

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO PUPILS' RECEPTION OF CHILDREN'S LITERARY WORKS

Irina-Mariana TODORUȚ, PhD student

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1912-1345>

"Ion Creanga" State Pedagogical University of Chisinau

Abstract. Children's literature represents a fundamental domain of aesthetic and cultural education, playing a decisive role in the formation of reading competence and aesthetic sensitivity. This article explores the issue of literary reception from an educational perspective, focusing on the formative, cognitive, and cultural functions of children's literature. Literary reception is approached as an active process of meaning construction, mediated by the educational context and pedagogical intervention. The study highlights the importance of a coherent methodology of literary reception in fostering a sustainable reading culture and supporting the intellectual and emotional development of pupils.

Keywords: children's literature; literary reception; aesthetic education; reading culture; educational methodology.

ABORDĂRI METODOLOGICE ALE RECEPTĂRII DE CĂTRE ELEVI A CREAȚIILOR LITERARE PENTRU COPII

Rezumat. Literatura pentru copii reprezintă un domeniu fundamental al educației estetice și culturale, având un rol determinant în formarea competenței de lectură și a sensibilității estetice. Articolul abordează problematica receptării literare din perspectivă educațională, evidențiind funcțiile formative, cognitive și culturale ale literaturii pentru copii. Receptarea literară este analizată ca proces activ de construire a sensului, mediat de contextul educațional și intervenția pedagogică, subliniindu-se importanța unei metodologii coerente în formarea culturii lecturii.

Cuvinte-cheie: literatură pentru copii; receptare literară; educație estetică; cultura lecturii; metodologie educațională

Introduction

In contemporary society, marked by accelerated technological development and the fragmentation of cultural experience, literary reading faces significant challenges. The decline in pupils' interest in reading requires a reconsideration of the role of literature in school education and, implicitly, of the methodology used to approach literary texts. Children's literature should not be reduced to a form of entertainment or an auxiliary didactic tool, but understood as a privileged formative environment capable of supporting aesthetic education and cultural development. The reception of literary works represents an active process of meaning construction, involving the interaction between text, reader, and educational context. From this perspective, the methodology of children's literary reception becomes a key educational concern, aiming to transform reading into a meaningful and formative experience.

Children's Literature as the Art of the Word and a Cultural Phenomenon

Literature, as a specific form of art, represents a privileged means of symbolic reflection and reinterpretation of reality through artistic language. By employing narrative structures, imagery, and expressive devices, literary texts create complex universes of meaning that enable readers to explore fundamental human experiences such as identity, emotion, morality, and social interaction. Within this broad cultural framework, children's literature occupies a distinct yet integral position, preserving the essential function of the art of the word while adapting its forms and content to the cognitive, emotional, and experiential characteristics of young readers.

Children's literature does not simplify reality, but rather reconfigures it symbolically in accessible forms that correspond to the developmental stage of the child. Through stories, characters, and narrative situations, children are gradually introduced to abstract concepts, ethical dilemmas, and cultural values. The artistic language specific to children's literature—marked by clarity, imagery, and symbolic density—facilitates the formation of early aesthetic sensibility and supports the child's entry into the cultural space of literature.

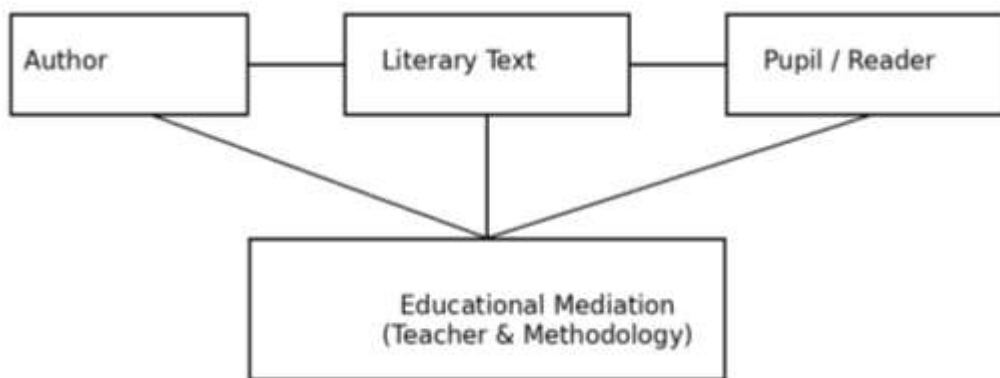
From a cultural perspective, literary texts addressed to children reflect social values, norms, and symbolic models characteristic of the community in which they are produced. These texts function as instruments of early cultural socialization, mediating the transmission of collective meanings and representations. Through systematic contact with literary works, children become familiar with narrative conventions, archetypal structures, and symbolic patterns that are fundamental to the literary tradition. This process contributes to the internalization of cultural codes and to the development of a coherent cultural identity.

Children's literature also plays a significant role in initiating young readers into the symbolic language of written culture. The encounter with narrative structures, figurative language, and aesthetic forms fosters the gradual acquisition of literary competence. As children engage with literary texts, they learn to recognize narrative sequences, interpret characters' actions, and infer implicit meanings. These skills form the basis of later, more complex literary interpretation and support the development of reflective and critical thinking.

