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# Contextual Study of Modern Literature as a Leadership Strategy for Developing Core Competencies in 5th–7th Graders

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### ABSTRACT

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The research is devoted to considering the peculiarities of the formation of students' key competencies in grades 5–7 by applying contextual analysis of modern literature. For the theoretical analysis of the research topic, an analysis of scientific publications on this issue was carried out. The study was carried out using both general scientific and empirical research methods, which allowed us to identify key results on the impact of contextual analysis of literature on the development of key competencies of students in grades 5–7. The approaches in Ukrainian educational policy to the formation of students' competencies of grades 5–7 through their study of literature in the lessons of Ukrainian literature and foreign literature have been determined. The academic paper presents the results of an empirical study based on the identification of the specifics of forming key competencies of students in grades 5–7 using the method of contextual analysis of contemporary literature. Students completed problem-solving tasks and a questionnaire as part of the research. The study's findings demonstrated that students who received training utilizing the contextual method outscored those who did not get this type of training. In addition, students demonstrated such qualities as a high level of critical thinking, developed communication skills, the ability to evaluate information critically, the ability to use a creative approach to processing educational material, and the ability to read.

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In the age of the information society, it is quite difficult to get students interested in studying literature and to form their desire to read books. This is mostly because books appear to be an

outmoded and uninteresting resource, and students may obtain the information they require from a variety of sources. In addition, teachers need to have sufficient general and special competencies to develop students' desire to think critically, take responsibility for their actions, be sociable and outgoing, and possess reading literacy. Teachers frequently think that assigning homework is the best measure of their effectiveness, and they show no empathy or compassion for youngsters who struggle academically because of personal issues (Bovsunivska, 2011).

Accordingly, the issue of what methods and approaches are useful to use to develop students' key competencies and interest in literature analysis is becoming more and more acute. In particular, traditional methods are no longer so effective since students need to be motivated to engage in learning activities.

At the same time, studying literary works allows students to learn to understand the specifics of society and the human soul, to identify people's emotions and empathize with them, and to develop the ability to cooperate with others and accomplish tasks as a team. Literature gives students the opportunity to understand the features of past epochs and immerse themselves in the study of fictional worlds while considering through artistic diversity, the problems of coexistence of the poor and the rich, the existence of democracy and tyranny, and the struggle between Good and Evil.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the development of key competencies of students in grades 5–7 using the method of contextual analysis of contemporary literature is an issue that requires careful consideration given the significance of studying literary works by students in grades 5–7, whose worldview continues to be formed.

The purpose of the research is to theoretically and practically investigate the formation of key competencies of students in grades 5–7 by applying the method of contextual analysis of modern literature.

## Literature Review

The issue of studying the formation of key competencies of pupils in grades 5–7 using the method of contextual analysis of modern literature has been considered by a number of domestic researchers. In the article by Tryhub (2020a), it is determined that students' skills in Ukrainian literature and foreign literature lessons can be assessed by the skills of working with the text and searching for certain information, by the skills of forming their judgments about characters and creating alternative scenarios, by the skills of seeing the hidden meaning of works, by the skills of correlating the information received from the work with the present. Accordingly, in order to develop these skills and abilities, the author argues that it is necessary to gradually make changes to existing curricula and textbooks. In particular, it is expedient to introduce rubrics that are related to direct work with the text and solving problematic aspects of the work, as well as to systematically apply the method of contextual analysis of literature, which is effective in forming key competencies of students.

Gladyshev (2022) also agrees with this standpoint. Since it was discovered that students who merely read texts do not acquire a foundational understanding of literature and are unable to understand the actions of characters, the scholar is convinced that the methodology of contextual analysis of literature emerged as a result of the evolution of education. Accordingly, there was an understanding that it was necessary to use teaching methods that would allow students to form a holistic personal understanding of the literary work, where they could freely

make judgments about the characters in the work, provide recommendations for other students to become interested in reading this work, and correlate the work with contemporary literature and current social phenomena. In addition, the author is convinced that the modern literature curriculum should be adapted to students' age and their preferences; consequently, there is a need to revise the compulsory reading list and replace it with those that will contribute to the formation of key competencies.

