

THE DIDACTIC FUNCTION OF LITERATURE IN SHAPING STUDENTS' NATIONAL IDENTITY

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This study investigates the didactic function of literature in shaping students' national identity within the context of contemporary Ukrainian higher education. The research addresses the need to understand how literary works, as carriers of cultural memory and value systems, contribute to students' personal and civic development. The study also considers the impact of digitalization on literary engagement and the formation of national consciousness among young adults.

The research methods include the analysis of scholarly sources, educational policies, and modern digital educational practices. Comparative methods were applied to assess traditional and digital forms of literary engagement, while empirical observations of educational trends informed the understanding of student interaction with literary texts.

The study identifies literature as a central instrument for shaping students' national identity by integrating cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. Literary works by Ukrainian authors address themes of freedom, responsibility, moral choice, and civic duty, thereby fostering critical thinking, empathy, and reflection on cultural heritage. Universities provide key spaces of socialization where students acquire not only professional knowledge but also civic awareness and value orientations. Digital environments, including online platforms, multimedia resources, and social networks, expand access to literature and introduce new forms of interaction, while also presenting challenges such as fragmented reading and superficial engagement. The combination of traditional and digital approaches enhances students' critical thinking, cultural literacy, and connection to national heritage.

Literature functions as a bridge between individual consciousness and national cultural tradition, supporting the development of socially responsible, culturally aware, and reflective students. Universities play a crucial role in mediating both traditional and digital forms of literary engagement, thereby ensuring the effective formation of national identity. Digitalization, when integrated with pedagogically guided literary education, acts as a resource rather than a threat, enriching students' understanding of Ukrainian culture and strengthening their engagement with national values.

Keywords: patriotism, literature, higher education, cultural memory, digital environment, culture.

ДИДАКТИЧНА ФУНКЦІЯ ЛІТЕРАТУРИ У ФОРМУВАННІ НАЦІОНАЛЬНОЇ ІДЕНТИЧНОСТІ СТУДЕНТІВ

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Дослідження присвячене вивченню дидактичної функції літератури у формуванні національної ідентичності студентів у сучасному українському університетському середовищі. Робота зосереджена на визначенні того, як художні твори, будучи носіями культурної пам'яті та системи цінностей, сприяють особистісному та громадянському розвитку студентів. Також враховано вплив цифровізації на сприйняття літератури та формування національної свідомості молоді. У статті використано теоретико-аналітичний підхід із поєднанням системного та соціокультурного аналізу, що дозволяє розглядати літературу як освітній та ціннісний інститут, а не лише об'єкт текстологічного дослідження. Для оцінки традиційних та цифрових форм роботи з літературою використано порівняльний метод, а емпірична база ґрунтувалася на узагальнених спостереженнях освітніх тенденцій.

Література виступає центральним інструментом формування національної ідентичності студентів, інтегруючи когнітивний, емоційний та поведінковий компоненти. Твори українських авторів висвітлюють теми свободи, відповідальності, морального вибору та громадянського обов'язку, сприяючи розвитку критичного мислення, емпатії та усвідомлення культурної спадщини. Університети забезпечують ключове середовище соціалізації, де студенти отримують не лише професійні знання, а й ціннісні орієнтири та громадянську свідомість. Цифрові ресурси, онлайн-платформи та мультимедійні формати розширюють доступ до літератури та змінюють форми взаємодії, водночас створюючи ризики фрагментарного сприйняття. Поєднання традиційних і цифрових підходів посилює критичне мислення, культурну грамотність та зв'язок студентів із національною спадщиною.

Література слугує мостом між індивідуальною свідомістю та національною культурною традицією, сприяючи формуванню соціально відповідальних, культурно свідомих та рефлексивних студентів. Університети виконують ключову роль у медіації традиційних і цифрових форм роботи з літературою, забезпечуючи ефективне формування національної ідентичності. Цифровізація, за умови методично продуманого застосування, виступає ресурсом, що збагачує розуміння культури та цінностей України.

