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Digital Literacy Practices of University Students: Contrasts Between Vernacular and Academic Contexts

Prácticas de literacidad digital de estudiantes universitarios: contrastes entre contextos vernáculos y académicos

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Abstract

This paper aims to contrast the digital literacy practices of first-year university students in vernacular and academic contexts. It is situated within sociocultural approaches that conceive language as a socially constructed and mediated process. Using ethnographic qualitative research, case studies were conducted with six Colombian students with different profiles of online activity. The information was collected through techno-biographies and techno-diaries, in-depth interviews, participant observation, and multimodal documentary review. To contrast the practices, four categories were addressed: discourse genres, multimodality, interaction, and online identity. The participants were found to carry out a diversity of practices, and they configure their uses in quite different ways and in accordance with their conceptions about writing, their interests, and trajectories. The students mainly carry out practices of receiving textual and audiovisual content, and online interaction, but when they participate in creative activities, they show high levels of motivation. In some cases, disconnections between the contexts are evident, which may be rooted in conceptions of vernacular practices as less relevant, but more entertaining, and the perception of the academic field as strictly normative. Being familiar with the practices of students both inside and outside the academic context can contribute not only to a better understanding of their forms of digital literacy, but also to the consolidation of flexible educational processes that allow the integration of developments constructed by the young people in different contexts.

Keywords: digital literacies, academic practices, vernacular practices, university

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Resumen

Este artículo pretende contrastar las prácticas de literacidad digital de estudiantes universitarios de primer año en ámbitos vernáculos y académicos. Se sitúa desde enfoques socioculturales que conciben al lenguaje como un proceso construido y mediado socialmente. Se planteó un diseño etnográfico y se llevaron a cabo estudios de caso con seis jóvenes colombianos con diferentes perfiles de participación en línea. La información se recolectó mediante tecnobiografías y tecnodiarios, entrevistas en profundidad, observación participante y revisión documental multimodal. Para contrastar las prácticas, se abordaron cuatro categorías: géneros discursivos, multimodalidad, interacción e identidad. Se encontró una diversidad de prácticas de los participantes, quienes configuran sus usos de acuerdo con sus concepciones sobre la escritura, sus intereses y trayectorias. Los jóvenes tienen, principalmente, prácticas de recepción de contenidos textuales y audiovisuales e interacción en línea, pero muestran un alto compromiso y estructuración de sus actividades cuando se involucran en dinámicas de creación y participación. Se evidencian algunas desconexiones entre los ámbitos, que pueden deberse a las concepciones sobre lo vernáculo como menos relevante, pero más entretenido, y a la percepción de lo académico como estrictamente normativo. Conocer las prácticas de los estudiantes dentro y fuera del contexto académico puede aportar tanto a una mejor comprensión de sus formas de literacidad digital como a la consolidación de procesos educativos flexibles que permitan integrar los desarrollos construidos por los jóvenes en distintos ámbitos.

Palabras clave: literacidades digitales, prácticas académicas, prácticas vernáculas, universidad

Introduction

Digital technology has had a significant impact on literacy practices. Many of the notions traditionally studied in the field of literacy are now strained (Street, 2017). The differences between the roles of author and reader, for example, have become increasingly blurred; individuals can access vast amounts of information, communicate with wide audiences, and produce their own content (Cassany, 2012; Lee, 2018), as well as participate and develop activities in various contexts all from a single device. These characteristics have intensified since the COVID-19 lockdowns, which led to changes in the conditions of education, work, and recreation for millions of people around the world (Katz et al., 2020).

In spite of these evident transformations, the place given by the school environment to forms of writing on digital media has been challenged (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). Far-reaching research in Colombian universities shows a tendency to maintain traditional print practices (González et al., 2015; Pérez & Rincón, 2013). Despite the fact that the courses usually include the mediation of technology, they rarely include reflections on its characteristics and how it has epistemologically and ontologically influenced writing culture (Molina & Salazar, 2015).

