Wordless picturebooks: a theoretical review of the articles published between 1975-2020

Álbumes sin palabras: revisión teórica de los artículos publicados entre 1975-2020

Francisco Antonio Martínez-Carratalá* ID
Universidad de Alicante, Spain

✉ * Corresponding author: famc@gcloud.ua.es

Abstract

Picturebooks are one of the fundamental resources in literary education since the first ages due to the richness of the relationships established between three essential elements in its design: object, text and illustrations. Within the different typologies, the wordless picturebook relies on the sequence of images as a narrative element and resources from different artistic languages. The aim of this study was a theoretical review of the articles in the bibliographic databases Scopus and Web of Science in order to know the investigations developed by means of this type of picturebooks. Once the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, 228 articles in English were analysed in the period 1975-2020. The results showed the increasing trend in the number of publications in the period, the most frequently used works, the journals with the most publications and the recurring topics in the set of articles. The conclusions highlight that the wordless picturebook is a type of work which offers more challenges than the simple visual stimulus, an interpretative space in which to approach complex topics, and that its artistic proposals are suitable for readers of all ages.

Keywords: Picturebooks; children's literature; language skills; visual literacy; aesthetic education

Resumen

El libro-álbum es uno de los recursos fundamentales en la educación literaria desde las primeras edades por la riqueza en las relaciones establecidas entre tres elementos esenciales en su diseño: formato, texto e ilustraciones. Dentro de las diferentes tipologías, el álbum sin palabras se apoya en la secuencia de las imágenes como elemento narrativo y recursos de diferentes lenguajes artísticos. El objetivo de este estudio era la revisión teórica de las publicaciones en las bases de datos bibliográfica Scopus y Web of Science para conocer las tipologías de las investigaciones desarrolladas mediante este tipo de álbumes. Una vez aplicados los criterios de inclusión y exclusión se analizaron 228 artículos en lengua inglesa en el periodo 1975-2020. Los resultados mostraron la tendencia creciente del número de publicaciones en el periodo, las obras más empleadas, las revistas con más publicaciones y las temáticas recurrentes en el conjunto de artículos. Las conclusiones destacan que el álbum sin palabras es un tipo de obra que ofrece más retos que el simple estímulo visual, un espacio interpretativo en el

que abordar temáticas complejas y que sus propuestas artísticas tienen cabida en lectores de cualquier edad.

Palabras clave: Álbum ilustrado; literatura infantil; habilidades del lenguaje; alfabetización visual; educación estética

Introduction

Picturebooks are literary and artistic objects that continue to consolidate culturally and educationally within the literary ecosystem from the earliest ages. The diversity in its offer has been the result of different studies and monographs, such as that by Kümmerling-Meibauer (2018), which delve into the interest in a resource that combines image, text and design in an artefact in which all its elements have the capacity for meaning. Within the different classes and types, the wordless picturebook is a type of work with an upward trend in the volume of titles published in the publishing market (Beckett, 2012).

This theoretical review focuses on describing the implications of wordless picturebooks and the interest in it within academic research by analysing articles in the Scopus and Web of Science (WOS) databases from 1975 to 2020. For this reason, this article presents the various communicative elements that articulate the creation of meaning in the picturebook, and then describes the particularities of the wordless picturebook and its implications for reading. The research findings aim at shedding light on the implications of a type of picturebook which, due to the absence of any kind of text, seems to imply less difficulty in comprehension and to provide an overview of the areas that use wordless picturebooks.

The picturebook: lines of research

The picturebook is a constantly evolving medium through the elements that define it: format, text and image. Kiefer (2008, p. 19) pointed out that these innovations were linked to socio-cultural and technological changes, with a particular impact on the materiality of the object, as well as the broadening of the target audience for these works, which have traditionally been associated with children's audiences. Since picturebooks are freely designed, this fact also makes it difficult to define them and has led, within academic research, to the use of different terms for its denomination and classification. In short, it is medium made up of a series of elements with a (potentially) capacity for meaning in their aesthetic and narrative communication.

