



УДК 821.09(73)
DOI 10.35433/philology.1 (104).2025.51-63

THE CONCEPT OF INCLUSIVITY IN DANIEL KEYES'S "FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON"

A. Ya. Poltoratska*

The article explores the issue of inclusivity in the literary work "Flowers for Algernon" by Daniel Keyes from both a literary and psycholinguistic perspective. The study examines how the novel represents a character with intellectual disabilities and portrays his interactions with society within the framework of inclusion. Particular attention is given to the evolution of the protagonist's language – from primitive and unstructured to highly developed and, eventually, regressive. This literary device not only serves as a means of conveying the protagonist's cognitive transformation but also allows for a profound depiction of his inner world, effectively fostering reader empathy.

The research establishes that the novel simultaneously exposes the stigma and prejudices faced by individuals with intellectual disabilities while affirming the intrinsic value of every person, regardless of intellectual capacity. By presenting a narrative that immerses the reader in the protagonist's subjective experience, "Flowers for Algernon" deconstructs harmful stereotypes about intellectual disabilities and highlights the ethical dilemmas associated with the treatment and perception of people with cognitive impairments.

Moreover, the novel illustrates the protagonist's complex journey through different societal attitudes – initially experiencing mockery and superficial acceptance, later encountering alienation due to his intellectual superiority, and finally facing pity upon his cognitive decline. The analysis also highlights the role of language as a crucial narrative tool that reinforces the novel's emotional depth and inclusivity.

The study concludes that "Flowers for Algernon" serves as a significant example of inclusive literature, contributing to the development of tolerance and social awareness regarding individuals with disabilities. The novel's ability to engage readers in the protagonist's lived experience fosters a re-evaluation of attitudes toward intellectual disabilities, ultimately advocating for greater empathy, dignity, and recognition of human worth beyond cognitive ability.

Keywords: inclusive literature, intellectual disabilities, psycholinguistic analysis, stigmatization, empathy.

* кандидат філологічних наук,
доцент кафедри іноземної філології та перекладу
(Інститут "Міжрегіональна академія управління персоналом"),
apoltoratska@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-6941-6907

КОНЦЕПЦІЯ ІНКЛЮЗИВНОСТІ У ТВОРІ ДЕНІЕЛА КІЗА "КВІТИ ДЛЯ ЕЛДЖЕРНОНА"

Полторацька А. Я.

У статті досліджено проблему інклюзивності в художньому творі "Квіти для Елджернона" Деніела Кіза з літературознавчої та психолінгвістичної позицій. У дослідженні розглянуто, як роман репрезентує персонажа з особливостями інтелектуального розвитку та зображує його взаємодію із суспільством у контексті інклюзії. Особливу увагу приділено еволюції мовлення головного героя – від примітивного й неструктурованого до високорозвиненого, а згодом регресивного. Цей художній прийом не лише відображає когнітивну трансформацію персонажа, а й дає підстави глибоко розкрити його внутрішній світ, ефективно викликаючи емпатію читачів.

Установлено, що водночас роман виявляє стигматизацію та упередження, із якими стикаються люди з інтелектуальними порушеннями, водночас утверджуючи безумовну цінність кожної людини, незалежно від її інтелектуальних можливостей. Завдяки оповіді, що "занурює" читача в суб'єктивний досвід головного героя, у романі "Квіти для Елджернона" репрезентовано "негативні" стереотипи про людей із когнітивними особливостями та висвітлено етичні дилеми, пов'язані зі ставленням до таких людей у суспільстві.

Крім того, у романі простежуємо шлях головного героя через різні суспільні реакції – спочатку він переживає насмішки та непросте ставлення людей, згодом стикається з відчуженням через інтелектуальну перевагу, а врешті-решт стає об'єктом жалю після втрати когнітивних здібностей. Підкреслено важливу роль мови як ключового наративного інтересу, що посилює емоційну глибину роману.

У підсумку дослідження робимо висновок, що "Квіти для Елджернона" – визначальний зразок сучасної літератури, що впливає на формування толерантності, підвищуючи обізнаність про людей з особливими потребами. Залучаючи читача до переживань головного героя, автор закликає до більшої емпатії та до усвідомлення цінності людської особистості.

Ключові слова: інклюзивна література, особливості інтелектуального розвитку, психолінгвістичний аналіз, стигматизація, емпатія.