According to a study by scientist Slyzhuk (2024a), students can effectively increase their natural scientific competencies by using contextual analysis of literature. Thus, while studying literary works related to the historical past and wartime, students develop reading interests, begin to discuss moral issues, and learn to see deep meanings in various stories. The study of works with elements of fiction allows them to develop observation skills and the ability to solve mysteries defined by the writer. Students are particularly interested in literary works containing detective stories, thrillers, adventure novels that deal with the issues of teenagers' relationships with their peers, parent-child relationships, and love stories. However, the main advantage of studying such works is the development of students' natural science competence since children learn about natural phenomena, climate, natural conditions, and learn to protect nature.

The scientist Yatsenko (2021) argues that studying literature in grades 5–7 has a positive effect on the formation of students' artistic competence. In the author's opinion, this is due to the fact that contextual reading allows students to work on a topic both holistically and to identify important elements for themselves. At the same time, a teacher should use strategies for integrating the work with other aspects of life, such as associating the work with a painting, sculpture, or other piece of art, and assigning students an imaginative assignment that enables them to make intermediate connections between artistic creations.

Gogol (2021) considers aspects of contextual analysis of literature in students of grades 5–7 as a prerequisite for the development of students' cultural competence. This is due to the ability of a work of fiction to be combined with works of art, with the problems of society, with the reflection of historical aspects. At the same time, textbooks on Ukrainian literature and foreign literature have sections that reflect the connection of a given work with the culture of the state and the region as a whole, which helps students form an emotional connection with the culture and traditions of the people as well as develop their reading experience and empathy for the characters in the literary work. In addition, by reading works of art in the lesson, students develop a holistic personality, reflect on changes in their inner world, develop their vision of literature, form their reading tastes, and strengthen their motivation to read works in the future. Textbooks often also include information materials for each piece of literature, which define the correlation of the work with the culture of the people.

Therefore, the analysis of scientific literature on the issue of forming key competencies of pupils in grades 5–7 using the method of contextual analysis of modern literature revealed that this topic is actively studied by modern researchers. In their opinion, this approach is important for the development of students' basic competencies in grades 5–7. However, it is necessary to consider this issue from a practical perspective to confirm the theoretical information.

## Method

The comprehensiveness of the research was achieved through the use of various research methods, which made it possible to demonstrate the integrity of this problem. General scientific

methods of research (description, analysis and synthesis, comparison, generalization) and empirical methods (questionnaires and the method of problem-based learning, the method of contextual analysis) were used in the study. The description method was used to identify the peculiarities of modern training of students in grades 5–7 in literature. The method of analysis and synthesis identified the problematic aspects of introducing contextual analysis into the training of students in Ukrainian and foreign literature lessons. The method of comparison was used to compare the results obtained in terms of students' training in Ukrainian and foreign literature. The method of generalization was used to summarize the results of the research. The questionnaire method was applied to conduct a survey among students to find out the effectiveness of introducing contextual analysis in their study of literature. The method of problem-based learning was used to determine the student's ability to solve problems related to the subject matter of the literary works. The method of contextual analysis of contemporary literature allowed us to identify the connection between the study of literature and the formation of students' additional competencies. Accordingly, the integrated use of these methods made it possible to identify particular research results.

The results of the key competencies development are shown in [Table 1](#). Questionnaire “Formation of key competencies of pupils in grades 5–7 by applying the method of contextual analysis of modern literature”.