Ключові слова: патріотизм, література, дидактична функція, вища освіта, культурна пам'ять, цифрове середовище, культура.

Problem statement and its connection with important scientific and practical tasks

In the context of globalization, cultural homogenization, and active transnational communication, the issue of preserving and shaping national identity gains particular significance. The weakening of traditional value frameworks, the growth of migration processes, and the influence of mass culture intensify the search for effective mechanisms for cultivating a stable sense of national consciousness. Literature has served as one of these mechanisms for centuries, possessing powerful educational and worldview-shaping potential.

Literature not only reflects a nation's historical and cultural experience but also performs a didactic function, guiding readers in developing a system of values, moral

orientations, and a sense of belonging to a specific cultural and national community. N. Ruda (2025) argues that engaging with literary representations of national heroes and analyzing the moral choices of characters fosters responsibility, critical thinking, and civic engagement. Through artistic images, plots, character types, and moral conflicts, literature facilitates reflection on concepts such as duty, collective responsibility, historical memory, and patriotism.

Studying the didactic function of literature in the context of national identity is particularly relevant because different cultural traditions implement the educational role of artistic expression on the basis of distinct philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic principles. Comparative analysis of these approaches allows scholars to identify universal and culturally specific models of literary education, as well as to deepen understanding of literature's role as an instrument of cultural socialization.

Thus, addressing the didactic function of literature in fostering national identity responds to contemporary scientific and socio-cultural demands and carries significant theoretical and practical potential.

The aim of this article is to identify and analyze the didactic function of literature in shaping national identity, as well as to determine the primary principles and artistic methods through which literature cultivates readers' national consciousness.

This study relies on a theoretical-analytical approach focused on understanding national identity within the university context. The methodological framework incorporates the principles of systemic and socio-cultural analysis, allowing literature to be examined as an educational and value-based institution rather than merely as an object of textual analysis. Additionally, it applies a comparative approach to the study of traditional and digital forms of literary education. The empirical foundation of the study consists of synthesized observations of educational practices and digitalization trends across Ukrainian universities.

Analysis of recent studies and publications on the problem

An analysis of the scholarly sources underpinning this study reveals several complementary strands that together form its theoretical foundation. A significant contribution to the understanding of national identity as a complex socio-cultural phenomenon comes from the works of J. Assmann (1992) and R. Brubaker (1998; 2005). Assmann's concept of cultural memory provides a framework for interpreting literature as a mediator between individual consciousness and a nation's historical and cultural experience. Brubaker's process-oriented approach to identity, in turn, supports the view of national identity as a dynamic construct shaped through social and educational practices rather than as a fixed or static category.

The institutional perspective, represented in the works of E. Gellner (1990; 2019), M. Rewakowicz (2018), O. Semenova and M. Herasko (Семенова & Герашко, 2020), I. Trubavina, O. Cherednychenko, N. Oliinyk, and K. Nedria (2023), establishes the analytical framework for examining the role of the state and educational systems in the production and reproduction of national meanings. These studies allow the university to be conceptualized not merely as an educational institution, but as a space of symbolic production in which literature functions as a tool for legitimizing cultural values and civic orientations.

Contemporary Ukrainian scholarship by T. Urys (Урись, 2021), O. Kuznetsova (Кузнецова, 2023), O. Veretiuk (Веретюк, 2005), and O. Tsalapova and M. Fedorenko (2024) further contextualizes these theoretical positions within the national academic discourse. In these works, national identity emerges as the result of personal, spiritual, and cultural self-development, while literature is understood as an essential component of this process. Of particular relevance are studies that approach literary texts not as objects of formal analysis, but as carriers of value orientations and markers of cultural identification.

Research on digital culture by L. Konoshevsky and O. Konoshevsky (Коношевський & Коношевський, 2010) expands the scope of the study by framing the digital environment as a formative space for contemporary youth. These works substantiate the need to reconsider traditional literary practices and emphasize the mediating role of the university in integrating digital formats with humanistic values.

