

RESEARCH OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN UKRAINIAN SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE¹

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary studies of children's literature are multi-dimensional and multidisciplinary. They cover texts and contexts, focus on both individual works or a writer's body of work and on theoretical generalizations of literary and cultural phenomena, as well as on national and comparative studies. However, in different countries, study of children's literature has its own specifics and history of development. In this article, the authors reviewed and analyzed the Ukrainian efforts in researching children's literature. The role and contribution of famous writers, scientists and teachers in affirming children's literature as a full-fledged subject of scientific studies was determined. The key trends in the development of Ukrainian studies of children's literature in the late 20th and the early 21st century were highlighted, listing the main problems which they raise. In this context, effective strategies, methodologies and critical approaches were considered in the research. These efforts revealed the potential of a systematic study of contemporary Ukrainian prose for children and youth as a multifaceted subject. They resulted in an outline of the concept of the artistic-aesthetic paradigm and the methodology of its cognition, which is based on the literary analysis of poetics that encompasses narrative, receptive-aesthetic, gender, post-colonial and other approaches as well as multidisciplinary studies.

KEYWORDS:

*research of children's literature,
literary strategy, didactic strategy,
multidisciplinary studies of
children's literature, methodology,
critical approach*

¹ In some parts, this article is based on fragments of our report on International Academic Conference "At the Same Table: The Position and Status of Research in Children's Literature and Culture" (Zagreb, 23–25 November 2023 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences).

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Ukrainian children's literature, as well as its scientific understanding, are overcoming marginality and have a good chance to be integrated into global scientific discourse. However, it was not always like that. In Ukraine, the study of children's literature has its own specifics and history of development. Social events determine key trends when it comes to scientific interest in literature that belongs to a certain topic or genre, the prevalence of particular images and motifs and activation of specific approaches to interpretation or analytical concepts.

Before becoming a full-fledged subject of Ukrainian scientific discourse, children's literature went "Cinderella's way" (Slavova, 2002). Even after a powerful stage of development at the beginning of the 20th century, which made it possible to talk about Ukrainian children's literature as an artistic and aesthetic phenomenon, its research was reduced to modest reviews of individual works or general remarks about the superiority of certain topics or genres that were considered useful for children's reading. It was only when literary and critical materials emerged at the beginning of the 20th century that Ukrainian writers and teachers started to create a tradition of scientific understanding of children's literature.

At first, analysis was dominated by the didactic optics, which involved the assessment of works addressed to children on the basis of their educational impact on the reader, i.e., their functional potential. However, already in the second half of the 20th century, children's literature research took on a different character. With the appearance of specialized magazines, which published articles and reviews focusing exclusively on this segment of literature, research became more systematic and scientifically analytical, causing a certain resonance and sparking discussion in literary circles. Well-known literary experts were involved in the analysis and assessment of children's literature, and some of them devoted separate scientific studies to the topic. However, many contemporary materials were ideologically driven.

It was only at the beginning of the 21st century that Ukrainian studies of children's literature managed to shed their marginal status and ideological dependence and censorship. Under the influence of foreign practices of active and versatile research of children's literature, which became widely available to the Ukrainian scientific audience from the late 1990s, more than two dozen scientists have been purposefully studying the theory and history of children's literature, forming a high-quality literary and critical discourse. Some of the factors fostering this

development include revival of book publishing, a new level of teaching of children's literature in institutions of higher education, development of programs for the promotion of children's reading, expansion of philological and pedagogical studies and implementation of interdisciplinary studies.

It is worth noting that the issue of the development of the Ukrainian tradition of children's literature research has not been comprehensively considered until now. However, there are works in which scientists Nataliia Marchenko (2024), Emilija Ogar (2012), Vitalina Kyzylova (2013a), Tetiana Kachak (2015), Olga Papusha (2004a) and Uliana Baran (2016a, 2016b) analyze various data, summarize and describe the state of research in children's literature dedicated to a certain period or a thematic or genre segment and tackle other components of textual or contextual consideration. Unfortunately, this remains limited to Ukrainian scientists because neither children's literature nor scientific studies about it were available to readers outside of Ukraine until recently. Open-access publications in English started to appear only in the last decade.

METHODOLOGY

In our article, we aim to review and analyze the Ukrainian efforts in researching children's literature, specifically:

- 1) to determine the role and contribution of famous writers, scientists and teachers in affirming children's literature as a full-fledged subject of scientific studies;
- 2) to highlight the key trends in the development of Ukrainian studies of children's literature at the end of the 20th and in the early 21st century;
- 3) to consider effective strategies, methodologies and critical approaches in this context.

The methodological basis of our research is a thorough analysis of scientific articles, monographs, critical materials and publications in periodicals devoted to the issues of theory, history and criticism of children's literature and published by Ukrainian scientists during the 20th and in the early 21st century.

Literary and didactic approaches are employed in order to highlight the selected problem. We define the conceptual potential of a systematic analysis of the poet-

ics of an artistic work addressed to children. We partially justify the expediency of using gender and narratological research approaches and methods as well as communication theory in children's literature studies.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AS A SUBJECT OF SCIENTIFIC AND CRITICAL REFLECTION BY UKRAINIAN WRITERS AND TEACHERS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

In Ukraine, literature addressed specifically to children began to actively develop only at the end of the 19th century. It flourished at the beginning of the 20th century, when famous writers Olena Pchilka, Ivan Franko, Lesya Ukrainka, Mykhailo Kotsyubynskyi, Borys Grinchenko, Oleksandr Oles, Dniprova Chai-ka, Ulyana Kravchenko, Kostyantina Malytska and others were writing for children. The well-known magazine "Dzvinok" ("Call", 1890-1914) was published in Lviv. Olena Pchilka was publishing the children's periodical "Moloda Ukraina" ("Young Ukraine", 1900 – 1903, 1923 – 1926). Ukrainian translations of well-known works by Daniel Defoe, Mark Twain, Fenimore Cooper and others were printed and made available for children's reading.

