

## **SYNERGY OF APPROACHES TO TEACHING MODERN UKRAINIAN LITERATURE TO TEENAGERS IN GYMNASIUM**

**Slyzhuk O. A.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The rapid growth of information in the modern globalized world creates challenges of finding new educational paradigms capable of performing a certain set of functions in the process of acquiring knowledge. This process is reflected in the educational systems of most European countries, and Ukrainian education, including teaching literature in secondary school, gravitates towards this too.

Principle of synergy associated with the theory of self-organization in complex systems has gained popularity in Ukrainian didactics in recent years. It allows for the combination of various pedagogical technologies, integration of different sciences into the process of shaping the competent personality of school and university graduates, making them capable of adapting to the changing environment and responding to modern social challenges. The importance of this principle is proved by psychological and pedagogical research of H. Haken, A. Semenova, O. Vozniuk, V. Tsykin and others. In O. Vozniuk's words, "The synergistic approach, initiating a certain synergistic worldview, enables teachers to see the importance of a holistic, interdisciplinary organization of knowledge, and to take into account the fact that narrow specialization and professionalization have resulted in partial, fragmented knowledge that is alienated from a man"<sup>1</sup>.

Teaching Ukrainian literature within the framework of basic secondary education (in gymnasiums) requires teachers to employ a synergistic principle if they want to restore students' holistic perception of literary works (including modern ones) as cultural phenomena and media texts that can carry cognitive information and aesthetic pleasure, transmit the experience of generations along with the essential for the historical memory narratives. There is strong evidence that the use of synergy-based methodical models of Ukrainian literature lessons makes studying this subject in high school more effective. This includes methodological guidelines for

---

<sup>1</sup> Voznyuk O. (2012). Pedahohichna synerhetyka: heneza, teoriya i praktyka [Pedagogical synergetics: genesis, theory and practice]. Zhytomyr : ZhSU Publishing House. Ivan Franko. P. 188.

Ukrainian literature lessons by teachers-practitioners as well as scientific research by such methodologists as Y. Bondarenko, L. Nezhyva, G. Tokman, V. Shuliar, T. Yatsenko and others. Basing her conclusions on evidence drawn from experimental studies, L. Nezhyva states, “What seems most significant about this system is that the ideas of synergism ensure the integrity of personal perception of the world, actualizing awareness of it through art, philosophy, folk notions, science, etc.”<sup>2</sup>. We consider it promising to rely on the synergy of approaches from various fields of knowledge to facilitate adolescents’ reception of literary works and to help them with the analysis of literary elements and the interpretation of content of modern Ukrainian literature while studying the subject in secondary (gymnasium) classes. By building interdisciplinary connections, using different types of contexts and activating background knowledge in the process of studying modern Ukrainian literature adolescents will improve their general intelligence and develop the key and subject literary competences as well.

To do this we need to clarify scientific approaches to teaching contemporary Ukrainian literature to teenagers and examine interpretive strategies used by gymnasium students in perceiving literary works. Focus should be put on the possibility of combining these approaches (synergy), and making it possible to forecast the results of their implementation into Ukrainian literature teaching practices. This paper is an overview of these scientific studies. To enable us to do this, we employ a complex of theoretical and empirical methods, including analysis, processing and interpretation of scientific literature, literary works and textbooks on Ukrainian literature as well as observation of the process of teaching and learning Ukrainian literature in gymnasiums.

### **1. Scientific approaches to teaching modern Ukrainian literature to teenagers**

Drawing on recent studies conducted by Ukrainian and foreign researchers, we define the concept of literature for teenagers or adolescent literature as follows: these are texts of different kinds, types and genres that meet the value, aesthetic and cognitive needs of the adolescent. They have their own content and formal characteristics and are open for interaction with the reader of the appropriate age category (in the 10–15 age bracket). The

---

<sup>2</sup> Nezhyva L. (2014) The Methodological Model of Studying Literary Directions through the Prism of the Synergetic and Didactic Heuristics. *Academic Bulletin of Donbas : Electronic Scientific Specialized Edition*, № 2. URL: <http://nvd.luguniv.edu.ua/archiv/NN26/12.pdf>

main array of literature that Ukrainian teenagers read is the literary texts of Ukrainian and foreign writers, with whom young readers get acquainted in the lessons of Ukrainian and foreign literature at school, read in the family circle and independently. Apart from works of fiction, adolescents read a variety of other texts including scientific, educational 'ethical' (the term introduced by V. Kyzylova) and journalistic texts, entertaining literature, non-fiction and reference books.

Adolescent literature is considered as a type of literature targeted to children and young adults by Ukrainian researchers U. Baran, N. Bohdanets-Biloskalenko, T. Kachak, V. Kyzylova, O. Lushchevska and others. In their works such literary elements as linguistic specificity, characters, themes and social issues reflected in this phenomenon have been widely investigated. In particular, we agree with V. Kyzylova who maintains that "children's literature is a world of fiction about what and who a child is, what is their microcosm and macrocosm, that is to say, everything around them. It is an organic component of general literature with all its inherent properties, although oriented to the interests of the child reader. Children's books have their own literary specificity which is adequate to child psychology. What makes them special, though, is the mastery of a writer to represent spiritual values in their works of fiction by exclusively aesthetic means"<sup>3</sup>. Thus, the nature of adolescent literature has been characterized as having many aspects which may influence recipient's perception and comprehension. To unlock the potential of this complex process, we need to take into account the main approaches to it.

