Metacognitive knowledge term has been used in SLL/FLL literature since 1980s; for instance Wenden (1999) refers to beliefs a system of related ideas, some accepted without question, and others validated by their experience", also Wenden (1986), beliefs seem to "work as a sort of logic determining consciously or unconsciously what they did to help themselves to learn English".</p> <p><u>Information from sources is presented without elaboration</u></p> <p>Castelloti and Moore (2002) assert that representations are neither 'wrong' nor 'correct' nor 'permanent'. They sustain representations vary depending on the macro-context (curricular options, teaching orientations and relationships between languages and society as a whole and in the classroom), and micro-context (directly related to classroom activities, and the attitudinal and classroom dynamics), as cited in Gabillon, 2005 p. 237.</p>	<p><u>In-text citation</u></p> <p>Zhera Gabillon (2005) refers...</p> <p>Nevertheless, Durkheim states that representations are "group of ideas which are widely shared and socially forceful because they are collectively created through the interaction of many minds", one example...</p> <p><u>Acronyms</u></p> <p>the "Revolución Educativa" promoted by MEN in our country...</p> <p><u>Assertions</u></p> <p>This is one of the best ways <i>instead of</i> this could be one of the ways ...</p> <p>Students at X schools have a low English level</p> <p>Information from sources is presented as own (plagiarism)</p> <p>The term metacognitive knowledge has been used in SLL/FLL literature since 1980s; for instance, Wenden (1999) refers to beliefs as a system of related ideas, some accepted without question, and others validated by the learners' experience, also for Wenden (1986), beliefs seem to work as a sort of logic determining consciously or unconsciously decisions learners do in order to help themselves to learn English</p> <p><u>Information from sources is presented with more elaboration</u></p> <p>Castelloti and Moore (2002) assert that representations are neither 'wrong' nor 'correct' nor 'permanent'. They sustain representations that vary depending on the macro-context (curricular options, teaching orientations and relationships between languages and society as a whole and in the classroom), and micro-context (directly related to classroom activities, and the attitudinal and classroom dynamics), as cited in Gabillon, (2005, p. 237). The current research takes into consideration variables that come from macro-context because the English class is influenced by the Institutional Educative Project and the bilingual polices that guide the daily pedagogical daily practices, also variables that come from micro-context when students talk about their experience with English learning through different data instruments like the life narratives with the information about how students have lived their English learning process and; the pupil journal that shows learners' perceptions and feelings concerning each class</p>

Proficient Writer

Overall research study description: In this study the researcher designed a professional development program for six new in-service teachers in the language institute in a state university and then explored how this program worked out for them. The researcher used questionnaires, interviews, class observations and the researcher’s journal in order to gather the data.

Draft 1	Draft 2
General English	General English
<p><u>Sophisticated vocabulary</u></p> <p>real schools must revolve around...</p> <p>which entails the development of programs...</p> <p>there is also a scientific contribution to the mentioned field.</p> <p>areas which later on became pivotal to plan and implement the professional development program</p> <p>Reflection, one of the topics, ran across all nine sessions in the program, so it was not a stand-alone component</p> <p><u>Informal expressions</u></p> <p>All in all, students in the lessons I observed...</p> <p>All things considered, there was a need to study theory of language learning</p> <p><u>Word choice</u></p> <p>The language curriculum at the ILEX is composed by 16 syllabuses,</p>	<p><u>More Sophisticated vocabulary</u></p> <p>For this research study, I followed the tenets of qualitative research, ...</p> <p>From the responses, I could assert that the in-service teachers...</p> <p>I will now present salient issues for each...</p> <p>I can ascertain now is that the in-service teachers</p> <p><u>Academic expressions</u></p> <p>Furthermore, students in the lessons I...</p> <p>Considering all these aspects, there was a need to study theory</p> <p><u>Word Choice</u></p> <p>The language program at the ILEX consists of 16 courses</p>
Academic English	Academic English
<p><u>Citation</u></p> <p>Díaz-Maggioli (2004) differentiates traditional professional Development from Visionary Professional Development. The differences are listed down in a table which is fully reproduced here:</p> <p>The following authors supported my research process thanks to the core components they present when it comes to curriculum development.</p>	<p><u>Citation</u></p> <p>On the other hand, Díaz-Maggioli (2004, p.2) differentiates Traditional Professional Development from Visionary Professional Development as follows:</p> <p>The following authors supported my research process as I developed it.</p>