Ivan Franko (1856 – 1916), Olena Pchilka (1849 – 1930), Lesya Ukrainka (1871 – 1913) and Borys Grinchenko (1863 – 1910) not only wrote for children, but also thought about what literature for children should be like. They paid attention to the peculiarities of children's reading, the choice of topics and genre design of texts. They laid the foundations for the perception of children's literature as a subject of critical evaluations, literary and pedagogical scientific studies.

Ivan Franko believed that children should read works that develop their minds, feelings and spirituality. These include short travelling stories, folk and family life tales, where the presentation is vivid and clear and the expression short, simple and clear. Science and morality should be the main elements and foundations of such works. Therefore, many works translated from English were very well suited, such as the well-known "Robinson Crusoe" and the life of Uncle Tom, Cooper's "Hawkeye" and its sequels (Franko, 2008).

Even then, I. Franko drew attention to the gender aspect of children's literature: "We will give the boy a story, vividly and easily created, and the girl (a little later) a poem, not written for children, but imbued with deep and true feelings, or an invitation from family, home life" (Franko, 2008). These reflections were based

on the societal gender stereotypes at that time.

The writer expressed his personal views on the fairy tale genre in the afterword to the collection "When the beasts still spoke" (1899), entitled "Fable about the fable". Tales about animals, in his opinion, are the best lectures for young children as they convey to the young reader a wise folk view of life's conflicts, an optimistic belief in the victory of what is good and true. The fairy tale "introduces the world of simple characters and simple relationships", where "everything is clearly visible and sympathies do not need to be shared" (Franko, 1979).

Borys Grinchenko reflected on the theoretical problems of children's literature and "demanded artistry, the absence of moralizing from works for children" (Kostiuchenko, 2009). In the article "Regarding the issue of a magazine for children's reading in the folk school" (published under the pseudonym B. K. Vilkhivskyi in 1895), the author sets requirements for children's periodicals and for works of art:

- 1) every work in a magazine must be imbued with a moral ideal;
- 2) in their works, authors should depict real life for children, but not omit "a lot of dark things";
- 3) works must be truthful and artistic, must foster a sense of truth, goodness and love for all people;
- 4) the plot should always be interesting, chosen from life, always wise (Vilkhivskyi, 1895).

In practice, these requirements were implemented in the children's magazine "Dzvinok", and the mentioned article is almost the only literary and critical material about children's literature at that time.

B. Grinchenko defended the opinion that children's literature is a specific type of literature, committed to the stimulation of national self-knowledge. The same opinion was held by Olena Pchilka, who stated in "Autobiography": "... although there were almost no Ukrainian books for children, there were still only a few families who wanted to get them; because at that time, children's books were not clearly distinguished from non-children's books. Children read Kulish's works and Marko Vovchko's stories with great pleasure. The work "Mr. Tvardovsky" by Hulak-Artemovsky was known by heart. Andersen's fairy tales and Serbian songs translated by Starytskyi were a great contribution to children's lectures" (Pchilka, 1930). These were the last decades of the 19th century, and the fact that

at that time children's and non-children's books were not differentiated also testifies to the lack of thorough research in this context.

Unfortunately, with the beginning of the creation of the Soviet Union, children's literature was limited to ideological ideas and subjected to strict censorship. In fact, from the 1920s to the 1990s, pedagogical and ideological points of view prevailed in understanding children's literature. Cognitive and educational influence on the reader was considered in children's literature, which was seen as a pedagogical instrument and not a subject of scientific studies from the artistic and aesthetic perspective. In the early 1930s, there were even discussions on this matter, the genre of fairy tales was banned, and the issue of children's literature was brought to the All-Ukrainian meeting in 1934.

From the 1920s and 1930s, the People's Commissariat of Education strictly controlled the publication and distribution of children's literature, considering it to be the main means of ideological education of the younger generation (Kachak, 2016: 137-140).

The printed word was considered to be one of the most powerful tools for the party's influence on the masses, and "children's literature was one of the most important tools in the process of creation homo sovieticus" (Świetlicki, 2015).

It is worth noting that the full-fledged development of Ukrainian children's literature, and therefore its research, was made impossible not only by ideological bias, but also by Russification and cultural colonialism, which was relentlessly implemented by the Soviet government. The popularization of Russian authors and works took place against the backdrop of repressions, accusations against writers of Ukrainian nationalism (M. Johansen, G. Epic, V. Vynnychenko, B. Lepky, V. Koroliv-Stary, etc.), prohibitions and restrictions on the use of the Ukrainian language in education, book publishing and other spheres of public life, discrimination against Ukrainian culture and art. In analyzing the publication of children's literature in Ukraine in the 1920s and 1930s, S. Zhygun notes the presence of an ideological component, the "rejection of national traditions" and the "dominance of Russia and its representatives" (Zhygun, 2022).

The situation with research in the Ukrainian diaspora was different. This is evidenced by the work "Ukrainian Children's Literature. An Attempt at a Review and Problems" (Hoshovskyi, 1966) by Bohdan Goshovskyi (1907 – 1986), who managed to avoid ideological requirements in his periodization and interpretation of the history of the development of Ukrainian children's literature. He also analyzed texts from a philological point of view in a socio-cultural context. He wrote

about the theory and criticism of children's literature, condemned the communist and russifying character of both Soviet children's literature and the articles about it. The writer noted that "research, critical consideration and problems of Ukrainian children's literature have deepened especially in the last twenty years" (Hoshovskyi, 1966, p. 14), which resulted in a "complete and not falsified" history of literature. "And this can be worked out and published not in the enslaved Ukraine, but only in a free country", which was the task of Ukrainian emigration.

