

# DEVELOPMENT

## OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE DIGITAL ERA

### DESARROLLO DE LA LITERATURA INFANTIL EN LA ERA DIGITAL

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#### ABSTRACT

The 21st century is a time when high technologies are widely used, life is increasingly intertwined with technology, and digital life grows more important day by day, compelling people to adapt. These rapid developments and changes are reflected not only in every field of life but also in literature. The impact of digital technologies is particularly profound in children's literature. Through these technologies, children learn educational content and values in a fun, interactive way. Azerbaijani children's literature is likewise entering a new stage of development via digital technologies. Traditional fairy tales, epics, and stories are being reworked into digital formats and presented to children. For example, interactive e-books and animations introduce children to the heroes of Azerbaijani folklore, fostering familiarity with cultural heritage. This article discusses in detail the development of children's literature in the digital era, its impact on children's lives and education, and the opportunities and challenges emerging in this field. Digital children's literature encompasses various formats, such as e-books, interactive stories, and mobile applications. These formats enable children to engage more actively with stories, heighten their interest in reading, and make learning enjoyable. However, while the development of children's literature in the digital era positively impacts education and child development, measures must be implemented to address existing challenges in this area. For the above reasons, we also provide recommendations and/or suggestions to address these challenges.

**Keywords:** Digital age, Children's literature, E-books, Mobile applications, Multimedia.

#### RESUMEN

El siglo XXI es una época en la que las altas tecnologías se utilizan ampliamente, la vida está cada vez más entrelazada con la tecnología y la vida digital cobra mayor importancia día a día, obligando a las personas a adaptarse. Estos rápidos avances y cambios se reflejan no solo en todos los ámbitos de la vida, sino también en la literatura. El impacto de las tecnologías digitales es especialmente profundo en la literatura infantil. A través de estas tecnologías, los niños aprenden contenidos y valores educativos de forma divertida e interactiva. La literatura infantil azerbaiyana también está entrando en una nueva etapa de desarrollo gracias a las tecnologías digitales. Los cuentos de hadas, las epopeyas y los relatos tradicionales se están adaptando a formatos digitales y presentándose a los niños. Por ejemplo, los libros electrónicos interactivos y las animaciones presentan a los niños a los héroes del folclore azerbaiyano, fomentando el conocimiento del patrimonio cultural. Este artículo analiza en detalle el desarrollo de la literatura infantil en la era digital, su impacto en la vida y la educación de los niños, y las oportunidades y los desafíos que surgen en este campo. La literatura infantil digital abarca diversos formatos, como libros electrónicos, cuentos interactivos y aplicaciones móviles. Estos formatos permiten a los niños interactuar más activamente con las historias, aumentan su interés por la lectura y hacen que el aprendizaje sea ameno. Sin embargo, si bien el desarrollo de la literatura infantil en la era digital impacta positivamente la educación y el desarrollo infantil, es necesario implementar medidas para abordar los desafíos existentes en este ámbito. Por las razones mencionadas, también ofrecemos recomendaciones y/o sugerencias para abordar estos desafíos.

**Palabras clave:** Era digital, Literatura infantil, Libros electrónicos, Aplicaciones móviles, Multimedia.

## INTRODUCTION

Children's digital literature encompasses various digital formats such as electronic books (e-books), interactive stories, and mobile applications in addition to the traditional book format. These formats offer opportunities such as enriching the text with visual and sound effects and allowing the reader to influence the course of the story. In addition, digital children's literature allows children to actively interact with the story. This increases their interest and makes the learning process fun. Multimedia elements such as sound, animation, and video facilitate the assimilation of the text and attract children's attention. Also, the digital format facilitates the transportation and sharing of content. This allows children to read anywhere and at any time. Digital children's literature also plays an important role in the development of language skills. Thanks to the interactive and engaging features of digital content, children are more actively involved in the language learning process and acquire various language skills more quickly. This helps them develop all aspects of language - speaking, writing, reading and listening. Thus, through digital platforms, children are introduced to more colorful and interactive texts. Unlike the simplicity of traditional books, digital books are rich in animations, sounds and interactive elements. Such content attracts children's interest more and motivates them to read. For example, while reading a story, children can hear the voices of the characters of that story and see their movements (Jun et al., 2025).

