

Inclusive occupational multiliteracies for migrants: a systematic review

Multiliteracidades laborales inclusivas para los migrantes: una revisión sistemática

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ABSTRACT

As in previous decades, demographic, financial and market forces continue to drive the increased migration inflows to recipient countries. Humanitarian reasons are, in turn, currently becoming the main impetus for migrants, who oftentimes flee situations of extreme vulnerability and distress in their countries of origin. The uprooting caused by forced migration must be met with efforts to support migrants' emotional regrouping in host communities. Such integration greatly depends on social and economic inclusion, especially through access to quality employment opportunities.

This paper examines contributions from previous research exploring a range of literacies aimed at securing employment and navigating the new socio-cultural employment scenarios that are presented to migrants. The results point to the inherent value of learning the vehicular language spoken in the recipient country, in combination with other literacies, referred to here as Inclusive Occupational Multiliteracies (IOM), among which the socio-affective domain also takes a substantial underlying role.

Keywords: multiliteracies, migrants, occupational literacy, language learning, inclusion

RESUMEN

Al igual que en décadas anteriores, las causas demográficas, financieras y de mercado siguen impulsando el aumento de los flujos migratorios hacia los países receptores. A su vez, los motivos humanitarios se están convirtiendo en el principal impulso para los migrantes, que a menudo huyen de situaciones de extrema vulnerabilidad y angustia en sus países de origen. El desarraigo provocado por la migración forzosa debe ser abordado con iniciativas para apoyar el arraigo emocional de los migrantes en las comunidades de acogida. Esta integración depende en gran medida de la inclusión social y económica, especialmente a través del acceso a oportunidades de empleo de calidad.

Este artículo examina las contribuciones de investigaciones anteriores que exploran diferentes alfabetizaciones destinadas a procurar un empleo y navegar por los nuevos escenarios socioculturales laborales que se les presentan a los migrantes. Los resultados apuntan al valor inherente del aprendizaje de la lengua vehicular hablada en el país receptor, en combinación con otras alfabetizaciones, denominadas aquí Multiliteracidades Laborales Inclusivas (MLI), entre las que el ámbito socioafectivo también desempeña un papel subyacente significativo.

Palabras clave: multiliteracidades, migrantes, alfabetización laboral, aprendizaje de lenguas, inclusión

1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of migration, whether originating from socioeconomic and work-related grounds or from natural or man-made crises, has increasingly demanded educational interventions to facilitate the successful integration of migrants into the host communities. Feelings of uprootedness, social isolation, alienation and loss of self-identity are among the gravest threats to those who have been forced to leave their homeland and culture behind in search of more favourable living conditions elsewhere (Schlechter et al. 2021). Among the competences to remove sociocultural barriers and to thrive in an unfamiliar setting, it is communicative competence, encompassing linguistic knowledge, but also social practices, attitudes and values related to textual, visual, symbolic, numerical and technological media usage in the community, that stand out as paramount (Casanova and Mavrou 2019).

The successful integration of migrants is thus heavily dependent on a range of associated processes, such as their social inclusion or additional language acquisition and, most notably, on their access to employment opportunities (Brell et al. 2020). In particular, the ability to engage communicatively in social interactions, producing spontaneous narratives within professional contexts becomes a "precious social currency" for migrants (Holmes and Marra 2011: 512). Conversely, unintended linguistic and cultural transgressions in the workplace might reinforce pre-existing biases of employers and co-workers, with negative consequences for the integration of the migrant worker (Holmes and Marra 2011).

The holistic view of literacy as a situated social practice which comprises learners' social, occupational and personal spheres is the basis of the New London Group's pedagogy of multiliteracies (1996). In this regard, the multiliteracies paradigm lends itself to the development of "occupational conscientization and occupational consciousness including the ability to read images and contextual features, such as geography and the built environment" (Townsend 2015: 397) and is therefore suited to accommodate a range of training opportunities for migrants. Moreover, the potential interplay between the needs of people who have been displaced from their communities and places of origin and the multiliteracies framework can underpin culturally responsive pedagogy and the implementation of inclusive teaching and learning (Watts-Taffe 2022) in which cultural diversity and individual difference are valued. However, despite the original centrality of working life and citizenship as two of the three domains of individuals' lives upon which the social change pursued by a multiliteracies approach is based (New London Group 1996: 64-69), additional language courses developed for professional migrants, whether they be general language learning or vocational language programmes, seem to follow largely conventional code-based and print-based teaching methodologies (Rossner 2008), lacking sufficient resources and strategies for the targeted education for illiterate or partially literate persons (Blommaert et al 2006).

