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Cours en ligne "Écriture de la recherche en Didactique des langues-cultures" (Online course "Research Writing in language and culture Didactics")
Chapitre 1: "Recherche et écriture de la recherche"
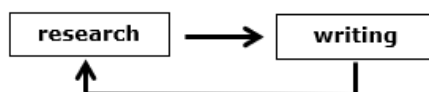
WRITING THE RESEARCH IN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE DIDACTICS

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH AND RESEARCH WRITING

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1. RESEARCH AND RESEARCH WRITING, TWO PROCESSES IN DIALOGICAL RELATIONSHIP[1]

The first fundamental idea to remember about the two processes of research and writing is that the latter is not only a "writing-product-of-research", i.e. the writing of a text that would collect the product of the research: what the researcher did, why, how, with what results and for what

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[1] To say that two elements, E1 and E2, have a dialogical relationship between them, means that E1 has effects on E2, but that in return E2 has effects on E1 (this is the phenomenon known as "recursivity"). For example, the teaching process (Tp) and the learning process (Lp) are in a necessary dialogical relationship because in the classroom a teacher... teaches to make people learn (Tp ➔ Lp), but to teach well, he has to observe the learning he has thus provoked to adapt his teaching (Lp ➔Tp). The "dialogic" is one of the seven modes of the complex teaching-learning relationship (see "Un 'méta-modèle' complexe : typologie des différentes relations logiques possibles entre deux bornes opposées" ("A complex 'meta-model': a typology of the different possible logical relationships between two opposing boundaries"), Document 1: "Relations complexes méthodologies d'enseignement/méthodologies d'apprentissage » ("Complex relationships between teaching methodologies and learning methodologies"), www.christianpuren.com/bibliothèque-de-travail/022/).

conclusions (which corresponds, in the above diagram, to the top arrow, from left to right). At the same time, it is a "writing-process-of-research",[2] that is to say a writing in the course of research that impels it, leads to its enrichment but also sometimes questions it (bottom arrow, from right to left, in the above diagram): it is because one is in the process of writing one's "research work", or "research writing", that one is in a position to write a report. [3]It is because one is writing one's "research paper" that one realizes that certain ideas are not yet clear, or that they are not relevant, or that it is impossible to validate them; or that they are not sufficiently hierarchical, linked, logically articulated to each other and the general problematic; or that those that have emerged from the experiments or the reading of new articles require that the problematization be reworked, or even that the research objectives be modified; etc.

It is a mistake, therefore, to wait until one has finished one's research before starting to write: writing the "point on existing literature" section[4], for example, can lead to modifying the experimental device; conversely, the analysis of the results of the experiments can lead to further reading, or even to reading books or articles that one has already read previously, which one will read differently by noting ideas that one had not noticed before. These recursions are not only unavoidable, but they are also beneficial to the research, and they are an indication that it is a real research with real results to be taken into account during the work. It is these recursions between the tasks of research and writing that make the work of research not of the order of procedure (its different tasks could be perfectly pre-programmed, and carried out one after the other), but of the order of *project*.

This recursivity between research writing and research should not be surprising, because it is valid for all intellectual work, of which learning is a part: pedagogues use the expression, very aptly, of "work writings" to designate those texts that students are asked to write to feed their learning process. Here, for example, is how Jacques Crinon and Hélène Eveleith present a dossier on "Les écrits de travail des élèves" in the March-April 2018 issue of *Les Cahiers pédagogiques* [5]magazine, No. 544:

> *At school, we don't always write much, because we are too often focused on producing a well-done piece of writing that will be evaluated or communicated. However, written language is also an intellectual tool, at the service of students' daily work. How can we get them to write more?*

The same is true of research writing, which is in itself a research instrument at the service of the researcher's daily work, work that includes all the cognitive operations and fundamental activities of the "project approach." I present them thus in a 2017 article[6]:

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[2] Hence the choice, in the French title of this course, of the expression "écriture de la recherche" and not "écriture de recherche".

[3] This expression traditionally refers to the written thesis.

[4] This "literature review" is often mistakenly called the "theoretical part", even though it includes, and is sometimes even essentially based on, concrete results of field experiments, or concrete proposals for intervention in the field...

[5] https://librairie.cahiers-pedagogiques.com/fr/revue/716-les-ecrits-de-travail-des-eleves.html.