From sociocultural perspectives such as the New Literacy Studies (NLS), it is relevant to study the (dis)continuities of literacy practices in different contexts and media (Alvermann, 2005; Cassany et al., 2010; Hull & Schultz, 2001). Various studies have shown the influence of digitalization on the vernacular practices of young people, particularly in the production of content and interaction on social networks (Amavizca Montaño et al., 2017;

de Casas Moreno et al., 2018; López & López, 2017). Digital technology also has characteristics that can put academic and vernacular domains under strain. These include the ways of valuing sources and the attribution of authorship, which appear to be more lax in vernacular domains (Ávila-Carreto & Mocencahua, 2020; Ciro, 2018; López-Gil & Fernández, 2019); the dynamics of content production, which are more multimodal on social networks and more textual in school (Valdivia, 2021; Vargas, 2016); and the variations in the written register in informal interactions, which can depart considerably from the forms preferred in the academic environment (Carvajal, 2020; Gómez & del Castillo; 2017; Palacio & Gustilo, 2016; Pérez, 2017), among others.

Far from considering the vernacular a negative impact on the academic sphere, the NLS suggest the need to build bridges between these areas (Ávila Reyes, 2016; Uccelli et al., 2020; Valdivia, 2021). What lies behind the idea that many young people have difficulty with writing could be a lack of connection or communication with their everyday practices (Buchholz & Pyles, 2018). This is particularly relevant when they enter university, since young people encounter a new system of symbolic order, with discursive modes and conventions that can initially conflict with the rest of their practices, which may lead them toward unidirectional and uncritical adaptation to the written academic culture (Zavala, 2019).

Vernacular and academic digital literacies

In the NLS, literacy refers to the social practices in which people use language for different purposes (Barton, 2007). This is related to the trajectories constructed by subjects within the framework of specific sociocultural and historical contexts (Barton & Hamilton, 2004). With the digital turn, new literacies have been established that include modes of reading and writing on screens connected through the internet, which imply new forms of interaction, conceptions, and values regarding literacy practices (Mills, 2010).

The practices are the unit of analysis and the main concept within the NLS. In order to analyze them, Hamilton (2000) suggests that observers should consider the characteristics of the texts and tools that mediate the interactions (artifacts), the participants, the activities they carry out, and the contextual aspects that frame them (domains). With respect to the artifacts, Cassany (2012) points to features such as the diversity of genres that circulate online, some of which are transferred from print media and others that are native to the digital world; multimodality or the use of diverse semiotic modes of representation of information; communication through multiple languages; and variations of the written code, among others. Regarding the participants and activities, Barton and Lee (2013) focus on aspects such as the collaborative nature of the practices, power relations, positioning, or the projection of identity.

Meanwhile, the domains of the practices are understood as spaces in which conditions are established for the production and circulation of texts, which determine the discursive forms that are privileged and excluded in society (Barton & Hamilton, 2004; Cassany et al., 2010). The vernacular domain has traditionally been associated with entertainment, informal, voluntary, and private contexts, in which symmetrical relationships are established between the participants (Barton & Lee, 2012). The academic domain, on the other hand, is considered a dominant, institutional, and public domain that is highly regulated, with defined roles and power relations, and standardized uses of the written language (Cassany et al., 2010).

Although this distinction between the spheres retains a certain validity, with the development of technology the boundaries have become more blurred (Cassany, 2012; Gee & Hayes, 2011). The vernacular has transcended private spheres and many of its practices have now become public and massive in scope. The academic sphere has also seen changes of place, as digital scenarios compete in their role of generating spaces for learning. While this domain remains normative, more collaborative, voluntary, and self-managed learning is taking place (Huang & Archer, 2017).

Considering these features, this research is aimed at contrasting the digital literacy practices that first-year students at a Colombian university develop in vernacular and academic environments, focusing the comparison on four characteristics: the discourse genres they consult and produce, the semiotic modes they use, their forms of interaction, and the projection of their online identity.

Methodology

Design

The study followed an ethnographic design with multiple cases, as we sought to understand literacy practices considering the conceptions, attitudes, and values of the participants. The principles of digital ethnography (Hine, 2015) were adopted in order to be immersed in the everyday and academic online life of the young people for 12 months.

Participants

Six university students participated. In order to select them, we used the results of a previous phase of this research, in which we identified different profiles of activity in digital media[1]. To choose the cases, the criteria considered were the availability to remain in the study, and the balance between the number of men and women and between different areas of knowledge.

Data collection techniques

Four data collection techniques were used:

- Life story, which took the form of two instruments: techno-biographies, which explored the digital literacy histories of the participants (Barton & Lee, 2013), and techno-diaries, which made it possible to track their current practices during the first two months of the research (Gómez & del Castillo, 2017).

