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## Reading and Note Taking in Monological and Dialogical Classes in the Social Sciences

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# Reading and Note Taking in Monological and Dialogical Classes in the Social Sciences

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*Abstract: This qualitative study explores the uses of reading and note-taking in two pre-service teacher training Social Sciences courses. Data analysis of in-depth interviews with professors and students, class observations and course materials suggested two polar teaching styles according to how bibliography was included in the course and the presence or absence of dialogicality. In one course, the professor assumed that students should read texts on their own prerogative. As monological lectures were given, they mostly studied from their class-notes. In the other course, the professor held class discussions based on readings that took place in and outside the classroom. According to students, this prompted them to use their class-notes to re-signify and consider the relevance of the information read, with talking, reading, and note-taking contextualizing each other. The dialogical teaching style merged literacy practices and interwove them with disciplinary contents, promoting students' active approach to meaning construction when learning.*

## Introduction

How do students use class-notes when they study for their courses? How do they relate these spontaneous writings to the bibliography they have to read? Is there any relationship between how their teachers include readings in their instructional practices and how students read and use their class-notes? These questions arose as a central issue in an exploratory study regarding how future high school Social Sciences teachers read and take notes to learn subject matter and why they do it in certain ways. This exploration was conducted in two teacher education courses in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

In this study, we assume that reading and writing uses are important because these practices are privileged learning tools (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Langer & Applebee, 1987; Wells, 1993), which allow the appropriation of ways of thinking and doing in the disciplines (Carlino, 2005; Carter, Ferzli, & Wiebe, 2007; Kostouli, 2005) and promote students' participation in disciplinary communities as critical readers and writers (Birr Moje, 2007; Zipin & Brennan, 2006).

Along the same lines, understanding reading and writing practices in teacher education courses can help us bring to the surface the conditions in which pre-service teachers learn what

they will be teaching later. This becomes particularly important since research has shown that the experiences that teachers had as students can influence their future teaching practices (Gordon, Dembob, & Hocevar, 2007). In the following sections we review findings that relate reading and writing practices to thinking and learning processes as well as studies on note-taking. We also present studies on the relation between dialogicality in teaching, students' reading and writing practices and learning. Then, we analyze reading and note-taking in subject area courses offered to History and Geography pre-service teachers in two institutions. Finally, we discuss our findings and offer suggestions for further research.

### **Reading and Writing to Communicate and to Think About Contents**

The literature review that we offered in previous works (Cartolari & Carlino, 2009; Cartolari & Carlino, 2011) shows that teachers and students commonly consider reading and writing as general communicative skills that only involve coding and decoding speech or thoughts. Such conceptualizations usually lead to the idea that these skills can be later transferred to any activity and context. This common way of thinking about reading and writing overlooks the diverse, situated and complex socio-cognitive processes that take place when people read and write (Olson, 1996), because it mainly focuses on the *communicative* aspects of literacy practices.

Furthermore, this usual idea of reading and writing does not take into account what Wells (1987) calls the *epistemic level* of literacy. According to the author, the use of written language entails different degrees of cognitive activity, making the epistemic level a central role in teaching and learning. Yet, this function is not intrinsic to any literacy practice and it only emerges when people write and read with certain purposes and under certain conditions, such as when reading and writing are used to analyze others' and one's own thinking beyond the immediacy of utterance (Wells, 1990b, Olson 1988). Literacy practices are potentially epistemic when used to explore and review ideas, talk about what has been read or written as well as to reflect about texts critically to reconstruct and/or transform knowledge. This epistemic use of reading and writing opposes what Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) have called a knowledge-telling model: the mere reproduction of content-knowledge without the transformative process that would imply reading and writing with a strategic formulation of goals, search criteria, and other components of problem solving. Accordingly, only those reading and writing tasks that entail analysis, comparison, and critical reflection of ideas actually can promote the elaboration of more complex knowledge (Carter, et al., 2007; Langer & Applebee, 1987; Newell, 1984; Newell & Winograd, 1989).

However, as Wells (1990a) indicates, just relying on the type of reading or writing task does not guarantee that students will reach the epistemic level in their literacy practices. Indeed, the epistemic function of reading and writing needs to be taught and scaffolded, instead of simply being *indicated*. Based on Vigotsky's (1934/1962) ideas on learning, Wells (1990a) claims that *teaching* the epistemic use of reading and writing implies organizing classes centered on literacy activities involving the joint participation of students and teacher. The teacher, as an expert reader and writer in a specific subject area, allows students to progressively use reading and writing epistemically throughout assisted performance. In order to promote this, teachers have to make text interpretation and production processes observable to students by talking about bibliography in class and engaging students in collaborative activities that make reading and writing practices explicit:

Simply telling students to read more critically or to make their point more effectively in writing will be of no help unless they have developed an understanding of the mental activities involved. And for this to happen, they need to participate jointly in reading and writing events with their teachers or more competent peers, in which these internal activities are externalized – and thus made available for appropriation – in talk about the text. (Wells, 1990a, p.16.)

Lerner (2001) also puts forward the essential role of teachers' interventions. She and her colleagues have documented how scaffolding students' reading and writing is fundamental to help them understand and learn disciplinary contents (Aisenberg & Lerner, 2008; Aisenberg et al., 2009). In addition, Carlino, Iglesia, and Laxalt (2013) in a study that surveyed 544 Argentinean professors across the disciplines showed that, on the one hand, the majority of professors gave initial guidelines, and assessed reading and/or writing, but they did not nourish these practices. On the other hand, some professors intertwined reading and writing as a regular part of their classes, through activities where students received teacher's scaffolding. Working with literacy as *interwoven* with disciplinary contents, according to the authors, can be a decisive factor to use literacy as an epistemic tool.

Therefore, inquiry on the epistemic uses of reading and writing should go beyond what students do with the texts they read or write on their own, as well as the types of tasks teachers ask them to do. This means that research should also focus on what happens when there are opportunities for students to discuss what was read and written (Wells, 1990b), a research approach that can be developed through observing and analyzing teacher/student's classroom interactions. The present study then examines these interactions and pays special attention to how they relate to students' uses of class-notes.

