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Julia Haba-Osca
Alba Ambròs
Julia Osca-Lluch

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Review Article

Scientific production in children's literature through the Web of Science

Julia Haba-Osca¹ 

Junior Lecturer, University of Valencia, Department of English and German Philology, SPAIN

Alba Ambròs² 

Senior Lecturer, University of Barcelona, Department of Linguistic and Literary Education, SPAIN

Julia Osca-Lluch³ 

Professor, Polytechnical University of Valencia, INGENIO (CSIC-UPV), SPAIN

Abstract

Children's literature has raised the interest of different disciplines and has strongly emerged not only in society but also in school and university curricula. This paper aims to analyse production in children's literature and determine the discipline's scientific activity published in international scientific journals indexed in the Web of Science. A total of 1,558 papers published in 474 journals were retrieved. The results show an increase in the number of papers on children's literature over time. Document typology was highly diverse, scientific articles and book reviews accounting for more than 85% of the total production. *Lion and the Unicorn*, *Children's Literature in Education*, and *International Research in Children's Literature* were the journals with the highest production. The journals analysed were classified under 96 different subject categories, *Literature* and *Educational research* being the areas with the largest number of publications.

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¹ Corresponding Author (✉ julia.haba@uv.es)

Web of Science veri tabanında dizinlenen dergilerde çocuk edebiyatına ilişkin eser üretimi

Öz

Çocuk edebiyatı birçok farklı disiplinin ilgisini çekmiş ve hem toplumsal alanda hem de okul ve üniversite programlarında önemli bir yer tutmuştur. Bu çalışmanın amacı çocuk edebiyatındaki eser üretimini incelemek ve Web of Science veri tabanında dizinlenmiş uluslararası bilimsel dergilerde bu alanda yayımlanmış bilimsel çalışmaları belirlemektir. 474 dergide yayımlanmış olan toplam 1,558 çalışma incelenmiştir. Bulgular, zamanla çocuk edebiyatı alanında yapılmış çalışmaların sayısında bir artış olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca, alandaki çalışmalar çok fazla çeşitlilik göstermekle beraber üretilen çalışmaların %85 ini bilimsel makaleler ve kitap incelemeleri oluşturmaktadır. *Lion and the Unicorn*, *Children's Literature in Education*, ve *International Research in Children's Literature* dergilerinin en çok çalışmanın yayımlandığı dergiler oldukları tesbit edilmiştir. Analizi yapılan dergiler 96 farklı konu başlığı altında sınıflandırılmış olup, *Edebiyat* ve *Eğitim Araştırmaları* bölümleri en çok sayıda yayının sınıflandırıldığı başlıklar olarak öne çıkmıştır.

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Introduction

Approaching children's literature^{1,2} from the viewpoint of scientific production over time requires initially defining what we mean by children's literature and contextualising it within its scope of action, dissemination and acceptance. Díaz-Plaja and Prats (1998), Hunt (1999), Etxaniz (2008) and Lorente (2011), described the problems encountered by children's and young adults' literature in being accepted by university academicism. It is worth remembering this to better appreciate the fact that a research and study line on children's and young adults' literature has only recently been developed within literature studies, one that finally needs no justification and is now booming in universities around the world.

Children's literature must be understood as the discipline that studies books for children. As such, to make progress as a discipline, it requires research in its specific area. The abovementioned line is intended to prove that the potential of this literature is to teach children to read competently, to enjoy reading, and to delve into culture. The basis for analysis must be literature studies, but beyond the studies proposed by Philology, studies on children's literature should consider the acquisition, development, and communicative variability of literary texts and their contribution to reading competence (Mendoza, 2010). Children's literature is currently accepted as an art object or product of an aesthetic nature but one with commercial and economic dimensions too. It has also generated a prolific and relevant research field in literature education, more particularly in language and literature didactics (Díaz-Plaja, 2009; Ballester, 2015).

It is in this context that children's literature has developed, raising the interest of different disciplines (psychology, history of literacy and culture, school education, language and literature didactics between other disciplines). Over the past twenty years, it has strongly emerged not only in society but also in school and in university curricula of former and new teacher training degrees for infant, primary and secondary education in Spain.

