

**Priority Dimensions in the Reception of Literary Texts by High School Students:
Cognitive, Affective and Pedagogical Perspectives**

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Abstract

The reception of literary texts constitutes a complex process of interpretation and understanding, in which the reader mobilizes cognitive, affective, and cultural competencies to construct the meaning of the artistic message. In the context of high school education, the development of reading and literary interpretation skills represents one of the essential objectives of literature study, contributing to the formation of students' critical thinking and aesthetic sensitivity. The present study aims to analyze the main dimensions influencing the reception of literary texts by high school students, with a focus on cognitive, affective, and pedagogical factors involved in the interpretive process. The research methodology is based on the analysis of specialized literature in reception theory and literature didactics, as well as on investigating students' perceptions regarding reading literary texts. The results highlight that students' understanding and interpretation of literary texts are influenced by their cultural experiences, the teaching strategies used in the educational process, and their motivation to read. Moreover, the study emphasizes the role of interactive teaching methods, which can stimulate students' active participation and contribute to the development of an authentic relationship with literature. In conclusion, optimizing the literary text reception process requires an integrated pedagogical approach, aimed at developing interpretive competencies and fostering interest in reading.

Keywords: literary reception; literary interpretation; reading competencies; high school education; literature didactics

Introduction

In contemporary society, literary reading remains one of the most important means of intellectual and cultural development for young people. Through literature, students encounter cultural values, models of thought, and perspectives on the world, contributing to their personal and social development. Within the educational process, the study of literature is not limited to transmitting information about authors and works; it also aims to develop students' skills in interpreting and engaging with literary texts.

Literary reception is a complex process that involves the interaction between the text and the reader. In this process, the reader is not a passive recipient of the literary message but an active participant who helps construct the text's meaning through personal experience and interpretive skills. Reception theory, developed in the second half of the 20th century,

highlighted the central role of the reader in the process of literary interpretation (Jauss, 1982; Iser, 1978).

In high school education, developing competencies in literary text reception is one of the main objectives of the study of literature. Students must learn not only to understand the content of a text but also to analyze its structure, identify stylistic elements, and interpret symbolic and thematic meanings.

Numerous studies in literature didactics indicate that literary text reception is influenced by factors such as reading competency levels, students' cultural experiences, teaching strategies employed in the educational process, and motivation to read (Rosenblatt, 1994; Hattie, 2009).

For high school students, the process of literary text reception occurs at a stage of intellectual maturation, characterized by the development of critical analysis skills and complex interpretation of the artistic message. This stage involves moving from predominantly informative reading to interpretive and reflective reading.

The aim of this study is to analyze the main dimensions influencing the reception of literary texts by high school students and to highlight the role of teaching strategies in developing literary interpretation competencies.

Research Objectives:

- Identify the cognitive dimensions involved in literary text reception;
- Analyze the role of emotional and motivational factors in the reading process;
- Highlight effective teaching strategies for developing interpretive skills;
- Formulate pedagogical recommendations for improving literature teaching in high school education.

Reception theory represents one of the most influential directions in contemporary literary criticism, emphasizing the role of the reader in the interpretation process. Unlike traditional approaches, which focused on the author or the text itself, reception theory considers that the meaning of a literary work is constructed through the interaction between the text and the reader.

Hans Robert Jauss introduced the concept of the "horizon of expectation," referring to the set of cultural and literary experiences that the reader brings to the act of reading (Jauss, 1982). According to this perspective, each reader interprets the text based on their own horizon of expectation, making the meaning of a literary work open to multiple interpretations.

Wolfgang Iser further developed this perspective through the concept of "gaps in the text," referring to elements that require interpretive completion by the reader (Iser, 1978). In this sense, reading becomes an active process in which the reader participates in constructing the meaning of the work.

These concepts are particularly relevant in the educational context, as they emphasize that literary interpretation should not be reduced to transmitting a single, fixed interpretation but should stimulate students' active participation in analysis and interpretation.

