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Clashing conceptions of multicultural literature: the case of children's and youth literature
Concepciones encontradas en torno a la literatura intercultural: el caso de la literatura infantil y juvenil

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyse the different conceptions that exist of children's and youth literature labelled as multicultural. Conceptions that emanate from two sets of academical discourses on this topic are compared, namely those originated in Spanish research centers and those proceeding from the USA. The analysis focuses on the criterions defining this literature: the aesthetic and formal, the thematic and representational, the authorship-based and the axiological. It is found that the different ways of conceiving multicultural children's and youth literature relate to different ways of conceiving the cultural difference, as well as to different intervention proposals for situations in which the cultural diversity turns out to be troublesome.

Resumen

En este trabajo se analizan las distintas concepciones existentes en torno a la literatura infantil y juvenil denominada intercultural. Se comparan las concepciones que emanan de dos conjuntos de discursos académicos dedicados a este tema: los provenientes de centros de investigación españoles y de los estadounidenses. El análisis se centra en los criterios de definición de esta literatura: el criterio estético-formal, el temático-representacional, el de autoría y el axiológico. Se descubre que las diferentes maneras de concebir la literatura infantil y juvenil multi e intercultural se corresponden con diferentes maneras de concebir la diferencia cultural, así como con diferentes propuestas de intervenir cuando la diversidad cultural implica problematicidad.

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Introduction

The increasing number and intensity of contacts among human groups and symbolic orders, considered as a distinguished mark of postmodernity, has had an enormous impact in literary production. It is no wonder if we believe literature is another sphere from which humans try to understand the world around us and ourselves, and create senses which help us overcome changes. It is obvious that certain phenomena such as thematic and formal hybridisation, the author's mixed-race or migrant condition or even just the representation of cultural contacts are nothing new in this field since the new thing is the degree of awareness raising and use thereof. They become more frequent and take a prominent position both in the field of literary creation and research, resulting in a category of works which are usually called multi- or intercultural literature.

But, what are we talking about when we talk about multi- and intercultural literature? It seems a basic question, nevertheless there is no consensus on how it should be answered. The main reason is the wide range of spheres it has been approached from. It is obvious that each field of knowledge pursues more or less different objectives, more or less inherent to them, and this inevitably affects the way the concept is defined. There is great diversity in terms of definition even in the same discipline which, on the other hand, is inherent to science. Therefore, positions in the field of literary studies equating intercultural literature with the so-called migrant writings can be found (Valero, 2010). In this case, specificity is supported through the particularities which the vital condition of the author as an immigrant; (hybrid) can produce in writing. This is called "ces voix d'ailleurs désormais d'ici" (Sorin, 2004, p. 33). The result is a hyperlink definition: the objective is defining literary concepts on the basis of elements that are beyond literature and are far from being solved in the relevant spheres. For this reason, it is understandable that this position has generated criticism (Roncagliolo,

2007; Rossell, 2007) and the need to deal with more specific criteria within this sphere is recalled in certain fields of literary theory and criticism: formal and aesthetic criteria. The way cultural contact translates into the work's configuration itself, into the way verbal matter is embodied, is analysed in the fantastic study carried out by Llamas (2012).

As a matter of fact, these oscillations affecting definitions have a very complex background related to debate on the very nature of studies on literature. We do not intent to solve them or explore them in depth: in our opinion, it is interesting to point out that there is also a wide range of conceptions of a group of multi- and intercultural literature that is not dealt with in the studies mentioned above. We are referring to children's and young people's literature (LIJ, as per its acronym Spanish, hereinafter referred to as CYL).

CYL's specificity

CYL, a discipline that is always left out as far as the art of word is concerned, is part of all human concerns (Mata, 2014), including those related to cultural contacts. In fact, the so-called multi- or intercultural CYL[1] now includes a great number of works for children and teenagers (see the FGSR selection, 2008). Nevertheless, certain aspects deserve a special chapter. Obviously, these aspects are related to the type of reader said works are aimed at, not just because his/her tender age but due to the approaches to learning and personality development used along with the role played by literature in these cases. The fact that the recipient of this works is seen as a person under construction -a *proto-person*- and the –mechanistic- way learning is still seen nowadays, results in an enormous emphasis in the ethical correctness of the message emerging from the works offered to this kind of reader and created for him. At least by most of the agents related to this field.

