

# **THE REAL WAY WE THINK WHAT THEY THINK: NEW COGNITIVE POETICS AND LINGUISTICS IN THE ENGLISH LITERATURE STUDIES (ELS) IN SPAIN<sup>1</sup>**

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Now that the new Cognitive Paradigm has strongly developed the hypothesis that language rests on the capacity of symbolic thought, we will theoretically reflect here on the need for a revision of the organization and particularly of the realistic management of English literary lessons in Spanish higher education. We will approach a possible solution to this need under a comprehensive prism on language that cognitive psychologist Christopher Sinha (2007:1287) poses as the basic proposition which unites many subscribers to the scientific program of 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Cognitive Studies of Language: “language can best be made sense of by recognizing that it is structurally and functionally continuous with, motivated by, and emergent from non-linguistic cognitive processes.”

On these basis, this paper aims at outlining a higher-educational overture where an initial realistic awareness of the disparities in the biocultural counterintuitive conceptual processes taking place at the pre-linguistic and pre-conceptual levels of backstage cognition in the minds of English authors and Spanish teachers and students, (as linguistically expressed in the original texts) can help us all to make our English Literature Studies (ELS) in the Spanish university a social activity successful in the end in the context of the European Higher Education.

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*Key words:* Spanish higher education, Teaching/Learning, English Language Literary Texts, Cognitive Poetics and Linguistics, conceptual projections.

Ahora que el nuevo enfoque cognitivo ha desarrollado con fuerza la hipótesis de que el lenguaje descansa en la capacidad de pensamiento simbólico, reflexionaremos aquí sobre la necesidad de revisar la organización y, más en concreto, el proceder realista de las clases de literatura inglesa en la educación superior española. Plantearemos a una posible solución para esta necesidad al amparo del amplio prisma lingüístico planteado por el psicólogo cognitivo Sinha (2007:1287), que lo presenta como propuesta básica que reúne a un gran número de partidarios del programa científico de la segunda generación de estudios sobre lingüística cognitiva: “language can best be made sense of by recognizing that it is structurally and functionally continuous with, motivated by, and emergent from non-linguistic cognitive processes.”

A partir de aquí, este artículo pretende delinear una propuesta para la educación superior. Dicha propuesta partiría de una conciencia realista de las disparidades existentes en los procesos conceptuales bioculturales contra-intuitivos que tienen lugar en los niveles prelingüísticos y preconceptuales de la cognición subrepticia en los autores ingleses y los profesores y estudiantes españoles (tal y como se expresan lingüísticamente en los textos originales). Esto nos ayudará a que los Estudios literarios ingleses (ELS) en la universidad española lleguen a buen puerto como actividad social dentro del contexto de la Educación Superior Europea.

*Palabras clave:* Educación superior en España, enseñanza/aprendizaje, textos literarios en lengua inglesa, poética y lingüística cognitiva, pro-yecciones conceptuales.

“Verily, it would fare badly with you if, as you demand, the whole world were ever to become wholly comprehensible in earnest. And isn’t this entire, unending world constructed by the understanding out of incomprehensibility or chaos?” Or again: “Of all things that have to do with communicating ideas, what could be more fascinating than the question of whether such communication is actually possible?”

(Friedrich Schlegel, *On Incomprehensibility*)

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow

Out of this ...

(T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*)

Our whole problem is to make the mistakes as fast as possible...

(J.A. Wheeler)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Per Aage Brandt, “Mental spaces and cognitive semantics,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 37 (2005)1578.

## 1. INTRODUCTION: TEACHING LITERATURE IN CULTURAL-SPECIFIC ES<sup>3</sup> AND THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE SPANISH UNIVERSITY

Ten years ago J. Guerra (1998) presented a general survey of the inadequate state of Spanish Universities to successfully accomplish the task of teaching a Second Language (L2) Literature in English Studies (ES). Our aim here is to adjust those initial criteria (grounded since then on the proposal of what Bill Readings (1995:465) had called “institutional pragmatism”)<sup>4</sup> to the present metamorphosis of our Spanish university body into a European university body. In this highly adaptative phase we spring from two milestones: 1) the art of teaching a *global* language’s Literatures with *local* means and 2) the assumption that of all local *integrative* means and mechanisms that we are supposed to activate in teaching and learning a second-global-language Literature, the primary is related to fundamental *cognition* itself, to the student bio-cultural capacity for *conceptual processing* first in L1 and secondly in L2. These two landmarks bring realism to the instruction fore requiring a primary pedagogical awareness of the cognitive ways we think a language *in use*; literally, of the *online* culture-specific

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<sup>3</sup> ES is here construed both as English Studies (ES) and España (ES) as acronym for Spain in Europe.

