

## **Intersections between literacy beliefs and written texts produced by 7 to 10 years old Chilean children**

Margarita Calderón López  
Lancaster University

### **Abstract**

The pilot study reported in this paper investigated Chilean children's meaning-making practices in written texts and their perceptions about literacy. This pilot study analyzed the relation between children's beliefs about literacy practices and the written text in terms of meaning making strategies. Participants in the study were 107 students in a rural school in Chile from second (N=53) and fourth grade (N=54). Participants were asked to answer one open elicitation task and a set of multiple choice questions about their home literacy practices. To investigate children's meaning-making strategies, each text was analyzed in terms of content, coherence, cohesion and structure. In addition, in constructing their meanings, some children used drawing to express themselves. The analyses considered variables as age and gender. The analysis suggests that, in general, gender is more significant than age. Results raised interesting issues in regard to how children perceived literacy. By analyzing the relation between the written text and home literacy experiences I demonstrate how children engage with these issues as empowered agents of their actions. This study shows the importance of including children's perspectives when investigating influences on their writing.

### **1. Introduction**

The relevance of written text has been increasingly led by academic, political and social concerns. In the Chilean academic field, several studies have focused on writing texts (Concha & Paratore, 2011; Parodi, 2011; Peronard & Gómez Macker, 1985), which means an increasing amount of research. However, there is still little about children's perceptions about literacy and how these might be related to their meaning construction in writing.

This study analyzed the relation between children's beliefs about literacy practices and the written text in terms of meaning-making strategies. To do so, 107 participants were asked to answer one elicitation task where they were ask to write anything they like and a set of multiple choice questions about their beliefs about literacy and literacy practices (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). By analyzing the relation between the written text and their perceptions about literacy I would like to demonstrate how children engage with these issues as agents.

By making the distinction between written text and perception, I focus on the relevance of considering children's perspectives and influences on the study of their writing.

This research approaches the study of literacy from a social perspective, therefore, this research will consider social practices and beliefs involved in the process of developing reading and writing (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Street, 1995). Due to the social relevance of literacy, it raises the need to consider how social beliefs might be influencing the development of meaning construction and understanding. In this sense, the context, and the cultural values around literacy are extremely relevant to this study.

From a social point of view, as a developing country, in Chile there is a big difference between the resources availability at each socioeconomic level. In addition, Chile is the country with the worst income inequality in the world (OECD, 2011). The main place where the children can develop or improve their literacy and language skills is in schools. This issue becomes extremely meaningful if we consider economically disadvantaged children. Family literacy practices in this context, tend to be very difficult or poor, which means that the emergent literacy outside of formal education is very difficult (Strasser & Lissi, 2009). In this environment parents cannot provide support or do not have the confidence to encourage literacy activities at home.

In developing countries the family literacy practices are affected by parent's lack of time to spend with their kids and the paucity of resources that they can provide. In respect of parents, it has to be considered that in developing countries "(parents) reach lower literacy and an educational level is likely to influence the quality of the home literacy environment in the form of literacy practices and attitudes toward literacy" (Strasser, 2009, p. 178). In this sense, literacy has a different role and it is certainly a factor to consider at the moment of studying this particular context.

In the case of this study, the lack of resources impacts on the literacy activities at home and school. Most of the participants in this study do not have computers or internet access at home, their parents do not own cellphones with internet, and the students only can use a computer in the library and with a very restricted access. Digital literacy practices are now a common descriptor when talking about literacy; however, in disadvantaged environments children do not have access to technological devices very often.

All these particularities have a huge impact on everyday literacy practices. It is because of this awareness that one of the main interests of this research is to contribute to an understanding of literacy in Chile.

## **2. Literature review**

This section aims to provide a brief description that situates this study into some specific ways of thinking. I will concentrate on some of the fundamental concepts related to this study. In particular, I will explain what means to learn and then write from a sociocultural perspective. Then I will introduce the concept of meaning construction and link it to the linguistic coherence.

### **Learning and writing from a social perspective**

This study is framed within a social perspective of cognitive development (Rogoff, 1990). This approach allows understanding cognitive development as a social process where peers and context play a fundamental role.