### **Taking Class-Notes**

Note-taking is one of the most common types of writing in higher education, with an overwhelming majority of students taking notes in their courses (Mateos, Villalón, de Dios, & Martín, 2007; Solé, et al., 2005). Research shows that this activity is characterized by complex cognitive processes that involve short term memory, topic understanding, and writing (Piolat, Olive, & Kellogg, 2005). Taking class-notes entails a challenge for students since the average writing speed is ten times slower than oral speech (Boch & Piolat, 2005) and this imposes the task of keeping an active representation of what is being said. In order to face this demanding task, students most commonly use two strategies. They either direct their attention to understand what they are listening, decreasing the amount of writing, or they concentrate on transcribing as much as they can, un-focusing their attention from what they hear (Piolat, 2004; Piolat, Roussey, & Barbier, 2003).

Along with describing the cognitive processes that note-taking entails, research has also explored how this activity relates to students' learning approaches. Some studies have shown that this writing practice encourages learning not only when they review their notes, but also while they are taking them as it is an activity that facilitates retention and promotes connecting segments of information (Kiewra, 1985a, 1985b; Laidlaw, et al., 1993). Researchers have also analyzed which techniques allow for a better registration and lectures' recall (Makany, et al., 2009; Palkovitz & Lore, 1980; Sutherland, et al., 2002) and how teachers' guidelines can help students take note of important information that they could otherwise overlook (Kiewra, 1985c;

Titsworth, 2004). Finally, some studies have concentrated on the relationship between the quantity and the quality of the notes taken by students with their examination scores (Baker & Lombardi, 1985; Neef, et al., 2006; Nye, et al., 1984).

Whereas most of the aforementioned research relates note-taking to examination-grades, recall of information and teaching guidelines, other studies centre their attention on how students use their notes when studying. In this line of inquiry, Hartley and Davies (1978) and Isaacs (1994) have shown how some students use their class-notes as a *product* while others use them as a *process*. When students use notes as a product, they take them as information to be studied without any other type of processing. Instead, when they use notes as a process, they consider them as information to reflect on, to rewrite, and/or to relate with other textual sources (Hartley & Davies, 1978; Isaacs, 1994). Likewise, Castelló and Monereo (2005) found that students generally used class-notes as an external resource to recall contents that were to be assessed. Nevertheless, a minority of students in their sample attributed an epistemic and strategic function to class-notes, using them to expand information found on assigned readings and/or other sources as well as to reflect on content taught in their courses. The results of this study show that the latter use of class-notes can help students to reconstruct and transform knowledge.

Finally, the distinction between the use of class-notes as a product or process has recently been related by Espino and Miras (2010) with superficial or in-depth learning approaches taken by higher education students. The authors did not find enough evidence to prove a clear relationship between these two variables; however, their study highlights the need to take a closer look at note-taking practices in particular learning environments. Therefore, research that takes situated practices into account has to analyze how different teaching styles can facilitate or not a use of class-notes as a process. In the next section, we present the theoretical framework that characterizes different teaching styles and relates them to students' uses and purposes of class note-taking and reading.

### **Dialogical or Monological Teaching Styles**

Dysthe's (1996) study on the relationships between talk, writing and reading characterizes the teachers' role as a facilitator or inhibitor of dialogicality in high school level classes. The author's distinction between dialogical and monological teaching styles departs from the one proposed for texts by Bakhtin (1985) and Lotman (1994). This distinction underlines that despite every text having a monological aspect, because it aims at establishing cultural meanings in a precise way, it cannot be considered as a passive container. On the contrary, every text is an artifact that generates new interpretations and thoughts because it interacts with other texts and interpreters, in the same way that an utterance does in dialogical chains (Bakhtin, 1981). Dysthe (1996) extends these concepts to instructional settings and characterizes the degree of dialogicality in teacher/students texts' centered interactions. According to the author, a dialogical style of teaching and a monological one can be conceived as two extremes of a continuum. A monological teaching style refers to instruction practices predominantly based on lectures; where there is little or no talk between teacher and students about texts. In consequence, a reproductive way of learning prevails because students lack opportunities to negotiate and/or produce new meanings on what is being taught, and they mainly adopt the role of listeners. Instead, in a dialogical teaching style there is a maximum level of talk about texts (produced or read) between teacher and students, and interactions are based mainly on authentic questions, with no pre-fixed answers.

This monological teaching style is related to what other studies have called a traditional instruction model where exposition and pedagogic action are mostly understood as transmitting information (Dubois, 2002). In this type of instruction, learning is commonly understood under the metaphor of the passive acquisition of knowledge and skills that are considered external to the subject (Biesta, 2001; Biesta & Miedema, 2002). Thus, in this conception of instruction, teaching predominantly entails lecturing about course contents (Hager, 2004) and learning mostly consists of endorsing the professor's authority in the knowledge (Rockwell, 1982). In this scenario, students tend to depend more on the teacher's oral exposition as a source of information than on the readings of disciplinary texts (Ratekin, Simpson, Alvermann, & Dishner, 1985). Moreover, the lack of reading appears to be based on two complementary situations: while students think that they do not need to read because the teacher's lectures offer them all the necessary information, teachers affirm they base their teaching style mainly in lectures because students do not do the readings (Mikulecky, 1982; Smith & Feathers, 1983a, 1983b).

On the contrary, a dialogical teaching style sets a different instructional scenario. There is a maximum level of talk about texts and writing. As Dysthe (2000) shows, this style of teaching boosts learning through the dialogicality reached by *reading and writing to talk* (reading and writing tasks to focus and prepare class discussions) and *talking to read and to write* (oral preparation of tasks that require reading and writing). A dialogical teaching style then is coherent with conceiving reading as an operation centered on meaning construction, which requires an active role from students (Lerner, 2001; Smith, 1988) and the assumption of a critical stance on texts (Delpit, 1995). In addition, as Guthrie (1996) and Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, and Afflerbach (1995) have shown, students read more when their teachers prompt them in class to understand, compare, and give their opinion on the readings. Additionally, incorporating students' voices as an essential component of the meaning construction that reading requires is vital for teachers to distribute power in the classroom (Castedo, 2007). Furthermore, Dysthe's (2000) findings evidence that in those cases where teaching is predominantly dialogical not only a deeper and more constructive learning is promoted, but also more opportunities are given to students who experience difficulties with academic reading and writing. Fernández, Uzuzquiza, and Laxalt (2004) obtained similar results in their action-research project where the teacher scaffolded the reading of a Sociology book chapter. The dialogue held in the classroom brought to the surface the challenges that this text presented to newcomers in the discipline and provided the professor with the necessary information to decide how to intervene. Therefore, students were made aware of the implicit debates that the text involved by talking about why the author cited other voices and whether these were in line with his argument or held opposite ideas. This type of intervention can help students that are less familiar with academic reading and writing to notice some important characteristics of Social Sciences texts.