[6] Cf. Puren 2017a: "Opérations cognitives (proaction, métacognition, régulation) et activités fonda-mentales (rétroactions, évaluations) de la démarche de projet" ("Cognitive operations (proaction, metacognition, regulation) and core activities (tasks, feedback, evaluations) of the project approach"). www.christianpuren.com/mes-travaux/2017a/.
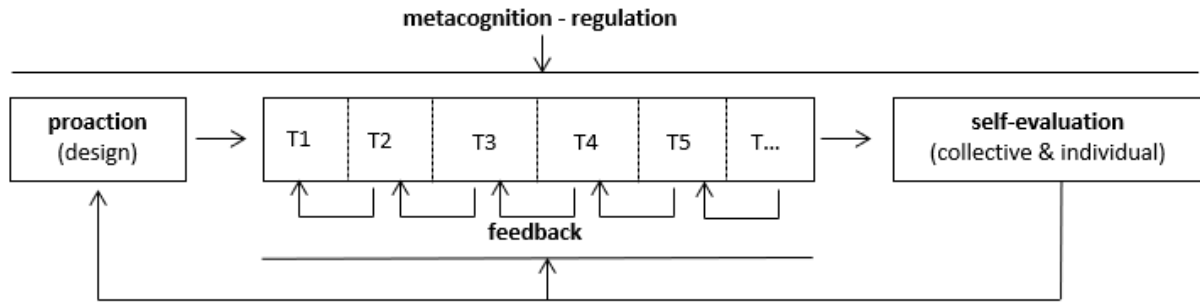
T = Task

The research begins by writing down the research project - its design. Subsequently, in the course of the research, the reflex that any student-researcher who finds himself or herself "blocked" or "lost" at some point must acquire is to take stock of the situation in writing. Writing research is not only writing the dissertation or the thesis, it is also of course the "work writings" that are the reading notes[7], but also these texts written for oneself to "put in black and white" one's problems, doubts, questions, decisions to modify or reorient one's research. Some student-researchers keep a "logbook" to force themselves to regularly and thoroughly carry out this other constituent operation of the project approach, "metacognition", or reflection on the action before, during and/or after its completion.

Writing is therefore an integral part of the research process: "research writing" is also "research writing"; "research work", when it refers to the printed dissertation or thesis, is also "research work", i.e. writing that not only presents the results of the research, but also bears witness to the work of writing the research and to the effects of this writing on the research: these two fundamental aspects are taken into account in the evaluation during the defense. This means that at certain moments, always during the presentation at the beginning of the oral defense, but sometimes also in the text itself, the student-researcher has every interest in pointing out to his interlocutors or readers in what way and why the progress of his research work has led him to modify his text in the course of writing (top arrow in the diagram at the beginning of this chapter 1, which I will repeat below)...
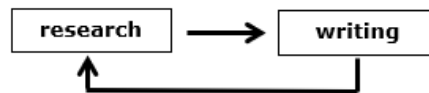
... or, conversely, how and why the progress of his writing has led him to modify his research (bottom arrow).

These remarks are always welcome during the oral presentation. However, they should be used sparingly in the text of one's research work, because the latter should not be a research narrative: the plan of a dissertation or a thesis should be conceived according to the requirements and constraints of *the presentation of* the results of the research, and not of *the process of carrying out* the research (*i.e.*, concretely, of its different phases and activities). I will come back to this below in relation to the research work plan.

2. RESEARCH WRITING AND REREADING, TWO PROCESSES IN A DIALOGICAL RELATIONSHIP
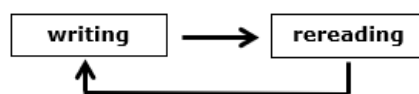
After this first idea of the *work **of** writing*, the second fundamental idea to be retained from this chapter is the necessity of *work **on** writing*.

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[7] I will address the issue of reading notes in Chapter 4.

- On the one hand, research papers - from their general plan to the sequence of ideas within their paragraphs - obey internal rules, "rules of writing", which have their own logic. Alongside the process of carrying out the research, which these works must report on, there is another process, a *process of presentation*: the writing of the research is not an account of the research, it corresponds to a global re-elaboration of the products of this research, whose requirements and constraints must be considered already during the course of the research: the two processes are also in a dialogical relationship:
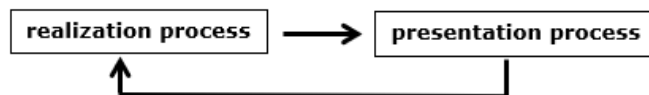
- On the other hand, since no one writes right or well from the first draft, the quality of the final writing depends mainly on the quality of the proofreading and rewriting. A quotation is always needed to illustrate this idea, that of Nicolas Boileau (1636-1711) in his Art poétique :

> *Make haste slowly, and without losing courage,*
> *Twenty times on the job put your work back,*
> *Polish it over and over, and repolish it,*
> *Sometimes add, and often delete.*

On the other hand, the conception that we now have of the writing-rewriting process, both in the field of learning and in that of research, is radically opposed to the two ideas that Boileau expressed in the preceding verses:

> *So before you write, learn to think.*
>
> *What is well understood is clearly stated,*
> *And the words to say it come easily.*

No: writing serves to learn to think, and it also serves to think: it allows one to identify the gaps, problems and defects in one's thinking; it forces one to clarify[8] and structure it.