Learning in context is one of the important issues that this investigation considers. It not only to emphasizes the cultural differences but also how children engage with these issues: “the aim is to recognize the essential and inseparable roles of societal heritage, social engagement, and individual efforts.” (Rogoff, 1990, pp. 25-26). In this sense, writing

practices are inscribed under a social perspective of knowledge and learning and this means that different issues are underlying writing and reading activities.

Under a social perspective of knowledge and learning children become a relevant part of the learning process. Children's experiences and perceptions have an important role in their learning process and in particular in how children developed their reading and writing. By acknowledging this perspective, Children are seen as agents that engage with several issues during their learning process. This perspective determines not only the way children learn, but also emphasizes the relevance of their own perspectives about the learning process.

In this context, writing is a practice that involves writing being situated and part of wider social practice: "Sociocultural theory argues that activity is situated in concrete interactions that are simultaneously improvised locally and mediated by prefabricated, historically provided tools and practices, which range from machines, made objects, semiotic means (e.g. languages, genres, iconographies), and institutions to structured environments, domesticated animals and plants, and, indeed people themselves." (Prior, 2006, p. 55). In this sense, writing involves all the practices in which students are located.

Writing represents the material means in which people distribute and mediate meaning (Prior, 2006). However, writing also involves dialogic processes of invention: "Sociocultural approaches to writing reject the simple equation of writing with material texts or acts of inscription, seeing writing as chain of short- and long-term production, representation, reception, and distribution." (Prior, 2006, p. 57). In this regard, writing becomes the centre of a bigger social and cognitive network that embeds these processes of invention.

Finally, within a sociocultural understanding of writing, written texts work as "artefacts-in-activity, and the inscription of linguistic signs in some medium are parts of

streams of mediated, distributed, and multimodal activity” (Prior, 2006, p. 58). In this sense, a text becomes a mediating artefact embedded in a social practice. In addition, it is important to point out that this definition considers the text as a multimodal activity. For this study this issue became relevant because some of the participants used drawings to illustrate, complement or construct their meanings. In relation with the multimodal aspect of this study, the work of Gunther Kress (1997, 2010) was used as guidance to understand the significance of drawing for children’s meaning-making.

### **Meaning construction**

In the context of this study, meaning construction emerges as a linguistic background to study a complex phenomenon from and through written text. For the purposes of this study, meaning construction is evaluated in relation to the way how people construct their own world. In Barton’s (2007) words: “The approach here rests upon a constructivist view of language, as mentioned earlier when discussing metaphors and thought, which sees language as playing a central role in the mental models people construct of the world” (p. 73).

Because of this approach to language in general and meaning construction in particular, this particular strategy is seen has a way to analyse from a linguistic point of view how some Chilean children construct knowledge on written text. All in all, meaning construction will not be analysed as an isolated category, but as a part of a social context and also in relation with literacy perceptions and development. Meaning construction would be considered as a process that involves discourse strategies and the resources used by the children to build meaning in their writing text.

In respect of a linguistic background, meaning-making strategies are materialized as some of the discourse practices that build the macrostructure (Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). According to Van Dijk and Kintsch, macrostructure is a coherent whole materialized by a

“network of interrelated propositions” (p. 52). At the same time, this macro structure is also related to strategies, which means that this concept involve a “goal - orientated, intentional, conscious, and controlled behaviour (Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983, p. 62). Meaning construction is understood as all the components and strategies that shape discourse. For this study, Coherence and Local Coherence related with Van Dijk and Kintsch’s model are considered in order to analyse children’s writing.

Coherence and Local Coherence are the specific discursive strategies related to meaning construction. These dimensions are part of the major knowledge network that involves meaning construction as a cognitive process: “Coherence is not merely a property of texts but rather the result of a complex interaction of semantic, pragmatic, and logical principles that both writer and reader activate in order to construct a coherent meaning for texts” (Concha & Paratore, 2011; Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983).

In relation with Local Coherence, this concept gathers the more specific grammatical strategies. According to Halliday and Hassan the different connectors create the texture that characterizes cohesion. (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). In specific, this study focus on the uses of any types of conjunctives (additive, adversative, causal and temporal) (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) or any other different strategies that students might use to join their sentences.