Therefore, adult's literature only aspires to compile, represent and explore the different

aspects of human experience, or even just to dream them up or to approach them in a different way. However, children's and young people's literature not only is required that its departure point should be the existing reality, but also it ought to propose a reality better than that the one existing, a desired reality, a utopia whose implementation is entrusted to younger generations (Larrosa, 2000). CYL is generally seen as an instrument or a vehicle to gear that desired change. In contrast with adult's literature, CYL is related to a will to influence, to act on this world, according to a specific project of humanity. Sustainable coexistence among cultural groups is part of this project and, within it, CYL is also used to achieve this objective. "CYL goes beyond […] the boundaries of mere discourse to become a powerful tool of socio-cultural guarantee, as well as one of the fundamental pillars among cultures in the same geographical environment…" (Ibarra and Ballester, 2009, p.10).

This approach obviously poses numerous problems. For example, some pedagogues see the concept of using CYL to convey a series of ready-made ideas as an instrumentalisation of literature (Carranza, 2006). On the other hand, too much emphasis is placed on the means, on the literary object, without taking into account other key elements of transmission, such as mediation, the environment, the human factor or even the will to read or learn (Petit, 2009). Given that proposals along this line are not often empirically verified (rhetoric and abstraction are very frequent features of pedagogical discourse on interculturality, García Castaño and Granados, 2000)[2]. But apart from all this criticism that is more than justified, the approach "CYL towards interculturality" has some very relevant elements when it comes to understand the relations established nowadays between literature and cultural diversity.

This paper focuses on the heterogeneity of the new cultural scene dreamt of and proposed by –or through- CYL. Indeed, said heterogeneity can be found, especially when travelling abroad and comparing the discourses produced in Spain with those produced in other socio-political contexts. We are especially interested in the differences between the Spanish and the American context. We are interested in the first one because it is just around us, since we carry out our activity in this country. The latter is interesting due to its quantitative importance and the specific profile adopted over the years[3]. For example, this comparison allows us to verify that in the Spanish case, the intercultural discourse is related to foreign-born immigration experienced in Spain recently (García Castaño and Barragán Ruiz-Matas, 2000), in contrast with the American case, which affects the configuration of how ethnicities are built in each of the two contexts.

We believe that focusing on the scientific production of multi- and intercultural CYL can be especially useful to draw this comparison. The discourse maze around this literature may shed more light that children's books themselves, because the different ideas on this literature and its objectives are exposed more explicitly. We are now analysing the different conceptions of multi- or intercultural CYL by means of the scientific discourses of both contexts, without seeking to evaluate them comprehensively.

The concept of multi- and intercultural CYL. An aesthetic-formal criterion

Although CYL is not alien to the discussions about adult's multi- and intercultural literature, these discussions are explained by a key component we have already referred to and that is related to a pedagogical project (Cai, 2002). But, what are we talking about when we talk about multi- and intercultural CYL?

In first place, it should be pointed out that those proposals to handle aesthetic criteria to define that CYS that can be called multi- or intercultural are not very frequent. Bermúdez (2010) is one example. According to this author, the main criterion that defines the intercultural nature of literature is the existence of a certain concern for identity and the literary expression thereof. She proposes to look at Latin American

literatures as an example, because "Latin American reflection on identity –in each of the countries and communities that are part of that unity called *Latin American*- has found in literature a relevant channel of expression right from the start" (Bermúdez, 2010, p.128). And this is not because she believes that in the Latin American context culture is more hybrid that in other contexts (because all cultural nature is hybrid). As a matter of fact, not all cultural spheres have a particular aesthetics that highlights such hybrid nature, the awareness and memory thereof. This proposal is one of the very few determined and specific examples that defined intercultural CYL according to strictly aesthetic criteria we has been able to find by updating the pedagogical approaches on literature and interculturality applying advances on literary theory. Actually, it has origins in a criticism of the prevailing trends in the pedagogical sphere.

