

EL DESARROLLO DE LA ALFABETIZACIÓN EN LOS LIBROS DE TEXTO DE INGLÉS EN LOS COLEGIOS DE PRIMARIA DE MADRID

LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN EFL TEXTBOOKS IN MADRID'S PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Lyndsay R. Buckingham

Universidad Pontificia de Comillas

lrbuckingham@comillas.edu

Mary Frances Litzler

Universidad de Alcalá

mf.litz@uah.es

ABSTRACT

Research indicates that Spanish schools tend to focus on literacy in a narrow sense, as in the mechanics of reading and writing with a focus on text at the word and sentence level. However, the idea of literacy on an international scale includes the ability to use reading and writing skills for a variety of activities with texts. This study seeks to examine whether four fourth grade textbooks for English as a Foreign Language used in Madrid take the more traditional approach to literacy or a broader one that involves the consideration of genre characteristics and work at the text level. A questionnaire was formulated to examine the reading and writing activities of the textbooks. The results suggest that the books present a more narrow view of the concept of literacy.

Key words: literacy, textbooks, English as a foreign language, primary education, bilingual education

RESUMEN

La literatura indica que en los colegios en España se entiende la palabra *literacy* como un concepto limitado a la mecánica de la lectoescritura, con un enfoque a nivel de palabras y frases (alfabetización), mientras a nivel internacional ese término incluye la habilidad de utilizar las destrezas de lectura y escritura para realizar una variedad de actividades con textos (literacidad). Esta investigación tiene como objetivo examinar si cuatro libros de texto de inglés para el cuarto curso de primaria en Madrid mantienen la visión tradicional de alfabetización, o si la amplían para considerar las características del género de texto y el trabajo a nivel de texto en línea con la literacidad. Para llevarla a cabo, se confeccionó un cuestionario para examinar las actividades de lectura y escritura de los libros. Los resultados sugieren que los libros toman una visión más reducida del concepto de literacidad.

Palabras clave: alfabetización, libros de texto, lengua inglesa, enseñanza primaria, enseñanza bilingüe

doi: 10.26378/rnlael%v%i332

Fecha de recepción: 1/09/2019
Fecha de aprobación: 14/11/2019

1. INTRODUCTION

The term “literacy” has received numerous definitions in a variety of fields from psychology to linguistics to economics. It has been considered a set of skills, a situated practice, a learning process, and the consumption of text (EFA Global Monitoring Report Team 2006). The view taken in this article is in line with the last of these notions in that different groups in society produce and use different genres and types of texts, which are situated within a broader social and political context (EFA Global Monitoring Report Team 2006). Literacy in this sense involves going beyond the mechanics of reading and writing to “the ability to use reading and writing skills in order to produce, understand, interpret and critically evaluate multimodal texts” (European Commission 2012: 13). This multimodality involves meaning communicated through different formats such as images, page layout, music and body language, among others (Cazden, Cope, Fairclough & Gee 1996). A plurality of text formats, languages and cultures are involved (New London Group 2000, as cited in Meyer, Coyle, Halbach, Schuck & Ting 2015), and indeed, new technologies offer a platform for different modalities and genres to emerge.

However, this evolution of the idea of literacy is not common to all cultures, and the development of literacy is not uniform around the world. Spain, the context of this study, has traditionally scored lower than average on tests such as PISA, which compare reading ability among different countries (Benítez Sastre et al. 2016). This indicator of students’ receptive skills is cause for concern and implies a need for improvement. Unfortunately, there are no data available regarding the level of students’ writing skills or their manipulation of multimodal texts. Nevertheless, as literacy is vital for social, economic and personal reasons (European Commission 2012), measures must be taken to improve citizens’ reading and writing abilities to their fullest and to consolidate pupils’ increased performance in these areas.

When addressing this concern for improving students’ literacy skills, many questions arise as to the reasons behind the relatively low international ranking of Spain, especially when considering the introduction of a foreign language, English, and the teaching of content in English. Even so, very few projects that focus on literacy development have been identified (Halbach & Candel Bormann 2019). The present analysis is part of a larger study on literacy development in primary schools in Madrid, Spain,¹ which attempts to identify the interpretations of literacy and related best practices in the fourth grade of primary school in Madrid, Spain. It focuses on the view and treatment of the concept of literacy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks, a fundamental component of any EFL course (Richards 2002), in order to determine the approach taken to improving pupils’ skills. The question is whether they take a narrow perspective of literacy, that is, one which views the concept as the basic mastery of reading and writing mechanics, or one that encompasses a wider view of literacy as an ongoing learning process to manipulate and produce different types of texts. It is assumed here that there is no distinction in the notion of literacy between first and second languages given the conceptualizations mentioned above.

2. THE CONCEPT OF LITERACY IN SPAIN

The term “literacy” has been traditionally translated to *alfabetización* or *lectoescritura* in Spanish (and to similar terms in Portuguese, French and German), though these terms describe a much narrower concept, i.e. learning the alphabet and learning to read and write letters and words (Cassany & Castellà 2010: 355). As can be deduced from the meaning of the terms traditionally employed in Spain, the development of *alfabetización* has tended to focus on the mechanics of reading and writing, and has been concentrated in the first and second years of primary school (Fernández & Halbach 2009). More recently there has been a push to adopt the term *literacidad* among Spanish speaking experts in order to avoid the limitations of the more traditional terms (Cassany & Castellà 2010; Gamboa, Muñoz & Vargas 2016; Iñesta Mena 2017), though this practice has not been taken up by teachers in schools.