Finally, it is important to point out that this study is situated in a Spanish language context. Therefore, Local Coherence is affected by the characteristics of Spanish academic writing. This means that different discursive conventions are taken into account. For example, it is important to consider that Spanish academic writing values complexity, subordination of clauses and longer paragraphs than English (Carlino, 2007; Concha & Paratore, 2011).

### **3. Data and Methods**

The methodological design of this study combines quantitative and discursive methods to process the data.

The sample is composed of 107 children. They are students from an urban school in Chile and belong to four different classroom groups, two from the second grade (N=53) and two groups from the fourth grade (N=54). All the participants were Chilean, Spanish native speakers. The school is located in a small district in the centre of Chile. Students were recruited by convenience or nonprobability sampling, which means that the sample was selected at the convenience of the researcher (Kiess, 2002).

At this point, it is important to mention that there are some personal characteristics that allowed me to get access to the participants of this study. During my work as a consultant on the Vicaría de la Educación [Educational vicarage<sup>13</sup>], I was able to gather knowledge about and make connections with several schools in Chile. This work allowed me to know rural and disadvantaged schools and their childhood education. I participated and coordinated the evaluation of more than 1000 students, distributed in at least 6 diverse schools in different places in Chile. In these evaluations children are tested in different language and numeracy skills. This assessment is executed due to a government policy that requires the schools with the highest poverty rates to assess their students in Language and Maths. I worked there from 2008 to 2012.

During this period I made contact with the participant school for the first time and during 3 years I coordinate the evaluation to preschool levels at the school. Because of this, I already knew the organization and dynamics of the school and the authorities of the school

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<sup>13</sup> The Vicarage for Education is the institution representing the Church of Santiago, on matters relating to Education. It was created in July 1974 by the then Archbishop of Santiago, Cardinal Raul Silva Henríquez, in order to strengthen an ecclesial identity of Catholic schools of the Archdiocese. However, nowadays the Vicariate has expanded his work to any school that requires improving their educational level.

knew me. Due to these circumstances I was able to have easy access and support for the evaluation.

Some social characteristics of the school and participants are given by the records of the Chilean Government, which are online and in the public domain. At this respect, there is more information available for the fourth grade because of the standard test applied to this grade<sup>14</sup>. In this school, this grade is associated with a socioeconomically middle group, this means that most of the parents declared to have between 11 and 12 school years and an income between \$245.001 (£310,817) \$450.000 (£570,887) per month. In addition, a middle group means that between 28, 51% and 55, 00% of the students are considered vulnerable<sup>15</sup>.

In addition, the school is classified as an urban place. However, the majority of the students come from surrounding rural areas. This is important to mention because some participants mentioned this in their texts and it is an important part of their life worlds.

Finally it is important to state that this research underwent the ethics approval process of Lancaster University. Furthermore, the data collection process was carried out in a way that fully respected the participants. In all cases informed consent was required and information sheets were given to parents.

### **Description of the data source**

The students were asked to answer an activity on their own classrooms and within their school hours. The process was coordinated by me but the students were supervised inside the classroom by a trained examiner. We watched the children during the process in order to keep everything calm. The activity was planned for 45 minutes which corresponds to the duration

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<sup>14</sup> The standardized test is called SIMCE and is applied to 2<sup>nd</sup> (since 2012), 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students all over the country. This test assesses Language and Communication and Maths.

<sup>15</sup> This condition is a sociological term used in diverse political and academic discourses to refer to people who are socially and economically disadvantaged. This could entail several characteristics related to the family's ability to control or counteract the forces that shape their own destiny. (Katzman, 2000)



of a lesson in Chile. The activity was designed as a series of multiple choice questions about some home literacy practices and one elicitation task where the participants could write whatever they want.

