



Creative Reading in Primary Schools: A Synthesis of Transactional, Sociocultural, and Multiliteracies Perspectives

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Abstract

Background: Creative reading in primary schools is often reduced to literal comprehension, whereas twenty-first-century literacy demands that students interpret, transform, and design new meanings from diverse forms of text. **Novelty:** Existing studies tend to examine reader response, scaffolding, and multimodal expression separately, so a framework that unites them for creative reading is still lacking. **Objective:** This conceptual article therefore aims to synthesize Rosenblatt's transactional theory, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, and the multiliteracies framework as foundations for teaching creative reading. **Methodology:** Using a theory synthesis approach, the study drew on literature collected from Scopus, Google Scholar, DOAJ, ERIC, and Sinta according to relevance and recency criteria, and analyzed the material through thematic coding and narrative synthesis. **Key findings:** The findings show that the three frameworks are complementary: Rosenblatt's theory positions the reader's aesthetic response as the starting point of meaning-making, Vygotsky's theory explains the role of social interaction and scaffolding within the zone of proximal development, and multiliteracies extend the expression of meaning across multiple modes of representation. Their integration yields a conceptual framework with four propositions: opening space for personal response before analytical tasks, gradually fading teacher support, offering varied modes of post-reading expression, and assessing both thinking processes and products. **Implications:** Practically, the framework gives teachers a principled basis for designing creative reading lessons, and it gives researchers testable propositions. Because the framework is argumentative and has not been empirically tested, development research, classroom action research, and quasi-experiments are recommended to operationalize and test it in primary schools.

Keywords: Creative Reading, Multiliteracies, Transactional Theory, Sociocultural Theory, Primary School

Introduction

Twenty-first-century literacy is no longer understood as the ability to restate the content of printed text, but as the ability to construct and reflect on meaning from diverse sources (Mirra & Garcia, 2021). Yet many children have not acquired even the basic ability, since almost 70% of children in low- and middle-income countries cannot read and understand a simple age-



appropriate text (World Bank, UNESCO, & UNICEF, 2022). A report calls for evidence-based methods of teaching reading (World Bank, 2025), and large-scale early literacy programs show that improvement requires effective and sustained implementation at the school level (Gillon et al., 2024). The gap is evident in Indonesia, where students' PISA 2025 reading scores remain far below the OECD average (OECD, 2026) and the School Literacy Movement has not been fully optimal in improving upper-grade students' comprehension (Lestari et al., 2024).

Previous research has approached creative reading and its theoretical foundations from several directions, mostly separately. Creative reading ability in the appreciation of literary works has been studied mainly at the secondary level (Saputra et al., 2026), while primary school literary literacy has been examined through digital media and a contextual approach (Mardi et al., 2025). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory has been applied chiefly to reading comprehension, through a guided reading program (Arguido et al., 2025) and through language scaffolding in early reading (Wu & Abu Bakar, 2025). In the multiliteracies field, a systematic review of research from 1996 to 2020 organized the literature around multimodal genres, pedagogy, and diversity in language learning without taking creative reading as its main focus (Báez-Bargellini & Meneses-Arévalo, 2023), and multimodal writing is reported to extend readers' expression beyond written text (Maamuujav, 2025).

Despite these efforts, a practical problem and a knowledge gap remain. In Indonesian primary schools, implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the literacy domain is constrained by teacher readiness and limited learning resources (Masrurah et al., 2024), and multiliteracies-based learning is held back by limited facilities and teachers' unfamiliarity with the approach (Selayani & Bayu, 2023). Preliminary research on fifth-grade students found a positive effect of a multiliteracies model on reading comprehension and creative writing (Fudhaily & Rahman, 2022), which opens opportunities for further development toward creative production, and a later needs analysis found students still receptive and weak at producing new works (Fudhaily et al., 2026). The knowledge gap is that no conceptual framework yet integrates reader response, graduated support, and multimodal expression for creative.

This conceptual study aims to synthesize Rosenblatt's transactional theory, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, and the multiliteracies framework as a foundation for developing creative reading instruction in primary schools, addressing the gap identified above. Three research questions guide the synthesis. First, what does each of the three perspectives contribute to the teaching of creative reading? Second, how can the three be integrated into a coherent conceptual framework for primary school instruction? Third, what pedagogical propositions follow from this integration, and what limitations and directions for future research accompany them? Because the study builds a theoretical argument rather than testing a model, it states no statistical hypotheses; instead, the propositions derived in the Findings are presented as general hypotheses to be tested in later studies.

