

REVIEW

Pedagogical conceptions about teaching academic writing in postgraduate studies: a literature review

Concepciones pedagógicas sobre la enseñanza de la escritura académica en posgrado: una revisión de literatura

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Cite as: Bracho-Fuenmayor PL, Boscán Carroz MC, Caballero de Lamarque CP, Quintero Ramírez JM. Pedagogical conceptions about teaching academic writing in postgraduate studies: a literature review. *Seminars in Medical Writing and Education*. 2025; 4:410. <https://doi.org/10.56294/mw2025410>

Submitted: 15-04-2025

Revised: 10-07-2025

Accepted: 15-10-2025

Published: 16-10-2025

Editor: PhD. Prof. Estela Morales Peralta 

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: postgraduate academic writing instruction remains a field of pedagogical tension, especially between normative approaches and critical, inclusive models. This integrative review aimed to analyze current pedagogical conceptions and teaching strategies for academic writing in postgraduate education, with emphasis on critical and sociocultural approaches.

Method: an integrative literature review was conducted following a systematic protocol. Academic databases were searched using keywords in English and Spanish. A total of 812 records were identified. After applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, 28 peer-reviewed articles published between 2021 and 2025 were selected for in-depth analysis.

Results: findings revealed two dominant pedagogical conceptions: traditional models focused on textual correction and standardized formats, and critical approaches that view writing as a situated, dialogic, and epistemically just practice. In addition, technical and sociocultural teaching approaches were identified, often coexisting in postgraduate programs. Persistent tensions were found between formal normativity and creative, critical expression, especially in contexts with high epistemic diversity.

Conclusions: the review confirmed the need to shift from prescriptive teaching models to more reflective and inclusive practices that support students' epistemic agency. It emphasized the importance of institutional support, teacher training in critical pedagogies, and evaluation systems that recognize process-oriented and context-sensitive academic writing.

Keywords: Academic Writing; Graduate Education; Critical Pedagogy; Epistemic Justice; Academic Literacy.

RESUMEN

Introducción: la enseñanza de la escritura académica en el posgrado sigue siendo un campo de tensión pedagógica, especialmente entre los enfoques normativos y los modelos críticos e inclusivos. Esta revisión integradora tuvo como objetivo analizar las concepciones pedagógicas actuales y las estrategias de enseñanza para la escritura académica en la educación de posgrado, con énfasis en los enfoques críticos y socioculturales.

Método: se realizó una revisión integradora de la literatura siguiendo un protocolo sistemático. Se realizaron

búsquedas en bases de datos académicas utilizando palabras clave en inglés y español. Se identificaron 812 registros. Tras aplicar los criterios de inclusión y exclusión, se seleccionaron 28 artículos revisados por pares publicados entre 2021 y 2025 para un análisis en profundidad.

Resultados: los hallazgos revelaron dos concepciones pedagógicas dominantes: los modelos tradicionales centrados en la corrección textual y los formatos estandarizados, y los enfoques críticos que consideran la escritura como una práctica situada, dialógica y epistémicamente justa. Además, se identificaron enfoques de enseñanza técnicos y socioculturales, que a menudo coexisten en los programas de posgrado. Se encontraron tensiones persistentes entre la normatividad formal y la expresión creativa y crítica, especialmente en contextos con alta diversidad epistémica.

Conclusiones: la revisión confirmó la necesidad de cambiar de modelos de enseñanza prescriptivos a prácticas más reflexivas e inclusivas que fomenten la agencia epistémica del alumnado. Se enfatizó la importancia del apoyo institucional, la formación docente en pedagogías críticas y los sistemas de evaluación que reconocen la escritura académica orientada al proceso y sensible al contexto.

Palabras clave: Escritura Académica; Posgrado; Pedagogía Crítica; Justicia Epistémica; Alfabetización Académica.

INTRODUCTION

Over time, the way academic writing is taught at the postgraduate level has changed considerably. These changes are not minor: they reflect broader transformations within higher education, in ideas about how learning takes place, and also in the relationships between language, knowledge, and power.^(1,2) There has been a shift from more prescriptive or even remedial approaches, common in the early decades of the 20th century, to current sociocultural and critical perspectives that have clearly reshaped the field.^(3,4) While there is no linear path, it is clear that several critical theoretical breaks have occurred.

Within this landscape, academic writing is increasingly central to postgraduate education. It is not enough to see it as a technique for communicating results: it is also a way of thinking, of arguing, of producing knowledge.^(5,6) Thus, its teaching should not remain formal or technical; it should be approached as a complex, situated practice with epistemic meaning and educational value. Therefore, learning to write in this context also means learning to be a researcher, even if this is not consistently recognized as such.^(7,8)

Thus, correcting a text or requesting an APA format is not enough. Teaching real writing involves accompanying processes.^(9,10) For this reason, specific pedagogical approaches have gained strength: social constructivism, communities of practice, and critical pedagogy. They all share a common idea: that writing is taught and learned collectively, with intention and reflection.^(11,12) not as something mechanical or as just another requirement in graduate school.