With the aim of exploring both the state of play of occupational instruction for migrants and the feasibility of adopting educational strategies that further advance their linguistic and professional inclusion, the remainder of the text is organised as follows: i) the theoretical principles around which the Inclusive Occupational

Multiliteracies (IOM) proposition is built will be briefly discussed; ii) prior research on educational initiatives pursuing the linguistic and occupational integration of migrants will be reviewed systematically for exploratory purposes, in order to bring forward evidence of delivery in this field, with a particular focus on current attempts to inculcate the multiliteracies approach in the context under study; iii) strategic proposals for harnessing the potential of multiliteracies instruction, which align with the pursued goals of inclusion, will be presented.

2. THEORETICAL FRAME

The concept of multiliteracies proposed by the New London Group (1996) has been endorsed with similar acclaim by scholars and language teaching practitioners alike since its inception. Numerous studies have delved into the connections between multiliteracies-based teaching approaches and the perceptions and assumptions of individual learners, trainers, and language course providers (Tan and McWilliam 2009). Although research on this pedagogy has been conducted mainly for the school-aged segment of the population, there is a growing consensus within the scientific community that multiliteracies might equally stimulate a more critical approach to adult lifelong learning (Holloway and Gouthro 2020), which in turn might advance the social cohesion and inclusion policy agenda that underpins European education policies (Guo 2010).

According to the principles of multiliteracies pedagogy, education must be committed to embedding multimodality, cultural plurality, technology, and a spirit of social justice through the acquisition of language, which is inherently socially constructed, power-charged and shaped by context (Holloway and Qaisi 2022). The valorisation of the potential social capital that each individual may contribute to their peer group, as well as the appreciation of individual differences as an asset, are also essential elements of this approach, the ultimate goal of educational efforts being to enable learners' diverse capabilities to thrive "for democratic, inclusive citizenship in an occupationally just world" (Townsend 2015: 398).

Competency in the language of the receiving society is deemed to be one of the central features of successful integration and the main tool to boost migrants' sense of agency and to spur social interaction and participation (Pulinx and Van Avermaet 2017). The theoretical framework of multiliteracies posits that the linguistic mode, in conjunction with and integrated into other modes of communication, is at the core of innovative teaching and learning experiences (Holloway and Gouthro 2019). Even though reading and writing are essential means of communication, multimodality seeks to extend the traditional scope of literacy to a broader spectrum of media. In this sense, multimodality in the foreign language classroom refers to blending two or more modes of communication - visual, oral, written, gestural, tactile, or spatial - to convey meaning (Dolzhich and Dmitrichenkova 2019). Against this backdrop, the benefits invoked by advocates of the multimodal approach seem highly desirable, as it prepares learners for dealing with unpredictable events and complex information sources, thus developing their critical mindset, and offering meaningful and culturally contextualised learning opportunities, as well prompting a feeling of group membership and belongingness. Furthermore, multiliteracies and multimodality

provide opportunities to engage marginalised learners (Holloway and Gouthro 2020) and allow for greater versatility in meaning-making practices.

While recent well-documented previous studies focus on adult migrants' second language literacy, their scope is generally limited to the development of a particular skill or language activity, thereby leaving aside the breadth of angles that multiliteracies instruction can draw on, such as learning issues pertaining to globalisation, diversity, and the impact of new technologies (Holloway and Gouthro 2020). Thus, the existing contributions on adult migrant literacy in additional languages concern predominantly the influence of literacy-based instruction on reading comprehension and appreciation of literary texts (Reyes Torres and Bataller Català 2019) or its effectiveness in improving written production in a second or additional language (Casanova and Mavrou 2019). Nevertheless, albeit secondarily, current publications such as those of Reyes Torres and Bataller Català (2019) or Casanova and Mavrou (2019) also address the multimodality of inputs used in multiliteracies instruction for adults.

Educational provision aimed at migrants is often informal and non-formal in nature (Hanemann 2021), and typically linked to the invaluable humanitarian and educational support provided by NGOs volunteers, such as university students, pre-service teachers, retirees, and non-professional practitioners who lack the methodological tools and didactic materials required to optimise the effectiveness of their instructional efforts. Moreover, these programmes respond in a standardised manner to individuals with very different personal and academic profiles (Rossner 2008), ranging from illiterate speakers of other languages and written codes, whose cultural traditions are predominantly oral in nature, to highly qualified individuals holding tertiary education degrees in their countries of origin, many of whom already have multilingual competence in several languages.