The same is true, moreover, of action and thought. For the common sense, "it is necessary to think before acting", but Henri Wallon puts the two processes in recursivity: "the thought is born from the action to return to the action" (*From the act to the thought*, 1942); and Jacques Demorgon, in an even broader and more complex way, points out that "acting, thinking, expressing are continually interfering."[9]

3. TECHNIQUES FOR PROOFREADING YOUR RESEARCH PAPER

There are a number of proofreading techniques that are effective, at least for some student researchers. I will continue with the advice I gave to my readers in Chapter 2 of my course "Methodology of Research in Language and Culture Teaching", concerning what I called "revision

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[8] Within the limits set by the natural language we use in language-culture didactics (Cf. *La didactique des langues à la croisée des méthodes. Essai sur l'éclectisme*, chap. 2.2.2.8 "La méthode de la complexité (bpar Edgar Morin), 3rd ed. 2013, pp. 88-91, www.christianpuren.com/mes-travaux/1994e/), and by the complexity of its project, its objects and its tools (cf. "Concepts et conceptualisation en didactique des langues: pour une épistémologie disciplinaire", Chap. 3. "Didactique des langues étrangères et "sciences de l'imprécis", www.christianpuren.com/mes-travaux/1997b, pp. 5-7).

[9] « Langues et cultures comme objets et comme aventures : particulariser, généraliser, singulariser », ("Languages and cultures as objects and as adventures: particularizing, generalizing, singularizing"), Conférence inaugurale du 1er Colloque international de didactique comparée des langues-cultures, CEDICLEC, University of Saint-Etienne, February 17-18, 2005.

strategies"[10]. Everyone can imagine other strategies that better suit his or her strengths and weaknesses and cognitive profile, but what is certain is that one must reflect on one's own strategies, consciously implement them, and regularly evaluate them in order to refine them.

1) Activate the "spell check" and "grammar check" functions of your word processing software, and systematically check everything it underlines (only add to the dictionary for spelling or ignore for grammar when you are sure it is correct). When in doubt, if you don't have the time or the means to check, leave the words and passages as they are, underlined, to check them later.

2) Never do "global" proofreading, *i.e.* one that focuses on both content and form: it is impossible to concentrate on both aspects at the same time. It is impossible to focus on both aspects at the same time. Do differentiated proofreading, some targeting the form, others targeting the substance.

3) Allow one or more days (and if possible, even more, to do something other than your research) between each of your rereads. Do the opposite experiment (reread your text several times in a row), and you will probably find that the more you reread, the better your text looks. On the other hand, I often throw away in the morning ("*Delete*" key on the keyboard) entire passages of my articles that I wrote the night before...

4) When you have changed a part of a sentence or a single word, always check that the rest of the sentence does not need to be changed; do the same for paragraphs after a change, addition or deletion of a sentence, and between paragraphs when they have been reordered. When entire chapters are moved as part of a reorganization of your plan, it is the transitions from one to the next that need to be revised, and sometimes the partial introductions and conclusions.

5) Proofread "selectively" the points you know you have not mastered well (infinitive endings in -er or participial endings in -é(es) of verbs, punctuation, etc.). Make a list of your weak points, which will constitute your "*checklist*" of targeted corrections.

6) Get more people to proofread your work if you are unsure of your writing and style.

It is very important, even before you start writing, to be aware of the presentation guidelines you will have to follow: it is easier, and safer, to respect them from the beginning[11], than to have to redesign your entire research paper later. The question of formal presentation rules (page format, font style and size, presentation of long quotations and notes, spacing between different types of paragraphs, etc.) should therefore be among the very first questions to be addressed.

First, check to see *if* your University, Faculty or Department has published a document to this effect, or if your supervisor has written such a document. If not, Chapter 5 of this research writing course offers "Rules for the presentation of reports, dissertations and theses" which can provide a good basis for establishing, between your supervisor and yourself, the rules you will have to apply.

4. WRITING AND PROOFREADING OF READING NOTES

The "reading notes", in the title of this chapter 4, are those taken from the existing documents that one consults for one's research (intended to make what is often called "the point on the literature" *i.e.* the synthesis of articles and works dealing with one's research theme), on the official programs, on the textbooks, etc.

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[10] « Méthodologie de la recherche en didactique des langues-cultures », Chapitre 2 « Planifier et organiser sa recherche » ("Planning and Organizing Research"), pp. 4-5, www.christianpuren.com/cours-méthodologie-de-la-recherche-en-dlc/chapitre-2-planifier-et-organiser-sa-recherche/.

[11] And the "beginning" is as soon as you start typing lecture notes, or immediately after copying and pasting passages that you may later quote in your own research paper.

