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LINGUISTIC FEATURES IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LEWIS CARROLL'S *ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND* AND L. FRANK BAUM'S *THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ*

This study explores the linguistic features of two iconic works of English-language children's literature – Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll and The Wonderful Wizard of Oz by L. Frank Baum. Both texts serve as key examples of literary fiction that not only shape children's perceptions of fantastical worlds but also actively influence the development of their language competence, imagination, and emotional intelligence. The focus of the research is the role of language as a central tool for engaging readers aged 8 to 12, who are at a crucial stage of cognitive and linguistic development.

The aim of this paper is to determine how the authors employ linguistic means – including narrative voice, wordplay, humorous elements, metaphors, comparisons, repetitions, and other descriptive techniques – to create a reading experience that is both entertaining and educational. Special attention is given to how these tools contribute to the development of critical thinking, empathy, and the capacity for reflection in young audiences.

Through a comparative linguistic analysis of selected passages from both texts, the study identifies recurring language patterns that strongly influence the perception of plot and characters. It also evaluates the effectiveness of such strategies in fostering reader engagement and transforming reading into an interactive, interpersonal experience with the text.

The paper examines the stylistic approaches of Carroll and Baum, who offer accessible yet layered and imaginative narratives that stimulate curiosity, enrich vocabulary, and contribute to the formation of cultural awareness. In particular, Carroll makes active use of absurd elements and language play, creating the impression of a surreal dream where logic is deliberately disrupted. In contrast, Baum favors a structured, realistic storytelling style focused on character development and moral lessons that resonate with a child's real-life experiences.

The study draws on the work of leading scholars in the field of children's literature, including Lecercle (1994), Nikolajeva (2005), and Hearn (2002), and emphasizes the importance of linguistic play, symbolism, and descriptive depth in literary texts for children. This approach allows for an analysis not only from a linguistic perspective but also in terms of the texts' potential to foster the development of soft skills in middle childhood.

Key words: children's literature, linguistic strategies, wordplay, narrative voice, reader engagement.

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МОВНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ДИТЯЧОЇ ЛІТЕРАТУРИ: КОМПАРАТИВНЕ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ «ПРИГОД АЛІСИ В ДИВОКРАЇ» ЛЬЮЇСА КЕРРОЛЛА ТА «ДИВОВИЖНОГО ЧАРІВНИКА КРАЇНИ ОЗ» Л. ФРЕНКА БАУМА

У цьому дослідженні розглядаються мовні особливості двох культових творів англomовної дитячої літератури – «Пригоди Аліси в Країні чудес» Льюїса Керролла та «Чудовий чарівник країни Оз» Л. Френка Баума.

Обидва твори є знаковими прикладами художньої прози, що не лише формують уявлення дітей про фантастичні світи, а й активно впливають на розвиток їхньої мовної компетенції, читацької уяви та емоційного інтелекту. У центрі уваги дослідження – роль мови як ключового інструмента залучення читачів віком від 8 до 12 років, які перебувають на важливому етапі когнітивного й мовного становлення.

Метою роботи є з'ясування того, яким чином автори використовують мовні засоби – зокрема оповідний голос, гру слів, гумористичні елементи, метафори, порівняння, повтори та інші описові прийоми – для формування читацького досвіду, що сприяє не лише розвазі, а й навчанню. Окрему увагу приділено тому, як ці засоби сприяють розвитку критичного мислення, емпатії та здатності до рефлексії у юної аудиторії.

Через проведення порівняльного лінгвістичного аналізу вибраних уривків з обох текстів було виявлено повторювані мовні шаблони, які мають сильний вплив на сприйняття сюжету та персонажів. Дослідження також оцінює ефективність таких стратегій у сприянні залученню читачів до процесу читання як активної, міжсособистісної взаємодії з текстом.

У роботі розглянуто творчі стилістичні підходи Керрола та Баума, які подають доступні, водночас багатозначні та образні оповіді, що стимулюють дитячу допитливість, збагачують словниковий запас і сприяють формуванню культурного досвіду. Зокрема, Керрол активно застосовує елементи абсурду та мовної гри, створюючи враження сюрреалістичного сну, де правила логіки порушуються навмисно. Натомість Баум надає перевагу структурованій, достовірній розповіді, яка базується на розвитку персонажів і моральних уроках, близьких до реальності дитини.

Дослідження спирається на праці провідних учених у галузі дитячої літератури, зокрема Лесеркл (1994), Ніколаєвої (2005) та Герна (2002), і підкреслює важливість мовної гри, символізму та описової глибини в художніх текстах для дітей. Такий підхід дає змогу не лише проаналізувати тексти з лінгвістичної точки зору, а й оцінити їхній потенціал у розвитку гуманітарних навичок у підлітковому віці.