If we take a narrow view and consider literacy to be simply the consumption of text, we can directly relate it to reading comprehension in either L1 or L2. As seen in PIRLS and PISA results, Spain’s young people have repeatedly scored near or under the average for the European Union in terms of reading comprehension ability, showing a slight decline (Benítez Sastre, et al. 2016: 6), though this is changing thanks to above average results on PIRLS 2016 (Mullis, O`Martin, Foy & Cooper 2017). Students are able to “read simple texts, retrieve explicit information, or make straightforward inferences, but they are not able to deal with longer or more complex texts and are unable to interpret what is explicitly stated in the text” (Benítez Sastre, et al. 2016: 6). Choi and Jerrim (2016) argue that this reading comprehension deficit already exists at the primary levels, even though it becomes more glaring at the secondary levels.

The 2016 PIRLS report (Mullis et al. 2017: 256) informs that schools in Spain spend an average 25% of school hours on language instruction, including reading, writing, speaking, literature and other language skills, which is only slightly lower than the international average (27%). Similarly, reading instruction, including reading across the curriculum is reported to account for an average of 16% of school hours, only slightly below the international average of 18%. Of course, it is not always the amount of time, but the approach taken, that is the key. It has been demonstrated that teaching styles in Spain are still based on the transmission of curricular content (language theory) rather than on constructivist approaches leading to communication of ideas (OECD 2014). Lorenzo (2016) argues that countries that focus learning through constructivist approaches demonstrate better reading competences, in part because they place less importance on metalinguistic knowledge. Indeed, Spanish EFL and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) textbooks focus on language accuracy rather than fluency or “more creative aspects such as reading for pleasure or creating personal texts” (Fernández & Halbach 2009: 53).

In the Spanish educational system, the processing of texts has traditionally relied on a bottom-up focus relating to word recognition, grammar and structure. The ELINET report claims that despite recent increases in project-based methodologies, there is a tendency to decontextualize language use at the pre-primary levels (Benítez Sastre et al. 2016). This has also been found to be the case in L2 in a recent analysis of textbooks used in the first two years of primary school in CLIL and ELT classrooms in Spain. The study found that the textbooks mainly focused on grammar and vocabulary as they were observed to work at word and sentence levels. Lessons were focused on gaining accuracy in reading and writing and the microskills involved, such as the mechanics of reading and writing, knowing the

letters and being able to produce them or blend them to read words (Fernández & Halbach 2009).

Performance gaps have also been found between Spanish children who are aware of summarizing and efficient reading strategies, though this gap is slightly smaller than the European average (Benítez Sastre et al. 2016). This suggests that only some pupils are using metacognitive strategies, and that they may not be using them as efficiently as in other countries. More recent results from PIRLS 2016 reveal that schools in Spain are working on skills and strategies such as comparing what pupils have read to experiences they have had and making predictions about what will happen next in a text (Mullis et al. 2017: 260).

Furthermore, the development of literacy arguably gains importance when considering students' learning through CLIL subjects, as is prominent in Spain. Indeed, discourse patterns change across cultures and these variations can be appreciated in both spoken and written genres (Gilmore 2015; Mickan 2017). Therefore, the intercultural element that is essential to CLIL presents both a difficulty and an opportunity, depending on one's perspective. In fact, teachers have identified the difficulty of teaching English from a Spanish literacy perspective, due in part to the fundamental differences between the two languages, such as the sound-grapheme correspondence in Spanish that is more unpredictable in English (Fernández & Halbach 2009). In this sense, they have reported a need for further training in the teaching and practice of literacy and oracy (Durán-Martínez & Beltrán-Llavador 2016: 83). At the same time, teachers have a clear opportunity to enrich their approaches to literacy through the application of foreign perspectives and techniques (Fernández & Halbach 2009). For these reasons and others, Meyer et al. (2015) suggests a pluriliteracies approach that involves more than one language, mode of communication and semiotic system, which is specifically useful in a CLIL environment.

The nature of literacy is fundamentally cognitive since it is based on the mental processes that allow a command of the language system, first in basic ways like phonology and later through more complex structures, including longer texts. Similarly, Cummins' (2000) idea of the initial acquisition of basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and the later development of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) is essential to the CLIL approach. Lorenzo (2016) suggests that the Spanish system fails when developing students' CALP, pointing to successful results in the PIRLS exam, which is mainly focused on narrative language, as compared to poor results on the PISA exam, which focuses on more expository, academic language. This is supported by the lack of focus on higher-order thinking skills such as interpreting or inferring meaning in primary level EFL and CLIL textbooks (Fernández & Halbach 2009). In fact, the results of PIRLS 2016 revealed that teachers ask their fourth grade pupils to determine an author's perspective less often than other skills and strategies for reading, such as identifying the main idea of what they have read or locating information in the text (Mullis et al. 2017: 259-260).

If pupils in Spain are to consolidate their improvement on tests such as PIRLS, they will need to improve their literacy skills in the broader sense of the word. The ELINET report (Benítez Sastre et al. 2016) claims that the PIRLS 2011 exam points to a number of skills that have been left unattended in primary levels, and that the PISA results point to a need for instruction in reading strategies. The authors of the ELINET report recommend spending more time on teaching reading in primary schools, and making more efficient use of the programs that are already in place to improve literacy skills among students (Benítez Sastre et al. 2016). Ruiz de Zarobe and Zenotz (2015) argue for metacognitive strategy training

to help students improve their reading comprehension skills. This is just one way to allow space for student reflection, dialogue and improvement throughout the learning process.