<sup>4</sup> “University Beyond Culture?” (*New Literary History*, 26.3, (1995): 465-492): “Rather than offering new pious dreams of salvation, a new unifying Idea, a new meaning and a renewed modernity for the university, I will call for an **institutional pragmatism**, one that recognizes that thought begins where we are, one that does away with alibis. By thinking without alibis, I mean ceasing to justify our practices in the name of an idea from ‘elsewhere,’ an idea that will release us from responsibility for our immediate actions. Neither reason, nor culture, no excellence, no appeal to a transcendence that our actions struggle to realize, in the name of which we can justify our deeds and absolve ourselves. Such a pragmatism, [...] requires that we accept that the modern university is a ruined institution. Those ruins must not be the object of a romantic nostalgia for a lost wholeness but the site of an attempt to transvalue the fact that the university no longer inhabits a continuous history of progress, of the progressive revelation of a unifying Idea. Dwelling in the ruins of the university thus means a serious attention to the present complexity of its space, an endless work of *détournement* of the spaces willed to us by a history whose temporality we no longer inhabit. Like the inhabitants of some Italian city, we cannot seek to rebuild the Renaissance city-state, nor to destroy its remnants and install rationally planned tower-blocks, only to put its angularities and winding passages to new uses, seek to learn from and enjoy the cognitive dissonances that enclosed piazzas and nonsignifying *campanile* induce--and we have to worry about what our relation to tourism is. This pragmatism then involves two recognitions. First, an awareness of the complexity and historically marked status of the spaces in which we are situated, while recognizing that these are spaces that we cannot *inhabit*, from which we are alienated, so that neither nostalgia nor revived organicism are viable options. Second, a refusal to believe that some new rationale will allow us to reduce that complexity, to forget present complexity in the name of future simplicity” (Our italics).

(Wierzwicka 1992; Bernárdez 2008) ways we think a L2 text in our L2 Literature classroom in Spain.

Being a European contemporary (on-course adaptative) scholar means that we necessarily have to ask ourselves the following fundamental questions: If we are not sensitive to these initial conditions during the act of teaching/learning a L2 Literature, what kind of real knowledge of English Literatures, English Cultures and English Language(s) are we endorsing our students with? How could we stay apart from current paradigms like the Cognitive Revolution, apart from this up-to-the-minute international cognitive route that is connecting every field of knowledge precisely to advance in the study of language? How could we keep apart from this new inclusive cognitive realism in the specific field of Literature as Art (as shown in Hogan 2003a)? And finally, how could our non-native-English Spanish students be competent European professionals in an increasingly multicultural European Spain and in an increasingly global world?

As we will expand bellow, as regards language and the artful mind (Turner 2006) that makes a written literary text real, those initial conditions are essentially usage-based conditions grounded in the ontogenetic, filogenetic and cultural reality that language does not carry meaning; that language guides meaning (Fauconnier 1997). This starting point unavoidably brings together Sciences and the Humanities to the construction of the new ES.

A key question here is then how to assimilate culture specificity to improve the Spanish student's symbolic capacity for English literary language. Taking advantage of this new scholarly situation brought up by the Cognitive Revolution, our inclusive intention is to turn outside in the real, cultural-specific (Kövecses 2006) Spanish narrative imagination (Turner 1996) as a necessary autopoietic (Maturana & Varela 2003) anchoring of our new proposition of integrating an all-encompassing biocultural approach to the learning of English meaning constructions (conceptual structures) and of English knowledge of the world's constructions (conceptualization processes) as cognitively dynamized in the course of the practical L2 Literature lesson.<sup>5</sup>

Hence, our ultimate target is to start academically implementing the natural (bio-cultural) faculty of our students to tackle with higher-order conceptualization complex cognitive dynamics (Fauconnier & Turner 2002) as those linguistically entrenched in literary texts and enactivated at its maximum degree in the on-course reading process performed in a different language/culture. In other words, our pedagogical goal is to develop our

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<sup>5</sup> See Vyvyan Evans's *A Glossary of Cognitive Linguistics* for a brief definition of the cognitive theoretical terms referred to in this essay.

students' natural symbolic capacity for language to improve the on-line way they project English concepts with cultural specific, indistinctly linguistic and non-linguistic, Spanish means. Eventually, to accomplish this task in higher ES we need to start performing the art of teaching literary texts in English from a basic awareness of the real way we think what they think.