Ключові слова: дитяча література, лінгвістичні стратегії, мовна гра, оповідна манера, залучення читача.

Problem statement. Reading is a fundamental skill that serves as the foundation for lifelong learning, critical thinking, and personal growth. For children, particularly those in their formative years, reading is not just a practical necessity but a gateway to imagination, creativity, and cognitive development. Children's literature plays a vital role not only in entertainment but also in the educational and developmental growth of young readers. It introduces children to complex ideas, emotional challenges, and linguistic structures in ways that are accessible and engaging. Through stories, children build empathy, strengthen imagination, and acquire both language skills and world knowledge.

In educational contexts, literature aimed at middle readers—typically children aged 8 to 12—is particularly significant. This age group is transitioning from early childhood into adolescence, marked by increasing independence, critical thinking, and emotional sensitivity. Literature for this stage must therefore balance complexity with clarity and encourage both intellectual curiosity and emotional resilience.

Lewis Carroll and L. Frank Baum are two influential authors whose works have long been regarded as cornerstones of children's literature. Lewis Carroll, a mathematician and logician, infused his children's work with puzzles and paradoxes, challenging young readers intellectually. Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) is known for its whimsical nonsense language and philosophical undertones. L. Frank Baum, a journalist and storyteller, sought to modernize the fairy tale, creating a distinctly American heroine in Dorothy who resonated with

children through her ordinary language and accessible emotions. Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) offers a more linear narrative and emotionally resonant language. Both books have deeply shaped literary traditions and continue to be widely read today.

This article focuses on the linguistic strategies—the deliberate use of language devices and stylistic techniques—that each author employs to engage readers and foster their development. Reader engagement in this context refers to the way texts captivate attention, elicit emotional responses, and stimulate cognitive processes such as imagination and interpretation.

The paper tries to answer the question of how the linguistic strategies of Carroll and Baum differ in engaging middle readers and supporting their cognitive and emotional development.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Research on children's literature often highlights its dual role in education and entertainment. Lecercle explores Carroll's linguistic playfulness, noting how nonsensical language challenges young readers' cognitive frameworks and stimulates curiosity (Lecercle, 1994). Similarly, Nikolajeva, emphasizes the immersive quality of descriptive narratives in fostering imaginative thinking (Nikolajeva, 2005). Michael Patrick Hearn argues that Baum's strength lies in his creation of Dorothy, a relatable child protagonist whose language and experiences are easily understood by young readers (Hearn 2002). Inspired by Carroll's Alice, Dorothy's adventures are crafted with simple yet engaging language, making her more accessible and appealing than traditional fairy tale royalty. These studies collectively underscore

the importance of language in shaping children's engagement with literature, laying a foundation for a focused comparison of Carroll and Baum's approaches.

The purpose of the article. This study aims to analyze and compare the linguistic strategies used in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, identifying their role in engaging middle readers and supporting their cognitive and emotional development.

Presentation of the main material of the article. With the significance of children's literature and the role of linguistic strategies in supporting cognitive and emotional development established, the following section presents a comparative analysis of two iconic texts that represent contrasting yet complementary approaches to engaging young readers.

To investigate how Lewis Carroll and L. Frank Baum use language to engage middle readers and support their development, this section presents a comparative analysis of selected passages from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. The analysis focuses on linguistic strategies related to narrative voice, lexical innovation, syntactic complexity, figurative language, and emotional tone. In doing so, it explores how each author constructs imaginative experiences that resonate cognitively and emotionally with young readers aged 8–12. The contrastive structure that follows enables a side-by-side examination of how each writer crafts their world through language.

Narrative Voice and Reader Engagement. Both Carroll and Baum adopt third-person narration, but they differ substantially in how they engage the reader's attention. Carroll frequently breaks the fourth wall, employing narrative intrusions, irony, and internal focalization. The narrator is often aligned with Alice's subjective perspective, as seen from the very first chapter: "*Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do...*" The use of focalization draws the reader into Alice's inner world, fostering empathy and mirroring the internal reflections of a developing child. Carroll's voice is also reflexive and playful, often drawing attention to the storytelling process itself.

In contrast, Baum's narrator is more stable and omniscient, offering a clear and direct narrative tone. The opening lines establish this straightforwardness: "*Dorothy lived in the midst of the great Kansas prairies, with Uncle Henry, who was a farmer, and Aunt Em, who was the farmer's wife.*" This unembellished narrative style helps young readers feel secure within the story world and provides a reliable frame of reference. The narrator rarely intrudes, maintaining

a degree of emotional steadiness suitable for middle readers who benefit from structural clarity.