Taken together, the analyzed publications form a coherent theoretical framework in which literature appears as a stable yet evolving instrument for shaping students' national identity within the contemporary university and digital environment.

Presentation of the main research material

The issue of the didactic function of literature and its educational potential has received considerable attention in both domestic and international scholarship. Within classical literary studies, researchers have examined the educational role of literary texts in the context of moralizing and enlightening traditions, as well as theories of literature as a form of social consciousness.

In cultural and philosophical studies, scholars analyze national identity as a complex socio-cultural construct shaped by historical memory, language, traditions, and the arts. Several studies focus on the role of literature in creating national myths and collective consciousness, although this aspect is often addressed fragmentarily. Contemporary Ukrainian research confirms that literature serves as a key instrument for shaping national myths and collective awareness (Kolinko, Fedorchenko, 2025; Namestiuk, Stefurak, Basniak, 2024; Мішалова, 2021; Трухан, 2024).

In international literary studies, including studies on Chinese literature, as noted by I. Khyzha (Хижа, 2024), scholars pay significant attention to the educational function of literature within the framework of Confucian ethics, where literary texts have traditionally functioned as tools of moral and civic instruction. In English-language scholarship, researchers emphasize the formation of individual and civic identity, although the didactic dimension often appears implicitly rather than explicitly.

Despite the availability of substantial scholarly work, comprehensive studies addressing the didactic function of literature specifically in relation to fostering national identity remain limited, particularly in intercultural and comparative perspectives. Contemporary scholarship still lacks a single, universally accepted definition of national identity. The concept demonstrates polysemy and interpretive variability, reflecting its complex nature and its integration across multiple fields of the humanities, including philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, and pedagogy.

National identity develops under the influence of historical experience, cultural tradition, language, education, and the social environment in which a person matures.

In the Ukrainian context, the linguistic dimension of national identity is especially significant, as sociolinguistic research demonstrates that language practices and bilingual experience directly affect patterns of national self-identification (Yarotska, 2024). We support T. Urys' perspective, which defines national identity as the result of a consciously and subconsciously mediated process through which an individual identifies with their nation, affirms themselves as a bearer of its culture, and recognizes their belonging to its system of values, including language, ethical norms, and cultural heritage (Урись, 2021). The scholar argues that national identity not only helps determine the characteristics and trajectory of cultural, political, and other societal developments but ultimately serves to protect them. Consequently, a well-formed national identity proves vital not only for individual self-development but also for the existence and continuity of the nation as a whole.

One of the most common approaches conceptualizes national identity as an internal, value-laden, and emotional state of the individual (Assmann, 2011; Brubaker, 2004). In this view, national identity manifests itself through an individual's awareness of belonging to a particular cultural and historical community and through a stable connection to one's homeland, language, and traditions. This awareness extends beyond the sphere of emotions and entails active engagement in the country's cultural, educational, and social life.

Another approach examines national identity from an institutional perspective, emphasizing the role of the state and the education system in shaping it (Gellner, 2019; Rewakowicz, 2018). Within this framework, the university represents a key space of socialization, where students not only acquire professional knowledge but also develop worldview orientations, civic responsibility, and a sense of their place within the national community. However, the stability of national identity depends on trust in social institutions and the perception of personal significance in public life.

Scholarly attention also highlights a person-centered approach, which treats national identity as the outcome of spiritual and cultural self-development. From this perspective, national identity does not appear as an imposed behavioral model but as a conscious choice of values grounded in reflection, historical awareness, and respect for cultural heritage. Ukrainian philosophy, literature, and the arts play a significant role in conceptualizing national identity precisely as a profound personal process.

Thus, one can define national identity as an integrative characteristic of the individual, reflecting the level of their socio-cultural development and readiness for active engagement with society. Within the student environment, it manifests itself in respect for national culture, interest in Ukrainian history, responsibility for preserving cultural values, and a desire for self-realization within the educational space.