Two years ago, after five years of observation and scrutiny of the students' awareness of their own thought processes of narrative imagination and of the individual levels of first and second language inquiry, Professor Guerra started to introduce some veiled practices with different conceptual projection methods in two undergraduate courses at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain (English Literature III: 17th & 18th Centuries and Anglo-American Literary Studies II: Modernist Fiction). The goal was to start measuring the extent to which it helped Spanish students cognitively integrate in any of its variety the prominent abstraction of these highly experimental (i.e. highly constructive) texts in English. As much is known today about the fact that metaphor is not just a matter of language but of thought, and that the degree of conventionalization of this metaphorical thought is very high, a primary pedagogical use of conceptual metaphors in English Literary Studies is been presently assembled in the ULPGC following the intuition that getting Spanish students to connect embodiment and language will prepare them to understand the cognitive mechanisms driving higher order conceptual counterintuitive constructions as those elaborated in literary devices of 17th or 20th century texts.

Below we will approach from a cognitive theoretical and philosophical perspective how and why should this new realism be introduced in the higher-education Spanish classroom at a practical level that does not necessarily include any previous or specialized knowledge of Cognitive Poetics and Linguistics by the students. We are currently statistically working on data that will be presented in much methodological detail in a subsequent article.<sup>6</sup> We

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<sup>6</sup> Due to the complexity of the corpus and to its length, a full methodological description of our experiment on practicing cognitive metaphor in ELS classroom is being prepared to be published in a separate article. We will go into detail in the teaching internship that the researchers Adán Martín and Graciela de la Nuez have completed in the first semester of the 2008/2009 academic year. Supervised by Juani Guerra, Adán Martín and Graciela de la Nuez have taught a part of two undergraduate courses: English Literature III (obligatory subject) and Anglo-American Literary Studies II (optional subject). Both courses belong to the four-year BA degree in English Studies offered by the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain. The two above mentioned co-teachers are PhD candidates that have been trained in cognitive theories in the framework of the Postgraduate Programme "New cognitive perspectives in the studies of language, literature and translation." This teaching experience has enabled them to put into practice the interdisciplinary methods learnt mainly in the first-year seminars of the PhD programme and in the second-year research supervision period.

first provide a brief survey of some preliminary problems on the teaching of English Literature in English and Non-English Speaking Countries.

## 2. SOME PRELIMINARY PROBLEMS ON THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN ENGLISH AND NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRIES

Questioning the status of 'Literature' in a new socio-cultural frame has also been an outstanding feature in the English-speaking countries particularly since the 80s. All in all, what they have overtly shown is a picture where the search for a "unifying idea" has been upholding thoroughly *unreal* results in the form of "new pious dreams of salvation" (Readings 1995:465). The progressive institutional devaluation of the concept "Literature" in British Universities was already plainly detailed in Peter Widdowson (1990), "W(h)ither 'English'" and in U.S.A. Universities in H. U. Gumbrecht (1995), "The Future of Literary Studies?" While Widdowson argued about the *function* of this discipline<sup>7</sup>, Gumbrecht, after a long experience teaching at Stanford University, found a solution in the need for "tasks instead of concepts."<sup>8</sup>

What was then known as Literary Studies in the English Departments has lately evolved as integrated in the wider academic spaces of Cultural Studies or Humanities. From the 90s, those new "Literature Departments" were themselves "increasingly abandoning the research project of *national literature*-so that English and Comparative Literature tends to function in the United States as a catch-all term for a general "humanities" department" (Readings 1995:487).

If we look at other non-English-speaking European countries like Denmark, we find the same thorny state of affairs; already in 2002 Hans Lauge Hansen

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<sup>7</sup> If we interpret 'Literary Studies' formalistically (the study of 'the literary') we may find ourselves (or our students) asking: 'but what then are we studying it *for*?' If we interpret the title historically (Literature - or indeed Literary Studies - located in history) we may well ask: 'but what *is* our focus of study, what *is* our object of knowledge?' If we think history explains the text better, then the same question occurs - 'but what *for*?'; if we read through the text to enhance our historical understanding are we really studying 'the literary'? The paradoxes and contradictions involved in naming so diverse and unstable a field multiply in geometric progression (1224).

