

PHENOMENA IN EDUCATION RELATED TO TEXTUAL WORLD EXPERIENCE

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The basic assumption of the study is that in the fields of science and education, the process of getting to know the world has been increasingly influenced by textual experiences. That is, instead of objective conformability, scientific discourse has been dominated by persuasion, explanation, a language that departs from the strict nomenclature - and this holds even for the natural sciences. Textual representation in the sciences now presupposes a sound knowledge of figures (textual, as well as literary, poetic and rhetoric ones) and of literary genres. Thus, genre poetics in teaching literature has been gaining importance lately.

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The world becoming textual in nature

“Leaving behind us the first decade following the turn of the century, we may say that the [...] events of this period imply for us that the world has become textual, that reading is necessary, and at the same time, that meanings constantly change and disperse” (Bence, 2011b:45; Márfai Molnár, 2011:52).

The applied teaching model is based on the official syllabus for teaching Hungarian as first language in the seventh year in primary schools in Vojvodina, with a compilation of examples having arisen during its application. However, the universal nature of classical literary genres overarches linguistic and cultural boundaries.

The possibility to get to know the world through textual experiences (Ankersmit, 2004; White, 1997:11.) and the potentials for textual representation in the sciences now presuppose a sound knowledge of textual figures (as well as literary, poetic and rhetoric ones). The success of mastering new knowledge and of passing it on is more and more explicitly dependent on the poetic and narrative methods used, regardless of the discipline we are talking about. For this reason, genre poetics in teaching literature (i.e. teaching about genres and genre-related concepts) has been gaining importance lately, as opposed to previous practice.

About the net-like, tangled nature of literature and its significance as a related art

The importance of being acquainted with classical genres is asserted by the way we approach literature today: literature is not a separate phenomenon, and the ambition to make literature classes modern and up-to-date is based especially on the view that literature has a net-like, tangled nature, and its

teaching should be like a related art discourse. Being a related and multimedial art, it is very complex, and thus the possibilities for organizing interdisciplinary classes are infinite. Of the interdisciplinary and intertextual characteristics of literature, *visuality* is of special importance (Szegegy-Maszák, 2000). This is the phenomenon when words are put next to each other, refer to one another and become linked together, and so they transform abstract notions and meanings into images: their expressive powers and effects build up tropical figures.

The classical and universal force of genre-related concepts

The traditional methods of teaching about genres (elaborating genre-related concepts through definitions) are also overruled by the fact that genres are linked to universal processes, codes and conventions, ignoring linguistic and cultural boundaries, the origins and meanings of the most traditional genres go back to classical (ancient Greek) culture, which implies contextualization in world literature (overwriting national and linguistic separateness) and suggests being a related art. Most classical genres are present in several arts (e.g. literature, music, visual arts, cinematic art) as well as disciplines, and they apply thousand-year-old cultural historic traditions and means of expression, e.g. hymn, song, elegy, allegory.

The author of the present paper participated as a university professor in writing the syllabi for teaching Hungarian as first language in higher years of primary education, and she also wrote a set of schoolbooks for seventh year (a textbook, an accompanying workbook and a teacher's book) – based on her own experience in primary education (Bence, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2011a). While working on the theses, tasks and aims of teaching first language in the seventh year, she had the above principles in mind. These are once again: experiencing the world based on texts, literature as discourse and a related art, genre-related concepts linked to (folk) traditions as well as to classical culture. On the strength of these, the main principles for planning lessons introducing concepts were the following: correlative application of several subjects and disciplines (literature and grammar, first language and foreign languages, stylistics and geometry, literature and visual arts, art literature and folk poetry, literature and music, literature–language–technical education, literature and sport, literature and information technology), interactive work, use of several languages (trans-cultural experience), as well as activating and utilizing the pupils' aesthetic sensibility and creativity (artistic talents).

The following section will demonstrate how three classical genre-related concepts may be introduced, elaborated, learnt and reinforced. Ideas will be suggested which rely on traditions as well as on possibilities of connecting arts, texts and languages. Concepts will be acquired through (literary) texts, i.e. by analyzing their poetic features, aesthetic correlation systems, formal-logical characteristics and tropical attractions, and not through definitions. After discovering correlations for themselves, seventh-graders will be able to describe the genre, and to recognize and understand its characteristics on their own.

