

CLIL Methodology through Biography

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Abstract – Biography belongs to the essayistic category, and its generic and rhetorical components offer multiple possibilities for language teaching. One of its requirements is completeness. This implies the definition of a situational context, and an existential and spiritual universe for each character. The biographical subject must be formed from all the components of the person. These also include death. This methodological proposal considers all these concerns, with the purpose of taking them as learning tools. Specifically: the recognition of a third historical person and its literary construction; its location in time and space; the description of its environment; its morphology and personality; its ideas and the alterities with which it interacts. The biographical discourse requires: diegetic format for the account of life; reflective discourse and introduction of the first person, both in the subjectivity and presence of the author and the reader. The historical basis provides an anchorage in the unavoidable reality for the Biography. However, since it is a literary genre, it allows the 'pact of fictionality'. This work proposes Biography, as a method for learning language and literature, through the cultural and existential context/contents which it entails. Specially, because 'biography' is a different concept, according to culture and theodices.

Keywords - Biography, CLIL, Cultural contexts, Language and Literature Teaching, Linguistic Integration

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1. INTRODUCTION

The following work presents a structure that consists of the following parts: first, the determination of our objectives; second, the development part, in which we will consider the traits of Biography as a literary genre, on the one hand, and, on the other, those of the biographical character; third, we shall explain how to apply all of them for language acquisition; finally, we shall establish our conclusions.

Here we set ourselves three goals. The general objective is to establish the possibilities offered by Biography as a genre for the didactics of language and literature. The second one is to define the generic features of Biography. Specifically, the concepts of character identity and context, and the contrast between Biography and Autobiography. Third, to show how discourse types, different genres, and the situational context and the existential universe are present in the character of the Biography. At the end, we will conclude in how these elements constitute resources of great utility for the teaching of languages through contents which are proper to the human being.

2. BIOGRAPHY AS A LITERARY GENRE

Western critics have identified just over twenty traits for the Biography (del-Olmo-Ibáñez: 2015: 125). The period of time considered goes from its classical origin, through all the stages of the genre to the

psychoanalytic Biography, and, finally, the most recent sociology contributions. Always according to a holistic conception of the human being. Methodologically, all these features are very profitable for the didactics of Language and Literature in a general sense: the genealogy and the psychological data; the importance of the personality and the formation of the character, both in its process and in its characteristics; the physical description and its spiritual facet; the importance of alterity and its intersubjective relations with the biographed subject; the significance of the last years of the life; death, as the closing of the life cycle; the dimension of social projection, universality and transcendentality of the character; the scriptural procedure, often by rubrics, and with the chronological criterion as a timeline; the exemplarity; the biographer as a determining element; the didactic purpose; its discursive modalities: narrative in third person and reflective in first person, but also other possibilities; and the presence of the fictional component.

In the biographical works, a second group of elements integrate the cultural contexts and existential universes of the characters. Specifically: the selection of sources and contents, and their treatment; the chronology; the need for historical and contextualizing information; hermeneutics; the ethical component; the interrelationship between individual and social universes; the production and transmission of the historical memory presented in

the Biography; and, finally, the interrelation among author/character/reader. This last feature is included in all the others. Above all, because it establishes three levels corresponding to each one of these three elements: author, character and reader. For that reason, the cultural contexts and the existential universes involved in Biography really are three. In other words, authors incorporate their situational environment and their existential universe into a perspective from which they construct the character; and the readers recreate and interpret the biography, the contexts, and the universes they discover in it (both those of the biographer and those of the character) from their own.

2.1 Our proposal on Biography

Based on classical poetics and rhetoric, we have traced a description of the Biography that completes with other aspects the previous features, which were collected from literature on the genre. We have established twelve lines that allow the language learners to be placed in positions that are familiar to them and, therefore, they can understand when they are related to the others. That is to say, in biographed characters who belong to the culture of the target languages. Those aspects are the following:

- a. Relevance as main selective criterion of actions. Relevance of the characters or of their alterities. The general selection criterion adopted by biographers is 'relevance'. The choice of the characters and the facts authors collect from their lives are those they consider relevant. This makes a fundamental difference to the idea of 'importance'. An 'important' character or an 'important' fact does not necessarily have to be relevant. On the contrary, there can be events in history and in lives which, without having a generalized or well-known resonance, are, nevertheless, the cause of a person's or humanity's life course taking a considerable turn. Likewise, the character of interest is not always the outstanding one. It may be, but many times there are characters whose intervention in history has been relevant, but whose social or professional place was not 'important' during their life.
- b. Biographer selects according to historical reality. Although the selective criterion is that of relevance, the character is always subject to its history. The author must conform his writing to the anchorage of the life lived by the real person.
- c. Essay diegetic arrangement determined by history. Biography presents a diegetic disposition, also conditioned by the history, since it does not exist without the character, which is the central and essential element.

