



# *Contextual transposition: Didactic strategy for the writing of the argumentative essay*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The objective of this educational research was to assess the impact of the didactic strategy “contextual transposition”, in the writing of argumentative essays. This strategy is located in the sociocultural approach of textual production and emerged as an innovation of the diagnostic stage of this research. For its implementation, four phases were defined: a) awareness-raising, b) exploration and discussion, c) transposition and, d) evaluation. The method was participatory action research and was applied to students of tenth grade “A” of the Benito Salinas de Dolores-Carazo Institute in Nicaragua, during the second semester of the year 2020. The research instruments were the diagnostic test, the didactic unit, the final test, the evaluation rubric of the essay written by the students, and the field journal. The main results showed that, from the contextual transposition, the students improved the written production, the definition of the thesis, and the organization of the ideas and structure of the essay, however, its impact on the reproduction of the sociocultural context or image of the student’s reality at the level of dialogic text is limited, therefore, more studies must be carried out to understand and overcome the limitations.

## INTRODUCTION

This educational research<sup>1</sup> was conducted with tenth-grade students of a regular high school, in Carazo-Nicaragua during the year 2020. The main objective was to assess the impact of the didactic strategy “contextual transposition”, in the writing of argumentative essays. This strategy was born as an alternative to writing, compared to the cognitive or sociocognitive approaches that until now have prevailed in the secondary education of Nicaragua, since these approaches are limited to the individualized vision of the student in his written production.

One of the main learning problems faced by students at all educational levels, including teachers, is the development of writing skills, which is evidenced in a specialized literature consultation. These first indications generated the need to make an empirical exploration to be able to locate and contextualize the problem to a reality and a specific topic, for which a diagnosis was made on the problems of writing argumentative texts with the study subjects.

The diagnostic stage showed that students’ writing problems go from spelling levels to grammatical levels. These difficulties generate the main problem that students are reproducers of what they read and do not produce their ideas, knowledge, and experiences and, in addition, contextualize them. That is why the question arises: How does contextual transposition affect the learning of the writing of argumentative essays with 10th-grade students of the Benito Salinas Dolores-Carazo Institute during the first semester of 2020?

To answer this question, the study set three specific objectives: a) to identify the most frequent problems of writing argumentative essays presented by the study subjects, b) to analyze “contextual transposition” as a didactic strategy in the written production of argumentative essays and c) to evidence the changes produced in the process of writing argumentative essays, with the application of the “didactic transposition”. With the response to these objectives, learning strategies are contributed in the writing of the essay as an argumentative text from the immediate context of the students, so that they can transform the information that reaches their hands into meaningful and valuable knowledge for their lives.

On the strategies that seek to improve the written writing of argumentative texts, the production is abundant, but for reasons of space, we will present in an illustrative way, two studies that drew particular attention; at the international level, we can cite the thesis of Camacho Roble (2017), carried out in Peru, which he titled “Strategies to write, in the production

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1. The article is the product of the final thesis of the degree to obtain the degree of Bachelor of Science in Education with a mention in Hispanic Language and Literature. The project was named “The contextual transposition: didactic proposal for the writing of the argumentative essay with students of 10th grade of the Benito Salinas Institute. Dolores – Carazo, during the second half of 2020” and is part of the line of research on the processes of learning of language and literature for secondary education. It was held in the period 2019-2020.

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of argumentative texts in students of the fifth grade of secondary school". The objective of this study was to improve the ability to write discursive texts; the interesting thing in Camacho's text is the comparison of the initial and final tests; that reflect a contrast between the initial and final knowledge of the students, however, it is difficult to understand it if you do not go through the analysis of the process.

The second thesis that is presented as antecedent, in this case at the national level, belongs to Lezama López and Herrera Arce (2016), which is entitled "Teaching strategies for the approach to the writing of argumentative texts in seventh grade" and its central objective was to analyze the writing in students, through methodological strategies that allow a greater mastery of Spanish grammar. In this research, the authors start from the cognitive possibilities of the students to analyze their results, without taking into account the sociocultural context, which for this research is paramount, in the sense that the written document is considered as an intertextuality and dialogical instrument.

