

Fostering literacy: Pre-primary pre-service teachers' reading habits and literature knowledge

MARÍA TABUENCA CUEVAS

JAVIER FERNÁNDEZ MOLINA

Universidad de Alicante

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ABSTRACT: In pre-primary education, there is a need for specific research into developing awareness of literary genres that can be used in the EFL classes to promote literacy. A total of 264 students on the Teaching English for Pre-primary Education course participated on an online questionnaire adapted from Cremin et al. (2008), using both qualitative and quantitative questions to provide an insight into the issue. The first part of the questionnaire examined the reading habits of pre-service teachers. The second part probed into the specific knowledge of texts and authors in general for use in the EFL pre-primary classroom. The results showed that there is a very limited tradition of reading outside the EFL classroom from students' experiences, that there is a very narrow catalogue of texts and genres that students are familiar with and lastly, that literature is primarily seen as a vehicle for vocabulary acquisition. Thus, it is essential to encourage future EFL teachers not only to become more knowledgeable about genres, but also aware of the different reasons to use literature in the classroom to promote literacy.

Key words: Pre-primary, literature, pre-service teachers, EFL, literacy.

Hábitos de lectura y conocimiento de la literatura de las maestras de educación infantil en formación

RESUMEN: En la educación infantil, es necesario realizar investigaciones específicas acerca del conocimiento del profesorado en formación sobre la variedad de géneros literarios disponibles para las clases de inglés como lengua extranjera para promover la alfabetización. 264 alumnas de Didáctica del Inglés para Educación Infantil participaron en un cuestionario en línea adaptado de Cremin et al. (2008) con preguntas cualitativas y cuantitativas. La primera parte examinó los hábitos de lectura de las maestras en formación. La segunda parte exploró el conocimiento específico de textos y autores en general para el aula de Educación Infantil. Los resultados mostraron que existe una tradición muy limitada de lectura a partir de las experiencias de las estudiantes, que el catálogo de textos y géneros con los que las estudiantes están familiarizadas es muy limitado y, por último, que la literatura se ve principalmente como un vehículo para la adquisición de vocabulario. Por lo tanto, es esencial alentar al futuro profesorado de inglés no solo a ser más conocedoras de los géneros, sino también a ser conscientes de las diferentes razones para usar la literatura en el aula para promover la alfabetización.

Palabras clave: educación infantil, literatura, docentes en formación, inglés lengua extranjera, lectoescritura.

1. INTRODUCTION

A greater attention on pre-school education in Europe has come to the forefront in recent years with meetings by experts from 28 countries and 30 education systems focusing on Early Language Learning (ELL). In the European Council Conclusions (2009), over a decade ago, the EU Education Ministers set a target that by 2020 at least 95% of children aged between four and the age in which compulsory primary education starts should participate in early childhood education. In Spain, the State System of Education Indicators (SEIE) reported in 2016-2017 that 96.3% of students were enrolled by the age of three in pre-primary education.

This trend coincides with an interest in Early Language Learning (ELL) at the pre-primary level, as the importance of learning two foreign languages from an early age (European Council, 2002), is another priority. The aim is to work on language competencies through “systematic awareness raising or exposure to more than one language during a pre-primary school context” (European Commission, 2020, p.6). Since 2006, English as a foreign language (EFL) has been introduced across Spain (Eurydice, 2017) with varying success in pre-primary education. However, there is no systematic focus on how to approach teaching EFL at early ages, as it is a fairly recent change in the Spanish education system. Studies on teacher training at this stage point out the challenges pre-primary teacher training programs still have (Cortina-Pérez & Andúgar, 2021; Enever, 2015) at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and demonstrate that “a lack of specific teacher training for this early introduction of the language, as well as vague legislative guidelines, has led teachers to implement their own methodological models and strategies” (Andúgar & Cortina-Pérez, 2018, p.220). Moreover, there is extensive research on the need to focus on early foreign language teaching by other researchers at the pre-primary stage (Mourao, 2015; Muñoz, 2008; Pérez-Esteve & Roig, 2009; Sotés, 2000).