There are other studies where formal elements are taken into account. For example, Núñez refers to the existence of certain argument patterns and stylistic features as elements that allow us to define the genre of young people's literature (Núñez, 2005). Nonetheless, as far as intercultural young people's novel is concerned, she only refers to the recurring emergence of a series of topics as a particularity of said genre -such as the initiation voyage, the wise old man or the real story- which are not quite defining. On the other hand, Pena (2011) highlights the frequent use of the first person as a defining feature with diary format and a certain confessional tone, aiming at offering readers a more immediate vision of the migration process in this case. In any case, none of these authors intends to see the formal element as a defining criterion of intercultural CYL, which seems to be defined by other aspects, such as those explained below.

Thematic-representational criterion

The par excellence criterion to define multi- or intercultural CYL is thematic. In both contexts, works are seen as multi- or intercultural to the extent to which they represent whether cultural contact itself or "other" cultural groups. "Under de label of 'multicultural children's and young people's literature' both books and tales reflecting coexistence activities of several peoples in the same place are identified as type of literature dealing with very different cultures" (Marcelo and Pascua, 2011, p. 8). In the first case, contact or coexistence of different groups is explicitly reflected in CYL. This is more frequent in Spain and is embodied under the form of experiences associated to migration, from the journey to the integration in the new social world, which is not so frequent in the American context (Broadway and Conkle, 2011).

In any case, explicit representation of cultural contact is not a requisite or a majority trend. The second case, which refers to multi- or intercultural CYL representing different cultural groups, prevails. In this case, cultural contact is not addressed but is implicit in the circumstances that result in this type of CYL. Due to the fact that the aspects of the life of a cultural group are addressed and that said groups classified as "other", whereas the relevant literature is classified as multi- or intercultural, refers to the existence of cultural contact in actual social life, where CYL emerges. In these cases, multi- and intercultural CYL is that describing those groups involved in cultural contacts in the extra-literary world.

This aspect is more or less common to both contexts. The main difference lies on what groups have to be involved so that we can talk about cultural encounters. In Spain, although historically is not precisely and example of cultural homogeneity, interculturality -or interculturalism- is generally associated to foreign immigrants. The intercultural discourse is particularly articulated in connection with foreign people from Third World (García Castaño *et al.*, 2000). For example, the need to make the curriculum more intercultural, which implies the diversification of the literary catalogue, is a response of the presence of immigrant students. Nevertheless, it does not necessarily

imply that the diversity described in literature is that offered by foreign immigrants: "In the field of children's and young people's literature, we can find works whose main theme or ambiance is the culture of other parts of the world and other ethnic groups; what we call multicultural children's literature" (Perera and Ramón, 2007, p. 87). Although reference is made to "other ethnic groups", ethnic or national differences inside Spain are not frequently associated to the field of CYL. On the contrary, we can frequently find exotic and hardly specific representations of fuzzily different ethnic groups:

> [The author] takes us to an exotic place, provides some descriptions, talks about *tajin* and other meals, about the camels, goats and lambs that live by the house [or about] that geography with grass huts, black Africans dressed in striking colours or other traditional costumes (Marcelo *and Pascua*, 2011, p. 6).

Although they are few, in the Spanish context there are some voices that reject this approach because it is seen as superficial (Ibarra *and Ballester*, 2009).

This conception is quite different in the United States, because ethnic and racial diversity is recognised irrespective of the migration process: "In schools that appear to be increasingly segregated along lines of colour and class, literature, television, and other media may present some of the few opportunities for all students to encounter people of different racial, ethnic, and socio-economic groups" (Sims, 1997, p. 3). Therefore, multicultural CYL would reflect "the different experiences of life, traditions, stories, views of the world and approaches by the different cultural groups that are part of a society" (Grant and Ladson-Billings, 1997, quot. in Mendoza and Reese, 2005, p. 4). But the virtual absence of references to immigration does not seem as important as the awareness of the asymmetry in relations among the groups that are distinguished. "Multicultural literature refers to literature by and about people who are members of groups considered to be outside the socio-political mainstream of the United States" (Henderson and Young, 2011, p. 59). To be specific, they

