Research Article

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The development of written expression in immigrant children from 6 to 9 years old

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Abstract: This article presents the results of a pilot study carried out based on texts from 15 immigrant children aged 6 to 9 years, who are learning Spanish in situations of immersion in the Communities of Madrid and Castilla-La Mancha. The aim is to understand how these students try to integrate into the school context and especially to determine whether the development of written expression during the early years of primary education allows them to carry out more complex linguistic actions aimed at communication, such as expressing positive attitudes towards the recipient. These actions may reveal the need to communicate and, therefore, the need to learn the language in order to integrate. The texts were taken from the ESCONES Corpus and were collected in a prior study on lexical retrieval and auditory perception in the development of communicative skills in children aged 6 to 9. The analysis carried out considered the vocabulary used, syntactic complexity and the use of linguistic actions in the different grades and found that the development of written expression may allow students to better express actions related to manifesting positive feelings and attitudes towards their interlocutor.

Keywords: written expression, communication, L2 Spanish, immigrant students, integration, primary education, attitudes, speech acts, L2 written corpora

1 Introduction

In recent years, the presence of increasingly multicultural and plurilingual students in central Spain has compelled schools to update their educational programmes to promote the coexistence of different languages and cultures in the classroom, thereby encouraging the exchange of social values that enrich the teaching/learning process.

Today, Spanish classrooms not only have newly arrived students with a total lack of knowledge of the language of schooling, but schools in central Spain also have children who have been living in the country for over a year with partial knowledge of the language, and second-generation immigrant children, whose parents immigrated from their countries of origin years ago. In fact, if we focus on the regions of Castilla-La Mancha and Madrid, we see that the programmes to integrate immigrant students are different.

In the Community of Castilla-La Mancha, primary school students learn the target language in contexts of immersion, within the classroom, in all years; in Madrid, students in stage two of primary school may enter link classrooms (*aulas de enlace*) for a maximum period of 9 months if they have no knowledge of the language of schooling. After this period, they must join their usual classrooms and continue to learn the language through immersion. In both cases, the situation requires teachers to receive training to manage cultural and linguistic diversities, which is essential for meeting the needs of immigrant students.

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This study will focus on immigrant students who, since their arrival, have had to learn the language out of necessity and who are therefore much more motivated than those who learn it to further their education in the country of origin (learning Spanish as a foreign language). Children who do not know the language of schooling and social mediation are aware that said language makes communication possible; learning the new language and acquiring communicative competency are essential requirements for their integration into the school.

Several authors argue that there is an evident need for immigrant students to communicate in order to integrate into the school context and, therefore, an evident need for them to learn the language (Maruny and Molina 2001; García Armendáriz et al. 2003; Lineros Quintero 2006; Linares Garriga 2007, etc.). Specifically, Lineros Quintero (2006) refers to a study by Lambert (1969) which demonstrates that “the type of motivation in the student determines their degree of competency in the second language” (2006: 210). Thus, she argues that students who learn the language for a utilitarian purpose have an instrumental motivation, and those who “learn the language and culture of another community have an integration motivation that usually leads to better results” (210).

Children who learn the language in the classroom must do so quickly in order to be able to communicate with their peers and their teachers and integrate into the educational context. In order to integrate, immigrant students must assimilate certain codes, norms, rules and attitudes to be able to have their most immediate needs met within the classroom. In other words, they must acquire identifiable formulas with which they can perform language actions particularly aimed at communicating with others, such as asking, thanking, expressing feelings or attitudes, explaining, showing off, complaining, ordering, advising, recommending, promising, offering, forgiving, etc.

Thanks to the use of codes, norms, rules and attitudes shared by the rest of the members of the educational community, students can put forth a positive image of themselves and adapt to the demands of the classroom and school life. In this case, it cannot be said that the use of these elements is due to an increase in their language awareness and greater reflection on language; however, it could be due to adaptive, utilitarian learning that influences the development of their communicative competency and allows them to achieve success in specific situations that arise in the classroom.

This study grew out of an interest to confirm whether the need to learn the language to integrate into the school context was reflected in some way in the written production of immigrant students when they must communicate with their classmates. The authors decided to analyse the written production of these children due to the findings of a previous study on lexical retrieval and auditory perception in the communicative skills of children aged 6 to 9 (Fuentes Gutiérrez 2019); this study found there were numerous linguistic actions aimed at communication, constant references to the recipient and messages created with a specific communicative intention – aspects that are, in principle, relevant to communication with the recipient.

Furthermore, the development of written expression in immigrant children is a topic that has not been thoroughly addressed. Given that there are hardly any studies with primary corpora in Spanish, specifically from central Spain, which combine the subjects’ need to learn the language to communicate and their development of written expression, the pilot study we are presenting is of great value to understand how these children try to integrate into the school context and whether we can somehow perceive their “desire for relation, integration and group belonging” of which Lineros Quintero speaks (2006: 210). According to this author, these factors “make learning from the communicative standpoint more motivated than learning presented to the student in the classroom” (210).

While there are studies that address student motivation and its influence on achievement in a second language or academic performance (Caso-Fuertes and García Sánchez 2006, Rodríguez Pérez 2012, Yu 2018), they do not use written texts from immigrant children with these traits to analyse characteristics that would allow for an understanding of how students manage that need or motivation to learn the language.

To examine this question, special attention must be paid to the identifiable formulas mentioned above, and they must be analysed to determine whether they are used to create communicative texts with information that is relevant to the interlocutor. Other indicators that will also be of use are references to

the recipient, the writer's communicative intent and the possible effect on the recipient. Additionally, analysis of the vocabulary and syntactic complexity considering the language in use could provide clues to answer the question: does the development of written expression throughout the early years of primary education allow students to carry out more complex linguistic actions aimed at communication, which may reveal their need to communicate in order to integrate and, therefore, their need to learn the language?

Given the above, the relevance and originality of this work lie in offering a corpus of written samples from children who are learning Spanish as a second language in school contexts, presenting the results of a pilot study in which samples are analysed to describe different levels of written communicative development in immigrant children who are undergoing the process of school integration, and proposing a research model based on primary corpora of samples of language from children with a native language other than Spanish.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Communication and language development in primary education

Primary education plays a fundamental role in the development of children's communication skills. One of the main objectives of this stage in the Communities of Castilla-La Mancha and Madrid is precisely to encourage education regarding language and communication, thereby promoting the development of integrated communication skills across all areas (Office of the Vice President, Regional Ministry of the Presidency and Spokesperson of the Government of the Community of Madrid 2014; Regional Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of the Community of Castilla-La Mancha 2014).

Students must learn the language of schooling and social mediation, the working language, in order to perform essential tasks such as “talk about themselves and their needs, get others to pay attention to them, plan their actions, solve problems, ask for and give the information they need, [...] tell, explain, argue, formulate hypotheses, predict, ask, clarify, give an opinion, etc.” (Regional Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of the Community of Castilla-La Mancha 2014: 18624).

The curriculum for Castilla-La Mancha (2014) explains the characteristics of students aged 6 to 12, with regard to their language development and communication. It must be remembered that primary education is a period of changes, especially in terms of language development, which influences personality development, in addition to being an instrument for socialisation and communication with others and with oneself. Language allows children to organise thoughts and ideas in accordance with the natural elements that it comprises: the configuration of sentences, the formation of mental lexicon, the acquisition of linguistic patterns, etc.