Likewise, over the last twenty years, children's literature in Spain has become consolidated, giving way to different types of research work: historic compilations of children's literature with a new approach to children's and young adults' literature in Spain (García-Padrino, 1998, 2004; Garralón, 2001); characterisation work or sector analysis in literature for children and young adults, i.e. studies based on reading ages (Durán, 2005; Colomer, 2008; Jover, 2008), or genre-focused studies: theatre, illustration, album (Tejerina, 1998; Durán, 2007; Silva-Díaz, 2006); works that place children's literature in literary education from the assumptions of the construction of the reader through the analysis of the literary components that modulate it and conform it (Colomer, 1998; Mendoza, 1999; Lluch, 1998); works about

¹ Although finding a definition of the object of study was not easy, when referring to Children's Literature in the paper we will use the definition by Díaz-Plaja (2016): "A set of texts –including oral tradition– that children enjoy and consider their literature. It may include texts not initially targeted at them, or adaptations of works for adults. It is basically divided into three literary genres: narrative, poetry and theatre.

² Within this framework, it must be noted that the origin of children's literature is in the 18th century, when children started being considered specifically and the need to educate them prompted the adaption and creation of texts specifically targeted at them. Some examples are *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by Daniel Defoe; *Alice in wonderland* (1865) and *Through the looking glass and what Alice found there* (1871) by Lewis Carroll; *Treasure island* (1883) by Robert Lous Stevenson. Children's literature did not exist as such at the beginning. Children used to read and listen to what was written by and for adults, and whatever they had access to from popular literature. Slowly, with schooling and the formalisation of education, a major change took place: they stopped being workers and started going to school to learn. A new category appeared –childhood– becoming an object of study itself.

textual analysis, illustrations, or organisation of reading activities that help to choose books for children, or to analyse images (Colomer, 2002; Durán, 2007); inter alia.

The growth of science production in children's literature has boosted the development of bibliometric studies that offer an interesting view of scientific activity, providing quantitative and objective information to evaluate the results of such an activity. Scientific production is an indicator that allows us to determine the growth of science through the number of published works and the different bibliographic elements in them, of researcher production, of a country or an institution, and of their collaboration.

The usefulness of bibliometric studies in the analysis of scientific activity and as a complement to other indicators has been largely accepted. Bibliometrics analyses scientific publications, the structure and dynamics of the groups producing and consuming them, and the information they contain. The bibliometric analysis of the production and impact of documents by area of knowledge is the best quantitative and qualitative indicator of the research activity carried out in a field (Verbeek, Debackere, Luwel & Zimmermann, 2002).

Bibliometrics has become widespread as an essential methodology for the evaluation of scientific production and all the phenomena linked to science communication. It is considered a fundamental tool in building and knowing the present and the history of research in different scientific domains. Since bibliometric methodology was first introduced in Spain in the 1970s (López Piñero, 1972), some scientific disciplines such as medicine and psychology have used it extensively. But its application is growing in the study of other fields or disciplines from humanities or social science: journal analysis (Kirk & Nylander, 2014; Fernández-Quijada, 2010); PhD dissertations (Curiel-Marín & Fernández-Cano, 2015; Moreno-Fernández & Moreno-Crespo, 2016); institutions (Maz-Machado et al., 2012); disciplines (Nikleva & Cortina, 2014); reviews (Sorli, Mochón & Martín-Carretero, 2011), information use (Haba, Peredo & Osca-Lluch, 2014; Osca-Lluch, Veyrat & Morales, 2013).

This paper gives an overview of international scientific activity in Children's Literature. The objectives are: 1) to study the evolution of scientific activity in this field; 2) to analyse document typology; and, 3) to identify the journals in which research on children's literature is published.

Methodology

This bibliometric study used as main source of research the information included in the databases of the Web of Science (WoS), produced by the company Clarivate Analytics. These databases are those that are universally used in bibliometric studies to include the best journals according to criteria of scientific and formal quality, and recognition by the scientific community. These are multidisciplinary databases, which include the names of all the signatories of the works as well as their places of work. They also offer information on the bibliographic references that appear in the documents analysed.