<p><u>Including the name of the source</u></p> <p>The third element in Brown's language... The Brown's fourth element in language...</p> <p>Freeman explains how in development, there is more range of possibilities for a given issue. There are no direct interventions or solutions which are proposed by an educator, or, a collaborator, as Freeman calls the one helping the teacher in development. Freeman understands development as gaining constant awareness of how teachers teach, thanks to the interrelation between teachers' mental lives, the collaborators help, and the experiences in class situations.</p> <p><u>Pointing out explicitly processes</u></p> <p>It can be inferred, based on what Brown presents, that evaluation is the single most important component</p> <p>The author says that it is evaluation what connects the other five elements and argues that in the absence of evaluation, they may turn out to be meaningless.</p> <p>As I have mentioned in the section preceding this one, the data collection instruments used during the diagnostic stage of my research study were four</p> <p>Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) have provided a definition of motivation which is worth quoting in its entirety.</p> <p><u>Vocabulary to introduce information from sources</u></p> <p>All things considered, teachers should follow teaching</p> <p>Richards illustrates readers by giving some examples of teaching principles One can then conclude that teacher performance would involve actions</p> <p>In conclusion, I can say that even in the learner-centered classroom we are looking for nowadays in (language) teaching</p> <p>In another book, Harmer (2007b)</p> <p><u>Combining the theory with the theory in theoretical construct</u></p> <p>Freeman's contributions were meaningful in the implementation stage of the present research study. First of all, there was a combination between training and development because the six teachers had the opportunity to critically reflect upon teaching incidents happening in others' and their own classes thanks to the videoed lessons used in the professional development program.</p>	<p><u>Omitting name of the source and elaborating</u></p> <p>The third element in language curriculum development is testing. The fourth element in language curriculum refers to the materials...</p> <p>In development, there is more range of possibilities for a given issue. There are no direct interventions or solutions which are proposed by an educator, or a collaborator, as Freeman calls the one helping the teacher in development. Development is understood as gaining constant awareness of how teachers teach, thanks to the interrelation between their mental lives, the collaborators help, and the experiences in class situations.</p> <p><u>Omitting making explicit processes</u></p> <p>Evaluation is the single most important component in the curriculum as it gives feedback to the other elements</p> <p>It is evaluation what connects the other five elements and argues that in the absence of evaluation, they may turn out to be meaningless</p> <p>The data collection instruments used during the diagnostic stage of my research study were four</p> <p>Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) have provided a definition of motivation.</p> <p><u>Vocabulary to introduce information from sources</u></p> <p>The conclusion is that teachers should follow teaching principles</p> <p>According to this article, teacher performance would involve</p> <p>Harmer (2007b) talks about teacher</p> <p><u>Pointing out the writer's presence in the document</u></p> <p>In order to develop the program I implemented, I conducted a careful and thorough needs analysis of the then present situation with novice English language</p> <p>I will close the theoretical revision by referring to three research studies in the...</p>
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APPENDIX Q
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

March 20, 2013

Office for Research

Institutional Review Board for the
Protection of Human Subjects

THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA
R E S E A R C H

Julio Cesar Gomez
College of Education
The University of Alabama
Box 870302

Re: IRB # 13-OR-094, "The development of writing skills in Masters level English as a Foreign Language teacher education programs: Insight into the process and perceptions from stakeholders in Colombian universities"

Dear Mr. Gomez:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. You have also been granted the requested waiver of written documentation of informed consent. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your application will expire on March 19, 2014. If the study continues beyond that date, you must complete the IRB Renewal Application. If you modify the application, please complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, please complete the Request for Study Closure form.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this application, please include the assigned IRB application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,



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Director & Research Compliance Officer
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