<sup>8</sup> "... our impression of a progressive dissolution affecting the notion of 'literature' suggests that we conceive of the wider field of the humanities -rather than of the field traditionally covered by literary studies- as the space where such projects [tasks instead of concepts] and their institutional articulation could be unfolded" (509).

presented a noteworthy view in *Changing Philologies. Contributions to the Redefinition of Foreign Language Studies in the Age of Globalization*. Five years later, his introductory words are crystal-clear: “Foreign Language Studies, both in Denmark and internationally, find themselves in a difficult situation: although contemporary society has a great need for linguistic and cultural competences, Foreign Language Departments at the universities are going through a slump. Student entries are declining, the academic prestige of the departments is waning and they are subjected to cutbacks in funding” (2007:7).

Alertness to these L1 & L2 global Literary Studies circumstances assists our endeavor here of understanding how problematic the situation of ELS in current Spain *really* is. Positively, it moves us forward towards a search for a profound change into a new paradigm; and it is the case that the new cognitive paradigm is truly offering us excellent pedagogical (linguistic and non-linguistic) tools to surmount it. Our pedagogical concern is *how* to use them in every culture-specific class, in each teaching/learning specific sociocognitive situation. This is, how to make of our natural literary mind constructing meaning in L1 a methodological part of the literature lesson to assist our thinking of very complex L2 literary texts. At a pedagogical level, which does not imply the general theoretical one as so well exposed in M. Freeman (2007), we are convinced that ELS in Spain needs a new house of fiction for a new art of teaching. And as all houses have to be constructed from the basement, we think that the conceptual metaphor is a firm monolithic base for the pedagogically gigantic and still young *Cognitive Literary Studies* that spread from Turner’s Cognitive Rhetorics.<sup>9</sup> To Freeman’s (2007:1176) consilient blending of the heat of Descartes’s stove and the air of Montaigne’s Library Tower we will add here the window(s) of Henry James’s house of fiction.

### 3. BACKGROUND. TOWARDS THE ART OF TEACHING L2 LITERATURE

J. Guerra’s long learning and teaching experience of L2 Literatures in ES has shown her that we have relied for so long on the first part of this theory<sup>10</sup> (that

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<sup>9</sup> For an application of Turner’s theory to English Literatures research in the Spanish University see Teresa Calderón Quindós (2004, 2005, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> In our view, the basic reason for this is a deeply entrenched conduit metaphor. See De la Nuez *et al.* (2009) “The Transmission Model of Education: A Cognitive Approach” in *Pragmatics Applied to Language Teaching and Learning* 431-448. A most clarifying primary essay in this respect is Reddy, M.J. “The conduit metaphor: a case of frame conflict in our language about language” in Orthony (1993).

language *carries* meaning) that unwillingly we have elapsed the most pragmatic second one, the most creative literally. However, the real thing is that it is precisely in that ‘guidance’ where teachers and students, writers and readers, process both *inputs* and *outputs* of new structuring of meaning and knowledge of the world with the instrumental means of L1 & L2. As this action (more properly *enaction*)<sup>11</sup> always occurs *online* in constant interaction with all sorts of contexts (from the student’s body, social environment or mother tongue, or the physical classroom itself, to a given text’s literary polyglot intertextuality), the L2 Literature classroom situation turns out to be an extremely complex educational site where teachers have to tackle with cognition (in its embodied, situated, distributed and synergic structurings) and with a huge variety of individual talents processing higher order L2 concepts on-line. Practically all levels of investigation in Cognitive Science as diagrammed in Posner and Raichle (1994), and as so glowingly improved since then, have something significant to be used to advance in this highly creative task that should be called hereafter *the Art of Teaching L2 Literature*. Thus, much research will have to be done in this field.

#### 4. COGNITIVE THEORIES: GROUNDING THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE IN MORE GENERAL COGNITIVE ABILITIES

Predominantly, Cognitive Linguistics present well developed principles, methods and particularly idealized cognitive models to analyze the biocultural organization of human fiction<sup>12</sup> as sociocognitive construction. The present debate on the

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<sup>11</sup> See Varela’s work (2003) on ‘enaction’ for an accurate description of this kind of ‘action’. Varela’s proposed that the only way we can understand human cognition and consciousness is in terms of the enactive structures in which they arise; these structures are the body as a biological system and as personally, phenomenologically experienced, and the physical world with which the body interacts to create new affordances. Since the preface to the second original Spanish edition of one of his former works with Humberto Maturana, *De máquinas y seres vivos. Autopoiesis: La organización de lo vivo*, he declares the richness of it: “En estos últimos años he desarrollado una alternativa explícita que evita estos dos escollos, haciendo de la reciprocidad histórica la clave de una codefinición entre un sistema autónomo y su entorno. Es lo que propongo llamar el punto de vista de la enacción en la biología y las ciencias cognitivas. Enacción es un neologismo, inspirado en el inglés corriente en vez del griego como lo es la autopoiesis. Corrientemente enacción se usa en el sentido de traer a la mano o hacer emerger, que es lo que me interesa destacar. La prueba de fuego de este punto de vista es que ha permitido una reconstitución detallada y meticulosa de un fenómeno que puede verse como caso ejemplar: la visión de colores” (55).