The multiple choice questions were used to measure the children's beliefs and attitudes in relation to their home literacy practices and focused on covering the main aspects of children's perception about literacy development (Rodriguez, Tamis-Lemonada, Spellman, Pan, Raikes, Gil & Luze, 2009). The aspects to take into account are: Literacy activities (questions 2 and 3), provision of learning materials (questions 5 and 6) and parental or peer's engagement (questions 7 and 8)<sup>16</sup>. In addition, questions number 1 and 4 are related to perceptions and beliefs about reading. These two questions aim to know the children's opinions, especially for knowing if they have a positive perspective or not.

The elicitation task was developed to analyse the meaning construction on their writing within a social perspective of literacy (Barton, 2007; Street, 1995). This view is mentioned due to the question that the children should answer: Write something about you that you wish to tell anyone, could be about your hobbies, your family, your friends, your vacations or your school, etc. This question was written with the aim that children could have the chance to construct (a small part) of their own world (Barton, 2007).

In addition, and continuing with the same logic, the answer space was a white square without lines. This choice was made thinking in children's liberty regarding their own options to construct their knowledge. Allowing children's creativity and freedom for their writing was crucial for this study. In addition, an open question follows the idea that with more guided structures children tend to retrieve images from their memory without making a transformation of the content (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987).

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<sup>16</sup> The full set of questions can be found in section 4.

Finally and as a methodological note, I would like to mention that the translation of the texts is an important issue to take into account. Due to the scope of the study, the way in which children construct their meanings it is a very relevant issue. In this sense, for the examples used in this article, the translation of the texts was made trying to be faithful to all the choices the students made when constructing their texts. In practice this means that the translation took into account all the grammatical errors, misspellings and vocabulary selection.

### **Analysis Procedures**

The multiple choice questions were analysed assigning a numerical value to each answer. This allowed me to analyse the responses in terms of their frequencies, correlations, and some other descriptive measures such as the mean, standard deviation, mode and averages.

To analyse the elicitation task I designed rubrics, also called scales, to measure 4 specific dimensions: Coherence, Local Coherence, Content and Structure. This method was chosen considering that through rubrics the researcher can elaborate a matrix that can be explained as a list of all the specific criteria that enable value learning, knowledge or skills gained by the students in a particular area (Martinez - Rojas, 2008). In this sense, the rubrics allowed me to describe the specific characteristics in each text. The rubrics were made in an inductive way. After reading all the texts I made a list with descriptors that pointed out some the common characteristics in each dimension. The descriptors were used to specify the characteristics of the performance level for each dimension.

The rubrics were made considering the literature, the sample and the Chilean curriculum. Each dimension was designed with 4 levels of performance being 4 the highest. These levels aim to provide a general description of the characteristics of the text. It was not the main concern to assess the students in respect of their level of achievement on their writing. It was

important to characterize the sample considering all the texts involved. In this context, the highest performance level was described in relation of the texts that show the better understanding of the rubric purpose. Nevertheless, because the rubrics considered the Chilean curriculum and the expected level of achievement for each dimension, the results did offer some information about the main difficulties the students were facing on their writing.

Below there is a description of each dimension:

### **Coherence**

This dimension aims to describe to what extent students are constructing meanings that demonstrate an understanding of coherence and how this understanding is expressed. In this sense, this dimension focuses on the global meaning of the text. The performance is defined by the achievement or fail in providing a communicative purpose in the text.

### **Local coherence**

This dimension refers to the use of mechanisms that contribute to the coherence of the text. In this sense, this dimension is related to the coherence of the full text as well, however, it's focussed on how the students used or did not use strategies to unite different meanings inside the text.

### **Content**

This dimension aims to point out how the student constructed a meaning related to the task. Even though the question was very open, some students did not address the communicative purpose of the activity. This means that some students did not express anything about them or their lives; instead there is a very brief account of a fact like: "My teacher Isabel is nice". This example does not achieve the aim of the task that was to write something about them.

### **Structure:**

This dimension is related to the structure of the text in the sense of the diverse units that composed a text. Paragraphs, sentences and punctuation are considered.

It is important to mention that the same rubrics were used for both grades, although this does not mean that the same expectations for each grade were applied. Each text was analysed in itself so this means that the goals reached in different levels did not mean to be exactly equal on each grade. These rubrics did not involve counting specific aspects or considering spelling mistakes to assign the scores.

