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Reading diary in the process of reception of immigrant families

El diario de lectura en los procesos de acogida de familias inmigrantes

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Abstract

The study analyses the reading diary in the processes of welcoming immigrant families. It is an exploratory, qualitative and ethnographic case study. The research focuses on the relation between literary reading and writing. The study was conducted at the school library in an Infant and Primary School during a school year with a group of six immigrant mothers. The findings show that the shared reading of literary text in a cozy context favors the development of attitudes towards written culture. The reading diary is used to make shared readings memorable, as well as an instrument of language appropriation. On the other hand, it shows the need for the informants to write to tell their own life experiences in the host language. Finally, the relationship between literary reading and writing is confirmed.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza el diario de lectura en los procesos de acogida de familias inmigrantes. Se trata de un estudio de caso exploratorio, cualitativo y de corte etnográfico que centra su objeto de estudio en la relación entre lectura literaria y escritura. La investigación se realizó en la biblioteca escolar de un Centro de Educación Infantil y Primaria durante un curso escolar con un grupo de seis madres inmigrantes. Los resultados obtenidos indican que la lectura compartida de textos literarios en un espacio acogedor del entorno escolar favorece el desarrollo de actitudes hacia la cultura escrita. El diario de lectura se utiliza para hacer memorables las lecturas compartidas, así como un instrumento de apropiación de la lengua. Por otra parte, se muestra la necesidad de las informantes de escribir para contar sus propias experiencias vitales en la lengua de acogida. Finalmente, se confirma la relación entre lectura literaria y escritura.

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Introduction

Literary reading builds senses, helps to symbolise absence in crisis situations, generates openness to new senses of belonging and contributes to reflect on the world and on one's self (Andruetto, 2015; Petit, 2015). According to Larrañaga & Yubero (2015), "reading's importance lies in the experiences told, whether real or fictional, as they generate life expectations and may strengthen ourselves, offering social learning and personal development opportunities" (p. 20).

Society in the 21st century is characterised by linguistic and cultural diversity as a result of global migration movements. In recent years, research on educational measures of welfare for immigrants has mainly focused on children of immigrant families. Therefore, the studies of Arizpe (2012), Fittipaldi (2012), Margallo (2012), Calvo (2015) or Chovancova (2015) have analysed the role played by literary reading in reception environments within the framework of the inclusive school (Booth & Aisncow, 2002). Nevertheless, there are few studies on the role played by literature in the inclusion process of immigrant families in the school community (Calvo, 2018).

The studies of González (2007, 2010) highlight the families' ignorance of school culture, combined with the culture shock of joining a new educational context, which entails fear of participating in such educational environment. On their part, Mejías & Cano (2016) point out that the limited participation of immigrant families in the schools is due to the language and cultural barrier; they thus advocate for the creation of a culture of inclusion by establishing dynamics that enhance the development of the host language. In the opinion of these authors:

All the work carried out at the schools to integrate immigrant students in the classroom produce poor results if such work does not include their families in the broadest sense, which is the key to successful inclusion of immigrant children (Mejías & Cano, 2016, p. 1130).

Arrojo & Berzosa (2018) also recommend strategies that promote the involvement of families in the school context, based on the results of the INCLUD-ED project called *Strategies for inclusion and social cohesion from education in Europe from education* (2011) that have proved beneficial not only for those children whose learning levels are increased, but also for those adults who participate in such increase and in other aspects of life.

Literary reading and writing when assimilating a culture

Migratory grief is a phase during which bonds are re-developed and referents and values are re-built. In this process, immigrants need to create new realities and reconcile two cultures: the culture of their country of origin and the culture of their host culture. To that end, literary reading contributes to social integration, as reading occupies a space in culture (European Commission, 2001; Montes, 2017). Lluch & Zayas (2015) also suggest using reading and writing as useful instruments to face crisis situations.

Literature can help to develop bonds in the individual's cultural polyphony, to mould and expand the symbolic universe; according to Machado (2018), "fiction lets us live multiple lives and experiences, understand the motions and reasons of others, thus illuminating our own reality" (p. 258).

Bruner's theories (2002) link narrative thinking, identity and literature; therefore "we create and re-create identity through narration, the inner self is the result of our narration (of the way we speak and write)" (p. 85). Narrative enables individuals to build senses and telling stories is essential to interact with society.