- In-depth interviews that sought to understand and expand on the information provided by the students in their stories.

- Participant observation in digital spaces, supported by a field diary of the researcher.

- Multimodal documentary review (Cárcamo Morales, 2018), which allowed evidence to be collected on the interactions and productions of young people on social networks, personal websites, and in online academic environments.

The instruments were together submitted to the judgment of five experts in the field of academic writing, all of whom had an education level consisting of at least a master's degree, three years of teaching and research experience, and related intellectual production. The assessment was based on five criteria: the scope of the objective of each instrument, clarity of writing, adjustment to the audience, intra- and inter-instrument cohesion, and length.

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1. In a previous phase, a descriptive study was conducted with 740 first-year students at a Colombian university. A questionnaire on digital literacy practices was applied and, using a statistical analysis of multiple correspondences and a cluster analysis, three levels of participation (active, medium, and occasional) were identified for each domain. These levels were associated with the frequency of their digital media use, content production, and attitudes towards the digital world. By combining the levels for each domain, nine user profiles were obtained. The students were invited to participate in the second phase of the study and young people with six of the nine profiles were contacted.

Table 1 summarizes the data collection procedures. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure their anonymity.

Table 1
Information collection process

Participant	Interviews	Techno-biography	Tecno-diaries	Participant observation journal	Multimodal review
Fabiana	12 (690 minutes)	1 (2,589 words + 1 graphic)	7 (8,720 words)	42 (21,163 words)	92 (36 texts, 39 images, 17 videos)
María	8 (461 minutes)	1 (timeline)	7 (6,977 words)	37 (18,422 words)	64 (29 texts, 30 images, 5 videos)
Julián	11 (582 minutes)	1 (2,690 words)	5 (6,211 words)	40 (25,120 words)	79 (12 texts, 67 images)
Camilo	9 (541 minutes)	1 (589 words)	6 (4,120 words)	38 (15,580 words)	32 (15 texts, 17 images)
Marcos	9 (494 minutes)	1 (725 words)	5 (3,890 words)	38 (17,102 words)	37 (14 texts, 23 images)
Gabriela	8 (379 minutes)	1 (698 words)	6 (5,696 words)	23 (11,776 words)	28 (25 texts, 3 images)

Source: prepared by the author.

Analysis techniques

We used qualitative content analysis to process the techno-biographies, the techno-diaries, the field diary records, and the transcriptions of the interviews. A semi-inductive coding scheme was developed (Díaz Herrera, 2018), which included the description of the literacy trajectories and four categories on the practices supported by the literature review: discourse genres, multimodality, interaction, and identity. Using Atlas.Ti 8.0 software, the text fragments related to the categories were coded and subcategories were established that emerged from the data. Figure 1 shows the code tree used in the analysis.
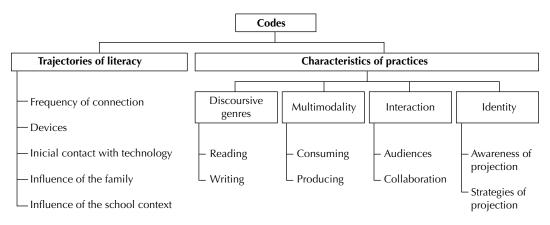

Figure 1. *Code tree*

Source: prepared by the author.

We also used computer-mediated discourse analysis (Burkart, 2010), which allowed to work directly with the digital texts that the participants produced. Inductive coding was performed, which resulted in three categories: multimodal resources (graphic and audiovisual), choices of code (languages), and linguistic and discursive resources (humor, formality of the statements). These elements were included as a complement to the content analysis, specifically in the categories of discourse genres and identity.

Results

First of all, the findings show a reconstruction of the profiles and literacy trajectories of the participants. Secondly, the contrasts can be seen between their practices in vernacular and academic contexts. For this purpose, the categories constructed on the basis of the theoretical references are used again.

Literacy trajectories

The first step is to begin with a description of the profiles and literacy trajectories, referring to the repertoire of practices that the subjects have constructed throughout their lives and in different contexts (Kontopodis et al., 2017). The characteristics of each participant are specified in a narrative reconstruction, agreed with the young people, which includes overall information from the techno-biographies, the techno-diaries, and the interviews.