Altogether, these studies support the idea that talking to prepare for subsequent readings and reading to talk allow students and professors to externalize their thoughts, making explicit some of the cognitive activities involved in reading epistemically. Therefore, through dialogicality, the epistemic function of literacy can be boosted. At the same time, when oral exchanges in the classroom between professor and students make noticeable the links between authors', students', and the professor's voices, the use of class-notes as a process can be promoted (Hartley & Davies, 1978; Isaacs, 1994). Nevertheless, no research has yet studied whether dialogical/monological teaching styles can be related to a process use of class note-taking as well as to the epistemic function of literacy practices. The present study, then, analyzes

how different teaching styles can relate to the way future History and Geography teachers use texts and class-notes to learn disciplinary contents.



## Research Design and Methods

The research design of this naturalistic study is in line with collective case studies which explore a topic or phenomenon in different cases assuming that they will help deepening understanding and improving theory for a broader series of cases (Stake, 1994). Despite the fact that a generalization of the results cannot be undertaken, these types of studies can give us tools to generate, reaffirm, or reformulate assumptions, theories, and hypothesis (Stake, 1998).

Our study took place in two public teacher education institutions located in Buenos Aires. (When the study was designed, it was inferred that, due to the location of the institutions, the students would show different socioeconomic levels. However, we found in the interviews and the observations that students assisting to both institutions did not show any differences in this regard. Therefore, this variable was not included in the analysis). Teacher education in Argentina is offered at post-secondary university and non-university related institutions, with around 80% of students enrolled in the latter (Aguerrondo, Vezub, & Clucellas, 2008). Compared to students who attend university institutions, students in non-university institutions are generally first generation students and come from lower income families (Cámpoli, 2004; Kisilevsky & Velada, 2002). Dropout rates in this teacher education system are quite high, with only one out of seven students graduating (Aguerrondo, et al., 2008).

The two institutions were selected based on the researchers' key informant contacts, which ensured the study's feasibility. In each institution, a course was chosen as a case, according to the following criteria: a) the courses subject area had to belong to the Social Sciences and be related to the discipline the pre-service teachers were studying to teach in the future, and b) they had to have contrasting uses of reading by the teacher in its classes, according to information provided by the key informants.

Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews, class observations, and course materials (including syllabi, bibliographies, and reading guides) were collected. First, we interviewed both professors. Julia (Professors' and students' names were changed to ensure confidentiality) taught a Geography course entitled "Spatial and temporal perspectives of America and Argentina" and Sebastian was the professor of "Contemporary History." Then, two non-participatory class observations were conducted. A preliminary analysis of observations and the interviews was used to design the questionnaire for students' interviews. The convenience sample was defined by asking each professor to point out one high- and one low-performance student according to their own criteria and course grades. All four of the students accepted to collaborate with the research. Finally, to triangulate data sources, course materials were gathered.

The data collection process took place at the end of the second semester in both of these annual courses in order to ensure that professors could select students for the interviews based on their high or low course performance, and to allow students to express their ideas about the uses of reading and writing after attending class for an extended period of time. Class observations and interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were completed with field research notes based on the observed non-verbal behavior. The analysis was done taking into account the broad objective of exploratory studies: to produce an understanding of the participants' perspectives and to look for relevant and/or new categories for later investigation (Maxwell, 2005). Tied to this rationale, and using a qualitative inductive categorization process, we looked for differences and similarities in the purposes and uses of texts – expected and/or done by teachers and students – as well as the purposes and uses of note taking. The emerging

categories were triangulated between the different data sources (professors' and students' interviews, observations and course materials) to reach a deeper insight in the analysis.

## Analysis of Results

In the data analyzed, the way students used their class notes and the amount and use of readings they did seemed to be related to how teachers included disciplinary texts in their classes.

Interviews and observations showed that Julia's teaching style was predominantly monological. This factor was identified by students as a reason for their small amount of reading and how they used their class-notes as a final material to study. In contrast, information collected in Sebastian's History course revealed that he taught predominantly with a dialogical teaching style. Dialogicality in text-centered discussions prompted students to read more and to relate what they read with their class-notes. In the following sections, we analyze how teaching styles, reading practices, and the use of class-notes are related in a particular manner in each case.

### Case 1: Monological Teaching Style

The first-year course "Spatial and temporal perspectives of America and Argentina" belonged to a teacher education degree in Geography. The course syllabus included four thematic units, two of them related to Geography contents, and the rest of them to History. The data analyzed below were gathered during the last History unit of the syllabus: "Discovery, conquest, and administration of America".

The interview with Julia, the course professor, showed a contrast between what she expected from her students' reading practices and what they claimed to actually do. Julia assumed that the role of reading in her class was the following:

*Julia: General bibliography is there to be consulted at any point of the year. Then, as I say "OK, we are starting unit one," students have a minimum of two books per unit to read. Then, I normally explain. Students, based on what they read in the bibliography, ask questions, ask for clarification, we confront ideas, or we discuss them.*

As shown in the previous excerpt, Julia expected students to read the bibliography mainly on their own initiative. She also defined reading as something that will let students appreciate different perspectives on the content, which at the time would allow avoiding dogmatic postures through class discussion and confrontation of different interpretations:

*Interviewer: What is the purpose of having students reading all these different authors, all these different perspectives that you told me about?*

*Julia: I think that, in first place, since no one has the science or the knowledge, the monopoly of the truth, since no one knows everything; it is good that different types of knowledge and focuses complement each other. You realize that this, perhaps, it is the same fact but that you haven't looked at it from that perspective that the author presents. And, perhaps, although in some aspects I could dissent with the other, I can also find some observations of the author that are pertinent, that I am not actually that far away from what the author says as I thought. If them [the students], if you [as a teacher], on the one hand, live it with certain openness and try to show them that, well, in that way we are helping students not to be so dogmatic. Aren't we?*

In the interviews and observation transcriptions, non-verbal data registered by the researcher is included between brackets “[ ]”, as well as any other information that the researcher considers necessary to facilitate readers’ interpretation. Ellipsis between brackets indicates parts of the recording that could not be transcribed due to ambient noise or superposition of voices.