However, institutional conditions do not always move in this direction. Many programs still do not provide the necessary support. In many cases, the entire burden falls on the thesis advisor, who does not always have the pedagogical tools.^(13,14) For this reason, in many universities, there are no systematic spaces where writing is practiced as a key part of training; as a result, gaps, voids, and inequalities are generated that directly affect students.^(15,16)

There are some enjoyable experiences: collaborative workshops, reading groups, and shared writing spaces. But these tend to be isolated initiatives rather than organically integrated into the curriculum.^(17,18) This makes the landscape largely fragmented. Ideas about how to teach writing often remain implicit, little discussed, and subordinated to the pressure to publish.

Amid this scenario, the specialized literature identifies several critical gaps. One of the most visible is the lack of systematization in the pedagogical conceptions that guide teaching practices, which significantly hinders both critical analysis and the real possibilities for improvement or innovation.^(8,19) There is also a scarcity of studies that connect these concepts to other relevant dimensions, such as curriculum design, training for autonomy, or the epistemologies that come into play in graduate studies.^(12,20) In addition, there is a noticeable disconnect between internationalization policies, which are becoming increasingly important, and the specific needs of those who are training in Latin American contexts.^(10,21)

Within this framework, this article aims to critically and systematically review recent publications from 2021 to 2025 on the teaching of academic writing in graduate programs. The focus will be on the pedagogical conceptions that underpin these practices: how they are understood, how they are applied, and what tensions they reveal. At the same time, it is interesting to see the impact they have on curriculum design and on the development of students' absolute research autonomy. Therefore, based on the above, the aim is to adopt a critical yet proactive perspective that allows us to imagine other ways of teaching writing. In this sense, the article is organized into five sections: introduction, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusions.

Throughout these sections, the selected studies are analyzed and their main contributions to the field are discussed.

Theoretical Framework

At the beginning of the 20th century, writing in graduate school was mainly understood as a technical skill, something that could be acquired through the correct application of rules and sufficient practice. This view, known as the “deficiency paradigm,” held that students lacked the necessary skills to write adequately.⁽²²⁾ Based on this belief, a remedial pedagogy was established that remained in place for several decades.⁽²³⁾

Although these initiatives were intended to provide support, they actually ended up reinforcing existing inequalities. Rather than questioning the dominant linguistic models, they reproduced them. Writing, as a result, remained on the margins of the curriculum, treated as a generic, homogeneous skill that could be applied equally across disciplines.

This landscape began to change in the 1960s and 1970s with the emergence of composition studies as an academic field. This shift was key: it allowed the focus to shift from the finished product to the processes involved in writing. From there, broader approaches began to gain traction, including cognitive, social, and discursive dimensions. Empirical research was conducted to investigate how people write, the strategies they use, the obstacles they encounter, and why they write the way they do.⁽²⁴⁾

At the same time, the more classical rhetorical tradition gave way to more flexible heuristic strategies. Influences from linguistics, psychology, and communication theory helped position writing as a situated practice: that is, determined by context, communicative intent, and the intended reader.⁽²⁵⁾ This conceptual change also began to influence teacher training.⁽²⁶⁾

In this new scenario, a proposal emerged that would mark a turning point: the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) approach. Its impact went beyond methodology: it represented a structural change in the way writing was understood within the university. It ceased to be the exclusive responsibility of language or writing departments and came to be conceived as a task shared by the entire teaching community. From then on, writing began to be integrated across the curriculum, not only as a communicative tool, but also as a means of learning specific content in each discipline.⁽²⁷⁾

Over time, this advance was further developed by the Writing in the Disciplines (WID) model, which introduced an even more specific perspective. Each discipline has its own genres, its particular forms of argumentation, and its rhetorical conventions. Within this framework, the idea of “disciplinary literacies” gained traction, as did the link between language and academic belonging.⁽²⁸⁾

Both WAC and WID contributed decisively to the institutionalization of training spaces in academic writing within graduate programs. Thanks to them, expectations regarding students’ writing skills also rose, as they were now required not only to write well, but to do so with disciplinary criteria and an awareness of the role that writing plays in the production of knowledge.⁽²⁹⁾

During the 1990s and 2000s, the teaching of writing in graduate programs shifted toward more sociocultural and critical frameworks. A different idea began to take hold: that writing is not only an individual or technical act, but a practice that occurs within specific communities, with their own rules, values, and forms.⁽³⁰⁾

From these critical perspectives, pedagogical proposals with a different approach began to emerge. An approach that not only recognizes but also values the cultural and linguistic diversity present in university classrooms. Collaborative writing, dialogue between different fields of knowledge, and the problematization of which discourses are legitimized as “scientific” or “valid” were then promoted.^(31,32)

More recently, there has been a noticeable trend toward integrating more complex theoretical frameworks. These frameworks take into account not only the text or product but also each student’s prior trajectories, academic identity, institutional context, and even the role of digital technologies in the writing process.⁽³³⁾ In this vein, genre-based approaches have offered valuable tools.⁽³⁴⁾

Finally, it is essential to highlight the role of communities of practice as specific spaces for writing support. These communities, which can be self-managed or promoted by the institutions themselves, have demonstrated their ability to generate collaborative environments where students not only improve their writing skills, but also find a sense of belonging, share doubts, recognize each other as peers, and learn horizontally.⁽³⁵⁾

METHOD

This work was carried out based on a narrative review of the literature, with a qualitative and integrative approach. The methodological choice enabled a more in-depth examination of how academic writing has been conceptualized and taught in graduate programs. It was not simply a matter of collecting data or counting how many times a concept appears; what was of interest was to critically interpret the discourses circulating in the field, identify tensions, review proposals, and understand the meanings at play.^(36,37)