Familiarity with different text types, including their organization, typical wording and other conventions makes verbal participation possible in community social practices (Mickan 2017). In fact, there is argument in favor of detailed analysis of text patterns to reveal these structures and lexical use for students (Gilmore 2015; Meyer et al. 2015; Mickan 2017). In Spain, the average percentages of Spanish learners who are exposed to different types of both literary and informational texts once a week or more are at or above the international averages (Mullis et al. 2017: 270). However, averages for other genres have not been found, and exposure to a wide variety, including digital texts, would be ideal (Gamboa, Muñoz, & Vargas 2016). A text genre map that identifies the text types necessary for non-linguistic disciplines would aid in the planning for overall literacy development.

In other countries, such as Australia and Canada, a text-based focus for language education requires students to analyze and reconstruct texts from different disciplines as well as work with other techniques. The idea is moving from learning to read toward reading to learn (Lorenzo 2016). In the same line, Meyer et al. (2015) argues that placing language at the center of all learning is necessary to deeper learning, considering that progress in learning requires an increasing capacity of articulating understanding.

The integration of best practices, such as the communicative methodology, in both linguistic (native and foreign languages) and non-linguistic disciplines, would be beneficial, perhaps with the adoption of a document that defines a common approach toward language awareness across school subjects. The Common European Framework provides EFL teachers with a reliable set of descriptors to aid in evaluation, and this can and should also be used when evaluating students' native language in order to gain clarity of the level of linguistic competence achieved (Lorenzo 2016). There should also be a focus on formative and authentic assessment through the use of portfolios, frequent observation, group corrections, self-assessment and the measure of individual progress (Lorenzo 2016).

3. OBJECTIVES

Given that textbooks are a key component in most language programs (Richards 2002), this study examines literacy development as observed through four EFL textbooks used in the fourth grade of the primary level of education in the Autonomous Community of Madrid. It has been inspired by Fernández & Halbach (2009) in that the objective is to explore whether the narrow sense of the concept of literacy is still taken in textbooks written or adapted for the Spanish market ten years after that study was written. More specifically, the present paper examines the following questions:

- What interpretation of the concept of literacy is behind each textbook?
- How is literacy developed in the EFL textbooks?
- Can any differences in the approach to literacy be observed in the textbooks used in bilingual schools as compared to those in non-bilingual schools?

4. INSTRUMENT

As mentioned above, this study is part of a larger project to examine the development of literacy skills in the third and fourth grades of primary school in the Autonomous

Community of Madrid. The larger project involves a combination of survey research (Fernández Fernández 2018; Halbach & Candel Bormann 2019), and textbook analysis. For the present study, two members of the research team (the authors of this paper) first developed a series of questions for examining textbooks based on the selection of features that are indicative of *lectoescritura* and literacy by Fernández and Halbach (2009) (see Table I).

	Literacy in a narrow sense	Literacy in a broad sense
Preliminary aspects	Work focuses on letters	Work focuses on sounds
	The mechanical part is important - neat handwriting	The mechanical phase is just a "preliminary"
Reading	Work is on pedagogical texts	Pedagogical texts are complemented with text from various genres: poetry, tales, etc.
	Work on the text is aimed at extracting information, normally through closed questions	The text is worked on in relation with the topic of the unit; it is used as a starting point for other activities (e.g. writing a poem)
	The text is not worked on at the level of textual comprehension, solely on language issues	An efferent and aesthetic response is looked for
Writing	Focus is on the text	Focus is on the student / reader
	Accuracy is valued	The content of the writing is valued
	Students write to answer questions	Students write to communicate
	Focus is on vocabulary (at the word level)	The text is related to students' own experience
	Focus is on the product	Focus is on the process
	Correct models are imitated	Creativity is fostered
Beyond reading and writing	Closely linked to "language"	Interdisciplinary character: developed through other subjects too
	Literacy is worked on in the first years of schooling	Literacy is a skill developed throughout life
	Concept of "multiliteracies" is not generally known	Concept of "multiliteracies" is known and practiced

TABLE I. Comparison of literacy features adapted from Fernández & Halbach, 2009

They each then examined two randomly selected textbooks and later compared answers to clarify the different questionnaire items and ensure consistency in their analysis. After this process, which included consultation with other members of the research team, four textbooks used by school teachers in the region were analyzed using the final instrument (Table II). The entire process took approximately four months.

In Spain and in the Madrid region, a large variety of books is available, many from international publishers and others from local companies. The particular EFL textbooks were selected because they represent four major international publishing companies and were mentioned by a number of the respondents to the questionnaire in Fernández Fernández (2018). At the same time, two of the textbooks are used by bilingual schools and the other two are used by non-bilingual schools according to the survey results, thus enabling a

chance to determine potential differences between the two types of schools in the area. It should be noted that neither the authors of this study nor the research group received any incentive or benefit from the companies for selecting their books over others. The books examined here are the following:

- 1) *High Five 4*, Macmillan Publishers (bilingual schools)
- 2) *Ace! 4*, Oxford University Press (bilingual schools)
- 3) *Hopscotch 4*, Cengage Learning (non-bilingual schools)
- 4) *Kid's Box 4*, Cambridge University Press (non-bilingual schools)

