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New Trends in Children's Literature Research

Twenty-first Century Approaches (2000-2012)
from the University of Vigo (Spain)



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Introduction

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The Research Group “Anglo-German Children's Literature and its Translation” (A11) at the University of Vigo was first set up in 1992. Made up of members from diverse literary fields such as English, German and French Studies and Translation and Interpreting, the group aims to provide doctoral and pre-doctoral students with the opportunity to start their research career in these areas. Since its creation, the group has been responsible for the commencement and implementation of more than twenty research projects at both regional and national level and at present we are involved in an European project called “Héritage, présent et avenir de la littérature européenne pour l'enfance. Identité, images, paroles”. In 2006 it was designated as “Group of Excellence” by Galician regional government (Xunta de Galicia), and has taken part since then in numerous international projects in Germany, Austria, Argentina, Italy and Mexico.

This research group was initially focused on the studies of English and German Children's Literature and their mutual influence. Eventually, new research lines were spread out and more experts joined in, such as the Department of Translation at the University of Vigo. This enabled the research lines to be opened towards the field of translation, implying thus a new and more extensive analysis on their impact on other literatures, with a particular emphasis on Spanish literature and on the literatures in other languages of the Iberian Peninsula by means of the study of their translations and adaptations.

The interest that Children's Literature -from now on CL- arouses not only from a didactic and educational perspective but also from a philological viewpoint, is evident in the significant number of students registered on the doctorate and MA courses offered by the Department of English, French and German Philology and Translation at the Faculty of Philology and Translation of the University of Vigo since 1996. All these courses stay open to other universities inside and outside our borders.

The activity of this research group has centred ever since its outset on studies about the origins of English and German CLs and their influence and impact on other European cultures. The first project was founded by the University of Vigo and Xunta de Galicia and bore the title of “The Intellectual and Literary Values of the Anglo-German Children's Literature and its Impact on Adult Culture”. The project carried out an analysis of its progress from a mere didactic and moralistic aspect towards a literature full of artistic and aesthetic values together with certain stylistic and structural aspects that marked the cultural formation of the adult. The result of this initial research was collected in the volume *Evolución de la Literatura Infantil y Juvenil Británica y Alemana hasta el siglo XX* (Cardeñoso: Vigo, 1995).

Two new projects followed, also founded by Xunta de Galicia, “Anglo-German CL as a Means to Approaching and Understanding Cultural Diversity and its Impact on Spanish CL” and “Anglo-German CL and its Reception in Spain: Historical Evolution and Linguistic Diversity”. They involved a study of linguistic, literary and socio-cultural aspects of Anglo-German CL as well as a review on the influence of Anglo-

German CL on Spanish CL by means of translated works, their reception by the critics and their influence on Spanish internal output (directly or non-directly adopted elements), i.e., the phenomenon of the German illustrated book or the English "nonsense" and the different adaptations of British and German books to media such as film or television in Spain. The results of these projects were published in the book *La literatura infantil anglo-germana en nuestro siglo* (PPU: Barcelona, 1997).

As this literature represents a specific communication process from a historical and cultural point of view, our research lines were expanded to the field of translation in order to analyse which factors within Anglo-German CL had influenced, to some extent, the development of Spanish Literature. We wanted to ascertain what books had been translated into Spanish, what kind of reception they had obtained from the critics and to establish then an analysis of their translations according to language communities (*genres*, translators, publishers, authors, titles, chronological development, etc...).

However, we found out that there was -and still is- a large gap of critical studies in the reception in Spain of the works in English and German CL thanks to translations and adaptations which, in spite of their being rather numerous, are sometimes of a poor quality, especially if we carry out a study of linguistic communities. The lack of critical studies in this sector has led to an increase in uncontrolled translated works in the publishing trade. This occurrence has increased since the mid '70s, when a certain promotion of regional, native languages (Galician, Basque and Catalan) in all areas throughout translations, bestowed on them a category similar to that of an international language. As regards their being oppressed languages for so long, the literary output was practically scarce or non-existent. Even CL was itself considered a peripheral sub-system within the literary system. Although this socio-political subjugation disappeared in the 70s, its aftermath still persists in many cases.