In addition, an important issue that emerged was that a relevant group of the participants included a drawing, so this task was analyzed in both a textual and a multimodal way. The multimodal expression was considered as one of the meaning-making strategies.

#### **4. Results**

This section is organized to give an account about the main findings of the study including interesting issues in regards to how children construct their meanings. This account is given to cover the main aspects of the study.

##### **Multiple choice questions**

The multiple choice questions covered the most important aspects related to reading and writing at home and at school. The purpose of these questions was to measure a tendency about the students' perceptions about literacy. Since these results reflect children's perceptions they are not necessarily accurate in terms of objectivity. For example, for one pupil, *very often* could mean *every day* and for another *four times per week*. In consequence, these results need to be interpreted with caution. In addition, this sample does not claim representativeness; in consequence, the findings are not transferable to other students.

The table below shows the results in terms of frequency for each question:

	Question	Grade	No	Sometimes	Yes
<b>Perceptions about reading</b>	1. Did you enjoy learning how to read?	<sup>nd</sup> <b>2</b>	1.9 %	0.0 %	98.1 %
		<sup>th</sup> <b>4</b>	0.0 %	3.8 %	96.2 %
<b>Perceptions about reading</b>	4. Do you like it when people read to you?	<sup>nd</sup> <b>2</b>	24.1 %	13.0 %	63.0 %
		<sup>th</sup> <b>4</b>	11.3 %	18.9 %	69.8 %
<b>Literacy activities</b>	2. Do you read everything you see since you learned how to read?	<sup>nd</sup> <b>2</b>	7.4 %	14.8 %	77.8 %
		<sup>th</sup> <b>4</b>	1.9 %	56.6 %	41.5 %
<b>Literacy activities</b>	3. How often do you read in your house?		<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Very often</b>
		<sup>nd</sup> <b>2</b>	11.1 %	27.8 %	61.1 %
<b>Learning materials</b>	5. How many books are there in your house?		<b>None</b>	<b>A few</b>	<b>A lot</b>
		<sup>nd</sup> <b>2</b>	7.4 %	18.5 %	74.1 %
<b>Learning materials</b>	6. Would you like it if somebody gave you a book for your birthday?		<b>No</b>	<b>It depends on the book</b>	<b>Yes</b>
		<sup>nd</sup> <b>2</b>	13.0 %	24.1 %	63.0 %
<b>Parental engagement</b>	7. Do you learn new words at home?		<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Very often</b>
		<sup>nd</sup> <b>2</b>	0.0 %	31.5 %	68.5 %
<b>Parental engagement</b>	8. Do you speak with your parents about your day?		<b>Only on weekends</b>	<b>Some days</b>	<b>Every day</b>
		<sup>th</sup> <b>4</b>	0.0 %	20.8 %	79.2 %
<b>Parental engagement</b>	8. Do you speak with your parents about your day?	<sup>nd</sup> <b>2</b>	11.1 %	29.6 %	59.3 %
		<sup>th</sup> <b>4</b>	1.9 %	39.6 %	58.5 %

Table 1: “Multiple choice questions results”

In terms of **perceptions about reading**, there is a clear positive trend. The greater majority of students declare positive attitudes about reading. However, in the question related to perceptions about reading aloud, there is a major variability in the results.

For **literacy activities**, the results show a greater variability in the results. Fourth grade students report a greater reluctance to practice reading on a daily basis. This tendency shows that students have not developed habits that reinforce their learning in the classroom. In relation to **learning materials**, the tendency shows that most of the students believe they have enough books at home. On the other side their answers for receiving a book as a gift show they have already set some preferences about what they like to read in general. Finally,

**parental engagement** shows that the majority of the pupils acknowledge that they learn new words at home and talk with their parents.

In addition, the results of the multiple choice questions were analyzed considering variables as age and gender. Results show that the differences by gender are more significant than by age. Girls showed a more positive trend than boys toward literacy and this was also reflected by the results on the elicitation task in their level of performance. These results confirm previous findings in other cultural contexts such as the National Literacy Trust report about boys in England (Boys' Reading Commission, 2012), the US National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores (2009 and 2011) and the report of the Ontario Ministry of Education (2004), just to mention a few.