Julia posited that disciplinary texts were a source of information and, besides, she referred to them as devices that allowed students to contrast and reflect on different perspectives on what was being studied. But surprisingly, what we could see as the recognition of the epistemic potential of reading in Julia’s discourse did not reflect at all on the amount of reading both of her students claimed to have done during the course. Indeed, these students stated that throughout the whole year, they only read between 50 and 60 pages out of the 237 that appeared as compulsory reading in the course syllabus (which also included three other reference books). Additionally, out of the 50 and 60 pages that the students declared to have read, they affirmed to have studied only between 20 and 30 pages.

Julia’s students, Amanda and Sara, stated that this lack of reading was, in part, due to the number of classes cancelled because of an extended winter break followed by an illness license (an illness license occurs when a professor is sick so he takes a leave for a period of time). Julia had to take (both periods together added up to about two months without classes). Yet, according to both students, during the rest of the year they did not read the bibliography either. Therefore, the lack of reading could not be directly attributed to class cancelation but mostly to what the following excerpts of interviews illustrate:

Amanda: *Imagine that we have this amount of class-notes [with a hand gesture indicates a great amount], because she does not indicate you or bring you photocopies [of the book’s chapters in the syllabus], the only thing I bought was a map of Argentina and a map of America... Then the class, she, with a map hanging there in the classroom and her pointer, gives us the lecture.*

Sara also mentioned similar reasons when she explained why she did not read the material specified as compulsory reading in the syllabus:

Sara: *I had to read some documents that she [Julia] gave us, some photocopies, but since she gives us everything, I mean, with her we have a four-hour class and in the four hours that we have with her is like you don’t need to read everything because she tells you everything, everything, everything, I don’t know how to explain you, she doesn’t give you much to read but she teaches you a lot in her lectures.*

Students found Julia’s lecture, that is, her oral explanation of the contents, as the central component of this course. Both students maintained that they did not need to read the bibliography because they used their class-notes to study.

Moreover, students’ lack of reading could also be explained by how students perceived the professor and how readings were not included in class. Julia seemed to be perceived by Amanda and Sara as the expert teacher in the subject and, linked to that, as a privileged source of knowledge. This is why the information offered in lectures, along with the professor’s interpretation of it, was considered enough by the students to learn course-content. Additionally, since reading was not explicitly included in teaching as an essential practice to learn, Amanda and Sara did not find it necessary to read bibliographical sources to construct meanings by themselves and negotiate them with Julia, as both students’ interviews transcripts show:

Amanda: *[...] even seeing that the teacher comes only with a pointer to give you the lesson, without needing a book, eh..., it surprises you that she knows, plus she gives you*

*specific information that she studied for sure, and she knows it, she never gives you a piece of data that if you look for it in a map is not going to be there or is going to be wrong.*

*Interviewer: And that, eh..., which one would be the source of that information that the professor gives you?*

*Amanda: Well..., she studies on her own, what she has been learning all this time, what she learned on her own, through books, she reads a lot, she instructs herself constantly...*

*Interviewer: How did you know that what she said was the only possible interpretation?*

*Sara: I suppose that it was the way in which she talked to us, it was like we all felt "ohhhh," do you get it?*

*Interviewer: As if you were in love with her teaching?*

*Sara: Exactly, I think everybody in class felt that way about her... And she gave us so much [information] that we used to say why, I don't know, go looking for information somewhere else, you know?*

The previous transcriptions illustrate how this situation could hinder students' access to the ways of understanding and making meaning of disciplinary academic texts. Since they did not feel reading as something essential, their chances to learn the ways of reading and understanding in the specific field of knowledge that they would be teaching in the future seemed to be diminished.

At the same time, the way the professor did or did not make reading indispensable for students (such as talking with students about texts and reading in the classroom) appeared to influence other less visible learning practices such as the way students used their class-notes to study. As a matter of fact, since Amanda and Sara did not read disciplinary texts, they tried to compensate by registering in their class-notes as much information as they were able to. The next interview fragments evidence the difficulties that these students found in relation to this issue:

*Interviewer: When I observed the class, sometimes many students, or sometimes only a few, or no one was taking notes. What defines when you take notes or not on what the teacher is saying?*

*Amanda: And..., what you consider is the essential idea, and something that if you don't know, when you have to explain it, it is going to make the topic incomplete. That's personal, depends on every person, taking notes is personal, sometimes it happens that I don't understand the notes that a classmate took, and my notes sometimes say exactly the same but with different words and I do understand them.*

*Interviewer: And what do you think that happens if you do not realize what is important and what not when you are taking notes?*

*Amanda: Well..., in Julia's classes... you miss a class, if you cannot get the main ideas, you cannot understand what she is explaining, you miss a class and you miss a whole unit, because she has explained us one unit in two classes, in two different Wednesdays. Then if you don't take notes in a class..., you have half of the unit empty, and even more when you have no photocopies [of texts in the bibliography]. Then, no matter what, you have to be able to get what she is talking about, the main ideas, which are going to help you to study.*

*Interviewer: How did you realize what was important, and what not, to take notes?*

*Sara: Well..., for example, I think that all she said was important, let's say, it's like..., when I take notes I want to write down everything, because maybe some guys just writing words can later remember, but not me, so I wanted to take notes of everything, everything,*

*everything, and that was when I used to get blocked because you cannot write down everything, at some point you miss something, and well...*

As it can be observed, the strategies these students claimed to use were different. Amanda wrote down only what she considered essential information, although, she did not seem to realize what criteria she should use to prioritize information offered in the lecture. Sara, on the other hand, acknowledging that it was difficult for her to remember big chunks of information based on short notes, used to write down as much as she could. However, due to differences between the speed of oral and written discourses (Boch & Piolat, 2005), this strategy led her to omit part of what was heard. Despite the difficulties that each student mentioned about note-taking, both of them showed that the lack of reading seemed to magnify the intrinsic challenge of taking notes (Piolat, et al., 2005). As a matter of fact, since Amanda and Sara almost exclusively studied from their class-notes, relevant information that could be omitted in their writing would probably not be later completed, corrected, or confronted with disciplinary texts information.