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The reception of literary texts involves a complex set of **cognitive processes that allow readers to decode, interpret, and evaluate the text's meaning**. During literary reading, students must mobilize skills such as identifying main ideas, establishing relationships between narrative elements, interpreting stylistic figures, and formulating conclusions regarding the overall meaning of the text.

The process of understanding a literary text occurs at multiple levels. At the primary level, the reader must identify explicit information, recognize the narrative structure, and understand the literal meaning of the message. At a later stage, the reader develops interpretive skills, allowing them to identify symbols, themes, and implicit meanings.

For high school students, the development of cognitive dimensions in literary reception is closely related to reading competence and prior experience in text interpretation. Students who are frequently exposed to reading and literary analysis activities tend to develop a greater capacity for interpretation and reflection.

Research in educational psychology emphasizes that literary reading contributes to the development of critical thinking and analytical skills. Through interpreting literary texts, students learn to formulate hypotheses, identify causal relationships, and evaluate different perspectives on reality (Bruner, 1996; Hattie, 2009).

In the educational context, the teacher’s role is to facilitate the development of these cognitive skills by employing teaching strategies that stimulate analysis and interpretation of literary texts.

In addition to the **cognitive component**, literary reception involves an important affective dimension. Literature has the ability to generate emotions, provoke reflection on human experiences, and stimulate reader empathy.

During reading, the reader often identifies with the characters and situations presented in the text, fostering emotional engagement in the interpretive process. This affective involvement contributes to a deeper understanding of the text and to the development of aesthetic sensitivity.

Louise Rosenblatt emphasizes that literary reading represents a transactional experience, in which the meaning of the text is constructed through the interaction between reader and text (Rosenblatt, 1994). In this perspective, the reader’s emotions and personal experiences play a central role in interpretation.

For high school students, the affective dimension of reading is particularly important, as it helps foster interest in literature and form an authentic relationship with literary texts. When students identify with the themes and characters of literary work, the reception process becomes deeper and more meaningful.

In this context, the teacher should create learning situations that allow students to freely express their emotional reactions to the text, stimulating dialogue and personal interpretation.

Another important aspect of literary reception is the **cultural dimension**. Literary texts reflect specific values, traditions, and historical contexts, and understanding them requires a certain level of cultural competence.

Students interpret literary texts through the lens of their own cultural and social contexts, which can influence how they perceive the themes and messages of those works. In this sense, literary reception becomes a dialogue between the world of the text and the reader's cultural experience.

Studies in literature didactics indicate that developing students' cultural competence contributes to a deeper understanding of literary texts and to the appreciation of their aesthetic values (Eco, 1994).

In high school education, the teacher is responsible for facilitating students' access to the cultural context of the literary works being studied, providing information about the historical period, literary movement, and stylistic particularities of the authors.

The reception of literary texts in the educational environment is significantly influenced by the teaching strategies employed by the teacher. Traditional methods, based solely on transmitting fixed interpretations, can limit students' active engagement in literary analysis.

In contrast, modern teaching approaches emphasize students' active participation and the development of independent interpretive skills. Methods such as debate, comparative analysis, guided reading, or literary interpretation projects can stimulate students' interest in reading.

The teacher thus becomes a facilitator of the interpretive process, guiding students to explore the meanings of literary texts and to formulate their own perspectives.

Developing reading competencies is fundamental for achieving an effective literary reception process. Reading competence involves not only the ability to decode written information but also the capacity to interpret, analyze, and evaluate the messages conveyed through the text.

For high school students, literary reading involves complex cognitive processes such as making inferences, identifying relationships between ideas, and interpreting symbolic meanings. Students must develop the ability to analyze narrative structure, identify themes and literary motifs, and interpret the overall message of the literary work.

Literature emphasizes that developing reading competencies significantly contributes to critical thinking and argumentative skills (Snow, 2002). Through literary reading, students learn to analyze multiple perspectives on reality and to formulate personal interpretations of texts.