Following the Linguistic Standardisation Act of Galicia (1983) and the implementation of Galician language in classrooms, there was a higher demand of readings for school. As the Galician literary trade was quite deficient, translations were needed -we ought to take into account that the development of translations is generally faster than that of original works-. Thus, the role of translation has been instrumental in the formation of Galician CL.

Given the continuous increase of both translated works within CL literary trade and their own native language output, the lack of specific critical studies in various translations is something to be noticed. Nor is there a diachronic tracking of the different versions of the same work. Translation regulations, -we are talking about descriptive and not about prescriptive rules, according to the terminology coined by Toury in 1995- which explain certain behaviours shown by mediators in relation to specific problems, become sharp, convincing theories for many people but only a few dare to explore the practice due to the methodological difficulty of multi-systemic studies that deal with language, literature and culture.

Before such a full-of-challenges background, we decided to complement the consolidated research on CL in English and German with this approach in translation. Without neglecting the linguistic combinations with Spanish, we considered essential translation studies which entailed other languages within the Iberian Peninsula. This line of research has originated three major projects: "Anglo-German Children's Litera-

ture and its reception in Spain: critical approach from different linguistic communities and through the analysis of translations and adaptations” (sponsored by Xunta de Galicia, 1998); “Transformation of Children’s Literature in media cultures: German and English adaptations for Spanish readers” (sponsored by Xunta de Galicia, 2001) and “Transformation of Children’s Literature in media cultures: Application of a critical research method of Spanish audiovisual adaptations of English and German children’s books” (sponsored by Ministerio de Ciencia y Tecnología, 2003).

All these projects and the research work carried out by the members of the group have achieved significant results from two different perspectives:

- Literary aspects: Historical and critical reviews which encompass literary ages, current issues -specific problems of youth: drugs, sex, new family structures, migration, reunification- and studies on certain writers and their works.
- Translation aspects: Specific problems of translations of CL; translation of German and/or English CL into Spanish and native languages, e.g. Galician; strategies, techniques, translators: cultural transference through German and/or English translations.

The most outstanding results can be observed in books such as *Contribuciones al estudio de la traducción de literatura infantil y juvenil* (CIE Inversiones Editoriales Dossat 2000 SL: Madrid, 2002); *Kulturelle Regionalisierung in Spanien und literarische Übersetzung. Studien zur Rezeption deutschsprachiger KJL in den zweisprachigen autonomen Regionen Katalonien, Galicien und Baskenland* (Peter Lang: Frankfurt, 2002) and *Estudios críticos de traducción de Literatura Infantil y Juvenil. Análisis de las traducciones de obras inglesas y alemanas a las cuatro lenguas oficiales en España* (vol. 1 and 2) (Septem Ediciones: Oviedo, 2003; Septem Ediciones: Oviedo, 2007).

This effort has led to numerous visits to research centres in other countries and to partnerships with other universities, not only European but also American, Canadian and South American. We have also signed a project with the Centre for Documentation, Dissemination, Research and Training in CL at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of San Luis (Argentina). Subsequently, a conference in International CL held in Puerto Rico, at the University of Mayagüez, unlocked new contacts with authors and researchers in South American CL. We have created since then a close and fruitful collaboration with researchers from Universidad Iberoamericana in México DF.

As our research work got increasingly recognised outside our borders and the bonds with other researchers outside Spain were secured, we realised the need for a closer cooperation amongst researchers and amongst research groups within our country. During meetings with foreign researchers -mainly German and British universities- we often raised the question of delving into the Spanish situation in the province of CL: what do you do, how and where is it done?

When attempting to collect all the information, we came across a broadly dispersed outlook and a rather individualistic image in this research field in comparison to other countries, where there were strengthened research groups specialising in particular lines of research, such as teaching, translation studies, linguistics, illustration, librarianship, etc... The scarce connection which exists in Spain has allowed us to con-

firm that in some cases two or more doctoral theses on the same topic were being carried out without those involved being aware of the fact. Due to the need for an internal bonding amongst the researchers and a joint projection abroad, the idea of the National Association of Research in Children's Literature (ANILIJ) was originated.