The intention was not only to describe what is done or what practices exist, but also to understand in a more complex way what it means to teach writing at the university. What is taught, yes, but also how it is taught,

why, from what assumptions, with what objectives, and what place this teaching occupies in academic training. To this end, an integrative review offered clear advantages: it allowed us to bring together diverse sources, from theoretical articles to qualitative studies, critical essays, and accounts of specific experiences, thereby constructing a broader and more nuanced view of the phenomenon.⁽³⁸⁾

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

To ensure the relevance and pertinence of the selected studies, the following inclusion criteria were applied:

- Publications between January 2021 and June 2025.
- Articles published in academic journals indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO, and Google Scholar.
- Studies with a qualitative or theoretical approach (essays, case studies, descriptive or interpretive research).
- Texts that explicitly address pedagogical conceptions of teaching academic writing in graduate programs.

In terms of approach, priority was given to qualitative studies and theoretical works, including essays, case studies, and interpretive analyses. In all cases, the texts had to explicitly address pedagogical conceptions of teaching writing in graduate programs.

The following types of publications were excluded:

- Articles published before 2021.
- Studies focused solely on writing at the undergraduate, secondary, or elementary school level.
- Quantitative research without an explicit pedagogical framework.
- Documents without peer review (such as papers, editorials, or unpublished theses).
- Studies that treat writing as an instrumental or technical tool without an educational focus.

Search strategy

The search for sources was carried out between January and June 2025 and covered four databases: Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO, and Google Scholar. Combinations of keywords in both Spanish and English were used to broaden the spectrum of results and avoid linguistic bias. Boolean operators were used, combining terms such as:

- “academic writing” AND “graduate education” AND “pedagogy”
- “academic writing” AND “graduate education” AND “pedagogical conceptions”
- “investigative training” AND “teaching writing” AND “Latin America”
- “pedagogical conceptions” AND “graduate programs” AND “scientific writing”

All results were systematized in a spreadsheet. Titles, authors, abstracts, and complete references were organized there, enabling more orderly tracking during the review, coding, and analysis phases.

Methodological quality selection and evaluation procedure

Figure 1 presents a flowchart summarizing the phases of the integrative review process. In the first stage of the search, 812 documents were identified from specialized databases and academic repositories. After applying filters for language, publication date, and full-text availability, the total was reduced to 414 records. Then, 43 duplicate documents were removed, leaving 371 unique references. Of these, 27 could not be retrieved in their entirety, leaving a total of 344 accessible texts. In the following phases, the defined inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, along with reading the titles and abstracts and, where necessary, the full text. As a result, 316 documents were excluded for failing to meet the study objectives. Finally, 28 texts were selected for inclusion in the integrative review analysis.

Although a quantitative synthesis was not sought, specific basic criteria were applied to ensure the methodological and conceptual quality of the selected studies. For example, the clarity of the pedagogical frameworks, the consistency between the objectives, methods, and conclusions, and the contextual relevance of each proposal were reviewed. The specific contribution they made to the field of academic writing training was also assessed.

For this evaluation, some items from the CASPe (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme) instrument were adapted for use with qualitative studies. The objective was to prioritize methodological transparency and theoretical consistency over more formal or quantifiable criteria.

Opting for an integrative review allowed for a more complex understanding of the object of study, in line with the proposals of authors such as Suri, Torracó, and Snyder, who highlight the usefulness of this type of review in clarifying emerging concepts, organizing fields in consolidation, and opening paths for future research.^(41,42,43)