To answer these questions, the study adopts a conceptual paper design with a theory synthesis approach (Jaakkola, 2020). The data are secondary: scholarly publications collected through searches of Scopus, Google Scholar, DOAJ, ERIC, and Sinta in 2026 and screened against inclusion and exclusion criteria, with the search and screening process reported following guidance for scholarly reviews (Page et al., 2021). In total, 58 sources were included. Information from each source was recorded in a synthesis matrix, analyzed through thematic coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021), and combined through narrative synthesis (Cronin & George, 2023; Snyder, 2019) into a conceptual framework. The study draws only on published literature and involves no human participants, so no ethical approval was required, and it does not undertake all stages of a systematic review.

The study is significant in three respects. Theoretically, it brings together three perspectives that are usually discussed separately and offers a new perspective on a familiar phenomenon (MacInnis, 2011). Practically, it gives teachers general principles, not a fixed sequence of steps, for opening room for personal response, adjusting support, and varying modes of expression; this matter because creativity is regarded as an important competence in primary education (Fauzi et al., 2025) and twenty-first-century skills accompany literacy from the primary level onward (Zuhri et al., 2024). It also supports attention to the reading process and not only the accuracy of answers (Kushki, 2024). For research, its propositions can be tested in studies such as classroom

action research, where graduated support has been associated with higher literacy scores (Suryani & Fauzi, 2025).

Several key terms are used here. Creative reading is an advanced level of reading, interrelated with speed reading and critical reading, at which readers move beyond literal comprehension to create new meaning (Afifah et al., 2023). Transactional theory holds that meaning arises from a transaction between reader and text, with the efferent and aesthetic stances as two orientations of reading (Momeni et al., 2026; Rosenblatt, 1978). The zone of proximal development is the gap between what a child can do alone and what the child can do with assistance (Rigopouli et al., 2025; Vygotsky, 1978), and scaffolding is the temporary support given within it (Maryam et al., 2026). Multiliteracies denotes multimodal and multicontextual literacy practices (Lim, 2023; New London Group, 1996), and learning by design positions students as active designers of meaning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Nuroh & Fatikhasari, 2025).

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. The Literature Review discusses the nature of creative reading and the three theoretical perspectives, and builds the conceptual framework of the study. The Methodology describes the research design, data sources, instrument, data collection and procedure, data analysis, accuracy, trustworthiness, and ethical review. The Findings present the patterns that emerged from the synthesis, the conceptual framework (Figure 1), and the four propositions (Table 1). The Discussion interprets the findings against previous studies, notes their implications, states general hypotheses, positions the novelty of the study (Table 2), and acknowledges its limitations and directions for future research. The Conclusion summarizes the aims, findings, and contribution of the study and offers recommendations for practice, policy, and further research.

Literature Review

Creative reading is understood as an advanced level of reading that does not stand alone but is related to speed reading and critical reading, so that the three need to be developed together (Afifah et al., 2023). At this level readers do not stop at literal comprehension but interpret, respond to, and generate new ideas from the text they read, so that reading serves as a gateway to thinking and creating. This ability demands a strong foundation, since the habituation and strengthening of reading interest need to be built first so that students are willing to move toward more creative activities (Noeraeni et al., 2025). Twenty-first-century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and communication also support students' readiness to interpret and create meaning (Zuhri et al., 2024). A systematic review of fifteen studies shows that multimode storybooks support primary school students' comprehension, reading engagement, interpretation, and creative response (Nurajijah et al., 2026).

The characteristics of creative reading are evident in students' ability to transform what they have read into new expression, whether oral or written. The use of pictorial media to rewrite stories based on personal experience has been reported to improve primary school students' ability to produce new story works (Khairani et al., 2025). In the domain of literary appreciation, creative reading ability is realized through imaginative thinking and the interpretation of meaning (Saputra et al., 2026). In terms of assessment, evaluation ideally measures not only the accuracy of answers but also the process of the reader's interaction with the text in its social context (Kushki, 2024). The creativity thus developed is also positioned as a basic learning goal that requires planned pedagogical innovation, as seen in a cross-national review (Fauzi et al., 2025). These characteristics indicate that creative reading needs to be understood as a continuous process, so that teachers need to design tasks that enable students to show the results of their thinking in diverse and meaningful forms.

Transactional theory views meaning as an event created in the transaction between reader and text in a particular situation, not as content stored complete within the text (Grandits & Krek, 2023; Rosenblatt, 1978). The theory distinguishes the efferent stance, which is oriented toward the information to be carried away, from the aesthetic stance, which is oriented toward the experience lived through during reading. This distinction matters because it determines how students treat a text. A systematic review of thirty-nine studies found that the application of reader-response approaches in primary and secondary classrooms centers on literary discussion, free response or creative writing, varied reading formats, and teacher read-alouds (Momeni et al.,

2026). Among pre-service teachers, self-involvement and literary judgment become dimensions of aesthetic transaction (Kamlun et al., 2026), while the use of graphic organizers can affect the aesthetic reading experience (Mendhakar et al., 2025).