Lexical Play and Word Formation. Carroll's linguistic inventiveness is one of his defining features. His playful manipulation of words is especially evident in the poem "*Jabberwocky*", with neologisms like "*slithy*," "*toves*," and "*gyre*." These portmanteau words defy semantic conventions and invite inferential thinking. Similarly, the Mad Hatter's riddle—"*Why is a raven like a writing-desk?*"—has no logical answer but stimulates curiosity and lateral reasoning. These features require young readers to stretch their cognitive capacities, experimenting with meaning beyond literal comprehension.

Baum's use of language, while creative, is more transparent and conventional. Although he invents terms such as "Munchkins" and "Kalidahs," these lexical innovations are semantically intuitive and embedded in explanatory context. For example: "*They have bodies like bears and heads like tigers, and claws so long and sharp that they could tear me in two in a minute.*" Baum's language provides accessibility and narrative continuity, helping readers visualize and process the fictional world without ambiguity.

Syntactic Structure and Cognitive Engagement. Carroll's syntactic choices often reflect philosophical ambiguity or paradox. In a dialogue between Alice and the March Hare, she says: "*I do... at least – I mean what I say – that's the same thing, you know.*" The recursive phrasing encourages readers to analyze meaning and examine how language expresses thought. Such syntactic complexity promotes metalinguistic awareness and supports the development of logical reasoning.

By contrast, Baum's syntax is typically linear and unambiguous, in line with the developmental needs of middle readers. The dialogue serves to reinforce themes rather than complicate interpretation. For instance, the Scarecrow says: "*I haven't got a brain... only straw,*" a line that is both emotionally transparent and symbolically direct. The simplicity of structure enables children to focus on emotional identification and moral inference.

Use of Figurative Language and Description. Both authors use figurative language to enrich their narratives, but with differing aims and levels of abstraction. Carroll's surrealistic imagery emphasizes the fluidity of space and identity. When Alice falls down the rabbit hole, she reflects: "*The rabbit-hole went straight on like a tunnel for some way, and then dipped suddenly down, so suddenly that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself falling down what seemed to be a very deep well.*" The blending of physical

action with introspective thought invites imaginative interpretation and experiential immersion.

Baum, however, favors more concrete, sensory-driven description. His Emerald City is described with visual specificity: "*It was a big, green place, with marble walls and a glass dome that glittered in the sun.*" This directness supports visualization and helps readers construct mental maps of the narrative world. Baum's descriptions also reinforce thematic contrasts between bleak Kansas and the vivid magical land, grounding emotional development in physical transformation.

Emotional Tone and Character Development. While Carroll maintains a tone of whimsical detachment, Baum offers emotionally grounded character arcs. Alice undergoes intellectual rather than emotional growth, encountering bizarre creatures and riddles that challenge her reasoning but leave her personality relatively unchanged. For instance, her encounters often end in confusion or contradiction, rather than resolution. In contrast, Baum's characters experience clear developmental journeys. The Tin Woodman desires a heart, the Lion seeks courage, and Dorothy longs for home. The repeated affirmation "*There's no place like home*" serves as an emotional anchor and provides closure. Baum's thematic consistency reinforces emotional resilience and self-belief in young readers.

Comparative Summary. The linguistic strategies employed by Carroll and Baum reveal distinct yet equally purposeful approaches to engaging middle readers. Carroll's narrative fosters cognitive growth through lexical experimentation, syntactic challenge, and interpretive ambiguity. His text, as explored by Stephens, implicitly critiques ideology by disrupting linguistic norms and inviting readers to "read against the grain" (Stephens, 1992). This aligns with the idea that children's literature can subvert, not just reflect, societal norms, providing a safe space for cognitive dissonance.

Baum's prose, by contrast, supports emotional development through clarity, structure, and moral coherence. Wall underscores the importance of narrative voice in shaping ethical frameworks, noting that stories like Baum's create a «transparent narrator» that guides readers through dilemmas with emotional clarity (Wall, 1991). This mirrors Nikolajeva's cognitive approach, in which she states that «structured narrative helps children internalize cause-effect logic and empathic understanding» (Nikolajeva, 2014).

Each author tailors their style to elicit different modes of reader engagement—one playful and questioning, the other stable and affirming. By

presenting their strategies side by side, this analysis illustrates how children's literature can serve diverse developmental needs through language.

Conclusion. The research demonstrates that the linguistic strategies employed by Lewis Carroll and L. Frank Baum in their respective works, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, serve distinct yet complementary purposes in the development of middle readers' linguistic and cognitive skills. While both authors successfully engage their audience, their approaches to language and narrative structure reflect different educational and developmental priorities.