Data gathered during class observation enriched what was mentioned by the professor and the students about reading uses in this course and how these related to students' use of class-notes. The following is an excerpt of a class centered on the historical thematic unit of this course for which students declared using part of the small amount of bibliography they read. In this fragment, Julia passed around a book to show an image that illustrated her explanation but did not ask her students to elaborate any meaning from it to share with others. In addition, she read aloud and interpreted some historical documents (primary sources) without asking and sometimes even obstructing students' participation in the activity. Furthermore, none of the historical documents read by Julia were included in the dossier they had to purchase for the class:

[Julia pulls out a book from her briefcase and shows it to the class]

Julia: *The seal had the face, in the same width and length, let's say, of the two monarchs, to make it clear that there was a balance of power between Castile and Aragon. Do you have this page? It's page 33, the page that has the Kings' signature.*

During class observations, students were distinguished using numbers, according to their location in the classroom. In this way, and due to the fact that there were no more than 20 students, it was possible to identify them. The letter "S" followed by a number responds to that classification.

S12: *Not in our dossier.* [The dossier is a set of copies of historical primary source documents that Julia asked students to acquire].

Julia: [...] *It's in page 36.*

S9: *No. We only have until page 29* [in the dossier].

Julia: *Ah, OK...* [Julia shows the book that has an iconic representation of the Queen and the King] *Let's see... there you can see Doña Isabel and Don Fernando...* [Some students laugh while others take notes.]

[Julia keeps on talking about the monarchs' physical appearance].

Julia: *OK... Instead, the grandson of Carlos of Augsburg started to sign with his name, uh? It reads "Carlos" here, and here there was one filigree that if we analyze it from the point of view of graphology, the personality of Carlos of Augsburg would be very interesting.* [Julia gives the book to S1, so she can look at the image and pass it around. Students look at the book, and while some of them only look at that page, others browse some other pages. When they pass it around, they comment with each other things that are inaudible. Julia keeps on talking]

Julia: *So, well, there you can see the importance of this quote [she sits down in her desk and looks up at something in the book she passed around before]. Let's see if some small documents can help you, and then I am going to give you a short activity... Look at America, Felipe's II will, don't forget the catholic Queen and King's great-grandson, a boy that..., I don't know if you have this page [in the dossier], from 30 to 35...*

S8: *No...*

Julia: *OK, very good. [Julia starts reading aloud from the book] "And because the Castile and India Kingdoms belong to the same crown and their laws and government procedures must be, if possible, similar; the members of our Council will try that the laws and the institution ordered in favor of those States behave to the style and order by which Castile and Leon kingdoms are governed as long as the diversity and differences of these lands and people allow it." [Julia stops reading and looks at the students.] There it is, this is a short piece but it has to be good [for the students to interpret]. Then, what are they saying here? How should European or American institutions behave compared to those that [...]? It is very clear what this book says.*

S7: *A reflection...*

Julia: *Exactly, as long as it is possible, only if there was a very different issue or a very important problem, try for it to be normal [...] OK, another one [she starts reading the book again] "Real Warrant to the House of Hiring's Accountant, Juan López de Recalde, to get into prompt and secret terms with Juan Díaz de Solís, since he will discover 1800 leagues that belong to the Castile reign, [stops reading and looks at the class], it was the expedition that was going to weigh anchor in 1515, [continues reading] "Given that in Mansilla, November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1514 [...]" [stops reading] And the last one, [starts reading] "Real Warrant of the Sevilla Assistant to get informed about the fact that certain natives from the Río de la Plata, who are in some monasteries, want to go back to their land with Don Pedro de Mendoza, to inform that if they want to do it, they can do it. Mané, January 9, 1535." [Julia stops reading aloud and closes the book.] These natives had been taken by the Gaboto expedition, eh? Now you can see clearly why these natives want to go back, and they could do that by going back with Don Pedro de Mendoza expedition. OK, did you understand? Is it more or less clear? [Julia does not allow any time for students to answer and keeps on going.] OK, OK, then. We are going to have a small break, eh? And then we continue, after the break. [Students close their binders and stand up to leave the classroom.]*

The previous excerpt shows how Julia, despite bringing a book into the classroom and reading aloud course bibliography, set a passive role for her students in the construction of meanings from texts. First, when she provided the book to the class she did not ask students to read or elaborate any interpretation about it. Students' comments were not taken into account by Julia, and students' dialogues got lost in the anonymity of a background noise. Therefore, an activity that had to do with reading and interacting with books ended up in this case merely endorsing the professor's speech.

Second, Julia read aloud documents that the students did not have in their dossier. Thus, students were not given the opportunity to go back to the readings in order to elaborate their own reflections on what was explained in class. And students were not able to do this later, since during the class observed Julia did not offer them a copy of the materials, and no student asked for one either. Furthermore, after finishing reading aloud the excerpts, Julia offered little or no time to discuss interpretations of the texts, and immediately provided her own interpretation.

Altogether, the analysis of Case 1 shows that Julia's prevalent style of teaching is monological. Opposite to this, Case 2 presented in the following section illustrates how a dialogical teaching style can enhance the interaction between reading, talking and note-taking (Dysthe, 1996).