Despite the demographic differences in the population studied, the findings reported by Willis Allen and Paesani (2010: 137) that "multiliteracies instruction is not just feasible but essential to the relevance" of introductory-level foreign language courses for adult learners are considered by the author to be generalisable to the migrant population. In this regard, however, it is the central contribution of Townsend (2015) and her formulation of the notion of *Critical Occupational Literacy* that has laid the theoretical foundation on which this paper is grounded. Arguing for the need to operationalise "identifiable, shared literacy skills, such as being able to decode the alphabet, distinguish between friendly and aggressive language, and assess the moral implications of everyday actions" Townsend (2015: 391) concludes that explicitly designed *critical* occupational literacy skills learning would engage a wide "range of researchers, educators and community members in public dialogues and decision-making about occupational experiences" (Townsend 2015: 393)

It is therefore worth exploring the extent to which the multi-modal and multiliteracy perspective have been implemented in the field of education for migrants and identify areas where their delivery might be further consolidated.

3. METHOD AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A probing literature review was chosen as the basis for the examination of the corpus produced around the theoretical framework of occupational multiliteracies for adult migrant learners. It was decided to focus on qualitative and mixed-method studies, in which both information on the teaching methodologies applied and the narrative accounts of the migrants involved in the training processes would be collected. Given the tight links of the study area with programme documents originating from European education authorities, it was also decided to incorporate the relevant grey literature into the pooling.

From the preliminary exploration set out in the introductory sections above, the following research questions guide the analysis and synthesis of the research body:

- What literacy/literacies are prevalent in occupational language courses for migrants?
- Which aspects of the multiliteracies pedagogy have generally been integrated into workplace language training courses for migrants?
- To what extent has the multimodal approach permeated the methodologies followed in these training opportunities?

The data collection procedure included six distinct steps, namely 1) a Boolean query formulated bibliographic search of scientific databases (ERIC, SCOPUS and WoS), 2) the incorporation of sources resulting from manual query, 3) the screening of duplicates, 4) the exclusion of non-relevant studies, on the basis of the information contained on their titles and abstracts 5) the full text examination of the remaining papers and 6) the quality assessment of the shortlisted studies. To optimise the prospects of retrieving relevant results, multiple targeted keywords were combined in the automated database query. However, as can be inferred from table 1, the inclusion of the term 'multiliteracies' for fine-tuning the searches yielded zero results in every database search.

	ERIC	SCOPUS	WoS
"Migrant adults"	403	17,797	--
AND "workplace"	15	312	--
AND "2 nd language learning"	0	2	4,205
AND "multiliteracies"	0	0	0

Table 1. Initial search criteria applied in database and manual searches

A first unexpected finding, therefore, was the absence of published work explicitly addressing the pedagogy of multiliteracies in contexts of additional language education for adult migrants, as will be discussed in more detail below. It was therefore decided to replicate the desktop search, replacing the term 'workplace' as a keyword by 'professional', then by 'vocational', and other standard terms in the literature in order to ensure the retrieval of all available relevant studies, in conjunction with the term 'literacy' and its plural variation 'literacies'. This broadening of the search criteria resulted in 52 potential citations. Figure 1 illustrates the stages

followed in the streamlining of these database and hand search results, leading to 32 manuscripts whose full text was subsequently screened.