In the 1960s, during the so-called Khrushchev era, following Stalin's death, there was a revival of national literature. Artistic and aesthetic works for children appeared (stories by Dmytro Pavlychko, Lina Kostenko, Grihyr Tyutyunnyk, Yevhen Gutsalo, Mykola Vingranovskyi, Vsevolod Nestaiko, Viktor Blyznets, etc.). The 1970s were marked by the activity of "Veselka", the only publishing house for children's books in the Soviet Ukraine.

In 1968, 1969, 1971 and 1972, annual literary and critical collections "Vesnyani obrii" ("Spring Horizons") were published, and later, from 1976 to 1990, several issues of the literary and critical journal "Literature. Children. Time" (15 volumes in total) were released (Gazhaman & Timochka, 2014). They contained reviews of published children's books, articles, research papers and literary portraits of children's authors. These publications filled the gap in children's literature research at that time (Kachak, 2020). "Spring Horizons" editions were published on over 200 pages and were divided into sections: "Literature for children and modernity", "A word to our brothers", "Literary portraits and explorations", "Reader and children's literature", "Reviews". As Iryna Boiko notes, "A prominent place in the almanacks was given to the comprehensive section 'Literature for children and modernity'. So, achievements or miscalculations in individual genres (fairy tales, prose, poetry, humor, fiction) were analyzed here, works of the same theme (heroic-patriotic, international, labor education) were compared, reviews of the work of individual writers were presented (for example, Oles Donchenko, Yurii Zbanatskii, Dmytro Bilous, Panas Vysikana and others" (Boiko, 2014: 5).

"Literature. Children. Time" covered a much wider range. In the updated edition, thirty-three pages of color inserts were added, on which the covers and illustrations of children's books were placed. Every year, new sections were added, reflecting the diversification of the publication's content: "The artist and the book", "Chronicle" (since 1976), "Tribune of the young critic", "On the artistic meridians", "Literary calendar" (since 1977), "School and literature for chil-

dren", "Golden seeds of the classics" (since 1980), "In the writer's workshop" (since 1982), "Foreign literature" (since 1983), "School reform is a national issue" (1985), "School reform in action", "Library. Book. Reader" (since 1986), "School reform and teaching of literature", "A word to high school students" (1987), "Native language" (1988), "Restructuring of school and teaching of literature" (1989), "Just saw the world" (1989). Since 1983, bibliographic lists of publications devoted to children's literature have been published.

Among the authors of the annual edition "Literature. Children. Time" (edited by V. Nedilko), there were eminent writers (O. Gonchar, N. Zabyla, O. Ivanenko, Yu. Zbanatskyi, Yu. Mushketyk, G. Boyko, V. Blyznets, D. Bilous, E. Gutsalo, V. Nestaiko, Yu. Yarmysh, T. Kolomiets, etc.) as well as many new writers. Active authors were also teachers at Ukrainian institutes and universities, school teachers and employees of children's libraries.

In the early 1990s, due to financial instability, the collection ceased to exist. In 2014, the National Library of Ukraine for Children published a systematic index of the contents of collections of literary and critical articles on children's literature (Gazhaman & Timochka, 2014).

As we can see, the number of publications devoted to children's literature started to increase already in the 1970s. Dissertation studies appeared, in which texts were thoroughly and comprehensively analyzed. A philological approach to the study of children's literature in the late 1970s was offered by Lyubov Kilichenko, the author of the textbook for students "Children's Literature" (1988). Scientists Dmytro Biletskii ("Paths of development of Ukrainian children's literature (1917 - 1967)" (1972), Yurii Yarmysh ("Ukrainian Soviet literary fairy tale (1917 - 1967)" (1974) and Sergii Ivaniuk ("Ukrainian Soviet prose for children. 1917 - 1941. The hero and the concept of the addressee" (1987) also analyzed the truth behind Soviet children's literature.

The number of literary and critical materials about children's works and books is increasing. For example, in 1983, "27 articles, reviews, four portraits of writers, 56 reviews and 7 materials on artistic design appeared. In the following year, the number of reviews increased by several dozen, and in 1988, it already exceeded 100" (Boiko, 2014: 8).

Since the 1990s, when Ukraine's independence was restored, the prejudiced attitude towards children's literature as a marginal subject of literary or bibliographic research has finally disappeared. Children's literature has become the focus of attention of publishers, organizers of children's readings and scientists.

THE KEY TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF UKRAINIAN STUDIES OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AT THE END OF THE 20TH AND IN THE EARLY 21ST CENTURY

Contemporary Ukrainian literature for children and youth as an artistic-aesthetic and socio-cultural phenomenon emerges on the basis of the best national literary traditions on the verge of destruction by a totalitarian and the formation of a post-totalitarian society. It is not a coincidence that the countdown to this stage started in 1991 - the time when Ukraine's independence was restored. This was the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, which became a colony for many peoples and prevented free development of their national culture and literature for decades.

The factors that contributed to the development of contemporary Ukrainian children's literature are:

- 1) Active development of book publishing for children of all ages, a broad and diverse range of both original and translated literature; more than 60 Ukrainian publishers have issued books for children and young adults over the past 20 years.
- 2) A new school canon is being created, in which a significant part is occupied by contemporary literature addressed specifically to young readers;
- 3) In recent decades, numerous campaigns promoting reading, literary competitions, awards, projects and state programs have supported children's reading.
- 4) Active cooperation with partners from other countries, translations of new foreign books into Ukrainian, and vice versa. Ukrainians participate in European and global literary events and reading projects (participation in book exhibitions, competitions and programs).

Specific interest in Ukrainian children's literature and children's books is growing. This is evidenced by translations into other languages and awards at international book fairs. More than two dozen Ukrainian books were included in the annual catalogue of book recommendations for international children's and youth literature "White Ravens" from 2011 to 2023, and the "Old Lion Publishing House" was recognized as the best publisher of children's literature in Europe at the 60th Bologna International Children's Book Fair (2023). Children's books are

also being published during the war which is ongoing in our country.