In this sense, academic research on picturebooks has paid special attention to the study of the interdependent links between the various elements that make it up and their function in the different artistic proposals in this medium. Among the research that has studied the characteristics of picturebooks, one of the aspects that has generated most interest focuses on the bimodal links between text and image (Nodelman, 1988; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006) and their relationships, which, in synthesis, would be redundancy, complementarity and counterpoint (Bateman, 2014). They are an indication of the reader's interpretative space between two codes, semantic and semiotic, in the construction of meaning and which are challenging depending on

the competence of the receiver. In this sense, picturebooks have great potential in the didactic field, such as the development of literary competence (Lluch, 2003; Cerrillo, 2007), links with literary works through intertextuality (Mendoza-Fillola, 2001) or, from the semiotic code, with other artistic works such as "interpictoriality" (Hoster-Cabo et al., 2018).

In this supportive relationship between semiotic and semantic elements, the contributions of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar and the implications for multimodal picturebook analysis, such as those developed by Painter et al. (2013) and Moya-Guijarro (2014), are noteworthy. From this perspective, the analysis of the discursive mode is extended with the different strategies of signification based on the image and its visual processes in the composition (such as the spatial composition, the representations of the characters or the description of the socio-affective relationships) which are key in the emotional involvement of the reader.

Although the study of the relationship between image and text has occupied a prominent place in academia, the study of the materiality of the picturebook medium also represents an exciting field of study (Mociño-González, 2019; Tabernero-Sala, 2019) within a publishing market in which the digital format is bursting onto the scene. In this sense, the physical object becomes an essential element at an early age (Kümmerling-Meibauer & Meibauer, 2019) with cognitive, affective and socio-cultural implications through the act of reading (Bruner, 1986). Within the literary ecosystem, the picturebook is thus a format that enjoys great vitality and in which a type of narrative has been consolidated with its own study characteristics, such as the picturebook.

The picturebook

Naming is the first outstanding aspect of this type of work, based on the absence of the textual element as a defining element, although this does not imply any lesser artistic quality. Prefixes and qualifications that highlight the hierarchical component of the text in the classification of books, when the picturebook is a medium in which text, image and medium are hybridised. In this sense, van der Linden (2015) points out that "making a picturebook requires a skilful mastery of sequential image composition, as well as a great ability to produce meaning that, without being unambiguous, is clear" (p. 71). This appreciation underlines the complexity and precision of sequencing as a narrative element, as well as an active reader with prior skills for the interpretation and comprehension of the work. Furthermore, as Nikolajeva (2010, p. 32) points out, such visual narratives can be highly complex depending on the number of details included in the narrative and numerous interpretations by the reader.

For this reason, the absence of text as one of the picturebook's key elements does not imply a simplification of reading. In line with these contributions, Bosch and Duran (2009) highlight the difficulties in the process of reception and interpretation of these narratives as they break with the traditional conventions of reading as an exercise in textual decoding and require an active and supportive reader to bring these communicative elements together. As Knudsen-Lindauer (1988, p. 137) points out, this type of book can stimulate skills in the child reader such as sequential thinking, the development of a complete sense of the story, visual discrimination, inferential thinking and the prediction of conclusions.

Among the essential elements used in these visual narratives, Serafini (2014) highlights five: the narrative sequence, the fragmentation of the image, the visual point of view, the framing and the structure in which the images are arranged. In a summarised way, Bosch (2015, p. 16) defines this type of work as "a narration of sequential still and printed images, anchored in the structure of the book, whose unit of fragmentation is the page, the illustration is primordial and the text is underlying".

It should be noted that this type of picturebook is not free of textual information (such as editorial paratexts or the title) and that the different types of texts inserted in the narrative imply the differentiation between wordless and almost-wordless picturebooks, as Richey and Puckett (1992) point out. Within this differentiation, Beckett (2012, 2014) points out the artistic component of these visual narratives that make it difficult to differentiate between the picturebook and the artist's book (in which different works interchange these denominations) with the analysis of works by Bruno Munari, Enzo and Iela Mari or Katsumi Komagata. They challenge the boundaries of the object itself for the creation of narratives that dispense with the textual component as a play based on the material and visual components of the book.