In summary, both works focus on the analysis of the writing of argumentative texts, but as a mechanical process that is born and develops in the individual, and do not take into account the sociocultural environment in which students live and are related.

## **MATERIAL AND METHOD**

This research is directed under the socio-critical paradigm since there is an intervention that allows being part of the solution of an educational problem. The research is qualitative interpretive because it studies a concrete reality, it does not seek the generalization of the results, as stated by Hernández Sampieri (2014: 7).

The specific method of research was participatory action research (PAR) in education, which according to Colmenares (2012) seeks to improve and/or transform educational practice while seeking a better understanding of this practice, permanently articulating research, action, and training. This author identifies a variety of denominations for the phases of the PAR, although all lead to three moments that we have organized in diagnosis, elaboration of the action plan, implementation of the action plan, and reflection of the practice.

The population was composed of 32 students of the 10th grade "A" of the Benito Salinas Gutiérrez Institute of the municipality of Dolores, Carazo. The randomly selected sample was composed of seven participants, between the ages of 15 to 16 years of 10th grade "A", morning shift. The only inclusion criterion was that all the students participating in the study attended all the class sessions.

The instruments for data collection that were used were: the diagnostic test, the didactic unit, the final test, the evaluation rubric of the essay written by the students, and the field

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journal. Each of the instruments was validated using the Delphi two-turn methodology, which is considered sufficient according to Colmenares (2012). In our case, the validation was carried out by four experts, two university professors, who are tutors in graduation seminary, and two secondary school teachers who have extensive experience in teaching secondary education. The evaluations were qualitative according to the criteria established for the evaluation of the research theses of the university.

In this research, the analysis of the results was carried out through the triangulation of temporal data, for this, the answers generated by the students in the diagnostic tests, the development activities of the unit, and the final tests were organized in a double-entry grid, which reflects in the first column the evaluation criteria used in the evaluation rubric and the first row the students (key informants), in such a way that, their interceptions generate across the information. In the last row and column, a comprehensive synthesis is generated that allows to capture of the most important categories for the analysis of individual and group results. According to Rodríguez, Pozo & Gutiérrez (2006, p.1) cited by Aguilar S. & Barroso J. (2015), triangulation is a “confrontational technique and comparison tool for different types of data analysis (analytical triangulation) with the same objective.”

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results have been organized according to the objectives proposed in the introductory part of this article and relation to the phases of participatory action research (PAR), described in the corresponding section.

### **Diagnosis**

Starting from the transversal axis of the unit, referring to the “Prevention and management of risk”, the students were asked to write a three-paragraph opinion (essay) on natural phenomena and their experiences and to assign a topic and underline the main idea. We identified two sets of problems that we associated: 1) problems of grammatical order and spelling, and 2) problems of writing and argumentation.

Due to the objectives set out in the research, only the problems related to writing and argumentation were addressed. On this idea, four of the students did not assign topics to their writings, and of the three who did, two gave titles that were not binding to the subject, for example, one of them spoke about the causes and consequences of natural phenomena and called his writing “Violence”. It must also be said that the main idea of his writing was focused on the importance of simulations and from it, he wrote other ideas. Only two students managed to argue beyond the literal level of writing, that is, to repeat what they think is important from other writings.

In summary, it was identified that students lack strategies that help them to make a broader textual production linked to their context, which can provide them with broader knowledge on any topic. The diagnosis revealed the need for contextual linkage, but also, for a way to manage that knowledge and bring it to its written form.

Based on these findings and the theoretical review, the didactic strategy “contextual transposition” was proposed as a way to link the context with the production of writing, in such a way that we seek to develop in the student significant learning, that is, to give meaning to the words in their context.

### Preparation of the action plan

The proposal for action was contextual transposition as a didactic strategy; which is located according to this study, within the sociocultural theoretical-empirical current of Vygotsky, Batjin, and Coll, cited by Torres (2004) and Castelló (2010) and for which it is conceived as an innovative didactic strategy, as it seeks to pass from the theoretical point of view of writing as an individualized form (cognitive or metacognitive) to a co-regulation, that is, intratextual and intertextual writing that is expressed in the dialogue of different voices in the text. To better understand the selected approach, look at Table 1, which shows a part of the comparative synthesis, of the research approaches of the process of regulation of writing, proposed by Castelló (2010).