With the purpose of knowing the evolution of scientific production in this subject, a search was conducted using the terms *Children's Literature*, *Didactics of Children's*, *Teaching of Literature*, and *Teaching of Language and Literature* in the "Topic" field, combining them with *Child* and *Kid*, because they are the keywords used to recover papers dealing with children's and young people's literature.

To analyse the evolution of scientific production in a certain area, it is necessary to know the number of published works in a given period of time. In this case, in order to know the evolution of the published works on children's literature in the Web of Science (WoS), all the documents included in this database were searched until October 2016, when the search was concluded. In this case, the "year of publication" field was interrogated without limiting any period of time in order to retrieve all the documents included in this information source.

Once the documents were found in the database we analysed the documentary typology of the works, that in this case were: article, book review, proceedings paper, editorial material, review, meeting abstract, bibliography, correction, biographical item, letter, news item, item about and individual, and film review.

Finally, to identify the journals, the field "publication title" was revised, which is the one that includes the title of the publications included in the Web of Science (WoS) database, where the works are published. Bibliometric indicators related to the documentary typology, the temporal evolution of the production, the language, the publication journals and the thematic areas of the journals in the Web of Science (WoS) were used. The bibliometric indicators are data obtained from scientific publications that serve for studies that focus on the results of research activity of a particular country or countries, scientific institutions, authors or research topics based on the premise that scientific publications are the essential result of an activity (Osca-Lluch et al., 2002).

Once all the production was collected, data were processed using Ms Excel 2007 and Ms Access 2007. A database was created where all data were included, and different indicators were obtained.

Findings

A total of 1,558 papers related to children's literature published in international journals indexed in the Web of Science (WoS) were retrieved.

Evolution of production over time

The time coverage designed in the search strategy did not begin with a specific year so that all the documents included in the databases could be retrieved. The first document found - a review paper of *The illustrated treasury of children's literature*, by Paul Zankowich- dated back to 1956. After this paper, production rates were steady but it was not until 1996 that a clear increase in publication of children's literature research took place. As of 2005, the growing trend remained constant (Figure 1).

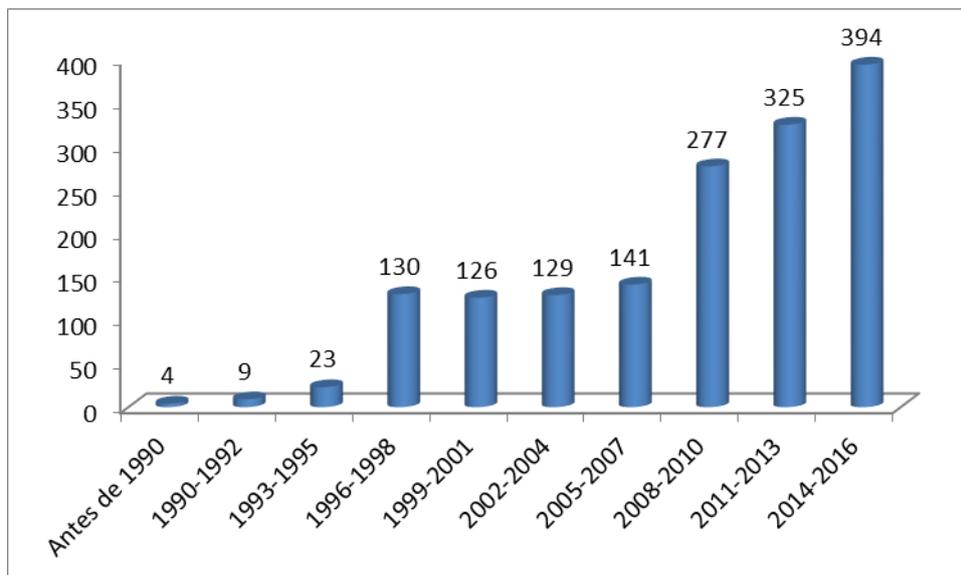


Figure 1. Evolution of production over time

Document typology

The document typology of the works is most diverse (Figure 2). 13 different document types were found, but scientific articles (60.99%) and book reviews (24.52%) stood out, followed by proceedings papers (7.24%), editorial materials (4.19%), and review papers (1.59%).