## Case 2: Dialogic Teaching Style

In this section we analyze data gathered about the “Contemporary History” course. The syllabus included four thematic units regarding the beginnings of capitalism at the end of the XVII century and the historical processes that led to the bourgeois crisis during the interwar period (1914-1945). The following data was collected during the instruction of the last unit called “Capitalism and bourgeois society crisis” and it showed a different use of reading and class note-taking than the one found in Case 1. According to Sebastian, the professor, course contents were directly linked to comprehensive reading of disciplinary texts, and, therefore, his objective was to teach his students how to read texts written by historians. In his own words:

Sebastian: *Basically, the activity is based on bibliography. They have specific texts from certain historians and they read them [...]. There is in-class reading, whether it be to analyze [primary] sources in some cases. I do not work that much with sources; I work with very few sources because I aim at comprehensive reading of texts written by historians.*

In addition, Sebastian claimed that the reason for including different reading activities in his classes was related with students’ needing to learn how to interpret disciplinary texts, as well as with his own experience on how to encourage that kind of learning:

Sebastian: *Because I am working on how to teach History, in Social Sciences..., one is looking for different strategies based on the objectives that you set yourself: how to understand the text..., how to understand the historical process departing from the elements given by the text. Taking in the fact that you have to defend and capture the author’s arguments in a discussion, this was, for example, going to show them how to identify the arguments that the author gives. In one way, from my experience, [...] this allows the student to develop how to search what the author wants, for example, what is the author’s explanation, what are his or her arguments. If you just tell them, OK, study this text, read this text to see what the author says, it is harder for them.*

Significantly, the students who were interviewed, Silvia and Martin, stated that they did read all or almost all the compulsory bibliography, and that the interaction between what they read and Sebastian’s orientations (the in-class debates he prompted between peers, the reading in pairs he asked them to do, as well as some reading guides he provided) were what allowed them to understand and re-interpret the course contents based on readings:

Silvia: *It was good, because we read and in class we worked what we read, then it is like to close up a little bit what we had read, yeah, I don’t know..., if we didn’t understand something, it was like you ended up understanding it in class because it was more practical, the class was not so theoretical like the professor lecturing what we had to read for that day for those who did not read, no, we always ended up doing an integrative activity related to the readings, then..., it is a way of wrapping it up or finishing understanding or understanding what you haven’t understood or didn’t get before.*

Martin: *I come [to class] with the reading, I come..., they jump from topic to topic and I am going to take part [talk or ask questions] in what I did not understand, or perhaps I understood something in some way and they tell me “no, you read it in the wrong way,” because of the two-way thing [feed-back].*

Interviewer: *OK, and when you do not read? When you cannot do the reading..., what happens?*



Martin: *I take notes, I write down everything, so later I can go back and check with the reading.*

As it can be seen, in this instructional scenario, reading texts was incorporated in class as an activity intertwined with learning disciplinary contents. Therefore, reading functioned as an epistemic tool to learn how to understand historical processes. While in Case 1 the class was the main source of information, in this case the class seemed more of a *heuristic space* in which the construction of knowledge happened as the result of the interactions between different voices (the professor's, the students' and the authors' ones).

Note-taking in Case 2 also acquired a different purpose and use than in Case 1: because of the explicit link between what was talked about in class and the bibliography, students claimed to use their class-notes to resignify, organize, and assign different levels of relevance to the information provided in texts:

Silvia: *I always like to listen to what professors say because later, when you finish reading the texts [...] you say "ah, now I get it", and when you go back and read you say "no, I did not get it" [...] I always write down everything [...]. Because I know what the professor said, then based on that, I see what he said to be more important, each person has a way of summarizing. And each person takes as important different things, isn't it?*

Interviewer: *What did you have difficulties with? What did you considered hard to do?*

Martin: *I think that understanding the [author's] argument, I mean, if I read and I can understand how the author explained to me the historical process, but actually if there is an argument I still don't know if I can get it right, with some authors I may realize [the author's argument in the text], or what they [the authors] are striving for or what they want to tell me, and with other [authors], I can't.*

Interviewer: *Uhum. And... Do you think that the class helped you to understand that? Did it give you tools to identify that?*

Martin: *The whole class discussions thing that we did between an author and another one. [...] Another thing was, and, over all, what did Sebastian and the professor practitioner [who had taught them a few classes during the year] was providing us with reading guides of the texts, with the reading guides, you finally get it [understand the author's argument]... It is a great help to understand some texts, especially the Economic texts, with the reading guides I could, I could understand them.*

In the former interview excerpts, students stated that they could construct meaning about the contents in their discipline thanks to the interaction between readings, Sebastian's interventions (class discussions, reading guides, integrative activities on texts; among others) and the notes they took during class.

Data gathered during class observation was consistent with the aforementioned. There was an interaction pattern between professor and students that appeared several times during the class: the professor asked questions about some historical fact, process or period and students, while answering, consulted copies of the class bibliography and/or class-notes, or underlined texts appointed by the professor as relevant to the topic. The following class-observation transcript offers an example:

Sebastian: *[After entering the classroom and having introduced the observer to students, Sebastian leaves his briefcase in a chair and takes out from it some books and photocopies and puts them on his desk. Still standing, he addresses the class] Today's class is a block with the next one. We saw the Russian Revolution; we saw last class Nazism as*

*an answer. What we are going to see now is Nazism [...]. Today we will work in the causes of the emergence of Nazism. As a text points out, Parkers' one [...]. We take the text as a basis, but then we will work on different explanations.*

S4: *Casanova* [an author in the course bibliography that appears in the syllabus], *are we going to take him?*

Sebastian: *Yes, but later.*

[S4 writes down the professor's answer. All the rest of the students, except one, have on their desks a copy of what seem to be the syllabus or a list of bibliography, and they mark or underline some things on it.]

Sebastian: [...] *it is the passage of the servant to the free worker, but poverty makes them stay. The problem of the rural peasant is that he does not have anywhere to go. There were no urban centers close by to attract them.*

[All students take note, except S1. The professor keeps on talking about the rural peasants' topic during the fall of the Middle Ages. Then S4 interrupts Sebastian.]

S4: *Wasn't there a model? [...] because Casanova compares Spain, Italy and [...].*

Sebastian: *Casanova's article is written to analyze if it was the fascism or not [...] OK, now we are going to take that. [...] The union between the bourgeoisie and the rye, as the authors say. [...] The bourgeoisie makes an alliance with the Junkers sectors [...]. What happens after the German defeat in the First World War? And here we enter with the text of [inaudible name].*

[Some students take notes; others look at their texts' photocopies on their desk or take out other texts' copies from their bags. They start looking at them and passing pages. Almost all students have underlined or highlighted the readings on their desks.]

