

FROM MULTICULTURALITY TO INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION:
THE CASE OF THE PICTURE BOOK *PAULA EN NUEVA YORK*

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Resumen

El objetivo de esta contribución es realizar un análisis del libro *Paula en Nueva York*, el cual fue galardonado con el “Premio Internacional de ilustración” de la Fundación Santamaría (2005). Analizaremos dicho texto desde una perspectiva semiótica y semántica tratando de mostrar cómo el lector, a través de su uso, puede tomar conciencia de otras culturas y de los aspectos positivos de cualquier diferencia cultural.

Teniendo en cuenta todos los nuevos desafíos concernientes a la educación para la ciudadanía, realizaremos un listado de todas las características multiculturales de este libro que lo convierten en idóneo para la promoción de la educación intercultural.

Palabras clave: educación intercultural, libros de imágenes, educación para la ciudadanía, literatura infantil.

Abstract

The main aim of this article is to analyse "Paula en Nueva York" a Spanish picture book which has been awarded the "Premio Internacional de ilustración" of the Santamaría Foundation (2005). The text itself is about interculturality. We are going to analyze this picture book from a semiotic and semantic viewpoint and we are going to show how the reader can become aware of other cultures and the positive aspects of any cultural differences by using it.

There are new educational trends which aim for a citizenship education. Keeping these trends in mind, we are going to list all the characteristics of this picture book so that it becomes quite clear that it is an ideal text for the promotion of intercultural education thanks to all the multicultural elements it includes.

Key words: intercultural education, pictures books, citizenship education, children's literature.



1. Intercultural dialogue. Reading as a resource for equality

We understand reading as something of value, that affects our lives and without it we cannot do the things we take for granted, things such as reading notices, or understanding messages... Reading has a double function: social and personal. This is because it is a tool which is related to writing. Both reading and writing help us to access knowledge. Besides this, we can discover things about the past or the future through reading, or more precisely, through Literature.

Because of this, we think a good way of reducing the gap between cultures is to use books and Literature from different countries. They give us plenty of interesting information which explains the behaviour, describes places, tell us stories about heroes, etc. Within a book we can find a lot of information because the author always includes a part of his/her own life, a life which has been spent in a specific country or city.

One of the benefits of a book is that we can learn things about a culture or country without needing to visit that country. This is an aspect that helps us understand, in an affordable way, why people may do things differently abroad. For

instance, if we had read books about English people, we would know that drinking tea is one of their particular customs and we should understand and respect it. Another example is the "siesta" in Spain. How can American people understand it if they do not know why it is important?

When we read a book we are establishing a dialogue with it, because we link our experiences to the contents of the book and gain a new kind of knowledge. Therefore reading is a very interesting and important activity. However we are wary of television or games since they may have a detrimental effect on readers around the world.

We have to consider reading as a good resource for Intercultural Education because it is through reading that people could improve their skills – listening, speaking, reading, writing - and their knowledge about the world in which they live.

2. Citizenship education

Firstly, we are going to break with the concept of *citizenship* which is sometimes understood as the right to vote. Our concept of a citizen is "a person who coexists with others within a society". Therefore, it is necessary to analyze how we live together and go far beyond the limits of the concept of "nation". Also there is the need to impose and embrace the idea of a "community" which embodies the local area, as well as the national and international backgrounds in which people live. To be able to do this, we need to establish new educational objectives, so it is necessary to achieve:

- an understanding of the relationship between a person's own context and his life in a different part of the world;
- a knowledge of social, economic and political aspects that explain the current social interaction;
- the development of competencies which favour democracy, respect and solidarity;
- the development of an autonomous and critical thinking;
- the acquisition of useful resources which help us reshape the world around us.

The increasing importance of the concept of education for citizenship is evident in curriculum design and development. Its insertion in the school programme brings up the question of whether the concept is of a specific or a transversal nature. Similarly, we could acknowledge the transversal nature of language as an element which covers every single area of a person's own formative process (López Valero, Coyle and Encabo, 2005). We strongly believe that neither linguistic nor literary education, or education for citizenship, can be reduced to a limited number of sessions. They are each part of a continuum that takes us through different curriculum and social aspects in order for us to appreciate the importance of forming ourselves as Twenty-first century citizens who adapt to a dynamic and ever-changing society.

It is not easy for Citizenship education to be understood since we live in a time when students are constantly bombarded with consumer stimuli. The education community must acknowledge this reality and should combine both aspects: capitalism and the need for a citizenship education. The new educational model should be a sign of the times. For that purpose the Consejo de Europa of the European Union provides a list with some key competences for long time learning in the society of knowledge. We are not trying to educate students for some particular curriculum requirements at school. What we are trying to accomplish is an interrelated learning which help students in any aspect of their lives at any time. There are eight key competences:

- Communication in the mother tongue;
- Communication in a second language;
- Numeracy competence and a competence in Science and Technology;
- Digital competence;
- Learning to learn;
- Interpersonal and civic competence;
- Initiative;
- Cultural expression.