In pre-primary education, young children are engaged mostly in oral language development in the classroom, focusing on the different components of the oral language which are closely linked to literacy development (August & Shanahan, 2006; Snow et al., 1998); these include: phonology (sounds); vocabulary (words); grammar (sentence structure); discourse (a coherent text to convey an idea or to tell stories); and pragmatics (language in use, and the context). This is echoed in regional educational policy, as in the Valencian Community (Decree 100/2022), where this study was carried out. In the decree it states that the teaching “must promote the acquisition of phonemes, the work of rhythm and intonation, lexical developmentand to recognize the general meaning of short texts” (p. 41145). Moreover, in the first cycle, students should be exposed to different genres of children’s literature, and in the second cycle, the use of literature, “will allow them to increase their knowledge and actively participate, taking advantage of the fact that they will have more mastery of the techniques of each language (p. 41146). Therefore, the use of literature for many purposes is actively promoted in the new decree.

There are shifts across multiple international organisations that are fostering early literacy skills in both L1 and L2. For example, Bertram and Pascal (2016) in an analysis of the IEA’s Early Childhood Education Study highlight that at level 0 there is no direct reference to literacy but that:

...the educational properties of early childhood educational development are characterised by a learning environment that is visually stimulating and language-rich. These programs foster self-expression, with an emphasis on language acquisition and the use of language for meaningful communication (p. 27).

Other researchers, such as Verhelst et al. (2009), in their report *Framework of Reference for Early Second language Acquisition*, state within the reading skill that “one objective...is that pre-school children must develop a basic insight into the functions of written language” (p.7). This is also reflected in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), (Council of Europe, 2001) which includes the use of literary texts in the descriptors for the attainment of language competence, as noted by Jones and Carter (2012). They point out that “a detailed look at the CEFR reveals that literature is seen as a central resource in achieving its goals” (p.70), although literature is discussed in broad and specific terms. Literature is described as something which helps to develop socio-cultural knowledge and aesthetic enjoyment of language, and it is also stated that “it is much hoped that teachers of literature at all levels will find sections of the framework relevant to their concerns and useful in making their aims and methods more transparent” (Jones & Carter, 2012, p.56). Therefore, it is evident that from a European perspective, early language learning and literacy must be promoted at the pre-primary stage and that using literature to foster literacy can be considered vital in language learning.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Teachers as readers and the role of literacy in the pre-primary EFL classroom.

It would be necessary to pinpoint what literacy means in the pre-primary EFL classroom. Literacy skills are developed not only by talking and listening to stories, but also by learning poetry and songs; and by being taught decoding and encoding through a systematic synthetic phonics programme (Department of Education, 2021). For the purposes of this study, literacy development includes phonology, vocabulary, sentence structure, discourse, and pragmatics. As mentioned previously, in the Valencian Community, where this study was carried out, teaching in the pre-primary EFL classroom “must promote the acquisition of phonemes, the work of rhythm and intonation, lexical developmentand to recognize the general meaning of short texts (p. 41145)”. This requires the support of a range of text types (Enz & Morrow, 2009) that teachers need to know to equip the classroom with a “print-rich environment.... library nook and literacy play areas” (Neuman, 2004, p.91), as studies regarding literacy in early childhood education emphasize. This requires a knowledgeable teacher in literary genres, from picture books to decodables, to be able to provide the enriching experiences necessary for literacy development.

Another issue is why teachers should be readers. There are limited studies on the reading habits of pre-primary teachers. Nevertheless, these demonstrate that teachers need a wide knowledge of children’s literature (Block et al., 2002; Medwell et al., 1998) to be truly effective teachers. Cremin et al. (2008), have highlighted in their study the “narrow scope

of primary teachers' knowledge and use of children's literature" (p.12). Specific patterns were identified regarding reading practices whereby teachers relied on the canon for book selection in the classroom. Studies, as early as 2002, by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), demonstrated that teachers cannot improve reading skills without also considering interesting and meaningful reading materials that "engage [student's] interests and satisfy their curiosity, preferences and needs" (Kowalewski, 2016, p.220). The Department of Education's (2012) internal analysis of the data from Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2006 suggests that it is especially narrative texts that make the most difference. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that at the pre-primary stage, reading books for young children is a compelling support for the type of language development that is associated with literacy (Bodrova & Leong, 2006; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

There is research that supports the bidirectionality of literacy skills that can be transferred both ways between the L1 and L2. This is especially important in the context of this study, where a co-official language is also being introduced at the pre-primary stage in the Valencian Community. Some research indicates that initial literacy does not necessarily need to be in the L1 as Dlugosz (2000) states, "...including the teaching of reading in language programs will benefit all young beginners, including pre-schoolers, i.e. children who have not yet been taught to read in their native tongue" (p. 285). Other researchers, like Pfenninger and Singleton (2019), point out that simultaneous bilinguals benefited from an earlier starting experience in another language and that mastering literacy skills are essential. In the words of Shin and Crandall (2014) "one only has to become 'literate' once" (p.160). However, there is some debate as to when L2 literacy should begin (Fleta-Guillén & García-Bermejo, 2014; Cortina-Pérez & Andúgar, 2018).