<sup>12</sup> Fiction, states Steven Pinker (2007:162), “is important not only in the lives of everyday people but in intellectual life. An acquaintance with major works of fiction has always been considered

pedagogical applicability of Cognitive Linguistics as shown in Geeraerts & Cuyckens (2007) and many other recent publications on the state of the arts, shows that in our transitional Europe this full variety of attempts to ground the study of language in more general cognitive abilities<sup>13</sup> will profoundly modify the overall state of affairs concerning English Literature teaching and learning both in English and non-English speaking countries.

For decades we have been overlooking the well-off bio-cultural capacity of our Spanish students for symbolic thought in the English Studies of Literature in Spain. This might be a good reason for a revision of the organization and particularly of the realistic conduct of our English Literature classes under a comprehensive prism on language that cognitive psychologist Christopher Sinha poses as the basic proposition which unites many subscribers to the scientific program of 2nd generation Cognitive Studies of Language: “language can best be made sense of by recognizing that it is structurally and functionally continuous with, motivated by, and emergent from non-linguistic cognitive processes.” (2007:1287).

The new Cognitive Paradigm has strongly developed the hypothesis that language rests on this symbolic capacity. Particularly since the publications of Lakoff's *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things* (1987) and Langacker's *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar* (V. 1, 1987) this cognitive revolution took clearly off from earlier generativist cognitive approaches to language as an essentially autonomous, innate capacity; the new “experientialists” delved deep into a more encompassing human sociocognitive capacity for symbolic thought that we find out to be a much desirable educational resource in the study of English in Spain and definitely of Literature in ES. Introducing cognitive premises in the ELS is in our view a sensible way to improve our student's symbolic thought to make real learning of literature in an unfamiliar language possible. An important question we are trying to answer in our practices in the L2 classroom is what are the most manageable cognitive tools to accomplish it.

The current commitment to the symbolic view of language initially developed by Lakoff (1987:583) and Langacker (1987:11) seems a good entrant for it extensively goes back in the dynamics of human thought to explore the fundamental cognitive ability that Verhagen (2007:49) very clearly elucidates as construal phenomena and construal operations. This symbolic view (explained in biological terms by Deacon 1997) has brought forth several new theories

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essential to being an educated person, and it is probably o more common university requirement than patently useful subjects like biology or statistics.”

<sup>13</sup> Csapó, Benő's (1992) *Kognitív pedagógia*, or Gibbs' (1994) *The Poetics of Mind*, could serve as starting point for the great amount of research done in the last 15 years.

about language and culture in almost all disciplines (both in natural and human sciences) that in one way or another are elucidating the bio-cultural construction of the most vital thoughts of the history of literature from its very beginnings but predominantly during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. From a counter-intuitive cognitive view these are *insightfully social* thoughts that in many cases are seminal to the emergence of new language structure giving shape to new thoughts making possible the emergence of new structures of meaning as in a feedback loop open ad infinitum. Those theories extend from language acquisition (Tomasello (2000) and his research on the acquisition of constructions) to the complex dynamics of artful representations (like Fauconnier and Turner (2002) and their theory of conceptual integration networks that has come to be known as *blending*), or the extensive work to modes of inference as modeled in patterns of conceptual integration by Ruiz de Mendoza (2002) and his research group in the University of La Rioja, Spain.

Paradoxically they are all linguistically modeling approaches to the text as “an open field of possibilities” as John Barth (1980) hermeneutically identified it from the postmodern philosophical-literary arena. However, they are doing so with much more improved interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological tools. The current academic state of the arts shows a broad multidisciplinary spectrum of very useful connected cognitive models, methods and principles that can change the way we teach in classes where the subjects are closely related to higher order conceptualization processes and the linguistic expressions of the minds’ concealed social complexities. In our view, we should start applying them to the teaching of Literatures in English as L2 from the most basic level. As this basic level has to do with how we structure thought, of all current approaches to the study of cognition those related to Embodiment Theory and to Social Cognition have provided some first relevance evidence of improvement in undergraduate students of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year in two subjects: *17th & 18th Century English Literature* and *Anglo-American Literary Studies: The Art of Fiction and 20th Century Novel*. We anticipate this basic level will prove to be highly effective first and foremost to enhance a strong capacity of our Spanish students that has been roughly dismissed so far: their natural capacity for symbolic thought, their natural literary mind, their natural narrative imagination. What we have always identified as ‘creativity’ (and if truth be told discharged when genuine due to its naturally ‘chaotic’ output) could now start being our main teaching/learning dynamics using tools from Cognitive Linguistics and Cognitive Poetics centered on conceptualization processes and meaning constructions in general.