This article focuses on the combination of Children's Literature and Citizenship education. It is within this combination, as we present it, that some of the key competences develop. Thus we are going to emphasise communication both in

the mother tongue and as a second language. We are also going to deal with the philosophy behind the key competence of learning to learn, as well as concentrating on interpersonal and civic competence. We would like people to contribute their own ideas and actions in order to form more democratic and caring societies (Lynch, 1986). We strongly believe we could achieve the objectives mentioned above by means of a linguistic and literary education, using children literature.

In the next section, we would like to define and study thoroughly the concept and characterization of Children's Literature as the main medium we present to approach Citizenship Education.

3. Contributions of Children's Literature to Citizenship Education

Keeping in mind that this kind of literature is considered to be aesthetic and functional, we argue for children's books to be considered as a valid didactic resource for curriculum design. For that purpose, they have to gather a number of specific characteristics which make them essential for the accomplishment of our objectives:

- Different versions of the text are to be available for the more or less skilled reader.
- An important concept or actual fact is to be presented by means of pictures or text.
- The books should raise the readers' interest.
- A well written and structured story is to urge the readers to find out more about the main theme of the book.
- The text itself is to help readers to understand and reflect on social aspects.
- It must help us to present different perspectives and interpretations on ideas and events.
- The books could be a starting point for the teacher when planning a more substantial lesson.

These characteristics could join those traditionally related to children's literature (Hunt, 1994; Huck, 2001) which we have already mentioned when describing other picture books (Encabo, 2006). Thus we find that the content of

children's Literature can cover the expectations we have for a Citizenship Education. We are going to highlight the characteristics and values within certain books that contribute to the acquisition of citizenship. The following elements are part of this citizenship and they can be addressed through Children's Literature:

- Telling the truth;
- Being careful;
- Respecting other people;
- Behaving sensibly;
- Making the right decision and asking for help when needed;

In the next section, we would like to find out whether the text of *Paula en New York* contributes to Citizenship Education.

4. Analysis of the picture book "Paula en Nueva York"

INDEX CARD

Author: Valverde, Mikel (1966-)

Title: Paula en Nueva York

Country: Madrid: SM, D.L. 2005

Description: 31pp.:Il. Col.; 28 cm

Premio Internacional de ilustración de la Fundación Santa María, 2005

Depósito legal: M-40283-2005

ISBN: 84-675-0607-5

Our analysis of this Picture Book is based on an analysis suggested by Cotton (2005:51). The author divides her analysis into four categories: *Visual Codes*, including location, size, perspective, colours, forms; *Visual Narrative Techniques* including distance, places, format, circumstantial details; *Types of Picture Book* including boundary breaking and finally, *Picture Book Ingredients* including intertextuality, fantasy/reality, relationships and characterization. Our particular analysis is intended to include these four categories. We are trying to make an analysis of the book in the form of a descriptive discourse. An overall vision of all the pictures of the book will be followed by a semantic and semiotic analysis.

The illustrations of this book have been awarded a prize. In the first one, we appreciate the value of differences. We see Paula, her group of friends and the cloud, each one of them on a different level; they are all gazing at the highest building in the city; we notice that Paula is away from the rest of the group. In the second picture, we see Paula comfortably sleeping on the cloud. In the third one, the girl is waving the cloud goodbye. She is now standing on the highest building in the city. The fourth illustration shows the icons of New York city ("New York is not Mecca. It just smells like it" Neil Simon), the Empire State building or the Chrysler Centre. In the next one, the astonished little girl faces the city as all the people walking past her stand out (we see a "Welcome to New York city" sign quite prominently). The sixth picture shows the little girl who, despite her fascination with the city, feels the need to go back to her group.

It is in the seventh picture that we come across multiculturalism, characterized by typical clothing. The girl finds a giant basketball player, a guy selling hot dogs, a policewoman, a Russian, a Portuguese man, an opera singer, a witch—who gives her an earring—a man from Puerto Rico, a man from Chinatown and even a crocodile in love. The text in the eighth picture reads: "The world is very big and the city where Paula lived was very small". In the next one, Paula chats with a goose in Central Park. The goose should guide his flock but he is lost. In the tenth picture some arrangements are made and Paula points the goose in the right direction. In the last picture, Paula is back in the city where she lives. She says goodbye to the goose and gives him the earring that the witch gave her.

