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STIMULATING EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS FOR OPTIMISING
THE RECEPTION OF LITERARY WRITTEN MESSAGES

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Abstract

One of the current challenges of education is to ensure an effective and learning-friendly context by providing educational experiences that will lead to the full engagement of pupils in the learning process. This study presents the results of the implementation of a stimulating educational programme which aims to optimise the reception of written messages from literary texts, by capitalizing the formal, non-formal and informal contexts in the teaching-learning of the subject *Romanian Language and Literature* on the primary education level. The programme was applied during the Pedagogical Practice by the students of the third year of the Primary and Pre-School Education Pedagogy, within the University "Eftimie Murgu" of Reșița. The activity took place in various learning contexts: in the formal classroom, using various, traditional and modern didactic strategies (involving all pupils and responding to their different needs), in the non-formal library and theatre environments, as well as and in the informal framework offered by the family and the media. The research methods used are methods of data gathering: experiment, observation, focus-group, pedagogical test and statistical processing methods: determining the central tendency, the tables with synthetic results. The conclusions of the study reveal the benefits of creating an atmosphere able to stir intellectual effort, aware and active attitude: openness to the reception of literary texts, gradual transposition of desirable attitudes and behaviours into the pupils' behaviour due to the contact with the heroes of different stories etc.

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1. Introduction

One of the current challenges of education remains the provision of an effective and learning-friendly context by providing educational experiences that will determine the effective participation of pupils in the learning process. There are, in the process of learning, certain conditions / preconditions that determine the likelihood of learning, synthesized by the integrative concept of *learning preparedness*, including: attention, motivation, interest, conception and attitude of the learner, preparation for the activity, etc. (Neacşu, 2015).

Ensuring an effective learning environment involves creating an atmosphere that stimulates interest and curiosity, leading to the total engagement of students in learning experiences (Paloş, 2016), while understanding the role and importance of the educational context in which and from which is learned.

2. Problem Statement

Man learns in any context, in any situation, at any time active. In order to ensure visible learning, school pupils and students need opportunities for independent practice, i.e. for learning and developing skills in contexts other than formal ones, explicit teaching (Hattie, 2014).

2.1. Learning as experience in formal, non-formal, informal contexts

The approach to learning as a lived experience involves "focusing on the intersection between cognitive, social and emotional learning," an experience dependent both on "the context in which learning takes place and the possibility of *inserting* learning in broader contexts of life ", the specifics of the field, the characteristics of the learner (Ciolan & Stîngu, 2015). It is about facilitating people's learning and transformation processes in different contexts with different methods (Ciolan, 2018), to identify the stimulating valences of the three forms / hypostases of education (formal, informal and informal).

2.2. Receiving written messages from literary texts

Focused on highlighting moral, emotional, aesthetic, behavioural aspects, etc. from the literary texts, the effort to optimize the reception, understanding, and internalisation of the written messages contained in the literary works goes beyond the boundaries between formal-nonformal-informal. It becomes necessary to identify and create relevant and stimulating learning opportunities both within the institutionalized school, library and theatre, and within the non-institutionalized family.

3. Research Questions

What are the results of the creation of stimulating educational contexts in the teaching and learning of the subject *Romanian Language and Literature* on the level of primary education (regarding the reception of written messages from literary texts)? How can they be created for the fourth graders keeping in mind that the psychosocial climate "can favour or hinder the optimisation of teaching and learning?" (Albulescu & Albulescu, 2019, p. 330).

4. Purpose of the Study

The paper aims at optimizing the process of receiving written messages from literary texts by pupils, highlighting the effects of implementing a stimulating educational program developed in various learning contexts: in the formal classroom, in the non-formal environment of the library and the theatre as well and in the informal milieu offered by the family and the media. In order to form the competence to receive the written messages from the literary texts, according to the curriculum of the Romanian Language and Literature, the students studied the following texts: *The Happy Prince* by Oscar Wilde; *Fram, the Polar Bear* by Cezar Petrescu; *Knock, knock, knock!* by Emil Gârleanu, *Childhood Memories* by Ion Creangă.

5. Research Methods

The research methods used are methods of data gathering: experiment, observation, focus-group, the pedagogical test and statistical processing methods of these ones: determining the central tendency, the tables with synthetic results.

5.1. Data collection methods

We decided to proceed by action research, carried out in two stages (Bocoş, 2017): *the diagnostic stage*: identifying and analysing problems, formulating hypotheses and *the therapeutic stage*: hypothesis testing in an experiment directed toward change, optimization.

Verification of the proposed hypothesis: Valorisation of formal, non-formal and informal contexts in the teaching and learning of the subject Romanian Language and Literature on the level of primary education will lead to the optimization of the reception of the written messages from the literary texts required an experimental case with a pre-test/post-test type case (Labăr, 2008). The sample consisted of 18 fourth graders. They underwent, under the guidance of third year students from the Primary and Pre-School Education Pedagogy Program, a stimulating educational program, designed (in collaboration) by the coordinators and mentors of the Pedagogical Practice. The pupils have benefited from the organization of learning in a supportive environment, favourable to individual development and manifestation of creativity and originality, by focusing on interactive strategies and extracurricular activities. Along with the cognitive meanings of messages in literary texts, strong emphasis was placed on moral-aesthetic lessons learned by children.

The methods of data collection correspond to the requirements of the experimental research: the **observation** allows to capture attitudinal and behavioural aspects; the **pedagogical test** is used to quantify cognitive aspects; the **focus group** aims to identify the opinion of classroom teachers and students on the results of the implemented program.