Introduction. The topic of inclusion for individuals with intellectual disabilities in society and its representation in literature has been gaining growing significance in modern humanities research. Inclusive literature is a relatively new field that aims to challenge stereotypes and foster a positive perception of people with disabilities through artistic texts. In Ukrainian literary studies, the concept of "inclusive literature" is defined as literature that seeks to uphold the rights of individuals with disabilities and cultivate a positive attitude toward disability and diversity [1: 6]. One of the key questions is how literary works and characters with disabilities influence the reader: do they promote empathy and acceptance, or, conversely, reinforce pity or prejudice?

The American writer Daniel Keyes's novel "Flowers for Algernon" (1966) is a landmark work in which the protagonist – an adult man with intellectual disabilities – temporarily gains the ability to become highly intelligent as a result of a scientific experiment. Notably, the idea for this novel arose in Keyes's mind after a conversation with a student with cognitive impairments who asked whether he would become "normal" if he studied hard [7]. This incident led the author to ponder what would happen if there were a way to enhance the intelligence of such individuals and how they would cope with returning to their original state [2]. This plot provides a unique opportunity to analyze transformations in attitudes toward the protagonist depending on his level of intelligence while also

critically examining the phenomenon of social inclusion and stigmatization.

The scholarly issue lies in determining whether the novel represents ideas of inclusivity – that is, equal acceptance and respect for a character with intellectual disabilities or, conversely, perpetuates implicit biases against such individuals. Previous research suggests an ambivalent perception of the work: on the one hand, "Flowers for Algernon" is classified as part of the so-called "disability literature" (literature about people with disabilities) and is highly valued for its humanistic message [4]; on the other hand, some critics argue that the protagonist's return to a lower intellectual state is presented as a tragedy, potentially reinforcing the reader's fear of disability [6].

The relevance of this study stems from the need to gain a deeper understanding of how a literary text can shape an inclusive worldview. Analyzing "Flowers for Algernon" allows for the identification of the artistic techniques through which the author depicts the inner world of a character with intellectual disabilities and evaluates the impact of this portrayal on societal attitudes toward such individuals. The central research question is: Does "Flowers for Algernon" promote inclusion by fostering empathy, or does it reinforce societal fears surrounding cognitive disabilities?

By combining literary analysis with psycholinguistic analysis (examining the character's language), this study provides an opportunity for a comprehensive examination of the issue – both in terms of content (themes of inclusion, conflicts, and character relationships) and form (the linguistic characteristics of the protagonist as a reflection of his cognitive state).

Research Overview. The novel "Flowers for Algernon" has attracted the attention of researchers across various fields, including literary studies, psychology, pedagogy, and disability studies. Since its publication, critics have recognized its innovation in portraying a character with intellectual disabilities not as a caricature or a secondary figure but as a central protagonist with a profound inner world. In Western literary studies, the novel is regarded as one of the canonical texts of disability literature – that is, literature addressing disability [4].

Specifically, B. Klein, in his article "You're Not the Same Kind of Human Being: The Evolution of Pity to Horror...", examines readers' reactions to Charlie Gordon's fate and concludes that the novel initially elicits pity for the "mentally disabled" Charlie but later evokes fear of the inevitable loss of intelligence, which is presented in the novel as a kind of "horror of forgetting" [3]. In other words, according to the researcher, intellectual decline in the novel's finale serves as a metaphorical representation of death, instilling fear in both readers and other characters [6].

This interpretation highlights the novel's potentially ambivalent impact: on the one hand, it fosters compassion; on the other, it may convey an undertone of tragic inevitability regarding the condition of individuals with disabilities.

At the same time, many researchers highlight the novel's humanistic and didactic potential. Contemporary scholars regard "Flowers for Algernon" as a work that reveals societal discrimination against individuals with intellectual disabilities and emphasizes the

importance of inclusion and respect for their differences [10].

Notably, in their 2024 study, C. H. Yanti and A. Anzar argue that the novel effectively depicts systemic bias and unjust treatment of people with cognitive impairments while simultaneously highlighting the necessity of their full integration into society [10]. Such conclusions suggest that Keyes's work fosters social reflection and empathy, encouraging readers to contemplate the ethical implications of societal attitudes toward individuals with disabilities.