I have already dealt with this question in the online course "Methodology of research in didactics of languages and cultures", Chapter 5, "Implementing research methods", point 2.1. [12]Section 2.1 "The documentary method" (pp. 31-37). Documentary research", which is dealt with in the first sub-chapter of this chapter (2.2.1, pp. 32-35), provides the researcher with a number of texts to read. With the hypotheses and research questions that one has previously elaborated in one's "research problematic" well in mind (and, better still, in view) [13]You read each of them with a pencil in your hand (or with the keyboard under your fingers) in order to identify and note all the ideas and passages that seem to be related to your research problem. Do not hesitate to reread them two or three times to make sure that they are really interesting. You can then write down only the idea, or copy the exact quote if it seems very illustrative.

The digital processing of the texts themselves allows one to copy and paste very easily the interesting passages. It is a good idea to comment on them immediately (in the margins, with the "annotation" function if these comments are not very long) so as not to give in to the ease of this manipulation, which encourages us to accumulate notes; and so as to remember, when we reread them, why we chose these passages, as well as the reflections that they immediately suggested to us. This technique avoids copying and pasting too many long passages which we then don't know what to do with, which again take us a long time to reread selectively, and which sometimes we even wonder why we had retained them!... On issues of magazines, books or personal photocopies, I do a first reading during which I simply indicate, with a vertical bar in the margin, the passages that seem interesting. It is easy to erase some of these vertical bars when rereading, whereas it is impossible to remove the highlights.

You must take care to add the bibliographic references of the article or book and the page(s) at the top of each sheet or computer file. I have taken the habit, for my part, of repeating at the bottom of each idea or quotation from the text read these references in the "American system", which is very practical for this purpose because it is fast and allows you to move each idea or quotation from one document to another without fear of losing the indication of its source.

If one reads an article whose title is closely related to one's research theme, in particular where several of one's "specific key concepts" are to be found[14], and one sees nothing interesting in it, it is either that the author is very bad (but it is better not to start from this hypothesis, especially if it is a known author, or at least if the article has been published in a peer-reviewed journal....), or, more likely, that his or her own problematic is poorly developed, or not yet "mature" enough... On all these articles related to your research theme, it can be efficient to do an automatic search for each of the keywords of any research (your "generic concepts"), and even more for each of the "specific concepts", those particular to your research theme.

After a certain amount of back and forth between readings, notes and rereadings, when one realizes that no new interesting idea appears in the documents, that one has already encountered all these ideas, it is because one's research is, as we say, "saturated", that is to say that there is no longer much hope of finding something else, or at least that the cost of the rereadings in terms of time and energy would be too great compared to the benefit that could be expected.

The rereading of one's reading notes is just as necessary as the rereading of one's own writings, even if, of course, the objective is different, since it is a matter of analyzing them to feed and support one's research. With these rereadings, we move from "documentary research" (chapter 2.2.1 of the above-mentioned course) to "documentary analysis" (title of the following chapter 2.2.2, pp. 35-36).

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[12] www.christianpuren.com/cours-méthodologie-de-la-recherche-en-dlc/chapitre-5-mettre-en-oeuvre-ses-méthodes-de-recherche/.

[13] I will come back to the importance of keeping this issue in mind when reading documents.

[14] Cf. sub-chapter 2.2. of chapter 5 of "Méthodologie de la recherche", and the "Glossaire des mots clés de la recherche en Didactique des langues-cultures" ("Glossary of keywords in Research in Language-Culture Didactics"), www.christianpuren.com/bibliothèque-de-travail/047/.

For my own analysis of both my "reading notes" and my own "research data" (notes from classroom observations, results of personal experiments, responses to survey questionnaires and interviews, etc.), I use the same "qualitative method" as conceived by Huberman and Miles[15]: I describe it in subchapter 2.5.2 of this chapter 5 "Implementing one's research methods".

This method requires reading and rereading all these documents to see what "emerges" from them, the ideas that "emerge": this is the "condensation" operation defined by these authors (see chapter 2.5.2.1: they group together under this term the "selection, centring, simplification, abstraction and transformation" of the data collected).

It is necessary to space out these re-readings by a few days or even a few weeks: intellectual work certainly requires concentration, but at the same time duration and repetition. A researcher who was asked by his students what to do when you are stuck in a research project answered: "Let it brew more". We see the metaphor: it is that of the tea bag or herbal tea that is left to soak in hot water, so that it slowly diffuses its perfume. But there is no point in pressing it immediately into the water: it must already be imbibed... But to soak up documents, whatever they are, there is only one technique available: rereading them again and again...

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[15] HUBERMAN A. Michael, MILES MATTHEW B. 1991. *Analyse des données qualitatives* (*Analysis of qualitative data)*, trans. fr. De Boeck-Wesmael s.a. Brussels, 480 p.