The pedagogical implication of this theory lies in giving room for students' personal responses before analytical demands are imposed, and not stopping at the search for answers regarded as correct (Anandari et al., 2024). Such personal responses may take the form of impressions, guesses, questions, or experiences recalled during reading. In primary school literary literacy, a contextual approach that invites students to connect stories with their own experience helps improve literary literacy (Mardi et al., 2025). The theory is also not limited to printed text, since primary school students' engagement with texts can be extended beyond written words through a multimodal critical literacy approach (Harrison & Linares, 2023). The aesthetic stance can thus become a foothold for the birth of new meaning and works, while the efferent stance remains necessary when readers need information for specific purposes, so that the two stances are managed in balance in reading instruction (Mendhakar et al., 2025).

Sociocultural theory asserts that the development of children's higher mental functions takes place through social interaction and mediation by more competent others (Kushki, 2024; Vygotsky, 1978). The concept of the zone of proximal development refers to the gap between what a child can achieve independently and what the child can achieve with assistance. In other words, the teacher does not merely convey information but is present as a partner who helps students step from what they have already mastered toward what they are almost able to achieve (Suryani & Fauzi, 2025). In learning practice, this concept helps teachers adjust the difficulty of material to students' abilities, while scaffolding serves as temporary support that builds understanding gradually (Maryam et al., 2026). In cross-cultural early reading instruction, graduated language support has been reported to increase students' independence in understanding and interpreting texts (Wu & Abu Bakar, 2025).

The application of sociocultural principles at the primary level has shown positive results in a number of studies. A guided reading program grounded in Vygotsky's theory has been reported to improve primary school students' reading comprehension (Arguido et al., 2025), and classroom action research at an Islamic elementary school (madrasah ibtidaiyah) showed literacy scores rising from 62.4 to 81.2 through small-group work, graduated support, and guiding questions (Suryani & Fauzi, 2025). Peer interaction also plays a role, since peer scaffolding behaviors appeared at every stage of sixth-grade students' writing task (Tinggie et al., 2023). These findings indicate that timely assistance and directed interaction can serve as a means of growing students' abilities, including abilities that demand new ideas. From the standpoint of creativity, Vygotsky's ideas about creativity have been revisited in the design of technology-enhanced twenty-first-century learning (Rigopouli et al., 2025), so that the theory is relevant to teaching creative reading.

The multiliteracies framework arose from the view that contemporary literacy practices are multimodal and multicontextual, so that pedagogy can no longer be limited to printed text (Maamuujav, 2025; New London Group, 1996). This idea was developed through the learning by design approach, which positions students as active designers of meaning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Lim, 2023). A systematic review of research from 1996 to 2020 identified three main themes, namely multimodal genres, multiliteracies pedagogy, and the recognition of diversity in language learning (Báez-Bargellini & Meneses-Arévalo, 2023). In primary schools, pedagogical multiliteracies is understood as combining diverse media, strategies, and learning models to build literacy that encompasses critical, analytical, and creative thinking (Nuroh & Fatikhasari, 2025), and it can be enriched with local wisdom to make learning more contextual (Amelia et al., 2026). This perspective shifts the goal of learning from merely understanding texts toward the ability to make and produce meaning through various modes.

The implementation of multiliteracies in Indonesian primary schools presents both opportunities and challenges. Multiliteracies-based learning is not yet optimal owing to limited facilities and teachers' unfamiliarity (Selayani & Bayu, 2023), and English teachers with a positive attitude toward multimodal literacy are still constrained by facilities, strategies, and technological skills (Jayanti & Damayanti, 2023). Similar findings appear in the use of multimodal texts in the classroom, which increases student engagement but is hindered by internet access, resources, and

teacher training (Kusumaningrum et al., 2024). These conditions indicate that teacher readiness and infrastructure support are decisive factors, so that the idea of multiliteracies needs to be translated into realistic instructional designs suited to school conditions. Strategies for applying multimodal texts are seen as able to optimize primary school students' literacy (Saputra et al., 2025), and multiliteracies learning has been reported to increase third-grade students' reading interest (Raihan, 2024).

The three foundations above complement one another and meet different needs in teaching creative reading (Lim, 2023; Rigopouli et al., 2025). Teaching creative reading is therefore not sufficiently built on a single theory, because each theory covers the limitations of the others (Báez-Bargellini & Meneses-Arévalo, 2023; Momeni et al., 2026). Transactional theory explains why students' experiential engagement and personal involvement with the text become the starting point for the birth of new meaning and works (Grandits & Krek, 2023). Sociocultural theory explains how this ability is grown gradually through teacher assistance and social interaction in the zone of proximal development (Wu & Abu Bakar, 2025). The multiliteracies framework extends the application of both principles to various modes of representation so that students' creative expression is not limited to written text. In this study, the relationship among the three is understood as complementary: involvement becomes the trigger, graduated support becomes the sustaining structure, and the diversity of modes becomes the vehicle. The construction of this framework is argumentative and has not been empirically tested.