Contemporary Ukrainian literature for children and youth as an artistic-aesthetic and socio-cultural phenomenon is an attractive and promising subject of literary and multidisciplinary scientific research.

Many works on its various aspects have appeared in Ukrainian literary criticism (Kachak, 2018, p. 33). We briefly mention the most eminent scholars of Ukrainian children's literature:

- Emilia Ohar (2012) explores children's books as a literary and publishing phenomenon;
- Vitalina Kyzylova (2013a), Tetiana Kachak (2016; 2018; 2019; 2022b), Lilia Ovdiychuk (2015), Iryna Boitsun (2013), Olha Buduhaj (2007), Oksana Garachkovska (2008), Olha Gorbonos (2008), Natalia Devyatko (2009) and others explore the artistic specifics, themes and genres of Ukrainian children's literature;
- Olha Papusha (2004 b), Kateryna Zaitseva (2012), Ulyana Baran (Hnidec) (2011; 2016a) analyze children's literature through the prism of narrative theory and communication theory;
- Natalia Marchenko (2010; 2014; 2024) studies biography for children and interprets the work of writers using a combination of biographical and other approaches;
- Bohdana Salyuk (2013) works on the issue of comparative literature and explores the typology of main characters;
- Lydia Matsevko-Bekerska (2011) and Tetiana Kachak (2017c; 2018; 2019) elaborate theoretical issues of interpretation and poetics of texts for young readers;
- Oksana Panko (2014) and Tetyana Blyznyuk (Kachak, Blyznyuk et al., 2022) conduct receptive analysis of children's literature from a comparative point of view;
- Yulia Kumanska (2021) offers interpretation of children's literature using the theoretical framework of environmental criticism;
- Vitalina Kyzylova (2013b; 2014), Tetiana Kachak (2009; 2017b; 2017d) and Olena Ryzhko (2023) analyze contemporary Ukrainian literature for children and young adults using the perspective of gender studies;
- Maryna Vardanyan (2018) analyzes emigrant Ukrainian children's literature.

Ukrainian Research Center of Children's and Youth Literature has resumed the publishing of the journal "Literature. Children. Time" (2011) and also organizes annual festivals and conferences dedicated to the study of children's literature.

In the 21st century, attention to children's literature in the cultural space is noticeably growing. Thanks to the work of libraries and professional associations of public activists, Internet platforms are emerging that provide information about old and new children's books, interviews with authors, professional reviews and scientific articles on the topic of children's literature. The National Library of Ukraine for Children has launched a project called "Key", aimed at young readers and specialists and researchers of children's literature (KLIUCH, 2010), as well as the children's reading support project "BaraBooka. The space of the Ukrainian children's book" (Barabooka, 2014).

In the research of children's literature in the past 20 years, we have noticed the following trends:

- focus on artistic features of the poetics of texts, more frequently in the historical context and less frequently within the framework of the theory of literature or study methodology;
- attention to individual works, the work of a certain writer, but not on the literature of a particular historical and literary period;
- thematic literary and critical reviews of published books prevail over systematized and generalized studies of children's literature within a certain period or cultural process;
- prose works rather than poetic works are more common in the field of researchers' vision;
- sporadic study of literature for children and youth in the context of the Ukrainian and global literary process;
- more frequent use of historical-typological and receptive-aesthetic approaches, insufficient attention to psychological, cultural, gender, post-colonial, psychoanalytic, hermeneutic, structuralist, etc. approaches;
- insufficient practice of comparative studies.

In the 2020s, Ukraine was once again forced to fight for its independence, against the occupation and genocide committed by Russia. The full-scale war that Russia started in February 2022 implies not only murders of Ukrainians, total destruction of cities and villages and ecological disaster; it also hinders

the economic and cultural development of society. All the events that we are experiencing now, childhoods ruined by war – everything is reflected in contemporary children's books. The war topic was prevalent in dozens of children's books from 2022 to 2024. Among them, there were picture books, fairy tales, illustrated books, short stories, poems and novels for teenagers (Kachak & Blyznyuk, 2024).

Emphasis is also changing in research discourse. The following areas of children's literature research are particularly relevant now:

- military topics and interest in other socially important issues in writers' works addressed to children;
- analysis of psychologism, emotional load of texts;
- young characters and models of their behavior in modern books;
- formation of general developmental trends (including European trends);
- evolution of certain genres of children's literature, in particular picture books as a combination of verbal and visual art;
- problems of translation and representation of Ukrainian children's books worldwide;
- interdisciplinary research of children's literature;
- comparative studies;
- use of children's books in the education and adaptation of Ukrainian refugee children in European schools.

STRATEGIES, METHODOLOGIES AND CRITICAL APPROACHES IN CONTEMPORARY UKRAINIAN STUDIES OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

At the beginning of the 21st century, in terms of scientific discourse in children's literature research, Ukrainian literary studies reached the threshold of overcoming the chaotic search for "methodological support, sometimes in pedagogy and psychoanalysis, then in information theory and semiotics, then in receptive aesthetics and cultural studies" (Slavova, 2002, p. 8), characteristic of the 1990s. Back then, Margaryta Slavova aptly noted that "the diachronic perspective of approaches to children's literature leads to the 'didactic-artistic' relation, which remains unchanged in its essence and self-awareness since it examines aesthet-

ic issues through a pedagogical perspective" (Slavova, 2002, p. 8). She singled out four main approaches to children's literature (pedagogical and psychological approaches, analysis of children's literature in the context of receptive aesthetics and cultural studies). Most often, literature for children and youth is the subject of philological attention (in the broadest sense). It is far less frequently considered through the prism of the pedagogical approach that was popular in the 20th century. This approach was based on a didactic strategy centered on the functional aspect of literature. For Slavova, a work is not just an artistic and aesthetic phenomenon, but a means of learning, cognition and upbringing.