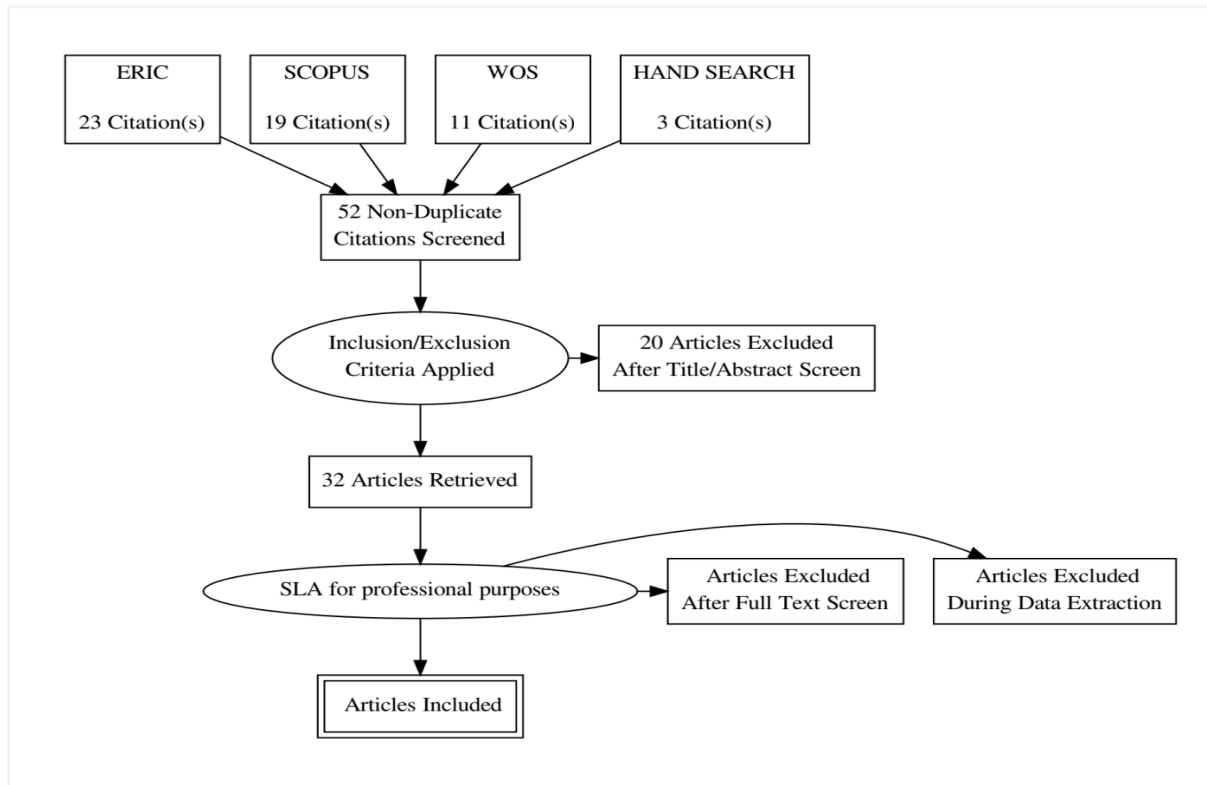


Figure 1. Data search and corpus retrieval process

Finally, the Mixed Methods Assessment Tool (MMAT) (Hong et al. 2018) was used to ensure the quality of the papers included in the corpus, resulting in a corpus of 15 compliant studies. For the analysis and systematisation of the data, each work in the sample has been assigned a codename, as indicated in Appendix I.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive profiling of the sample

In terms of the nature of the training models described in the studies, over two thirds of the sample comprise research on migrant trainees who aspire to access the labour market, while only three of the studies describe on-the-job training or in-house professional advancement (S7, S9 and S12). Thus, latter studies contextualise learning in real professional environments, either by having participating migrants log “their everyday workplace talk” (S7: 515), undergo participant observation (S9), or by reporting on employers’ perceptions across a variety of sectors (S9).

Among the most salient characteristics identified in the corpus as a whole, research on this subject has been carried out predominantly through a qualitative methodology, applying ethnographic techniques (preliminary interviews, role plays,

retrospective interviews, etc). Only one study (S5) followed a different methodology, based on Critical Discourse Analysis (examining meaning, coherence, and structure of the text) of three Canadian Government Agencies policy texts.

The most prominent professional sectors researched are those related to service provision in healthcare, childcare and elderly caregiving, as well as domestic work. The population under study in the corpus is predominantly made up of female employees in entry-level positions, with few possibilities for upgrading or long-term employment. However, initiatives aiming to deconstruct gender segregation in the labour market (S1) by incorporating roughly equal numbers of male and female participants in the two work-related educational tracks (cleaning / services and health / social care), stand out. Many of these studies also consider the cultures of origin of these migrant women and the reverse phenomenon (S12), with the return of these workers to their places of origin.

For the most part, the studies report the point of view of the women workers, although some texts also incorporate the perspective of employers (S1, S7, S9 and S13), training providers (S4, S6 and S15) and policy makers (S5). In general, this is a low-skilled labour force, although there are exceptions where migrant women are highly educated (S3, S7, S9 and S12). The countries of origin are countries in Asia Minor, traditional migrant-sending countries such as Latin America and the Caribbean.