We argue that the formation of national identity begins long before entry into the university. The family plays a central role in this process, as it lays the foundation for initial understandings of language, traditions, moral norms, and cultural memory. As O. Kuznetsova emphasizes, it is within the family that parents establish the basis for children's understanding of themselves and their national roots, shape their attitudes toward their own and other cultures and traditions, and significantly influence the development of national identity (Кузнецова, 2023). Attitudes toward reading,

education, and literature cultivated during childhood largely determine a student's receptivity to the humanities and cultural meanings.

Literature occupies a unique and indispensable place in the formation of students' national identity. Within higher education, it functions not as an optional element but as a necessary instrument of cultural and spiritual socialization. Literary works possess a unique capacity to integrate rational comprehension of historical experience with emotional engagement, making them particularly effective in shaping stable value orientations.

Literature accumulates a nation's collective memory, reflects key stages of its historical development, social conflicts, moral dilemmas, and spiritual quests. Through literary texts, students gain the opportunity not only to engage with their country's past but also to relate it to their personal experiences. In this context, literature serves as a mediator between individual consciousness and national cultural tradition. A literary work presents the reader with the author's conceptualized analysis of the state of the world and an evaluation of reality and its phenomena. Through the artistic word, the author offers specific value orientations and ethical frameworks for reflection (Урись, 2021).

Works by Ukrainian authors address themes of freedom, dignity, responsibility, moral choice, and service to society. Engaging with these themes helps students develop an understanding of national identity as both personally meaningful and socially significant. Analyzing literary characters, plots, and authorial positions cultivates critical thinking, empathy, and the ability to engage in dialogue with cultural heritage.

In university practice, literature also fulfills an educational function. Working with fictional, memoir, and documentary texts allows students to develop a holistic understanding of the relationship between the individual, society, and the state. As O. Veretiuk notes, authors consciously or unconsciously transmit identifiers of their ethnicity, personal and national selfhood, and the national identity embedded in their works (Веретюк, 2005). Particular value lies in engaging with texts connected to regional history and local cultural contexts, which enhances awareness of the "small homeland" within the structure of national identity.

At the individual level, students' national identity manifests itself in social activity, respectful interaction with others, willingness to collaborate, and responsibility for the country's future. It encompasses a cognitive component (knowledge of history and culture), an emotional component (a sense of belonging), and a behavioral component (participation in social and cultural life).

Amid contemporary challenges facing Ukrainian society, rethinking national identity in the context of the twenty-first century becomes especially relevant. National identity should be understood as a dynamic system of values capable of uniting students from different regions and social groups. Universities, with their considerable educational and cultural potential, bear responsibility for fostering a conscious and mature national identity, in which literature occupies a central and indispensable role.

Thus, literature in higher education functions not only as a carrier of national cultural memory but also as a space for value-based dialogue between the past and the

present. However, students' interactions with literary texts undergo significant changes under contemporary conditions. The development of information technologies and the digitalization of education transform traditional practices of reading and interpreting literary works. L. Konoshevsky, O. Konoshevsky, and other scholars identify digital culture as a formative environment for the contemporary younger generation (Коношевський & Коношевський, 2010). This raises important questions regarding the formation of national identity in a digital environment. Modern students increasingly engage with literature in electronic rather than printed formats, which necessitates a reconsideration of the roles of both the university and the instructor. The digital space emerges as a new cultural reality within which literature continues to serve an identity-forming function, albeit through new forms and mechanisms of influence.

In the context of digitalized education, shaping students' national identity acquires new dimensions. The digital environment becomes a key space for the socialization of contemporary youth. For university students, online spaces often serve as primary sources of information, cultural models, and communication. This reality directly affects the ways in which students perceive literature and cultural heritage.