Among the interpretive strategies applied to works for children and youth, the most common is the literary one, which unfolds on the plane of analysis of the work as an aesthetic and artistic phenomenon and is designed to reveal the specifics of literature for children at the level of the poetics of texts, as well as to point out its artistic originality and trends. In recent years, a multidisciplinary strategy has become popular. It involves the interaction of various branches of scientific knowledge in the study of literature for children and youth as a multifaceted socio-cultural phenomenon. The cognitive basis and tools for its research are knowl-

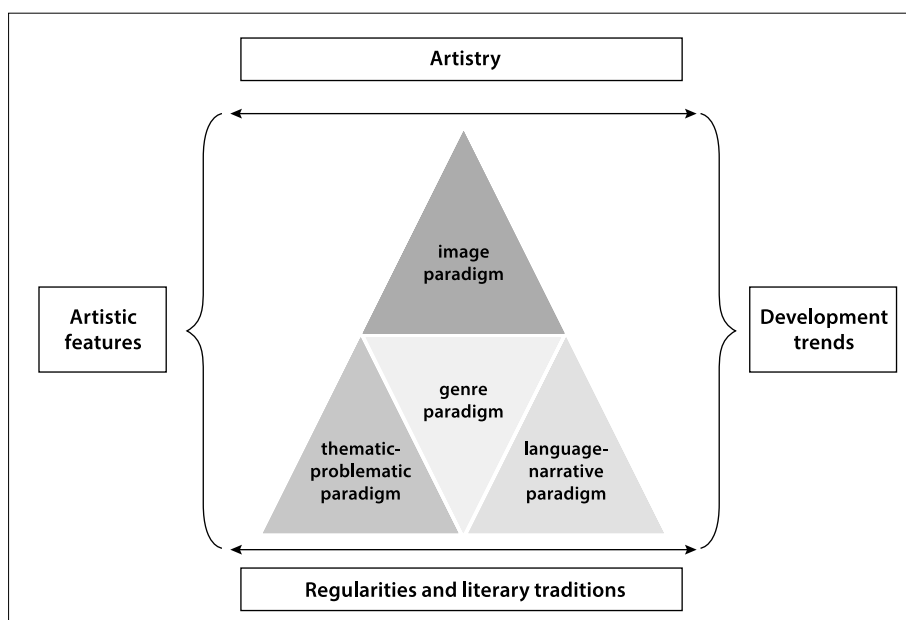


FIGURE 1 Structure of the artistic and aesthetic paradigm of contemporary Ukrainian prose for children and youth

edge and methodology of various academic courses: literary studies, pedagogy, psychology, philosophy, cultural studies, anthropology, sociology and others.

In order to understand the essence of contemporary Ukrainian literature for children and youth as a holistic literary phenomenon, we developed the concept of analyzing the artistic and aesthetic paradigm of a certain segment of literature at a particular stage (Kachak, 2019) (Fig.1).

This paradigm is a multi-component macro-system which consists of poetic sub-paradigms (thematic-problematic, genre, figurative, language-narrative, time-space) and paradigmatic relations of their structural units. Its nature is determined by artistic features and trends in the development of a specific segment of literature. The use of the abstract concept of "artistic-aesthetic paradigm" is legitimate, taking into account the multifaceted essence of the subject of research (a collection of works, various substantive and formal ways of textual implementation of various aspects, which make up a multi-component structure built on paradigmatic connections).

This concept is built on the basis of a systematic analysis of the poetics of the text, strengthened by the toolkit of current critical approaches (communicative, narrative, receptive, gender, psychoanalytical, postcolonial, etc.) and multidisciplinary studies.

The philological interpretation focuses first of all on a text that represents the problem of the author and the reader, creation and perception. Only after finding out the WHAT (the essence of the subject) is it possible to conduct a full-fledged study of HOW and WHY; for what purpose this WHAT was created by the author (the author's intentions, artistic thinking, motives for building a dialogue with a young reader, aspects of the author's artistic creativity, etc.) and HOW it is perceived by the reader.

This concept was tested in the study of contemporary Ukrainian prose for children and youth (Kachak, 2018) and received positive reviews (Świetlicki, 2019). On the basis of the analysis of the artistic and aesthetic paradigm and its key sub-paradigms, we defined general tendencies of the prose evolution for children of preschool and junior school age and the teenage-youth audience: scope of thematic and genre niches, artistic and aesthetic quality, updating the poetics of works, mastering the experience of foreign writers; changes in functional aspects of the artistic text, i.e., the rejection of didacticism and ideological engagement; the orientation to the modern child and adequate conversation with him/her. As a result, certain generalizations were made:

- chart of the most relevant topics and problems,
- by taking into account structural and historical-typological methods as well as receptive poetics, the genre system of contemporary Ukrainian prose for children and youth is explored and a classification of prose genres suggested,
- from the standpoint of narratology, receptive aesthetics and psychoanalytic studies, the specifics and patterns in creation of children-heroes in texts of different genres with specific narratives were revealed and analyzed; the typology of the main characters in realistic, adventure, biographical and fantastic prose was determined,
- the peculiarities of narrative practices and the specifics in the depiction of place and time in texts of various genres were outlined.

Literature for children and youth cannot be studied outside of contexts as its specifics lie in the *orientation* to the addressee, who is outside the text (receptive-aesthetic approach), in *psychological features* of creating and reading textual meanings (psychoanalytic approach), in *prescribing feminine and masculine concepts* in the text (gender, feminist approaches, masculinity studies), in *societal ideas* about childhood and childhood subculture (cultural), etc.

The theory of communication is a productive methodological platform for researching literature for children and youth.