Figure 2 visually displays the regions where the research was conducted. One quarter of the studies in the sample were undertaken in Australia and New Zealand (S3, S6, S7, S8, S9, S15), indicating that these countries have been particularly engaged in researching this issue.

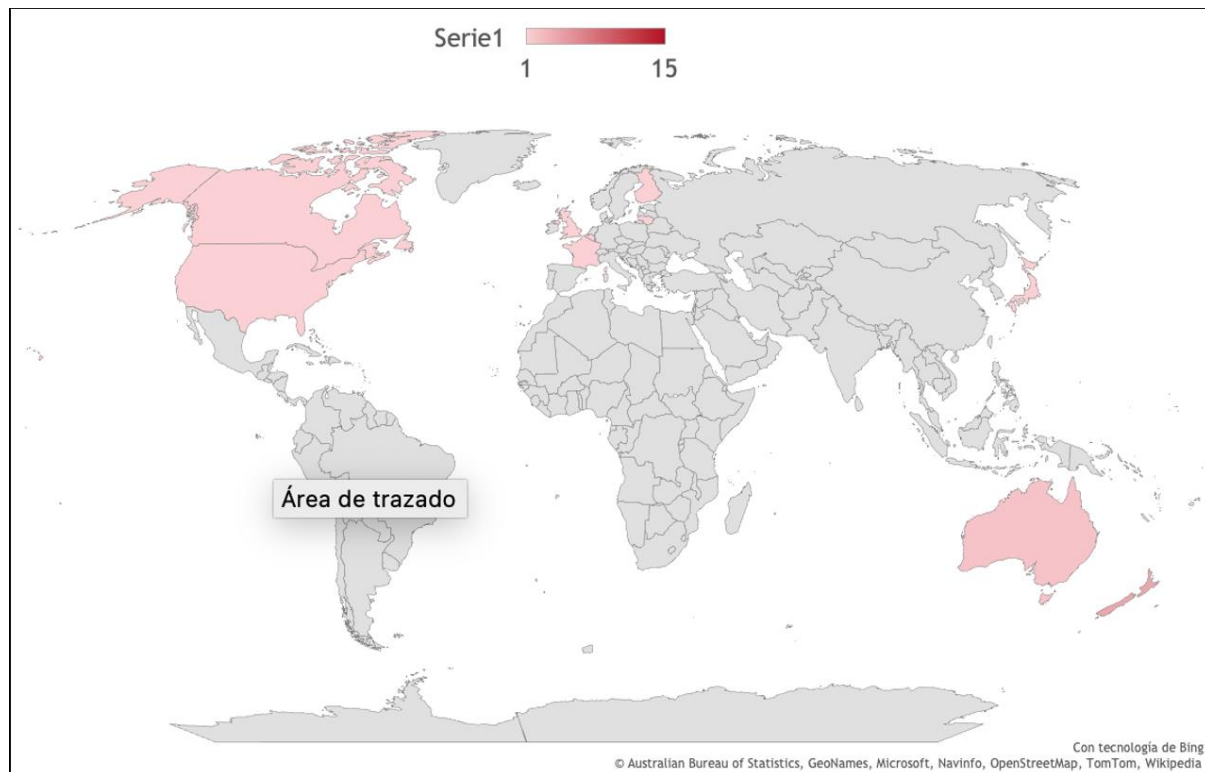


Figure 2. Geographical distribution of studies sampled in the corpus

The following section presents the results obtained from the textual and conceptual information analysis of the papers that make up the corpus.

4.2 Thematic analysis of the research corpus

4.2.1 Explicit and tacit literacies

The topical analysis of the corpus led to the identification of 7 thematic clusters. Due to the preliminary result mentioned in the previous section, notably that no study expressly alluded to the pedagogy of multiliteracies, the ensuing mapping of the data is based on the comparison of the literacies expressly mentioned in the corpus and those literacies which can be inferred from the narrative content of the studies, albeit tacitly.

Table 2 records the seven literacy domains used for the classification of the content covered in the different studies.