*Psychological approach.* It determines school age ranges and year groups since there are some discrepancies in pedagogical research relating this issue. It also influences children's reading choices and their interest in literature education as well as the content of the literary canon that is studied in school. There is no general agreement on the age levels for children's books among foreign researchers either. In her study, O. Lushchevska points out that "American theories face a certain local terminological problem. In the Ukrainian language, to indicate the stages of human life between childhood and adulthood, we use two concepts – young teens (from ages 11–12 to 15–16) and adolescents (from ages 15–16 to 18 and even older). In English, the concept 'adolescence' is used to define persons in both age groups"<sup>4</sup>. We are in complete accord with the researcher about the need to

---

<sup>3</sup> Kizilova V. (2012) *Literatura dlya ditey ta yunatstva: khudozhnya spetsyfika, tendentsiyi interpretatsiyi* [Literature for children and youth: artistic specifics, trends in interpretation]. *Actual problems of Ukrainian literature and folklore*, vol. 17. P. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Lushchevska O. (2012) *Vid prypushchennya do vyznachennya : pidlitkova literatura / literatura dlya yunatstva* [From assumption to definition: adolescent literature / literature

distinguish between books for teens (for 10–15 years old children) and young adult books (for readers aged 16–19) because there are differences in students' reading interests and their perceptions of reading between these two age groups.

That is the reason for finding appropriate methods to organize the process of studying literary works by adolescents, which has critically influenced academic dialogue on this problem and practices of teaching literature in educational institutions of Ukraine. The theoretical foundation of this research is based on the psychological studies of O. Bedlinskyi, D. Bushman, L. Vyhotskyi, L. Dolynska, E. Erikson, L. Kohlberg, D. Niday, Z. Ohorodniichuk, J. Piaget, O. Skrypchenko, G. Hall and others, which define the age groups and their psychological characteristics. According to O. Bedlinskyi, "The main activities of adolescents include communication and interaction, which, in case of middle grade readers, are based on the construction of social relationships, whereas young adults are involved in the construction of the material and spiritual world. As for communication, it serves as a reference system at all stages of construction"<sup>5</sup>. Reading literary fiction helps younger teens get an idea of social relations and contributes to the development of young adults' spiritual world. These factors affect the choice of reading strategies for middle schoolers (grades 5–7) and older teens (grades 8–9). Prior research has thoroughly investigated problems that teenagers encounter in their period of adolescence and suggested that they should be tackled through communication and interaction with peers as well as accumulation of other people's experiences, reflected in various media texts, including works of fiction.

*Sociological approach.* The choice of texts, media texts and literary texts in particular, for perception and interpretation plays a vital role in developing reading skills.

The main selection criteria should take into consideration young readers' interests and focus on modern day characters and their thoughts, actions and awareness of their own role in society. E. Ohar comments, "we propose not to limit the concept of modernity of children's books to the relevance of their informational component. In our opinion, the essence of this concept relates to how effective in terms of communication a book is at given time

---

for youth]. *Literature. Children. Time. Bulletin of the Center for the Research of Literature for Children and Youth*, Ternopil : Navchal'na knyha – Bohdan, vol. 3. P. 83.

<sup>5</sup> Bedlins'kyy O. (2010) Konstruyuvannya yak providna diyal'nist' pidlitkovoho viku [Design as a leading activity of adolescence]. Actual problems of psychology: problems of psychology of creativity: coll. Science. Proceedings of the Institute of Psychology. GS Kostyuk NAPS of Ukraine. / ed .. V. O Molyako. Zhytomyr : ZhSU named after I. Franko, vol. XII, issue 10, part II. P. 59.

and under given circumstances, that is, whether its content is interesting or meaningful for children, or whether the characters, plot, interpretive way of illustration and construction are relevant to modern times; how efficacious the communicative and regulatory potential of the text is and how well the literary form and the visualization techniques are functioning”<sup>6</sup>. According to E. Ohar, it is modern books with their ability to translate familiar and relatable behavioural models, speech characteristics and values that are needed for children and teenagers today; they satisfy their cognitive interests. The sociological approach to the process of perception of contemporary Ukrainian literature is at the core of the development of social and civic competencies. To develop these competences, adolescents should read social issue poetry and prose. Among the variety of modern realistic and psychological prose for children, which is widely represented in the modern literary process, we can highlight thematic groups that contribute to the development of their social competencies.

The importance of assimilation of social and moral norms by adolescents has been emphasized by B. Shalihinov. He writes, “The child should get (first of all in school) universally important, generally accepted, ‘standard’ ideas about real life, prominent among which are notions of language standards and standards in people’s relationships, accepted in this society motivation of events and individual actions, an idea of the generally accepted emotional and behavioral reaction to the actions and situations around them and a notion of established national and universal human values, etc. A teenager sees any person as a human, in terms of ‘a living natural being’, but not from the point of view of their belonging to a particular nation or ethnic group, to a certain historical (especially remote) era or to a certain social class or strata”<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, perception of contemporary literary works, which are close to young readers in time, is yet another way for them to assimilate well-established models of social behaviour. Among such works in Ukrainian literature in our time, many are devoted to social issues and problems including attitudes towards peers with disabilities, preservation of family traditions, social orphanage, bullying, etc.

---

<sup>6</sup> Ohar E. (2007) Kryteriyi suchasnosti ta funktsionalnosti suchasnoyi ukrayinskoyi knyhy dlya ditey [Criteria of modernity and functionality of a modern Ukrainian book for children]. *Printing and publishing*, vol. 46, p. 123.