## 5. TWO PHASES IN THE APPLICATION OF COGNITIVE THEORETICAL FUNDAMENTALS IN ELS IN SPAIN

So far we have identified some theoretical fundamentals from Cognitive Linguistics and Poetics; we see them as a necessary first phase in the process of elaborating effective cognitive methods to implement ELS in Spain. We believe that the full application of theoretical contributions of outstanding so called Cognitive Literary Studies (Koestler 1964, Reuven Tsur 1992 & 1998, Turner 1991 & 1996, Fauconnier & Turner 2002, Brandt 2004, Freeman 2002, Gavins & Steen 2003, Hogan 2003a and 2003b, etc.) to the study of ELS in Spain will be very significant in the long term; so we see them as a second phase. By and large, the most influential contribution so far has been Mark Turner. Already in *Reading Minds. The Study of English in the Era of Cognitive Science* (1991) Turner pointed towards the birth mark of a new methodological view of Literature declaring that “cognitive science will ultimately require the study of literature as a crucial product and activity of the human mind.” A few years later, in *The Literary Mind* (1996), he presented key revisions to our understanding of thought, conceptual activity, and the origin and nature of language, in the form of a unified theory of central problems in cognitive science, linguistics, neuroscience, psychology, and philosophy. Literary Studies was immediately struck by his new answers to classic questions about knowledge, creativity, understanding, reason, and invention.

However, though his exceptional 2002 co-authored treatise on mapping the complex dynamics of higher order conceptualization of this literary mind is now being applied to many research fields from neuroscience to music worldwide, applying it to assist teaching/learning L2 literature in our undergraduate classroom needs much more methodological research and a previous introduction to more basic cognitive models structuring less complex conceptual projections like Lakoff & Johnson’s (1980) conceptual metaphor and others.

Another landmark volume in Cognitive Literary Studies, Patrick Colm Hogan’s *Cognitive Science, Literature and the Arts. A Guide for Humanists* (2003), takes off from the advanced Cultural Studies to situate the current importance of Cognitive Science and Cognitive Literary Studies: “[...] if many social scientists have embraced culturalism in recent years, still more linguists, psychologists, neurobiologists, philosophers, even many anthropologists and sociologists, have moved toward cognitivism. It is customary to refer to the development of cognitive science as “the cognitive revolution” (...). The expression is not mere rhetoric. Cognitivist methods, topics and principles have come to dominate what are arguably the most intellectually exciting academic

fields today. The astounding proliferation of programs in the field is testimony to the meteoric rise of cognitive science.”

For our local purposes in ELS in cultural specific Spain our drift cannot be so fast. For we don't want be drifted off European course.

## 6. TASKS AND CONCEPTS TOGETHER IN ELS: LOOKING BACK IN LANGUAGE

Our literary-pedagogical crave is to look back in language and conceptualization processes in order to find those that cognitively match seminal phases of our L2 students learning processes while reading literary texts in English. This is a gradual *task* that has to be fed with *concepts*. Ours is a bottom-up integrative search at the most basic levels. Thus, in order to find the best food for pedagogical thought we are searching for basic tools from hybrid principles of *Cognitive Poetics and Linguistics* in order to outline a cognitive-didactic approach to ELS in Spain. Far from the specifically literary, this journeying already started with works like Dirven's (1989) approach to English grammar applying general processes that facilitate language learning, or Taylor's (1993) treatise on the application of cognitive linguistic principles to the teaching and learning of grammar to offset former totally intuitive communicative learning. More recently, Gerard J. Steen (2007) has mapped, from a methodological perspective, the developments of a wide range of data, methods and techniques in search of converging evidence for the new cognitive theory of metaphor.