In addition to the clarification of the picturebook's characteristics, it is worth noting the increase in its publishing presence in recent years, its recognition among literary critics (as in the list of *The White Ravens*) or in different literary awards (from the Caldecott Medal to works by David Wiesner or Molly Idle) to the Bologna Children's Book Fair to works by Quentin Blake or Lizi Boyd. In short, this is a type of work that, in addition to reflecting its artistic qualities, offers a wide range of themes that introduce an ideological component to the interpretative dimensions of these visual narratives.

Examples of these qualities include the creation of a library for children on the island of Lampedusa in 2012 which includes a collection of wordless picturebooks (International Board on Books for Young People [IBBY], n.d.) as a meeting point through these works. As stated by Arizpe et al. (2014): "The affordances of the wordless picturebooks means that readers must take risks with their predictions and understandings, and they must also activate intertextual and cultural knowledge" (p.4).

Methodology

Objectives of the research

The main objective of the theoretical review is to identify the themes, titles of the most frequently used works and areas of research in English-language scientific articles using wordless picturebooks in the electronic databases Scopus and WOS (including articles translated into English that appear in these databases). Secondly, to quantify the number of publications per year in order to observe the trend and interest of wordless picturebooks within academic research.

Database selection criteria and search formula

Firstly, for the selection of documentary sources, the Scopus and WOS databases were chosen over Google Scholar because of the operability offered by the different platforms for data retrieval, list creation and bibliometric data analysis of the articles retrieved. Secondly, because of the relevance of the scientific journals included in these databases.

Starting from the objective of the research and its definition, the search formula in both databases is narrowed down, starting from the theoretical review and the search in the *ERIC* Thesaurus of the appropriate terms for the definition as "Picture books". Additionally, it includes "Picturebooks" which is widely used in literary studies and which, as Sipe (2001) points out: "the spelling picturebook -as one word- is utilized intentionally in order to emphasize the unity of words and pictures that is the most important hallmark of this type of book" (p. 23). Similarly, the commonly used name for wordless picturebooks is "Wordless Picturebooks".

This way, the search formula is constructed using English words: (("WORDLESS PICTUREBOOK*") OR ("WORDLESS PICTURE BOOK*")), adding the asterisk operator to include them in the plural and singular. This search provides 510 results across all fields and publication types in the Scopus database and 185 in WOS (including the Core Collection, INSPEC and MEDLINE). The "Silent Book*" category was also included and provided 6 results in both databases that were repeated in the main search. In order to limit the results of a generically formulated formulation, inclusion and exclusion criteria are specified for article eligibility and subsequent export using EndNote Online and Mendeley Desktop to eliminate duplicate articles.

Inclusion criteria

From the search formula in both databases, the publication type (English language and translated articles) is selected. The total number of articles in Scopus and WOS is 354 and 151, respectively, from which we select those with wordless picturebook as the main element of the research, form part of the analysis within the different types of picturebooks or are an element used in the intervention (either exclusively or as part of a group of works). After analysing the relevance of the articles and eliminating duplicates (122 articles), the first article retrieved in the Scopus database dates back to 1978 and in WOS to 1975.

Exclusion criteria

The first exclusion criterion focuses on discarding those articles retrieved from the databases that are not related to the wordless picturebooks. When searching in "all fields" of the databases, those where the term appears in the references but does not deal with the subject are ruled out. Secondly, the separation of terms includes seven articles in which the wordless comic book *The Arrival* (Tan, 2006) appears as a core element of the research. Therefore, the exclusion criteria focus on those articles that do not meet these criteria or that focus on pictorial resources other than in book format. Finally, the theoretical review covers the period from 1975 to 2020, with a final selection of 228 English-language articles, corrected for year of publication in case of

divergence between databases by checking in the journal. The complete list of articles by year is hosted in the Zenodo[i] open data repository.