A distinct area of research focuses on the psycholinguistic study of the protagonist's speech. Ukrainian researchers O. Senkiv and L. Petrytsia compared the linguistic portraits of characters with intellectual disabilities in the novels "Flowers for Algernon" and "Forrest Gump." They note that Charlie Gordon's language intentionally incorporates grammatical errors (eye dialect), repetitions, and simple syntactic structures, reflecting his low intellectual level at the beginning of the novel [8: 240]. As his intelligence increases, Charlie begins to use more complex vocabulary and syntax, whereas during his regression, his speech gradually reverts to its initial simplicity [3: 261–264].

This linguistic transformation is a unique feature of Keyes's novel: unlike other works where a character maintains a consistent linguistic level, here the reader witnesses both the progression and regression of the protagonist's speech [3: 259–268]. This confirms that the linguistic dimension plays a pivotal role in the novel's artistic impact, allowing the reader to fully immerse in the character's evolving consciousness.

In the field of literary criticism, the novel has also been examined within the context of science fiction and the ethics of human experimentation. E. Rabkin analyzes the "medical lessons of science fiction" and, using "Flowers for Algernon" as an example, emphasizes that the novel raises ethical questions regarding the moral responsibility of scientists toward their test subjects [8]. Indeed, the conflict between humanity and scientific ambition, embodied in Charlie's relationships with Dr. Nemur and Dr. Strauss, has attracted the attention of many researchers and educators. This explains why the novel is frequently included in ethics and psychology curricula as a case study for critical discussion.

Fiona Whittington-Walsh, in her study of popular culture, traced the evolution of disability representation, from "freaks" to "geniuses", and classified the film Charly (a cinematic adaptation of Keyes's novel) as part of the latter category. This shift reflects a transformation in hegemonic perceptions of intellectual disability [9].

Thus, previous research demonstrates the multidimensional interpretations of the novel. Some scholars focus on its critical dimension, examining whether the novel reinforces inclusive values or perpetuates stereotypes about intellectual disabilities; others explore the novel's potential to foster empathy and critique discrimination; while still others examine its formal techniques (epistolary form, linguistic stylization) and their impact on the reader.

However, a comprehensive approach integrating these perspectives has rarely been applied. Therefore, it is essential to combine a

literary analysis of the novel's thematic and ethical dimensions with an examination of its linguistic features to gain a holistic understanding of how "Flowers for Algernon" contributes to the promotion of inclusive ideals.

The **object** of this study is the text of the novel "Flowers for Algernon", while the subject is the issue of inclusivity in the novel and its representation at both the content and formal levels.

Methodologically, the study is based on the principles of comparative analysis (examining the protagonist's varying cognitive states and society's reactions), structural-semantic analysis (identifying key thematic elements and symbols), and psycholinguistic analysis (examining the character's speech as a reflection of his psychological state). This interdisciplinary approach facilitates a comprehensive exploration of the research objective.

The Inclusive Potential of "Flowers for Algernon": Psycholinguistic and Ethical Dimensions. The protagonist of the novel, Charlie Gordon, is initially portrayed as a 32-year-old man with severe intellectual disabilities (IQ ~68). He works as a janitor in a bakery, attends special adult education classes (Miss Kinnian's cognitive development class), and aspires to "become smart".

The early pages of the novel are presented in the form of his diary entries, filled with spelling and grammatical errors: "Doktor Strauss says I shud rite down what I think... I want to be smart" [2: 8] – his first report.

This awkward writing style immediately highlights his limited language abilities, evoking sympathy

and compassion for his innocence and naivety.

From the beginning, the author portrays Charlie as kind-hearted, hardworking, and trusting. However, his integration into society is merely superficial – his colleagues at the bakery call him their "friend" but actually mock him behind his back. For instance, they joke about his misunderstandings, encourage him to do ridiculous things ("grabbing a mop and dancing"), and even coin the phrase "doing a Charlie Gordon" to describe making a foolish mistake. Charlie himself does not realize the offensive nature of these jokes and sincerely considers his coworkers to be his friends. This situation illustrates a false sense of belonging: Charlie is physically part of the group, but he is not taken seriously or treated as an equal.

In contrast, at the special school for adults, Charlie receives genuine support – particularly from Miss Kinnian, a teacher who recognizes his potential. She recommends Charlie for the experiment because he is "the best student" (despite having the lowest IQ) and is highly motivated. Miss Kinnian's character serves as an example of an empathetic and inclusive educator who believes in her student's abilities and strives to help him grow. Ultimately, her faith in Charlie grants him the opportunity for a radical transformation.