Foreign researchers Michael Benton, Hans-Heino Ewers, Cordula Kahrman, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, Emer O'Sullivan, Maria Nikolajeva, Peter Hunt and Zohar Shavit study in detail the problems of communication between the author and the reader through the text in various national and historical-literary contexts. In Ukraine, Ulyana Baran, Alyona Boychuk, Kateryna Zaytseva, Lidiya Matsevko-Bekerska, Oksana Panko, Olga Papusha and others address these questions.

"Author-text-reader" is the conceptual basis, the key to understanding the tendencies of the narrative and receptive-aesthetic plan. The author, as one of the components of the communication paradigm, is interesting as an optic in the interpretation of textual reality, which can also be considered through the prism of biography and the analysis of national and cultural context. The text as a component of communication is the main subject in the process of determining trends and artistic features of modern literature for children and youth. The reader (in the textual and contextual dimension) is a category that determines the specifics

of literature for children and youth, which can be proven by taking into account the theoretical ideas of R. Barthes, G. Jauss, V. Iser, U. Eco, M. Zubrytska and D. Appleyard.

The type of reading and perception of texts by readers depends on their belonging to the age category (reader-player, reader-hero, thinking reader, reader-interpreter, pragmatic reader (Appleyard, 2005) and explains the interest in works of a certain genre, compositional structure or direction (adventure or psychological; realistic or fantastic) and the possibility of receiving enjoyment (Barthes, 1975) in the process of reading.

“Writers addressing works to children consciously project the reader of a certain age with a certain level of life experience, a certain gender, with its inherent mechanisms of understanding what is read and creation of new meanings of the work” (Kachak, Blyznyuk et al., 2022). Often, adult authors are guided by the “partial experience” of their addressees, trying to simplify their own vision of the world, offer “the world through the eyes of a child”. Much also depends on whether the writer has crossed the line beyond which the conflict between the author's and the reader's experiences begins. An important factor in a child's perception of a work is the author's orientation to the horizon of the reader's expectations, the new format of childhood and the implementation of the initial function of literature. Children strive to acquire new experience, “improve empirical knowledge”, so each new book is a step of great initiation (Matsevko-Bekerska, 2011).

The writer's orientation towards a potential reader (U. Eco) occurs through the choice of a peculiar linguistic code, literary style and specialized indices. “Adequate understanding of the text by young readers, as well as its strategic direction, depend on the inner textual projection, the author's intentions, the ability to predict the model reader and “create competence” (Kachak, Blyznyuk et al., 2022). The reading behavior of the child-recipient has its own specifics and is also determined by literary and non-literary factors.

Although the subjective nature of reader receptions complicates their study, research through the prism of phenomenological-receptional ideas is an important key to a holistic discourse on the interpretation of literary texts.

Narrative theory makes it possible to characterize the features of narrative discourse in children's literature, to classify narrative models in texts (which can be based on the criteria of content (what is said) or form, discourse (how it is said)), to analyze more deeply the dominant trends of plot-oriented or psychology-ori-

ented prose for children and youth (Nikolayeva, 2004), to create a typology of child heroes in various genres of texts or to analyze a gallery of characters within one text.

Application of the narrative approach in the study of children's literature concerns the following aspects:

- 1) determining the type of narrator (extradiegetic or diegetic or intradiegetic; homodiegetic (metadiegetic) or heterodiegetic) (Schmid, 2010), a characteristic of the author's presence and position in the text, from which events and situations in the artistic narrative are presented to readers, as well as the "point of view" (a way of expressing the subject).
- 2) overview of structural units of the narrative text (motif, event, plot); attention to plot modeling, presentation of sequence of events in literature for children and youth, order of the narrative (including functions of anachronisms), duration and forms of movement in narratives (narrative frequency: functions of iterative and singular narrative, manifestations of isochrony) (Papusha, 2004);
- 3) definition of the type of narrative structures (action-oriented or character-oriented, proposed by M. Nikolajeva (2004, p. 166)) and narrative models (traditional and non-traditional, linear and non-linear, centric and acentric types (Siruk, 2003), or autobiographical, monological and postmodern narrative models of two varieties (with intertextual structure and with game structure), fantasy narrative model (Riabchenko, 2011);
- 4) typology of character representation from the standpoint of narrative theory, which takes into account narratological aspects of the character (a set of artistic techniques used by the author to reveal the character), static/dynamic character depiction, centering on one hero, several heroes or a group of main characters (Kachak, 2022a) within the framework of a single work. Contemporary Ukrainian prose for children and youth uses different variations of including a character in the narrative framework of the text and practices different ways and types of presenting the thoughts and statements of characters (Fig. 2).

