

## WHY WRITING IS SO POOR?

In a recent *Interciencia* editorial, about the correct way to write, we dealt with the issue of the importance of the style and form in scientific literature. The structure of the different modalities of scientific publications and the importance of the adequate use of the language, whichever it might be, were perfunctorily presented. Notwithstanding, within a positive approach and with a constructive spirit, the question of why our youth and, because of its particular interest for us, researchers under training, write so poorly.

The weaknesses of primary and secondary schools inasmuch as language education are not the whole response. The generations born at the end of the last millenium have an immense lagoon in what corresponds to the language. The materials to which the members of these generations are largely exposed have not been, in many cases (and perhaps in the majority of cases) submitted to revision by duly trained personnel. Among the many virtues of the social networks, that of linguistic correctness is not included. With some exceptions, of course, the lingo used in social networks and other media present in the Internet does not represent the most polished language. On the contrary, to some it is simply abominable.

We are referring to the basic elements of writing, to the respect for correct orthography and the adequate usage of punctuation; to the elements of grammar and, particularly, to syntax. To the clear expression of your own ideas and those of others, as well as its connectivity, always facilitating the work and comprehension by the reader.

If the habit of reading is not exercised, particularly that of the masters of the language and the literature, there will be no case for the development of a coherent and quality writing capacity. During the last century, widespread alphabetization and the massive use of communication media brought with them a spectacular advance in the possibilities of access to information in all the population, as well as civic participation. Writing, until then reserved for the social and/or economical elites, has turned out to be a common asset.

The fact that such writing leaves much to be desired certainly does not mean that it is a defect of those social networks or communication media, neither is it a defect of the press that the news be written in a faulty language so many times. In any event, it is a problem of the lack of quality controls in the electronic media and of the deficient training of those who practice journalism. In any case, the result is a mediocre idiomatic quality, to which scientific literatures does not escape.

It is a felt need that higher education and, particularly, schools in the scientific disciplines deal with the problem and look for mechanisms to motivate the improvement of the use of language among its members. To this end it is not enough, as it could seem to be, to promote the habit of reading... of good reading. It is necessary as well to stimulate writing, because it is only by writing that one learns to write. With permanent exercise, reviewing in a conscious and careful manner what has been written is how one learns to do it. The establishment of groups to exchange the written material and to jointly and repeatedly revise and comment it should be encouraged. Needless to say, this should be everyday practice within research laboratories and no work should be sent for publication without being carefully revised.

To advocate for what appears to be against common practice at present times is difficult indeed. However, from the side of scientific publications there is a clear necessity to make sure that writing is improved. In the case of *Interciencia*, numerous papers arising from university theses are submitted to us. Regretfully, the eventual presence of teachers as coauthors, on occasion in great number, does not warrant that they have read and corrected the material. This should be the rule.

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