**Table 1**

*Questionnaire “Formation of Key Competencies of Pupils in Grades 5–7 by Applying the Method of Contextual Analysis of Modern Literature”*

No. s/n	Question	Answer
1	What methods of preparation for the study of contemporary literature are used in the classroom?	
2	Do literature textbooks contain additional sections?	
3	Do you know what contextual analysis is?	
4	Are you interested in correlating the work you read with other areas?	
5	Does reading a literary work help you gain additional knowledge and skills?	
6	Do you think it is advisable to introduce contextual analysis into the teaching of literature?	
7	What do you think needs to be changed in the process of getting acquainted with works of contemporary literature?	

## Results

In general, “contextual analysis” is a method according to which, when studying a work of art, its connection with other spheres of life is found (Gogol, 2019; Tryhub, 2020a, 2020b). In particular, this method is implemented in the educational process when adding information to a literary work that is related to the work, such as headings, links, footnotes, images and photos, facts and data. This helps the learner understand the course material better and teaches them how to evaluate the data and make decisions.

It is often presented in the format of a historical reference, which enables the students to understand the context of the material being presented to them (Slyzhuk, 2024b). We can also see a biographical aspect when data from the writer's life are briefly presented, which results in a holistic understanding of the relationship between the plot and the author's real life (Tryhub, 2020a). In addition, we can also talk about the artistic aspect since it is necessary to understand why this work was written in this genre, trend, and direction (Slyzhuk, 2021).

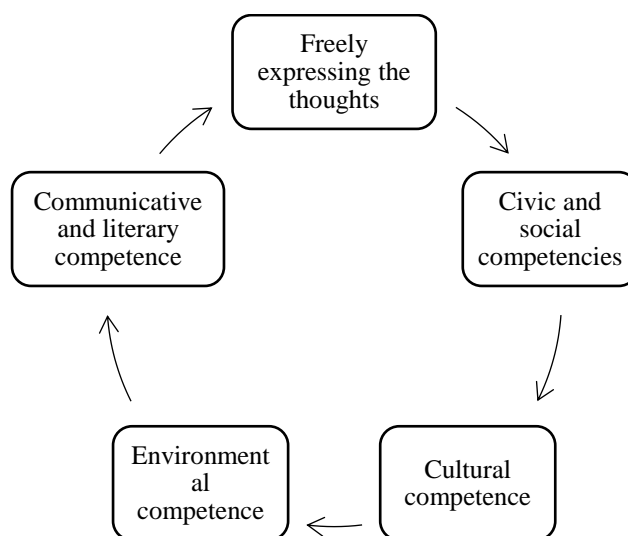
Studying a literary work with context in mind involves developing students' skills in processing texts, thinking critically, making decisions, and expanding their worldview. In addition, it helps develop the ability to think objectively and explain one's opinion, which leads to the fact that judgments begin to be based on specific facts, and proving an opinion already involves clear argumentation (Tryhub, 2017).

However, it's crucial that the content is age-appropriate and connected to interdisciplinary connections because, even with more material, a student may not grasp the text's main ideas due to age, lack of social experience, ignorance, and unrelated subjects. Therefore, it is important that the student possess the capacity to interpret the text from cultural, historical, social, and psychological perspectives based on extra-textual evidence. In addition, students should already possess certain competencies appropriate to their age.

The competencies of pupils in grades 5–7, according to the legislation on education, are as follows, as shown in Figure 1. Key competencies of pupils in grades 5–7 in the process of studying Ukrainian literature and foreign literature.

**Figure 1**

*Key Competencies of Pupils of Grades 5–7 in the Process of Studying Ukrainian Literature and Foreign Literature*



These competencies are also closely related to the age characteristics of students in grades 5–7. These are adolescent children aged 11–14 who already have certain ideas about life, may face some difficulties, and have their own experience of interaction with others and friends. They are at the stage of becoming a personality, where their inner world and appearance are constantly changing (Yatsenko et al., 2021). Therefore, the formation at this stage of key competencies, which are a set of knowledge and skills, makes it possible to form high-quality subject knowledge and also helps develop the competencies necessary for innovative personal development. These competencies help students learn to solve problems and see the connections between different aspects of their lives more deeply. In addition, they begin to learn independently, therefore, they can find connections that a teacher may not see (Yatsenko et al., 2023a).