	Question item
Reading	What genres are present in the textbook as a whole? <i>Narrative, factual description, recipes, biography, adverts, interviews, etc.</i>
	What is the purpose of the reading activity? <i>Introduction/reinforcement of grammar or vocabulary; subject content; reading as an activity to relate to one's life; encouragement of reading as a pleasurable activity.</i>
Writing	At what level are students producing and analyzing language? <i>Word level, sentence level or beyond sentence level.</i>
	What type(s) of linguistic scaffolding is provided? <i>Examples, selecting from options, matching, etc.</i>
	How meaningful is the language production? <i>Encourages creativity and originality, relates to student experience, relates to textbook situation</i>
	What type(s) of procedural scaffolding is provided? <i>Provision of models, explicit analysis of models, planning, reviewing</i>
	Does the activity involve the planning of language production and/or editing to make improvements?
Beyond reading and writing	Do the exercises relate to the students' other classes, and hence, their world beyond the English language?
	Do the textbook exercises and/or teacher's book promote the idea that literacy is a skill that is learned throughout life?
	Do the textbooks encourage the pupils to practice with other formats of expression such as Internet, dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc.?
	Are students encouraged to express themselves in different formats such as posters, collages, etc.?
	Are students encouraged to work with their language skills beyond the textbook, such as through Internet?

Table II. Questionnaire by authors used in the analysis of the textbooks

5. METHOD

The questionnaire was composed of several items meant to regard the units' overall content and the focus on literacy skills. First, the aspects related to reading were examined. The genres present in each textbook and their purpose were noted. The different exercises related to reading were then considered in order to determine whether the texts were designed to assist pupils in learning about grammar and vocabulary or whether reading was encouraged as an activity that involved students' experience in the world. Second, the activities related to writing were examined and categorized as being at the word, sentence

or paragraph level. They were also read to determine whether they involved rote language practice or if they allowed for pupils to express themselves and their own life experience in a meaningful way. In addition, the existence of scaffolding, or assistance in building up to a larger task be it linguistic or procedural, was examined. For example, extensive writing exercises were examined to see if the textbooks promote the notion that writing is a process that involves planning, editing and reviewing. The last part of the questionnaire involved examining the books to determine if the exercises foster the notions that literacy goes beyond language work into other areas of study and that it is developed throughout life. As such, the textbooks were examined to see if they encourage work with other written formats such as dictionaries and digital sources.

The two researchers examined the pupil's book, activity book and teacher's book for each of the four titles using the questionnaire. Particular attention was paid to the reading and writing exercises in unit 5 of each pupil's book because this unit was considered representative of the others; it followed the same overall structure and was not an introductory, project or review unit. The extra components from the publishers for the textbooks were not examined given the large volume of material already available.

6. RESULTS

This presentation of the results first discusses the approach to literacy as described in the teacher's books, and then continues with the textbooks themselves.

6.1 Interpretations of literacy in teacher's books

The introductory section to each of the teacher's books was read to determine whether the word *literacy* appeared and how the concept was described when it was mentioned. In the absence of the word in question, the explanations for the reading and writing exercises in this same section were examined to determine the interpretation of literacy held by the authors. It was found that two of the teacher's books mention the actual term, while three of them provide descriptions related to different aspects of the concept. The teacher's book closest in line with the broader definition of literacy discussed above is High Five. The textbook is reported to have a literacy spread in each unit "designed to help pupils to understand, respond to texts and to reflect on them" (Ramsden 2014: 20). It involves the "analysis of characteristics such as author purpose, the reader and the informative content of a text" (Ramsden 2014: 20), which helps children to prepare for writing. The teacher's book for Ace! 4 also mentions the term and describes aspects suggestive of a broader interpretation of this concept, such as students' familiarity with stories including their "narrative conventions"; a focus on stories in the textbook "further familiarity and understanding of the functions of text" (Bilsborough & Bilsborough 2012: 6). In terms of writing, the teacher's book highlights the use of "clear models" (Bilsborough & Bilsborough 2012: 7) to enable children to produce their own writing samples.

The teacher's book for Hopscotch 4 does not mention the term "literacy" but does refer to "teaching pupils the conventions of writing" (Cook & Hill 2017: 4) as one of the objectives in the textbook, which is focused on developing pupils' language skills so that they can have "both accurate and fluent communication" (Cook & Hill 2017: 4). A "Writing Time" section on spread C of each unit provides a model for writing with an activity that "prepares the pupils for producing their own piece of writing" that is "always guided and

supported" (Cook & Hill 2017: 9). Like this textbook, Kids' Box 4 makes no reference to the word "literacy" but language is said to be "introduced in context" with the chance for learners to "personalize" it (Frino & Williams 2017: 6). There is also a "strong focus on pronunciation" (Frino & Williams 2017: 11). Both of these descriptions appear to be somewhat in line with the broader conceptualization of literacy described above. However, further examination of the pupil's books discussed below, reveals that this is not always the case.

6.2 Literacy as observed in the textbooks

At this point in their education, pupils are familiar with the letters and handwriting and are now working towards improvement of their reading and writing skills in the English language. For this reason, the textbooks contain no work on the mechanical side of these activities. Instead, they have exercises to increase ability in associating sounds and spelling along with the pronunciation of English, given the fact that pupils are learning a foreign language. They also have an abundance of audio recordings from the start of each unit; pupils consistently read the corresponding text as they listen to the recording so that they can associate the spoken word with the written form. At the same time, new vocabulary items tend to be presented in a context that involves text and pictures to facilitate comprehension.