Song

This is the best-known lyric genre, what is more, it is considered to be the basic lyric genre. *It is a short poem of unchanging tone, expressing the feelings of the poetic self (the lyricist).*

The phenomenon summarized in one single sentence above, i.e. the genre called song is not completely unknown in the seventh year of primary school: forms of folk poetry (e.g. folk songs) are constantly recurring in the curriculum (in first language classes, music classes, and also in foreign language classes, in the forms of rhymes and children's songs) from the first year on. Besides, in rural surroundings, a sound knowledge of folklore, traditional customs and ways of life are still to be found. Urban environments do not exclude these either: lullabies and children's songs can be and should be parts of the lives of children growing up in towns, too. Seventh-graders must have met numerous elements and phenomena of urban subcultures, too, e.g. urban songs, street singing, street music, street balls, background music, rock concerts, etc. An equally important momentum is that adolescents are usually interested in pop music, and if we include by way of analogy these phenomena into the concept building process (expression of feelings, unchanging tone, with musical accompaniment, sung poem), we will have an interactive lesson with countless possibilities for the pupils to be creative.

In classes of Hungarian as first language in Vojvodinian schools, the conceptualization of the genre *song* is generally approached from two directions. One approach is from the direction of oral literature – utilizing the aesthetic experience provided by popular Hungarian flower (love) songs, or sung poetry about love and refuge, shaping from the Renaissance till the Kuruc vernacular poetry. The other approach is from the direction of well-known works from world literature, together with their interpretations, through which learning a new concept can be a lively, colourful and interdisciplinary process.

Flower songs are a type of love songs. The author (the lyric self, the person who speaks in the poem) addresses his beloved by the name of a flower (rose, valley lily, lily, carnation), thus expressing how beautiful she is, and how much he loves her. The earliest of love songs found in hand-written form is considered to be *Soproni virágének* (*Flower song from Sopron*), dating back to the end of the 15th century.

*Virág, tudjad, tőled el kell mennem,
És te íretted kell gyászba öltözmem.
(Flower, know that I have to leave you,
And that I have to go into mourning for you.)*

Motifs of flower songs recur in artistic poetry too, even hundreds of years later (e.g. love poems of Bálint Balassi), in manuscripts of love lyre (laments, farewell songs, outlaw poetry) and in oral literature in the literal sense of the word, i.e. folk poetry as well.

Hungarian folk poetry illustrates prosodic phenomena such as *tact emphatic verse*, *halved twelve* or *old eight* and enables pupils to master these.

We would like to emphasize here that we do not intend to apply the creative, playful teaching methods of lifelike pedagogy instead of the official curriculum but as a part of it, as a type of teaching model. This is important to be stressed because teachers of Hungarian as first language tend to say that they are unable to cover the necessary material if they

organize classes in a playful way. What is more, one of the teachers even wrote an article about it in the cultural supplement of the Hungarian daily in Vojvodina (Sok, 2011). Despite of that, we still think that the children's creativity and playfulness, their talents in arts and other modes of expression have to be utilized during the process of acquiring new contents/concepts, and not instead of it or following it.

The author came upon considerable resistance when she included a task in the schoolbook (Bence, 2006b) (at the end of the section clarifying the concept of song) to "write a flower song, preferably in halved twelve". The main objection was that thirteen- or fourteen-year olds "cannot write" or "cannot be expected to write" a flower song on their own. But these objections would be right only in the traditional, frontal, definition-based teaching model (when they even make pupils learn definitions by heart), while the author of the new schoolbook intended to utilize the pupils' skills in music and singing, as well as their previous knowledge in folk poetry. All this is supposed to be activated in class, and the experience that could be achieved by acting out, singing, dancing, beating out folk songs would lead to understanding and the ability to independently describe this simple phenomenon, i.e. that a song is a short lyric form expressing feelings and it has an unchanging tone, and in Hungarian folk tradition and sung vernacular poetry (and also in artistic poetry based on the above) the rhythm of the verse is obtained by varying stressed and unstressed syllables, which make up beats, and a typically Hungarian pattern is the beat made up of double six syllables, or in other words, a twelve-syllable, two-beat verse. The author – a part-time primary school teacher for several years – has tried out in actual practice every single unit included in the syllabus and the schoolbook she had made – with success. She presumed with good reason that others can be equally successful in it. These days, more and more flower songs in halved twelves appear in *Jó Pajtás*, the only weekly paper for Hungarian children in Vojvodina, which includes a section for publishing the writings of talented pupils (compositions, independent texts, poems).