are people "other than the white middle-class citizens of the United States" (Sims, 1997, p. 3) or, in other words, "racial or ethnic minority groups that are culturally and socially different from the white Anglo-Saxon majority in the United States" (Norton, 1999, quot. in Cai, 2002, p. 12). Multicultural CYL thus "focuses attention on those groups whose histories and cultures have been omitted, distorted, or undervalued in society and in school curricula" (Sims, 1997, p. 3). Therefore, sometimes we go further and include other groups that have historically been disadvantaged in society, such as women, religious groups, homosexual or handicapped people (Sims, 1997; Cai, 2002), far from associating culture with ethnicity, something that is often subject to criticism (Welsch, 2008).

Indeed, the proposals from the American context are different from the Spanish ones not only in the type of groups that are seen as "other" groups, but also in the way they are represented. In contrast with those superficial, exotic and folkloric descriptions that are normally used in the Spanish context, American researchers we are referring to, set one essential requisite so that the representations of minority groups can have some positive effect in the readers' conceptions, and authenticity is one of them. Faithful representation of everyday life, today and internally diverse (Yokota, 1993) of minority groups is seen as an essential way to deconstruct preconceptions about them. So much so that authenticity emerges as the basic criterion to evaluate multicultural CYL's quality and suitability. In case this requisite is not met, the book should be discarded, no matter how well written it is (Cai, 2002). According to these authors, if the movement of non authentic books is not stopped, we will be at risk that students keep their prejudices without being challenged (González and Montaño, 2008), and therefore multicultural CYL would not fulfil its mission.

Authorship criterion

In the American context, the question of authenticity is associated to a certain concern for the authorship of multicultural books. It seems that most of multicultural CYL are written by members of minority groups; nevertheless, multicultural CYL written by members of other groups is not rare. Indeed, as far as this second group is concerned, many researchers ask the following question: "Can authors outside the culture create authentic literature about a culture other than their own?" (Oswald and Atkinson, 2011, p. 4). The ability of these authors to describe faithfully alien cultural elements and their authority to comment on them is subject to debate. These positions can be found frequently:

> The chapter [...] does not include books about Latinos by authors who are not Latinos themselves. Whereas the merit of a book is not determined by the heritage of the author or illustrator but rather by their intention, knowledge, sensitivity, responsibility, and artistry, the experience of a people can seldom be told authentically from the outside (Campoy and Flor, 2011, p. 196).

Such statement is considerably sharp; nevertheless, it leaves room for some specific cases where authors outside the culture in question can construct an accurate representation. There are also more open approaches that extend that possibility to any author who can compensate their lack of cultural experience for research work and consistent involvement in the life of the group represented (Yokota, 1993), as well as for empathy:

> None of those factors —race, sex, class, even language— matters as much as experience and empathy. If someone has lived and worked so closely within another community that she has assimilated their experiences, then I think she can come to feel what they feel (Minfong Ho, 2002, quot. in Oswald and Atkinson, 2011, p. 7).

However, works written by "native" authors are in a fortunate position in this debate: "if the writer is of the same skin colour and speaks the same language as the people she writes about, then of course she's more likely to portray them with more sensitivity than someone who is completely different" (Minfong Ho, 2002, quot. en Oswald and Atkinson, 2011, p. 7). It is remarkable that the ability of "native" authors to capture the essence of their own group's culture is never called into question by researchers excepting on one occasion: "you don't have to have a blood quantum but you do have to have the ability to listen and to learn [...] that predilection to listen and to read, because there is nothing genetic about it at all" (Oswald and Atkinson, 2011, p. 23). Significantly, this opinion belongs to one of these "outsider" authors.