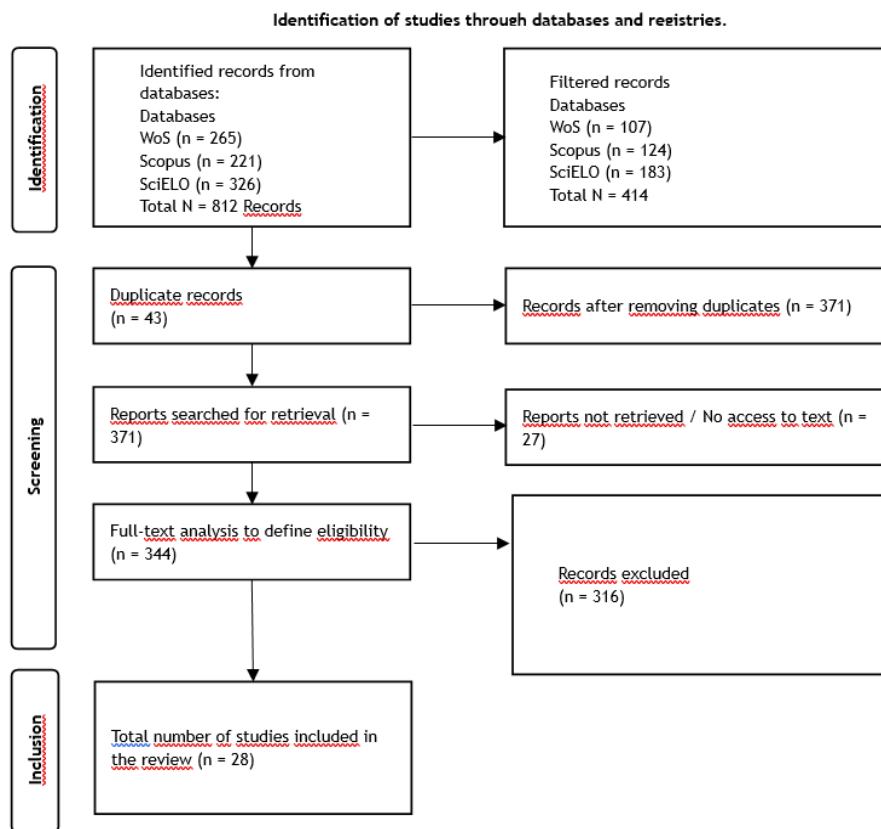


Figure 1. Flow chart based on PRISMA
Source: Adapted from Page et al.⁽⁴⁰⁾

RESULTS

Categorization of pedagogical conceptions about teaching academic writing at the postgraduate level

In the postgraduate field, pedagogical conceptions of how academic writing is taught and learned span a broad spectrum. Some are anchored in traditional models that continue to emphasize formal correctness. In contrast, others adopt more critical positions that promote contextualized, reflective academic literacy with a clear commitment to epistemic justice. In more traditional approaches, writing is often understood as a final product: something that must comply with certain disciplinary conventions, with clear structures and precise language. Here, what matters most is usually that forms are respected and rules are followed.⁽⁴⁴⁾

These forms of teaching are also supported by institutional structures that limit pedagogical innovation. Inflexible curricula, teachers without specific training in critical pedagogies, and practices that still replicate transmissive models are some of the factors that hinder change.^(45,46) Despite this, some teachers manage to introduce more open strategies, such as one-on-one tutoring or collaborative dynamics. However, the literature indicates that these initiatives often coexist with traditional frameworks, creating an overlap between new practices and old structures.^(44,47)

In contrast, critical pedagogical conceptions, framed within currents such as critical pedagogy (CP) or dialogic education models, seek to transform the way writing is conceived in graduate studies entirely. From these perspectives, writing is not just about writing well, but about actively participating in the collective construction of knowledge. It is about recognizing the knowledge each student brings and assuming that writing has an identity dimension situated in specific cultural contexts.^(48,49) A clear example is the JADE (Justice and Dialogic Education) approach, which proposes learning environments where dialogue, co-authorship, and epistemic justice are central to the writing process.⁽⁴⁸⁾

Studies based on this vision show how certain pedagogical practices can promote a richer writing experience, including peer review, critical information literacy, collaborative work, and the incorporation of prior knowledge. All of this contributes not only to producing better texts but also to researchers who are more aware of their place in the production of knowledge.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Furthermore, these practices help to challenge the hierarchies that often legitimize certain academic discourses and exclude others. For this reason, they are considered inclusive and sustainable strategies, both culturally and pedagogically.^(45,49) Even so, their implementation faces significant challenges: there is little teacher training in these approaches, and many institutions continue to push for “measurable” results.

When analyzed as a whole, traditional conceptions tend to reduce writing to a normative task, something

done to comply with norms. In contrast, critical conceptions view it as a complex, situated, dialogical, and transformative process. This polarity, far from being merely theoretical, presents a concrete opportunity: to think about how we can move pedagogical practices toward more reflective, more democratic models. And this is especially important in research training, where writing is not only a tool but a way of constructing knowledge.

In master's and doctoral programs, critical conceptions are expressed through practices that profoundly reconfigure the meaning of writing in academia. One of the most visible is dialogicity: not as just another technique, but as a real space for academic conversation. There, students and teachers collaborate, review texts together, and give each other feedback. It is no longer a matter of correcting, but of collectively constructing knowledge.⁽⁴⁸⁾

Another key aspect is recognizing diverse knowledge. This implies accepting that students arrive with valid backgrounds, languages, and cultural understandings that can enrich scientific writing. Challenging traditional epistemic hierarchies is part of this work and allows for the construction of more pluralistic writing closer to Latin American realities.⁽⁴⁹⁾ At the same time, critical information literacy is a cross-cutting theme: it involves teaching students to search for, select, and use information from a critical, conscious, and ethical perspective.⁽⁵⁰⁾

Several studies also recognize the value of promoting inclusive practices in linguistic and cultural terms. This is not a matter of "lowering the level," as is sometimes thought, but of adapting academic communication to make it accessible without losing depth or rigor.⁽⁵⁰⁾ This line of work is often linked to an ethic of authorship that promotes a more equitable distribution of power: the student is not only a learner but also an author, someone with their own voice within the academic field.⁽⁴⁵⁾

However, moving in this direction is not easy. Many structural obstacles hinder the implementation of these concepts. For example, the lack of critical training among teachers, the pressure to publish quickly, assessments focused on normative standards, and the absence of clear policies that support alternative forms of evaluation.^(44,46) Even when technologies are incorporated, there is a risk that traditional practices will be digitized, without generating fundamental pedagogical changes.^(51,52)

Despite this, the literature shows that critical conceptions have enormous potential to enrich the teaching of academic writing. Not only because they improve students' skills, but also because they promote autonomy, dialogue, ethics in authorship, and a commitment to epistemic justice. But for this potential to be realized, more than good intentions are needed: profound transformations are required in teacher training, institutional culture, and the way learning is assessed.