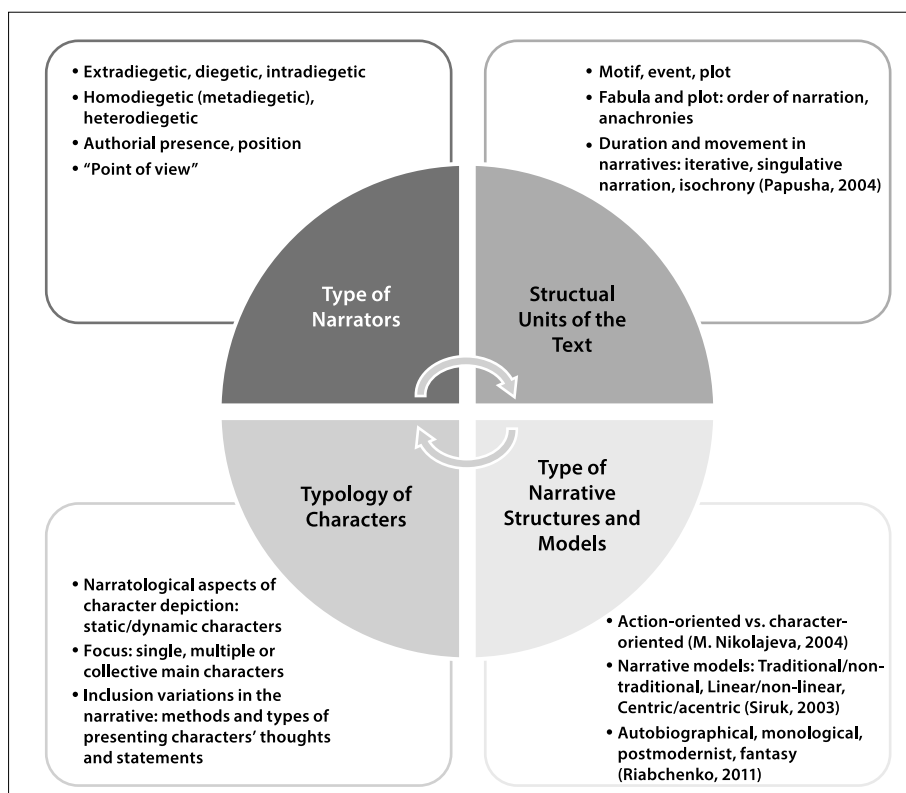


FIGURE 2 Application of the narrative approach in the study of children's literature

We consider the gender approach an effective tool for learning about contemporary prose for children and youth. The relevance of its use in relation to this research is determined by the appearance of texts addressed to young readers with clear gender marking and functional aspects related to gender identification and socialization (Kachak, 2018: 218 - 273).

Feminist criticism (the works of Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Milet, Elaine Showalter, Nila Zborovska, etc.) is part of the theoretical and methodological base for research into the peculiarities of artistic thinking and "female writing", the main construct of "girlish/feminine experience" in the so-called "girlish texts" written mostly by female authors ("Behind the Looking Glass" by Oksana Lushchevska, "Schoolgirl from the Suburbs" by Oksana Dumanska, "My Mother's Transitional Age" by Iryna Matsko, a collection of short stories "Chat for Girls", "Marta from St. Nicholas Street", etc.) (Kachak, 2017b).

In the study of children's literature, masculinity studies (Elizabeth Badinter, Robert Conel, Michael Kimmel, Pierre Bourdieu, Igor Kohn, Zbyszek Melosik, Jacek Kohanowski, Eva Kosowska Sedgwick, Agnieszka Matusek, Mateusz Świetlicki) provide the methodological basis and toolkit for gender studies prose about boys (Serhii Hrydin, Oleksandr Gavrosh, Volodymyr Rutkivskyi, Andriy Kokotyukha, etc.), where male identity dominates and a masculine discourse unfolds.

The gender approach is also relevant in understanding and interpretation of gender-symmetrical prose, in which stereotypes and images of masculinity and male identity are reproduced alongside similar feminine phenomena (Stepan Protsyuk, Nadia Bila, Vasyl Teremko).

The toolkit for feminist critique, masculine and gender studies revealed an understanding of realistic teenage-youth texts with gender labelling, which formed a vivid paradigm tendency of contemporary literature for children and youth - the formation of real girls, boys and gender-symmetrical discourses. The definition of texts as those "for girls" and "for boys" was based on the criteria relating to the interrelated categories – "author / text / reader" and the dichotomy "feminine / masculine". In a work resulting from the author's gender-marked experience, articulation is taken into account along with autobiographical moments, gender poetics, centring of characters of a certain gender, the type of narrative model, orientation and addressing of the text to the readers of a particular gender.

The interpretation of texts through the prism of gender reading reveals the manifestations of male and female self-presentation, ways of creation and reception. These aspects are specific in the literature addressed to children as it relates to the theory and practice of upbringing, formation of young personalities with properly formed ideas about gender roles, gender stereotypes and mechanisms of gender identity. Children's literature is one of the factors in gender socialization of a child, and the use of the gender approach in its research involves consideration of scientific achievements in age- and gender-psychology and gender pedagogy.

We offer our own model of children's literature research by using the tools of the gender approach, which is built on the communication paradigm "author-text-reader", where the hero/character dominates at the text level as a representative of gender identity, a certain type of behavior, a participant in gender relations, a carrier of gender culture (both stereotypical and going beyond gender perceptions) (Kachak, 2019). The subject of research is gender

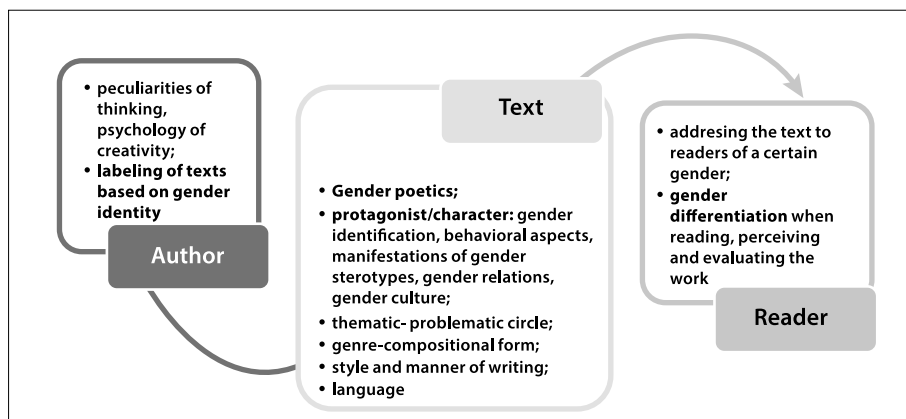


FIGURE 3 Model of children's literature research using the tools of the gender approach

poetics as a set of artistic, gender-marked features of the work. Methods of creation, distribution, functioning and reception of texts are taken into account (Fig.3).