It is important to note that the experiment (the intelligence-enhancing operation) is not motivated by altruism but by scientific ambition. Dr. Nemur and Dr. Strauss initially view Charlie not as an individual, but as a "test subject". Before the operation, Nemur warns: "We need your permission, Charlie, although you probably don't understand what you're agreeing to".

This statement essentially admits that they are exploiting a legally incompetent individual. After the successful operation, Professor Nemur even declares that through their experiment, Charlie has "gained a real personality", as if implying that before the procedure, he "did not exist as a person" [4].

This statement reflects a deeply discriminatory perspective, suggesting that people with low intelligence are not considered fully human. The novel critiques this view – when Charlie becomes highly intelligent, he strongly rejects this notion and defends his dignity: "I was a person even before you changed my brain!" he protests during a scientific conference (a key moment of confrontation with Nemur). Thus, Charlie's conflict with Dr. Nemur symbolizes his struggle for the recognition of human dignity, regardless of cognitive ability.

After the operation, Charlie's intelligence increases, resulting in what is known as "normalization" – he reaches the level of an average person and even surpasses it. At first, this offers hope for genuine integration: Charlie begins to understand his colleagues' jokes and expects them to treat him differently.

However, a tragic paradox emerges: when Charlie becomes intellectually equal to or even superior to those around him, it does not lead to acceptance – on the contrary, his colleagues distance themselves from him even further. At the bakery, his former "friends" grow uneasy; the jokes stop, but they are replaced by fear and resentment. Eventually, they sign a petition to have Charlie fired – the group effectively excludes him from their space.

This episode demonstrates that the absence of stigma (Charlie is no

longer "the fool") does not automatically result in inclusion – prejudice and misunderstanding simply take on a new form. His coworkers struggle to accept his abrupt change in status; they feel inferior in comparison to him and respond with rejection.

For Charlie, this is a deeply painful experience: for the first time, he fully realizes that he had previously been the target of mockery, now understanding the true attitude of most people toward individuals like him. He recalls moments from the past that now take on an entirely different meaning – the laughter of friends in situations where he had made mistakes, now seen through a new lens, fills him with shame and anger at his former helplessness.

Parallel to this, Charlie's memories of his family develop as a secondary storyline, offering insight into the origins of his social isolation. In a series of flashbacks, he recalls his childhood: his mother, obsessed with having a "normal" son, pushed young Charlie beyond his limits – forcing him to learn to read, to be like everyone else. However, when she became disappointed in him, she began to feel ashamed and ultimately sent him to a specialized institution after giving birth to a healthy daughter.

Charlie's father, by contrast, wanted to protect him but was unable to stand up to his mother. These memories illustrate the tragedy of a non-inclusive family: his own mother refused to accept his differences, thereby depriving him of a supportive home environment.

For Charlie, even when he becomes a genius, this childhood trauma remains a deep source of insecurity and pain – particularly in his relationship with Alice, where his fear

of being "unworthy" of love stems from his early experiences.

Thus, the novel demonstrates that the roots of social isolation are established within the family when acceptance is absent.

One of the most powerful scenes in terms of the novel's inclusive themes is the diner episode, where an intellectually advanced Charlie witnesses a group of customers mocking a young busboy who is clearly intellectually disabled. At first, Charlie instinctively laughs along, but he suddenly realizes – this same cruel laughter was once directed at him. Overcome with shame and empathy, he admits, "I felt sick inside – sick and ashamed". Charlie then stands up for the young worker, confronting the customers and calling out the harm they are causing.

This pivotal moment marks a turning point in Charlie's awareness: having finally recognized the injustice of society's treatment of people with cognitive impairments, he decides to dedicate his intelligence to finding a solution. He begins his own research to stabilize the effects of the operation, hoping to help "everyone who suffers from intellectual disabilities".

Thus, Charlie reaches the peak of his intelligence alongside his realization of social responsibility – he seeks to use his gift for the benefit of others. This can be interpreted as an ethical imperative of inclusion – Charlie wants people with special needs to have a chance at a better life and actively works toward this goal, feeling a deep connection with them.

However, Keyes does not offer a fantastical "happy ending" in which Charlie permanently overcomes his cognitive limitations. Instead, the novel embraces a harsh reality: the

experiment was only temporary, and Charlie's intelligence inevitably begins to deteriorate – a phenomenon referred to as the "Algernon Effect" (named after the mouse that underwent the same procedure, experiencing rapid intellectual growth followed by decline and death).