<sup>7</sup> Shalihinov B. (2012) Chy diysno dlya ditey treba pysaty «tak samo, yak dlya doroslykh, tilky shche krashche»? (dytyacha literatura i sotsializatsiya maybutnoyi osobystosti) [Is it really necessary to write for children “just like for adults, only better”? (children’s literature and socialization of the future personality)]. *Literature. Children. Time. Bulletin of the Center for the Research of Literature for Children and Youth*. Ternopil : Navchalna knyha – Bohdan, vol. 2, p. 11.

Tolerance towards children who are not like so-called normal kids represents one of the key issues in modern society in general, and in school society in particular. The discussion of this problem is provided in the number of novels, among which “*Stranger*” by O. Saiko, “*140 Decibels of Silence*” by A. Bachynskiy, “*Butterflies in Ice Shells*” by O. Radushynska, “*Girl from the City*” by O. Ryzhko, etc. The importance of preserving family traditions and thus reviving interest in national history is clearly seen in the teenage and young adult books of contemporary Ukrainian writers (Iren Rozdobudko “*Arsen*”, M. Pavlenko “*Mermaid from 7-C, or the Curse of the Kulakivski Family*”, “*Mermaid from 7-C and the Lost in Time*”, “*Mermaid from 7-C Lost in the Maze*”, V. Rutkivskiy “*Poterchas*”, etc.). The psychological impact of family turmoil and parental divorce on adolescents is explored in the stories of O. Kupriian “*Salty Kisses*”, S. Hrydin “*Not an Angel*”, O. Saiko “*Birds Always Come Back*”, O. Dumanska “*Schoolgirl from the Suburbs*”, and so on. Relationships with parents and social orphanage are depicted in the prose works of M. Pavlenko “*Mykola’s Stories*”, I. Matsko “*My Mother’s Transitional Age*”, O. Ryzhko “*Mousetrap*” and others. Bullying that makes children feel like outsiders is depicted in the stories of S. Hrydin “*Not Like the Others*”, M. Pavlenko “*The Mermaid from 7-C Against the Mermaid from the Bilokrylivskiy Forest*”, A. Shavlach “*Pampukha*”, Y. Cherniienko “*Revenge*”, M. Haidamaka “*Cyber Spieler*”, O. Burlaka “*Torn Frame*”, O. Ryzhko “*Stung by Betrayal*”. The first teenage love is portrayed in psychological realist fiction, sometimes with magic elements. A perfect example is that of the works by S. Protsiuk “*Argonauts*”, M. Pavlenko “*Mermaid from 7-C Plus a Very Maritime Story*”, M. Morozenko “*I’ve Fallen in Love*”, O. Ryzhko “*Only Maru Knows*”. We believe that reading such literary works will encourage the development of social competencies of both adolescents who are in the process of growing up and their parents, who often cannot find a common language with their children due to the lack of understanding teenage problems and behavior.

*The cultural approach* is favourable to the integration of all other aspects into a single space of creativity, along with national and cultural achievements. It underpins research in almost all spheres of the humanities. Thus, defining the main concepts of the integrative personal approach in psychology, H. Ball considers culture to be one of its main notions, stating that “it appears worthwhile to interpret culture, in its broadest sense, as a combination of those means and traits, or qualities of existence and functioning of individuals, communities and humanity as a whole that provide two functions, these are of social memory and socially meaningful creativity, which, in other words, are the functions of the regulation of

reproduction and dialogical creativity”<sup>8</sup>. Literary works of different historical periods are part of the cultural heritage that belongs to the society within which they were created. Readers come to understand this from life experience. Adolescents should be made aware of this fact when they study Ukrainian literature in school by making connections with history, art and literature, but most of all, by relying on their own experience in observing culture, taking part in it and preserving memory of it. After all, scientists believe that “culture, in its unity of the two specified subsystems, exists at different levels of scale, or, in other words, different modi. These are as follows: a) common to all mankind; b) special (in particular, ethnic, super-ethnic, subethnic; this also includes modi that are characteristic for professional, age, gender, denominational, etc. components of society, as well as small communities, for example, families); c) individual (personal)”<sup>9</sup>. This means that the personality of a teenager who is engaged in ‘dialogue’ with a literary text, which, in its turn, is an expression of contemporary culture, is a subject of this culture, perceiving modern reality indirectly. The cultural approach opens up opportunities for teenagers to perceive fiction as an expression of universal creativity, national and ethnic heritage and individual style of the author’s cultural vision. It helps them identify themselves with a certain cultural and social community, topos, civil society of the country, where they were born and live now. This aspect is equally important for both reading works of contemporary literature and for studying them in gymnasium. As O. Brovko and N. Bohdanets-Biloskalenko argue, “when students study literature, they familiarize themselves with adaptation and integration practices of the writers who have described, analysed and reflected on the identity problems in the form of an artwork, which can serve as models and scenarios for positive cultural reconstruction and the basis for the civic identity development in modern Ukraine”<sup>10</sup>. The cultural approach is highly flexible when applied to teaching contemporary literature to adolescents, because it allows for revisiting the past and looking at those events through the prism of their role in the modern cultural space. Since literature is part of the cultural heritage of mankind, the cultural

---

<sup>8</sup> Ball H. (2009) Intehratyvno-osobystisnyy pidkhid u psykholohiyi : vpyryadkuvannya holovnykh ponyat [Integrative-personal approach in psychology: ordering the main concepts]. *Psychology and Society*, no. 4, p. 33.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. P. 35.