Competence-based tasks are used to develop students' key competencies, which are aimed at developing certain skills and abilities that have a positive impact on the realization of a person

in society (Law of Ukraine “On Education”, 2017). The essence of such tasks is that they form an idea of how the knowledge gained in the classroom can be used outside the classroom. These include tasks that are not only related to theoretical knowledge of the subject matter but also to the social experience of students, their knowledge of human adaptation to new conditions, and the relationships of students with their peers and older people. In addition, such tasks are appropriate for developing students’ skills in teamwork and cooperation with others. For example, familiarization with literary works of different eras allows students to form the idea that social phenomena such as poverty, unemployment, and financial difficulties have always existed, and this can even be correlated with the modern period (Hrytsak, 2020).

The introduction of competence-based tasks in the process of studying Ukrainian and foreign literature has a positive impact on the educational process since adolescent students receive the knowledge that is available to them, taking into account their age, as well as the knowledge that they can use correctly. Accordingly, students’ interest in studying works of literature increases and their literary competence grows, in addition, their motivation to work more actively in class increases, and learning itself becomes practical (Yatsenko et al., 2023b).

At the same time, the issue of implementing competence-based learning is quite acute since it requires a balance between modern methods and traditional learning. This is due to the fact that pedagogy is currently at a stage of development when the usual methods of presenting information do not allow students to develop practical knowledge, and students need motivation to develop their ability to be interested in learning a new subject. Therefore, more and more attention is being paid to contextual analysis as a method of forming students’ key competencies (Hrytsak, 2019).

Currently, Ukrainian teachers are deeply considering the issue of introducing contextual analysis in the lessons of Ukrainian literature and foreign literature in order to develop the key competencies of students in grades 5–7. In particular, the textbook “Ukrainian Literature. Grade 5” by Kovalenko and Bernadska (2022) has a column before each work with questions about whether the student is already familiar with this genre and whether they have already read the works of this cycle; students are asked to predict what the work will be about based on the title. Each work of fiction also contains information about the genre or the specifics of its appearance; questions about why the characters acted the way they did, how the student evaluates their actions, and whether such actions are correct; in addition, it is suggested that the student draws a diagram of the work in the notebook.

In Voloshchuk’s textbook “Foreign Literature. Grade 5”, the development of key competencies in interaction with the context of the work is ensured by offering students a literary warm-up and reading information about the work or genre. There is also a “Magic Corner” section after the work that identifies connections between the work and other disciplines, as well as with the present. The section “Literary Workshop” defines various tasks related to the work, including a picture related to the work; therefore, the students have to express what kind of connection they see (Voloshchuk, 2022).

Similar methods of developing competencies are also present in textbooks for grades 6 and 7, where more attention is paid to students’ ability to express their opinions and justify their own position regarding the work’s connection to the historical aspect. This is in line with the focus on developing communicative and literary competence, civic and social competence, and cultural competence. Other competencies, such as environmental competence, are also used,



but they are more like additional competencies (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, n.d.).

Modern textbooks also reflect the author's attitude to a particular phenomenon, which encourages students to freely express their opinions, as they may disagree and, by providing arguments, prove to the teacher that their viewpoints are correct. Moreover, such skills of expressing one's opinion correctly are important for students aged 11–14 since they gain social experience and become involved in more and more spheres that begin to surround them. The ability to prove one's opinion is an important skill that contributes to the harmonious development of a personality and his/her attitude as a creative person (Yatsenko et al., 2022).