There are therefore a variety of positions in this regard and the debate remains open in these authors' opinion. Winding it up is not our mission either. We intend to draw attention on the fact that it arises and that it only arises in the American context. Regardless of whether the most radical positions can be justified or not from an anthropological point of view, we are now interested in their objective: establishing a monopole on the production of multicultural CYL, which means keeping a morsel of power for groups that have been historically disadvantaged in their society -people "of colour" especially (Sims, 1997, p. 3)- and thus conquering a social space for them:

> The rise of multicultural literature is a political, rather than a literary, movement. It is a movement to claim space in literature and in education for the historically marginalized social groups, rather than one to renovate the craft of literature itself (Cai, 2002, p. xiii).

In the scientific literature written by academicians associated to research centres in Spain, the claim that CYL about "other" peoples are written by "other" authors is practically non-existent. It is true that the individuals who play a key role in intercultural discourse in the Spanish context, foreign immigrants, are a category of authors that is recognised in certain types of studies on adult's literature: migrant literature, which we have already referred to. On the other hand, chapters four and five of the book directed by Miampika (2007) are one of the very few examples we have found (another one

is Moure's reflection, 2011), where the claim of a literature written by these authors is seen as an act of justice, necessary to make up for the situation of marginalisation and silencing they suffer in Spain. Nevertheless, we go back to the field of general literature through these references. Although willingness to integrate is the flagship of CYL, supporting immigrant authors is not usually seen as a strategy, for example, to demonstrate their creative potential and counter lack of knowledge. We have only found two studies dedicated to CYL written by *amazig* authors, stressing the credit of emphasising the value of the cultural heritage of this group of immigrants. In first place, it is a communication whose author states as follows:

> All these literary and linguistic publications, many of which are works by North African-descendent Catalan youngsters, have contributed to make amazigh language and literature known and helped to give them their due place within Catalan society (Akioud, 2011, p. 7).

In second place, Soto (2011) compares CYL books on Arab issues: on one hand, those written by Spanish authors and, on the other hand, those written by Arab authors who emigrated to western countries and translated into Spanish. It leads us to conclude that the production of books written by immigrant authors diversifies issues and environments, describes cultures in depth (and, therefore, in the ability to deconstruct prejudices) and offers a new approach to the different issues, from those that are significant from the point of view of the host society to those that are significant for immigrant themselves, such as the cultural shock and the feeling of rejection. Nevertheless, authorship seems to be partially important only, to the extent it contributes to propose alternatives to clichés. Upon transforming the approach, there are no reasons why native authors cannot write valuable books on the experience of those people, whether in their country of origin or in their host countries, although some "personal work" is necessary" (Soto, 2011, p. 23).

As far as power relations among those groups involved in cultural contact are concerned, they are taken into account only in one of the studies on CYL we have analysed. Its author suggests "extending the application of post-colonial theory to the study of this kind of literature [CYL] to redefine the undermined idea of multiculturalism" (Alonso, 2011, p. 79). Nevertheless, it is not clear if authorship plays any role in her proposal or if asymmetry of power is only suggested as an element to address the analysis of narrative itself.

According to what is reflected in scientific literature, a relative absence of "other" authors in Spanish children's and young people's literature is found, and therefore little importance is placed on the criterion of the author's biographic-demographic-legal condition to define intercultural CYL. We might think that this absence is due to the fact that intensification of migratory flows took place in Spain later than in other countries such as Germany or France, where these literatures are more established. Nevertheless, in view of the testimony of the literary authors who are included in the aforesaid book on literature and migrations (Miampika, 2007), we believe that this is not the reason, or the only reason at least.

The authorship criterion is thus far more important in the American context, although it is true that is usually associated to the other criterion dealt with above: the thematic-representational criterion. Combined, they are one expression of the commitment to social causes CYL seems to be bound to. In the Spanish context, this commitment to social causes related to cultural diversity has a different nature, as we will see in the following heading.