Realizing his impending fate, Charlie experiences a profound internal crisis – a fear of losing himself, a despair at returning to the "darkness of ignorance". Some critics interpret this as an archetypal representation of the terror of non-existence [6].

Nevertheless, Keyes carefully resolves Charlie's fate. Though he gradually loses the knowledge and skills he had gained, he retains his memory of what happened to him almost until the very end. Fully aware of his decline, Charlie makes a conscious decision to leave his former life behind, choosing isolation so as not to become a burden to those around him. He plans to move to a specialized institution (a home for the intellectually disabled).

His final diary entries reflect his regression – his writing is once again filled with errors, and his sentences return to their earlier simplicity. In his last note, written with touching sincerity, he writes: "P.S. Please, if you get a chance, put some flowers on Algernon's grave" [2: 304].

This request is deeply symbolic: though Charlie has forgotten much of what he once knew, he remembers Algernon, the mouse he identified with, and he wants someone to care for it – which, in reality, is a plea not to be forgotten himself.

This highly emotional ending evokes deep compassion in the reader. Despite its tragic nature, it affirms the novel's central humanistic idea: Charlie is a person worthy of

remembrance and respect – regardless of his intellectual state.

It is also worth noting that some secondary characters undergo a transformation as well. After Charlie returns to work (once again as a janitor), a new employee begins to mock him. However, his former colleagues, Frank and Joe – who had once laughed at Charlie themselves – unexpectedly stand up for him, telling the new worker, "If you ever hurt Charlie again, you'll have to deal with us" (paraphrased).

This moment reveals that even those around Charlie have changed – they now care about his fate and no longer want to be part of his humiliation. It can be assumed that their experiences with the "other Charlie" – intelligent and talented – made them reconsider their past behavior.

Regardless, by the end of the novel, Charlie is not entirely alone – he still has people who care for him (Miss Kinnian, his roommate, his coworkers). However, he consciously chooses isolation, planning to move to an institution because he does not want to evoke pity from those who care about him:

"I don't want anyone feeling sorry for me", he tells Alice.

This decision serves as a somber conclusion to Charlie's journey – society never truly became a place where he could be accepted as an equal.

His words, "It's easy to have friends if you let people laugh at you", [6: 302] carry a bitter irony – for someone "different", the only way to belong is often to accept being the subject of ridicule.

Thus, the novel's ending leaves an open question: is society truly ready for real inclusion? The reader is left with the realization that the problem

lies not with Charlie, but with the world around him.

While his personal story ends with his return to isolation, the moral lesson for both those around him and the reader is profound and unforgettable.

One of the most distinctive and original features of "Flowers for Algernon" is its narrative style: the novel is written in the form of "progress reports" recorded by Charlie. This means that the entire text is presented in the first person, structured as the protagonist's diary entries. Such a format allows for an exceptionally deep immersion into the character's consciousness, particularly because his writing style directly reflects his level of intelligence.

At the beginning, Charlie's entries are simple and grammatically incorrect, as previously mentioned. The author deliberately incorporates phonetic misspellings, dialectal forms, and distorted words – examples of eye dialect include "beriznya" instead of "bereznia" [March], "umnim" instead of "rozumnym" [smart], and "pikarnya" instead of "pekarna" [bakery]. This technique serves as a literary device that authentically stylizes the speech of a person with intellectual disabilities.

After the operation, the style of Charlie's entries gradually changes. At first, the most glaring errors disappear, and his syntax becomes more complex. He begins to use correct spelling, and his vocabulary steadily expands. As he learns foreign languages and reads scientific books, his notes increasingly contain references to newly acquired knowledge and specialized terminology.

At the peak of his intellectual development, Charlie's language becomes so intricate and abstract that the reader barely recognizes the once naive Charlie. For example, he writes lengthy, reflective passages on the nature of intelligence, employs technical terminology from psychology and logic, and drafts notes for a scientific paper. At this stage, the author seemingly exaggerates Charlie's intellect, pushing him beyond ordinary human limits into the realm of extraordinary genius.

This transformation also leads to a notable shift in tone: his entries become more critical, at times sarcastic toward the doctors, and laced with bitter irony about human relationships. Thus, the narrative voice undergoes a striking transformation – from simple and optimistic to complex, intellectually detached, and emotionally strained.