Semantic and semiotic analysis:

It is quite evident that the idea embedded in the book is that Paula is bored with her social setting and looks for something better, something different. The first picture is quite significant since we see her away from the rest of the group. This means that the girl is different from them. She is paying more attention to other aspects of her environment than to what her teacher is saying. Her lack of interest could mean that she is either absent-minded or just curious. We are inclined to accept the second one. The idea of 'something different' is also reflected in the contrast between the two cities: the city where Paula lives by the sea and the city of New York packed with immense buildings. Both cities are quintessentially different. They clash. On the one hand, the place where Paula originally comes

from consists of small houses with red roofs and some hills in the background. Her city is also surrounded by the sea and embraced by a blue sky. On the other hand, Manhattan is presented as an urban nucleus stuffed with skyscrapers, with uniform grey roofs and faded yellow buildings. It is a city which does not seem to have any open spaces. Another aspect of the presentation of the girl is that, Paula's group of friends contrasts with the people she finds in New York: in the former, they all look the same whilst in the latter, everyone looks different.

We would like to point out that loneliness comes with diversity. In the fourth picture we can only see the buildings. One must look carefully to find the girl. In a city like New York, no one would notice a little girl ambling in the street on her own. Multiculturality is depicted in every person she meets on her visit, from the man from Puerto Rico to the one from Chinatown. They all have their own identity. They are all respected despite being immersed in a different culture. Leaving the differences aside, we notice that the goose is not only similar to Paula in size but he also finds himself in a difficult situation. No one in New York pays attention to the conversation between these two except the frogs that live in the park. This situation appears to have no negative connotations whatsoever. It is simply a result of diversity. Therefore, we could interpret this as a situation where the girl benefits from her experiences in a different environment and culture from her own. We would like to add that, as in *The Wizard of Oz*, the importance of home is highlighted: "There is no place like home". Life for Paula is much more colourful at home because the unfamiliar 'fadedness' of New York makes her feel homesick.

It is also important to analyse how Paula reacts on her visit to New York through her body behaviour and the positions she adopts throughout the book. Her facial expressions go from strangeness and astonishment (as she discovers things that she did not know) to sadness in the eighth picture where we find her feeling dejected and homesick. Despite discovering another culture and trying to understand it, she wants to go back home. Back to where she belongs.

We would also like to mention that when she is in her own country she feels secure and 'in charge of her life' so can be seen in a dominant position at the top of the page. When she is in New York, however, she feels unsure of herself and ill-at-ease; so she can be found at the bottom of the page in a position where she

has no control. This is a reflection of that feeling one may experience at first when discovering other cultures. It is a feeling of insecurity. Nevertheless we believe that when the girl's adventure comes to an end, a few changes have taken place. She is no longer the little girl she used to be. All the new experiences she has lived on her journey and all the things she has discovered (even though they are presented in the book as a dream) have enriched her life.

5. Conclusion

It is not easy to make an accurate written analysis of a picture book but we believe we have succeeded in offering a good perspective. We have highlighted the value of reading and the relationship between citizenship education (including intercultural education) and Children's Literature. The picture book *Paula en Nueva York* appears to contain every element that we have suggested, as it shows a variety of cultures, the experiences of a girl in her dreams, the discovery of diverse realities and, in the end, the realisation that living at home is not so bad after all. We feel, therefore, that this book could facilitate a thorough study of multiculturalism and how it might relate to Intercultural Education.

In a time when frontiers between countries are becoming more permeable, it is necessary to study other cultures and to learn about them in class (Nieto, 2001; Moran, 2001). In the Twenty-first century, it is essential to learn about other cultures so that we can acknowledge and accept any differences. We recommend that the professionals (teaching staff, librarians and teachers in general) should use "Paula en Nueva York" as an excellent example of a multicultural world, like the one we live in, and as a trigger to achieving Intercultural Education.

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CENSURA Y TRADUCCIÓN PARA NIÑOS

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Resumen

Este artículo trata sobre la influencia de la censura franquista en la traducción de literatura infantil. Nos hemos centrado en la traducción española de algunos de los libros de la serie Guillermo de la escritora Richmal Crompton (1890-1969).

En primer lugar hemos estudiado los libros dentro de su contexto histórico, entre 1940 y 1960, después de la Guerra Civil española. Luego hemos estudiado el tratamiento recibido tanto de la literatura infantil española y extranjera (particularmente la inglesa) por la censura franquista. Hemos ilustrado esta parte del estudio con algunos informes y declaraciones hechos por algunos miembros del cuerpo de censores y ejemplos curiosos procedentes de la traducción de *Still William: Guillermo y el cerdo premiado*.

Por último hemos establecido una comparación entre William y Harry Potter, la serie de libros infantiles mas popular pero también la más desafiada de 1999 y tristemente tenemos que concluir que la censura en la literatura infantil aún existe hoy en día pero adoptando una nueva forma, lo famoso "políticamente correcto".

Palabras clave: traducción, censura franquista, literatura infantil, serie Guillermo Brown.