6.2.1 Texts and reading

The texts found in all four textbooks appear to have been written specifically for the textbooks, and have not been reproduced from other sources. Nevertheless, the teacher's book to High Five mentions "fun and motivating texts from the real world" (Ramsden & Shaw 2014: 18) and the teacher's book to Hopscotch indicates that reading passages are "inspired by National Geographic" (Cook & Hill 2017: 8). Narratives involving children are included in all the books and, in fact, the storylines in High Five and Kid's Box continue throughout the different units. The characters introduced in an initial story in Ace! and Hopscotch appear throughout the other units even if they do not take part in the actual stories. Songs are also present in all four textbooks. Authentic works of literature are not found in the books except for a short extract from *The Owl and the Pussycat*, found in Kid's Box.

After literary texts, the genre found most often in these textbooks is factual description, similar to those found in a content subject textbook, an encyclopedia or the Internet. In fact, all four textbooks include lessons in each unit related to other subject areas and to culture. Recipes, another type of factual text, are also found in all four books. Finally, the High Five literacy spread mentioned above introduces pupils to a few characteristics of a wider range of texts, including biographies and autobiographies, myths, adverts, acrostic poems, newspaper articles and interviews, and travel brochures, in addition to the genres already indicated.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the texts are used for different purposes in the books. The stories and songs that pupils read are clearly used as support for language work. They include examples of grammatical structures and vocabulary that are introduced before or afterwards and that pupils practice in a more focused way. In some cases, the structure is actually highlighted in bold in the story (as in Hopscotch), or it is listed at the bottom of the page for the teacher and pupils to see easily (Ace! and High Five), both

strategies that reinforce the linguistic focus of these texts. Pupils can also be asked to find words and grammatical structures in the text or to select the correct word of two for a sentence. After reading the stories, all four textbooks instruct the children to act them out, a strategy to reinforce language learning but also one related to comprehension. The activity books have exercises that involve matching sentence halves and/or fill-in-the blank sentences and dialogues with or without a selection of words in a word bank, mainly aimed at practicing language.

The texts used for cultural and cross-curricular topics, typically located in the second half of the units in all four textbooks, show a shift towards vocabulary and meaning. When comprehension questions are part of the reading exercise, they involve looking for a short answer in the text, selecting true sentences from a list or fitting the correct word from a word bank into a summary paragraph. Nevertheless, the questions are often very similar to the actual wording of the original text, so there is little challenge in terms of text comprehension. In other words, the exercises remain for the most part within the lower order thinking skill of understanding. It should be noted, however, that these readings are often used as the basis for more extensive writing, as explained below. The activity book exercises corresponding to these sections tend to reinforce the learning of vocabulary, with exercises involving matching and the reordering of sentences.

Despite these different uses of texts in the textbooks, it is worthy to note that the purpose of reading tends to be more instrumental than pleasurable or meaningful, particularly in the case of stories. Pupils are not given a meaningful purpose for reading, as evidenced in the instructions listed prior to the readings throughout the four books. Examples are "Listen and read" (Ace) and "Listen to the recording and read the story" (Hopscotch).

Pupils are, however, sometimes encouraged to brainstorm ideas and then read texts to confirm their answers, which creates a context for reading. This is most evident and meaningful in High Five, which incorporates prediction questions into each literacy section of the pupil's book. For example, pupils are asked "What do you think Sirens are? Read and listen to find out. What do the Sirens do?" (Ramsden & Shaw 2014: 58). The other three pupil's books show no evidence of this extent of prediction of content; instead, teachers are given suggestions in the teacher's books to have the class brainstorm ideas related to a topic and/or have the pupils identify items in pictures which are related to the reading to follow. Nevertheless, the prediction work in Hopscotch and Kid's Box is mainly vocabulary preparation to assist pupils in understanding the text, thus, reinforcing the instrumental nature of the reading and encouraging a focus on word-level processing skills, a bottom-up approach to handling text.

It is significant to note that High Five and Ace! have pupils respond to content in the story for each unit in a short exercise at the end of the corresponding lesson. This involves filling in some blanks in sentences related to their opinion about the story and their favorite character and vignette. High Five also has them write a reason for their preferences and discuss their own experience with regards to the situation in the story. In addition, the culture section of High Five has pupils discuss questions that relate the ideas from the text to their own experience once they have finished reading. After that, they are encouraged to do a webquest on the topic. These exercises related to personalizing their experience with texts encourage pupils to use the higher-order thinking skills of drawing connections between ideas and taking a stand on a position.

6.2.2 Writing

In terms of the writing skills developed in the four textbooks, practice is often at the word or sentence level and it is frequently used to reinforce the language work. Students fill in letters to complete partially written words, do puzzles such as word searches, and finish sentences or write complete ones, first using sentence frames and model sentences and then doing so on their own. They also reorder words and write questions that go with answers that are provided. In this sense, the focus in all four books is on developing accurate use of the target language, as opposed to valuing the content of the ideas written.

While communication of meaning related to the pupils' lives is not often involved, all the books make at least some attempt to enable pupils to personalize their practice of the language structures. For example, in Hopscotch they answer questions in one sentence about their favorite types of food and drink in a unit review (Clark 2017: 57). In this way the focus is slightly shifted from linguistic accuracy to the communication of ideas, bringing the perspective of literacy to a slightly broader one.