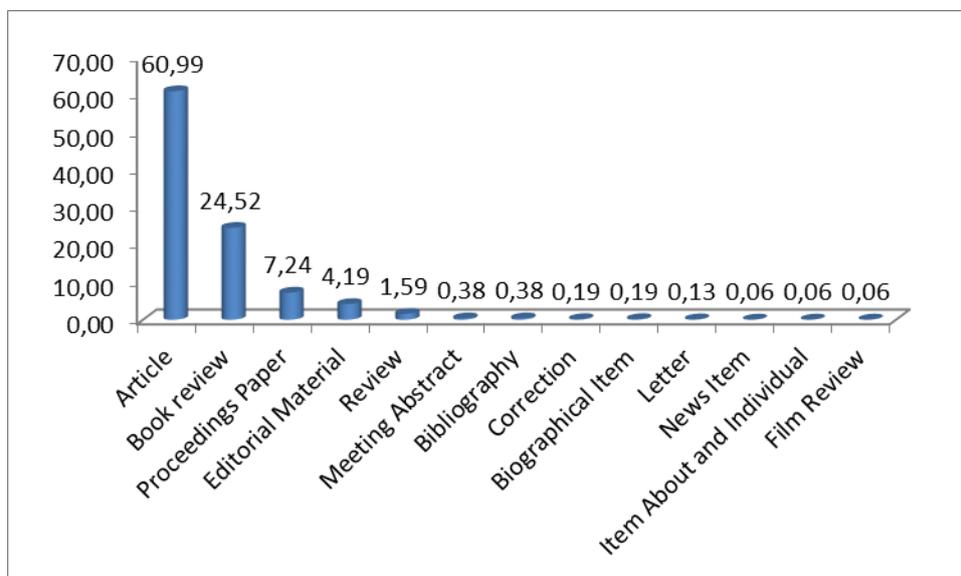


Figure 2. Document typology

Publication languages

Papers on children's literature were published in 16 different languages (Figure 3). Most of the production was written in English (1,391 papers, 89.28%) and Spanish (43 papers,

in only 42 journals (8.86% of the total). Table 1 shows the relationship of those 42 journals that have published more than half of all scientific production in children's literature during the whole period analysed, together with the number of published works and the thematic category in which the journal has been classified in the database consulted.

Table 1. Most productive journals, published works and subject categories

Journals	Number of works	%	Subjects in WoS
<i>Lion and the Unicorn</i>	152	10,43	Literature
<i>Childrens Literature in Education</i>	142	9,75	Literature
<i>International Research in Childrens Literature</i>	105	7,21	Literature
<i>Reading Teacher</i>	88	6,04	Education & Educational Research
<i>History of Education & Childrens Literature</i>	27	1,85	History
<i>Meta</i>	21	1,44	Language & Linguistics
<i>TLS-The Times Literary Supplement</i>	15	1,03	Humanities, Multidisciplinary
<i>Neohelicon</i>	14	0,96	Literature
<i>Library Journal</i>	13	0,89	Information Science & Library Science
<i>Perspectives-Studies in Translatology</i>	13	0,89	Language & Linguistics
<i>Library Trends</i>	12	0,82	Information Science & Library Science
<i>Sex Roles</i>	11	0,75	Psychology, Developmental; Psychology, Social, Womens Studies
<i>Archiv fur das Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen</i>	10	0,69	Language & Linguistics; Literature
<i>Cadernos de Traducaao</i>	9	0,62	Language & Linguistics
<i>Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy</i>	9	0,62	Education & Educational Research
<i>Victorian Studies</i>	9	0,62	Humanities, Multidisciplinary
<i>World Literature Today</i>	9	0,62	Literature
<i>Ariel-A Review of International English Literature</i>	8	0,55	Literature
<i>CLCWEB-Comparative Literature and Culture</i>	8	0,55	Literature
<i>Environmental Education Research</i>	8	0,55	Education & Educational Research; Environmental Studies
<i>Library Quaterly</i>	8	0,55	Information Science & Library Science
<i>Literacy</i>	8	0,55	Educational & Educational Research; Linguistics
<i>PMLA-Publications of the Modern Language Assocationa of America</i>	8	0,55	Literature
<i>African American Review</i>	7	0,48	Literature, American
<i>English Teaching-Practice and Critique</i>	7	0,48	Educational & Educational Research; Linguistics