<sup>10</sup> Brovko O. & Bohdanets'-Biloskalenko N. (2017) Kulturnyy landshaft khudozhozhno tekstu yak vyyav etnichnoyi identychnosti: tekhnolohiya vyychennya [The cultural landscape of an artistic text as a manifestation of ethnic identity: a technology of study]. *Mountain School of the Ukrainian Carpathians*, no. 17, p. 139.

approach to teaching contemporary literature to teenagers is closely connected with the views of literary scholars on this process.

*Literary approach.* Phenomenon of children's and young adult literature has become an important issue in modern Ukrainian literary criticism. It has been explored in fundamental studies by T. Kachak, V. Kyzylova, L. Matsevko-Bekerska, B. Shalahinov, M. Vardanian and others. Some of them highlight, among other things, approaches to the reception of literary fiction by young readers, the most prevailing of which is the method of receptive aesthetics, whereas for *analytical and synthetic activities* during the work on the *text and its interpretation*, literary critics are more inclined to apply textual analysis.

In almost all literary studies on children's reception of literary works, considerable emphasis has been placed on those traits that distinguish it from the perception of literature by an adult personality. In L. Matsevko-Bekerska's view, "By definition and by its essence, children's reception is so complex due to the fact that it has the potential to foresee and to follow author's guidelines voluntarily and unconditionally. As a rule, the reality of the text is organically included in the reality of consciousness, filling the vacuum of experience, and therefore aesthetic experiences of children reading are proactive in nature"<sup>11</sup> We agree with this opinion, and also believe that the reception of literary fiction by adolescents develops gradually. Firstly, it takes place at the cognitive level, then the teenager connects with the characters on an emotional level and finally, providing that the young reader has acquired reach reading experience, the reception reaches deeper to the aesthetic and creative levels.

Many researchers have posited that literary works recommended for young readers have dual audiences of children and adults. Readers' perception of the same literary text is different and rooted in their personal experiences. B. Shalahinov comments, "Books for adults rely on already formed life and aesthetic experiences of their readers. As for children's literature, it aims to shape its readers' life experience. An adult reader has already formed their social experience. A reading child is still developing their social experience. This equally refers to the aesthetic features. Unlike an adult, a child is not capable of perceiving a literary work as a meta-text. They perceive it as a main text and self-sufficient text, without its

---

<sup>11</sup> Matsevko-Bekerska L. (2011) Dytyacha literatura yak forma dialohu kultur: hermenevtychnyy aspekt [Children's literature as a form of dialogue of cultures: hermeneutic aspect]. *Literature. Children. Time. Bulletin of the Center for the Research of Literature for Children and Youth*. Ternopil : Navchalna knyha – Bohdan, vol. 1, p. 20.

multi-layered historical lining”<sup>12</sup> This accentuates the idea of the prism of naïve realism, through which children and mid-grade readers perceive literary works, as opposed to the concept of aesthetic properties and ideological functions of books for young adults.

The literary approach to perception of literary works by adolescents remains dominant in modern research on children’s and young adult literature, however some scientists feel the need to combine it with the pedagogical aspect when it comes to school literature education, taking into account its pedagogical orientation.

Although there has been a decline in interest to the pedagogical approach, which came as a result of the active development of all others discussed above, it remains well established in the modern secondary education institutions (gymnasiums) and reflected in the main documents regulating the sphere of modern literature education, including the educational standards of the basic secondary education.

*The pedagogical approach* to teaching modern Ukrainian literature to teenagers is extremely changeable, because it depends on various factors, including social needs, pedagogical instructions and authorial intentions. In recent years, the concept of ‘literary work’ in teaching literature in school has been transformed into ‘literary text’, as one of the text types. This explains why textual analysis has become the most important method in literary studies. At the same time, studying literary texts by schoolchildren is aimed at comprehending literary fiction, including contemporary Ukrainian literature, as a holistic phenomenon in the unity of its form and content with due account of the artistic context.

What is more, the concept of literary text also involves a pedagogical intent. Indeed, as N. Marchenko reminds us, “children’s texts always seek dialogue and understanding, making adults think carefully about what exactly they want to put into their child’s soul and delve into that soul. Therefore, in practice, it is children’s texts that provide the communication channel for ‘the dialogue between generations’”<sup>13</sup>. Because of this, the

---

<sup>12</sup> Shalahinov B. (2012) Chy diyсно dlya ditey treba pysaty «tak samo, yak dlya doroslykh, tilky shehe krashche»? (dytyacha literatura i sotsializatsiya maybutnoyi osobystosti) [Is it really necessary to write for children «just like for adults, only better»? (children’s literature and socialization of the future personality)]. *Literature. Children. Time. Bulletin of the Center for the Research of Literature for Children and Youth*. Ternopil : Navchalna knyha – Bohdan, vol. 2, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> Marchenko N. (2011) «Tekst dlya ditey» yak forma samousvidomlennya ta transformatsiyi suspil’stva [«Text for children» as a form of self-awareness and transformation of society]. *Scientific works of the National Library for Children named after V.I Vernadsky*, vol. 31, p. 515.

pedagogical approach plays crucial part in selecting reading 'texts' for students of different age categories, giving preference to those that might have a positive impact on their system of values and life experience, whereas the artistic merit as an aesthetic quality of a literary work is secondary and provisional for its reception.