Carroll's linguistic strategies prioritize creativity, ambiguity, and critical language awareness. His work is renowned for its playful manipulation of language, embracing absurdity, wordplay, and nonsensical logic. The whimsical and often paradoxical nature of his language encourages readers to explore the limits and flexibility of words, fostering a sense of linguistic experimentation. This approach promotes a critical awareness of language itself, challenging young readers to question traditional uses of words and to engage with meaning in unconventional ways. Carroll's writing encourages children to think creatively, make connections between disparate ideas, and appreciate the malleability of language, which is crucial for the development of higher-order thinking skills.

In contrast, Baum's work is characterized by a more straightforward and structured use of language, focusing on clarity and accessibility. The simplicity of his narrative and the relatable language used by the characters, particularly Dorothy, ensure that the story is easy to follow for young readers. Baum's writing strikes a balance between adventure and emotional depth, using familiar language to evoke feelings of empathy, courage, and hope. His focus on emotional resonance helps children connect with the characters and themes on a personal level, encouraging them to understand complex emotions and ethical dilemmas through the lens of a child protagonist. The emotional grounding provided by Baum's narrative makes it an essential tool for developing empathy and moral reasoning in young readers.

Both authors' strategies are highly effective for middle readers but serve different developmental functions.

Carroll's approach nurtures the imagination and curiosity of middle readers by allowing them to experiment with language in a way that is both fun and thought-provoking. His nonsensical use of language encourages children to stretch their creative capacities, think beyond literal meanings, and appreciate the playful side of communication.

Through the whimsical worlds he creates, Carroll invites readers to explore the relationship between language, meaning, and reality, providing a space for cognitive flexibility and abstract thinking.

Baum's style, with its clear narrative structure and emotionally resonant characters, provides a stable foundation for middle readers to navigate their own emotions and develop a sense of moral clarity. The accessibility of his language allows young readers to easily follow the moral lessons embedded in the story, such as the importance of friendship, bravery, and self-discovery. By using language that is grounded in emotion and relatable experiences, Baum's narrative supports the development of emotional intelligence, helping children to understand and process complex feelings.

Moreover, Hunt stresses that different narrative strategies correspond to distinct stages of cognitive and emotional development, and both nonsense (Carroll) and realism-light fantasy (Baum) serve essential roles in the broader landscape of children's literary education (Hunt, 1994).

In addition, recent studies on children's comprehension and narrative processing further support these distinctions. The 2020 Semantic Scholar study on museum texts emphasizes that multimodal storytelling and repetition, like that used in Dr. Seuss or *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, are most effective when aligned with children's developmental stage. Similarly, the 2021 study on Filipino readability shows that linguistic structure and repetition significantly improve comprehension in early and middle readers—a hallmark of Baum's more formulaic, emotionally anchored storytelling (State Library of Queensland, 2020; Lipovsky, 2020; Imperial & Ong, 2021).

Finally, repetition—a feature common in both authors, albeit used differently—has been shown to enhance learning and memory in children's books (Mays N., 2020; Cioffi, 2025). Carroll uses repetition to subvert expectations and build rhythm, while Baum employs it for reassurance and narrative cohesion.

Thus, each author's style complements different literacy goals, making both essential pillars of children's literary education. Carroll's work enriches

children's linguistic flexibility and imaginative potential, while Baum's contributions foster emotional intelligence and moral understanding. Together, their works form a balanced approach to children's literacy, addressing both the cognitive and emotional aspects of reading. By incorporating both types of narratives into children's literary education, educators can provide a holistic reading experience that nurtures the imagination, linguistic creativity, and emotional development of young readers.

These findings have practical implications for educators and translators.

For teachers both works can be used to expose students to different narrative and linguistic styles. Carroll's nonsensical language can be a tool for teaching creative writing, phonetics, or logic games, while Baum's descriptive passages can support lessons on setting, theme, or character development. Teachers can guide students in comparing the protagonists' journeys, encouraging students to reflect on decision-making, personal growth, and friendship. Open-ended questions like "Why do you think Alice feels confused here?" or "How does Dorothy show bravery?" promote emotional intelligence. Lessons could combine literature with activities in art, drama, and language play (e.g., writing their own riddles or mapping fantasy worlds), helping students engage more deeply with the text.

Translators should preserve the tone and playful elements in Carroll's work without losing the intended confusion and layered meanings. In contrast, Baum's style requires clarity and emotional fidelity to maintain the simplicity and warmth that engage young readers. They might consider how fantastical elements resonate with their audience's cultural context, especially when preserving puns or idiomatic expressions. Creative solutions may be needed to maintain accessibility and relevance without distorting the text's meaning.

Ultimately, recognizing how different linguistic strategies serve young readers allows for more thoughtful application of these works in the classroom and more nuanced translations that retain their educational and emotional power.

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