In the first and second years of primary education, there is an evolution in how children adapt language to the communicative context, “children learn to vary register according to the context, the situation and their interlocutors” (Regional Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of the Community of Castilla-La Mancha 2014: 18627). Additionally, “children come to fully master the phonetic repertoire, their vocabulary expands, they fully access writing, they improve in the use of all verb tenses [...]” (2014: 18627).

In the third and fourth years of primary, significant progress is made in reading and writing, not only due to the evolution of fine motor skills, but also because of advances in thought, which becomes more logical and flexible. As Piaget stated in his work *Six Psychological Studies*, at 7 or 7 years, children are in an intermediate phase of the so-called *concrete operational* stage. In this stage, operations (above all, addition and multiplication) are based on objects rather than on statements (1991).

Other characteristics of students in the third and fourth years of primary are described in the Castilla-La Mancha curriculum: increased vocabulary, concept formation, correct use of agreement (specifically, of articles and pronouns), precision in writing, progression in movement, etc. (Regional Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of the Community of Castilla-La Mancha 2014). As can be imagined, there are still some limitations to these students' thought, which will develop further in subsequent years with

the appearance of logical operations linked to abstract thought and to hypotheses not associated with concrete objects.

In the fifth and sixth years of primary education, children's thought evolves, as they are between a final phase of the stage of concrete intellectual operations and the initial phase of the stage of abstract intellectual operations, "of personality development and affective and intellectual inclusion in adult society (adolescence)" (Piaget, 1991: 14). According to the above-mentioned document from Castilla-La Mancha, in the last years of the stage:

syntax becomes more complex, students understand all verb forms, their comprehension of language and mathematical concepts expands, but physical changes result in certain motor imbalances (body language and writing); however, they consolidate their motor balance and have greater mastery of the concepts of space and time. (2014: 18627)

The complexity of primary education students is due to the multiple changes that occur in language development in all years of the stage. These changes have an impact on communication and on the social relationships constituted in the classroom and school, given that this period involves progress in the acquisition of linguistic and communicative skills. However, the individuality of each student must be considered, and it should be kept in mind that development is not uniform for all. The characteristics described above are a guide that allows for an understanding of how students aged 6 to 12 progress in general throughout the stage; however, as was mentioned above, there is a wide variety of students in classrooms in central Spain.

To meet students' needs, teachers must understand their general characteristics and have a broad training that allows them to support the development of language awareness and communicative competency in all years of the stage, promoting reflection on language and the adaptation of its use in the different communicative situations that students will encounter. The training that teachers receive must cover both teaching Spanish as a native language and teaching Spanish as a foreign language. In this regard, Fernández López states that:

teachers who undertake the arduous task of teaching a language to children aspire for their students to be competent users who can manage common communicative situations effectively; however, teachers' objectives must go further: they must ensure that students carry out these tasks consciously so that they can enjoy and celebrate the success of their communicative interaction. (2015: 15–16)

In the case of teaching Spanish as a second language to immigrants, the teacher's challenge is to strengthen students' capacities and to develop *basic interpersonal communication skills* and *cognitive/school linguistic competency*, also called academic competency, to be able to achieve their integration into the educational context (Cummins 1984 in Villalba and Hernández 2007).

Communicative competency is an indispensable skill for interactions in any context, and academic competency is essential for participating in the classroom and carrying out schoolwork in the language of instruction (Linerós Quintero 2006, Linares Garriga 2007). The two competencies are not acquired at the same time, as they do not require the same cognitive demands and, sometimes, "the mismatch between [the two] means it is impossible for students to adapt to the communicative demands that arise in the classroom (synthesis, analysis, assessment, interpretation, etc.) and to access the educational curriculum" (Villalba and Hernández 2007: 10).

Immigrant students in Spanish classrooms may manage to achieve optimal communication skills in a short time, but sometimes they receive poor results on schoolwork, often to the surprise of their teachers. For this reason, teachers must promote the acquisition of the aforementioned skills by immigrant students, understand the causes which lead to obtaining those results and keep their needs in mind with respect to the use of language.

In the case of written expression, according to García Armendáriz, Martínez Mongay and Matellanes Marcos, the needs of immigrant and native students are the same,

given that, together with personal texts (lists, letters, notes, invitations, etc.) in school, all will need to carry out the activities set by the teachers or their textbooks, take tests, write explanations on topics, write texts in which they describe, narrate, etc. (2003: 103)

Furthermore, the aforementioned authors (2003: 104) recommend that a series of psychomotor and cognitive *strategies* or *micro-skills* be developed, citing Cassany et al. (2000). With regard to these *strategies*, of particular importance are those cognitive *micro-skills* related to the communication situation, as teaching the language must be aimed at preparing students for real communication with other speakers.

In a multicultural, plurilingual classroom, it is essential that teachers understand that the members from different cultures perform their communicative acts by considering a wide variety of pragmatic aspects, above all, those that deal with the sociocultural norms that govern their behaviour in the communicative situations that surround speech acts. According to Escandell Vidal, “the use of language is governed by rules and principles, [and] together with the rules themselves, the participants must have certain attitudes” (1993: 74).

Sociocultural norms are learned naturally as communication skills develop during the primary stage. In spite of this, teachers must demonstrate the said norms and show how they are used for effective communication:

Linguistic education must take into account three fundamental aspects that are involved in any instance of language use: the components of the communicative context, with the rules that enable students to adapt their speech to the situation; the knowledge and thoughtful use of the linguistic code (oral and written) on the levels of the sentence, word and text; and attitudes that eradicate the use of certain sociolinguistic prejudices that are transmitted by language.

Learning a language is not simply appropriating a system of signs, but also the cultural meanings that these signs convey and, with these meanings, the ways in which people in the environment understand or interpret reality. (Regional Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of the Community of Castilla-La Mancha 2014: 18623)

Often, when speech actions or acts are discussed in textbooks, greater importance is placed on their use in oral communication, as it is more immediate and, perhaps, in the early years of primary education, more necessary for students’ integration in the classroom. However, written texts can also contain the linguistic elements that comprise communicative acts. Moreover, these linguistic elements are already being used in written texts in the early years of the stage; these written texts often contain traits characteristic of orality, which indicates that students make use of the techniques that they already know from oral communication to communicate in writing.

Although their learning of the working language during the first few years of primary education is mainly oral, students must learn to use the written code through “strategies that allow them to cohesively and coherently understand and produce different types of text, while also taking into consideration spelling rules and other conventions of the written code” (Regional Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of the Community of Castilla-La Mancha 2014: 18628).

In recent decades, with the appearance of the communicative approach, the teaching of written expression has come to be based on learning techniques and strategies to create real texts that can be used by the student to communicate (Cassany et al. 2003). The curricula for Castilla-La Mancha and Madrid approach written expression from a functional point of view aimed at the use of language for specific communicative purposes. In these documents, composition is set aside in favour of written texts with a greater focus on communication. For example, the Community of Madrid curriculum speaks of satisfying the communicative function and of texts related to “everyday situations and common, specific topics related to the students’ own interests, experiences and needs” (2014: 81).