The idea to translate Goethe with the pupils – to get to know the genre of song better – was met with similar scepticism. *The Wanderer's Night Song* (*Vándor éji dala*) is included in the textbook and the syllabus to be analyzed, and it is interesting for translation: there are numerous Hungarian translations by famous poets, some of which are also included in the workbook!), moreover, the poem can be found in the syllabus and textbook for German as a foreign language as well! Even if German is not taught in a school (which is nowadays often the case), parallel texts can be found in other foreign languages too, and all that is needed afterwards is a basic knowledge of the foreign language, a dictionary, possibly some translation programs and other sources on the internet, and the task is done. The lesson will thus be dynamic and interesting, suitable for groupwork, but also makes use of individual creativity and talent, and it ensures several subjects and disciplines to be present at the same time (musical education, foreign language, information technology) in correlation with each other. It mobilizes traditions of folklore and cultural history, moreover, relevant examples from German romantic painting can be brought up (and they are, in the book [Bence 2006b]!) (e.g. the Goethe poem is illustrated by works of Caspar David Friedrich). Pupils may try to illustrate the poem themselves (in class of Hungarian!), which is actually tropical thinking, resulting in images, and it would be useful for understanding stylistic means, figures (all part of the syllabus). In the 2010/11 schoolyear, the first successful attempts at translating *The Wanderer's Night Song* were published in the above-mentioned weekly paper for children.

Hymn

This is a similarly familiar genre, which operates along (cultural) historic traditions. It evokes by nature relevant knowledge from the field of musical education, and analogies are drawn between musical education and literature. By learning about hymns of the antiquity and those of the Middle Ages, contents of national and inter-cultural relevance are also covered. It can be well illustrated how a musical and a literary work can be merged into one single unit, and it is worth emphasizing that the national anthems of many countries and nations are first of all that: musical and literary masterpieces (e.g. the Serbian, Austrian, Hungarian, Indian national anthems). This promotes tolerance, by which artistic works are judged based on artistic criteria, not based on expressed heroic and military contents.

A very interesting story is that of the French national anthem, and at the same time it is a good example for how people's attitudes change towards military contents (just think of the lines of the *Marseillaise* that are by now considered inadequate!). The *Marseillaise* has an exciting Hungarian cultural historic relevance, too: its first Hungarian translator, Ferenc Verseghy was among other reasons condemned to death because he translated this revolutionary poem into Hungarian, then in 1795 he was imprisoned for several years, following the suppression of the Hungarian Jacobinic movement of Martinovics. The fortress he was taken to to serve his sentence was Kufstein. The literature of Kufstein has become a notion in Hungarian literary history; numerous significant Hungarian writers and poets were imprisoned in the north-Austrian province, and they wrote poems, memoirs, diaries inspired by their captivity (e.g. János Batsányi [1763-1845]: *Elegies in Kufstein - Kufsteini elégiák*, Ferenc Kazinczy [1759-1831] the "father" of Hungarian literature, the most significant promoter of literature and neologist at the turn of the XVIII. and XIX. centuries, spent almost seven years in dungeons of Austria, in Kufstein among them. He wrote his reminiscences under the title *The Diary of My Captivity (Fogságom naplója)*, which Ágnes Nemes Nagy [1922-1991] later called a masterpiece of one of the most significant Hungarian poets of the XX. century). It is a recurring problem even in university courses that some students are unable to geographically locate Hungarian literary historical phenomena and contents: due to altered political and cultural borderlines they do not know where Cseke is, for instance, where Ferenc Kölcsey (1790-1838) wrote his *Hymn (Hymnus)* that later became the Hungarian national anthem. Primary school pupils obviously do not know where Kufstein is. Thus, a lesson like this offers opportunities for further correlations and it activates pupils' creative skills. A colourful, imaginary travelogue or itinerary, a Baedeker can be made for a journey to Kufstein for example, including its famous sights well-known today.