Considering that the results compared children aged 7 to 10, it is worth emphasizing that the gender difference plays a more significant role than the age variable. This could mean that the gender gap<sup>17</sup> remains over time. In terms of differences by age, the results are fairly equally distributed with some exception such as receiving a book as a gift, where oldest children proved to have more settled preferences about what to read than the youngest pupils.

### **Elicitation task**

This question aimed to allow the students to construct meanings and knowledge. To do so, the most important aspects on meaning construction in written text were considered. The analysis with the rubrics produced the following results:

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<sup>17</sup> I am referring here to the thesis that explicates how girls are more likely to have better results in literacy related activities. This thesis is supported and encouraged for all the reports listed earlier.

Dimension	Grade	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Coherence	2 <sup>nd</sup>	0.0 %	55.6 %	38.9 %	5.6 %
	4 <sup>th</sup>	1.9 %	37.7 %	43.4 %	17.0 %
Local Coherence	2 <sup>nd</sup>	24.1 %	72.2 %	3.7 %	0.0 %
	4 <sup>th</sup>	0.0 %	79.2 %	20.8 %	0.0 %
Content	2 <sup>nd</sup>	7.4 %	42.6 %	38.9 %	11.1 %
	4 <sup>th</sup>	0.0 %	1.9 %	47.2 %	50.9 %
Structure	2 <sup>nd</sup>	27.8 %	51.9 %	14.8 %	5.6 %
	4 <sup>th</sup>	0.0 %	43.4 %	34.0 %	22.6 %

Table 2: “Elicitation task results per level”

The results show that most of the students are grouped around levels 2 and 3. This result is consistent with the expectations in this kind of evaluations. However, it is important to note that for the dimension of Local coherence the greater majority of students were ranked at level 2. This level of performance shows that for the students in the sample it was difficult to use connectors or any other way to gather their meanings.

In addition, one important issue that was tested was the relation between the multiple choice questions and the written text. This analysis aimed to determine the relation within the children’s beliefs about literacy practices and their written texts. To do so, I applied a correlation test and a Krystal Wallace test to measure the relation between the elicitation task and the multiple choice questions. I also did a Partial correlation test to measure these 2 variables and their relation with age. Contrary to expectations, this study did not find a correlation between the results on the elicitation task and the multiple choice questions. Moreover, there is no partial correlation between these results and age.

A possible explanation for this might be that at this age children have not developed strong opinions about their practices and even though their perceptions are valid, they might be influenced by the educational curriculum promoted by the government. The current Chilean Spanish language curriculum for primary school education mentions that students

have to develop a positive approximation to reading. There is an emphasis on motivating and reinforcing good attitudes about reading (MINEDUC, 2012). In this sense, the curriculum has the expected outcome at least in this particular subject. This influence impacts on the results because the majority of the students have developed good perceptions about literacy, so this might be counteracting the different perceptions among the students.

In addition, the results show that both, the multiple choice question and the elicitation task have a correlation between themselves. In the elicitation task, Coherence is a measure that correlates with all the other variables. In the multiple choice questions, question number 2 (Do you read everything you see since you learn how to read?) correlates with all the other questions. These correlations validate the questionnaire because the variables are indeed related.