The interrelation between literary and pedagogical approaches is correlated by the so-called canon of children's literature, and there is no general agreement on it. In particular, U. Baran points out that "unlike the school reading canon, the canon of children and young adult fiction comprises only those books that were written and published especially for the young reader. The modern canon of children's literature provides for the observation of the following three criteria: internationality, a variety of genres and openness to modernity as an extension of the traditional canon. We consider the canon of contemporary literature for children and youth as active, because, according to modern literary scholars, critics, readers and consumers themselves, some works may be subjected to decanonization, and some may, on the contrary, be restored to its current corpus"<sup>14</sup>. We believe that defining boundaries between canonical and non-canonical literature in terms of children's books requires taking into account the synergy of all approaches considered as well as young readers' interests and trends in modern research in the field of methods of teaching literary fiction to schoolchildren.

*The blend of methodological and literary approaches is action-oriented since it is aimed at synthesizing all approaches to teaching and reading children's and adolescent literature in order to prove by empirical testing their relevance to school literary education. One of the tasks of adolescents' school literary education is to find effective approaches to the perception of modern literature. One of the missions of the teenage school literary education is finding effective approaches to the study of contemporary literature. This problem is an increasingly important area in the literary methodology. In her analysis of the issue, O. Isaieva emphasizes that "the functions of reading have undergone significant changes in a fast-paced and information-saturated world. People are spending less time reading for pleasure due to lack of time. This leads to a gradual loss of the aesthetic function of reading. Instead, the pragmatic aspect is taking central stage: I read because it is required from me for the lesson, for the assessment or for*

---

<sup>14</sup> Baran (Hnidets) U. (2014) Aktyvnyy kanon suchasnoyi literatury dlya ditey ta yunatstva: Zakhid ta Skhid [Active canon of modern literature for children and youth: West and East]. *Scientific works: Scientific and methodical journal. Philology. Literary Studies*. Mykolayiv : Vyd-vo CHDU im. P. Mohyly. P. 12.

acquiring certain skills and so on. As a result, skimming and superficial reading are gaining popularity. Slow and thoughtful reading, in its turn, is becoming a thing of the past. As for the genre preferences, the small genres seem to prevail. Reading a text, the modern reader is paying less and less attention to long and elaborate descriptions, they are interested in the dynamics of events and facts, and the more action-packed the plot is, the more they like it”<sup>15</sup>.

Studying literature in modern literary education is geared towards developing reading competence, which is defined as “understanding, using, reflecting on and engaging with written texts, in order to achieve one’s goals, develop one’s knowledge and potential, and participate in society”<sup>16</sup>. These skills are essential in cognitive reading of different types of texts, and not just literary works. Modern literary education aims primarily at the development of young readers’ subject literary competence, including their ability to perceive contemporary literary works in multiple forms and layers of meaning, reflecting culture, history and values. As an outcome of such reception, adolescent students are able to interpret literary texts properly in the light of their own experience.

Thus, the most effective way to facilitate and improve teenagers’ reception of contemporary Ukrainian literature is that which takes into account the number of scientific perspectives on this phenomenon, including psychological, sociological, cultural, pedagogical and the blend of methodological and literary approaches. This process needs improvement in practices of teaching literature in gymnasiums, which can be done by introducing the new synergistic phenomenon of perception, focused on the integrated development of the key as well as subject literary competences of schoolchildren at the level of the basic secondary education.

## **2. Combining interpretive strategies to enhance literary reading skills in gymnasium**

While studying contemporary literature in school, adolescents deepen their understanding of literary works through interpretation and analysis. Their mechanism in school literary education differs significantly from strictly scientific interpretation and analysis, since they take into account inexperience of interpreters and allow for instructional scaffolding. Gymnasium students acquire their skills of interpreting literary texts

---

<sup>15</sup> Isayeva O. (2016) Formuvannya chytacha-interpretatora u suchasnyy ukrayinskiy shkoli [Formation of the reader-interpreter in the modern Ukrainian school]. *Dyvoslovo*, no. 2, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> PISA: chytatska hramotnist [PISA: reader literacy] (2017) / way. T. Vakulenko, S. Lomakovich & V. Tereshchenko. Kyiv : UTSOYAO. P. 12.

gradually and their development should be based on the integration of various interpretive strategies into educational process.

The problem of analysis methodology relevant to children's and young adult literature is one of the most significant current discussions in modern literary criticism. This explains a multiplicity of approaches to scientific research in this field. Specifically, V. Kyzlyova underlines that artistry is the main characterization criterion of children's and young adult fiction, "The criterion of artistry can be defined as deep and original literary content, which is arranged in the most vivid and appropriate literary form; harmony of content and form of a work of art, perceived emotionally. The components of artistry include, on the one hand, the depth and originality of the content (which is rightly insisted upon by supporters of hermeneutics), and, on the other hand, the artfulness of its formal execution. Art has its own laws, but does not have generally accepted guidelines on how to observe them. True art cannot be reproduced, so it does not have any permanent characteristics that can be defined. Being a literary work means being either funny or sad or inspirational. Just as any, even the brightest, individuality belongs to a certain type, so a work of art is characterized by the ability to embody the laws of art in itself"<sup>17</sup>. This literary approach to the study of children's and youth literature accords with the competency-based school literary education, aimed at the development of the ability to interpret literary texts independently and assimilate represented in them values and morals.

Exploring the problem of emerging in the Ukrainian literary criticism methodology of research of children's and young adult literature, T. Kachak focuses on different interpretive strategies in foreign and Ukrainian scientific discourse and distinguishes among them literary, didactic and multi-disciplinary learning. She comments, "You cannot use all available approaches and methods simultaneously, but their application is crucial when studying a group of literary works on a particular theme or of a particular genre, looking at the books of certain writers or conducting analysis and making generalizations on the nature of the development of literature in a certain era, and so on"<sup>18</sup>.