POSTCOLONIAL THEORY (CRITICISM) AND LITERATURE RESEARCH FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Taking into account that the focus of this research is the Ukrainian literature for children and youth which was written after the 1990s in the post-Soviet, post-colonial and post-communist period, the tools of the post-colonial approach turned out to be relevant (Roderick Mc Gillis and Meena Khorana, Perry Nodelman, Karín Lesnik-Oberstein, Deborah Cogan Thacker, Charles Sarland, Mateusz Świ- etlicki). Post-colonial interpretation was used in the process of studying works on anti-colonial and post-colonial themes (Kachak, 2014; 2017a), which depict children and childhood in totalitarian, transitional, post-totalitarian and post-com-munist times in realist and psychological novels for teenagers (prose by Volo- dymyr Rutkivskyi, Zirka Menzatyuk, Stepan Protsyuk). The concepts of “lost childhood”, totalitarian trauma of the generation of Soviet children and depiction of children of the transitional era are explored as subjects of postcolonial research. The functional possibilities of literature for children and youth, considered in the light of the post-colonial practice of writing and reading, are important.

The research of the artistic and aesthetic paradigm and the analysis of trends in

their statistical and dynamic manifestations deepen and define scientific achievements in the sphere of contemporary Ukrainian literature for children and youth and provide insights into its specificity (in content, genre-style, figurative, narrative, linguistic and receptive aspects). The work expands scientific understanding of the basic principles of functioning and development of this segment of literature; opens up a scientific perspective and enriches the heuristic tools of knowledge from the point of view of this artistic, aesthetic and socio-cultural phenomenon.

Conclusion. As evidenced by the analysis of scientific articles, monographs, critical materials, publications in periodicals devoted to the issues of theory, history and criticism of children's literature and published by Ukrainian scientists during the 20th and in the early 21st century, the study of children's literature in the Ukrainian scientific discourse has originated in literary and critical reviews and literary considerations about this segment provided by famous writers and teachers in the period of transition from the 19th into the 20th century – Ivan Franko, Borys Grinchenko, Olena Pchilka, Lesya Ukrainka.

Later, children's literature was considered by Soviet critics through the prism of the didactic approach and the ideological aspect. And only thanks to diaspora publications, in particular the research of B. Hoshovsky, we now have an ideologically disengaged understanding of the history of Ukrainian children's literature, its periodization and general overview.

From the second half of the 20th century onwards, the research of children's literature became systematic, purposeful and professional owing to the appearance of the collections "Spring horizons" and "Literature. Children. Time", which used to publish articles and reviews dedicated only to books addressed to young readers. Dissertation and monographic studies appeared, but those were, unfortunately, largely based on the requirements posed by the Soviet ideology of the time. The systematic history of children's literature was presented in a textbook by L. Kilichenko.

The situation changed with the restoration of Ukraine's independence in the 1990s. Ukrainian scientists have been introduced to a much wider methodological platform of foreign studies of children's literature, have started using various critical approaches and producing thorough scientific studies. The leading Ukrainian researchers of children's literature include Ulyana Baran, Tetiana Kachak, Vitalina Kyzylova, Emilia Ohar, Natalia Marchenko, Lilia Ovdychuk, Bohdana Salyuk, Marina Vardanyan and others.

Despite wartime difficulties, children's literature, children's reading and scientific research on children's literature are developing in Ukraine. In the Ukrainian scientific discourse on children's literature, philological and interdisciplinary studies are emerging. They focus on the problems of:

- trends in the development of modern children's literature as an artistic-aesthetic and socio-cultural phenomenon;
- the analysis of texts dealing with the topic of war;
- the evolution of certain genres of children's literature, in particular picture books as a combination of verbal and visual art;
- comparative studies.

The analysis of artistic features of individual works or works of children's writers prevails, while less attention is dedicated to the problems of the theory of children's literature. There are not many works of a general nature that would give a comprehensive assessment of children's literature with regards to all its manifestations and components, from different points of view and through the prism of different critical optics.

Using our experience as an example, we revealed the potential of a systematic study of contemporary Ukrainian prose for children and youth as a multifaceted subject. We outlined the concept of the artistic-aesthetic paradigm and the methodology of its cognition, which is based on the literary analysis of poetics that encompasses narrative, receptive-aesthetic, gender, post-colonial and other approaches as well as multidisciplinary studies.

Further studies would benefit from developing and testing other methodological models and concepts for a systematic, versatile and complex analysis of the phenomenon of children's literature.

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ISTRAŽIVANJE DJEČJE KNJIŽEVNOSTI U UKRAJINSKOM ZNANSTVENOM DISKURSU

SAŽETAK

Suvremeno proučavanje dječje književnosti multidimenzionalno je i multidisciplinarno. Razmatra tekstove i kontekste, bavi se individualnim djelima, ali i opusom pojedinih pisaca te teoretskim generalizacijama o književnim i kulturološkim fenomenima, kao i nacionalnim i komparativnim studijama. Međutim, istraživanje dječje književnosti u svakoj zemlji ima vlastite specifičnosti i vlastitu povijest razvoja. U ovom članku autori donose pregled i analizu ukrajinskog djelovanja na području istraživanja dječje književnosti. Definirana je uloga i doprinos slavnih pisaca, znanstvenika i nastavnika u afirmiranju dječje književnosti kao punovrijedne istraživačke teme. Istaknuti su ključni trendovi u razvoju ukrajinskih istraživanja o dječjoj književnosti krajem 20. i početkom 21. stoljeća te navedeni glavni problemi. U ovom su se radu stoga razmatrale strategije, metodologije i kritički pristupi koji bi u ovom kontekstu bili učinkoviti. Utvrđen je potencijal sustavne studije o suvremenoj ukrajinskoj prozi za djecu i mlade kao kompleksne istraživačke teme, što je urodilo razradom koncepta umjetničko-estetske paradigme te njezine kognitivne metodologije, utemeljene na književnoj analizi poetike koja obuhvaća narativni, receptivno-estetski, rodni, postkolonijalni i druge pristupe, kao i multidisciplinarno istraživanje.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI:

istraživanje dječje književnosti, književna strategija, didaktička strategija, multidisciplinarno istraživanje dječje književnosti, metodologija, kritički pristup