Lewis (2008) sees literary experience as a way to overcome individuality, "when I read great literature, I turn into a thousand different people and remain myself at the same time" (p. 140). In this sense, Rosenblatt's transactional theory (2002), efferent and aesthetic reading

are inserted, as well as reading as interaction (transaction) between the text and the reader, who creates meanings by linking literary discourse to his/her emotions and experiences. This vision of literature is shared in the works by Sanjuán (2011), Petit (1999, 2015), Calvo & Tabernero (2015), among others. According to these authors, literary reading is conceived as a healing social inclusion strategy in crisis situations "to seek refuge in situations of great disarray" (Montes, 2017, p. 110).

On her part, Meek (2004) sees literature as a natural setting to enhance motivation and skills to access written culture. This author explains that the individual is immersed in the world of writing and, therefore, has to engage in cultural behaviours linked to written culture, as it is a tool to grasp reality.

According to Alvarado (2013), "writing promotes objectification processes and some perspective on one's discourse" (p. 175); it helps to organise thought and develops complex expressive and cognitive functions. Ong (1987) underlines that, in order to live, individuals do not only need proximity but also distance, and this is the contribution of writing to human conscience. Similarly, Olson (2009) states that "making everyone literate was not only instrumental but essential to social change and personal development" (p. 4).

According to Ferreiro (2002), literary reading affects language development and writing is a process to shape the individual's identity. The result of the research conducted by Ferreiro (2013) in multilingual schools in Europe highlights the role played by literature when it comes to discovering and assimilating a new language and a new culture.

From a theoretical point of view, it is vital to reflect on and analyse how encounters that highlight the importance of "democratising literary reading" (Machado, 2018, p. 257) can be promoted through reception processes of immigrant population. In short, offering citizens

the tools required to build senses and explore the symbolic world to expand their stance "on the written universe" (Montes, 2017, p. 333) is a social responsibility. Reading and writing are actions that help to develop bonds with reality and to be in the world (Petit, 2015).

The objective of this study is to analyse the reading diary (Chambers, 2007) on paper and under the form of a notebook within the framework of the hosting processes of immigrant families. To this end, a shared-reading-friendly environment has been provided in the school environment to read literary texts in the host language.

Method

Design of the research

The design of the research is based on the subject and the context of the study; therefore, an exploratory case study (Simons, 2011) was selected, configured following the qualitative/interpretative paradigm of an ethnographic nature (Mendoza, 2011).

The data collection techniques and instruments used included audio recordings and transcriptions of the sessions, as well as reading diaries of the respondents and field notes of the researcher.

Overall, ten one-hour sessions were recorded over six months, between January and June 2017. According to Van-Lier (1988), recordings used as an instrument allow for the subject of study to be observed in detail and subsequent transcription of data makes it possible to do a thorough check thereof. The encryption proposed by Cambra (2003) was followed: numbering the respondent's turn (respondent no.), category M1 (mother 1, mother 2, and so), Res. (researcher), paraverbal messages (laughter), contextual comments (staring at the cover).

At the beginning of the research, each respondent was provided with a notebook to be

used as reading diary, but also as a free means of expression (Vigo, 2007).

The field notes collected were used to reflect on practice, to keep track and to facilitate understanding of social reality (Simons, 2011).

Participants

This study was conducted in the school library of a Childhood and Primary Education Establishment (CEIP, as per its Spanish acronym) in the Autonomous Community of Aragon throughout a school year. This establishment is characterised by its linguistic and cultural diversity, as 20% of the enrolled students belong to immigrant families.

In order to identify the link between the school and immigrant families, a series of educational agents (n=8) underwent diagnostic interviews (Kvale, 2011): two advisors from the Resource Centre for Inclusive Education (CAREI, as per its Spanish acronym) of the Regional Government of Aragon, the headmaster, two

teachers and three immigrant mothers. The advisors designed actions focusing on the immigrant mothers in order for them to upgrade their language skills in Spanish, hence improving their chances to socialise. The teachers stated that these immigrant mothers take care of enrolling and tracking the academic performance of their children. On the other hand, the headmaster expressed the mothers' concern about the academic performance of their children; nevertheless, she stated that they barely attend any meetings at the school and that they need to upgrade their command of Spanish language: "they try to make themselves understood, to express themselves, they want to get along when their husband is at work, when they go to the doctor and at school" [Headmaster: 24/01/17]. All three immigrant mothers stated that they had trouble speaking in Spanish in public and that they had no feeling of belonging to the school culture.