Consequently, it should be asked what traits differentiate a composition from a communicative text. Cassany et al. (2003) give us some clues in their book *Enseñar lengua* [*Teaching Language*]. They state that communicative texts have “a set structure, register and even phraseology; there is an explicit recipient that varies and determines the particular degree of formality required in each case, [and] the topic of the text is real or realistic, depending on the purpose of the communication” (2003: 278).

Compositions, on the other hand, have a “free structure, register and phraseology. There are no established conventions. The recipient is implicit (the teacher) and does not vary. There are no markers of the degree of formality. [There is] absolute freedom in terms of the topic” (2003: 278). Compositions are a

classroom task used to awaken critical thinking, creativity, imagination, etc. To write them, students use the knowledge they have acquired (spelling, norms, organisational rules, etc.).

According to these experts, both communicative texts and compositions play a role in learning. One of the most characteristic traits of communicative texts as compared to compositions is that a direct relationship between the writer and recipient is established. Moreover, the language used in communicative texts is employed in accordance with the intent itself, the context and with the other person's potential interpretation of the discourse. Occasionally, despite the writer's use of language that is suitable for the context and recipient, or their excellent ability to communicate, the recipient may interpret their language not only according to extralinguistic elements dependent upon the situation but also according to other elements related to their experience.

2.2 The development of written expression: theory and research

Written expression as a communicative skill has been studied in recent decades from different perspectives in the field of language teaching/learning. According to several authors (Camps 1990, García Parejo 1999, Madrigal Abarca 2009, Arias Fuentes 2013), the most influential model has been that of Flower and Hayes (1981), because "it involves the participation of three large units in the process of written production: the task environment, the writer's long-term memory and cognitive processes (planning, translating and revising)" (2013: 35).

Other theories that focus on the writing process include those by Scardamalia and Bereiter (1992), which are also mentioned by Arias Fuentes (2013). These authors (1992) propose two models: the first, *knowledge telling*, and the second, *knowledge transforming*. The two models highlight the differences between mature and immature writers. In that study, mature writers are those close to graduation or who have already graduated, and immature writers are primary students. With the two models, the authors search for mechanisms that may help immature writers move from *knowledge telling* to *knowledge transforming*.

Research in the field of written expression may focus on the writing process, the product or both. Within the analysis of the written text, studies in the field of comparative rhetoric are common (Martín 2000; Trujillo 2001, 2002, 2003; Fernández Marrero 2005; Deza Blanco 2006, 2007; Jiménez Ramírez 2010; Lira Días 2010; Heredero Zorzo 2016, etc.). This discipline "studies writing, its acquisition and the differences that arise between texts in two different languages" (Lira Días 2010: 47). The aforementioned studies help improve language teaching, because they focus on the structures that may pose difficulties to learners of a second or foreign language, so that instruments can be created to facilitate their learning.

In the last decade, several studies have been carried out on didactics in the field of written expression. Specifically, on writing skills, we have the study by Llamazares Prieto et al. (2014) on factors that influence the learning of reading comprehension and written composition in children in preschool and primary education; and the study by Carril Martínez (2015) that analysed the reading comprehension of immigrant students in primary education to determine whether there was a relationship between reading comprehension and academic performance.

Other studies that contain very important didactic applications for teaching second and foreign languages are those by García Armendáriz et al. (2003), mentioned above; recently, the study by Lucha Cuadros and Díaz (2018) to research writing competency and improve writing in foreign students, offering a corpus of written production in Spanish as a first language and as a foreign language; the study by Madrigal Abarca (2009) on methodology for teaching written expression to learners of Spanish as a second language, based on writing as a process; and the study by Arroyo González and Rodríguez Correa (2014) on evaluating strategies and learning in immigrant students who are learning Spanish in the school context.

Also of note in the area of didactics is the work by García Parejo (1999) on the theory of written expression in the field of second languages, in which she provides examples of her contributions through high-value activities; and the more recent contribution of Arias Fuentes (2013) who offers a summary of

the different research focused on the process, the product and the didactics of writing. This author references Cassany whose contribution in the field of writing in the Spanish language has been of great importance and interest.

According to this author (Cassany et al. 2003; Cassany 2009), writing skills are acquired when students master certain concepts, procedures and attitudes. First, concepts include all elements of the linguistic code that a competent writer must know: suitability, coherence, cohesion, presentation, style and grammar.

Second, procedures comprise psychomotor and cognitive aspects. Psychomotor aspects are the alphabet and handwriting, and cognitive aspects include planning, drafting and revision (Cassany et al. 2003). The psychomotor aspects are more related to the mechanical tasks of practising handwriting. In the first years of primary education, achieving graphomotor skills is one of the first steps in creating written texts. Other early steps are sound-letter correspondence and transforming the oral code into written code.

Third, attitudes include “the individual’s values and opinions about language, written expression and each of their components. This section refers to [...] the motivation, interest and even pleasure or boredom that students may feel about the act of writing” (Cassany et al. 2003: 259). Communicative texts also reveal a positive or negative attitude towards the recipient, which is evidenced by the writer’s intent and the linguistic and communicative actions they undertake.

In this group’s prior research with immigrant students in school contexts, the study on Lexical Retrieval and Auditory Perception in the Communicative Skills of Children Aged 6 to 9 (Fuentes Gutiérrez 2019) was published recently; this work includes a corpus of native and non-native speakers. This study should receive special mention as the precedent for the research to be presented below.

This study researched whether auditory perception and lexical retrieval had an influence on the development of the communicative skills that are employed when creating written texts. In developing this study, the authors took into consideration the theories of language awareness, auditory perception and lexical retrieval and the reality of children aged 6 to 9 who are learning Spanish in the contexts of linguistic immersion.

The extralinguistic variables that were used to design the study were as follows: *school*, *sex*, *age*, *education level* and *language knowledge*. First, with regard to the variable *school*, two schools were selected: one located in the Community of Madrid and the other in the Community of Castilla-La Mancha, specifically, in the province of Guadalajara. Second, for the variable *sex*, the possibility that the level of acquisition of communicative skills may vary between boys and girls was taken into account. Third, for the variable *age*, the sample analysed included children of 6 to 9 years. This variable was related to *education level*, as the children in that age range were in the first 3 years of primary school. Finally, with regard to the variable *language knowledge*, the study included students whose native language was Spanish and immigrant students who were learning Spanish in the classroom.

All of the tests were carried out in school contexts, and the informants were selected after sample collection. Thus, the study¹ originally had 203 students, 60 of whom were finally selected for analysis in order to obtain the maximum number of foreign informants. The study therefore constituted a pilot test, as the size of the groups was limited.

The materials that were created to collect written samples from the students were divided into two categories: presentation and tests. In the presentation, students had to write their full name, age and sex. Then they completed a section based on the European Language Portfolio, specifically, on the Language Passport. In this section, they had to indicate which languages they spoke, where they spoke them and with whom. This allowed the researchers to collect data from the informants and include them in tables for the subsequent analysis, transcription and tagging of the samples.