Table 1 summarizes the key differences between traditional and critical conceptions. Each category is supported by recent studies, which further substantiate the interpretive analysis of this review. As can be seen, while the former continue to prioritize form, correctness, and the final result, the latter focus on dialogic, ethical, and transformative processes. And at stake in this difference is much more than a teaching strategy: it is a way of understanding what it means to teach writing at the university level.

Table 1. Comparison between traditional pedagogical conceptions

Category	Traditional Concept	Critical Concept (Critical Pedagogy)
Vision of writing	Final product conforming to norms, emphasis on correctness and form (Asfaw et al., 2025; Ahmad & Shaukat, 2023).	Social and epistemic process; focused on identity and agency (Lee, 2025; Eybers, 2025; Mecnas et al., 2021).
Role of the teacher	Transmissive and evaluative figure; focus on supervision and regulatory compliance (Asfaw et al., 2025; Zagoto, 2025).	Dialogic facilitator who co-constructs knowledge with students (Lee, 2025; Kavenuke & Muthanna, 2021).
Student participation	Limited; students complete prescribed tasks without much agency (Asfaw et al., 2025).	Proactive and reflective; the student's voice, experience, and collaboration are valued (Eybers, 2025; Mecnas et al., 2021).
Assessment	Based on normative rubrics and final results (Ahmad & Shaukat, 2023; Asfaw et al., 2025).	Authentic and critical assessment focused on processes, reflection, and dialogue (Lee, 2025; Kavenuke & Muthanna, 2021).
Inclusion and diversity	Discursive homogeneity; little attention to diverse trajectories (Zagoto, 2025).	Inclusion of diverse knowledge, languages, and experiences; intercultural and situated approach (Mecnas et al., 2021; Eybers, 2025).
Didactic approach	Technical and normative; focused on formal skills and rigid academic genres (Ahmad & Shaukat, 2023).	Based on critical literacy, dialogue, epistemic justice, and co-authorship (Mecnas et al., 2021; Lee, 2025; Kavenuke & Muthanna, 2021).

Institutional conditions	Little curricular flexibility; structural barriers to innovation (Asfaw et al., 2025; Kavenuke & Muthanna, 2021).	Requires supportive policies, critical teacher training, and institutionalization of inclusive approaches (Ahmad & Shaukat, 2023; Kavenuke & Muthanna, 2021).
Use of technology	Instrumental; focused on delivery, correction, or automation (Eager & Brunton, 2023).	Ethical and collaborative integration; technologies for reflection, peer review, and dialogue (Eager & Brunton, 2023; Kotsis, 2025).
Epistemic implications	Reproduction of disciplinary hegemonies; correctness is prioritized over meaningfulness (Asfaw et al., 2025; Zagoto, 2025).	Epistemic justice and openness to plural epistemologies; critical and contextualized scientific production is promoted (Eybers, 2025; Mecnas et al., 2021; Lee, 2025).

Technical and sociocultural approaches to teaching academic writing in graduate programs

Within academic writing training at the postgraduate level, two broad pedagogical approaches are often presented as opposites. However, in practice, they are usually combined: technical skills-focused approaches on the one hand and sociocultural approaches to language on the other. In the former, writing is perceived as a set of decomposable skills: citing correctly, organizing sections, using connectors correctly, and following specific formulas. The latter understands writing from a different perspective: as a social, situated practice that involves much more than technique. It requires integrating into an academic community, understanding its conventions, and gradually building one's own voice within the disciplinary discourse.^(53,54,55)

Technical approaches often rely on tools such as linguistic corpora, structural templates, and repetitive exercises that train students in specific formats, such as theses or scientific articles. These strategies have proven effective in improving the normative and formal aspects of writing, especially in contexts with intense institutional pressure to publish or among international students who need to adjust to specific rules,^(53,56) quickly. But of course, this type of training has its limits. For this reason, sociocultural approaches propose another perspective: training students as active members of a discursive community, helping them to read and write from their position as epistemic subjects. This involves genre analysis, critical participation, and the construction of a solid authorial identity.^(54,55,57)

Given this divergence, the analysis is organized around an initial question that helps clarify the contrast: ¿what are the differences between technical and sociocultural approaches to teaching academic writing at the graduate level? A review of the studies reveals a clear difference in how students are conceived. In technical models, they are positioned as individuals who must perform predefined tasks. In contrast, sociocultural approaches view them as active subjects who interpret, negotiate meanings, and make discursive decisions based on their context and background.^(55,57,58) While some focus on teaching standardized formats, others aim to develop deeper, more situated rhetorical skills.^(59,60)

A second question also guides this section: ¿how are sociocultural approaches integrated with writing training in advanced higher education? Recent literature shows that this articulation takes shape in particular pedagogical practices: the use of the CARS (Create a Research Space) model, for example, working with corpora combined with genre analysis, or the development of critical reading skills within the disciplines themselves.^(54,58,61)

Similarly, some studies show how combining technical tools with a sociocultural approach can strengthen academic literacy processes, especially for master's and doctoral students who face complex challenges: writing a thesis, entering academic networks, or meeting publication requirements^(53,62) in this scenario, the way of evaluating also changes, as it is no longer just a matter of verifying whether the rules are being followed, but of assessing how the student fits into the discursive practices of their community.^(59,60)

Taken together, the evidence analyzed allows us to affirm that sociocultural approaches offer powerful tools for teaching writing in a situated, critical, and professional manner. Their value lies not in opposing technical approaches, but in complementing them. Teaching writing at the graduate level requires a more comprehensive education that helps build an ethical and situated relationship with knowledge.