Axiological criterion

In Spain, the thematic-representational criterion also plays a key role when defining intercultural CYL. Nevertheless, in comparison with the American context, where emphasis is placed on the explicit and faithful representation of the different groups and their

idiosyncrasies, less importance is placed on capturing the cultural particularities in Spain, while priority is given to describing the existing relations among the cultural groups. In this quote, we can find how this approach is seen simultaneously to the other focusing more on the description of the cultural particularities of "others":

> These works, just as the proposals, result from the so-called 'Interculturality' in order to present contacts among cultures, to represent situations of harmonious or confrontational coexistence, to reflect respect or disrespect for difference, to show the transformations that take place in everyday life: tolerance, peace, etc. Others, under the heading 'Other cultures', are marked by reflecting on other different cultures, presenting them to the society of origin in order to offer possible coexistence to readers, introducing myths and other cultures' symbols to them, and helping them to understand their 'possible neighbour', the 'other' (Roig, 2012, p. 364).

Focusing on relations is not only seen as additional to the most strictly representational option but it emerges as an essential requisite to enable us to talk about intercultural CYL:

> [Breakdown of diversity by topic] is a necessary condition but somehow sufficient [...] Nowadays' discourse on interculturality needs texts that respect the cultural diversity that converges in our society [...] a catalogue created to foster the transmission of values (Ibarra, 2007, p. 26).

Therefore, in many cases, the privilege of the relational element turns into a must to promote those titles where cultural relations are established in terms of equality, dignity and acceptance: "Teachers should make a preliminary selection on the basis not only of aesthetic quality but also of the promotion of attitudes involving approach, respect and solidarity towards differences, dealing with diversity as a source wealth" (Marco, 2002, p. 15). The objective of this selection is placing readers "before the neutrality whereby we can coexist and understand difference" (Balça, Azevedo, Pires and Costa, 2011, p. 7), thus passing these attitudes to them. Nevertheless, according to other specialists:

> It is not necessary [...] that narratives *per se* are ideal models of intercultural relations [...] it is by

exploring, for example, the conflicts, contradictions and the absence of positive interculturality models in narrative, and therefore some valuable senses for Intercultural Education can become explicit (Morgado, 2006, pages 18-19).

This approach to the relational and axiological sphere often decuples from the strictly representational sphere and tends to deal metaphorically with difference and the attitudes towards it. Metaphors with animals are usual (Encabo, Valero and Jerez, 2012; Gutiérrez, 2009) -which is not acceptable to the defenders of multiculturalism in the United States, at least when it is accompanied by the representation of ethnic features, because it is seen as an animalisation of the groups that are represented by the metaphors (Sabis-Burns, 2011) - as well as metaphors with colours (Roig, 2012). The use of these metaphors explains why many Spanish specialists believe it is acceptable to recover some CYL classics for the purposes of intercultural education:

> In Children's Literature, there are paradigmatic cases of acceptance of difference and understanding of different realities. Classical texts such as *The Ugly Duckling,* versions of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* or even *The Steadfast Tin Soldier* are stories that can help us understand differences among people (López Valero, s/f:, p. 6).

Here is another example: "*Noah's Ark* is the first legendary example of coexistence in which animals are the main characters" (Flor, 2002, p. 32). This movement inside CYL, aiming at promoting exemplary patterns of conduct -offering them directly or provoking search for it by exposing readers to conflict situations- is only seen as intercultural in the Spanish context.

Different models of the same tool

The conceptions of multi- and intercultural CYL that are increasingly prevailing both in the Spanish and the American context share certain underlying approaches. In first place, they are based on a way to see culture as something that is finite (internally homogeneous and clearly distinguishable from other corpuses of the same order), essentialised and ethnitised (attached

to a specific human, ethnic or national group), even racialised (explicitly in the US, implicitly in Spain). To sum up, a concept of culture that suited well the historic moment where it emerged (that of the nationalisms of the 19th century), but that is seen as obsolete in nowadays' societies (Welsch 2008)[4]. In second place, both contexts emphasise almost exclusively the configuration of the didactic material, according to the mechanistic vision of learning, whereby the attitudes and behaviours of children and young people can be directly influenced just by being exposed to certain messages. This view has been criticised by Larrosa (2000), for instance. Nevertheless, at this point we are especially interested in the divergent aspects because we believe that their scope is far beyond theoretical analysis: the analysis shows that we are facing two different ways to conceive CYL's commitment in terms of cultural diversity.