In this context, in coordination with the establishment's management team, the immigrant families were invited to visit the school

Table 1. Respondents' profiles

RESPONDENT	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	IN SPAIN SINCE	LANGUAGES	BOOKS AND READING IN THE FAMILY
M1	Morocco	10 years	Arabic, mother tongue. Spanish, A2 level	Books in Arabic to improve her children's reading and writing learning
M2	Morocco	11 years	Arabic, mother tongue. French, second language. Spanish, A2 level	Few books at home. She reads to her children in Arabic
M3	Morocco	3 months	Arabic, mother tongue. She is learning to read and write in Spanish	She tells stories to her children in Arabic
M4	Morocco	11 years	Arabic, mother tongue. French, second language. Spanish, A2 level	She reads in Arabic and French with her children She left her books in her country
M5	Morocco	9 years	Arabic, mother tongue. French, second language. Spanish, A2 level	She reads in Arabic and French with her children She left her books in her country.
M6	Morocco	10 years	Arabic, mother tongue. French, second language. Spanish, A2 level	She reads in Arabic and French with her children She left her books in her country

library voluntarily one hour each week to create a reading group. The sample was made up of six immigrant mothers (n = 6), who showed an interest in the proposal and selected a day and a time to go to the library depending on availability, which explains the sample's bias. Table 1 shows the respondents' characteristics in terms of country of origin, time spent in Spain, languages used in everyday life and relationship with books and reading at home.

As can be seen in table 1, they have books in the language they know at home, although three of them explained that they had to leave their books in their country of origin. They are women who emigrated to join their husbands; therefore, they underwent a family reunification process.

Inno circumstance didthis study envisage any initial assessment of the sample's oral fluency or writing skills as voluntary participation of any member of the immigrant families was prioritised, regardless of their command of Spanish language. Additionally, the intention was to minimise the language and cultural barriers in order to foster a welcoming climate for shared reading in a context of discussions held within an inclusive reading community. The study is thus based on the social and emotional dimen-

sion of literary reading (Arizpe, 2012; Calvo, 2015, 2018; Margallo, 2012). This approach is not so frequent in reception processes of immigrant families, as attention is normally drawn on the acquisition of the language as a tool to face everyday life situations, both in institutional Spanish language courses and informal contexts. Nevertheless, according to Teberosky's theories (2012), literature, diving into books and reading are a pathway to literacy in multilingual contexts.

On the other hand, the field work enabled to determine that five respondents had A2 level (Instituto Cervantes, 2002) of communicative competence in Spanish.

Fieldwork performance

Sessions were revitalised following the reading approach proposed by Chambers (2008), adapted to the research context (table 2) in order to foster a climate to provide the respondents with a book corpus in Spanish and to build shared senses as an interpretative community (Fish, 1980). According to Mata (2016), "shared reading activities help to develop new social bonds, help to relieve states of anxiety and stress or emotional crises" (p. 23).

Table 2.
Summary of the revitalisation phases of the sessions

PHASE	OBJECTIVES	QUESTION MODEL
FIRST PHASE: BEFORE READING	Predicting, inferring, activating prior knowledge, linking	What does the title mean to you? What do you think it is going to tell us?
READING OUT LOUD PHASE	Listening actively, creating a bridge between the text and the readers, binding the group	Those raised spontaneously by the respondents, such as: what does it mean?
CONVERSATION PHASE	Speaking, identifying words and/or new expressions, expressing opinions about the characters and situations of the text	What did you like? What part did you like best? And least? Did the book remind you of something? Did it surprise you? Have you heard any word you like? Any new word? What character did you best?
WRITING PHASE	Writing about the readings in the diary, free written expression	What are you going to write about?

The researcher read the texts out loud to facilitate the encounter between the readers and the book. This orality method enables to link respondents by sharing imaginary universes. Additionally, reading out loud enhances the language acquisition and learning, and also promotes cognitive skills such as predicting, linking and inferring.

Data analysis

Responses (Calvo, 2011, 2015; Fittipaldi, 2012; Rosenblatt, 2002) where respondents displayed an attitude and stance on writing were analysed. The texts produced in the reading diaries were also analysed. The analysed data were categorised and interpreted according to the objective of the study.