Results

Evolution of the number of articles published from 1975 to 2020

In a first quantitative approximation of the references in the Scopus and WOS databases, four periods are established to simplify the analysis. Table 1 shows the increasing trend of publications related to wordless picturebooks in each period. This progression can be seen in the cumulative frequency expressed as a percentage (FA) and the annual average of articles in each period (M), with 80.70% of the articles analysed after 2005 over a period of fifteen years, compared to the initial period of thirty-one years (FA $_{1975-2005}$ = 19.30%).

Table 1.
Evolution of articles published in Scopus and WOS by period

Period	N	FA (%)	M
1975-2005	44	19.30	1.42
2006-2012	52	22.81	7.43
2013-2019	104	45.61	14.86
2020	28	12.28	28.00

Note: N=228

Figure 1 shows the number of articles published per year and consolidation over the last decade in academic research. In this growing trend, the year 2020 stands out with the highest number of articles (n=28) in the set of years covered by the review and emphasises the interest of its study.

Figure 1.
Evolution of published articles 1975-2020
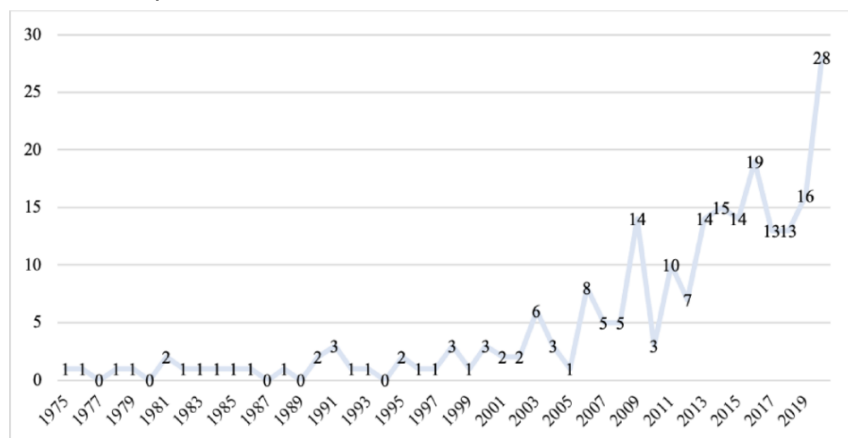
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Most used wordless picturebooks in articles between 1975 and 2020

The most frequently used picturebooks in this research are quantified within the corpus of articles analysed. This count includes picturebooks that are part of the research methodology or its specific analysis and not part of a broad corpus of recommended reading. In this process, differentiating the four periods, Mercer Mayer stands out with six titles and, in particular, with his picturebook *Frog, where are you?* (1969). It is used in 80 research studies (35.09% of the total number of articles) and in 65 of them as the only instrument for analysis, in clinical research preferably. It is also found how this picturebook has been used systematically throughout the different periods together with other titles, as shown in table 2.

Table 2.
List of wordless picturebooks most commonly used in academic papers

Author	Works and year of publication	N	P_1	P_2	P_3	P_4
Mayer, M.	*Frog, where are you* (1969)	80	18	21	29	12
Mayer, M.	*Frog goes to dinner* (1977)	17	1	5	8	3
Mayer, M.	*A Boy, a Dog, and a Frog* (1967)	12	3	2	6	1
Mayer, M.	*One frog too many* (1975)	12	2	4	5	1
Mayer, M.	*Frog on his own* (1973)	11	1	1	7	2
Mayer, M.	*A boy, a dog, a frog, and a friend* (1971)	8	2	0	5	1
Day, A.	*Good dog, Carl* (1985)	7	0	4	3	0
McCully, E. A.	*Picnic* (1984)	6	0	4	2	0
Wright group	*I had measles* (1987)	6	0	1	5	0
Lee, S.	*Wave* (2008)	3	0	1	2	0
Wiesner, D.	*Tuesday* (1991)	3	0	1	2	0
De Paola, T.	*Pancakes for breakfast* (1979)	3	0	0	2	1