Fabiana [AV+AA: active vernacular + active academic]. 18 years old, communications student. Her digital practices are frequent and diverse in the vernacular and academic spheres. Her academic and family experiences have strengthened her relationship with writing (multilingual parents). She establishes few differences between the real and the virtual, as her practices move from one medium to the other. She has a personal blog on healthy eating, with around 2,000 subscribers, and publishes informative articles on a weekly basis. She participates as a presenter of a student news program in her extracurricular activities at the university.

María [AV+MA: active vernacular + medium academic]. 20 years old, industrial engineering student. She has frequent digital activity, specifically in the vernacular, in which she participates as the administrator of a Facebook group that supports women who are victims of violence. She also participates in several online environmental and political groups.

Julián [AV+OA: active vernacular + occasional academic]. 21 years old, business administration student. He has frequent practices in the vernacular, with complex and highly structured routines related to landscape photography. He manages a semi-professional Instagram account. In the academic context, he has had negative experiences with the subjects of introductory writing and English, a situation that meant he was at risk of dropping out.

Camilo [MV+AA: medium vernacular + active academic]. 18 years old, nursing student. He has frequent practices in both environments, but in the vernacular, they are more associated with reception of information. In the academic environment, he produces textual and graphic content (class notes) that are recognized and validated by his peers and professors. He conceives of himself as a digital native and spends most of his time connected to the internet through mobile devices.

Marcos [MV+MA: medium vernacular + medium academic]. 20 years old, psychology student. He is characterized by the consumption of information in the vernacular environment, although this includes some graphic productions. In the academic environment, he uses technology for processes to search for information and, specifically, for collaborative writing, which is a common requirement on his course.

Gabriela [OV+MA: occasional vernacular + medium academic]. 21 years old, biology student. She has occasional practices in vernacular environments, does not have active profiles on social networks, and limits the use of messaging applications. She considers that real life is more productive and that there are certain risks on the web that she prefers to avoid. Her academic practices in digital media respond to the specific demands of that context.

Early contact with technology was evident in the trajectories of the participants. In addition to access to computers and the internet in their early years, the young people are familiar with video games and four of them belong to communities of video gamers.

> "I started playing on the PlayStation and I learned a bit about the world of video gamers, the way
> they write in English … the life they have in there" (techno-biography, Fabiana).

Family-related literacy practices have also supported the configuration of some of the profiles, as in the case of Camilo [MV+AA], whose mother is a doctor and he is interested in health issues, or in the case of Fabiana [VA+AA], whose father is French and has fostered her interest in other cultures and languages.

> "The library in my house had a lot of books. Some novels, children's stories, but especially health
> books … that's why I wanted to be a doctor very early" (techno-biography, Camilo).

All of the young people currently have access to two or more devices, have email, and various social media. Gabriela [OV+MA] is the only participant who does not use social media, although she does have a Facebook profile that is rarely updated. In the academic environment, the young people are familiar with the institution's virtual classroom and with various tools that allow them to access, store, and work with information in digital media.

Online discourse genres

Discourse genres refer to the texts that circulate on the web and mediate the interactions between subjects (Cassany, 2012). In the techno-diaries the participants recorded the main digital genres they accessed in vernacular and academic settings and also and mentioned them in the interviews. With these data, we conducted quantitative content analysis.

It was identified that the genres they read are more varied and frequent than those they produce. In both the vernacular and academic domains, they mostly look at websites, blogs, and videos. Their vernacular practices predominantly include video tutorials and short articles that facilitate daily tasks and information on topics of interest. Their academic practices include class materials shared by teachers (slides, guides). Reading in English is a requirement in most subjects.

With regard to their production, there are significant differences between the students, specifically in the vernacular domain (Table 2).

Table 2
Genres produced online

Participant	Vernacular	Academic
Fabiana	Chat, posts on social networks, comments on networks, entries in blog, explicative videos, live broadcasts	Summaries, reviews, reports, essays, slides, infographics, online forums, news, reporting
María	Chat, posts on social networks, comments on social networks, infographics, webinars	Summaries, reports on LaTex, essays, slides
Julián	Chat, photos on Instagram, posts on other social networks, memes	Summaries, reports, online forums
Camilo	Chat, comments on social networks, memes	Reviews, reports, essays, notes, graphic organizers.
Marcos	Chat, comments on social networks, selfies, memes	Summaries, reviews, reports, essays, virtual forums, slides
Gabriela	Chat	Summaries, reviews, reading reports, lab reports, essays, virtual forums, slides

Source: prepared by the author.