Table 2 summarizes these key differences between the two approaches. Based on the studies reviewed, it is possible to visualize not only how they differ in their theoretical basis but also how they impact teaching practice, evaluation criteria, and, ultimately, the type of researcher that is trained.

Table 2. Comparison between technical and sociocultural approaches		
Dimension	Technical skills-centered approach	Sociocultural approach to language
Conception of writing	Technical and textual competence; execution of codified tasks and academic norms (Li et al., 2023; Meng & Meng, 2023).	Situated social practice; process of participation in communities of practice (Lu et al., 2021; Ariza-Pinzón, 2021; Mary, 2023).

Role of the student	Executor of instructions, focused on correcting and replicating structures (Li et al., 2023).	Active participant who negotiates meanings, positions themselves, and constructs an academic identity (Ariza-Pinzón, 2021; Mary, 2023).
Pedagogical strategies	Use of corpora, fixed-formula tutorials, focus on structured sections of academic texts (Li et al., 2023; Meng & Meng, 2023).	Modeling, co-construction, and independent writing based on disciplinary genres and discursive communities (Chen, 2024; Liu et al., 2023; Lu et al., 2021).
Assessment	Formal accuracy, compliance with conventions, formatting, and citation (Li et al., 2023; Meng & Meng, 2023).	Discursive participation, rhetorical appropriateness, and positioning in the field (Saidi & Talebi, 2021; Veerappan et al., 2022).
Educational objective	Production of correct and disciplinarily valid academic texts.	Development of critical competence, integration into discursive networks, epistemic agency.
Theoretical support	Applied linguistics; skills-based writing instruction (Li et al., 2023).	Critical sociolinguistics; genre theory and communities of practice (Ariza-Pinzón, 2021; Mary, 2023; Lu et al., 2021).

Tensions between normativity and creativity

One of the most notable tensions, and perhaps also one of the most difficult to resolve in teaching academic writing at the postgraduate level, has to do with striking a balance between two poles that are often presented as opposites: teaching the formal rules required by scientific writing and, at the same time, encouraging creative, critical, and reflective thinking among students.⁽⁶³⁾ On the one hand, academic writing must adhere to certain conventions: there are structures, formats, and expectations. This leads to practices focused on correctness, textual adequacy, and compliance with criteria. But, on the other hand, there is also a need for students to develop their own voice, to think freely, propose ideas, and write autonomously.

This contradiction is not only didactic; it is also influenced by institutional expectations, assessment practices, and the trajectories students take to reach graduate school. In many cases, prior educational experience has not provided solid preparation in academic writing, creating significant inequalities from the outset.⁽⁶⁴⁾ Standardization, although helpful in establishing minimum quality parameters, can become a barrier if applied rigidly.

Recent studies show that this tension affects both sides of the educational process. Teachers who try to teach flexibly but are limited by formal structures, and students who want to express their ideas but are unable to adapt to the required molds. This gap between what is taught and what is produced generates frustration in both directions.⁽⁶⁵⁾ Added to this is the diversity of levels at which students enter programs: some arrive with experience in academic writing, others do not, and this marks differences from the outset.⁽⁶⁶⁾ While rules help maintain a sure consistency, they can also become a straitjacket that prevents the exploration of alternative paths.

This tension not only involves choosing between different methods but also reflects different views on what it means to teach, what it means to know, and how academic knowledge is constructed. In contexts such as Latin America and Anglo-Saxon systems, it has been observed that disciplinary cultures and institutional policies influence how writing is taught and what types of production are valued. Ramirez et al.⁽⁶⁷⁾, for example, describe how some universities have begun to accompany this process of adaptation without neglecting student autonomy. In turn, Hincapié and Gutiérrez-Ríos⁽⁶⁸⁾ warn that if inflexible formats and overly prescriptive assessments dominate the environment, it is tough for truly critical thinking to flourish.

In response to this, methodological proposals have emerged that seek to build bridges. Ruiz⁽⁶⁹⁾ suggests integrating practices such as question-based pedagogy, critical reading, and formative feedback to allow the development of one's own voice without sacrificing rigor or standards. It is a matter of inhabiting the norms, but doing so from a conscious, critical place.

Of course, the path is not free of obstacles. Peralta⁽⁷⁰⁾ identifies that one of the most significant problems is the lack of knowledge of the genres specific to each discipline. This lack of familiarity affects integration into academic communities. To address this problem, some universities have begun to implement spaces such as writing circles. In these collaborative environments, students write in process, read each other's work, experiment with styles, and receive feedback without fear of making mistakes.⁽⁶⁷⁾

Ultimately, the literature suggests that these tensions should not be eliminated, but instead accepted as part of the process. Pozzo et al.⁽⁷¹⁾ point out that students' ideas about writing—how they will be evaluated and what is expected of them—condition their performance from the outset. Therefore, it is essential that teachers recognize this diversity and offer differentiated support that combines academic rigor with openness to other ways of thinking and expressing oneself. Only then will it be possible to train researchers who write with rigor, but also with authenticity, meaning, and a voice that is their own and that genuinely contributes to

the academic field.