Note: N= number of articles; P_1=1975-2005; P_2=2006-2012; P_3=2013-2019; P_4=2020.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Given the high number of studies using Mercer Mayer picturebooks, it is specified that they appear in 104 of the studies (FA= 45.61%). By works, the picturebook *Frog, where are you?* (1969) is the most frequently used and it also has 955 references within *Scopus* and 688 in *WOS*. As a side note, a comparison with Maurice Sendak's classic picturebook in the field literary criticism and studies *Where the wild things are* (1963) shows that it has 395 references in Scopus and 172 in WOS. Checking this against Google Scholar citations in May 2020 shows that Sendak's classic is referred to 1552 times compared to 2738 for Mercer Mayer's picturebook. This comparison might indicate that it is one of the most, if not the most, cited picturebooks in academic research.

Leading journals in the period 1975-2020

Finally, in the quantitative analysis of the research, we offer data from the journals with the highest number of publications in the period in order to contextualise the areas of research interested in wordless picturebooks (table 3). Firstly, the data broken down by period are given for journals with 3 or more publications (a total of 104 articles representing 45.61%). The remaining publications are found in 16 journals with two publications and 92 with one publication.

Table 3.

Leading journals by period

Magazines	N	P_1	P_2	P_3	P_4
Language Speech and Hearing Services in Schools	14	3	5	4	2
Reading Teacher	12	7	0	5	0
First Language	8	0	0	5	3
Journal of Early Childhood Literacy	7	0	0	7	0
American Journal of Speech Language Pathology	5	0	2	2	1
Early Childhood Research Quarterly	5	0	1	3	1
International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders	5	0	1	4	0
Journal of Speech Language and Hearing Research	5	0	4	1	0
Clinical Linguistics and Phonetics	4	2	0	2	0
Early Child Development and Care	4	1	1	2	0
Narrative Inquiry	4	1	2	1	0
Reading and Writing	4	0	0	2	2
Aphasiology	3	0	3	0	0
Applied Psycholinguistics	3	2	1	0	0
British Journal of Developmental Psychology	3	1	2	0	0
Children's Literature in Education	3	0	2	0	1
Cognitive Development	3	0	0	1	2
Frontiers in Psychology	3	0	0	2	1
Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology	3	0	1	2	0
Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders	3	1	0	2	0
Ocnos. Revista de estudios sobre lectura	3	0	1	2	0

Note: N= number of articles; P_1=1975-2005; P_2=2006-2012; P_3=2013-2019; P_4=2020.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

As can be seen in the publications, all positioned in the highest quartiles in their areas in the Scimago Journal & Country Rank (SJCR), the predominant areas are specialised in the study of language and linguistics (from the arts and humanities or social sciences), in educational aspects (from the social sciences or psychology) and, to a lesser extent, in literary theory (*Narrative Inquiry* and *Ocnos*). There is also a growing trend of interest in these media,

with between 40 and 50% of the publications in all four periods. (P_1=40.91%; P_2=50.00%; P_3=45.19%; P_4= 46.43%).

Summary of selected articles

In order to simplify the analysis of the set of articles, a thematic summary of the studies is provided by analysing the different areas of interest in wordless picturebooks. Although most of the articles analysed are concentrated in the following periods (between 2006 and 2020), the three decades of the first period (1975-2005) mark the beginning of a series of research that will consolidate and evolve over the years.

Firstly, the largest number of articles focuses on the analysis of language skills through wordless picturebooks by designing different research methodologies. The first example is found in Omotoso and Lamme's (1979) research in which the intervention focuses on the detection of socio-cultural differences in the acquisition of language skills in three groups of students from different ethnic backgrounds. This is the first research in the selection of articles that uses Mercer Mayer's wordless picturebooks in its methodological proposal and will be replicated in others in the clinical setting (Muñoz et al., 2003).