2.2. Previous studies on English literacy in Spain

There is some debate on whether it is better to wait for the consolidation of spoken language, or if literacy can be successfully integrated into Pre-Primary EFL in an attempt to broaden the scope of literacy instruction at that level. Morais and Silva (2022) analysed the policies on the teaching of reading, comprehension, and production of written texts in six different countries, including Spain. Their paper concludes that there is governmental commitment to the literacy of children under six years of age, promoting the interest of reading and writing texts. There is, moreover, a small body of literature that is concerned with the teaching of English literacy at early stages in Spain. The incorporation of phonics has, nonetheless, fuelled the debate of whether it is possible to teach to read and write a foreign language within the Spanish pre-primary context.

There is more extensive research referring to the use of synthetic phonics to support early literacy in the pre-primary classroom. When the specific features of English, the apparently random relationship between letters and sounds, are not fully understood, learners of English apply the grapheme-phoneme strategy of their own language (Ibarrola, 2007) resulting in an oral language which is neither the mother tongue nor English. Such practice hinders any attempt to properly approach the complex phenomenon of English literacy. The limited specific previous studies in the field include that of Rendón-Romero et al., (2021) who defends that phonics in Spain has not been researched enough. These scholars believe

that it is plausible to transfer English literacy skills to Spanish. Not only Ibarrola (2007), but also López-Cirugeda & López-Campillo (2016) have attempted to find a gap where phonics may suit Spanish existing language teaching policies. Andúgar and Cortina-Pérez (2020), in turn, highlight the most characteristic features of phonics commercial programmes. They explicitly express the irregular spelling of the English language which does not follow phonic rules, unlike Spanish, Italian and especially Finnish, which are acknowledged phonological languages. In this line of thought, Fleta-Guillén and García-Bermejo (2014) expound the need to work on the aural and oral skills at the pre-primary level and suggests means to achieve it. Tolchinsky et al. (2012) analysed the voices of the teachers identifying their preference for explicit instructional practices, more focused on the learning outcomes but less concerned with autonomous writing and occasional learning.

Additional research on reading suggests that ideally, both authentic and specially written attractively illustrated books should be used (Pino & Rodríguez, 2010). Aparicio-Molina and Pérez-Agustín (2019) advocate the joint teaching of two different linguistic and cultural systems applied to the stages of early childhood through picture books. This is in line with Álvarez-Cofiño (2003), who proposes intertwined usage of Big Books, English versions of classic stories, and specifically designed children story books to lead to measurable success at ages where reading is not expected from them. Larragueta and Ceballos-Viro (2018) present a study on the selection of picture books for vocabulary acquisition, highlighting the importance of a proper selection. According to their results, students learned more vocabulary when the narration consisted of simple sentences or single words and when the books had at most three elements per page clearly differentiated from the background.

Other researchers focus on methodologies regarding the use of literature in the pre-primary classroom. González-Martín and Querol-Julián (2016) compare methodologies regarding the use of well-known stories for English language learning in the pre-primary classroom as do Coyle and Ferrez-Moya (2018) and Guadamillas-Gómez (2015). Fleta-Guillén and García-Bermejo (2018) go one step further including the need to create and illustrate stories to foster literacy at early stages. Others like Cortina-Pérez and Andúgar (2020) highlight how innovation in the classroom can lead to the development of literacy. Nevertheless, from the broader perspective of the design of the school linguistic project, Ruiz-Bikandi (2003) warns about the need to plan well in advance and cautiously the simultaneous or asynchronous literacy instruction of two languages, since a minimum linguistic development in L2 is required. The author emphasises the fact that “there is no automatic transfer from literacy L1 to literacy L2” (p. 133) which is echoed by Fleta-Guillén and García-Bermejo (2014), among others in the field.