	THEMATIC AREAS
CULTL	Cultural Literacy
DIGL	Digital Literacy
SAL	Socio-Affective Literacy
CIVL	Civic Literacy
LANGL	Linguistic Literacy
VISL	Visual Literacy
OCCL	Occupational

Table 2. Thematic categorisation areas

4.2.2 Explicitly alluded literacies

Table 3 shows the topics covered in the keywords, abstracts, and section headings of the papers, as well as those explicitly covered in the discussion of their results. In addition, the categories recorded in Table 3 summarise, from a conceptual point of view, the topics that were the subject of planned educational initiatives aimed at their further development in each of the studies analysed.

Among the first results that can be visually ascertained is that multiple literacies are dealt with in all the samples of the corpus. Due to the criterion selection of the studies, all but four papers (S7, S10, S13 and S15) explicitly mention concepts related to job-related literacy in conjunction with second or additional language literacy. Sixty percent of the studies allude to aspects of awareness of the customs, values, beliefs, and cultural conventions of the host communities, most often in connection with pragmatic and linguistic learning outcomes. Therefore, the research efforts of authors in this field seem to revolve around migrants' employability, their capacity to achieve and develop proper rapport in the workplace, and the various aspects of culture (awareness of the host culture and of the company culture being the most recurrent ones) around such interactions.

Technological and social aspects are next in terms of prevalence in the sample. The prominence of digital resources and devices as a medium for instruction or as a working tool is highlighted in twenty percent of the sample, and similarly, the

empowerment of workers, peer community support and access to citizenship status is explicitly developed in a similar percentage of the studies. This emerging attention to areas aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the European Education Area, such as improving citizens' abilities and ICT competency for the digitalisation of social and work processes, or raising their civic engagement and democratic awareness, is primarily found in most recent research (S4, S11, S15), with only one study (S2) dating back to 2007.

	CultL	DigL	SAL	CivL	LangL	VisL	Occl
S1							
S2							
S3							
S4							
S5							
S6							
S7							
S8							
S9							
S10							
S11							
S12							
S13							
S14							
S15							

Table 3. Literacies expressly considered in the research corpus

4.2.3 Types of literacy tacitly discussed

It should be noted that in some cases, the references considered for the recording of implicit literacies in this section, as presented in Table 4, are very tangential. In this sense, the mere acknowledgement of the digital divide which has a bearing on migrant students' performance, for example, has been factored in when determining the coverage of Digital Literacy in the studies.

These literacies are generally expressed in terms of perceived necessities expressed by migrants or their potential employers, or desirable traits for a successful inclusion in the target society, but they are not linked to any formal, informal or non-formal training programme reported in the studies. Thus, this comparison will bring to the surface the difference between the deliberate and incidental learning observed by the corpus authors.

	CultL	DigL	SAL	CivL	LangL	VisL	Occl
S1							
S2							
S3							
S4							
S5							
S6							
S7							
S8							
S9							
S10							
S11							
S12							
S13							
S14							
S15							

Table 4. Literacies tangentially discussed in the research corpus

Consequently, when comparing Tables 3 and 4, it becomes clear that there is an underlying discrepancy between the learning needs of the target population, which are addressed in an incidental way, and the desired educational goals of literacy that the interventions aim to achieve.

In view of the above, the first research question guiding this exploratory study, concerning the prevailing literacies in occupational language courses for migrants, could be addressed from a twofold perspective: those literacies that are branded as such by educational researchers and training providers for adult migrants, like linguistic, cultural, digital or occupational literacy, feature prominently in the reports of the findings made; however, other literacies while being ubiquitous in the day-to-day lives of the target population, permeate the literature thematically but are not formally foregrounded.

As regards the second research question, concerning the elements of the pedagogy of multiliteracies that are embedded in workplace language education for migrants, there are two key areas which concern respectively the private domain and the citizenship domain of learners, namely socio-emotional literacy and civic literacy. For instance, S2 points to the importance of migrant domestic workers developing empowering strategies to cope with work-related stresses and strains, adopting proactive attitudes to challenge labour exploitation. This study similarly finds that education "is used by domestic workers as a way of coping with these inadequacies, of surviving the stressors" (Cuban 2007: 4). In this sense, awareness-raising through educational interventions to break out of their isolation equip migrants to "move into a public position of influence" (ibid: 5) through their community, recognising an agentic sense of self and giving voice to their social positions and views, within the existing tensions of power and privilege, as well as in relation to their work experience (ibid: 7). Another emotional domain developed is that of the students' own self-concept, and thus Morel (2018) examines how the trainees struggled to overcome more intimate difficulties, linked to their lack of self-esteem and poor confidence in themselves and their abilities, which could manifest as forgetfulness, detachment and lack of concentration.