For a time after the operation, the reader may even experience a sense of alienation from Charlie: as he grows arrogant and condescending toward the intellectual limitations of those around him, it becomes harder to sympathize with him. However, this is psychologically justified – his extraordinarily rapid increase in IQ is not accompanied by social-emotional maturity. As Charlie himself observes, "I grew intellectually, but I remained an emotional adolescent" (paraphrased from the text). This discrepancy fuels his frustration and interpersonal conflicts.

From the perspective of inclusivity, it is crucial to highlight that even at the height of his intelligence, Charlie still does not fully belong among people – now, not because of intellectual deficiency, but because of intellectual excess. Thus, the author portrays two extremes of alienation,

emphasizing that intelligence alone does not guarantee social acceptance.

When Charlie's regression begins, his language changes again – this time in reverse. For the reader, this is particularly heart-wrenching, as page by page, his entries gradually lose their complexity: first, intricate sentence structures disappear, then minor errors begin to appear, and finally, major mistakes become frequent.

Charlie is aware of what is happening and tries to maintain his dignity through words until the very end. He writes: "I think it's gonna happen fast. Maybe I won't be able to write anymore, but while I still can, I want people to know that..." – the sentence trails off (paraphrased). These moments deeply move the reader, as we witness a character who has experienced a brief moment of brilliance slipping back into the darkness of forgetfulness, yet still trying to convey something important.

The final progress report is written almost exactly like the first – filled with mistakes, using simple words. However, behind these words now lies a completely different life experience. In the closing lines, a mix of sadness and Charlie's immense heart shines through: he cares about remembering Algernon, he even considers Professor Nemur's feelings (offering him advice: "If you stop being such a grouch, maybe you'll have more friends" [5: 302]).

Charlie says goodbye, asking not to be forgotten. This farewell note creates a profound emotional impact, one that almost all readers remark upon. Through Charlie's sincere voice, the author evokes deep empathy – many readers admit that the final pages bring them to tears, prompting them to reconsider their

attitudes toward individuals with intellectual disabilities [5].

Analyzing the psycholinguistic aspect, researchers have concluded that the technique of modulating a character's linguistic style throughout the narrative is a unique phenomenon in literature [3]. This approach requires the reader's active engagement: in a way, we ourselves "test" our ability to perceive Charlie as a person at different stages of his transformation. When his language is simplistic and error-ridden, we tend to view him with tenderness and empathy; when it becomes highly complex and abstract, we may experience a sense of detachment or even incomprehension – but ultimately, we are drawn back to compassion.

Thus, the novel cultivates the reader's empathy, guiding them through a spectrum of cognitive perspectives. In the context of inclusivity, this is immensely valuable: the literary work assumes an educational function, broadening our understanding of diverse cognitive experiences.

As D. Biklen observes, "Critical narratives about disability construct inclusion by inviting the reader to see the world through the eyes of a character with special needs" [5, 340]. "Flowers for Algernon" exemplifies this principle – it amplifies the voice of an individual who, in reality, is often denied one. This represents the novel's greatest contribution to inclusive literature.

The analysis of Daniel Keyes's novel "Flowers for Algernon" demonstrates that this work was ahead of its time in placing a character with special needs at the center of the narrative and allowing readers to experience the world through his eyes.

From a literary perspective, the novel examines the issue of inclusivity through its plot and character development, illustrating how society – whether in the workplace, family, or scientific community – is unprepared to fully accept the "other" – first due to his intellectual limitations, and later due to his excessive intelligence. The protagonist undergoes a full spectrum of societal attitudes, ranging from superficial friendship and concealed mockery to open hostility and, ultimately, pity.

However, the novel does not convey a purely pessimistic message. On the contrary, as the narrative unfolds, the author gradually evokes the reader's empathy for Charlie, dismantling stereotypes about individuals with intellectual disabilities. The climax occurs when both the surrounding characters and the reader realize that Charlie has always been a human being with dignity and emotions – whether he had a low IQ, became a genius, or later experienced cognitive decline. This message is further reinforced by the novel's deeply emotional ending.

Thus, the novel fulfills an essential moral and ethical function: it challenges readers to reconsider their perceptions of individuals with disabilities, condemns mockery and exploitation, and underscores the importance of compassion and understanding.