We agree with literary criticism and consider a multidisciplinary approach to be the most appropriate for the school interpretation of literary

---

<sup>17</sup> Kyzlyova V. (2012) *Literatura dlya ditey ta yunatstva: khudozhnya spetsyfika, tendentsiyi interpretatsiyi* [Literature for children and youth: artistic specifics, trends in interpretation]. *Actual problems of Ukrainian literature and folklore*, vol. 17, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> Kachak T. (2017) *Literatura dlya ditey ta yunatstva: problemy metodolohiyi doslidzhennya* [Literature for children and youth: problems of research methodology]. *World literatures: poetics, mentality and spirituality*, vol. 10, p. 32.

works, since it allows for combining different interpretive strategies with the aim to achieve the synergistic effect, which is to make it possible for a learner-reader to accept synthesis of opinions about a literary work and at the same time to develop the ability to interpret the text independently, assimilating its values and beliefs.

This approach appears to be especially relevant if we take into consideration the interpretation procedure itself, which allows the reader to create a holistic view of a literary work in their mind and then compare the real with the imagined. According to N. Astrakhan “What makes it possible to analyze a literary text is its functioning as a system. Interpretation as well as its synthetic character are determined by integrity of a literary work. These systematic nature and integrity simulate the systematic character and integrity of reality itself, reflecting them in a work of fiction”<sup>19</sup>. This characteristic of literary interpretation makes it possible to bridge the gap between the elements of a literary work that occurs in analysing or ‘deconstructing’ the text into separate components of its form and content. As a rule, middle grades students’ textual analysis involves reading a literary text carefully, interpreting its parts and searching for hidden meanings to deepen their initial perception of the text. Such an analysis is based on the idea of the Hermetic Circle, which naturally arises while working on a literary text in gymnasium classes, because readers’ imagination creates a holistic vision and understanding of the author’s position in a literary work that requires a new interpretation. Thus, interpretation becomes increasingly complicated from school year to school year, and, in B. Shalahinov’s view, “the dialogue should also gradually move to more complex forms, shifting from the opposition of ‘appropriate-inappropriate’ to a higher level of the ‘dialogue of values’. Ensuring a consistent transition from one level to another poses a real challenge to the education methods specialist; it can be successfully realised only under one condition – when the education methods specialist will take into account the pedagogical aspect of the school literary course”<sup>20</sup>. Teenagers are more likely to be interested in reading those books whose characters are just like them and go through the

---

<sup>19</sup> Astrakhan N. (2014) Analiz ta syntezy v protsesi literaturoznavchoho piznannya [Analysis and synthesis in the process of literary cognition]. *Science and Education a New Dimension. Philology*, II (4), vol. 24, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> Shalahinov B. (2012) Chy diysno dlya ditey treba pysaty «tak samo, yak dlya doroslykh, tilky shche krashche»? (dytyacha literatura i sotsializatsiya maybutnoyi osobystosti) [Is it really necessary to write for children «just like for adults, only better»? (children’s literature and socialization of the future personality)]. *Literature. Children. Time. Bulletin of the Center for the Research of Literature for Children and Youth*. Ternopil : Navchalna knyha – Bohdan, vol. 2, p. 14.

ordeals similar to their own. This makes literary works that describe moral dilemmas and shed light on such issues as bullying, first love and relations with peers and older generations most relevant for adolescents.

For example, students develop their ideas of the importance of motherland, their home and families while reading poetry by Halyna Kyrpa, Tetiana Maidanovych, Iryna Nebelenchuk, Liubov Yakymchuk, Serhii Zhadan and others.

Teenagers learn how to be tolerant in relations with peers, compassionate, honest and passionate about work for the benefit of people from the literary characters of fictional prose by Halyna Malyk, Lesia Voronyna, Oleksandr Havrosh, Serhii Hrydin, Andrii Bachynskiy, Maryna Pavlenko, Mariia Morozenko, Zirka Menzatiuk and others. What attracts young readers to these literary works is the portrayal of protagonists as well as interesting plots, saturated with fantastic adventures, proximity in time and relevant problems raised by their authors.

Development of humanistic values, which recognize the dignity of each human being, their freedom, equality, tolerance and justice in relations with other people, often takes place when students read and interpret patriotic poetry and realistic psychological prose of modern Ukrainian writers.

When following the pedagogical approach, whose importance has been emphasized by B. Shalahinov, it is important to focus on the synergy of individual and literary interpretations of a literary text.

Individual interpretation of each student is subjective in nature and is based on their life experience, reading preferences and general erudition. This naturally leads to a wide variety of possible opinions, interpretations and students' perceptions of the same literary work. Additionally, it is determined by genre and genre-specific details of a literary text. For instance, modern psychological prose for teenagers gives rise to personal associations and makes young readers perceive such literature as a reflection of real life. In that case, we should expect fairly similar students' individual interpretations of such literary works. This can be explained by age-related characteristics of the perception and comprehension of realistic fiction. However, there is no need to limit interpretation opportunities of the contemporary literary works to cognitive reading and naïve realist perspectives. The purpose of literary education in gymnasium is to expand students' individual interpretations by relying on the aesthetic category of artistry, which is inherent in literary works.