The most frequent genre used is chat, through messaging services and on some social networks. The participants with active vernacular profiles—Fabiana [AV+AA], María [AV+MA], and Julián [AV+OA]—have more diverse, interactive, and multimodal genres, and with structured processes of searching for information, content curation, and textual, graphic, and audiovisual production. In these three cases they create content at least twice a week and have specialization in certain topics (food, gender violence, landscape photography).

Two participants produce occasional multilingual genres: Fabiana [AV+AA] publishes blog posts in multiple languages and Julian [AV+OA] uses English tags in his Instagram posts:

> "Hashtags are really important, because if you don't add the ones that best describe the photo, the photo doesn't move" (interview 7, Julián).

The academic genres show fewer variations and are similar in all six cases. Synthesis texts are frequent, such as summaries and certain support resources for oral presentations (slides). Forums are also included, which have more interactive characteristics than the aforementioned texts and are framed within virtual classroom activities. Reports seem to vary more because they are reading reports in some cases, and laboratory reports, in other cases. . The spontaneous practices highlighted in this area include the production of notes by Camilo [MV+AA], which are used as a strategy for the uptake of class topics:

> "I learned this system [Cornell] in a biology subject in high school and it really helped me to memorize and understand the topics and that's why I use it here at the U ..." (interview 9, Camilo).

Multimodality

Multimodality refers to the integration of different semiotic modes to represent information (Kalantzis et al., 2020). In the vernacular domain, we identify greater circulation of graphic material, a mode that is favored on social media. In the academic domain, text reading is predominant, although we can also observe a preference of the young people for audiovisual formats, specifically to solve problems of comprehension (Kalantzis et al., 2020):

> "If I have a presentation or a difficult piece of writing and I don't understand the books, I watch videos that explain the topics in a simple way" (interview 6, Gabriela).

> "For fundamental Mathematics it's essential. The textbook is good, but it skips a lot of explanations ... whereas a youtuber like JulioProfe says everything in detail" (interview 3, María).

Multimodal production is less frequent than reception. In the vernacular area, more varied modes are found, as demonstrated by the publications of Fabiana [AV+AA] and María [AV+MA], which integrate text, image, and video. In the practices of Julián [AV+OA], the image (photograph) is predominant, accompanied by labels in English and Spanish. Camilo [MV+AA] and Marcos [MV+MA] also communicate mostly through images, but with less structured processes of production (mixture of memes and selfies).

In the academic environment, it is common for the participants to have traditional textual production, with the gradual incorporation of images. Preparation of visual aids for oral presentations or use of graphic organizers to summarize information are common requests in the subjects the participants were studying in their first year.

The use, but also the preference, of text in the academic environment is related to the privilege given to writing in teachers' practices and to the conceptions of the students themselves, who consider that the real writing is predominantly textual:

> "Of course, it's not the same when you have to write an essay, a summary, or a real text in university as when you write a meme" (interview 8, Fabiana).

> "You can't present a real piece of work, like a final report for example, with something short like a map" (interview 4, Camilo).

These differences perceived in multimodal production lead to the fact that young people do not generally integrate the skills they have developed in the vernacular environment into the practices of the academic environment. This integration was only observed in the case of Fabiana [AV+AA], an aspect that may be related to the degree she is pursuing (Communications).

Interaction

This category refers to the relationships established with other online interlocutors, considering that the materialities of digital interfaces enable more direct and distributed communication than analog media (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). In the vernacular sphere, the interactions of the study participants mainly occur through reactions and comments to posts. The audiences are broad in almost all cases, with a minimum of 500 contacts on Gabriela's [OV+MA] Facebook and more than 6,000 on Fabiana's [AV+AA] Instagram account.

Active producers are those who have greater interaction with the public, as they pay attention to feedback from their contacts. They are also willing to make modifications to the content depending on the reactions:

> "I like to respond to everything, because it's nice, and if you post it's for someone to see and react" (interview 4, Julian).