Digital transformation alters not only access to texts but also the nature of engagement with them. Electronic libraries, online archives, and educational platforms expand students' opportunities to encounter Ukrainian literature. At the same time, the depth and pace of reading literary works change. Fragmented information consumption, typical of digital environments, can complicate the holistic comprehension of literary texts. However, digital spaces should not be viewed solely as a risk factor. They open up new forms of student engagement with national culture. Social media, blogs, and multimedia projects contribute to the popularization of literary works and authors. Through digital formats, literature becomes part of students' everyday experience, which is crucial for shaping national identity among young people.

Digital interpretations of classical texts allow authors' messages to remain relevant to contemporary readers. Audiobooks and podcasts broaden the audience for literary works, while visual and interactive formats enhance emotional engagement with the text. At the same time, the rapid consumption of digital content can lead to superficial assimilation of cultural meanings. Fast consumption does not always promote reflection or value-based comprehension. In this context, universities play a critical role as mediators between the digital environment and cultural heritage. Instructors serve not only as providers of knowledge but also as guides within the informational space. Methodically structured use of digital resources can preserve the depth of humanities education. Integrating online platforms into literature instruction promotes critical thinking by enabling students to compare multiple interpretations of texts. Digital tools also facilitate access to regional and lesser-known literature, thereby broadening students' understanding of the diversity of Ukrainian national culture.

An essential aspect of this process involves cultivating digital reading literacy. It requires responsible and conscious engagement with texts. Without such an approach, digitalization can undermine the meaningful depth of literary education. In

the digital era, national identity develops within a context of constant informational choice. Students need the skills to distinguish culturally significant content from informational noise. Literature in digital environments can serve as a guide to values, but this requires a deliberate educational strategy. Universities should create conditions for intentional, reflective digital reading, combining traditional and innovative approaches to working with texts. As O. Tsalapova and M. Fedorenko emphasize, combining traditional and innovative approaches to reading culture creates a unique environment that motivates productive and creative engagement (Tsalapova & Fedorenko, 2024). Digital technologies do not replace classical reading; rather, when integrated pedagogically, they can enhance it. In this way, the digital environment becomes a resource for shaping national identity, strengthening students' connection to cultural traditions. Digitalization thus represents not a threat but a challenge to humanities education, and the way universities respond to it will significantly influence the future of national identity among student youth.

Conclusions

The article demonstrates that literature plays a central role in shaping students' national identity, functioning simultaneously as a repository of cultural memory and a medium for value-based reflection. Ukrainian literary works, through their exploration of freedom, dignity, responsibility, and civic duty, foster students' understanding of national identity as both a personally meaningful and socially significant phenomenon.

Analyzing literary characters, plots, and authorial perspectives develops critical thinking, empathy, and the capacity to engage in dialogue with cultural heritage. In higher education, literature facilitates the integration of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components of national identity, allowing students to connect historical knowledge with personal and social responsibility.

Universities serve as key sites of socialization, where students acquire not only professional knowledge but also worldview orientations and civic awareness. The formation of national identity is a dynamic, multi-layered process influenced by family, early cultural experience, and educational practices. Literature, as an educational tool, reinforces these processes by offering interpretive frameworks that connect the individual to broader cultural and historical traditions.

The study also highlights the transformative impact of digitalization on literary engagement. Digital environments, including online platforms, multimedia resources, and social networks, extend students' access to Ukrainian literature and diversify modes of interaction. While digital media can encourage fragmented reading, it also offers new opportunities for active participation, dialogue, and reflection within the cultural space.

By combining traditional and digital approaches, universities can create a rich and interactive learning environment that strengthens students' attachment to national culture and enhances their critical engagement with texts. Developing digital reading literacy emerges as an essential component of modern humanities education, enabling students to navigate information responsibly and to distinguish culturally meaningful content from informational noise.

Ultimately, literature remains a powerful instrument for fostering national identity in both physical and digital educational contexts. It cultivates reflective, socially responsible, and culturally aware students capable of meaningful participation in civic and cultural life. The synergy of literature, university pedagogy, and digital technologies represents a significant resource for sustaining and enriching national consciousness among contemporary Ukrainian youth.

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