**Table 1.**

Approaches to Teaching Learning in Writing

	<b>Notion of writing</b>	<b>Notion of regulation</b>
<b>Cognitive</b>	Cognitive processes of planning, textualization, and review.	The metacognitive system used by the writer to control textual production: <i>planning</i> : setting objectives and <i>reviewing</i> : detecting, diagnosing, and solving problems.
<b>Sociocognitive</b>	Complex cognitive, motivational, and behavioral activity in interaction with the social and physical environment.	Self-initiated thoughts, feelings, and actions that writers use to achieve various writing goals, such as improving their writing ability or improving the quality of the text they have created.

	<b>Notion of writing</b>	<b>Notion of regulation</b>
<b>Cultural</b>	The discursive activity of the writer is mediated, dialogical, and located within a discursive community, and located in a specific social, historical and cultural context.	Process of transfer from external regulation (expert) to internal self-regulation (apprentice) of knowledge that allows the regulation of a certain discursive activity.
<p>Note: Own elaboration, built with base to Castelló, M., Bañales, G. &amp; Vega, N. (2010). Approaches in Academic Writing Regulation Research: State of the Art. <i>Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology</i>, 8 (3), pp. 1253-1282.</p>		

Own elaboration, built with base to Castelló, M., Bañales, G. & Vega, N. (2010).

The didactic strategy “contextual transposition” was developed with the second didactic unit “Let’s learn to write essays” of the subject language and literature of secondary education in Nicaragua and is organized in four phases:

Phase 1. Presentation. In this phase, the students were presented with the unit with the topics to be treated through a concept map and the competencies they expect them to achieve. Immediately, awareness was raised about the content of the unit, especially about the transversal axis, which is where it was taken as a reference for the essays written by the students. In the case of the unit to be treated, it presents as a transversal axis the environmental culture and in particular the component “Prevention and risk management”, which represents a limitation for the writing of argumentative texts, since it is an “objective (exact)” topic that does not give rise to conflicting positions, as it would, for example, another transversal axis referred to values, gender, etc.

Phase 2. Exploration and discussion. The second phase consisted of the search for individualized information on the subject by the students. Before, the teacher-researcher provided video-graphic references (educational pills, documentaries, interactive pages, etc.) on the subject, and guided the students to investigate more on their part and talk with their families and friends about lived experiences regarding risk prevention and management. This first moment helped the study subjects to get in touch with their previous knowledge, that is, reactivate them to face the new content. In a second moment, we move on to the group discussion of the information collected to look for coincidences and differences in positions regarding the findings. It is here that they begin to argue their ideas, from a verbal communicative action. These moments are cyclical and can be repeated two or three times to motivate the student to seek more accurate information and to document their arguments.

Phase 3. Transposition. Once the students had a firmer and clearer position on what they think and say about risk prevention and management, and also have enough arguments, they moved on to the phase of translating their ideas into a written text with the help of the teacher and a mediation guide, in which the steps for their realization were established; the guide begins with the definition of the thesis, then suggests expressing in a four “T” the arguments and counterarguments, and then begins with metacognitive activities.

Phase 4. Evaluation. It is done by reviewing a pair (another student) who has a different thesis than their peer. To do this, a co-evaluation tool was used to review the arguments. Finally, a re-writing of the text was carried out, which passed into the hands of the teacher to be reviewed in its formal and content aspects.

### **Implementation of the action plan and reflection of the practice**

The results of the action plan were analyzed from the triangulation of temporal data and are presented in the relationship of a) three evaluation criteria established in the rubric (improved after applying the diagnosis), b) the phases of the didactic proposal (contextual transposition) and c) the three essay drafts written by the students. It should be noted that the criteria established in the rubric were eight, but for reasons of space only the three referred to the sociocultural approach to writing and the assessment of the didactic strategy were analyzed.