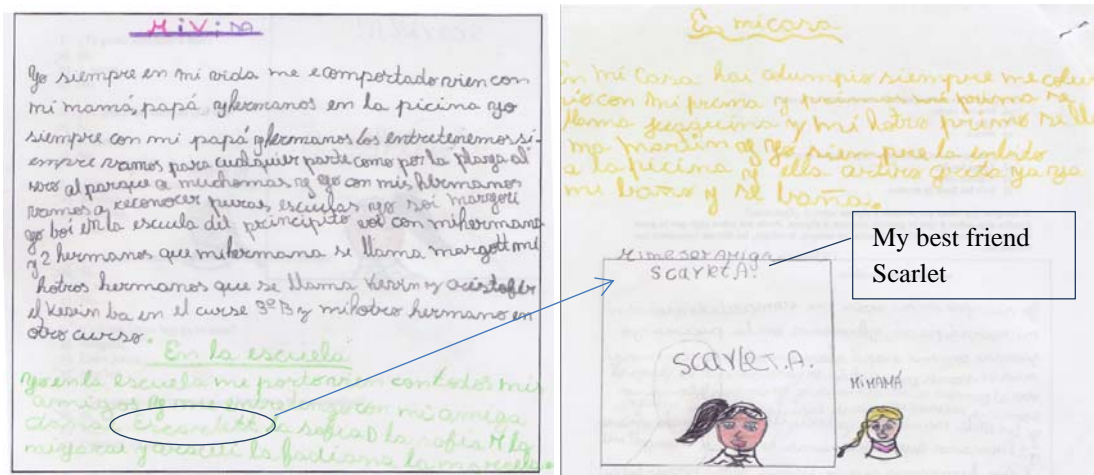
### **Multimodal expression**

Another finding includes interesting issues in regard to how children represent themselves by constructing their meanings. In relation to this issue, one important matter that emerged was that a relevant group of the participants drew. The analysis focused on showing how drawings construct meaning in different ways. The results show different communicative purposes related with drawing. The analysis was made considering the features of the drawing in relation with the text. In this sense, 3 different purposes were identified:

- 1) **To illustrate previous meanings.** In these cases, the students use drawing to show some specific detail of the text such as the home they described, how their friends or pet looks like, etc. In this context, the drawing is an important part of the text, because it is part of the meaning they are constructing alongside the text.

In the example showed below, the student drew the friend she was talking about: Scarlet.





Text sample: Example 1.  
4<sup>th</sup> grade.

The full transcription and translation of the text can be found in the appendix.

- 2) **To incorporate new meanings.** A typical example of this use of drawing was that some of the students draw their home or the area where they live. Because their homes or environment was not part of the text, they added new meanings that contribute to how they picture their world.

In the example showed below, the student incorporated all the meanings by drawing.

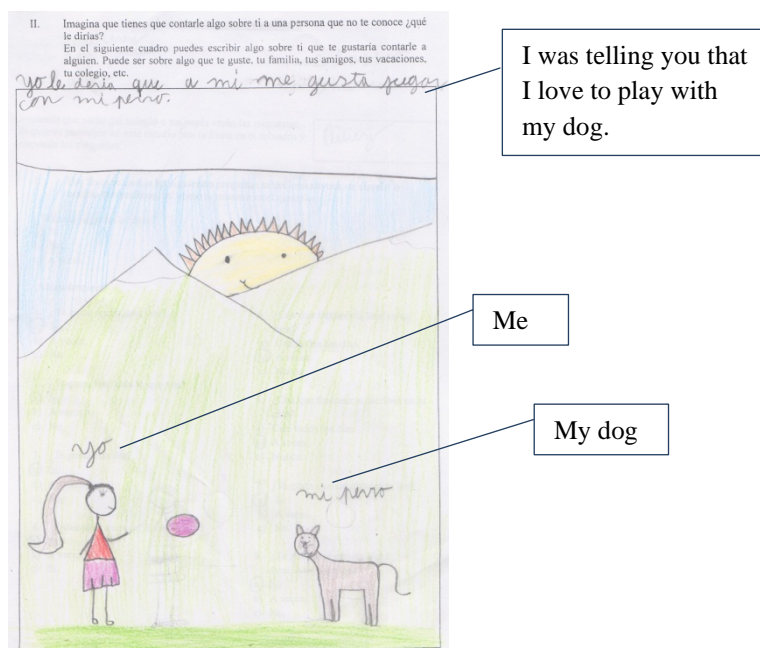
The amount of meaning we can infer from the drawing is certainly



Text sample: Example 2.  
2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

3) **Collaborative way of constructing new meaning.** In these texts, the pupils replaced part of the sentence with the drawing itself. So the drawing was an irreplaceable part of the meaning, and without it the meaning would have been incomplete.

In the case showed below, the student explained in the drawing *how* she played with the dog.



Text sample: Example 3.  
2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

These examples showed the value of incorporating drawing as one of the relevant strategies to understand how children construct their meanings. Moreover, this analysis indicates the relevance of taking into account their preferences about how they construct their meaning. The drawings weren't random shapes, but meaningful contributions to their texts.