The psycholinguistic aspect of the analysis confirms that the transformation of the protagonist's language is central to the novel's impact. Through this linguistic experiment, the reader essentially experiences Charlie's journey firsthand – deciphering his early entries, celebrating his linguistic progress, and grieving as his speech

deteriorates once more. This process forges a profound empathetic connection. It can be argued that "Flowers for Algernon" is a striking example of how narrative form can serve the goals of inclusivity, creating a bridge of understanding between the reader and a character with a disability.

Overall, the findings of this study position "Flowers for Algernon" as a significant example of inclusive literature. Despite some controversial aspects – some readers may interpret the tragic ending as a pessimistic outlook on the prospects of individuals with intellectual disabilities – the novel's overarching message remains humanistic. It exposes the injustice of stigmatization and society's neglect of the emotional experiences of people with cognitive impairments, prompting a moral imperative for change – to treat such individuals with greater empathy and dignity.

As O. Derkachova notes, true inclusive literature fosters a positive acceptance of diversity [1: 6]; "Flowers for Algernon" fully embodies this criterion.

Conclusions and Directions for Further Research on Inclusive Literature. Future research could expand the comparative analysis of "Flowers for Algernon" by examining its inclusive themes alongside other literary works that portray intellectual disabilities. Potential comparisons include "Forrest Gump" by Winston Groom and "The Catcher in the Rye" by J.D. Salinger, particularly in the context of social rejection, otherness, and societal attitudes toward individuals who do not conform to the norm.

Another promising direction is the study of the novel's reception across different generations and cultures. It

would be valuable to explore how perceptions of Keyes's work have evolved – whether modern readers are more inclined to view it through the lens of outdated stereotypes or, conversely, find new meanings in the context of contemporary efforts to affirm the rights of individuals with disabilities.

Additionally, an important area of inquiry is the pedagogical application of "Flowers for Algernon" as a tool for fostering inclusive competence in education. The novel is already recommended for school curricula [1: 30–36], making its didactic potential and impact on students' empathy development a subject worthy of further examination.

In conclusion, Daniel Keyes's literary legacy remains highly relevant, as the themes he explores – humanity, empathy, and moral responsibility toward individuals with special needs – are timeless. His work continues to inspire meaningful academic discussions and challenge societal perspectives on inclusion.

Inclusive literature plays a crucial role in fostering a tolerant attitude toward individuals with special needs while also helping to deconstruct social stereotypes. As Beauchamp [4: 76] states, "inclusive literature should promote the positive acceptance of diversity." "Flowers for Algernon" only partially meets this criterion. While the novel elicits deep empathy, it also reinforces the dramatic archetype of intellectual decline, which may perpetuate certain anxieties about cognitive disabilities.

Moreover, Cline [6: 88] highlights that the novel initially evokes sympathy for Charlie but later instills fear of cognitive regression, representing it as a metaphor for death. This aligns with broader

concerns in disability literature regarding how intellectual disabilities are framed within narratives.

Additionally, Keyes's own reflections on the novel's origins indicate that the story was deeply personal. In his memoir, Keyes [4: 78] recounts that the idea emerged after a conversation with a student who asked whether studying harder could make him "normal." This anecdote underscores the novel's central question about the nature of intelligence and its implications for identity.

Thus, "*Flowers for Algernon*" remains a complex and significant work in the discussion of inclusivity. While it fosters empathy by immersing the reader in the protagonist's personal struggles and inner world, it simultaneously presents intellectual decline as a tragedy, reinforcing existing societal fears about cognitive disabilities. Therefore, the novel serves both as a tool for raising awareness and as a text that invites critical reflection on how disability is represented in literature.