As scientific evidence based on the observations of the process of studying contemporary literature suggests, a different methodical effect arises when readers interpret literary works characterized by secondary conventionality. These include such genres as lyrical prose, lyrical epic, fantastic prose with a deep subtext that appeal to teenagers and adults alike. Possibility of multiple possible individual interpretations of such texts requires teacher's correction together with the

employment of the whole set of techniques aimed at the textual analysis with elements of literary interpretation, which, in its turn, is characterized by a multidisciplinary perspective and a broad range of interpretive strategies. Literary criticism uses this kind of analysis for close reading and evaluation of a literary work. According to Polish researcher Yanush Slavinskyi, “Every interpretation constructs the dual modalities of literary narrative – evident and hidden, explicit and implicit. Obviously, the transition between them looks differently in different types of interpretive strategies, however, it always goes from certain given properties to potential conditions, from manifestation to motivation, from collection of attributes to the system of values, from an available text in the form of a linear sequence to some kind of grammar that projects that sequence”<sup>21</sup>.

As for the use of various interpretive strategies in school literary education, it serves a slightly different purpose. It adds aesthetic components to young readers’ individual interpretations and aims at developing the ability to use literary terms as well as their reading skills, reading culture and preferences. This defines the orientation of literary education in gymnasium towards the competency-based approach, that induces middle grade learners to sustain extensive reading through their school years and into adulthood, to strive to read literature and, therefore, to become more culturally competent.

Thus, when studying contemporary Ukrainian literature for children and young adults in school, the effective way is to combine individual and literary interpretations. As for applying the latter, we take into account opportunities provided by specifically the literary as well as pedagogical and multicultural approaches. This is dictated by the nature of children’s and young adult literature, its multifaceted character and ambiguous perception. The choice of interpretive strategies is also influenced by such factors as psychological, age-related and individual characteristics of young readers coupled with the orientation of modern literary education in Ukraine towards the European experience in competency-based learning.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study obtained by analysing, processing and interpreting scientific literature, literary works and textbooks on Ukrainian literature and by observing the process of Ukrainian literature education in gymnasiums has helped identify various approaches to perceiving and interpreting children’s and young adult fiction. Our contention is that this trend influences the way students study Ukrainian literature in gymnasium.

---

<sup>21</sup> Slavinskyi Ya. (2013) Do problemy “mystetstva interpretatsiyi” [On the problem of «art of interpretation»] / translated from Polish by O. Sinchenko. *Synopsis: text, context, media*. no. 3–4. URL: <https://synopsis.kubg.edu.ua/index.php/synopsis/article/view/71>. (accessed 29.05.2021).

Upon examining cultural, literary, psychological, pedagogical, sociological, and the blend of methodological and literary approaches to reading and students' reception of literary works, we consider their synergy to be the most relevant for school literary education. It will provide an opportunity to introduce the new synergistic phenomenon of perception, focused on the integrated development of the key as well as subject literary competences of schoolchildren at the level of the basic secondary education.

The next stage in achieving synergy of approaches in teaching contemporary Ukrainian literature is development of interpretive competence which is equally important for both reading proficiency and critical analysis of literature. Literature curriculum in secondary education allows an opportunity to combine interpretive strategies, given modernity of the values expressed in a literary text, in order to achieve the synergistic effect, which is to make it possible for a learner-reader to accept synthesis of opinions about a literary work and at the same time to develop the ability to interpret the text independently.

To achieve this effect, we rely on the interpretive strategies developed and tested within the framework of pedagogical science, literary research and study of contemporary Ukrainian children's and young adult literature as part of human culture.

This opens up an opportunity for changes in the paradigm of teaching language and literature in modern Ukrainian gymnasium.

### **SUMMARY**

This study presents a review of modern approaches to teaching contemporary Ukrainian young adult literature in gymnasium. It outlines scientific approaches to perceiving and interpreting contemporary Ukrainian literature by adolescents. The main focus is on the interpretive strategies to employ for reading literary texts in gymnasium. The effect of their combination (synergy) on studying literary works of contemporary Ukrainian young adult fiction is thoroughly explored. Through showing that synergy of approaches facilitates teenagers' perception and comprehension of literary works, this research proves its efficiency for school literary education. Another aspect explored is the methodology aimed at expanding individual interpretations with aesthetic components, developing young readers' ability to use literary terms, improving their reading skills, building reading culture and encouraging good reading habits. The emphasis is made on the orientation of literary education in gymnasium towards the competency-based approach. This study offers a methodological system to motivate teenagers to read into adulthood. It is expected that its implementation into instructional practices in teaching literature and language will create lifelong readers. In the end, an outline is given on the

prospects of developing methodology of teaching contemporary Ukrainian children's and young adult literature in school.

## REFERENCES

1. Astrakhan N. (2014) Analiz ta syntez v protsesi literaturoznavchoho piznannya [Analysis and synthesis in the process of literary cognition]. *Science and Education a New Dimension. Philology*, II (4), vol. 24, pp. 17–20.

2. Ball H. (2009) Intehratyvno-osobystisnyy pidkhid u psykholohiyi : vporyadkuvannya holovnykh ponyat [Integrative-personal approach in psychology: ordering the main concepts]. *Psychology and Society*, no. 4, pp. 25–53.

3. Baran (Hnidets) U. (2014) Aktyvnyy kanon suchasnoyi literatury dlya ditey ta yunatstva: Zakhid ta Skhid [Active canon of modern literature for children and youth: West and East]. *Scientific works: Scientific and methodical journal. Philology. Literary Studies*. Mykolayiv : Vyd-vo CHDU im. P. Mohyly, pp. 8–12.