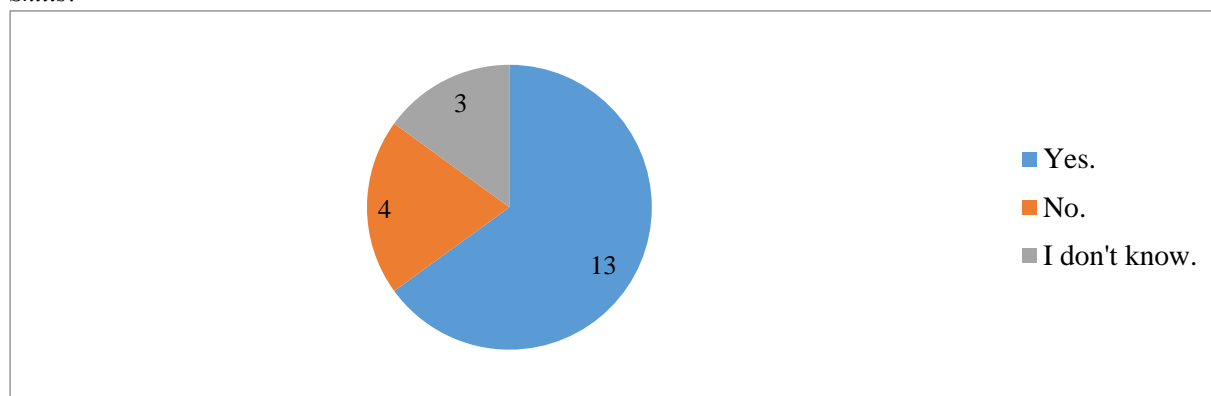
We carried out an empirical study to determine the effect of contextual analysis of modern literature on the development of students' critical competencies in grades 5–7. For this purpose, students in grades 5, 6, and 7 of the educational institution "Secondary school of I–III levels №42 of Kyiv" were offered to take a survey on this issue. Thus, the administration of the institution, teachers, and parents of the children were familiarized with the purpose of the research and agreed to its conduct. A total of 20 students took part in the study, and they were divided into 2 groups. Group 1 includes students who will study Ukrainian and foreign literature for 1 month using contextual analysis, and Group 2 includes students who will study using traditional approaches to learning only by reading works.

After the experiment, students were asked to complete a survey on the topic "Formation of key competencies of students in grades 5–7 by applying the method of contextual analysis of contemporary literature". According to the results, 12 pupils (60%) indicated that traditional methods are mainly used in literature lessons, where they read a literary work and can briefly discuss it; however, the connection with other areas of the work is practically not discussed. At the same time, 13 students (65%) said that textbooks have additional sections, such as information notes, but due to the lack of class time, they are hardly ever addressed. When asked about contextual analysis, 12 students said they did not know what it was (60%), while 8 students answered in the affirmative (40%). At the same time, 13 students answered that they were interested in relating the work to other areas (65%), while seven students (35%) gave a negative answer. At the same time, all students affirmatively answered that the method of contextual analysis should be implemented in literature classes. Regarding the question of changes, students answered that the work should be correlated with other areas, considered in a modern aspect, and more information technologies should be added.

The question "Does reading a literary work help you gain additional knowledge and skills?" is a key one in our survey. The results are shown below in [Figure 2](#). Answers to the question "Does reading a literary work help you gain additional knowledge and skills?"