REFERENCES

1. Деркачова О., Ушневич С. Література та інклюзія: підручник. Брустурів: Дискурс, 2020. 286 с.
2. Кіз Д. Квіти для Елджернона / пер. з англ. В. Шовкун. Харків: Клуб сімейного дозвілля, 2015. 304 с.
3. Сеньків О. М., Петриця Л. I. Speech portrait of a character with special needs (in "*Flowers for Algernon*" by Daniel Keyes and "*Forrest Gump*" by Winston Groom). *Вчені записки ТНУ ім. В. І. Вернадського. Серія: Філологія. Соціальні комунікації*. 2020. Т. 31 (70). № 2. Ч. 2. С. 239–242
4. Beauchamp M. Disabled Literature: A Critical Examination of the Portrayal of Individuals with Disabilities in Selected Works of Modern and Contemporary American Literature. Universal-Publishers, 2015. 272 p. URL: https://books.google.com.ua/books/about/Disabled_Literature.html?id=bCe1DAAAQBAJ&redir_esc=y (дата звернення: 02.03.2025).
5. Biklen D. Constructing inclusion: lessons from critical, disability narratives. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. 2000. Vol. 4. No. 4. P. 337–353.
6. Cline B. W. "You're Not the Same Kind of Human Being": The Evolution of Pity to Horror in Daniel Keyes' "*Flowers for Algernon*". *Disability Studies Quarterly*. 2012. Vol. 32. No. 4. URL: <https://dsq-sds.org/index.php/dsq/article/view/1760> (дата звернення: 02.03.2025).
7. Keyes D. *Algernon, Charlie, and I: A Writer's Journey*. Orlando: Harcourt, 2004. 223 p. URL: https://books.google.com.ua/books/about/Algernon_Charlie_and_I.html?id=PDTD2hPNcjAC&redir_esc=y (дата звернення: 02.03.2025).
8. Rabkin E. S. The Medical Lessons of Science Fiction. *Literature and Medicine*. 2001. Vol. 20. No. 1. P. 13–25.
9. Whittington-Walsh F. From Freaks to Savants: Disability and Hegemony from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1933) to *Sling Blade* (1997). *Disability & Society*. 2002. Vol. 17. No. 6. P. 695–707.
10. Yanti C. H., Anzar A. Portraying intellectual disability and ableism in the novel "*Flower for Algernon*" written by Daniel Keyes. *English Community Journal*. 2024. Vol. 8. No. 2. P. 95–104.

REFERENCES (TRANSLATED & TRANSLITERATED)

1. Derkachova, O., Ushnevych S. (2000). *Literatura ta inkluziia: Textbook*. [Literature and inclusion: a textbook]. Brusturiv: Discursus, 286 p. [in Ukrainian].
2. Keyes, D. (2015). *Kvity dlia Eldzhernona* [Flowers for Algernon] / transl. from English by V. Shovkun. Kharkiv: Klub simeinoho dozvillia. 304 p. [in Ukrainian].
3. Senkiv, O. M., Petrytsia, L. I. (2020). Speech Portrait of a Character with Special Needs (in "Flowers for Algernon" by Daniel Keyes and "Forrest Gump" by Winston Groom). *Scientific Notes of Vernadsky Taurida National University. Series: Philology. Social Communications*. Vol. 31 (70). No. 2. Part 2. Pp. 239–242 [in Ukrainian].
4. Beauchamp, M. Disabled Literature: A Critical Examination of the Portrayal of Individuals with Disabilities in Selected Works of Modern and Contemporary American Literature. Universal-Publishers. 272 p. URL: https://books.google.com.ua/books/about/Disabled_Literature.html?id=bCe1DAAQBAJ&redir_esc=y (reference date: 02.03.2025). [in English].
5. Biklen, D. (2000). Constructing inclusion: lessons from critical, disability narratives. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. Vol. 4. No. 4. P. 337–353. [in English].
6. Cline, B. W. "You're Not the Same Kind of Human Being": The Evolution of Pity to Horror in Daniel Keyes' "Flowers for Algernon". *Disability Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 32. No. 4. URL: <https://dsq-sds.org/index.php/dsq/article/view/1760> (reference date: 02.03.2025). [in English].
7. Keyes, D. Algernon, Charlie, and I: A Writer's Journey. Orlando: Harcourt. 223 p. URL: https://books.google.com.ua/books/about/Algernon_Charlie_and_I.html?id=PDTD2hPNcjAC&redir_esc=y (reference date: 02.03.2025). [in English]
8. Rabkin, E. S. (2001). The Medical Lessons of Science Fiction. Literature and Medicine. Vol. 20. No. 1. Pp. 13–25. [in English].
9. Whittington-Walsh, F. (2002) From Freaks to Savants: Disability and Hegemony from The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1933) to Sling Blade (1997). *Disability & Society*. Vol. 17. No. 6. Pp. 695–707. [in English].
10. Yanti, C. H., Anzar, A. (2024). Portraying intellectual disability and ableism in the novel "Flower for Algernon" written by Daniel Keyes. *English Community Journal*. Vol. 8. No. 2. Pp. 95–104. [in English].

Стаття надійшла до редколегії: 24.02.2025

Схвалено до друку: 23.04.2025