On the one hand, narrative is necessary. The organization of the story requires the narrative structure, its location in a space and in a time that allows the literality of the succession of events. The logic of the plot of a life can be shaped in accordance with that of the narrative, thanks to the space-time axes. Space is a very important aspect. It is considered from different perspectives: that of the birth place, that of the geographical characteristics, that of the character's family, that of the personal context, that of the work place and that of the social relationships.

- d. But, on the other hand, all of this must always refer to the historical reality of the character and focus on his specialty. Central element is always the character. And, the purpose is to reflect its essentiality and relevance.
- e. Author. For traditional biographers, the author should not be present or speak in his or her own name. Nevertheless, for some modern biographers, subjectivity, interpretation, identification and intention, or the author's feelings and presence must be admitted. Some of them feel absolutely free to intervene, give their opinions, tell their own experiences, or, even, bring their characters to their present lives and places. That is the case of Ramón Gómez de la Serna, Spanish biographer, who, for instance, brings Goya to the famous Café Pombo in Madrid, where he used to gather with intellectuals, writers, painters.
- f. A portrait, complete or fragmentary. In the Biography a portrait must appear, complete or fragmentary, but there must be always a plastic representation of the biographed person. This representation must contain the essentiality of the character, either in its totality, or gathered in one of its parts. The information it conveys refers both to that of the individual and to the contextual and cultural (López Vega, 2009) information. The portrait represents its essence in the gesture, in the bearing, in its dressing way, etc. And these elements, in turn, are determined by the era, fashion, uses and conventions of their cultural and existential universe. For some biographers, as Gregorio Marañón (1970), the portrait is so important that they include in their books photographs or reproductions of painting portraits. He even often selects several images of different stages of the characters' lives. Marañón also reflects on the importance of their physiognomy and attribute to maturity or psychological

stability the fact that there is little variation in their appearance along a person's life.

- g. The biographed subject consists of an individuation. This individuation is defined by its acts, and before itself and before others; but, once again, always close to its history. The individuation is constructed by the author-narrator through documentary information, through which the character himself provides about himself, and through the data which the other characters provide. The biographed character also manifests himself in his thoughts, his actions, his decisions, his reactions to the facts of his life and to his historical moment.
- h. For all the above reasons, a subjective realism is characteristic of this genre. Subjectivity is inherent to the elaboration of the biographical subject. It is present from the very moment of choosing a character to be biographed. Likewise, there is subjectivism in the selection of life events and characters who interact with the biographed character. However, we must always remember that all these operations must respect and keep their fidelity to the historical reality of the character and its context.
- i. To conclude with this enumeration of defining features, it is necessary to point out that there can be a collective character or a non-human one. This happens with the example of the Biography of peoples or nations, which is the case of the Bible. It is the clearest example of this type of Biography, which represents the history of the life of the Jewish people. Without reaching the intensity of the biblical case, we also find the collective character when the authors refer to countries or nations as protagonists of their life story. Many times they cannot be fully considered Biographies, but they undoubtedly fulfill the traits of other biographical varieties.
- j. In the sub-genre of the Biography of Cities, the biographer treats a city in exactly the same way he creates the human character. Such is the case of Spanish biographers such as Gregorio Marañón or Ramón Gómez de la Serna with Toledo or Paris, respectively, for instance. Also noteworthy is the production of books on cities and countries by Miroslav Sasek. This author also presents the peculiarity that his works are illustrated books. The possibilities offered by the iconography of his illustrations make them even more profitable for language teaching. This kind of Biography is extremely useful since it is a great way to know the place, the people, the history and

culture of places which belong to target language. They reflect the relationships between space and inhabitants and their interactions. This is very helpful for learners to access to cultural and pragmatic knowledge at the same time that they learn the language.