<i>Journal of Literacy Research</i>	7	0,48	Educational & Educational Research; Psychology Educational
<i>OCNOS-Revista de Estudios sobre la Lectura</i>	7	0,48	Education & Educational Research
<i>Reading Research Quarterly</i>	7	0,48	Education & Educational Research; Psychology, Educational
<i>Young Children</i>	7	0,48	Education & Educational Research
<i>Bilig</i>	6	0,41	Area Studies
<i>Hispania-A Journal Devoted to Teaching of Spanish and Portuguese</i>	6	0,41	Linguistics; Language & Linguistics; Literature, Romance
<i>Libri & Liberi</i>	6	0,41	Literature
<i>Modern Language Review</i>	6	0,41	Language & Linguistics; Literature
<i>Target-International Journal of Translation Studies</i>	6	0,41	Linguistics
<i>American Literature</i>	5	0,34	Literature, American
<i>Anglia-Zeitschrift fur Englische Philologie</i>	5	0,34	Language & Linguistics; Literature
<i>Bookbird-A Journal of International Childrens Literature</i>	5	0,34	Literature
<i>Canadian Literature</i>	5	0,34	Literature, African, Australian, Canadian
<i>Intervention in School and Clinic</i>	5	0,34	Education Special
<i>Jeunesse-Young People Texts Culture</i>	5	0,34	Humanities, Multidisciplinary
<i>Reading Research and Instruction</i>	5	0,34	Education & Educational Research
<i>Wasafiri</i>	5	0,34	Humanities, Multidisciplinary
20 journals	4	5,49	
30 journals	3	6,18	
86 journals	2	11,81	
296 journals	1	20,32	
Total journals: 474		100	

Subject categories

The journals included in the databases of the Web of Science (WoS) can be classified thematically in one or more of the 96 categories that are used by this database, which is currently managed by the company Clarivate Analytics. Please note that a journal could be included in more than one subject category, as was the case with *Archiv fur dar Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* -simultaneously classified in the categories *Language & Linguistics* and *Literature*, for example. The number of papers published in journals classified under Literature and Education & Educational Research represented 48% of the total. And the number of works in journals indexed under *Language & Linguistics* and *Humanities, Multidisciplinary* came to 124 and 78 documents, respectively (Table 2).

Table 2. Most frequent subject categories

WoS Subjects	Number	%
Literature	575	32,16
Education & Educational Research	284	15,88
Language & Linguistics	124	6,94
Humanities, Multidisciplinary	78	4,36
History	70	3,91
Linguistics	69	3,86
Information Science & Library Science	53	2,96
Psychology, Educational	28	1,57
Psychology, Developmental	24	1,34
Literature, Romance	23	1,29
Psychology, Social	22	1,23
Women's Studies	22	1,23
Literature, American	19	1,06
Rehabilitation	18	1,01
Literary Reviews	17	0,95
Area Studies	16	0,89
Folklore	15	0,84
Literature, Slavic	15	0,84
Literary Theory & Criticism	14	0,78
Religion	14	0,78
Sociology	14	0,78
Literature, German, Dutch, Scandinavian	13	0,73
Social Sciences, Interdisciplinary	13	0,73
Communication	12	0,67
Environmental Sciences	12	0,67
Literature, African, Australian, Canadian	12	0,67
Psychology, Multidisciplinary	12	0,67
Psychology, Experimental	11	0,62
History of Social Sciences	10	0,56

The results of the study show that children's literature research in the WoS databases up to 2016 covers a 60-year period, and display an upward trend, with a more pronounced increase in the last 8 years. Although the document typology of the papers published in WoS journals is varied, the most frequent format is a scientific paper written in English. English is the language used in 89.28% of the works, followed by Spanish with just 2.76%.