Once we were able to verify how this kind of associations ran in other European countries and by obtaining support and receiving suggestions from many of them - especially from the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University of Frankfurt am Main-, we put forward the idea of inviting and gathering together the highest possible number of national researchers and of suggesting the official setup of an institution of this nature.

The formal creation of our Spanish association meant, on the one hand, the review of the current state of affairs and the existing immediate trends in this area in our country and above all, the consideration of their situation in the research field of the Higher Education sector in Spain.

In order to reach some valid conclusions, we arranged in Vigo in 1999 the First International Conference of the Asociación de Investigación de Literatura Infantil y Juvenil (ANILIJ): *Tendencias actuales en investigación*, with the aim of gathering together the highest number possible of national and international experts in this literary research field. Especially noteworthy is the support and advice we have received during this first congress from Hans Heino Ewers (Johann-Wolfgang-Universität, Frankfurt) and Kimberley Reynolds (Newcastle University), two of the greatest researchers in the field of CL.

Accordingly, we set four main scientific goals to be achieved:

- To gather national and international experts in CL together with any other likely ANILIJ members in order to consolidate networks, draw up a balance of both teaching and research in this literary field within the universities of the Iberian Peninsula and contrast it with the rest of Europe.
- To analyse the impact of CL studies on educational policies, the possibilities which they offer and the limitations they impose against the development in teaching and research.
- To draw up a balance of the projection which CL research in the Higher Education sector is currently having in the whole of the Spanish research.
- To assess external dissemination which the activity of the different research groups is producing in diverse countries together with its impact and connection with other groups.
- To encourage interdisciplinary research, with the result that there is a place within the association for both researchers appertaining to the philological province - Americanists, Anglicists, Germanists, Hispanists, Romanists, Slavists, etc...- and researchers appertaining to other adjacent disciplines -artists, historians, illustrators, librarians, translators, etc...-, as long as they focus on research and not on a mere dissemination or spreading of CL.
- To encourage collaboration and participation in projects, meetings and researchers exchanges amongst the associations of research in CL which already exist in other countries.
- To encourage publications as well as the organisation and participation in conferences and open days in the field of CL.

International cooperation displays two fundamental objectives:

- To exchange information on the situation of research in CL, on institutions of research in this field and on the specialities in CL and its contents within the diverse university degrees.
- To facilitate contacts and collaboration amongst our researchers and those of other countries in specific research areas.

The outcome of the Conference has allowed us to confirm, in the first place, the quality and vitality of the research which is being developed in Spain on national and world CL, as well as the scientific status reached by translation studies as regards this literature. In the second place, it has given us the go-ahead to analyse the existing shortage in certain research areas and the subsequent purpose of palliating it. Every scope has been reflected on the monograph *Literatura infantil-juvenil: Tendencias actuales en investigación*, published in October 2000 by the University of Vigo.

More than one hundred and fifty lecturers from diverse Spanish universities and researchers of other cultural provinces are members of the Association. In this First Conference, it was agreed the creation of a database which gathers the names of all ANILIJ members, their workplaces, main research lines and a compilation of their publications.

This Conference was followed by another one held in 2001 in Alcalá de Henares, where the ANILIJ library would be founded, with its main goal being the collection of all those publications received from all areas in the central venue. In December 2003 the *III Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Nacional de Investigación de Literatura Infantil y Juvenil* took place at Centro Cultural Caixanova in Vigo. Its subject matter was “Worlds in conflict: Representation of Ideologies, Social Confrontations and Wars within Children’s and Young Adults literature”.

In September 2005 the *IV Congreso Internacional* was held in Cádiz, with its main theme revolving around humour. Dr Andrew Casson, Dr Tomás Albaladejo and Dr François Marcoin were amongst the lecturers who participated in it. Our conferences are biannually held in a different university each time, to which our members are usually linked.