This interest in the study of narrative production also extends to L2 (mainly English) learning with bilingual populations with different mother tongue backgrounds, such as Spanish (Fiestas & Peña, 2004; Schick, 2015) or Chinese (Chen & Yan, 2011) as an example. As noted above, Mercer Mayer's works are a constant in the analysed articles assessing language production, among which Heilmann et al. (2016) five of their works without finding significant differences in the results in the production of their narrative language. The authors consequently recommend the use of these works in similar research.

Linked to this type of research focused on children's production, the influence of the socio-cultural context in the interaction between the family (especially the mother figure) and the pre-reader in the construction of stories is also analysed (Melzi & Caspe, 2005; Escobar et al., 2017). Among the studies that use wordless picturebooks for narrative elicitation, research that takes as a reference the "Theory of Mind" and the attribution-prediction of emotional states to other people (or characters) stand out. As Charman and Shmueli-Goetz (1999) point out, in addition to the analysis of the linguistic component, sociocultural, cognitive and metalinguistic factors are included in this research and, as Pelletier and Astington (2004) point out, improvement in these mental attribution activities facilitates narrative comprehension.

These contributions are developed with a typically developing child population (as a study centre or control group), but will be of particular relevance in research with a population with difficulties in language acquisition and difficulties in emotional state attribution with people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and the learning potential for this group through the visual code. Among the research exploring these characteristics (Thurber & Tager-Flusberg, 1993; Norbury & Bishop, 2003; Siller et al., 2014), Mercer Mayer's most cited wordless picturebook is used and reflects the stability of this title in different studies over the years in the clinical setting.

From the data in table 3, which shows the journals with the highest number of publications, it can be seen how wordless picturebooks have been an element for finding out about language difficulties in populations with different disorders in the group of articles. Within the body of articles in the period, some have been found to be associated with cognitive functional diversity (Hemphill, 1991; Channell, 2020) or with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) such as that by Zenaro et al. (2019). While studies associated with ASD or cognitive impairment have been present in all four periods, hearing impairment has also been an area of research interest from the second period to the present (Aram et al., 2006; Boonen et al., 2020).

Finally, we highlight the contributions of Coderre (2019) and a review from the clinical field that questions the criterion of attributing to wordless picturebooks a greater ease of comprehension in the reading process. In his detailed analysis, he focuses on the implications and complexity of such visual narratives used in research involving interventions for the linguistic analysis of populations with language difficulties (autism, developmental language disorder and aphasia), as well as the difficulty in making comparisons with the outcomes of the normatively developing population.

Although the above research is interesting in the field of education, those that deal with aspects more focused on didactics or literary theory are less represented in the selection of articles. Among the recurrent arguments for its didactic potential in the initial stages are the stimulation of orality and its subsequent materialisation in writing or creating one's own stories (Reese, 1996). Among the most interesting contributions, Read and Smith (1982) highlight the importance of wordless picturebooks in the development of visual literacy: understanding the narrative sequence, identifying details in the image, globalising the narrative plot, making inferences, drawing conclusions, determining cause-effect relationships and, finally, arguing.

This last point is relevant for further research where the importance lies in the communicative approach and the establishment of a dialogue on wordless picturebooks depicting complex themes. Among the articles that analyse the potential for the development of empathy and social awareness through wordless picturebooks are those focused on migration, such as the theoretical studies of Duckels and Jacques (2019) or ecological awareness with the research of Ramos and Ramos (2014), as illustrative examples. In this regard, Rapanta et al. (2020) underline the importance of teacher training to address these complex issues with students and the need for inclusion in the educational curriculum. Similarly, the analysis in this research shows a greater diversity of titles and a greater depth of aesthetic communication. In this area, the analysis of participants' reading responses is also essential, such as the creation of reading clubs in libraries in rural areas (Colón & Tabernero-Sala, 2018) or through the same wordless picturebooks in different countries (Ghana, China and the United States) in the research of Liu et al. (2011).