Thus, though our last declared goal is discovering how higher order conceptual integration network theory can contribute to facilitating English Literatures learning in Spain, Cognitive Literary Theories like Turner's are not imperative during this first phase. For we think that the more complex the didactic conceptual devices are the less probable it is to be successful in executing the art of teaching L2 literature. Assuming Cognitive Poetics as a discipline that includes models from Linguistics, Semiotics, Literary Studies and Translatology, we are presently trying to elaborate a method to start productively applying in undergraduate class the most basic tools provided by Cognitive Linguistics to dig up the student familiarity with more complex phases of these processes like those emerging in the learning of literary texts, at their highest level in L2. Since the bang of Lakoff & Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), conceptual metaphor seems to be a pervasive basic tool used particularly in vocabulary acquisition. We have used it in the classroom for two

main reasons; the first is that current linguistic investigations are open to developments that seem to gradually come closer and closer to concepts that traditional poetics has considered crucial since its origins. The second is that we have gathered initial evidence of substantial improvements in L2 Literature students reading capacity promoted by a plain change from being passive observers to being active observers. Our sensitivity to the L2 context and to the complexity of our academic and Canarian-Spanish environment, and our focus on *interaction* instead of on univocally ‘monitoring’ the students actions, is clearly promoting students dynamic and adaptative functions and co-regulation of action (understanding and processing unfamiliar structures of knowledge). Getting our students to connect *embodiment* and *language* is positively helping them to be aware of the conceptual counter-intuitions elaborated in very complex literary devices such as 17<sup>th</sup> century Metaphysical *conceits* or Modernist *point of view*, among so many prodigious others. Our pedagogical intention, goal and kinetics is thus to make students primarily aware that the function of embodiment is to externalize cognitive/emotive processes so they can influence and be influenced by others. We want them to start seeing with the I of mind convergences between complex literary texts constructions and simple life constructions. This pedagogical experiment is being built up in the frame of a married approach to language: from Linguistics, as a socio-cognitive complex system (Bernárdez 2002, 2008) and from Literary Theory, as a creative (adaptative) symbolic system (Guerra 1992, 2008). From the very beginning, Vygotsky’s *Psychology of Art* has increased the wealthy of this couple assuming language as a material tool transforming the human brain that socially uses it. Presently, it is really producing thriving results much more so when our initial expectations were appalling.

## 7. POETICS AND HERMENEUTICS

We should now draw a convenient distinction between *Hermeneutics* and *Poetics* as two outstanding approaches to the study of literature in ES. Though our perspective is essentially integrative, separating them in class has proved methodologically successful. As successful as pedagogically separating the linguistic and the conceptual levels of study in order to show the student how they are experientially connected in real time, on-line language use.

The main question underlying the hermeneutical approach has always been “What does *this* text mean?” This seems to have been the major drift in the teaching of English literary texts in Spain, a drift always open to the fearful

*gotcha!* and to miscarried ideological outputs by the Spanish students (Guerra 1998)

Cognitive Poetics approach in class would sort out a different question: “What are the mechanisms and processes that make it possible that *this* text means something at all?” In the L2 literary class it would turn out to be a search for the mechanisms that make this text real, that make it new, that make it artful in a socio-cultural unfamiliar system like English language. In our view this is an important piece that we all have lacked so far in the puzzle of a literature class in ES. Now that we have well developed cognitive theoretical contributions to encompass it we can complement more hermeneutical, stylistic, narratological or any other teaching-specific approach to the study of literary texts. In point of fact, the cognitive metaphor underlying the Spanish proposition *Cada maestrillo tiene su librillo* could be an excellent example of the main reason to introduce cognitive processes in our practical lessons: a realistic awareness of how we structure thought. We all know what we are talking about and we all know that it has nothing to do with the lexical meaning, as in *this is unmistakably the best highway to take in ES in Spain*. We know that we are not referring to a material book or a material highway, but... do we know why and how are these two physical objects structuring our non-physical thoughts in one language and the other? This basic cognitive mechanism that Lakoff & Johnson (1980, 1999) called *conceptual projection*, and specifically a more pedagogical idealized cognitive model like *conceptual metaphor*, has initially proved to be a valuable teaching tool that has made some frustrated Spanish students aware of *the real thing* in the apparently so difficult to understand literary texts of the 17<sup>th</sup> and the beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, we have used in class Zoltan Kövecses *A Practical Introduction to Cognitive Metaphor* (2002)<sup>14</sup> and the first results in the students assignments and final papers have been very surprising. It seems that with only general explanations/interpretations of the text (even when actively debated in class) they are not allowed to see the real picture: they are not allowed to observe the creative chaotic conceptual alterations of these highly avant-garde periods where the so called linguistic mind stochastically breaks here and there as waves in a moving ocean. Instead, their bio-culturally different cognitive processes when reading a L2 text and their anxiety of imitation of the teacher’s most entrenched explanation makes them lose the sight of literature, of language,

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<sup>14</sup> Every week the students had to deliver a one-page summary of each chapter. Though compulsory, it did not count for the final grade. It was intended to be done as a straightforward activity of extracting main ideas about the way we metaphorically project conceptual structure between different domains. Students were asked to start being aware both of L1 and L2 pre-linguistic and pre-conceptual bio-cultural processes.

of culture and hence of life itself. This is making us think that somehow we suppress their natural capacity for symbolic thought and thus for learning out of the impaired way we think how English authors think as linguistically reflected in the literary texts. In this first stage of our experiment, the conceptual way we think how they think through their texts is proving a realistic task with the less-is-more tools of Cognitive Linguistics.