In the academic context, there are fewer spaces for interaction, although they do occur in the forums of the virtual classroom. The students consider that the audience is usually restricted to the teacher:

> "Blackboard is almost always only with the teacher. Sometimes with classmates, but not even with classmates from other semesters or with other teachers, let alone with external people" (interview 3, Marcos).

Compared with interaction, collaboration is less frequent in the two areas. The closest experiences are those of Fabiana [AV+AA], who takes part in a student newscast and jointly edits the scripts with other members of the team; María [AV+MA], who coordinates with colleagues from the feminist association on the type of content they publish, or Camilo [MV+AA], who participates in Facebook groups in which he discusses topics in which he is interested:

> "I belong to lots of groups … we talk about George R. Martin's books, about the comparison with the series, we analyze characters, we invent parallel stories, we read to each other …" (interview 4, Camilo).

In the academic environment, some of the teachers encourage group writing activities, which can be undertaken by the students in different ways. These can range from division of tasks to joint planning, writing, and review strategies:

> "Lots of assignments depend on the teacher, on what they ask for. Sometimes they only ask the students to write in groups so as not to grade so much, but not because the work is difficult or it's required … other times the work is hard and it has to be done by everyone" (interview 4, Marcos).

Online identity

Identity is related to the images that people construct of themselves from their interaction with others. In this research it is limited to the awareness of online image projection, supported by the use of linguistic and discursive mechanisms (Barton & Lee, 2013). The young people with the most active profiles are concerned about the image they are able to project through their posts:

> "What an embarrassment to write some nonsense if you know 2,000 people are reading" (interview 3, Fabiana).

These participants carefully select the discursive resources and semiotic modes with which they want to reach the audience. For example, Fabiana [AV+AA] uses scientific papers to support her publications on nutrition, combines different tones to achieve relevance and credibility, and introduces some memes and humorous resources to capture attention and facilitate the understanding of the audience (Figure 2).
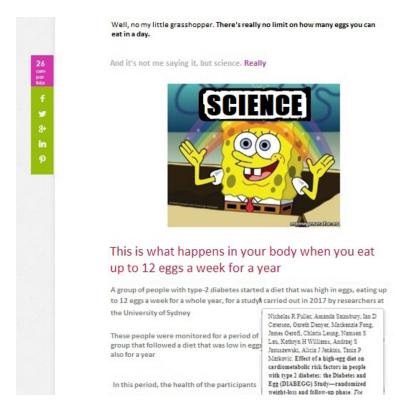
Figure 2. *Discursive and multimodal resources used by Fabiana*

Source: class material provided by Fabiana.

María [AV+MA], on the other hand, projects herself as a person who is critical of the dominant social dynamics and she has defined various strategies to maintain that image:

> "I don't publish nonsense. It has to be information that is useful to my followers, that is critical, that doesn't have sexist or violent content, that uses inclusive language" (María, interview 5).

Julián [AV+OA] uses resources such as humor, irony, and especially memes to express his positions:

> "I like to make fun of Porky [reference to President Iván Duque] just with memes" (interview 9, Julián).

Marcos [MV+MA] and Camilo [MV+AA] give less importance to image projection in vernacular contexts, as their purposes are more focused on entertainment. In the case of Gabriela [OV+MA], although she does not use her networks often, she considers it important to have an internet presence:

> "I know that if I close Facebook, it's like I wouldn't exist, I keep it there and I log into it sometimes" (interview 2, Gabriela).

With regard to the academic environment, the six participants are interested in displaying an image of commitment to teachers. However, they do not believe that they can project their own identity in writing, possibly because of the perception of this environment as a normative space, in which there is little room to express subjectivity:

"We all end up writing the same. My first conflict was on a course when the teacher crossed out parts of my writing where I said 'I' ... I say 'I' all the time, because they're my ideas ..." (interview 5, María).

Discussion and Conclusions

The profiles included in this research demonstrate the diversity of young people's digital media practices. Despite the fact that all six of them are of similar ages, participate in the same university context, and have access to technology, they configure their uses in different ways. Profiles such as those of Fabiana [AV+AA], María [AV+MA] or Camilo [MV+AA] can be considered closely related to the notion of digital residents, that is, young people who can transition fluently and without major differentiation between the physical and virtual worlds (Cassany, 2012). Gabriela [OV+MA], meanwhile, uses the internet occasionally, so she has more of a profile of a digital visitor. The literacy trajectories are influenced by multiple aspects that go beyond this relationship with technology, including the practices of the family environment, school experiences, individual interests, and conceptions of what it means to participate in digital media.