Writing beyond the sentence level is also practiced in all four books at least once in each unit. In the longer writing exercises, which entail up to about 60 words, pupils are often expected to write about a topic that is pre-selected. The genres practiced are typically factual, as when pupils write a news article (Ace!), information for a holiday brochure (High Five) or a recipe (Hopscotch), but they can also include opinions as in writing about their favorite sports and sports star in unit 7 of Hopscotch.

All four books provide practice that enables pupils to progress from writing at the word level to the sentence level and then to more extensive writing of up to about 60 words. Nevertheless, in High Five and Ace! the flow from one level to the others is clearer than in Hopscotch and Kid's Box. For example, in learning about recipes in Ace!, pupils identify cooking verbs in pictures, write one-sentence instructions with the verbs, practice the structure of "there is/there are," write sentences to describe pictures, read descriptions of ingredients in dishes, and other activities. At the end of the unit the learners work with model recipes before writing one of their own. In contrast, the progression toward writing a text in unit 5 of Hopscotch is less guided. Specifically, it jumps from practice at the word level to longer text writing (up to 60 words) with limited work at the sentence level between the two.

As mentioned above, the reading texts in the different units are sometimes used as the basis for more extensive writing. In three of the textbooks, a text is used as a model and there is planning for writing of some type (High Five, Ace! and Hopscotch) with varying degrees of evidence of a process approach to writing. The clearest examples are found in High Five. For instance, in preparing to write information about a travel destination, pupils first read about Italy and Mexico and do comprehension activities. They then examine the features of the genre, such as the presence of a map, photos and information on cities, and are prompted to write brief guided notes about a destination of their choice before writing their own text.

Some similar comprehension and planning activities can be found in Ace! though without explicitly examining the aspects of the genre in question. In Hopscotch, models are provided and students do some very basic planning of the content by answering a series of guided questions before writing their own paragraph, but there is no explanation of the genre or the structure of the text. The textbook Kid's Box does not appear to work with models for writing. In addition to encouraging pupils to plan for writing, High Five also has

them review their work to determine if they have included certain features of the genre examined in the prior lesson. It is the only textbook of the four that does so.

Due to the restrictions of following a model text, there is generally little room for creativity in these writing exercises. Pupils are able to personalize their work by adding their own ideas and opinions in the different types of exercises that involve writing beyond the sentence level, but creative writing per se is hardly practiced. When creative production is fostered, it often involves another type of expression such as drawing and inventing. This is the case of the invention of robots or super animals (Kid's Box), minibeasts (High Five), a town or city (Ace! extra worksheets), and a drawing of a student's favorite thing (Hopscotch).

6.2.3 Beyond reading and writing

The readings and writing exercises that go beyond the sentence level reveal attempts on the part of the publishers to relate the content to other subjects in school. High Five and Ace! promote contact with language from other subject areas including science, technology, history, maths, and arts and crafts in a cross-cultural lesson in each unit. Kid's Box does the same in a special CLIL section at the end of each unit focused on "connecting the world outside the classroom" (Frino & Williams 2017: 8). Finally, Hopscotch, which is based on National Geographic content, focuses on people and different places in each unit, and on a particular cross-curricular subject through the section of each unit called the Explorers' Club. All of this is positive since "progression in discipline or subject understanding will be limited unless it is accompanied by progression in learners' subject-specific literacies" (Meyer et al. 2015: 52). Nevertheless, the cross-curricular or CLIL sections tend to simplify content and focus on lower-order thinking skills, a finding that also held true in a study of international textbooks marketed in Argentina (Banegas 2014). A comparison of textbooks used in other subjects in Spain is needed to determine the extent to which the contents of the CLIL sections in English language textbooks are indeed simplified.

None of the textbooks or teacher's books makes explicit reference to literacy's being a skill developed throughout life. The latter do, however, mention learner autonomy and/or fostering an interest in learning in their introductory sections. In fact, High Five mentions the explicit idea of "preparing children for learning throughout their lives" (Ramsden & Shaw 2014: 21).

In terms of the development of multiliteracies, High Five has pupils do webquests for additional information after each culture lesson and Ace! encourages them to use a dictionary for new words, thus encouraging them to work with different sources of information. Kid's Box and Hopscotch, however, make no indication to pupils to look elsewhere for information. Nevertheless, the four different textbooks do have pupils create work in other formats than the traditional written text. Posters, comics, collages and labelled drawings are included in project work to promote these different formats of writing and creative expression, which is a positive step toward fostering and raising awareness of multiliteracies.

In addition, three of the four textbooks include access to an online website with additional activities for pupils to continue practicing outside their classes, thus facilitating digital literacy. A new edition of the six-level High Five series will also include a pupil's app for use on a mobile phone and this updated textbook, as well as Kid's Box, can be used in paper or digital format in class. DVDs with videos are also available to reinforce classes for all four textbooks.

7. DISCUSSION

The four textbooks analyzed continue to have a focus on language as they involve extensive practice at the word and sentence levels, but they do incorporate longer readings and, to some extent, writing at the paragraph level. While linguistic scaffolding is provided in abundance, especially for sentence level work, varying levels of scaffolding are provided in terms of assisting students to explicitly understand the structuring of paragraphs or the process of writing, despite promises in the teacher's books to foster guided assistance to reading and writing. Models are provided but there are varying degrees of explicit explanation regarding structure.