Table 3 summarizes these tensions: formal requirements versus creative expression. Rather than obstacles, these tensions open up possibilities for critically reviewing current models and exploring new ways of teaching writing, especially in environments as diverse as those in Latin America.

Table 3. Formal requirements versus creative expression		
Dimension	Normative requirements	Promotion of creativity
Conception of writing	Textual production aligned with fixed structures and formal conventions (Lesmes et al., 2024; Osorio et al., 2023).	Writing as situated, reflective, and critical expression (Hincapié & Gutiérrez-Ríos, 2023; Ruiz, 2023).
Role of the teacher	Normative evaluator who applies criteria of correctness and format (Osorio et al., 2023).	Mediator of critical thinking, who encourages exploration and discursive agency (Ruiz, 2023).
Student experience	Frustration or disadvantage due to lack of knowledge of conventions or unequal prior trajectories (Lesmes et al., 2024).	Participation and sense of authorship when one's own ideas are valued (Pozzo & Rosso, 2023).
Disciplinary culture	Requirement to conform to rigid disciplinary genres and traditional expectations (Ramirez et al., 2024).	Recognition of diverse knowledge and alternative thinking styles (Hincapié & Gutiérrez-Ríos, 2023).
Assessment	Focus on the product, formal criteria, format, citation (Osorio et al., 2023; Peralta, 2023).	Formative assessment, focused on processes, argumentation, and original thinking (Ruiz, 2023).
Pedagogical methodologies	Teaching formulas, normative genres, expected structures (Peralta, 2023).	Writing circles, question-based pedagogy, reflective writing (Ramirez et al., 2024; Ruiz, 2023).

DISCUSSION

The results of this integrative review show that the teaching of academic writing in graduate programs remains a field marked by contrasts, disputes, and pedagogical pursuits that, in many cases, stay far from fully resolved. Although the field has experienced significant conceptual and practical advances, very different—and even contradictory—views persist about what teaching writing at this level entails, who should take on this task, and what pedagogical criteria or frameworks should be used to do so.

Between norm and emancipation: a pedagogy in dispute

One of the most consistent findings is that many programs remain anchored in a traditional logic that treats writing as a technical skill. In this approach, what matters is that the text complies with the rules: that it is well written, well structured, and well cited. That is all that matters. This model, a direct heir to the “deficiency paradigm”,^(72,73) sees the student as someone who needs to be corrected, normalized, and adjusted to specific formal standards, without necessarily explaining the underlying reasons behind those standards.

Despite its continued use, this approach has been strongly questioned from multiple perspectives more than is generally recognized. Researchers such as Asfaw et al.⁽⁴⁴⁾, Zagoto⁽⁴⁷⁾, and Ahmad et al.⁽⁴⁶⁾ agree that this form of teaching is limiting. Not only does it reduce writing to a question of form, but it also reinforces existing inequalities. Requiring all students to produce texts under the same codes, without considering their educational backgrounds or cultural contexts, is a practice that tends to exclude rather than include.

In the face of this normative paradigm, critical and sociocultural approaches are gaining strength, proposing another way of understanding writing. One that conceives it as a situated practice, deeply dialogued and charged with identity. It is not a question of correcting texts from a punitive logic, but of accompanying processes of thought, reading, and production that are complex and personal. Studies such as those by Lee⁽⁴⁸⁾, Eybers⁽⁴⁹⁾, and Mecnas et al.⁽⁵⁰⁾ insist that the task of teaching is not to evaluate technique in the abstract, but to encourage the emergence of one's own voice. This voice feels like a legitimate part of the academic community.

The value of the critical approach: a transformative pedagogy

Looking at the teaching of academic writing through the lens of critical pedagogy and dialogic education completely shifts the horizon. It is no longer just a matter of learning to cite properly or follow the format of a scientific article. Instead, it is about accompanying students in the process of becoming aware, understanding how they position themselves within their field, and developing a way of thinking and writing that is autonomous, that says something of their own. In this context, proposals such as the JADE (Justice and Dialogic Education) approach, developed by Lee⁽⁴⁸⁾, take on special relevance, especially in regions such as Latin America, where epistemic and linguistic diversity is profound yet underrecognized.

The studies reviewed show that when these critical concepts are put into practice, forms of teaching and learning emerge that are much richer, more open, and more inclusive. These include writing circles, peer review, co-authored work, integration of community knowledge, ethical reflection on authorship, and critical literacy in the use of sources.^(45,67) These strategies not only help improve academic output but also transform how students relate to writing, research, and each other.

However, the existence of these experiences does not mean that they are widespread. In fact, one significant limitation is that many of these practices remain isolated, driven by individual teachers or small teams, and almost always without solid institutional support. As Asfaw et al.⁽⁴⁴⁾ and Durand Villalobos et al.⁽⁶⁴⁾ point out, these efforts often face demands that pull in another direction: meeting graduation deadlines, maintaining high indicators, responding to rankings, and metrics. And that, in the long run, ends up discouraging pedagogical proposals that, although valuable, do not easily fit into traditional evaluation schemes.

Therefore, if we genuinely want to move toward a transformative pedagogy in the teaching of academic writing, it is not enough to recognize its theoretical value or to promote good practices in isolation. Something more profound is needed: an institutional and political commitment to review the regulatory frameworks of postgraduate education. Only then will it be possible for these critical proposals to move from being exceptions to becoming an integral part of the educational model.