With regard to the established categories, we can observe more practices of reception than of production in the online discourse genres. Websites are the main sources of information for both academic and vernacular purposes, a finding which is consistent with other research in higher education (Amavizca Montaño et al., 2017; López-Gil & Fernández, 2019; Pérez & Rincón, 2013). In the vernacular setting, the most active profiles demonstrate the production of more sophisticated, interactive, multimodal genres on topics in which the participants are highly involved. These profiles are closely related to those of prosumers or pro-designers (Hernández et al., 2017), as they are not limited to the reception of information. In the academic field, the genres produced are similar in all cases and correspond to non-specialized academic texts, with characteristics that are more analog than digital (González et al., 2015).

The multimodality also displays considerable differences in both contexts. In the vernacular there is greater integration of different semiotic modes in five of the six profiles, albeit with different levels of complexity. Fabiana [AV+AA], María [AV+MA], and Julián [AV+OA] engage in structured practices of production and have broad awareness of the role of textual, graphic, and audiovisual elements. These aspects involve the development of skills that transcend technical conditions and entail the articulation of multimodal resources to express, motivate, and document experiential knowledge (Nouri, 2018; Pérez & Cassany, 2018). In the academic environment, various modes are integrated, but writing remains the priority both for teachers' assignments and for the representations of the students themselves, who see it as real writing.

In interactions at the vernacular level, we can identify broad audiences in social media. However, only the young people who constantly produce information pay great attention to the characteristics of the audience and plan specific actions to interact with them, such as reacting, commenting, or modifying posts. This possibility of transforming productions based on dialogue with others is enabled by the tools of the platforms and responds to the notion of unfinished digital text (Bawarshi, 2004). In the academic context, interactions occur mostly with teachers and adjustments can rarely be made to texts that have already been delivered. Interaction practices may occasionally involve collaboration with others, although this is not a predominant characteristic.

As regards identity, the six young people are aware of the image they wish to project online, although some give it more importance and propose specific mechanisms in order to maintain it. This identity also involves their positioning with respect to the world (Pérez & Cassany, 2018), especially on topics of interest to the young people such as political ideologies or gender violence. Linguistic and discursive resources are important in this

positioning (Barton & Lee, 2013), because the young people often use humor and irony to make their positions explicit. In the academic environment, the participants identify greater constraints in the expression of their subjectivity, not only because the topics of their interest are addressed less often, but also because more distant forms of expression are privileged.

Although vernacular and academic practices in digital media share certain characteristics, there are important disconnections in the profiles studied. Some of them are related to the lack of validation of everyday practices in the university. This situation may lead young people to perceive their experiences outside academia as being less valuable or not particularly useful (Shepherd, 2018). Young people's representations about writing and about texts have an important influence on this disconnection, since in most cases they considered that academic writing is real writing. In spite of this, the students feel more motivated, comfortable, and able to express themselves creatively in vernacular activities.

Despite these conceptions, we observe characteristics that can support the creation of bridges between both spheres, such as the validation of the skills that young people have built outside the classroom—specifically those related to multimodal production and the structuring and planning of complex communication activities. To facilitate this connection, it could be important to have greater freedom for the inclusion of topics that can link disciplinary approaches with social issues that are of interest to young people, flexibility in the use of linguistic and discursive resources to express subjectivity, and the identification of broader audiences. It should be remembered that not all students have the same trajectories and interests, but some of these characteristics could lead to greater involvement in academic practices.

In order to achieve this, the commitment of the teachers and institutions is essential, since the transfer of practices from one context to another does not usually occur automatically (Alvermann, 2005; Barton, 2007). Indeed, only in one of the cases studied (Fabiana) was this possibility evident. Establishing connections between students' repertoires of literacy and the demands of the academic culture could help to address the unidirectional processes of acculturation in higher education, which often exclude and even attempt to erase the trajectories constructed by students (Ávila Reyes et al., 2020; Prior & Bilbro, 2012; Zavala, 2019), which can produce greater disassociation between young people and academic practices.

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