From a social perspective, number of studies (S3, S4, S5, S9, S10) report the importance of community of peers for emotional support and for successful learning outcomes, given the affordances it provides to interact with others (S6), practise the additional target language and to establish and maintain social networks and satisfying relationships with co-workers (S8).

In terms of civic literacy, language training is oftentimes linked to access to certain public welfare services such as health care, social care (S1), access to community resources and community participation (S2), deploy political and citizenship skills and strategies which are "crucial for constructive decision-making" (Dabic 2008: 9) or manage travel and immigration paperwork (S11).

Regarding the third research question, the multimodal approach is rarely mentioned in the sample, and integration of visual literacy principles and non-text-based images in lesson plans is identified in only twenty percent of the corpus. Thus, Cuban (2007) describes programmes in the community for the inclusion of migrant domestic workers which utilise visual aids such as videos, DVDs and cards, while Morel (2019) notes their usability in scenarios of illiteracy but some oral proficiency in the

target language, where conversations and interactions in class can be triggered by iconographic documents that are readily available on the Internet.

A very notable contribution in this respect is Hastwell, Strauss and Kell's (2013) study on the training of workers in a supermarket chain, in which the need to expand educators' conception of what qualifies as a text is raised. Among the examples cited that would be suitable as visual material supporting situated learning are "product packaging and identification; pricing labels; barcodes; order forms; stock control databases; quality assurance forms and checklists; payslips and leave forms" (ibid: 78). By way of illustration, these authors allude to the case of Rula, a neo-literate employee who is able to discern between various magazines being sold in the supermarket based not only on their titles, but on their appearance and the use of "different semiotic systems and non-textual images: their size, the type of cover image(s) and the quality of their paper" (ibid: 85), in addition to the specific section in which they are displayed.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The first conclusion of this paper confirms Townsend's (2015) observations concerning the need to define terms that capture critical occupational literacies and to mainstream them among teaching professionals working with disadvantaged collectives. Therefore, the position of this article converges with Kluzerand and Rissola (2009) in arguing that policymakers should support the successful integration of migrants into the labour market by better aligning their competences to the job functions to be performed, thereby "democratising the Lisbon goal of 'better employment'" (ibid: 75).

Similarly, it appears obvious that efforts to disseminate the pedagogy of multiliteracies among those who are involved in the teaching of adults, particularly migrants, are still required. The potential of this approach coupled with multimodal stimulus-based instruction does not seem to be reaching the everyday practice of adult education or the training of those groups that could benefit most from greater social inclusion.

A second conclusion that emerges from the findings of this study is the necessity of a reworking and extension of the paradigm proposed by the New London group (1996), that would build the socio-affective dimension into the multiliteracies approach. This conclusion opens up promising opportunities for future research.

For both of these very reasons, we have proposed the umbrella term Inclusive Occupational Multiliteracies (IOM), as it captures both the multifaceted nature of the knowledge, skills and competences which are required to fulfil a job in a given environment, whilst encapsulating the need for a didactic approach akin to that proposed by the New London Group yet suited to present-day instructional media. Consequently, as lines of future research, we propose to open new avenues of inquiry to determine the extent to which the multiliteracies approach has the potential for dealing with the changing service sector jobs and for overcoming the downward occupational mobility of migrants, as put forth by Strömmer (2017), as well as to chart which of the analysed literacies, and to what degree of proficiency, are required for entry-level jobs, or for the career advancement of migrant workers.

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APPENDIX I. SYSTEMATISATION OF STUDIES IN THE CORPUS

CODENAME	CONTRIBUTOR(S) / YEAR OF PUBLICATION
S1	Benerdal, M. (2021)
S2	Cuban, S. (2007)

S3	Dabic, S. (2008)
S4	De Paepe, L. et al. (2018)
S5	Gibb T.L. (2008)
S6	Hastwell K. et al. (2013)
S7	Holmes, J. & Marra, M. (2011)
S8	Holmes, J. & Riddiford, N. (2011)
S9	Hunter, J. (2012)
S10	Morel, A. (2018)
S11	North, A. (2017)
S12	Otomo, R. (2020)
S13	Pundziuviene, D. et al. (2020)
S14	Strömmer, M. (2017)
S15	Tour, E. et. al. (2021)