With regard to the tests, in the first, students read a prompt text (Appendix I), an adaptation of one of the tales of Count Lucanor: “What happened to a good man and his son”. The students had to retrieve

¹ See the original document for more information on how the groups from each school year were formed: Fuentes Gutiérrez, Elisa. 2019. Lexical retrieval and auditory perception in the development of the communicative skills of children aged 6 to 9 in their school contexts. *E-eleando, Serie de monografías* (10). Alcalá de Henares: Publications Service of the University of Alcalá.

words from this text, categorising them as *names of animals*, *words that end in a vowel* and *adjectives*. In the second test, students had to select four of the words that they had found in the prior section and create a letter to a friend of theirs on any topic. The duration of the presentation and tests was never longer than 30 min. Additionally, in all of the class groups, the same indications were followed and very precise instructions were given to ensure the tests were administered following the same criteria.

Subsequent analysis was based on the tasks' objectives. Thus, it was necessary to transcribe and tag all of the words and texts, which were included in the ESCONES Corpus² (Corpus of Spanish in School Contexts). All of these allowed the researchers to analyse the results and draw conclusions. Some of their conclusions are of note here: first, clear progress in language awareness was observed in the students from first to third year of primary school. Second, errors in perception did not affect the creation of coherent texts with highly relevant information, and a high degree of lexical retrieval did not imply the creation of texts with a high degree of textual and grammatical coherence. Lastly, it was determined that communicative skills must be developed at the same level for the *Spanish/L1* and *Spanish/L2* groups in the first years of primary education, and the said skills must continue to be worked on in subsequent courses.

2.3 General characteristics of immigrant students in primary classrooms

The presence of immigrant students in Spanish classrooms has increased significantly since the 1990s. Even though there was a decrease in immigrant numbers during the economic crisis as many foreign families sought other destinations or returned to their home countries, today these numbers remain at high levels. This is especially true in the Community of Madrid, one of the places chosen by immigrants to live and work. Specifically, within the Community of Madrid, immigration is concentrated in Madrid Capital, with 3,96,816 foreigners in 2017 in that area alone (García Paredes 2019).

If we consider primary education students (aged 6 to 12 years) in the Communities of Castilla-La Mancha and Madrid, the values are much higher in Madrid, with 49,500 foreign children compared to 13,606 in Castilla-La Mancha (INE 2019). These students are enrolled, above all, in public schools. Recent data (Economic and Social Council 2019: 166) confirm that there is an excessive concentration of immigrant students in those schools. "In the 2016-17 school year, foreign students are overrepresented in public schools, which enrol 66.2% of native students, but 80.3% of immigrants." They add that these data hardly varied for the 2017–2018 school year.

In all non-university Spanish education (Economic and Social Council 2019), 7,48,429 foreign students were enrolled for the 2017–2018 school year, of which 1,80,324 were from Morocco, followed by 1,05,213 from Romania. These data coincide with the total Moroccan (7,70,523) and Romanian (6,76,005) population in Spain. However, in the Communities of Madrid and Castilla-La Mancha, Romanians have the greatest presence, with a total of 1,63,730 Romanian immigrants compared to 76,697 Moroccans in Madrid; and 64,318 Romanians compared to 31,501 Moroccans in Castilla-La Mancha (INE 2019).

The data collected on foreign children in Madrid and Castilla-La Mancha do not include information on second-generation students born in Spain, whom we talked about at the beginning of the article. These students deserve special mention because their characteristics are halfway between students of Spanish origin and foreign students. Regarding this type of student, Hernández García argues that

they are located between two worlds. They experience two languages and two cultures in two different spheres: in private, women are the custodians and transmitters of the values of the culture of origin; in the public sphere, the culture and language of the host society. Identification with one or the other is a permanent source of conflict for these children and

² The ESCONES Corpus was presented to the scientific community in the last edition of the ALFAL Conference (Colombia 2017): 18th International Conference of the Latin American Association of Linguistics and Philology (ALFAL) held at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá Campus (Colombia) from 24 to 28 July 2017, by Fernández López, Corredor Romero and Gómez Herrera in "The development of communicative skills in school contexts: instruments for the study of language awareness in children".

adolescents. They are foreigners everywhere they go, and therefore the feeling of alienation, of a loss of personal references is common. However, the conflicts these children experience, over time, result in a change of structures, mentality, etc. for their families and their countries of origin. (2001: 20–21)

With regard to the linguistic difficulties of immigrant and second-generation students, the latter should not have any if we take into consideration that they were born in Spain; however, given the level of exposure of many of these children to the Spanish language outside of the classroom and the fact that it is common for them to speak their family's language at home, there are likely to be problems related to the academic and communicative competencies we spoke about in Section 2.1. Sometimes the parents of these students and of immigrant students do not know the target language, which complicates their integration into the educational community, communication with teachers and other parents and their ability to support their children with schoolwork.

Although institutions aim for all students to have the same opportunities, joining the Spanish education system late can increase the differences between students of Spanish origin and immigrant children. Currently, there are measures to include immigrant students in integration programmes because of their specific needs for educational support (Economic and Social Council 2019). Arroyo González and Berzosa Ramos (2018) cite Vila (2000) who distinguishes between *linguistic immersion* and *submersion programmes*. The former take the native language into consideration and students join them voluntarily; in the latter, the family language is not considered and, according to the authors Arroyo González and Berzosa Ramos (2018: 196),

the result of these programmes is generally school failure and social exclusion. These are students that, over time, become less interested in the school context and education, who never come to fully master the second language or their own and who have difficulty following school content because they do not have a mastery of the language of instruction.

Enumerating characteristics that define all immigrant students learning Spanish in the classrooms of central Spain is a difficult task. This is due, first, to the heterogeneity of this group and, second, to the multiple factors behind this heterogeneity. In this section we have attempted to define some general characteristics, with recent data that allow us to understand what kind of presence these students have in the classroom, where they are largely concentrated and what are the difficulties surrounding language that may influence their integration. To understand specific characteristics, schools and teachers must support each student and their family individually, considering their country of origin and socio-demographic, sociocultural and linguistic aspects.

3 Pilot study: the development of written expression in immigrant children from 6 to 9 years old

During the prior study (Fuentes Gutiérrez 2019), it was observed that there was not much difference between the written production of immigrant students and students whose first language was Spanish in terms of word choice, textual coherence, grammatical coherence, the relevance of the information, order and clarity.

However, it was not studied, because it was not relevant to that work, whether the need to learn the language to integrate into the school context was reflected in some way in the written production of immigrant students when writing communicative texts. Nevertheless, the texts by these students contained several linguistic actions aimed at communication, constant references to the recipient and messages created with a specific communicative intent, all of which could be relevant to communication.

3.1 Objectives of the study

This study made use of the texts that immigrant students had created in the second test in the prior study (described above). These texts were analysed with the general objective of determining whether the development of written expression throughout the early years of primary education allows students to

carry out more complex linguistic actions aimed at communication, which may reveal their need to communicate in order to integrate and, therefore, their need to learn the language.