Also relevant is Bosch's (2012) proposed classification of wordless, almost wordless and fake wordless picturebooks. In his analysis, she clarifies different titles by David Wiesner that in other articles analysed are considered to be wordless picturebooks. The researcher includes them as "almost wordless" because of the textual information hidden in their different titles and providing relevant information to the reader. Finally, the systematic review by Arizpe (2013) represents one of the most interesting articles in this period, in which the areas of interest of educational

research using wordless picturebooks in the field of education are pointed out. From the reader's point of view, he points out the importance of the mediating figure in this process because of the complexities and challenges of this type of work. In addition, teachers are advised not to impose verbalisation activities without sufficient time for the reader to interpret and generate their own meanings.

Discussion

The initial purpose of the review was to describe the implications of wordless picturebooks and to find out about interest in academic research by analysing articles in the Scopus and Web of Science databases. The breadth of the search formula, to which the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, served to reflect the growing interest in this type of research, which also coincides with the vitality of wordless picturebooks in the publishing market (Beckett, 2012). Within the 228 articles analysed, relevance was shown in the findings of Arizpe's (2013) and Coderre's (2019) reviews from different fields that indicate the need for the approach of transferring contributions between areas related to the clinical, psychological and literary fields due to the complexity of the semiotic code (Nikolajeva, 2010; Serafini, 2014; van der Linden, 2015).

This was evidenced by the constant use of Mercer Mayer's work to contrast the results of previous research. This circumstance reveals that the stability in the selection of the work does not pursue the in-depth analysis of the wordless picturebook but rather the implications for the evolution of standardised tests or the characteristics of the population analysed. This highlights the lack of an in-depth analysis that could be expanded through multimodal analysis (Painter et al., 2013; Moya-Guijarro, 2014). In this sense, it would also be advisable to know whether there are different responses in these activities to wordless picturebooks that break stereotypes, whether of gender or ethnic origin. Additionally, Bosch's (2012, 2015) definitions are relevant for the design of wordless picturebook research and allow for the precision of the resources used in narrative elicitation activities.

Among the areas that are being consolidated in the field of literary didactics, the importance of the dialogical approach, the analysis of reading responses and the treatment of complex topics in different research contexts stand out (Arizpe et al., 2014). These highlight the importance of reading mediation and teacher training in order to adjust didactic proposals that are not limited to production activities. This way, theoretical studies throughout the period under analysis have clarified the characteristics and implications of this type of picturebook in the literary ecosystem.

Conclusions

The study has shown an increasing trend in the publication of articles using wordless picturebooks from different approaches, with the increase being more pronounced since 2013. In the analysis of the research in these databases, there is greater presence of empirical studies related to the clinical field in which wordless picturebooks are an instrument used for different purposes: assessment of language skills, language difficulties in participants with different disorders and participants from different socio-cultural backgrounds. In such articles, Mercer

Mayer's picturebooks have been used continuously and have made his picturebooks some of the most cited in academic research. A fact that seems to indicate the interest in this area of replicability of studies and comparison with previous findings.

On the other hand, there are fewer publications focusing on theoretical studies of this type of picturebooks, but they are also growing in recent years. This research addresses aspects related to the didactic possibilities of this type of reading, which requires an active reader who, despite the lack of text, will need a series of skills for the construction of meaning. From the thematic variety, the analysis of reading responses or the shared interpretation in the classroom, the wordless picturebook in this field is not considered just an instrument for narrative elicitation or the production of written tasks, and studies such as those by Arizpe (2013) or Coderre (2019) reflect these peculiarities. Among the limitations of the research were the exclusive search in English and the focus on one type of publication.

Finally, it is worth suggesting the importance of a cross-cutting approach that brings together findings from literary and clinical studies to broaden the diversity of picturebooks used and on the implications of multimodality in the educational and therapeutic domains.

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Notes

[i] The following *ZENODO* link directs to the complete list of references analysed and sorted by year of publication (https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5752515).