- k. The biographed subject responds to a logic, to a space-time, psychological (Castilla del Pino, , transcendental, social and cultural coherence (Aullón de Haro, 2001); and it must be adjusted to its history. We have already spoken of the need for narration in order to provide order and linearity in the succession of events to a person's life. The axes of space and time allow us to locate it and its events. But it is not a mere linear succession of events. This narrative structure must be coherent in all its aspects. In those of the characters, in those of the places, and in those of the facts.
- l. In relation to this aspect, hermeneutics is another of the invariant elements of Biography. An interpretation is always implied in Biography. Both from the author, who has to understand the character's life for being able to write the text; and for the reader who has to get to the character's essence and to know biographer's reasons.
- m. All this makes Biography the literary genre that most requires contextualization in order to be constructed. And, therefore, the one that offers the most keys for the integration of learners in situational environments and in the existential universes of the target language.

2.2 A Basic Difference

Considering the rhetoric of the genre, there is a basic differentiation between Autobiography and Biography with respect to enunciators, objects and modes of enunciation. In Autobiography 'I speak of myself', as opposed to Biography in which 'I speak about another'. According to Dilthey (1978), Autobiography defines a first stage in the human knowledge. It corresponds to the discovery of the self. It means an auto-recognition, which is a necessary step for being possible the other's recognition. Once, the human being is able to identify oneself, they are capable to discover otherness in a superior level of maturity.

Autobiography	Biography
Creator subject = Subject of the story	Me author chooses for its relevance a third person
The author responds to an introspective need	One of its permanent features is exemplary intent
Transformation from the historical me > Narrator me > Literary me	

Every person recognizes himself as the subject of his own history. In one sense, it can be said that the recognition of the other comes to be carried out from the same perspectives that self-knowledge produces. First of all, every 'I' needs a physical and psychological recognition of itself. It requires a consciousness of its transcendental facet. And it needs to recognize the spaces in which it unfolds, and its evolution in time. To every person, all these components are his own, and he has identified them in his physical environment, in his culture and in his language.

Thanks to this self-knowledge, it is possible to discover the other people. It is possible to recognize in them the same physical and psychological components as in oneself. It is possible to identify the other person's consciousness and spiritual part. And, also, it is possible to access to their space and time, their culture and their universe. All this contents make easier the learning of the language and their acquisition.

3. BIOGRAPHY FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING

Biography as a literary genre allows the integration of cultural contexts and existential universes contents in a privileged way for the Didactics of Language and Literature. The profitability of the study of the biographical subject can be adapted to all levels of education and to any objectives of language teaching. No matter whether we are teaching first or second, third... languages. It is possible to create a work plan, a methodology, that allows the student to identify all these elements. In this way, the student will be able to understand how the process of socialization and insertion of subjects into the culture of the target language takes place. And this refers to the author's time environment, to historical information about the character's time, or to the collective memory implicit in the biographies.

In a natural way, also, the apprentices, as readers, will establish comparisons between their experiences and those of the character, whether or not they belong to the same culture. This derives from the above described relationship between author, character and reader.

The temporal, spatial and enunciation changes which these processes require allow learners to develop

strategies for their communicative competencies in all aspects.

In addition, as a meteorological procedure, the differentiations indicated between Biography and Autobiography can be exploited. Implicitly, the types of discourse and textual models will also be studied, since examples of them usually appear in all these works.

At this point we wish to make a comment concerning CLIL. This method has been understood as a second language learning methodology. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that speakers are continuously acquiring communicative competences and developing or completing those which they already possess. We, speakers, keep learning our or other languages through contents which life brings to our daily activities. For that reason we prefer not make difference between first or second languages since a general methodological perspective of genres as a learning tools is useful in both cases. This does not mean at all to forget the necessary differences which the teaching will have depending on the characteristics of the target group of learners.

Cognitive processes are also put into operation in the selection of the events of one's own life and in the comparison with those lives that are read in another language. In the same way, they are activated when one contrasts thoughts or memories with one's own reality, or with the history of the biographed subject.

Similarly, diegetic reasoning is exercised in trying to organize personal events and recognize the elements of narration in the telling of lives. And this contributes to the development of the narrative procedure in the second language. The axes of space and time bring the writer/reader to the necessary coordinates for the representation or recognition of the vital trajectory.