As for the journals of publication, wide dispersion is found in their number, although three -*Lion and the Unicorn*, *Children's Literature in Education* and *International Research in Children's Literature*- stand out for their high publication rates, with 27% of the total papers.

One of the most interesting aspects is the cross-cutting dimension of the discipline, reflected by the vast array of subject categories of the journals publishing the works. As expected, the category with the highest number of journals is *Literature* (the three journals with more papers fall under this category). However, a great many papers are published in journals classified in categories belonging to other disciplines or scientific areas, such as *Education, Language* or *Psychology*, to mention just a few, which points to the links between literature and other scientific disciplines.

Discussion and Conclusions

As a conclusion, we can state that once the data of this study was analysed it is observed that the evolution of scientific production in children and youth literature is increasing throughout the whole period studied. Therefore, it can be said that children's literature is also increasingly important in education, as the presence of children's and young adults' literature in all educational levels has steadily grown over the past two decades. Gradual acceptance and inclusion of children's literature in higher education has resulted in abundant bibliography, which reflects the development and progress of different research lines and the dissemination of children's literature. Children's and young adults' books have a value of their own; they are semiotic entities of an aesthetic category, and their functionality is not necessarily a secondary path towards Great Literature; Rather, it should be noted and qualified that they contribute to developing the individual as a reader precisely because the semiotic qualities of (*great*) literature are already in them (Mendoza, 2010). In this educational process, children's literature plays an essential role. On the one hand, children's books project and preserve values, structures, and references in culture (Colomer, 2010); on the other, the peculiarities of discourse and literary genres are based on re-elaborating models and structures present in literary tradition. In Mendoza's account (2010), these two functions give way to the remaining eight⁶ in the construction of literary competence.

In this context, it is important to emphasise that the role of teachers in infant, primary and secondary education is essential to being able to work with children's literature and developing the skills needed to become a good mediator. This situation occurs when an adult facilitates access to children to the literary message and its decoding. Teachers are indispensable as text providers (oral, iconic, audio-visual texts, and of different genres); they put children in contact with books that will help them develop their reading and literary skills. As the child grows up, the teaching-mediating function shifts from providing texts to sharing exchange situations intended to collaborate in the construction of the meaning of the texts and

⁶ According to Mendoza (2010), the functions are as follows: 1) Projecting and preserving values, structures and culture. 2) Observing that the peculiarities of discourse and literary genres are based on re-elaborating models and structures present in literary tradition. 3) Appreciating the literary fact as an exponent for the permanence of literature as a cultural exponent. (4) Forging the reading habit, as a means for the progressive development of reading experiences that are integrated into one's literary competence. (5) The development of literary competence is linked to reading promotion, as it deals with shaping a literary habit through which the progressive development of reading experiences integrated in literary competence as particular knowledge is ensured. (6) Determining the model (or implicit) reader as the ideal receiver of the literary work, as envisaged by the author. Boosting the receiver's cooperation or interaction, as a basic function to work on educational aspects for the reception, construction of meaning, and interpretation. (7) Identifying the features of literary discourse. (8) Establishing intertextual connections to relate literary productions and link them as exponents of a genre, a topic, or an ideology.

to suggest and guide readings that shape the receivers' reading pathway and develop their competence (Díaz-Plaja, Prats, and Mendoza, 2011). As mediators, teachers need to consult and access information and recommendations previously studied by children's literature experts.

It is observed that the documental typology of the works published about children and youth literature included in the databases of the Web of Science (WoS), are mainly articles (60.99%) and book reviews (24.52%). While the most used language by researchers is English (89.28%).

Teachers and researchers are interested in knowing the state of the art of a particular discipline or scientific area. The evolution of scientific publication parameters and academic career demands in many countries -like Spain- require adaptation to new research challenges and quality improvement in scientific production. This study is the first approach to the state of research in children's literature today, and offers some insights into international scientific journals used by researchers through the production of works included in the Web of Science (WoS) for the dissemination of their research.