The *V Congreso Internacional* was held in León in 2007 and bore the title *Identidad/es*. The plenary speakers were Gillian Lathey (Roehampton, United Kingdom), Emer O’Sullivan (Lüneburg, Germany), and the writer Aidan Chambers.

In 2009, the Conference was held for the first time in a Latin American country, Guadalajara (Jalisco, Mexico) from 24 to 27 of November. Amongst its objectives we should highlight the rediscovery of mythical texts kept in the imagery and which have thus favoured the creation of diverse *genres* and modalities together with the pondering on characteristics and features appertaining to orality as the source point of CL.

The *I Jornada Internacional de Crítica e Investigación en LIJ* organised by ANILIJ was held in Vigo in November 2010. The celebration of this short conference intended to gather together CL researchers from all areas of the Peninsula in order to know first-hand the research lines being developed, debate on the needs observed within the research in this field and encourage some dialogue, collaboration and exchange amongst experts to enable all different groups, formally constituted research

networks and PhD students or recent doctors to expound their current projects and announce the research lines as well as the latest news and trends in a dynamic way.

Once again, in 2012 in Vigo the topic to be debated was “Family in CL”, which tackled the issue from different viewpoints such as *genre*, interculturalism, translation, classical tales, traditions, multiculturalism or the new family models and conflicts in the 21st century. In previous ANILIJ Conferences, we had already explored within CL the topic of war conflicts, humour, identities, multiculturalism, social realism and imaginary worlds..... and it seemed that CL had started to reflect other different familial structures, other family models, the presence of grandparents, homosexual subject matters, intergenerational conflicts and new family conflicts ... in such a way that they deserved an overall thought and an in-depth analysis.

The University of Bologna was our host in the III International Conference held last March 2013 and organised by ANILIJ-ELOS at the Scuola di Lingue e Letterature, Traduzione e Interpretazione, Università di Bologna. The Conference bore the title “¿Me traduces una historia?: la traducción en ámbito infantil y juvenil”. Researchers from Brazil, Costa Rica, Italy, Mexico, Spain and the US attended the Conference. Besides the papers and plenary conferences delivered at the central venue of Forlì, the ANILIJ Board of Directors enjoyed the exclusive chance of presenting an introduction of the Association and delivering a lecture on the translation of CL in Galicia in the Centre of Translators at the prestigious Children’s and Young Adults Book Fair in Bologna.

In 2007, two new sections were set up within ANILIJ, the Galician-Portuguese section ELOS, chaired by Blanca-Ana Roig -group LITER21, University of Santiago de Compostela- and the section ANILIJ-Iberoamérica, chaired by Laura Guerrero -Universidad Iberoamericana of Mexico-. The Association belongs to the IRSCS-International Research Society for Children’s Literature, which has enabled its members with an international collaboration at the highest level. In 2009, the IRSCS celebrated its 40th anniversary together with the 19th International Conference, which took place at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University of Frankfurt am Main (Germany), and where for the first time in its history, Spanish appeared next to English as the other language equally recognised as official in the conference. Both AII and ANILIJ groups were appointed coordinators of the Spanish-speaking section. Likewise, the AII group cooperates with the *Red Temática de Investigación LIJMI: “Literaturas Infantiles y Juveniles del Marco Ibérico e Iberoamericano”*, headquartered at the University of Santiago de Compostela, opening thus a wide collaboration amongst Galician researchers and those of the other autonomous regions. Besides, the AII group has been allocated with diverse agreements and researcher exchange programmes with several entities and institutions and works directly with their representatives, amongst whom the *Institut für Jugendbuchforschung*, Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main; *Institut für Germanistik*, Universität Wien; National Centre for Research in Children’s Literature, University of Roehampton, London; and Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico D. F. should be pointed out.

In the year 2006 the AII group was awarded the status of “Group of Excellence” through the “Programa de estructuración de unidades de investigación en humanidades y ciencias sociales” of the Xunta de Galicia (Galicians Government). This position has

conveyed international recognition to the group whose members started to take charge of coordinating the collection *Diálogos intertextuales. Estudios de literatura infantil y juvenil alemana e inglesa: trasvases semióticos* in the German publishing house Peter Lang (Frankfurt). The publications of this collection (seven books have been launched so far) deal with the research CL area in Spanish language.