As for the anchorage with history or reality, the consequences are twofold. On the one hand, it forces the apprentice to reflect on his or her own history and culture. On the other hand, he will necessarily acquire knowledge about the history and culture of the character in the biography.

Concerning affective competence, subjectivity, reflection and interpretation, all of them are involved in biographical genres. The affective element is undeniable with respect to oneself. Self-reflection and interpretation are inherent to the revision of one's own life. And all of this is, by definition, subjective. With respect to the biographed subject, the same thing happens. The confrontation with any otherness implies reflection, subjectivity in its perception, and in the interpretation of its acts.

The figure of the biographer also leads to the learning of the language. It is necessary to know the author of any literary work. But, in this case, this figure is present in various ways that are not hidden from the reader. Biographers usually give their opinions in comments to a different facts or decisions made by the characters. And, mainly, authors are a present figure for the fact of their selection procedure. For the reasons which have lead them to choose one person and not other, and some events of their lives and not others.

When it comes to autobiography, it has already been said that what defines it is the identification of the author with the biographical subject. In both cases, the character no longer responds to reality, but is the result of the subjective creation of a creative subject. Neither is the other the real person, nor is one oneself. They are no more real but literary subjects.

The elaboration of a self-portrait and the recognition of the portrait in the biography allows familiarity with the descriptive discourse and procedure. Both morphologically or physically, as well as psychologically or spiritually.

In the case of the Biography, it provides the model of the description in the target language. It allows to know the lexicon corresponding to this type of discourse and places the learner in the different types of description in the language he is acquiring. And the fact that they are equivalent to those of the genre in their original language will make their recognition and assimilation easier.

The process of individuation and the coherence of the character are united in the didactic methodology for the teaching of languages. The actions of the subject, the information coming from other characters and the information offered by the author himself are also comparable to those that the learner knows in his own language. This can be done through literature, when the student has a certain degree of training. But it is also something naturally acquired by all speakers in their processes of incorporation into the world and social life. In this sense the elaboration of one's own thought, or the recognition of another's thought are also procedures which have a reflection in the language. The Biography presents this reflection and offers it as a pretext for the apprentice to activate his thought and analyze actions, decisions, reactions, facts and historical events.

Finally, the requirements of logic and coherence for biographical construction lead the student to the exercise of a construction that responds to these conditions. Nevertheless, it is necessary to take into account the subjectivity and, in extreme cases, the functionality which are also characteristics of biographical genres. However, in both realistic and fictional principles, the reader and author must

always submit to a logic and coherence in all aspects.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen in the preceding pages, Biography seems to us to be a genre that syncretizes features of all types of discourse and presents models of all enunciations, modes and objects of enunciation. It is also especially profitable for language learning by its own generic entity in a global sense. Likewise, in a specific way, when language and literature are considered as transmitters of cultural and ideological contents. The spatial and temporal requirements are essential for the construction of the character and the imperative subjection of it to its historical reality. The Biography needs the social, historical and cultural context in which it develops.

It includes, on the one hand, a triple dimension due to the relationship that is always established between the author and the reader. But, in this case, it is amplified by those created between them two and the character. From such a situation comes a privileged horizon. That allows comparisons with integrating purposes for the reader/learner in the culture of the target language through the experiences of the biographer and the biographed character. On the other hand, comparison also functions in a tripartite way in terms of biographical relations as opposed to autobiographical relations, which are generated at the same time in these works. There is a biography of the character, the presence of the author and the self-reflective conscience of the reader.

Biography has never been analyzed from this point of view. That genre was repeatedly studied from the method perspective, or from the way to present the character or the documentary information. But not as a literary genre, either considering its pragmatic function or its poetical features.

Considering biographical and autobiographical genres as material for language learning through content also represents a new vision. The possibilities of interpreting literary genres from a communicative point of view and not only as objects of literary theory or poetics are very profitable pedagogically.

However, they have not been applied to the didactics of languages from this perspective, nor in the high performance it offers for the acquisition of social, pragmatic and cultural competences. For these reasons we think there are three main conclusions from our proposal: first, widening the horizon of CLIL to all kind of language acquisition will open minds and texts to a bigger and greater possibilities for learners. Second, considering literary and discursive genres, and types of discourse and texts from a communicative perspective and as the frames for communicative

actions, it will make easier for teachers to elaborate teaching and communicative strategies. At the same time, students will be able to develop their learning strategies taking their knowledge as a starting point.

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