## **5. Conclusion**

In relation with the multiple choice questions, even though modest, the present study provides additional evidence with respect to literacy beliefs. This study has found that there is a clear positive trend towards reading among these students. Even though rooted in the curriculum, these results can be considered as a good indicator for the implementation of further strategies that could impact positively on reading and writing.

However, it is noteworthy that students indicated a varied frequency in their activities. A significant number of students do not recognize their practices as something frequent. In this respect, it is important to point out that these students attend school every day, do homework, watch TV or see advertisements on their way home. Consequently, it is very likely that these pupils practice reading and writing activities on a daily bases. However, they do not recognize all their practices as worthy to mention or associated to reading and writing. This result support previous finding in literacy studies such as the studies carried out by Heath (1983).

In relation with the elicitation task, the results show the relevance of acknowledging the way in which children construct their meanings. In particular, the results show the relevance of the drawings. The task also identified some aspects that are most difficult for the students. In this respect, it is important to mention the stage of the school year in which they were evaluated (November, the end of the school year in Chile). In consequence, it would have been expected that a significant amount of children reach the higher levels of

performance. Students performing at Level 3 are on track to reach the optimal level. In this sense, the students achieving the Level 1 and 2 are at a disadvantage compared to the expected performance at the end of the year. Specifically, the dimensions of Coherence and Local coherence showed the greater number of students in these lower levels of achievement.

Another important finding was that gender was more significant than age. An implication of this finding is that gender has to be taken into account when teaching writing. To do so, a reasonable approach to contribute to this issue in Chile could be a further case study that focuses on gender differences based on literacy practices.

Even though these results showed some interesting issues, one of the limitations is that the questionnaire in itself could not capture the literacy practices. On the contrary, the results suggest that children are very influenced by the governmental curriculum in relation with their reading and writing motivation. These issues only can be addressed with a qualitative study.

All in all, by analyzing the relation between the written text and home literacy experiences this study showed how children engage with these issues as active agents. The student's meaning-making strategies when building a text proved to be valuable, constructive and worthy to consider when analyzing children's writing.

## Appendix

Text sample: Example 1:

<i><b>Original</b></i>	<i><b>Translation</b></i>
<p><u>Mi vida</u> Yo siempre en mi vida me e comportado vien con mi mamá, papá y hermanos en la piscina yo siempre con mi papá y hermanos los entretenemos por la plaza al sero al parque a muchomas y yo con mis hermanos vamos a reconocer puras escuelas yo soi magali voy en la escuela del andes <sup>18</sup> voi con mihermana y 2 hermanos que mi hermana se llama maryorie my hotros hermanos que se llama Cris y el brian Cris ba en el curso 3ºB y mi hotro hermano en otro curso.</p> <p><u>En la escuela</u> Yo en la escuela me portovien con todos mis amigos y me entretengo con mi amiga danae Escarlett la silvya D la silvya M la miyarai y araceli la fabiana la marcela.</p> <p><u>En mi casa</u> En mi casa hai columpio siempre mecolumpio con mi prima y primos mi prima se llama juaquina y mi hotro primo se llama diego y yo siempre la enbito a la picina y ella artiro grita yo ya me baño y se baña.</p>	<p><u>My life</u> I always on my life had behave well with my mother, father and Brothers on the swimming pool I always have fun in the park and the montain and more with my father and brothers we go to know different schools I am magali I attend to the school of andes I attend with mysister and 2 brothers my sister is called maryorie and my other brothers are called Cris and brian Cris attend to 3ºB classroom and my other brother in a different class.</p> <p><u>In the school</u> I behave well in the school with my friends and play with my friend danae Escscarlett silvya D silvya M miyarai fabiana marcela.</p> <p><u>At home</u> At home there is a swing I always swing with my cousins my cousin is called juaquina and my other cousin is called diego and I always invite her to the pool and she immediateli screams I will take a dip and she takes a dip.</p>

Text transcript.

<sup>18</sup> All the names were changed to protect the anonymity of the participants.

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