The specific objectives that fall under this general objective are as follows:

1. Define how written expression is developed from the first year through the third year of primary education in terms of the production of communicative texts.
2. Observe whether communicative texts are created with references to the recipient, demonstrating the writer's intent and taking into account the recipient's possible interpretation.
3. Analyse whether students make use of identifiable formulas to carry out linguistic actions (speech acts) that are particularly aimed at communication and describe how these formulas are used and whether their use is oriented towards the creation of texts with information that is relevant to the interlocutor.

3.2 Methodology

To meet these objectives, this study was based on legal documents from the Communities of Castilla-La Mancha and Madrid and their contributions regarding the characteristics of primary students and communication skills; on theories of communication and speech acts; and on the contributions of experts in the development of written expression. Additionally, the methodology of this pilot study is based on the methodology from the study *Lexical retrieval and auditory perception in the development of the communicative skills of children aged 6 to 9 in their school contexts*, and the writing samples from immigrant students were taken from the said study.

In this study on the development of written expression, the research has been designed to focus solely on informants with a native language other than Spanish; moreover, the results of the second test have been analysed using different objectives than those established in the first study. For more information on the methodology, see the aforementioned study (Fuentes Gutiérrez 2019).

To determine whether the development of written expression throughout the early years of this stage allows students to carry out more complex linguistic actions aimed at communication in contexts of linguistic immersion, the texts written by the students must be analysed in accordance with their different education levels. First, we will examine the lexicon they have employed to write their communicative texts. Second, we will analyse the syntactic structures and whether they show identifiable formulas that perform linguistic and communicative actions, whether they make reference to the interlocutor, whether they show communicative intent, whether they consider the recipient's possible interpretation, etc. All of these will describe the evolution of immigrant children's written expression from the first to the third year of primary education.

3.3 Research design

The informants selected for this study were a total of 15 immigrant boys and girls who had been in Spain between 1 and 3 years and who had learned the working language in the classroom. Of these 15 students, Romanian was the native language for five, Arabic for four, Bulgarian for three, German for two and Ukrainian for one. Although these students had been in Spain between 1 and 3 years, some of them still had only partial knowledge of the language of instruction.

The 15 children were 6 to 9 years old and students in first to third year of primary at schools in different autonomous communities: Castilla-La Mancha (Guadalajara) and Madrid. The school in Guadalajara is called *Las Lomas* and the school in Madrid is *Madrid Sur*. When the first study was done, interviews were carried out with the classroom teachers and school headmasters in order to obtain more information on the students. These data were used to understand the situation of the students who were taking the tests with regard to integration in the classroom, language learning in the school context, academic progress in different subjects, etc.

Given that the tests were always taken inside the classrooms, the students were grouped from the beginning into two schools in different autonomous communities and three different education levels

(five in first, seven in second, and three in third year of primary). To analyse the results of the written samples in line with the established objectives, other groupings did not need to be performed or other variables considered in the study. Additionally, as this study is focused on the development of language throughout the first 3 years of primary education, it was not seen to be necessary to group the students by the particular features of the schools; thus, the students were grouped solely by year.

3.4 Analysis of results, discussion of data and preliminary conclusions

3.4.1 Analysis of lexicon

3.4.1.1 First year of primary education

In the first year of primary education, a very simple vocabulary was used to write the communicative texts. This vocabulary reflects intents and attitudes that have an important bearing on this analysis, and therefore the first step is to examine which words were most commonly used by these students. There was a total of 58 different words used: 17 nouns, 14 verbs, 6 pronouns, 5 adverbs, 4 adjectives, 4 determiners, 3 prepositions, 2 interjections, 2 contractions and 1 conjunction. Some of these words are repeated several times. If we consider only the lexical words, the most frequently repeated are the adverbs *muy/mucho*, the verbs *ser* and *ir*, the pronoun *contigo* and the nouns *vez*, *cocodrilo* and *burro* (Graph 1).

First, with regard to the analysis of the adverbs, it should be noted that the words *muy* and *mucho* have been counted together as they represent the same grammatical category and because of their similarity in lexical content. Three of the five children used them in their texts, and two paired them with the word *contigo*. This leads one to think that their use is related to the need to show positive attitudes towards the recipient, as can be seen in the sentences:

- (1) *Jugamos mucho y me gusta mucho.* [*We play a lot and I like it a lot.*]
- (2) *Hoy me lo he pasado muy bien contigo.* [*Today I had a very good time with you.*]
- (3) *Te quiero mucho.* [*I love you a lot.*]
- (4) *Me cambio muchas veces contigo el estuche.* [*I exchange my pencil case a lot of times with you.*]

Second, with regard to the analysis of the verbs, it should be noted that after the adverbs, the verbs *ir* and *ser* are the most commonly repeated words, although there are 12 other different verbs in the texts. The intransitive verb *ir* appears a total of four times, three of which are in the past (preterite and present perfect) and one in the present. The linking verb *ser* also appears four times, all in the present. This verb is used to describe attributes of the recipient or the relationship between the interlocutors and to introduce oneself. This can be seen in the following sentences:

- (5) *Samuel es mi mejor amigo.* [*Samuel is my best friend.*]
- (6) *Yo soy Paula.* [*I am Paula.*]
- (7) *Eres el más pequeño.* [*You are the smallest.*]
- (8) *Eres muy mono.* [*You are very cute.*]

Graph 1: Words used by students in first year of primary.

In the above sentences, the adjectives *mejor*, *pequeño* and *mono* are used. The first, *mejor*, is an irregular comparative adjective which the student uses to show a greater degree of friendship with his classmate. The adjective *pequeño* is accompanied by the adverb *más* to form a superlative. Lastly, the colloquial adjective *mono* is used with *muy*, increasing the value of its meaning.

Third, with regard to nouns, the most commonly used were *burro* and *cocodrilo*, as they were part of the prompt text. However, only one student used them in their text, and the rest used other options such as *amigo*, *estuche*, *Alejandro*, *María*, *Paula*, *pueblo*, *carta*, *cartero* [...]

3.4.1.2 Second year of primary education

In the second year of primary education, the students write more complicated texts with a greater number of words. Their vocabulary is more varied, and the writer is more involved in the communicative process. In total, there were 76 different words: 27 nouns, 14 verbs, 11 adjectives, 7 determiners, 6 prepositions, 5 adverbs, 3 pronouns, 2 conjunctions and 1 contraction. As in the first year, some of these words were repeated several times. If only the lexical words are considered, the most frequently repeated words are the verbs *ir*, *ser*, *gustar*, *comprar*, *jugar* and *ver*, the nouns *caballo* and *cocodrilo*, and the adverb *muy*, which in this case was not counted with *mucho* because that word was not used by any of the seven students (Graph 2).

First, regarding the analysis of the verbs *ir*, *ser* and *gustar*, the number of times they appear compared to the other verbs should be noted. In the texts written by second year primary students, there are a total of 36 verbs (taking into account that some are repeated on several occasions); *ir* accounts for 19% of these verbs, *ser* 17% and *gustar* 11%. The most commonly used verb, *ir*, is intransitive and is used by students in their texts to make plans with the recipient or to tell anecdotes and experiences. Some sentences that used the verb *ir* are as follows:

- (9) *Fui a ver los cocodrilos.* [I went to see the crocodiles.]
- (10) *Fui al mercado a comprar.* [I went to the market to do the shopping.]
- (11) *¿Quieres ir a montar a caballo?* [Do you want to ride horses?]
- (12) *Si vas al zoo puedes ver caballos muy bonitos.* [If you go to the zoo you can see very beautiful horses.]