3. AIMS OF THE STUDY

There are three aims in this study which used an adapted version of the questionnaire based on Cremin et al. (2008). The first aim is to explore the reading habits of pre-service pre-primary teachers at the University of Alicante in the Valencian Community. The second aim is to find out what English text types these pre-service teachers are familiar with for use in the pre-primary EFL classroom. The last aim is to find out how pre-service teachers view the potential use of literature in the pre-primary EFL classroom for literacy.

We hypothesize that, similar to the study done by Cremin et al. (2008), the pre-service pre-primary teachers will have limited knowledge of literary texts -irrespective of their previous experience- that can be used in the EFL classroom albeit they may be avid readers in general. We also hypothesize that their use of literature will be limited to instrumental activities like vocabulary acquisition.

4. METHOD AND INSTRUMENTS

Within the research tradition, academics have debated whether quantitative and qualitative approaches should or should not be utilised combined for research purposes (Bryman, 2016). The two main reasons provided resort firstly to the ontological and epistemological load underlying every piece of research, and secondly, to the notion that they belong to separate paradigms, even opposing ones. In this study, an online questionnaire adapted from Cremin et al. (2008) including both, quantitative and qualitative questions, was used for a mixed approach (Shorten & Smith, 2017). Following Silva and Wright (2008), the qualitative questions within the architecture of the research design chosen should help to check and correct the quantitative data ensuring that the survey data are more reliable. The combination of both approaches was deemed would shed light on the issues achieving a more comprehensive account of the object of study. As validation is an important step in research (Cresswell & Miller, 2000), face validity was established by having three experts in the field read through and evaluate the questionnaire. Once this was completed, a limited number of students pilot tested the questions. This is a second essential step to the validation process.

The tool Google forms was used to collect the data as the “advantages of online data collection techniques” (Granello & Wheaton, 2004, p.388) were strongly considered. Instructions on how and when to fill in the questionnaire were provided in class. The program ACQUAD 7 (Huber & Gürtler, 2013), a software program which can be used in the analysis of text, was used to analyze and interpret the data collected in the open questions in the questionnaire. According to Iglesias-Martínez et al. (2014) this software program has the “capacity to combine the processes of interpretation and codification” and permits “a deductive and inductive strategy” (p. 172) to analyze the information collected from the questionnaire. The analysis followed these phases:

- First, a list was drawn up with the recurring concepts of the answers.
- Next, the frequency levels of each concept were identified.
- After this, the most iterative concepts were regrouped into codes and subcodes.
- Finally, frequencies and percentages were analysed.

The qualitative analysis also intends to quantify the importance of the issues that emerge using an absolute frequency (AF) and the percentage (%AF) in relation to the information gathered. The calculation of the absolute frequencies of the different codes shows their relative importance from the perspective of the participants. The analysis uses the following codification for the types of participants: (UD) university degree students.

4.1. Participants

The only obligatory course on teaching English in the Pre-Primary Education degree is taught in the first semester of the first year of the degree program at the University of Alicante. Students are only given one semester of specific instruction in the course Didactics of English for Pre-Primary Education. This means that there are over 340 students enrolled on the course, however, only 264 students participated on the online questionnaire. It was done on a voluntary basis and done outside class time. All of them are in the first year of the degree program. In total, 94% of the participants are female and only 6% are male.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first question was primarily based on the reading habits of the students who participated on the survey. There was a total of 420 responses for the first question.

Table 1. *What literature in English have you read for pleasure? (books, short stories, comics, graphic novels, poetry, verse novels, etc.).*

Codes UD	AF	AF%
Novels	150	35,7%
Chapter books	132	31,4%
Short stories	97	23,1%
Manga, Comics, Graphic novels	25	6%
News	11	2,6%
Poetry	5	1,2%

In response to the first question, the genres chosen showed the popularity of novels and chapter books as the favourite genres for pleasure reading in English, followed by a lesser percentage of short stories. The categories of manga, comics and graphic novels, poetry and news were mentioned only by a few participants. These results would indicate that students are avid readers in English. It was interesting to note that some students read the news in English.

The second question asked the participants to list some titles of literature that they had read in English for pleasure. This proved to be a real challenge, as in some cases students were unable to list examples of titles they had read and simply stated 'I don't remember the title' or 'I don't remember the name of the book'. Some listed books they had read in Secondary Education like the series, *Henry VIII and his Six Wives*, *Sherlock Holmes*, or *The Murder of Mary Jones*. Others showed an interest in the supernatural and adventure, with titles such as *Harry Potter*, *The Shadow Hunters* or *The Hunger Games* which clearly reflected reading for pleasure. However, the repetition of novel and chapter book titles is surprising and shows a very limited repertoire of reading experiences.