A more constructivist approach toward building a message in a collaborative and creative way would be more conducive to guiding students to developing literacy, as well as learning how to continue developing these skills throughout their lives (Fernández & Halbach 2009; Lorenzo 2016). Continuing to add work at the text level through contact with additional texts and genres and with the features of these genres will be crucial to developing students' multiple literacies (Mickan 2017). This is especially important when considering that the CLIL approach involves different contexts and that discourse patterns vary across cultures (Gilmore, 2015; Mickan 2017). It is interesting to note that the two textbooks used in bilingual schools (High Five and Ace!) make the process of writing more explicit than the other two. This finding suggests that more work on writing as a process might be taking place in bilingual schools if their choice of textbook can indicate this intention.

At the same time, pupils' previous experience is not always considered despite its importance in facilitating comprehension using a top-down approach to reading. Some attempts at making language practice relevant to pupils, however, can be seen. There ought to be a more meaningful, communicative approach to using writing for real-world purposes in order to arm pupils with the tools to produce coherent texts that perform communicative tasks (Gilmore 2015; Meyer et al. 2015; Mickan 2017).

Despite claims in the teacher's books, there also continues to be a tendency to require mostly lower order thinking skills of pupils, though this too seems to be changing to some degree. While some textbooks concentrate on simple comprehension questions about texts, others make an effort to have students apply what they have learned in some way. Higher order thinking skills and critical thinking can mainly be appreciated in the projects and cross curricular topics that are offered by the textbooks. Pushing students to use these skills is important in any educational setting, but especially so in a CLIL setting, where cognition and CALP are essential to sustainable learning (Coyle 2007; Cummins 2000), and in a country such as Spain which has been found to fail at students' mastery of CALP (Lorenzo 2016).

On the whole, varying degrees of all of these aspects of literacy have been found for the different textbooks. High Five stands out as being the closest in line with the broad interpretation of literacy discussed at the start to this article. The other textbooks approach this broader understanding to a lesser extent. Ace!, however, does promote scaffolding to understand the organization of texts and it encourages pupils to reflect on their opinions of texts, both steps in this same direction. It is interesting to note that the two books used by bilingual schools have come the furthest in working towards a more global view of literacy. This may be related to the pupils' need to communicate in English in different contexts and their receiving more hours of instruction in English. The combination of exposure to different contexts and a potentially higher level of language leads pupils to be able to work

more in-depth with texts, and textbook publishers appear to be responding to this situation. Nevertheless, research involving more textbooks is needed to confirm this distinction.

8. CONCLUSION

Literacy development is necessary for students, and it is essential that they see it as a multidisciplinary and lifelong goal. To this end, further work must be done to consider a common literacy approach across disciplines and regard literacy as a longitudinal concept. Through the study of text genres and their relation with school subjects, the curriculum can be constructed so that students work with a variety of genres throughout their school years, as in countries such as Australia and Canada. Support for subject-specific literacy development can be given from the Spanish and English language classes if there is coordination at all levels among stakeholders. In fact, the potential for transfer of what is learned in the first and second languages, as detailed in Cummins' Underlying Proficiency model (Cummins, 1980), means that the development of literacy in either language will benefit the learner, regardless of the language of input or output. Further, CLIL classes provide an opportunity for students to gain flexibility in terms of varying discourse patterns found in different cultures, and this should be maximized.

Further similar research is required in order to determine whether the findings of the present study can be confirmed in textbooks for other subjects, including Spanish language and CLIL classes. It would also be interesting to continue analyzing textbooks used in later levels of primary education as well as in secondary education to determine whether there is continuity and further development of literacy regarding more advanced genres. The hope is that these and other similar studies will influence publishers to make further efforts to offer materials that foster literacy in the broader sense of the word, and that teachers will become better informed in order to make decisions about the materials with which they choose to work. It is of paramount importance to continue training teachers in a more encompassing definition of literacy, the necessity to support students in developing multiliteracies, and the appropriate related tools and methodologies.

NOTE

1 This paper has been possible thanks to funding from Universidad de Alcalá for the project "Desarrollo de destrezas de alfabetización en el segundo ciclo de educación primaria en centros de la Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid: Estudio de la situación actual" [CCGP2017-HUM/024]. The authors would also like to indicate their appreciation to Dr. Ana Halbach for reading and commenting on the manuscript.

REFERENCES

- Banegas, D. L. (2014). An investigation into CLIL-related sections of EFL coursebooks: Issues of CLIL inclusion in the publishing market. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 17(3), 345-359.
- Benítez Sastre, L., D'Angelo Menéndez, E., Garbe, C., Gil Traver, F., Lafontaine, D., de Juan Sánchez de Rojas, M. P., Villabona Garcíaet, M. (2016). *Literacy in Spain: Country report, children and*