At an academic level, we can establish that the field of digital children's literature is located at the intersection of literary studies, pedagogy, and information technologies. According to Marsh (2006), the incorporation of digital elements into children's narratives redefines the mechanisms of reading and multimodality: "children's engagement with multimodal texts extends literacy practices beyond print." More recently, López-Escribano et al., (2021) point out that an interactive e-book is not simply an enriched PDF; interactive children's e-books are designed to scaffold emergent literacy through embedded hot spots, narration, and adaptive feedback loops. In today's increasingly interconnected and dynamic world, the acquisition of digital skills not only encompasses text decoding but also sensory interaction (sound, animation) and nonlinear narrative navigation, which children can experience with new technologies (Grøver et al., 2023).

Regarding theoretical perspectives on children's reading and digital media, Vygotsky et al. (1978) emphasizes, from a sociocultural constructivist perspective, the role

of the mediator in the internalization of language; in digital environments, the device acts as a mediator. Digital affordances can serve as cognitive scaffolds, fulfilling roles traditionally held by adult readers (Xiao et al., 2024). Furthermore, multimodal approaches recognize that meaning is constructed through multiple codes (visual, audio, gestural) (Unsworth, 2024). Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) laid the groundwork, and recent studies show that children develop richer multiliteracies by combining text, image, and sound in digital picture books. Moreover, self-determination theory indicates that interactivity increases intrinsic motivation. When children can exert agency over story elements, autonomy and relatedness needs are satisfied, boosting engagement (Coe, 2025).

Thus, the development of children's literature in the digital era is characterized by enriching traditional literature with new forms and presenting it to children in a more attractive way. Through interactive books, mobile applications, and digital games, children increase their interest in literature, develop language skills, and assimilate cultural values. For example, digital versions of classic works of Azerbaijani children's literature help children become more familiar with these works and increase their interest in them. In general, digital content prepared in the Azerbaijani language allows children to better master and develop their native language. For this reason, the topic of the development of children's literature in the digital era is very relevant (Li, 2024).

Among some of the strengths of digital children's literature, which have boosted its widespread dissemination, we can highlight: 1) **accessibility and democratization**: the portability of tablets and smartphones allows access to hundreds of titles anywhere; 2) **support for emergent learning**: studies show that e-books with audio and animation facilitate the development of phonological awareness and vocabulary in children aged 4–7, even without adult mediation; and 3) **inclusion of vulnerable populations**: interventions with e-books have demonstrated significant benefits in children with language difficulties and from low SES backgrounds, since the multimedia elements bridge language gaps through concrete illustrations and audio cues. However, limitations and challenges persist in the adoption of these technologies, such as: 1) **cognitive overload**: excessive multimedia can be distracting; irrelevant animations reduce narrative comprehension (child-encyclopedia.com); 2) **technological dependence and the digital divide**: not all homes have adequate devices; the "app gap" continues to limit homogeneous access; and 3) **quality of design and pedagogy**: the lack of educational design standards leads to poorly conceived applications (Grøver et al., 2023; López-Escribano et al., 2021; Maslin

et al., 2023; Presta et al., 2024; Xiao et al., 2024). As Korat and Segal-Drori (2016) conclude, “more is often less” in interactivity.

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## DEVELOPMENT

Digital children's literature leads to a number of positive changes in the educational process, as its interactive and visually rich content increases children's interest in reading, and multimedia elements help them better understand and remember the text. Digital children's literature has the following key characteristics (Serafini, 2012):

- Digital children's literature uses elements such as sound, animation, and interactivity. This attracts children's attention and makes their reading process more interesting and fun.
- Digital storytelling allows children to engage more actively with the story. This helps them understand and remember the story better.
- E-books and mobile applications can be used anywhere, which allows children to continue reading at any time.