The third question identified the group of students who simply do not read at all for an assorted number of reasons. These reasons are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2. *If you never read anything in English, list all the reasons.*

Codes UD	AF	AF%
I do not have time	31	45.6%
It is hard to read in English	18	26.5%
I do not like reading in any language	12	17.6%
Books are expensive	2	2.9%
Other(s)	5	7.4%

Results show that reading in English is not something that a small group of students considers essential as part of their professional development. These responses are in sharp contrast to the study by Commeyras et al. (2003) which highlights that teachers that read support young readers and that teacher's "professional reading experiences can have a positive impact upon their pedagogy" (Cremin et al., 2009, p.4).

In the fourth question, most of the respondents identified two main categories which appear in Table 3.

Table 3. *What type of texts / genres can you use in the pre-primary classroom?*

Codes UD	AF	AF%
Rhymes /Riddles/Songs	204	38.9%
Picture books	198	37.7%
Decodables	52	9.9%
Poems	40	7.6%
I don't know	31	5.9%

The obvious preference for rhymes, or picture books (which include folk and traditional tales) in contrast to poems or decodables would imply that there is a strong preference for specific genres which could be limiting in the pre-primary classroom. This could hinder the development of pre-primary students' literacy, as Bakken (2017) highlights how emphasising the learners' ability to interpret, reflect on and evaluate a wide variety of texts in different genres develops an awareness of texts in the learners which is also an objective of the CEFR.

Question 5 asked students to list the titles of any of the genres they had chosen in the previous question. The list of titles highlighted that students were primarily familiar with many of the texts presented as part of the course material. Traditional tales like: Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Snow White, The Gingerbread Man were repeated often. More

contemporary picture books such as *We're going on a Bear Hunt*, *The Magic Porridge Pot*, *How the Fly saved the River*, *The Gruffalo* and the *Little Hungry Caterpillar* were the most repeated; as were traditional rhymes like *Jack and Jill*; or *One-two, buckle my shoe*, among others. It became apparent that students were comfortable with the texts seen in the course or traditional tales and rhymes and did not venture out on their own to explore alternative texts or authors.

The next question asked the participants to list the name of any author of texts that can be used in the pre-primary classroom. Many students were unable to name an author related to the texts in the previous question. The list of authors was so reduced that it was almost anecdotal in the questionnaire. As one student stated: 'It's more important to remember the name of the book, it doesn't matter if you don't know the author'. This may indicate that students are unaware of the need to become knowledgeable of authors and the genres that they produce. This would enrich the expertise of the pre-service teachers and allow them in the future to make appropriate decisions regarding texts in the classroom.

The last question was designed to see how literature could be used in the Pre-primary classroom. The varied responses are in the table below.

Table 4. *How can you use literature for literacy in the pre-primary classroom?
List all the possibilities.*

Codes UD	AF	AF%
To learn vocabulary, set phrases, expressions	159	40.2%
It is not important	106	26.8%
To learn about culture and values	44	11.1%
To learn grammar	36	9.1%
To think critically	20	5.1%
To learn how to spell	20	5.1%
Improve listening and fluency	3	0.7%
For fun, motivation, know interesting stories	3	0.7%
Improve language and communication	3	0.7%
To pass the subject	1	0.25%
Know more (in general)	1	0.25%

It was not surprising that many participants pointed out that their use of literature would be limited to instrumental activities like vocabulary acquisition or spelling. The next largest category signals that there are no important uses for literature which would seem to be contradictory. However, further scrutiny of the questionnaire indicates that the use of texts is not often associated with the development of specific literacy skills and thus, its importance is not valued. It is interesting to note that only a few responses showed quite a different approach, for example, one student said, 'for fun', another 'to know interesting

stories’, and yet another ‘to know more’. Even though some of the responses were very insightful, these were too few to really make a difference. This attitude of these pre-service teachers shows how in many cases literature “remains a somewhat marginalised resource, featuring in only a limited way” (Jones & Carter, 2012, p. 69). Limiting literature to these types of tasks undermines its use in the classroom (Krashen, 2004) and exemplifies why knowledge of literary genres and texts is essential (Cremin et al, 2009) to foster literacy in the pre-primary classroom for multiple purposes to enrich language exposure.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study is limited to a small group of pre-service teacher students, mostly female and the majority within a specific age bracket between 18-19 years of age. Therefore, it is only a limited view of the reading habits and knowledge of these first-year students on the pre-primary degree program.