In this sense, children's literature becomes a mediating space between the world of childhood and general culture. It bridges the gap between the immediate, concrete experience of the child and the abstract symbolic systems of culture. Through literary texts, children are encouraged to imagine alternative realities, to empathize with fictional characters, and to explore diverse perspectives. This mediating function enhances the formative potential of children's literature, positioning it as a central component of aesthetic education and cultural development.

By integrating artistic expression with educational value, children's literature contributes to the formation of reading competence and to the cultivation of a lasting relationship with literature. Its cultural and aesthetic dimensions support not only intellectual development but also emotional and moral growth. Therefore, understanding children's literature as both the art of the word and a cultural phenomenon is essential for the development of effective methodological approaches to literary reception in the educational context. The interaction between author, text and pupil is mediated by educational methodology, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Literary reception in the educational context



**Figure 1. The author–text–pupil relationship
mediated by educational methodology**

Aesthetic, Formative, and Cognitive Functions of Children's Literature

Children's literature fulfils a complex set of interrelated functions that manifest at aesthetic, formative, and cognitive levels, contributing to the holistic development of pupils. These functions are not isolated, but operate simultaneously within the act of literary reading, shaping both the intellectual and emotional dimensions of the child's personality. Understanding these functions is essential for the development of an effective methodology of literary reception in the educational context.

The aesthetic function of children's literature is primarily oriented toward the development of the capacity to perceive, appreciate, and internalize artistic values. Through figurative language, imagery, rhythm, and symbolic structures, literary texts cultivate aesthetic sensitivity and foster an appreciation for the beauty of artistic expression. Early exposure to aesthetically valuable texts enables pupils to develop taste, imagination, and sensitivity toward artistic forms, laying the foundations for a mature relationship with literature. The aesthetic experience offered by literary reading stimulates emotional engagement and contributes to the formation of a positive attitude toward reading.

The formative function of children's literature is closely linked to the development of moral, social, and emotional competencies. Literary texts present situations, characters, and conflicts that allow pupils to explore values such as empathy, responsibility, justice, and cooperation. Through identification with fictional characters and reflection on narrative situations, pupils gradually construct their own systems of values and attitudes. This formative dimension supports the development of emotional intelligence and social understanding, reinforcing the educational role of literary reading beyond the transmission of information.

At the cognitive level, children's literature contributes significantly to the development of linguistic competence, comprehension skills, and reflective thinking. Literary texts provide rich linguistic input that supports vocabulary expansion, syntactic awareness, and semantic understanding. Through narrative complexity and symbolic meaning, literary reading encourages pupils to analyze, interpret, and infer, thereby stimulating higher-order cognitive processes. The engagement with literary texts promotes active thinking and supports the gradual transition from concrete to abstract modes of reasoning.

The interaction between the aesthetic, formative, and cognitive functions of children's literature enhances the educational value of literary reading. These functions reinforce one another, creating a learning experience that integrates intellectual stimulation with emotional involvement. As pupils engage with literary texts, they develop not only reading competence, but also the ability to reflect on their own experiences and to relate them to broader cultural and symbolic frameworks.

In the educational context, the recognition of these functions underscores the necessity of a coherent methodological approach to literary reception. Teachers play a crucial role in guiding pupils toward the exploration of aesthetic meanings, the interpretation of symbolic content, and the reflection on formative values embedded in literary texts. By valorising the aesthetic, formative, and cognitive functions of children's literature, the educational process can foster a sustainable reading culture and support the comprehensive development of pupils.

The Author–Text–Reader Relationship in Literary Reception

Literary reception is grounded in a dynamic and interactive relationship between author, text, and reader, within which meaning is not fixed, but continuously constructed through the act of reading. The author structures the literary text by encoding meanings, symbols, and aesthetic intentions, yet the full realization of these meanings occurs only through the reader's interpretative activity. In this sense, the literary text functions as an open structure that invites multiple interpretations, depending on the reader's experiential and cultural background.

In the case of children's literature, the author–text–reader relationship is shaped by the developmental characteristics of young readers. Literary texts addressed to pupils are designed to facilitate gradual access to symbolic meanings, adapting narrative structures and expressive devices to their cognitive and emotional capacities. However, this adaptation does not diminish the artistic value of the text; rather, it enables an authentic encounter between the pupil and the literary work.

The reader plays an active role in the reception process, contributing personal experiences, emotions, and expectations to the interpretation of the text. Meaning emerges from the interaction between the textual structure and the reader's horizon of understanding. In the educational context, this interaction is mediated by pedagogical intervention, which supports pupils in navigating the symbolic and aesthetic dimensions of the literary work.

The teacher functions as a cultural mediator who facilitates dialogue between the pupil and the text, encouraging interpretative engagement and reflective reading. Through guided discussion and interpretative activities, pupils are supported in constructing meaning beyond surface comprehension. This interactive approach transforms literary reception into a formative experience that fosters critical thinking, aesthetic awareness, and cultural understanding.