Sebastian: *Who read [inaudible author's name] text?*

[Four students claim having read it.]

Sebastian: *OK, who wants to be in charge? [Which one of the students wants to read aloud?]*

[S7 reads an excerpt of the text.]

Sebastian: *No, it's not that.*

[S3 reads aloud another excerpt and Sebastian nods affirmatively.]

Sebastian: *Let's see, what is the stab in the back?*

S1: *It's what Germans said afterwards.*

Sebastian: *And what is this? A discourse, or a fact?*

S3: *It's a discourse.*

Sebastian: *It is important to distinguish this. What do you think that discourse it's there for?*

S1: *To blame on someone.*

Sebastian: *OK, then it was not a defeat, but it was interpreted as one [...].*

The previous excerpt illustrates how the professor referred to the bibliography from the very beginning of the class and also how students asked about texts they had read beforehand. Even those who eventually participated during this class had on their desks highlighted or underlined texts. One of Sebastian's interventions consisted on formulating a question (*What happened after the German defeat in the First World War?*) and requesting students to read in class the author's text to answer it. The in-class dialogue that followed this request, took into account the readings done beforehand by some of the students (reading to talk). At the same time, Sebastian focused on certain characteristics of

meaning construction (for example, *And what is this? A discourse or a fact?* and *OK, then it was not a defeat, but it was interpreted as one*) that should be noticed to understand the topic (talking to read). In this way, in-class interactions in relation to texts oriented students' construction of meaning. Furthermore, Sebastian not only relied on what students had read outside class. Instead, he introduced *in-class reading* for *all* students to interpret the texts while scaffolding this practice, as the following observation transcription shows:

[Sebastian asks some students to look for Vincent's and Parker's texts and offers his copy just in case someone needs it. Then, he asks students to work in pairs. Four groups are formed. The professor asks to two of the groups to work with Parker's chapter and to the rest of the groups to work with Vincent's text. Sebastian addresses each group pointing them out a section where they have to start reading the text. Then, he anticipates that he will ask a question for everybody and that each group will answer it according to the text they are reading.]

Sebastian: *OK, the question is: What sectors supported Nazism and why? This is for everybody. It is the first paragraph; what criteria or what does the author focuses on to do the analysis? In Parker first paragraph, in Vincent at the end of the second page starting where it reads "it might have been necessary".*

[Students start reading. Some mark or underline the text. S2 writes in her binder while reading silently next to S1, with whom she is sharing the text's photocopy. Some whispers can be heard coming from groups in which one person reads aloud while the partner follows the reading silently. After eight minutes, some students start talking with their partners. Sebastian has been reading, sitting in his desk. When students start talking louder, he looks at the class and then gets up, gets closer to S5 and S6 group, who are still silent. He asks them what reading they had to work with. The students answer the professor but the answer is not audible. The professor takes the copies that students have and looks at the pages, flipping them. He points a part of the text to them and says "*here it is where he talks about that*". In the meantime, in another group, S7 and S8 write in their binders. Some part of their conversation is audible.]

S7: [Talking to her group's partner] *I do not completely get it, I mean, I understand what it says but is it referring exactly to reality?*

S8: [Looking at the copy.] *Let me see, no, I think that this is not here.* [S8 points at something in the text with the pen.]

S7: *Of course, it was not benefited by the republic [...].*

S8: *Sure, yeah.*

S7: [Reads a part of the text aloud.] *But I think that here it talks about the intellectuals...*

S8: [Keeps on reading aloud.]

[The activity in pairs continues. After approximately 20 minutes, Sebastian addresses the class.]

Sebastian: *OK, we are going to take advantage of the 25 minutes we have left.*

[The professor reads the question given before the reading started. Then he looks at S3 and S4.]

Sebastian: *Parker, what does he say?*

S4: *We saw how the inflation, how everything came down. Before and..., after the year 29.*

Sebastian: *But the economic fluctuations undermine. Why?*

S5: [Inaudible.]

S9: [Intervenes even though he is not part of the group the professor asked the question to.] *But it's more social what she [S5] says...*

Sebastian: [Interrupts addressing S9.] *But that is another author, Vincent. That is precisely what I want to emphasize.*

S7: *The [social] class changes...*

Sebastian: *OK [...]. Let's start by Vincent.*

S9: *The author says that the haute bourgeoisies had saved its own skin [...], here it says "saved its own skin" [...].*

Sebastian: *During what period?*

S9: *When the revolution failure...*

Sebastian: [Inaudible.]

S9: *OK, I was saying that with the inflation they had become richer and that their answer [...].*

Sebastian: *The haute bourgeoisie, votes for the Nazi party?*

S9: *It doesn't say anything here, but yeah, if they put money...*

S4: [Intervenes, even though belongs to the group that had Vincent's text.] *No, they did not vote [...]. They just finance it with the aim of repressing the workers movements, but they don't want them in power.*

Sebastian: *They keep on voting to the traditional parties, but finance it; and the petite bourgeoisie [asks looking at S7 and S8 group]?*

S8: *OK, it says that it is a way of coming out of this inflation.*

S7: *It does not come out benefited from the republic and starts to fluctuate.*

S8: *It has an ambivalent attitude. But here it says that the left could not co-opt them [...].*

Sebastian: *And, in this fluctuation, which one is the biggest fear of the petite bourgeoisie?*

S7: *Inflation, the haute bourgeoisie getting bigger...*

Sebastian: *Exactly, to the proletarianization.*

It is important to point out how the professor set a class activity that promoted the participation of all the students based on what was read in class. By asking them to read and discuss in pairs to answer a question, Sebastian made visible the divergences between the authors' perspectives. The fact that the professor gave a clear reading purpose made it easier for students to focus on what they had to pay attention to and understand. In addition, Sebastian circumscribed the reading to a specific excerpt. In this way, students did not spend too much time locating the relevant information in the chapter and thus were able to concentrate on interpreting the texts taking into account the questions posed in class.