4. Bedlinskyy O. (2010) Konstruyuvannya yak providna diyalnist pidlitkovoho viku [Design as a leading activity of adolescence]. *Actual problems of psychology: problems of psychology of creativity: coll. Science. Proceedings of the Institute of Psychology. GS Kostyuk NAPS of Ukraine.* / ed.. V. O Molyako. Zhytomyr: ZhSU named after I. Franko, vol. XII, issue 10, part II, pp. 52–59.

5. Brovko O. & Bohdanets-Biloskalenko N. (2017) Kulturnyy landshaft khudozhnoho tekstu yak vvyav etnichnoyi identychnosti: tekhnolohiya vyvchennya [The cultural landscape of an artistic text as a manifestation of ethnic identity: a technology of study]. *Mountain School of the Ukrainian Carpathians*, no. 17, pp. 136–140.

6. Isayeva O. (2016) Formuvannya chytacha-interpretatora u suchasniy ukrayinskiy shkoli [Formation of the reader-interpretator in the modern Ukrainian school]. *Dyvoslovo*, no. 2, pp. 25–27.

7. Kachak T. (2017) Literatura dlya ditey ta yunatstva: problemy metodolohiyi doslidzhennya [Literature for children and youth: problems of research methodology]. *World literatures: poetics, mentality and spirituality*, vol. 10, pp. 22–34.

8. Kyzyl'ova V. (2012) Literatura dlya ditey ta yunatstva: khudozhnya spetsyfika, tendentsiyi interpretatsiyi [Literature for children and youth: artistic specifics, trends in interpretation]. *Actual problems of Ukrainian literature and folklore*, vol. 17, pp. 10–18.

9. Lushchevska O. (2012) Vid prypushchennya do vyznachennya : pidlitkova literatura / literatura dlya yunatstva [From assumption to definition: adolescent literature / literature for youth]. *Literature. Children*.

*Time. Bulletin of the Center for the Research of Literature for Children and Youth*, Ternopil : Navchalna knyha – Bohdan, vol. 3, pp. 83–89.

10. Maier R. (1993) Jugendliteratur: Formen, Inhalte, pädagogische Bedeutung. Bad Heilbrunn / Obb : Klinkhardt.

11. Matsevko-Bekerska L. (2011) Dytyacha literatura yak forma dialohu kultur: hermenevtychnyy aspect [Children’s literature as a form of dialogue of cultures: hermeneutic aspect]. *Literature. Children. Time. Bulletin of the Center for the Research of Literature for Children and Youth*, Ternopil : Navchalna knyha – Bohdan, vol. 1, pp. 18–24.

12. Marchenko N. (2011) “Tekst dlya ditey” yak forma samousvidomlennya ta transformatsiyi suspilstva [“Text for children” as a form of self-awareness and transformation of society]. *Scientific works of the National Library for Children named after V.I Vernadsky*, vol. 31, pp. 509–519.

13. Nezhyva L. (2014) The Methodological Model of Studying Literary Directions through the Prism of the Synergetic and Didactic Heuristics. *Academic Bulletin of Donbas : Electronic Scientific Specialized Edition*, no. 2. Retrieved from <http://nvd.luguniv.edu.ua/archiv/NN26/12.pdf> (accessed 29.05.2021).

14. Ohar E. (2007) Kryteriyi suchasnosti ta funktsionalnosti suchasnoyi ukrayinskoyi knyhy dlya ditey [Criteria of modernity and functionality of a modern Ukrainian book for children]. *Printing and publishing*, vol. 46, pp. 119–124.

15. PISA: chytatska hramotnist [PISA: reader literacy] (2017) / way. T. Vakulenko, S. Lomakovich & V. Tereshchenko. Kyiv: UTSOYAO.

16. Slavinsky Ya. (2013) Do problemy “mystetstva interpretatsiyi” [On the problem of “art of interpretation”] / translated from Polish by O. Sinchenko. *Synopsis: text, context, media*. no. 3–4. URL: <https://synopsis.kubg.edu.ua/index.php/synopsis/article/view/71>. (accessed 29.05.2021).

17. Shalahinov B. (2012) Chy diysno dlya ditey treba pysaty “tak samo, yak dlya doroslykh, tilky shche krashche”? (dytyacha literatura i sotsializatsiya maybutnoyi osobystosti) [Is it really necessary to write for children “just like for adults, only better”? (children’s literature and socialization of the future personality)]. *Literature. Children. Time. Bulletin of the Center for the Research of Literature for Children and Youth*, Ternopil : Navchalna knyha – Bohdan, vol. 2, pp. 10–17.

18. Voznyuk O. (2012). Pedahohichna synerhetyka: heneza, teoriya i praktyka [Pedagogical synergetics: genesis, theory and practice]. Zhytomyr: ZhSU Publishing House. Ivan Franko.

19. Zavhorodnya L., Tymoshenko YU. (2009) Analiz ta interpretatsiya yak tekstualni stratehiyi smyslotvorennya [Analysis and interpretation as

textual strategies of meaning making]. *Southern archive. Series: philological sciences*, no. 45, pp. 40–44.

**Information about the author:**

**Slyzhuk Olesia Alimivna,**

Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences,

Associate Professor at the Department of Ukrainian Literature

Zaporizhzhia National University

66, Zhukovsky str., Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine, 69600

[orcid.org/0000-0002-7696-6157](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7696-6157)