Our attitudes have changed not only towards the *Marseillaise* but also towards the Hungarian national anthem, the poem of Kölcsey. Earlier, it was considered to be a poem full of rhetoric, heroic-historic contents, confronting past with present, but more recent research finds (Borbély, 1995) that it contains elements that can be related to folklore, traditions of Twelfth Day following Christmas (drinking wine and weathermaking), so the poem has a layer of meaning which is lighter, more playful, less lofty, what is more, it can be sung to one of the most popular and jolliest melody of Hungarian singing tradition, to the Hungarian dance of swine-herds ("Life, oh, life of a swine-herd / this is life indeed..." „Élet, élet, kanász élet / ez aztán az élet..."). Singing the national anthem to this melody results in a very

cheerful, liberating atmosphere even in university courses, which proves that students have a need to dismantle classical forms, rhetorical contents, traditional norms and thoughts. And we already know today that this is not a violation of traditions or lack of respect!

Elegy

A genre evoking both the traditions of classical world literature and universal historic-literary metaphors. The historic narrative, the "great account" that the process of introducing and elaborating this concept in class evokes, is obviously the story of Ovidius, alongside "the poetics of exile" and the universal Tomi metaphor. Most European literatures have created their own exile stories; the "Tomi literature" and the "letters from Pontus" played roles in their evolution. Hungarian literary history too keeps count of literature based on exile poetics, such as Kelemen Mikes's (1690-1761) *Letters from Turkey (Törökországi levelek)*, a fictitious book of letters from the emigrant in Rodosto, or János Batsányi's story about his exile to Linz, then Mihály Babits's (1883-1941) *Letter from Tomi (Levél Tomiból)*, written while teaching in Fogaras, Gyula Juhász's (1883-1937) *Ovid's letter to Julia (Ovid levele Júliához)*, Domokos Szilágyi's poem (1938-1976) *Two Ovidiuses (Két Ovidius)*, the well-known Tomi short story of Vojvodina by Mihály Majtényi (1901-1974) *It's Autumn in Tomi (Tomiban ősz van)*, or István Domonkos's (1940) long verse *Rudderless (Kormányeltörésben)*. The Tomi-story – similarly to the literature of Kufstein – offers ideas for cartographic research, for elaborating touristic itineraries, or even for a literary investigation (e.g. is the statue of Ovidius still to be found on the main square of Konstansa?), for imagining to be in exile and for writing fictitious letters or diaries.

Since the genre of elegy is linked to forms like that of sonnets, and since learning about verse forms is also part of the syllabus in primary schools, this may give rise to further creative ideas. Both the Petrarchan sonnet and the Shakespearean sonnet, as well as the love stories having inspired the sonnet cycles start the pupils' imagination. The rules of the poetic form are illustrated and clarified through a Hungarian text from Vojvodina, Károly Jung's poem about homelessness, *Song of Motherland (Dal a hazáról)*, which does not take longer than ten minutes, even with children of average abilities. So there are again good opportunities for pupils to try their talents at writing, and they like to test their skills. *Jó Pajtás* publishes numerous poems of pupils, written in sonnet form.

Conclusion: The infinite field of links

The practice of elaborating, learning and reinforcing genre- and stylistics-related concepts through analyzing texts (Barthes, 1996) in schools persuades us that comprehending a concept through stories, i.e. traditional, cultural and intertextual links, opens up brand new vistas in teaching (e.g. if we treat a song or an elegy as a cultural code) for an infinite field of interdisciplinary and intercultural links. This gives the pupils the sense of a life-like experience, while their creativity and other skills are utilized and improved (Bence, 2010, 2011a).

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