In sentences (11) and (12), we see two very clear communicative intents; in sentence (11), specifically, the speaker directly asks the letter's recipient if they want to go horseback riding. This means that they are writing to him to make plans with him, to communicate. In sentence (12), the intent to recommend something to the recipient can be observed.

With regard to the second most commonly used word, the linking verb *ser*, there is hardly any difference compared to the first year of primary. In both, the verb is accompanied by very similar adjective and nominal attributes that are used to speak about the recipient and show feelings and attitudes towards the person with whom the writer is communicating. The four sentences in which the verb *ser* was used in the second year of primary are as follows:

- (13) *Eres mi mejor amigo de fútbol.* [You are my best friend from football.]
- (14) *Eres muy inteligente y simpática.* [You are very smart and nice.]

Graph 2: Words used by students in second year of primary.

- (15) *Fui a ver a los cocodrilos y eran muy simpáticos.* [I went to see the crocodiles and they were very nice.]
 (16) *Eres guapo con ese disfraz de cocodrilo es muy chulo.* [You are handsome with that crocodile costume it is very cool.]

With regard to the intransitive verb *gustar*, sometimes it is accompanied by nouns, as in: *te gusta el helado* [you like ice cream], *me gusta ese disfraz* [I like that costume]; and other times, with verbs in the infinitive, such as: *te gusta montar en cocodrilo* [you like to ride crocodiles], *te gusta jugar a la Play 4* [you like to play with the PlayStation 4]. This verb, as with the verb *ser*, is most frequently used in the present. However, the verb *ir* is used in the preterite, present and simple future.

Second, the use of the adverb *muy* must be analysed in the second year of primary, as three out of seven students used it, or 42%. As with students from first year of primary, *muy* is used to demonstrate positive attitudes towards the recipient and accompanies the descriptive adjectives *inteligente*, *simpático* and *chulo*. This last word is colloquial and is used by the student twice; one example is above in sentence (16), and the other is: *también me gusta ese disfraz de caballos chulos* [I also like that cool horse costume].

Third, with regard to nouns, the most frequently used were *caballo*, *cocodrilo* and *hijo*. All three were part of the prompt texts: *caballo* was used in four out of seven students' texts, *cocodrilo* in three out of seven and *hijo* also in three out of seven texts. Other nouns used include *amigo*, *disfraz*, *vacaciones* and *parque*.

3.4.1.3 Third year of primary education

In the third year of primary, there is much more lexical variety than in the first and second years. The average number of different words per text is 27, compared to 15 in first year and 19 in second year. These texts are also longer, with an average of 33 words per text, much higher than the texts from first year (19) and second year (25).

In all of the texts from the third year of primary, a total of 63 different words were used: 15 nouns, 15 verbs, 6 adjectives, 6 adverbs, 6 conjunctions, 6 pronouns, 4 determiners, 4 prepositions and 1 contraction. As in the first and second years, some of these words were repeated several times. Taking only lexical words into account, the most commonly used are the verbs *ser*, *dar*, *decir*, *querer* and *poder*; the adverbs *muy/mucho* and *siempre*; the adjective *mejor*; and the nouns *serpiente* and *amigo* (Graph 3).

First, with regard to an analysis of the verbs, as has been seen, of a total of 15 different verbs, *ser*, *dar*, *decir*, *querer* and *poder* are the most frequently repeated. In the texts written by the third year primary students, there are a total of 26 verbs (taking into account that some are repeated on several occasions); the linking verb *ser* accounts for 31% of these verbs, and the verbs *ser*, *dar*, *decir*, *querer* and *poder* 8%. Some examples of the sentences with the verb *ser* are as follows:

- (17) *Yo soy tu mejor amigo eres tan lista yo te apoyo.* [I am your best friend you are so smart I support you.]
 (18) *Natalia eres muy simpática ayer me dijiste que era muy inteligente.* [Natalia you are very nice yesterday you told me that I was very smart.]

Graph 3: Words used by students in the third year of primary.

In the third year, this verb was used above all in the present indicative; in other years, there were no precedents for the use of other verb moods. However, here there was one example of the verb *ser* in the present subjunctive:

- (19) *Quiero que seas mi hermano.* [I want you to be my brother.]

Second, the adverb *muy/mucho* has been used by two out of three of third year students, or 67%. As in first and second year, *muy/mucho* is used to show positive attitudes towards the recipient and accompanies verbs: *me ayudas mucho* [you help me a lot], and adjectives: *simpático* and *inteligente*. Both adjectives are descriptive. The adjectives used by these students also include *mejor*, which, as noted above, is a comparative adjective that is used in all 3 years together with *amigo*. The adverb *siempre* was also used by two out of three third year students, in sentences which will be analysed below.

Third, the most frequently used nouns are *serpiente* and *amigo*. *Serpiente* is used by two of three students, but *amigo* is only used by one. Other nouns that were also used include *cole*, *consejo*, *mercado*, *hermano*, *cartero* and *mentira*.

3.4.2 Analysis of syntactic structures and their meaning in communication

3.4.2.1 First year of primary education

In general, in the first year of primary education, students write very long sentences, without punctuation marks, that have a very simple structure. In most cases, this is because written communication is totally related to oral communication. Students write sentences just as they would express them in the oral code; for that reason, terms are frequently reiterated.

- (20) *El cartero te va a traer una carta que te he hecho yo soy Paula.* [The postman is going to bring you a letter that I made I am Paula.]
- (21) *Samuel es mi mejor amigo y jugamos mucho y me gusta mucho.* [Samuel is my best friend and we play a lot and I like it a lot.]
- (22) *La última vez que casi te come un cocodrilo y te montaste en el burro te caíste del burro y fuiste al pueblo.* [The last time that a crocodile almost eats you and you got on the donkey and you fell off the donkey and you went to the village.]

In sentences (21) and (22), the repeated and exclusive use of the copulative conjunction for textual cohesion can be observed.

The texts by first year students are largely comprised of compound sentences with copulative coordinating conjunctions (see Appendix II). In them, students try to express feelings and attitudes towards the recipients and to tell real or imagined experiences and anecdotes that could easily be created by oral communication. In these cases, the need to express feelings and attitudes can be seen in the use of syntactic structures led by *me gusta*, in the use of positive adjectives to describe the interlocutor such as *mono*, in the inclusion of the interlocutor in the verb's action by using pronouns such as *contigo*, and in the repeated use of *muy* and *mucho*.

The students' intent in all cases is to communicate with their interlocutor, mainly to demonstrate a positive image of themselves or of the other person. Underlying this intent is the need to integrate, to be accepted by classmates; this is not apparent in the form, but rather in the content of the texts. In Graph 4, we can see the communicative and linguistic actions carried out by students in the first year of primary and the values they have expressed.