Selected corpus

The corpus of works was defined following the criteria of Calvo (2011) and Calvo & Tabernero (2015) in reception contexts. These authors' keys are based on the concept of distance reading (Lewis, 2008), based on the metaphorical content of literary language (Ricoeur, 1996). This vision of literary reading enables the reader to objectify his/her personal story and unleash a narrative activity. According to Machado (2018), "fiction narration breaks individualist indifference and accustoms readers to step out of himself/herself and live other lives, which leaves an emotional experience, openness to other people, which is extremely rich" (p. 262).

In this same line, Petit (2015) recommends books that are not just a pure carbon copy of the reader's life, "but a metaphor, a transposition, a detour" (p. 67), following the same approach to metaphor of Ricoueur (1996) as a way to look at the world, to rewrite it and live in it. Readers are protected by the mediation of a text and the book becomes a welcoming aesthetic space. This is an underlying concept of the studies conducted by Bonnafé (2008) when referring to the book as an

aid that links the individual and his/her community and as a tool that facilitates relationships between individuals, "bringing books to families of foreign origin implies recognition of the host country" (p. 69).

Such criteria are supported by the series of books shared in the fieldwork: three folk tales (Yo dos y tú uno, La mujer mandona and La mano negra) from the compilation of Rodríguez Almodóvar (1983), Cuentos al amor de la lumbre; Cinderella by Perrault and illustrated by Innocenti (2001), Loba from Cuando de noche llaman a la puerta by Docampo (2001) and Piramo e Tisbe by Guillot (2007) from Ovid's metamorphoses.

Results

Data collected from the respondents' answers, the texts produced in the reading notebooks and the researcher's field notes underwent a triangulation process. The results thereof produced the following category framework: readings category, linguistic category and emotional category.

The readings category includes segments that have been identified in those respondents' oral answers that express certain stances on writing in order to record the texts read in the reading diary to recall them, as well as their opinions. For example, based on the inferences of the subject dealt with in *La mujer mandona*, interest in writing down the title in the reading diary grows:

- 81. Res.: Today we are going to be reading *La mujer* mandona.
- 82. 2: Ah!
- 83. Res.: La mujer mandona. The title, does it ring a bell? Does it remind you of something you have already read, a legend, a story in your culture of origin? What is the story about? What is told in it?
- 84. M2: She breaks the rules, she is a woman who breaks the rules.
- 85. Res.: La mujer mandona breaks the rules.
- 86. M2: Writing, otherwise I do not remember [Reading group, session no. 4: 31/03/17]

It is about short texts made up of notes including details about the books' authors; figure 1 is a good example of this. These pages also reflect the views and feelings (figure 2) generated by shared reading in the readers and represent a way to make reading memorable.

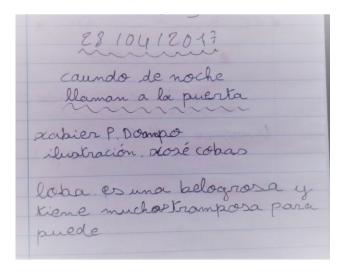


Figure 1. Screenshot of M1's diary page.

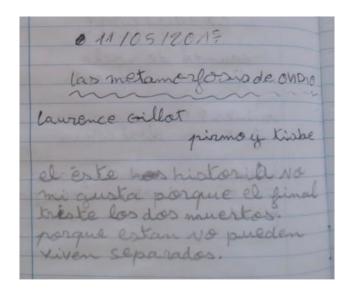


Figure 2. Screenshot of M2's diary page.

The linguistic category covers all responses referring to assimilating the host language. Therefore, during the group conversations, potentially acquisitive sequences take place (Cambra, 2003), and respondents question

grammatical categories regarding the gender of a substantive and its semantic value (M2 & M6) in a context of discussions held within an inclusive reading community:

- 27. Res.: The title of this tale is *Loba*. What do you think is the story about?
- 28. M2: Cheater.
- 29. M3: Unfaithful, all the bad things.
- 30. M1: Wolf, she wolf. I see the picture of a wolf in first place, caution, safety.
- 31. M6: The wolf can kill you.
- 32. M1: To eat.
- 33. M2: Why did not he/she write wolves? Just she wolf.
- 34. M6: What difference does it make wolf, she wolf?
- 35. Res.: What may be in the tale? Why is it "she wolf" instead of "wolf"?
- 36. M6: Both can do everything. Both.
- 37. Res.: The title is she wolf
- 38. M2: That is right. I do not know why. Something special. A loving she wolf who protects her young, I do not know.