- adolescents*. European Literacy Policy Network (ELINET). Retrieved from http://www.elinet.eu/fileadmin/ELINET/Redaktion/user_upload/Spain_Long_Report.pdf
- Bilsborough, K. & Bilsborough, S. (2012). *Ace! 4* (class book, activity book, teacher's book). Oxford University Press.
- Cassany, D. & Castellà, J. M. (2010). Aproximación a la literacidad crítica. *Perspectiva Florianópolis*, 28(2), 353-374. DOI: 10.5007/2175-795X.2010v28n2p353
- Cazden, C., Cope, B., Fairclough, N., Gee, J., et al. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60-92. Retrieved from http://newarcproject.pbworks.com/f/Pedagogy+of+Multiliteracies_New+London+Group.pdf
- Choi, A., Jerrim, J. (2016). The use (and misuse) of PISA in guiding policy reform: The case of Spain. *Comparative Education*, 52(2), 230-245. DOI: 10.1080/03050068.2016.1142739
- Clarke, S. (2017). *Hopscotch 4: Activity book*. Cengage Learning/National Geographic Learning.
- Cook, J., Hill, D. A. (2017). *Hopscotch 4: Teacher's book*. Cengage Learning/National Geographic Learning.
- Coyle, D. (2007). Content and Language Integrated Learning: Towards a connected research agenda for CLIL pedagogies. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 10(5), 543-562. DOI: 10.2167/beb459.0
- Cummins, J. (1980). The cross-lingual dimensions of language proficiency: Implications for bilingual education and the optimal age issue. *TESOL Quarterly*, 14(2), 175-187.
- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Clevedon, UK and Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters.
- Durán-Martínez, R., Beltrán-Llavador, F. (2016). A regional assessment of bilingual programmes in primary and secondary schools: The teachers' views. *Porta Linguarum*, 25, 79-92.
- EFA Global Monitoring Report Team (2006). *EFA global monitoring report 2006: Literacy for life*. Paris: UNESCO. Retrieved from <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2006/literacy-life>
- European Commission (2012). *EU high level group of experts on literacy: Final report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/school/doc/literacy-report_en.pdf
- Fernández, R., Halbach, A. (2009). Uncovering the approach to literacy of Spanish textbooks used in a CLIL context. In S-A. Ditze & A. Halbach (Eds.), *Bilingualer sachfachunterricht (CLIL) im kontext von sprache, kultur und multiliteralität* (pp. 42-55). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Fernández Fernández, R. (2018). "Exploring Literacy in Bilingual Contexts. CAM Primary Teachers' Conceptualization." Paper Presented at the 42nd AEDEAN Conference, Córdoba. November 7-9.
- Frino, L., Williams, M. (2017). *Kid's Box 4* (teacher's book). Cambridge University Press/Cambridge English Language Assessment.
- Gamboa, A. A., Muñoz, P. A., Vargas, L. (2016). Literacidad: Nuevas posibilidades socioculturales y pedagógicas para la escuela. *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Educativos (Colombia)*, 12(1), 53-70. Retrieved from [http://latinoamericana.ucaldas.edu.co/downloads/Latinoamericana12\(1\)_4.pdf](http://latinoamericana.ucaldas.edu.co/downloads/Latinoamericana12(1)_4.pdf)
- Gilmore, A. (2015). Research into practice: The influence of discourse studies on language descriptions and task design in published ELT materials. *Language Teaching*, 48(4), 506-530. DOI: 10.1017/S0261444815000269
- Halbach, A., Candel Bormann, D. (2019). Inching towards literacy in Madrid's primary schools: A survey of school-wide projects, *Language and Education*, 33(5), 416-430. DOI: 10.1080/09500782.2019.1622712
- Heath, J., Crawford, M. (2017). *Hopscotch 4: Pupil's book*. Cengage Learning/National Geographic Learning.

- Iñesta Mena, E. M. (2017). Revisión sobre literacidad como noción multidimensional para una didáctica de las lenguas inclusiva. *Porta Linguarum*, 27, 79-92. Retrieved from http://www.ugr.es/~portalin/articulos/PL_numero27/6_Eva%20M%20Inesta.pdf
- Lorenzo, F. (2016). Competencia en comunicación lingüística: Claves para el avance de la comprensión lectora en las pruebas PISA. *Revista de Educación*, 374, 142-160. DOI: 10.4438/1988-592X-RE-2016-374-329
- Meyer, O., Coyle, D., Halbach, A., Schuck, K., Ting, T. (2015). A pluriliteracies approach to content and language integrated learning – mapping learner progressions in knowledge construction and meaning-making. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 28(1), 41-57. DOI: 10.1080/07908318.2014.1000924
- Mickan, P. (2017). Text-based research and teaching from a social semiotic perspective: Transformative research and pedagogy. In P. Mickan & E. Lopez (Eds.), *Text-based research and teaching: A social semiotic perspective on language in use* (pp. 15-35). Palgrave Macmillan. DOI: 10.1057/978-1-137-59849-2_2
- Mullis, I., O'Martin, M., Foy, P., Hooper, M. (2017). *PIRLS 2016: International results in reading*. Chestnut Hill, MA: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, Lynch School of Education, Boston College and International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). Retrieved from <http://pirls2016.org/download-center/>
- Nixon, C., Tomlinson, M. (2017). *Kid's Box 4* (pupil's book, activity book). Cambridge University Press/Cambridge English Language Assessment.
- OECD (2014). *New insights from TALIS 2013: Teaching and learning in primary and upper secondary education*, OECD Publishing. DOI: 10.1787/9789264226319-en
- Ramsden, J., Shaw, D. (2014). *High Five 4* (pupil's book, activity book, teacher's book). Macmillan Publishers.
- Richards, J. C. (2002). The role of textbooks in a language program. Retrieved from <https://www.professorjackrichards.com/wp-content/uploads/role-of-textbooks.pdf>
- Ruiz de Zarobe, Y., Zenotz, V. (2015). Reading strategies and CLIL: The effect of training in formal instruction. *The Language Learning Journal*, 43(3), 319-333. DOI: 10.1080/09571736.2015.1053284