In the United States, multicultural CYL is used as a weapon in a struggle, in a real crusade (Kuharets, 2001) because it recognises and represents groups that have been historically disadvantaged in society. Breakdown of literature by topic regarding this groups and the demand to reserve the exclusive right to create this literature is expressly aimed at readjusting power relations. Meanwhile, as it is seen in Spain, CYL is a clearly conservative instrument because it should help to promote cohesion among the different segments of the population, mainly between native people and foreign immigrants, minimising those conflicts that may arise from cultural differences[5].

We believe that the different design of the same tool is closely linked to the origin of the relevant discourses and the social places where they are divulgated and fostered. In the United States, the defenders of these proposals claim to be direct heirs of the Civil Rights Movement of the 50s (Sims 1997), which emerged as a response to the segregation suffered by racially marked groups for centuries. In fact, the most influential defenders, such as Sims, Cai or Yokota belong to these groups themselves. On the contrary, in Spain this discourse is far more

recent and is not pronounced by those groups affected but by hegemonic spheres, from those agents representing "us" (the "others" are not subjects but objects of these actions). Public institutions are who mainly lead the way to defend foreign immigrants as a vulnerable group in favour of their harmonious integration in society, by promoting and designing necessary actions (measures of *attention to diversity,* aimed at foreign immigrants; measures to *raise awareness,* aimed at native people) and also leading the construction of the integrationist and interculturalist discourse. The actions taken by Spanish institutions seem to be due to the direct boost of European institutions: intercultural education is introduced or at least systematised as such in the early 90s by means of a report requested to the Member States of the European Commission (García Fernández, 2006).

In the corpus of Spanish scientific pedagogical production, these actions are justified by the fact that it is the duty of a democratic society to defend the rights of vulnerable groups and minorities and to strive to create good conditions for coexistence within diversity (Perera and Ramón, 2009; Ballester, 2010). Nevertheless, regarding the main driver of these actions, the interest to implement integration initiatives might be due to far more pragmatic reasons. On the one hand, striking a balance between divergent elements and reducing potential conflicts allows dominant players to keep their position and control in socio-political events. On the other hand, it might also be due to the relationship of dependence created between the degree of social cohesion and the ability of society as a whole to compete on the international market. The European Commission itself expresses this relationship (and it seems very clear what is conditioned on what):

> The Union sets today a new strategic objective for the next decade: becoming the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy, able to grow economically in a sustainable way with more and better employments and more social cohesion (European Parliament, 2000).

Conclusions

Approaching scientific production from different socio-political contexts allows us to identify different conceptions of multi- and intercultural CYL and also different conceptions on how CYL can contribute to improve social relations in a culturally diverse reality. In this case, we find that the works belonging to the Spanish context mainly link cultural diversity to foreign immigrants. The CYL that is defined as intercultural in this context is that constructed on the issue of relations among cultural groups and conveys the values of tolerance and respect. That CYL, aimed at expressing and enshrining a welcoming attitude towards the "others", corresponds to a type of action aimed at minimising any conflicts that might arise from diversity. On the other hand, the proposal that we identify as prevailing in American authors is based on a concept of an ethnitised, racialised cultural diversity, independent migration. The way CYL's potential is seen by these authors, both in terms of thematic-representational elements and authorship, cannot be related to the search for harmonious coexistence. In this context, multicultural CYL is a tool to assert the identity of those disadvantaged groups in society destined to contribute to readjust power relations.

Some differences detected between the proposals of both contexts are related to their ascription to multiculturalism and interculturalism, respectively. Nevertheless, we believe that the causes of heterogeneity are not exclusively related to the aforesaid ascription. We believe that some essential differences are due to other elements related to the origin and the level where these proposals are divulgated in each of the contexts. If we pay attention to these aspects, we find that the different conceptions of multi-intercultural CYL are related to different educational and political projects.