In the digital age, interactivity allows children to engage more actively with text, which supports their learning process. Reading and listening to stories in a new format increases children's vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Thus, lessons enriched with interactive and multimedia

elements make the learning process of children more interesting and effective. The widespread availability of digital content is making a significant contribution to improving education in remote areas. In places where traditional printed books and educational materials are lacking, digital books and resources can fill this gap. Digital books, videos, and interactive learning tools available online allow children living in rural areas to benefit from education just like their urban peers.

Digital content plays an important role in ensuring equality of educational opportunities. Children from families with limited financial resources are not left behind in education by having access to digital books and online educational materials. This is an important step in ensuring social justice and ensuring that education is accessible to everyone (Reich et al., 2016, p. 585). Today, children learn their lessons in a more interesting and motivating way through digital books, educational games, and videos. This increases their interest in lessons and helps them achieve better results. For children living in remote areas, such tools make the educational process more attractive and increase their enthusiasm for learning.

The future of children's literature in the digital age is linked to the further expansion of innovative applications and technologies in this field. In the future, digital formats are expected to be enriched with more interactivity and multimedia. This will make children's reading and learning processes more interesting and effective, and support their cultural development. Azerbaijani children's literature is a source known for its rich cultural heritage and history. In recent years, taking advantage of the digital era has created new opportunities to develop this traditional literary culture.

Nargiz Ismayilova's book “The Magic Brush” (Ismayilova, 2020) collects prose works titled “Ordubehisht Tulip”, “Adil Shah and the Land of Kangar”, “The Great Architect”, “The Magic Brush”, “Mysterious Water”, “Beaded Hill” and “The Ruined One”. Most of these works were written based on folklore. This book, which plays an important role in the development of Azerbaijani children's literature and in introducing children to national values, culture and history, retains its importance even in the digital age. Nargiz Ismayilova's works can be widely distributed on digital platforms and can reach more children. Presenting these works in digital format can help children become familiar with national folklore and literature, develop their language skills, and increase their interest in reading. Through modern technologies, these works can be presented in an interactive format, making the reading process more interesting and entertaining for children.

Nargiz Ismayilova's works reflect the richness and depth of folklore, allowing children to gain knowledge about national values and culture. Through these works, children get to know the culture, history and traditions of Azerbaijan better. The use of folklore in the educational process helps children form their national identity and become attached to their own culture. The science fiction genre expands children's thinking abilities and interests them in new scientific knowledge. Reyhan Yusufgyzy's short story "The Green-Eyed Girl" (Yusifqizi, 2011), with its inclusion in Azerbaijani children's literature, develops children's thinking about technology, scientific discoveries, and the future. This genre increases children's creative abilities and opens up new possibilities for them regarding future possibilities.

The plot of the story "The Green-Eyed Girl" is full of events that attract and interest readers. The main character of the work is a child who is interested in scientific discoveries, and this interest leads him to various adventures. The work instills values such as friendship, courage, and curiosity in children, as well as increasing their interest in scientific knowledge. Publishing Reyhan Yusufgyzy's short story "The Green-Eyed Girl" on digital platforms allows the work to be delivered to a wider audience. When presented in digital format, this work provides children with an easier and more comfortable way to read. Interactive digital formats help children immerse themselves more deeply in the work and assimilate the text.

The historicity of Elkhon Yurdoglu's poetry also permeated his prose works, especially in his tale "Gorgud Dede" (Yurdoglu, 2020). The motifs of the epic "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud", which has become famous throughout the world due to its antiquity, were used. This work reflects the richness of ancient Turkic culture and history and brings readers closer to this heritage. The plot of the tale "Gorgud Dede" is rich in historical and mythological events that immediately attract readers. The work combines the motifs of the epic "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" and describes the adventures and struggles of the heroes of this epic. The themes of the work include heroism, friendship, courage and patriotism. This work, presented in digital format, provides content that children and young people can easily read and learn historical motifs from.