Our aims were to explore the reading habits of pre-service pre-primary teachers at the University of Alicante in the Valencian Community; to find out what English text types they are familiar with for use in the pre-primary EFL classroom, and to gain an insight on how they view the potential use of literature in the pre-primary EFL classroom for literacy. The results of the questionnaire showed that our hypotheses were to some extent corroborated in this study.

We hypothesized that most students would not be avid English readers, and the data initially seemed to contradict the hypothesis. However, a closer look at the data showed many titles that students had read recently as part of their high school curriculum, although it may have additionally resulted in reading for pleasure. Nevertheless, fewer students mentioned texts that can be considered popular fiction and even fewer were able to name authors. Therefore, these results highlight that many of these pre-service teachers have not developed a habit in general of reading for pleasure in English. As future teachers, the use of literature needs to be fostered and as the OECD (2002) argues, the will (to read) influences the skill (and interest) in students. A surprising issue that became evident was the percentage of students who do not read at all in English. This would need more research as reading is a fundamental part of a teacher’s work. For future pre-primary teachers, reading in English is a necessary skill as English language and the different curricular areas overlap. This overarching issue would be an area to study further as “all educators have a fundamental role in ensuring all children learn to read, including...initial teacher training...” (Department for Education, 2021, p.6).

The second hypothesis was that the participants would have limited knowledge of literary text types that can be used in the pre-primary EFL classroom and there would also be (a logical) unfamiliarity with authors. This proved to be correct as the limited number of titles showed that most students were familiar with songs, rhymes, and picture books (including folk or traditional tales) that were worked on during the course. There was little interest in poetry or the use of decodables, even though these genres can be applied to the acquisition of phonemes, rhythm and intonation and lexical development. Interestingly, some students stated it was not necessary to know the name of the authors, and even more surprisingly, in a few responses, the names they did remember did not necessarily relate to the titles students

had listed in the previous question in the questionnaire. This result mirrors Cremin et al. (2009), who have detected in their study the “narrow scope of primary teachers’ knowledge and use of children’s literature” (p.12). This indicates a need for specific research into areas such as motivating teachers to use literature starting at pre-primary levels and developing awareness regarding the variety of genres that can be used in the EFL classroom, from traditional tales to poetry and decodables.

The third hypothesis regarding possible uses for literature in the pre-primary classroom was corroborated. The responses of the students showed that the possible uses for literature in the pre-primary classroom were limited for the most part to vocabulary awareness, ignoring other aspects of literacy such as the acquisition of phonemes, the work of rhythm and intonation, or the recognition of the general meaning of short texts. The fact that many students did not value the importance of the use of texts in the classroom further highlighted that texts are not necessarily associated with the development of these literacy skills.

The Valencian Community is one of the regions in Spain where EFL is part of the pre-primary curriculum, providing all young learners with opportunities to learn more than one language. Moreover, as stated by the European Commission (2020), “the younger children are exposed to different languages, the greater their ability to develop a feeling for the rhythm, the phonology and the intonation of the language. Their potential to grasp the language structure later is also greatly enhanced” (p. 10). This is also reflected in the pre-primary education decree in the Valencian Community (Decree 100/2022) where literacy skills and the exposure to different genres are part of the EFL curriculum. Subsequently, this growing trend in teaching EFL at the pre-primary stage should be accompanied by specific teacher training according to Andúgar and Cortina-Pérez (2018) at HEIs. Moreover, as studies have shown, training for literacy is vital for EFL pre-primary teachers, who often have only general methodological guidelines and no specific content in decrees that can be followed for the introduction of EFL at this stage. The need to focus more on literacy through the use of literature in EFL is similarly echoed by Jones and Carter (2012) who have pointed out that “a detailed look at the CEFR reveals that literature is seen as a central resource in achieving its goals” (p.70) and this should include developing an approach to working on literacy at the pre-primary stage (Bertram & Pascal, 2016; Verhelst et al. 2009). Therefore, future pre-primary EFL teachers should be encouraged to become readers themselves (Cremin et al., 2008) and be trained not only to be familiar with different genres and authors, but also on how to use literature in the classroom to develop literacy skills.

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