Technical and sociocultural approaches: between complementarity and tension

Another line of analysis that runs through this review concerns the contrast and the possible encounters between two ways of teaching writing that, although sometimes presented as opposites, can actually complement each other. On the one hand, there are technical approaches, which prioritize the teaching of specific skills: how to cite, how to structure an article, how to use connectors, or how to construct clear paragraphs. As Lu et al.⁽⁵⁴⁾, Ariza-Pinzón⁽⁵⁵⁾, and Mary⁽⁵⁷⁾ point out, these models can be beneficial, especially for students who arrive with significant gaps, whether linguistic or academic. Materials such as tutorials, guides, templates, and exercises with corpora all serve as a starting point, especially when what is needed is to level knowledge or facilitate access to conventions that are often not entirely clear.

But on the other hand, there are sociocultural approaches, which propose something more complex, more processual. It is not just a matter of the student learning to repeat forms, but of understanding why those forms exist, what function they serve, how they relate to specific ways of thinking, arguing, and validating knowledge. In this perspective, writing is not a technical exercise, but a cultural, social, and deeply identity-forming practice. Authors such as Prior⁽⁷⁴⁾ and Manathunga^(75,76) explain that this process of academic enculturation, of learning to inhabit a discursive community, with its rules but also its tensions, is fundamental if the aim is to train researchers who not only write well but do so with meaning, commitment, and a critical eye on what they produce.

The review shows that it is not a question of choosing one approach or the other, as if they were mutually exclusive. Some experiences demonstrate that integration is possible and desirable. Studies such as those by Muñoz⁽⁶²⁾ and Liu et al.⁽⁶¹⁾ explore precisely how to combine technical training with a more reflective education that does not lose sight of the person who writes, with their knowledge, background, and voice. In these proposals, formal skills do not disappear, but are taught within a broader framework, where the student is not just someone who learns rules, but someone who participates, questions, and takes a stand. This articulation between the technical and the sociocultural appears to be a fertile avenue, as it allows us to go beyond the dichotomies between form and content, between norm and creativity, between technique and thought, which often impoverish the discussion, and opens up space to think about a more comprehensive pedagogy that maintains academic standards without renouncing the possibility of constructing knowledge from the uniqueness of each individual.

Creativity, normativity, and epistemic justice

One of the most persistent tensions, and perhaps also one of the most difficult to resolve in the teaching of academic writing at the postgraduate level, has to do with how to balance two forces that often seem to be in conflict: on the one hand, the need to comply with well-established academic norms, and on the other, the desire for students to write with their own voice, with authenticity, with discursive creativity.

What several of the studies analyzed reflect is that this tension is not only theoretical: it is experienced in practice, every day. Many students, especially those who come from educational backgrounds less oriented toward writing, are confronted with very rigid formal frameworks. And what they feel is a mismatch. They struggle to find their place in genres that they do not fully recognize as their own. They struggle to say something new when the rules seem to require them to repeat what has already been said.^(65,66)

However, as proposed by Ruiz⁽⁶⁹⁾, Pozzo et al.⁽⁷¹⁾, and Hincapié et al.⁽⁶⁸⁾, it is not a question of choosing between one thing and the other. It is not a question of setting aside the rules or imposing creativity as some empty slogan. The key is instead to teach students to move within meaningful frameworks. Students need to

understand why specific structures exist, what function they serve, and how they can inhabit them without losing their voice. Because yes, it is possible to write with rigor and sensitivity. It is likely to be creative without ceasing to be academic.

This challenge takes on a particular dimension in Latin American contexts, because here diversity is not only of styles or levels, but also epistemic, linguistic, and cultural diversity. So what is at stake is not only how one writes, but also who has the right to write, to be heard, to be considered legitimate within academic discourse. In this context, teaching writing can become much more than a subject or a skill; it can be a concrete way to achieve epistemic justice and open the classroom to other voices.^(49,77,78,79)

CONCLUSIONS

A review of recent studies clearly shows that the teaching of academic writing at the postgraduate level, at least in Latin America, still oscillates between models that are often contradictory. On the one hand, more traditional approaches remain prevalent, focusing on correcting form and teaching “how to write well” without delving too deeply into the reasons why. On the other hand, there are more critical and situated pedagogical approaches that view writing as part of a broader process encompassing identity, culture, and the academic community.

These approaches differ not only in terms of methodology or technique. What is at stake, ultimately, is how we understand learning, knowledge, and scientific production. While traditional positions continue to focus on formal rules, critical approaches, such as those of Eybers or Mecenas *et al.*, propose that teaching writing is also teaching how to think, how to speak from one’s own perspective, and how to take a stand.

Even so, some experiences show that it is possible to move towards a more human, more inclusive education. Writing circles, dialogic tutoring, and the pedagogical use of technologies with ethical meaning offer paths and clues for transforming practices without sacrificing quality or rigor. Still, they require institutional will, critical teacher training, and, above all, time.

Therefore, this review argues that the teaching of writing at the postgraduate level cannot continue to be viewed as a secondary or technical task. Instead, it is a deeply formative process, a space for building academic community, for disputing meanings, and for democratizing the production of knowledge. In this sense, the challenge is great, yes, but it is also an opportunity to imagine other ways of teaching, researching, and writing in and from our universities.

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FINANCING

The authors did not receive financing for the development of this research.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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