Love for the homeland and pride in one's people have always occupied a special place in Azerbaijani literature and folklore. The epics of "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud", folk songs and fairy tales are vivid examples of this theme. The patriotic feelings transmitted from generation to generation through these works increase young people's love for their homeland and encourage them to be loyal to national values. The theme of patriotism is also widely featured in

Azerbaijani written literature. The works of our poets such as Mammad Araz and Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh emphasize love for the homeland, pride in one's people, and hatred of enemies. These works play an important role in educating young people in the national spirit and strengthening their feelings of patriotism.

In addition, the topic of patriotism is also at the center of attention in Azerbaijani scientific research works. The works of our scientists extensively examine the issues of national values and patriotism and give recommendations for the dissemination of these topics in our society. Such research is of great importance in terms of protecting national values and educating young people in a patriotic spirit. The theme of patriotism also occupies one of the main places in modern Azerbaijani children's literature. In Alibeyli Khanimana's poem "Our Lungs, Our Souls" (Alibeyli, 2008), the issue of the Turkish nation, which has the same language and blood as our brothers, and their friendship with our nation is highlighted. The poem celebrates the bonds of brotherhood and friendship between the Azerbaijani and Turkish nations, emphasizing the common values and historical ties of the two peoples.

In the poem "Our Liver, Our Soul", Khanimana expresses her deep feelings about brotherly relations. The poet emphasizes the love and attachment of the two nations to each other, noting the importance of friendship and cooperation between them. This friendship is strengthened both by its historical roots and by cultural and linguistic unity. One of the main themes emphasized in the poem is national unity and patriotism. Brotherhood with the Turkish nation is reflected not only in the political and economic spheres, but also in culture and literature. In Khanimana's poetry, this spirit of unity and solidarity also plays an important role in the patriotic education of children. Such works instill feelings of national unity and friendship in the younger generations, encouraging them to protect and develop their national identity.

In modern times, with the development of digital technologies, poems such as Alibeyli Khanimana's "Our Liver, Our Soul" can be made accessible to a wider audience. The dissemination of these poems through digital platforms serves to develop children's feelings of patriotism and national unity. These works are presented to children in a more interesting and engaging way through e-books, audio and video materials. Digital platforms offer children a wide range of opportunities to increase their interest and love for literature. Digital versions of classic works of Azerbaijani children's literature help children become more familiar with these works and increase their interest in them.

English children's literature also has a rich history and many beloved works. Writers such as Charles Dickens, Lewis Carroll, Beatrix Potter, Roald Dahl and J.K. Rowling have created unforgettable works for children. The digital age has opened up new opportunities for these works to be made available to a wider audience and presented in new formats. For example:

1. Lewis Carroll – *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) is a story about Alice's journey into a fantasy world. It has been reimaged in the digital age as various animated films, interactive games, and e-books.
2. Beatrix Potter – *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902) was written and illustrated by Beatrix Potter. Peter Rabbit's adventures have been adapted into animated series, e-book format, and various apps in the digital age.
3. Roald Dahl – *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964) is a classic children's story that has been brought to the digital age through two different film adaptations, e-books, and interactive games.
4. J.K. Rowling – *The Harry Potter series* (1997-2007) is one of the most famous examples of fantasy literature. In the digital age, the series has been widely disseminated through films, games, e-books, and augmented reality applications (Salmon, 2014).