According to our analysis, we can also conclude that the study of the configuration of cultural relations within CYL can provide very relevant information to complete the picture obtained by focusing on the same elements within general literature. As we have already pointed out, the feature that makes CYL special in this sense is its propositive nature. We might also state that, as far as cultural contacts are concerned, the difference between adult's literature and CYL is the same as that identified between multi or intercultural*ity*, on the one hand, and multi or intercultural*ism*, on the other. Regardless of the nuances related to prefixes, suffixes refer to two identifiable aspects linked to the coexistence of human groups or symbolic orders culturally marked in the same coordinates of time and space. On the one hand, multicultural*ity* refers to "a matter of fact, co-presence of individuals and groups in the same space of sovereignty who claim different cultural identities" (De Lucas, 2002, quot. by García Castaño, Olmos, Cotini & Rubio, 2011, p. 39). In contrast with the foregoing, multicultural*ism* refers to the "ideological, social and political project (theoretical and practical) that intends to manage diversity through public policies" (García Castaño *et al.*, 2011, p. 39). We might state that multi/intercultural*ity* belong to the factual sphere, whereas multi/intercultural*ism* belong to the normative sphere[6].

In this sense, multi- and intercultural CYL is a particularly interesting field if we do not only intend to find the different ways cultural diversity is seen and conceived and in the establishment of cultural relations, but rather the solutions proposed to solve any conflicts that may potentially arise resulting from diversity. In addition, by using an approach of an anthropological nature, focused on the practices and conceptions related to literature, that is, on its interrelation with social world (because we find that CYL is not a literary product but rather a social, cultural and political product), we can contribute to completing those findings falling within literary studies, more focused on the literary object itself. There is no doubt that fostering this line of research would be very enriching.

Notes

1 There have been numerous attempts to define multiculturalism and interculturalism. Most of the time the distinction between both terms has been related to the emphasis on dialogue between the cultural groups involved. However, this distinction is still vague. On the one hand, the component of the dialogue is not exclusive of interculturalism, it is also present in some multiculturalism trends. On the other hand, the complexity of each term requires to specify the historical approach which we are referring to, when comparisons are made. Whatever are the discernible differences, it is undeniable that the different approaches to multiculturalism and interculturalism share a common base (Barrett, 2013). In the CYL field, there is a clear preponderance of the multiculturalism term on the CYL sources coming from United States but a clear predominance of the reference to interculturalism in Spain. When communication occurs between the two contexts the low frequency of this concurrence does not seem to be due to the difference in multi or interculturalism approach, rather to the secrecy of scientific production in both contexts, perhaps caused by the linguistic differences or the academic inbreeding. Thus, the prefix seems to lose importance. For these reasons, we consider the multicultural and intercultural CYL together, while respecting the usual labels when referring about only one of the contexts.

2 This generic approach implying the use of literature to improve coexistence of culturally different societies poses many problems and debate requires further in-depth study than we can carry out in this paper.

3 We would like to make clear that the American authors selected in this paper represent just a specific movement within pedagogical-literary multiculturalism in this context –which is usually classified as critical multiculturalism distinguished by its search for "fundamental changes in the power structure" (Cai, 2002, p. xv). The simplified way to refer to this movement in terms of "American multiculturalism" is due to the fact that we cannot find any similar approach in the Spanish context.

4 Nowadays' anthropological studies strive to see culture in different terms to those of homogeneous and atomised objects but rather as mechanism of adaptation and an action taken by people aimed at organising difference among themselves: it is thus fluctuating, dynamic, changing and flexible (García-Castaño, Olmos, Contini and Rubio, 2011). This means that, on the one hand, it is not "cultures" who establish relations among them but people. On the other hand, the ethnic element is just one of the multiple factors that interact and affect globally the behaviour of individuals. Obviously, this approach obliges to be cautious in interpreting the terms of multiculturalism and interculturality themselves; nevertheless, addressing this issues further falls beyond the purposes of this paper.

5 It should also be pointed out that obtaining harmonious internal relations also articulates the discourse of *conservative* American multiculturalists; nevertheless, these approaches are utterly rejected by the supporters of the other type of multiculturalism: *critical* multiculturalism.

6 This terminological distinction is obviously not unanimous (cfr. García-Castaño *et al.* 2011). In any case, debates on terminology in both spheres do not affect the fact that, regardless of the terms used, both spheres are clearly identified by researchers.

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