#### **Criterion 1:** The author reflects his social reality

*Phase 1 (first draft).* In general terms, they do not reflect their social reality and usually mention things of a more global nature. Only the E7 student is the one who mentions problems of his environment, but it is not known how to explain. *Phase 2 and 3 (second draft).* All students reflect their local or national reality. They mention names such as the educational center (E3), the houses and streets of the neighborhood (E6), or what is related to Hurricane Mitch (E4). *Phase 4 (third draft).* All students, from the different topics chosen, address their close reality, especially the virtuality they live in social networks since they use them persistently and focus their attention on the negative aspects of the use of social networks: estrangement from the family (E3), the addiction they cause (E6) and the contents not suitable for children and young people.

It is evident that communication processes are taken to written production, and the thesis of Batjin (1979) cited by Anna Camps (1995) is reaffirmed, that dialogue is fundamental to write an argumentative essay since they obtain broad information about the subject and from which different ideas can arise that enrich their essay, adjusting it to the context (social and physical).

It is also shown that there was a transfer from external regulation (teaching) to internal self-regulation (apprentice), according to what Castelló, M., Bañales, G. & Vega, N. (2010) proposes, since, in each phase of the implemented strategy and each draft, the student presented advances, especially in textual production, argumentation and order of the document.

### **Criterion 2.** Intratextual dialogue

*Phase 1 (first draft).* There is no intertextual dialogue, that is, the students write, only from their perspective: a monologue. *Phase 2 and 3 (second draft).* Even in his second writing, there is no evidence of internal dialogue in the text. They always speak from their perspective. *Phase 4 (third draft).* Even in the third draft the personal perspective persists, although there are indications of dialogue with other people, for example, the E1 student refers to the dialogue with other relatives through the use of technologies, the E5 student, refers to the conversations he has had with other people who are at a long distance regarding the issue of addictions to social networks.

In the first phase and draft written by the students, greater written production was evidenced, however, there was no significant impact on the internal dialogue of the essay, that is, the dialogical and contextual perspective that is intended to be achieved. Let us remember that, from the sociocultural approach of the writing of argumentative texts, the essay must be enriched with concrete practices, favor clarity and an environment of dialogue and discussion that promotes argumentative discourse, since this, as Torres points out quoting Batjin (1999), is structured around the communicative need of the author's thesis in dialogue with other positions.

In other words, the process of contextualizing the writings was quite limited, since evidence persists in the students of a socio-cognitive approach –implemented by the Ministry of Education of Nicaragua– the second of the three proposed by Castelló et al (2010). That is, the students did not manage to elaborate the image of their reality in the text, as proposed by Camargo M. Zahyra, Caro L. Miguel Á. & Uribe Á. Graciela (2012:124).

### **Criterion 3.** Intertextuality dialogue

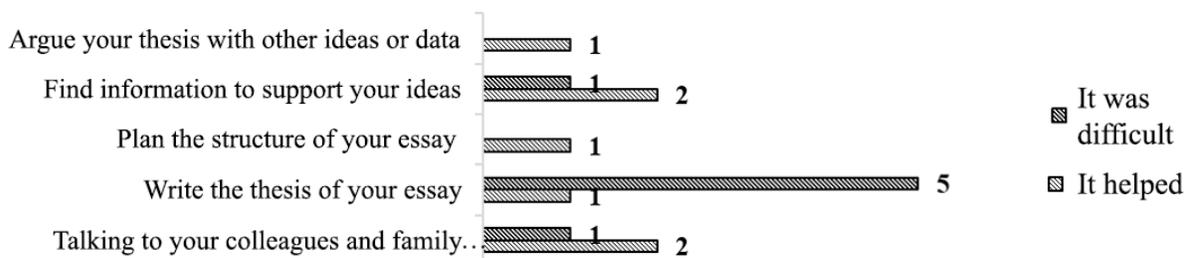
*Phase 1 (first draft).* Five of the students invite the reader to reflect on the importance of the actions we must take in the face of natural disasters. The other two students acquire a commitment together with the readers, thus, the E5 student states “it is important that we take into account each of the prevention measures”. *Phase 2 and 3 (second draft).* Five students address the reader, but without getting involved, and two engage with the reader. Student E1 said “it is necessary to work together and in a sustained way for the protection of the environment.” *Phase 4 (third draft).* In this phase everyone sends messages to the reader, usually opening awareness

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about the problem that they focus on according to the selected topic, for example, the student (E4) invites the reader to be careful with children, adolescents, and young people, who must be supervised, since they can obtain information that could generate both psychological and emotional damage.