Digital technologies are providing new ways for children to learn about and love literature. E-books and audiobooks make it easier for children to access and read books. Platforms such as Amazon Kindle, Apple Books, and Audible offer a wide range of books for children. Interactive apps and games play an important role in digital children's literature. These apps develop children's reading habits and teach them in a more fun way. For example, the augmented reality game "Harry Potter: Wizards Unite" introduces children to the world of books more closely. Educational platforms and online resources help children develop their language skills and literary knowledge. Platforms such as BBC Bitesize, Khan Academy Kids, and National Geographic Kids offer interesting content related to literature (Genc, 2014, p. 55).

However, along with all this, there are a number of challenges related to the development of children's literature in the digital age. One of these challenges is the excessive use of digital devices, which can lead to health problems if children spend a long time in front of a screen. Children spending more time with digital devices can cause eye strain, headaches, and sleep problems. Experts emphasize that children spending a long time in front of a screen can negatively affect their physical and mental health. To prevent these problems, parents and teachers should limit the time children spend in front of a screen and diversify their activities (Genc, 2014).

Also, spending too much time on digital devices can negatively affect the development of children's social skills. Children's weakened communication skills in real life can lead to difficulties in establishing social relationships. Parents and teachers should teach children a balanced lifestyle and encourage them to develop social skills in both the digital and real worlds (Kucirkova, 2019). In modern times, children are faced with a huge amount of information. This can distract them and create difficulties in absorbing information. To develop children's skills in distinguishing between useful and harmful information, they should be provided with the right sources of information (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013).

But it is well accepted that reading is important for children to develop creativity, critical thinking, and imagination. The abundance of digital content can sometimes reduce children's interest in literature. To solve this problem, children should be made to love traditional books and their interest in literature should be maintained (Jones & Park, 2015). There are also concerns about children's data security and privacy in the digital world. It is important to protect children's personal information and take security measures. Therefore, children should be informed about the dangers of the internet and measures should be taken to ensure their safety.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the modern era, children's literature is being presented in new formats in the digital age and is being delivered to a wider audience. Through e-books, audiobooks, interactive applications, games and augmented reality technologies, children's interest in literature increases and language skills develop. From classic works to new writings, children's literature becomes more accessible and interesting in the digital age. This ensures that children become more familiar with literature and love it. Although the digital age offers many opportunities for the development of children's literature, there are also a number of challenges in this area. Increased screen time, weakening social skills, information overload, the decline in the value of literature, and concerns about data security are issues that need to be considered in the development of digital children's literature. To address these challenges, parents, teachers, and educators must work together to create conditions for children to benefit from digital content in a healthy, balanced, and safe manner. Only in this way can the problems associated with the development of children's literature in the digital age be overcome and children can develop healthily in both the digital and real worlds.



Consequently, we believe the following important steps should be taken to support the development of children's literature in the digital age and to ensure that children achieve higher results in the fields of education and culture:

- Improving the quality of digital content. To improve the quality of digital content for children's literature, texts and interactive elements prepared by experts should be used. These contents should be designed in a way that is appropriate for the age groups of children and responds to their interests.
- Strengthening technological infrastructure. Strengthening technological infrastructure is essential to ensure that children living in remote and rural areas have access to digital children's literature. Free or low-cost internet services should be provided in regions without internet access.
- Educating parents and teachers. Parents and teachers should be educated about how digital literature can be used in children's development. They should be given information about the balanced and safe use of digital content.
- Health risk management. Certain rules and guidelines should be developed to minimize the negative health effects of children spending long periods in front of screens. For example, children should be advised to take a break of a few minutes every hour.
- Protection of national and cultural values. It is important to protect and promote national and cultural values in digital children's literature. Classical and modern examples of Azerbaijani literature should be presented in digital format, and special projects should be implemented to introduce children to their culture.
- Digital literature festivals and competitions. To promote the development of digital children's literature, digital literature festivals and competitions should be organized at national and international levels. Through these events, writers, artists and technologists should come together and new projects should emerge.
- Development of multimedia resources. Multimedia resources (videos, animations, games, etc.) should be developed to enhance children's learning and increase their interest. These resources should cover different aspects of literature and be adapted to children's different learning styles.

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