Furthermore, literary reading stimulates imagination and creativity, offering readers the opportunity to explore fictional universes and reflect on diverse human experiences, contributing to aesthetic sensitivity and empathy.

In the educational context, reading competencies should be supported through varied teaching methods that encourage active student participation in interpreting literary texts.

Another factor influencing the reception of literary texts is motivation for reading. Motivation encompasses the internal and external factors determining students' interest in reading and interpreting literary texts.

Students with higher reading motivation tend to develop stronger interpretive skills and to be more actively involved in literary analysis. Conversely, a lack of motivation can lead to difficulties in understanding and interpreting texts.

Educational psychology research shows that reading motivation is influenced by factors such as prior reading experiences, family environment, and teaching strategies used in schools (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Teachers can stimulate reading motivation by selecting literary texts relevant to students' interests and by using interactive methods that make reading an engaging and meaningful experience. Reading activities can also be integrated into interdisciplinary projects or creative tasks such as dramatization, artistic interpretation, or literary debates.

In literature teaching, the use of appropriate teaching strategies plays a key role in developing students' literary reception skills. Modern methods emphasize active student involvement and the ability to interpret texts independently.

Frequently used strategies include guided reading, textual analysis, literary debate, and group work. These methods allow students to explore different interpretations of the text and express their own opinions about the literary work's meaning.

Guided reading is an effective method for developing literary interpretation skills, in which the teacher guides students through questions and analytical activities to facilitate understanding.

Literary debate is another important strategy, as it fosters critical thinking and argumentative skills. By participating in debates, students learn to analyze multiple perspectives and support their viewpoints with arguments.

Interactive methods, such as case studies or literary interpretation projects, create a stimulating educational environment that encourages students to explore the meanings of literary texts in creative ways.

The educational context in which reading takes place significantly influences how students receive literary texts. The school environment, teaching style, and available educational resources can enhance or limit students' interest in reading.

A learning environment that encourages dialogue, reflection, and personal interpretation can help develop reading skills and foster interest in literature. In contrast, a rigid teaching model based exclusively on memorizing fixed interpretations can reduce students' engagement.

Access to diverse resources, such as school libraries, digital platforms, or cultural activities, can foster a closer relationship between students and literature. In the current context of digital education, integrating educational technologies into literature teaching offers opportunities to stimulate students' interest in reading. Educational platforms, reading apps, and multimedia resources can facilitate access to literary texts and diversify ways of interpreting them.

Materials and methods

Materials

The present study was conducted on a sample of 100 high school students, selected from pre-university educational institutions. The purpose of this sample selection was to investigate how students receive and interpret literary texts studied in the Romanian Language and Literature curriculum.

The sample structure was determined based on several criteria relevant to the research objectives: high school profile, school environment, and students' gender. These criteria enable a comparative analysis of how different categories of students engage with literary reading and interpretation.

Regarding high school profiles, participants came from three main educational tracks. Forty-four per cent (44%) of students belonged to the humanities track, indicating a stronger orientation toward social sciences and literature study. Additionally, 39% of students were from the technological track, and 17% from the science track, providing a diversified perspective on how students with different academic orientations engage with literary reading.

Regarding the school environment, the results show a clear predominance of students from rural areas, representing 81% of the total sample, while 19% came from urban areas. This distribution reflects the particularities of the educational context in which the research was conducted and enables analysis of the educational environment's influence on literary text reception.

From a gender perspective, the sample included 64% female students and 36% male students. This distribution is common in studies on literary education, where interest in reading activities is often more pronounced among female students.

The complete distribution of the sample is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Structure of the student sample

Criterion	Subcategory	Number of Students	% of Total
Profile	Technological	39	39%
	Science	17	17%
	Humanities	44	44%
School Environment	Rural	81	81%
	Urban	19	19%
Gender	Male	36	36%
	Female	64	64%

Methods

The research employed a questionnaire-based survey, one of the most frequently used methods in educational studies to investigate students' perceptions and attitudes.