Understanding the author–text–reader relationship is essential for the development of effective methodological strategies in literary education. By recognizing literary reception as a dialogic process, educational practice can move beyond mechanical reading and support the formation of autonomous, reflective readers.

Particularities of Literary Reception in Pupils

The process of literary reception in pupils is influenced by a range of psychological, cognitive, and educational factors that shape their interaction with literary texts. Pupils' comprehension and interpretation abilities evolve progressively, reflecting their level of linguistic development, prior reading experience, and motivational disposition toward reading. Literary reception in childhood is characterized by a strong affective component, as pupils often engage emotionally with characters and narrative situations.

At early stages of development, pupils tend to focus on concrete elements of the text, such as plot and characters, while gradually developing the ability to grasp symbolic meanings and abstract concepts. This progression underscores the importance of age-appropriate literary texts and pedagogical strategies that support interpretative growth. Exposure to diverse literary forms enhances pupils' interpretative flexibility and expands their cultural horizons.

Motivation plays a crucial role in literary reception. Pupils who associate reading with positive emotional experiences are more likely to engage actively in the reading

process. Educational contexts that encourage curiosity, imagination, and personal response contribute to the development of intrinsic motivation for reading. Therefore, the methodological approach to literary reception must be sensitive to pupils' emotional and motivational needs.

By fostering an environment that values interpretative freedom and personal engagement, educators can support meaningful literary reception. This approach enables pupils to construct personal meanings while gradually acquiring interpretative competence, contributing to the development of a sustainable reading culture.

Methodology of Literary Reception in the Educational Context

The methodology of literary reception encompasses a coherent set of pedagogical principles and strategies aimed at promoting pupils' active engagement with literary texts. Literary reception is conceived as a process that integrates cognitive, affective, and aesthetic dimensions, requiring a flexible and pupil-centred methodological framework.

Key methodological strategies include expressive reading, interpretative dialogue, symbolic analysis, and the correlation of literary content with pupils' personal experiences. Expressive reading enhances emotional engagement and facilitates access to the rhythm and imagery of the text. Interpretative dialogue encourages pupils to articulate their understanding, formulate hypotheses, and negotiate meaning collaboratively.

Symbolic analysis supports the exploration of deeper meanings embedded in literary texts, guiding pupils toward the recognition of metaphorical and thematic structures. The integration of personal experience allows pupils to connect literary content with their own lives, enhancing relevance and comprehension. These strategies contribute to the development of interpretative competence and reflective thinking.

Methodological flexibility is essential for addressing individual differences among pupils. Adaptation to developmental stages, learning styles, and cultural backgrounds ensures inclusive and meaningful literary reception. The teacher's role as mediator is crucial in orchestrating these strategies and creating a supportive learning environment.

Through a coherent methodology of literary reception, literary reading becomes a formative process that supports the development of reading competence, aesthetic sensitivity, and cultural awareness.

The Role of School and Teacher in Developing Reading Culture

The school represents the primary institutional framework for the systematic development of reading culture, offering pupils structured and continuous opportunities to engage with literary texts in a meaningful way. Beyond its instructional function, the school acts as a cultural space in which reading is legitimized as a formative practice, contributing to the intellectual, emotional and social development of pupils. Within this

educational environment, literary reading supports not only the acquisition of language skills, but also the formation of values, attitudes and cultural awareness.

The teacher plays a central and irreplaceable role in cultivating pupils' interest in literature and guiding their interpretative development. Acting as a cultural mediator, the teacher selects literary texts that are appropriate to pupils' age, cognitive level and emotional maturity, while also ensuring their aesthetic and educational value. Through thoughtful pedagogical mediation, the teacher facilitates pupils' encounter with literature, helping them move beyond surface comprehension toward interpretation, reflection and personal engagement with the text.

An essential aspect of this process is the creation of an open and dialogic classroom climate, which encourages pupils to express personal responses, share interpretations and engage in reflective discussion. When pupils are invited to articulate their own viewpoints and relate literary texts to their experiences, reading becomes a participatory and meaningful activity rather than a mechanical task. Such dialogic practices contribute to the development of critical thinking and strengthen pupils' motivation for reading.

Through consistent and coherent pedagogical intervention, the school can foster stable reading practices and promote positive attitudes toward literature. The development of reading culture requires sustained educational effort, continuity in instructional approaches and a shared pedagogical vision that values literary reading as a fundamental cultural practice. In this context, the collaboration between school and teacher becomes decisive in shaping pupils into active, reflective and motivated readers, capable of maintaining a long-term relationship with literary texts.

Conclusion

Children's literature represents a fundamental pillar of aesthetic and cultural education. When valorised through an adequate methodology of literary reception, it significantly contributes to the development of reading competence, aesthetic sensitivity, and reflective thinking. A systematic approach to literary reading within school education is essential for fostering a sustainable reading culture and for integrating pupils into the universe of cultural values. Through coherent pedagogical intervention, literary reading becomes an essential instrument of contemporary education.

These findings underline the necessity of integrating coherent methodological approaches to literary reception in contemporary educational practice.

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Email: irinatodorut2019@gmail.com