The need to learn the language has led these students to mainly develop the oral code, and because they still have not learned the norms that govern the written code, they transfer what they know to the texts they write. It has been observed that students who do not know the language very well try to employ what they have learned in the oral code in order to write. For example, see how an Arab student told his friend Carolina in a letter that he had gone to the zoo, the cinema and the Burger King:

- (23) *Querido/a carorina y doalfo ey do al fine ey do al burquequin* (original transcription of text).

Graph 4: Number of students who carry out linguistic actions aimed at communication (speech acts) in first year of primary.

As can be seen, a lack of knowledge of the written code leads him to make errors in word segmentation, probably because he is learning to make the switch from the oral code to the written. Even his possible errors in pronunciation can be seen, as he transcribes the words almost exactly how he would use them while speaking.

3.4.2.2 Second year of primary education

In the second year of primary, although the texts are more complex and there is a greater involvement of the writer, there are no significant differences with regard to the prior year in terms of sentence formation. In this year, there continue to be constant repetitions, especially of the main verb, as in:

- (24) *Te gusta montar en cocodrilo y también te gusta el helado y te gusta jugar a la Play 4.* [You like to ride crocodiles and you also like ice cream and you like to play with the PlayStation 4.]
 (25) *Iremos un día iremos un día al parque.* [We'll go one day we'll go one day to the park.]

The differences between some students and others increase. While some students still repeat words, as can be seen in the above sentences, others have learned resources and strategies related to ellipsis to avoid repetition, as can be seen in the sentences written by a female student:

- (26) *¿Quieres montar a caballo? ¿o a camello?* [Do you want to ride horses? Or camels?]
 (27) *Con el caballo podemos jugar a carteros y con el camello a árabes cansados en busca de agua.* [With the horse we can play postmen and with the camel play tired Arabs looking for water.]

In sentences (26) and (27), there is greater syntactic complexity than in the above sentences. Additionally, the coherence and elements of textual cohesion are also more complex. In the second sentence, the prepositional complement precedes the verb, and the student even uses the expression *en busca de*.

In the second year of primary education, sentences are also mostly compound with copulative and disjunctive coordinating conjunctions and are mainly used to make statements. As in the first year, these sentences reference the interlocutor and use elements of oral speech to get their attention. In sentence (28), one of the girls uses the imperative to advise or recommend that the other should go to the zoo:

- (28) *Y mira si vas al zoo puedes ver caballos muy bonitos.* [And look if you go to the zoo you can see really beautiful horses.]

In sentence (29), the discourse is clearly oriented towards the interlocutor, above all because it demonstrates the writer's communicative intent in writing the text, and that intent is expressed through an adverbial clause at the end:

- (29) *Ayer estuve preparando unas cosas para hablarte de mis vacaciones.* [Yesterday I was preparing some things to talk to you about my holidays.]

Graph 5: Number of students who carry out linguistic actions aimed at communication (speech acts) in the second year of primary.

In general, the second year students write texts with an intent that is demonstrated through the formulas they use to carry out linguistic and communicative actions (see Appendix III). Graph 5 shows the number of students who have carried out linguistic actions aimed at communication. As can be seen in the graph, there is a wider variety as compared to the first year students. This could be because they use the texts for different communicative purposes, including to propose plans, tell experiences, give advice and show feelings or attitudes.

3.4.2.3 Third year of primary education

In the third year of primary education, there is a much greater degree of complexity in sentence structure. Here, the sentences are compound and include subordinate clauses: compound sentences with disjunctive and adversative coordinating conjunctions; and noun and adverbial clauses (purpose, reason and condition). Therefore, there is a greater variety in sentence formation compared to the prior years. Before, long, repetitive sentences, typical of oral language, predominated; now, the sentences are still long, but they are related through connectors and separated by punctuation marks. Some examples of compound sentences and subordinate clauses are as follows:

- (30) *Algunas veces nos peleamos en el cole pero eres mi amiga* [Sometimes we fight at school but you are my friend] (Compound sentence with adversative conjunction).
- (31) *Ayer me dijiste que era muy inteligente* [Yesterday you told me that I was very smart] (Noun clause).
- (32) *Pareces una serpiente porque siempre te arrastras por el suelo* [You look like a snake because you always drag along the ground] (Adverbial clause of reason).
- (33) *Siempre me das consejos para que no me castiguen* [You always give me advice so that I don't get punished] (Adverbial clause of purpose).
- (34) *Si quieres podemos darle un susto al cartero o podemos poner en el mercado.* [If you want we can scare the postman or we can put. in the market.] (Compound sentence with disjunctive conjunction).

The syntactic complexity achieved in third year is very interesting. In the three samples analysed, there are at least two compound sentences per text, and the average length of the texts is 33 words. Appendix IV has the texts by the three students: KAR_005 of Arab origin, YAR_001 of Palestinian origin and VIK_002 of Bulgarian origin. Of the texts, the complexity of the sentence written by VIK_002 stands out: *si quieres podemos darle un susto al cartero o podemos poner en el mercado serpientes y cocodrilos de mentira para que se asusten.* [if you want we can scare the postman or we can put fake snakes and crocodiles in the market to scare people.]

In the third year of primary, the students also use expressions characteristic of oral language, all of which are very closely related to references to the interlocutor. Thus, in the prior sentences, we see that the writer directly addresses the recipient. In sentence (35), the student tries to get their

Graph 6: Number of students who carry out linguistic actions aimed at communication (speech acts) in third year of primary.

interlocutor's attention by using questions or expressions that directly affect them. First, the student uses an impersonal structure to indicate that he does not know who said something about the recipient. Then he asks them directly for this information. This shows that the types of discourse and communicative resources available to the student are increasing.

(35) *Han dicho por ahí que has creado un mercado, ¿es cierto?* [*I heard that you have created a market, is that true?*]

The use of the verb *ser* to express feelings or attitudes towards the interlocutor, the use of a wide variety of clauses to communicate different facts, and constant references to the recipient allow us to deduce that these students are creating their texts with very specific communicative objectives. In the first and second years, the texts were aimed at carrying out one or two linguistic actions at the most. In the third year, however, there are texts that have traits of different linguistic actions. For example, in sentence (30), the student says to the recipient: *algunas veces nos peleamos en el cole pero eres mi amiga* [*sometimes we fight at school but you are my friend*]; i.e., he performs the action of forgiving while expressing his feelings towards the other person.

Graph 6 shows the number of linguistic actions aimed at communication in the third year of primary. As explained in the prior paragraph, in the texts by third year students, several actions can be observed at the same time: forgiving, proposing plans, telling experiences, expressing feelings or attitudes, etc.

4 Conclusions

Language, as a means of communication and socialisation, is the primary tool that immigrant students have to integrate into the school context. In order to interact with their classmates and teachers, they must know a series of codes, norms, rules and attitudes to be able to have their most immediate needs within the classroom met. In this study, it was demonstrated that the needs of the students studied are, above all, affective, given that a total of nine students, or 60% of the sample, needed to express feelings and attitudes towards their interlocutor, promoting a positive image of themselves and of the recipient. It has also been seen that a large part of the sample had the need to tell experiences or propose plans in their communicative text.