The questionnaire was designed to assess multiple dimensions of literary text reception, including:

- Students' interest in reading;
- Difficulties encountered in interpreting literary texts;
- Perception of teaching methods used in literature classes;

- Importance of reading in students' cultural formation.

The research instrument included 10 items, most of which were formulated as closed-ended questions with predefined answer options. This structure allowed efficient data collection and analysis.

The questionnaire was administered during school activities, and participation was voluntary. Students were informed about the study's purpose and assured that their responses would be kept anonymous.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, such as calculating frequencies and percentages, which highlight general trends regarding students' perceptions of reading and interpreting literary texts.

The results were interpreted in relation to the research objectives and specialized literature in literature didactics.

Results and discussion

The first aspect investigated was students' level of interest in reading literary texts. Results indicate significant differences by high school profile and prior reading experience.

Most students reported a moderate interest in reading literary texts. Approximately 42% of respondents reported reading literature occasionally, primarily in the context of school activities. Meanwhile, 31% reported frequent reading, both in school and during leisure time.

Conversely, 27% of students indicated that reading literary texts is not a preferred activity and is perceived more as a school obligation. These findings align with observations in specialized literature, which note that adolescents' interest in reading is influenced by personal motivation, educational environment, and teaching strategies used in instruction (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Table 2. Frequency of reading literary texts

Frequency	Number of Students	%
Frequent	31	31%
Occasional	42	42%
Rare	27	27%

The results highlight that most students perceive literary reading primarily as a school-related activity. In this context, teachers play a crucial role in stimulating interest through methods that make reading an attractive and relevant experience.

Another objective was identifying students' main difficulties in interpreting literary texts. Analysis indicates that interpreting symbolic elements and stylistic figures is one of the primary challenges for high school students.

Approximately 38% of students reported difficulties in identifying and interpreting literary symbols. Additionally, 29% reported difficulty understanding the overall message of the text, especially for works from more complex literary movements.

Another notable aspect is the difficulty students face in formulating personal interpretations. About 21% of respondents preferred reproducing interpretations from textbooks or the teacher rather than expressing their own perspectives.

Table 3. Main difficulties in literary text interpretation

Difficulty Type	Number of Students	%
Interpretation of symbols	38	38%
Understanding the overall message	29	29%
Formulating personal interpretation	21	21%
Identifying stylistic figures	12	12%

These results suggest the need for teaching strategies that support the development of students' interpretive skills and encourage personal perspectives on literary texts.

The study also examined students' perceptions of teaching methods used in literature classes. Results indicate that students particularly value activities involving active participation and collaboration.

Approximately 46% of students preferred debates or group discussions, as these activities allow them to express opinions and analyze multiple perspectives. Meanwhile, 33% favored creative activities, such as dramatizing excerpts or conducting literary interpretation projects.

Only 21% preferred traditional teaching methods based on teacher explanations and frontal text analysis.

Table 4. Preferred teaching methods

Teaching Method	Number of Students	%
Debates and discussions	46	46%
Creative activities	33	33%
Traditional methods	21	21%

These results underscore the importance of interactive teaching methods that enable students to actively participate in interpreting literary texts.

Conclusions

The study highlights that high school students' reception of literary texts is influenced by cognitive, affective, and pedagogical factors. Reading competence, motivation, and teaching strategies play an essential role in how students interpret and engage with literary works.

Analysis showed that although many students express interest in reading, difficulties remain in interpreting texts, particularly in symbol identification and personal interpretation.

The study also emphasizes the importance of interactive teaching methods, which stimulate active participation and develop interpretive competencies. Activities such as debates, creative projects, and group work can effectively foster an authentic relationship between students and literature.

In conclusion, optimizing literary text reception in high school requires a modern pedagogical approach focused on developing critical thinking and promoting interest in reading.

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