Presently, the work by the group is being carried out around these six wide research lines:

- English, German and French (two Francophone researchers have joined the group in 2011) CL and its translations and adaptations into the four official languages in Spain.
- Critical and literary analysis of Anglo-German and French works within the CL area.
- Study and designs of critical editions in the CL area in German, English, French and Spanish language.
- Social and historical study of the development of CL in German, French and English-speaking countries.
- Critical analyses of audio-visual products derived from Children's and Young Adults works.
- BITRA: upgrading of the online database BITRA -Bibliografía de Traducción e Interpretación- with entries about translation of Children's and Young Adults Literature –and comments.
- Feminist theories and CL.

One of the most significant achievements of the research group, as part of ANILIJ, is the creation of the first Spanish scientific journal dedicated entirely to CL research. It's a yearbook known as *AILLIJ* (*Anuario de Investigación en Literatura Infantil y Juvenil*) and which figures in the publications catalogue of the *Modern Language Association* (MLA), bestowing thus on it the category level "A" amidst the scientific journals in our country. Number 0 opened the *Anuario* in 2001 and volume 11 was published in 2013. Our journal has got as its main target the dissemination of the research which is being carried out in the field of CL not only on a nationwide scale but also outside our borders. It intends to encourage the research of interdisciplinary character and to reasonably contribute towards the spreading of knowledge by offering one more forum on brainstorming about all topics which bind this literature to society and culture. *AILLIJ* is addressed to a specialised readership in and out of Spain, intending the achievement of a wide circulation amongst researchers within international scopes. Essays and reviews in both English and Spanish language are published on *AILLIJ*. It comprises a scientific committee integrated by experts from different countries and wherein a great diversity of work lines and perspectives is represented. In all these years several individuals of renown have taken part, i.e. B. Dolle-Weinkauff, Teresa Durán, H. H. Ewers, J. Griswold, J. Jacobson, Gemma Lluch, M. Nikolajeva, Riita Oittinen, M. J. Olaziregui, J. Perrot, K. Reynolds, I. Schon, Zohar Shavit, or N. Tucker, amongst many others, alongside those who are initiating their research activity within CL.

Even though the Association is of national character, as established by article 2 of its statutes, "To gather together those researchers in CL who live in Spain and whose

research is carried out both on a nationwide scale and on an international one”, it also provides for the condition of “cohered members”, that is, the possibility that other researchers from other countries may belong to this association, at least whereas the conditions to create an organization of similar features in their respective nations are not met. Particularly, at this time there are “cohered members” in our association from Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay and the US. The current number of members adds to something more than one hundred people, to whom we may also incorporate some institutions such as CEPLI (Children’s Literature Research Centre, University of Castilla-La Mancha), ELOS (Asociación Galáico-Portuguesa de CL), the Fundación Germán Sánchez Ruipérez, or GALIX (Asociación Gallega del Libro infantil).

The central venue of ANILIJ is located on the Faculty of Philology and Translating in the University of Vigo, where its current board of directors is also situated, - Chairwoman: Blanca-Ana Roig Rechou, Vice-Chairwoman: Veljka Ruzicka Kenfel, Secretary: Ana Fernández Mosquera, Treasurer: Lourdes Lorenzo García and Chairperson: Isabel Mociño González.

It has also got its very own web page (www.uvigo.es/anilij), as well as a Facebook page and a publication blog page where information can be found on events, courses, bibliographical indexes, useful links, etc... On a weekly basis, members are informed via email of all those relevant events and new releases which are being produced in the CL world.

All academic achievements obtained from the Research Group "Anglo-German Children's Literature and its Translation" (AI1) are the result of a great individual effort of each member for many years devoted to research. As head researcher, I am very grateful for the friendship of all of the members of this research group and I would like to thank all of them for their trust, loyalty and companionship, and, above all, their hard work and expertise show in their research papers included in this volume.