The development of written expression throughout the first years of primary education has allowed these students to acquire the tools to carry out more effective communication. There is a progression in written expression from first year to third year that enables students to better express the linguistic actions

that are carried out for communication. The students in third year of primary have more resources to communicate and, therefore, can carry out more linguistic actions aimed at communication, even within the same text, as was seen in Graph 6. The increased vocabulary in third year, together with the formation of more complex sentences, makes it possible for them to create more useful communicative texts that express more relevant ideas for communication.

The analysis of the samples also indicated that most of the texts had traits characteristic of oral language, which revealed that immigrant students who are learning the language in the classroom try to use tools that they already know from oral language to communicate in writing. This is the case because the norms and codes of oral language are acquired out of need before those of written language, so that immigrant students can coexist in the classroom and, as was said, can cover the affective needs that all children aged 6 to 9 have. The traits of oral speech, together with a large number of references to the interlocutor, combine to create a single effect in these children's written production: the texts resemble those used in colloquial oral communication, as if they were having a face-to-face conversation with the interlocutor.

This study involves advanced knowledge of the mechanisms that immigrant students use to integrate into the classroom. The fact that this was a pilot study with such a small sample size limits the extent to which the data can be generalised; furthermore, the study raises some questions that could be answered by performing an in-depth study of how immigrant and Spanish-origin students interact. It has been demonstrated that expressing positive feelings and attitudes towards the interlocutor may be a first step towards integration for these students, but what effect do these statements have on the other person? What results would be obtained from analysing the texts created by Spanish students? Do children, in general, tend to use language that shows a positive attitude towards their classmates? Are positive attitudes shown only in written communication or also in oral communication?

As we said, an in-depth study of all of these aspects in which the texts of native and non-native students were compared, trying to extract the differences between them and broadening these results, could help to better understand how immigrant students act in the classroom when faced with the need to communicate in order to integrate and how students of Spanish origin act to try to integrate them. Our objective was to determine how written expression is developed, focusing on communicative actions; however, more studies will be needed to complete the ideas presented here and to fully consider the presence of immigrant students in our country's classrooms.

Appendix I: Prompt text: the postman's tale

Hace muchos años, un cartero muy simpático recorría los pueblos con su hijo para repartir las cartas. El hijo, un muchacho inteligente, siempre ayudaba a su padre, pero a veces se equivocaba.

Como esta historia sucedió hace muchos años, padre e hijo iban andando en compañía de un viejo burro que cargaba las cartas y los paquetes.

Un día, paseaban por el mercado de un pueblo saludando a la gente, cuando escucharon que una vendedora de loros y jilgueros decía:

- ¡Mira esos dos!, van caminando teniendo un burro en el que montarse.

El hijo, que había escuchado a la mujer, le dijo a su padre:

- Papá, móntate tú en el burro que yo iré andando.

El padre le hizo caso y se montó, pero un rato después, escucharon a un vendedor de caballos y camellos que le decía a otro:

- ¡Mirad ese padre!, deja que su hijo vaya andando con lo pequeño que es.

El hijo, al oír esto, le dijo a su padre:

- Papá, esta vez me montaré yo, y tú irás andando.

Cuando el hijo llevaba un rato montado, volvieron a escuchar a un vendedor de cocodrilos y serpientes que decía:

- ¡Vaya hijo! Él va montado en el burro y su padre, un anciano, andando.
Padre e hijo, desesperados, decidieron montarse los dos, pero no agradaron a la gente, que dijo que el pobre burro estaba aguantando demasiado peso.
El padre, cansado, le dijo a su hijo:
- No hay nada que hacer, hijo. No debes hacer las cosas para agradar a los demás, ya has visto que no funciona. Si quieres un consejo, haz lo que más te agrade a ti mismo.

Adapted version of Tale II: “What happened to a good man and his son”, from the literary work *Tales of Count Lucanor* by Don Juan Manuel (Vicedo 2004: 37–40).

Appendix II: test results. First year of primary education

PAU_002

cartero	Ecibocado	Caballo	Camello
Querido/ a Alejandro			
Tequiero mucho el cartero te va a traer una carta que te e echo yo yo soy Paula me cambio muchas beces con tigo el estuche eres el mas pequeño Eres muy mono adios Alejandro			

PHI_003

burro	serpiente	pueblo	cocodrilo
Querido/ a Maria			
Ola Maria la ultima bec que casi te come un cocodrilo y te montaste en el burro te caiste del burr y te fuiste al peblo y te encontraste con un cocodrilo.			

AND_002

loro	igado	piscina	Gato
Querido/a Samuel es mi mejor amigo y jugamos mucho y me gusta mucho.			

ALE_003

caballo	Sespiente	hijo	cocodrilo
Querido/amigo Iván hoy me lo e pasado muy bien con tigo al pilla pilla			

HAS_004

lorro
Querido/a carorina y doalfo ey do al fine ey do al burquequin

Appendix III: test results. Second year of primary education

NER_001

cocodrilo	hijo	Sinpatico	Mercado
Querido/amiga aller estuve preparando unas cosas para ablarte de mis vacaciones: fuy a ver los cocodrilos y eran muy sinpaticos luego vi a un padre con su hijo y por ultimo me fui al mercado a comprar.			

MAR_002

caballo	hijo	Biejo	muchcho
Querido/a Alfoso, Biejo, muchacho, hijo, caballo iremos un dia iremos un dia al parque ir nos comparamos un helado comprarem-o jegueton y iremos a la play y fomos a leer un teatro y nos peremos a una picina.			

PAU_003

Caballo	Camello	Cartero	Cansado
Querido/a Gabriela			
¿Quieres ir a montar a cabaño? ¿o a camello?, con el cabaño podemos jugar a carteros y con el camello a arabes cansados en busca de agua.			

HAM_010

Edu	amigo	futbol	mal
Querido/a Edu juegas un poco mal a el futbol heres mi megor amigo de futbol			

EDU_011

caballos	cocodrilo	camellos	Ijo
Querido/ a Samul			
Eres guapo con ese disfrac de cocodrilo es muy chulo. y tanvien megusta ese disfrac de caballos chulos.			

VAL_012

CROCODILO	HIJO	LORO	CABALLO
Querido/ a Hola samuel te gusta montor en crocodilo y tambien te gusta el helado y te gusta jugar ala plei 4.			

NAT_009

inteligente	sipatica	ija	caballo
Querido/ a Manuela eres muy inteligente y simpatica eres como my ija e mira si vas al zoo puedes ver caballos muy bonitos			

Appendix IV: test results. Third year of primary education

KAR_005

serpiente	hijo	montas	visto
Querido/ a sofía eres el mejor yo soy tu mejor amigo eres tan lista yo te apoyo me ayudas mucho alguna beces nos peleamos en el cole pero ese mi amiga siempre me das consejo para que no me castiejien.			

YAR_001

inteligente	sinpatica	Serpiente	Mercado
Querido/ a Natalia eres muy sinpatica ayer me dijiste que era muy inteligente. Pareces una serpiente porque siempre te arrastras por el suelo. Han dicho por ahí que has creado un mercado ¿es cierto?			

VIK_002

Mercado	Serpiente	cocodrilo	Cartero
Querido/ a Raúl			
Quiero que tu seas mi hermano.			
Si quieres podemos darle un susto al cartero o podemos poner en el mercado serpientes y cocodrilos de mentira para que se asusten.			

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