The experimental design required the following steps:

- a. The pre-test stage. The activity took place exclusively in the classroom, combining the lecture and interactive methods such as: exercise, independent reading, conversation, explanation, starburst, the cube method, brainstorming, role play, the idea tree, the quadrant

method, the quintet, the "I know / I want to know / I have learned" method. Pretesting consisted in applying the pedagogical test and making observations.

- b. The experimental stage: the activity was carried out in various learning contexts:
 - ✓ In the formal environment of the classroom, by introducing various didactic strategies specific to the LLR study: dramatization, the story pyramid, comic books, graphic illustration of ideas in a text etc.
 - ✓ In the non-formal milieu of the library (meetings with writers, book lending, reading sessions) and theatre (with socio-educational animation, watching shows, *stag in go* literary works by the children etc.).
 - ✓ In the informal context offered by the family and the media (the purchase, together with the children, of books or electronic supports for literary texts, book loans among pupils, reading night or family film watching etc.).
- c. The post-test stage. The pedagogical test was applied in order to identify the effects of the implemented program. In order to support the quantitative data obtained, two qualitative methods were introduced in the post-test: the observation method and the focus group.

5.2. Methods of data analysis and presentation

In the present research, the methods of statistical-mathematical processing and graphical presentation of the data are the determination of the central trend and the introduction of the results in synthetic tables. **The determination of the central tendency**, the calculation of the basic statistical indicator for the quantitative variables: the mean (Labăr, 2008) was realised for the indicators through which the cognitive aspects were investigated (critical thinking, curiosity, personal solutions, observation, analysis and understanding of some ideas) and attitudinal-behavioural (free will, cooperation, intense relationship, interest and attraction for reading). The data are presented in the form of *diagrams, graphs, tables* (Androniceanu, 2017). **The synthetic results tables** include the classification or ordering of groups of common elements: frequency and media in our case.

6. Findings

As a result of the pupils' participation in the proposed activities, real progress is observed regarding the majority of the indicators investigated through the pedagogical tests, the observations made on the school pupils' behaviour and the focus group, attended by the teachers and students in practice.

6.1. Quantitative analysis of the data obtained in the pre-and post-test stages

Table 1 summarizes the results obtained by students in both stages of the experimental action:

Table 01. Pre-test and post-test comparisons: Mean values

Single group	Cognitive aspects				Attitudinal aspects			
	Reading, oral and written expression	Critical - creative solutions	Intellectual efforts	Comprehension of the writer's visions	Participation and involvement	Mutual learning	Desirable behavior	Pleasure and motivation
Pre-test	3,63	1,92	3,8	1,87	3,35	3,52	3,28	3,16
Post-test	4,71	2,55	4,98	2,51	4,12	4,55	4,31	4,45

These results are illustrated graphically in Figure 01.

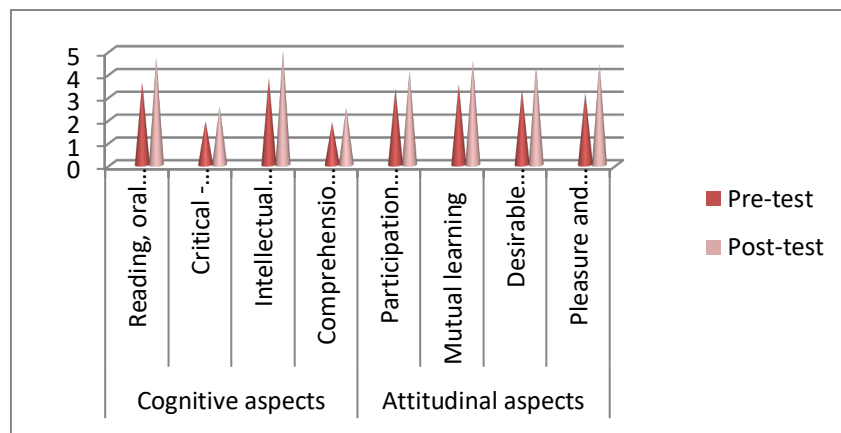


Figure 01. Pre-test and post-test comparisons

6.2. Qualitative analysis of the data in the post-test stage

The qualitative data provided in the post-test by the participants of the focus group support the quantitative analysis, grasping aspects of subtlety: opinions, personal thoughts, proposals of teachers and students related to the working method forwarded. Both the advantages and the drawbacks of such an approach to LLR subject training were revealed in Table 02.

Table 02. Advantages/Drawbacks of the program

Advantages	Drawbacks
Personalizing learning, effective learning	Important time consumption
Pupils' interest in finding out about writers' lives	Adapting the curriculum to the particularities of child
High degree of attractiveness for pupils	Noise, relative disorganization
Collaboration and cooperation, intense interrelation	Processes of group dynamics difficult to control
Climate favourable for learning	Difficult to reach consensus
Increase of trust in others and self-confidence	Not achieving total involvement of timid children
Talent discovery and valorisation	Desire of individualistic affirmation
Provoking and solving constructive conflicts	Non-constructive conflicts

7. Conclusion

The findings of the study reveal the benefits of creating an atmosphere that stimulates interest, curiosity, pupils' participation: openness to the reception of literary texts, preoccupation for other works of the proposed writers; the gradual transposition of desirable attitudes and behaviours into one's own behaviour, due to the contact of small pupils with the heroes of different stories; sustained intellectual effort, conscious and active attitude etc.

The pupils' results following the use of interactive methods have improved significantly, which confirms the success of conceiving activities related to traditional learning that can successfully complement the pupils' knowledge acquisition, while contributing also to the strengthening of cultural expression skills.

The proposed program contributes to the formation of communication skills, essential in the contemporary world. "In the context of developing and practising communication skills in Romanian language, reading proves to be an extremely useful tool, a life skill necessary to any speaker (Bucurenciu, 2016).

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