[Reading group, session no. 7: 28/04/2017]

This category is identified in the diary pages used to reinforce and retain new vocabulary acquired during the active and attentive listening process when reading out loud (figure 3). In this case, they write the term in Spanish and its translation into Arabic as a strategy to learn and acquire the language.

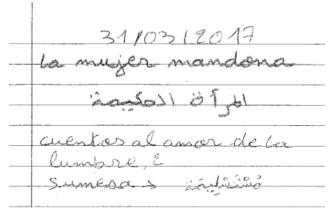


Figure 3. Screenshot of M1's diary page.

The emotional category is identified as those self-reflective responses that reveal the meaning and the sense of writing in the host language. The excerpt of a respondent (M2), who feels writing is an emotional need, is a good example:

283. Res.: Do you enjoy writing?

284. M2: Yes, I have always written in Arabic.

285. Res.: In Arabic.

286. M2: I write what I feel.

287. Res.: And in Spanish?

288. M2: Never, this is my first time.

289. Res.: How do you feel about this experience?

290. M2: I know what you feel, you are nervous,

write it in your diary and release tension

291. M2: Sure, if you bring out what you have inside

you

292. Res.: You get away

293. M2: I get away.

[Reading group, session no. 10: 26/05/2017]

Reading diaries become stories of life as shown in figure 4. Two respondents even described their migratory journey, reconstructed it and recreated their vital experience through narra-

mellamo hasnae sois de maruelas uso carada kengo tres hijos. levo en españa desde diez años haora livo con me familia. uso e queiro me familia mucho antes estive vivo con me padre uz me madre uz mio hirmanas haora me padre está muerto me echar mucho. cuando me acuerdo me padre está trabajar mucho horas está trabajar mucho horas está tiene un dia lebre. el mismo tiempo me madre este tiene mucho trabajar en casa con nonotros. haora me toca con me familia la vida está aqui

Figure 4. Screenshot of M4's diary page.

tion as an instrument to get away, give meaning and build themselves.

Conclusions

The results suggest that shared reading of literary texts in a welcoming school environment promoted the development of attitudes towards the written culture of the host language. According to the resulting categories, the reading diary, as a medium and format, has three functions: writing to retain shared readings (Chambers, 2007), writing to acquire the language (Ferreiro, 2002; Teberosky, 2012) and writing to get away and build one self (Alvarado, 2013; Ferreiro, 2002; Ong, 1987).

The readings category reflects the usefulness of including reading diaries as an instrument to make reading in the host language sustainable. This result suggests that the selected readings have been included in the respondents' cultural polyphony.

The linguistic category focuses on reading out loud as an orality method, as a way to acquire the language. Therefore, the respondents acquire new vocabulary, which they have assimilated and retained on the pages of their diaries.

In this sense, the link between literary reading and writing is confirmed (Meek, 2004), and the text's world makes the reader convey his/her world (Rosenblatt, 2002). Therefore, the emotional category shows the role played by writing as an individual's search to know who he/she is and to shape his/her narrative identity (Ferreiro, 2002). Diaries reveal the interiorisation of a narrative discourse that contains references and meaning, and the need to write to tell one's own vital experiences in the host language. The texts produced by respondents M2 and M4 at home are an evidence of the dimension of writing as a process to reflect, express and refine emotions and develop bonds with reality (Petit, 2015).

Therefore. the respondents developed certain attitudes towards written culture and the diary is an adequate means to write up their stories, a way to get away (Alvarado, 2013; Andruetto, 2014; Ong, 1987) and to organise their memories: "M2: I know how you feel, you are nervous, write it in your diary and release tension", "Get away".

It should be noted that this study has never been aimed at assessing the sample's command of Spanish language, but at fostering a welcoming climate to speak and write in an interlanguage (Selinker, 1972) provided by each respondent. For all respondents, it was a great opportunity to hear literary texts in Spanish read out loud, and also to speak and write in the host language, as they had never been part of a reading community within the school community.

This study is expected to be useful for other educational realities to minimise language and social barriers through literary reading and writing under the form of a reading diary.

Nevertheless, the results of this study should be interpreted in the context of this specific research, mainly due to the sample's bias. Although such results may be a starting point to design subsequent longitudinal studies to confirm and/or compare the data obtained.

Literary reading fosters approaching reading by providing the individual with symbolic and linguistic materials to build senses about one's self and the world, an essential key to social inclusion.

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