Moreover, reading and discussing in pairs set students in an active and collaborative position in front of the disciplinary texts. Therefore, they were not just expecting to *receive* the *right* interpretation from the professor, but they were able to advance firstly on their own on the construction of meaning. In this way, the whole class activity as well as the dialogues among students and with the professor prompted a collaborative text interpretation. The joint work set by Sebastian allowed giving meaning to different authors' voices in relation to the disciplinary knowledge throughout the polyphony generated by students/professor interaction during the in-class reading and discussion activities. In this class, Sebastian's instruction was congruent with a dialogical teaching style.

In sum, given the differences found between Case 1 and 2, we can identify two ways in which professors included or not students' voices on readings in their classes. Each teaching styles seemed to not only affect the amount of bibliography students actually read, but also the way they used their class-notes to study, depending on the monological or dialogical strategies professors mainly used in their classes.

## Discussion

The previous analysis depicts two situations depending on whether dialogicality was encouraged through reading and talking about texts in the classroom. These opposite situations revealed polarized teaching styles which affected how students used reading and class-notes to study. These results can be useful to think about teaching and learning practices in higher education.

In Case 1, Julia's prevalent instructional strategies revealed a monological teaching style, in which lecturing took a central place, and teaching was often reduced to the mere transmission of information (Dysthe, 1996; Dubois, 2002; Wells, 2006). Talking about texts and reading to talk were not practised as knowledge transforming tools. Students reported that they did not see the purpose of reading the bibliography because their class-notes, based on the professor's oral exposition, were enough to study and pass this course. These results are consistent with the ones Ratekin, Simpson, Alvermann, and Dishner (1985) obtained more than two decades ago. Their study showed how students prioritized the teacher's voice as the most important source of information if there was not a clear link between course lectures and bibliography. It is worth noticing that lecturing as the main instructional strategy seems to continue, over time, to keep off students from reading more.

In addition, the possibility for students to actively construct meanings from texts seems to be scarce when teaching consists mostly of lectures. This situation can affect students' chances of appropriating the ways of talking and reading in the discipline they will teach in a near future, as they do not take account of the opportunity to enact and get feedback on these literacy practices. Furthermore, the lack of discussion and oral exchanges on readings in class can lead students to endorse the professor's authority as the knowledgeable one (Rockwell, 1982). This hinders the distribution of power in the classroom (Castedo, 2007), as well as students' opportunity to develop a critical stance on knowledge and texts. Along the same lines, this monological teaching style can also drive students to use their class-notes as a product (Hartley & Davies, 1978; Isaacs, 1994) when they are not explicitly stimulated to relate class-notes with other sources of information.

In the opposite extreme of the monological/dialogical continuum, Case 2 showed a different use of class-notes and reading. Sebastian, the professor, posed the need to read as a central component of his course and prompted students to learn how to interpret History texts *in class*. This is consistent with Guthrie (1996) and Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, and Afflerbach (1995) findings: when talking about readings is set by the professor as a regular in-class activity, students tend to read more.

Further, in his case the professor's role entailed other teaching strategies than just declaring his knowledge to students. Learning was not simply a synonym for paying attention to lectures. Instead, students were encouraged to participate in class expressing their understanding of texts in a heuristic space where the polyphony set between teachers', students', and authors'

voices constituted a privileged means to construct and negotiate disciplinary meanings. This polyphony, prompted by a *dialogical teaching style*, would flesh out the epistemic function of literacy practices (Wells, 1987, 1990b) and avoid mere knowledge telling (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). As a result, the potential agreement and conflict endorsed by the different voices could lead students (as well as professors) to reflect on and transform a text's meanings and knowledge. Accordingly, students intertwined their class-notes with the course readings. Thus, their notes were used as a *process* since these became a tool to resignify and differentiate between central and peripheral information in the bibliography when studying (Hartley & Davies, 1978; Isaacs, 1994). In this way, class-notes constituted an epistemic tool that favoured knowledge reconstruction and transformation (Castelló & Monereo, 2005).

Classroom interactions centered on disciplinary texts facilitated students' access to the ways of talking, reading and understanding in a specific area of knowledge. This access was achieved through several teaching strategies that prompted dialogicality: questions to guide in-class readings, class-discussions on certain texts, and professor's interventions. Altogether, the way bibliography was used in Case 2 required an active role from students which could foster a more critical stance on readings.

Overall, the analysis of both cases shows that the ways in which students read, write, and talk in class can be framed by the teaching style enacted by the professor. Different instructional practices can then facilitate or hinder constructive ways of learning, depending on how the class is set to scaffold or not how to read epistemically: for example, in our study, the class-time that each professor was willing to devote to discuss texts influenced not only the amount of reading students did outside the classroom, but also the role that class-notes played in relation to texts in their learning. Henceforth, our results support Dysthe's (1996) claim that the interaction of talking and writing increases dialogicality. It also further expands and develops the idea of the importance of interaction between the professor's and the students' voices not only when talking about students' writings but also when discussing assigned readings. As well, this study provides a thick description of the two ways in which professors deal with literacy tasks in their courses, as proposed by Carlino, Iglesia and Laxalt (2013). Case 1 illustrates the marginal or *sewed* place given to literacy, while Case 2 gives a detailed example of the *interweaving* of reading with disciplinary contents.

Although the results discussed above cannot be generalized they can be contrasted with studies done in other contexts, providing relevant information on how teaching styles can promote or hinder the arising of the epistemic and polyphonic use of reading and writing in and outside the classroom. Furthermore, we hope to contribute with literacy theories and research by providing useful categories of analysis for qualitative and quantitative studies that further analyze the impact of teaching styles on the way students read and use their class-notes.

Finally, if a common complain heard in higher education is that students do not read or do not understand what they read (Carlino, & Estienne, 2004; Carlino, 2005), studies as the one presented here are necessary to unveil the reasons why this happens and take action to revert this situation. This seems especially relevant in the case of pre-service teacher education: if only the professor's voice prevails in the classroom, how will future teachers learn how to construct and/or transform knowledge through reading and note-taking? It is here where understanding the common uses of reading and class-notes becomes imperative since this can help revealing how future teachers are learning what they will soon have to teach.

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