The substantial increase in scientific production in this discipline can be considered the outcome of the gradual inclusion of children's literature in different university degrees, primarily education or teacher training ones but also library science and documentation. Moreno and Sánchez-Vera (2000; as cited in Ballester, 2015) have summarised the situation and evolution of children's literature in higher education. 1971 was the beginning of its progressive incorporation as a subject in all Spanish universities, under the generic name of 'children's literature'. But the key year was 1991, for two reasons: First, thanks to the 1991 curriculum, children's literature started being included as a core course in Spain's teacher training degrees, in the infant education speciality, under the descriptor 'Children's literature and its didactics'. In the same year, new third-cycle programmes were implemented in many universities, including children's and young adults' literature in PhD studies. It was precisely in the third cycle that the courses devoted to this subject increased. The trend has continued to this day, as children's literature has consolidated and expanded into specialisation courses, postgraduate studies, PhD theses, continuing education, summer courses and so on.

In addition to the increase and dissemination of children's and young adults' literature in teaching degrees, a recent turning point must be underlined: the introduction and implementation of degrees in the European Area of Higher Education (EHEA). In all teacher training degrees of Spanish universities, the curriculum includes -as a core course- Didactics of Children's (and Young Adults') Literature in the infant and primary education specialities. This was first implemented in academic year 2010-2011, following Royal Decree 1393/2007 of 29 October, and Order ECI/3857/2007 of 27 December, which lay down the requirements for the validation of official university studies qualifying graduates as infant and primary education teachers.

The course "Didactics of children's literature" is intended to prepare future teachers to develop, in pupils, skills related to children's literature. The course has given rise to professional expectations in students, who approach children's literature willing to use it with their class (Díaz-Plaja, 2009). This has brought out a noticeable improvement and assurance that all future teachers in pre-school and primary education would have heard about children's literature and its teaching in one of the four years of the degree. Despite the fact that children's literature is a core course, the debate about contents and skills is not yet settled and requires

further assessment (Amo, 2003, 2009; Cerrillo et al. 2005). However, progress has certainly been made; the situation of the course in the former undergraduate studies differed greatly across Spanish universities, each specific degree having its own curriculum.

Gradual acceptance and inclusion of children's literature in higher education has resulted in abundant bibliography, which reflects the development and progress of different research lines and the dissemination of children's literature. In Anglo-Saxon countries, the works of Sadler and Knoepfelmacher (1992), Watkins (1996), and Butler (2006) are well-known compendiums of the teaching and research activities carried out in English-speaking universities, and an excellent sample of the types of courses offered at various educational levels.

Based on the bibliometric study conducted, we can conclude that children's literature research is an increasingly relevant object of study, as a significant increase in the number of papers published in international journals specialised in different scientific disciplines was found, though the vast majority of works were in the area of Language and Literature Didactics. Many papers seem to be intended to provide the course and the teachers with concepts and resources on children's and young adults' literature to be applied in the classroom. Other works are more related to the epistemological status of children's literature in connection with the reader, or as the basis of literary education through a formative canon. Other texts are related to teaching and learning methodology in different communicative, social and linguistic contexts, as understood by the growing number of professionals from different disciplines who use children's literature as a tool for teaching and learning foreign languages, which explains the dispersion and large number of journals and subject areas in which these are classified.

We also found research related to not only knowledge acquisition or skill development but also to the learning of ideological and moral values -a concern with many teachers and one that has given rise to selected collections, titles, and bibliographies on current issues (civility, democracy, multiculturalism and so on). According to Colomer (2016), in 2014-2015 research studies on children's literature achieved continuity and thematic consistency with topics in new times. Readers, image, literature on a screen, and some social changes in personal and family domains have drawn the attention of Spanish researchers. Therefore, we can say that the subjects present in children's literature research continue being the fascination with links between image and text in the album genre, and the treatment of gender, sexual orientation or family models.

This study can be useful from different perspectives. Firstly, it can be useful to teachers, researchers, and/or mediators, as it offers objective data extracted from the Web of Science which provide quick and valuable bibliometric information about international journals and scientific activity in children's literature. Secondly, it will be interesting to analyse future contributions and potential applications of children's literature as well as its relationships with other scientific disciplines, which will allow us to further explore this area.

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