The intertextuality dialogue, that is, the contextualized arguments tending to respond in advance to the questions or doubts of the possible interlocutors, proposed by Camps (1995 quoting Batjin, 1979), are only developed by the students in a unidirectional sense; from the author to the readers, and only in some cases is involvement and empathy achieved from the student who writes. In any case, students are limited to a literary vision (romantic or expressive) and not to a discursive activity of the writer: mediated, dialogical and located within a discursive community and located in a specific social, historical and cultural context, as proposed by Castelló, M., Bañales, G. & Vega, N. (2010) in the approaches to the regulation of academic writing.

Regarding the assessment of the strategy, in which the students were consulted about the learning activities proposed by the didactic strategy “Contextual transposition”, two important facts should be highlighted (see graph 1): the first is that the most difficult activity for them was “writing the thesis of the essay” and in fact, this problem was prevalent in the first draft and some cases in the second draft. Which caused secondary problems in the students such as the argumentation and organization of their writing. In the final writing, normally the thesis was clearer for them, and that allowed to provide argumentative elements – although no concrete data – in addition, the structure of the essay was more orderly because it was subordinate to that central idea or thesis.



**Figure 1**

Assessment of the activities of the strategy  
Contextual transposition

Note Own elaboration, based on the results as a product of the insertion in the classroom.

The other important observation, in this case, is that the two activities that facilitated the writing of the essay were; a) seek information to support your ideas and b) talk to your

colleagues and family members to generate ideas about the essay”, that is, they produced from a dialogue that was generated with other documents and their context, even if they do not explicitly reflect it in their writings.

**Table 2.**

Assessment and evaluation of the “contextual transposition” strategy

Student	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7
Criteria							
<b>Overall assessment of the strategy</b>	Good, it made us generate ideas to be able to write with our own words.	Easy, attractive, inductive, and motivating. He says “it makes you want to write the essay”	Dynamic, fun, and integrative	Very good, I encourage the development of knowledge and expression.	Very good, fun, generated meaningful learning.	Coherent, educational, I provide easy writing.	Entertaining, functional.
<b>Evaluation of class assessment</b>	Feedback on basic concepts for writing	Easy, dynamic, and practical (by essay writing)-	Help at all times from teachers.	Very good. Meaningful learning and above all respect prevailed	Easy and very good	Educational and objective	Easy, entertaining, interesting.

In general terms, students characterize the contextual transposition strategy as motivating, integrative, easy, and functional, because for them, it “makes them want to write the essay” (E2), generates meaningful learning (E5), and is easy and fun (E2, E3, and E5). In a word, the strategy is functional to arouse interest in learning.

On the form of evaluation of the strategy, the students believe that it allows the feedback (E1) and the accompaniment of the teacher (E3), in addition, the rest of the students consider that their form of evaluation is easy and interesting. That is, they understand the logic of the strategy and the ends it pursues.



## CONCLUSIONS

The student's previous knowledge of the essay is merely conceptual; they know about the parts of the essay and their characteristics, they also identify the structure of the essay, but in practice, it was difficult for them to define a thesis and logically, derive arguments from that central idea. In addition, the mistakes made by the students at this time of writing were spelling, grammatical and writing.

The application of the strategy "contextual transposition" favored a greater textual production, defining a thesis and logically arguing its ideas, and writing the essay in an inductive order. It also favored the social commitment of the students with the topics they wrote. However, the dialogical production that was expected in the text was fulfilled only in part, since the students in the third draft, spoke about their context, but always from their personal experience and not with cultural and social representations, which can only be learned and expressed from dialogue with other people.

The strategy had a very positive assessment by the students because it allowed them to learn to write a thesis -although it was one of the activities they consider most difficult-, seek information and talk to the family and the community to generate more and better ideas. They also value the strategy as motivating and integrative, in addition to its ease of evaluating and feedback with the accompaniment with the teacher.

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