Moreover, our awareness of the culture specific way we think what unfamiliar embodied, situated, distributed and synergic literary voices think in real time is paradoxically turning out to be something so simple that strikes us as unforeseen in its familiarity; in a sense, our students now can understand (we could even say *interstand*) and creatively process those myriad impressions of life that Virginia Woolf declares a novel to be or Robert Frost famous moment when “a poem must not mean but be” by bringing them to their own lives. In our view it is time to make these axioms real in L2 class activating the student primordial literary mind that, as Turner (1996) states, makes everyday thoughts possible. We view it as a new pedagogical Literary Realism. As we have expressed elsewhere, in the field of Education and in the frame of the New Europe, the real thing should be called *The Art of Teaching*.

Getting through counter-intuitions, basic to handle varieties of conceptual processes, should be pedagogically presented as a universal language game. As students will have to jump for the first time into this novel sea, into the culture-specific *reality* of the bio-cultural way they think, a first main step would be to get rid of much ideology during the university formation period and to introduce a scope of conceptual motivations for structural aspects of English language and literature that they can access activating (properly “enactivating”) their unconscious backstage cognition driving their creativity both in their first language and in English.

## 8. CONCLUSION

To make Spanish ELS real in the context of European Higher Education we should approach literary texts as open fields of multicultural possibilities.

The present endeavor to ground the study of language in other general cognitive abilities, which builds the bridge to the overall symbolic approach in Cognitive Poetics and Linguistics, poses a new *realism* in disciplines like Psychology, Linguistics, Sociology or Anthropology, that until now has been a signpost of literary studies even at its most formalist levels. *Realism* as the more salient concept in the history of Literary Theory and, by extension, *Fiction*,

*Representation, etc.* are fundamental concepts which are configuring the new methods that bring together former natural and human sciences in the present cognitive studies of language. Literary writers and critics growing interest in painterly abstractions in literary texts are a good example of the natural (bio-cultural) yearning to present things as they are, emergent from non-linguistic cognitive socio-cultural processes, particularly since the beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in English Language (though we could trace this yearning back to the influential Japanese medieval haiku to cite just one of so many cultural specific expressions of narrative imagination projected and elaborated in the form of a literary text production). Ezra Pound comes immediately onto stage; Henry James is lucid evidence for the creative use of paintings in *The Art of Fiction* that he captivantly combine with his brother Williams' well-known pre-cognitive theory of perception. This thread is unending if we pull out of the tip of Gertrude Stein's composition as explanation.

We should take advantage of all this pre-linguistic material in a class where to fulfill our main target we must first make a second language *real* to allow the students to activate their symbolic thought primarily to be able to start *reading* (conceptually processing on-line) a literary text in English, thus making it real in the culture-specific situation of a foreign language in use. A first necessary step is putting aside our old thirst for rational explanations and letting language do in class what it does in real life: drive meanings stochastically to fulfill representation and communication through cognitive processes like composition, elaboration or compression (Fauconnier & Turner 2002). In other words, understand and make real that Gertrude Stein's prominent essay "Composition as Explanation" activating her dynamic thoughts both in our production and consumption of (her) literature; particularly in a class where we teach texts written by Francis Bacon, John Donne, John Milton, Henry James, T. S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and so many others to non-English speakers? Until now we have not had any strong cognitive usage-based theory of language comprehensive enough to endorse an effective humane integration of every other learning in the literary L2 class; particularly those from all other subjects but also in general those related to the real everyday life, language and culture of the students as they experience them in terms of conceptual projections at the level of backstage cognition which is to say at a pre-conceptual, pre-linguistic levels (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999). Simplistic as this could appear, we deem it rigorous in this decisive moment in the growth of English Studies in Spain and entirely adjustable to the main changes in the European Space for Higher Education. We see the late exponential advances in multidisciplinary cognitive theories of language as a high-quality implementation to face these changes.

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