**Figure 2**

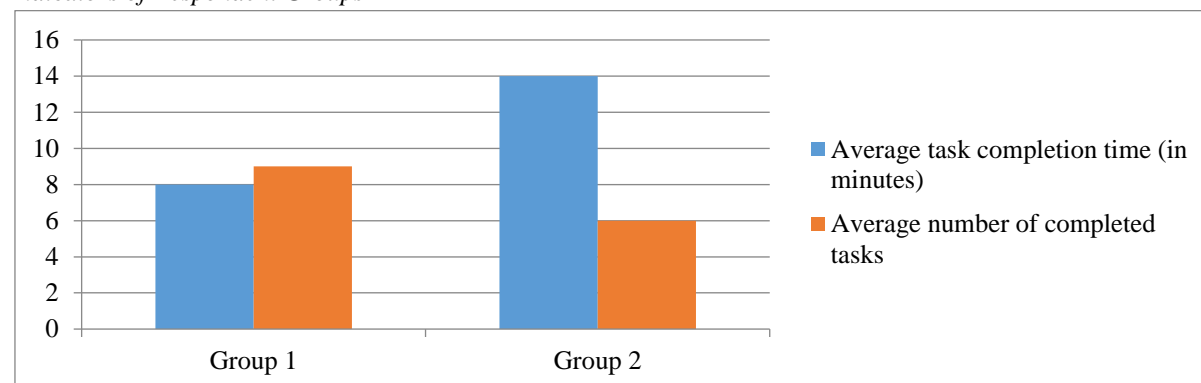
*Respondents' Answers to the Question "Does Reading a Literary Work Help You Gain Additional Knowledge and Skills?"*



In other words, students see the benefit of using contextual analysis since it will allow them to develop new skills. In order to confirm the results of the survey, students were asked to take part in an experiment using the problem-based learning method. Students in groups 1 and 2 were instructed to read the text passages and finish the assigned tasks, which included writing a letter to their favorite character, imagining the characters' future lives, and creating a diagram of the literary work. The results are shown in Figure 3. Indicators of respondent groups.

**Figure 3**

*Indicators of Respondent Groups*



According to the results, students of Group 1 completed the task faster than students of Group 2, which emphasizes the positive impact of contextual learning on the development of key competencies, including communicative and literary competence, civic and social competence, and cultural competence.

## Discussion

Our research has revealed that the formation of key competencies using the method of contextual analysis in Ukrainian literature lessons is an effective way to develop various skills and abilities in students of grades 5–7. However, it can be argued that the implementation of this method requires modifications to the education system as a whole and involves changes to existing textbooks (Yatsenko et al., 2024). In particular, textbooks should have more sections, more closely reflect the connection between the work and other areas of life, and motivate students to acquire new knowledge and develop new skills (Yatsenko, 2018). At the same time,



teachers should also use contextual analysis correctly to build students' competencies, which involves taking advanced training and personal development courses in various fields (Yatsenko & Slyzhuk, 2022). It should also be noted that a clear system of student motivation should be developed since it is difficult to get students interested in literature classes and reading works (Yatsenko & Pakharenko, 2022). Therefore, the complete application of contextual analysis as a tool in the regular study of literature is still restricted by the current problematic issues.

## **Conclusion**

According to the results of the research on the formation of key competencies of pupils in grades 5–7 by applying the method of contextual analysis of modern literature, it was found that the use of contextual analysis has a positive effect on the development of knowledge and skills. In this case, the use of contextual analysis consists not only in a detailed reading of the work but also in performing additional tasks for it, finding connections between the work and problematic aspects of other areas, and identifying commonalities in the work and in the present. This method is interesting for students in grades 5–7 who already have some social experience and they can make connections between the story and other areas.

The conducted empirical research has revealed that contextual analysis effectively influences the development of students' various competencies in grades 5–7. In particular, communicative and literary competence, civic and social competence, and cultural competence are formed more comprehensively when using this method. In addition, students need to understand the practical connection between the work and other areas in order to be able to apply knowledge in their activities.

However, problematic aspects of implementing the approach in the educational process when studying modern literature were also identified. The solution to this problem is possible through the formation of a new educational policy, where textbooks and teaching materials will be focused on the development of students' practical skills; another important aspect is the conduct of professional development courses and activities aimed at teaching teachers to master contextual analysis; it is also necessary to combine works more with modernity, which will motivate students to acquire new knowledge. As a result, this will have a positive impact on the formation of key competencies of students in grades 5–7 by applying the method of contextual analysis of contemporary literature.

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