This framework has implications for instructional design. These implications are formulated as general principles, not as a fixed sequence of steps, so that they can be adapted to students' characteristics, the availability of learning resources, and the learning habits of each class (Kusumaningrum et al., 2024). Initial activities need to open room for students' personal responses before analytical tasks (Anandari et al., 2024). Teacher support is designed to be responsive and gradually reduced as students' independence increases (Tinggie et al., 2023). Post-reading tasks provide diverse modes of expression, not only written text (Lim, 2023). Assessment attends to the thinking process as well as the product (Long et al., 2022). These principles also open room for development research to translate them into more operational designs. Strengthening digital literacy can support these implications because it plays a role in developing students' critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity (Fatmawati, 2025), while effective literacy instruction at the school level requires implementation that is scaled and sustained (Gillon et al., 2024).

Methods

Research Design

This study is designed as a conceptual paper, that is, a type of scholarly writing that aims to integrate existing theory and empirical findings into a new framework of understanding, rather than presenting primary data or systematically evaluating the methodological quality of previous research (Jaakkola, 2020). Based on the typology of approaches to conceptual articles, this study takes a theory synthesis approach, that is, assembling various theoretical perspectives and empirical research results on creative reading, the psychological foundations of reading, and multiliteracies into a single coherent and applicable conceptual framework for primary school instruction. The resulting conceptual contribution is directed at providing a new perspective and enriching understanding of a familiar phenomenon, in line with the criteria for a scientifically valuable conceptual contribution in academic writing (Heinonen & Gruen, 2024; MacInnis, 2011). This approach was chosen because the aim of the study is not to test hypotheses but to build a theoretical argument that underlies the development of instruction.

Data Sources

The data sources of this study are secondary data, namely written scholarly publications, not human respondents or informants. Conceptual and empirical materials were collected by searching Scopus, Google Scholar, DOAJ, ERIC, and the accredited national journal portal Sinta in 2026, using combinations of keywords such as “membaca kreatif”, “creative reading”, “multiliterasi”, “multiliteracies pedagogy”, and “pembelajaran membaca sekolah dasar”. The

search and screening process is reported transparently as recommended by guidelines for reporting scholarly reviews, although this study does not undertake all stages of a systematic review because it is conceptual rather than evaluative in nature (Page et al., 2021).

The materials are divided into two groups. The first group consists of foundational theoretical and methodological works with no publication-year limit, which serve as the main reference sources for the three theoretical foundations and the approach of the study. The second group consists of journal articles, books, and institutional reports that are substantively relevant to creative reading, the theoretical foundations of reading, or multiliteracies, published in 2021–2026, with open access preferred. Materials not relevant to the focus of the study or lacking a clear publication identity were not included. The selection of academic texts as the main data source is in line with the principles of document-based research (Abdurrahman, 2024). In total, 58 sources met these criteria and were included in the synthesis: nine foundational theoretical and methodological works and 49 sources published in 2021–2026.

Instrument

The main instrument of this study is the researcher, who collects, reads, and interprets the materials in depth. The supporting tools used are a list of search keywords and a synthesis matrix. The synthesis matrix records the identity of each source, the level or context, the theoretical foundation used, and the main findings. The matrix items were formulated from the key concepts of the three theoretical foundations (reader response, graduated support, and multimodal meaning design) to fit the aims of the study. This matrix then became the basis for compiling Table 1 and Table 2 in the discussion section, so that its accuracy as a conceptual instrument is judged by its fit with the aim of the synthesis.

Data Collection and Procedure

Data collection was carried out in four steps. First, the researcher determined the focus of the study and compiled the search keywords. Second, the researcher searched the databases mentioned above. Third, the materials were screened against the inclusion and exclusion criteria by reading titles and abstracts, then the full text of materials judged relevant. Fourth, the information from each material that passed screening, namely focus, level, theoretical foundation, and main findings, was recorded in the synthesis matrix for analysis in the next stage.

Data Analysis

The collected materials were analyzed through a process of thematic coding to identify key concepts, relationships among theories, and points of convergence between empirical findings and relevant theoretical frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Byrne, 2022). This process was followed by narrative synthesis, that is, assembling ideas from various sources into a coherent and mutually reinforcing line of argument, a technique commonly used in writing articles based on literature integration (Paul et al., 2024; Snyder, 2019). The results of the coding and synthesis were then combined into a new and more integrated conceptual argument structure, in line with the characteristics of the theory synthesis approach in writing conceptual articles. The synthesis was organized along a coherent line of argument, starting from the nature of creative reading and the transactional and sociocultural foundations, to the position of multiliteracies as a contemporary literacy framework that combines the two for instruction in primary schools.

Accuracy

The accuracy of the materials was maintained by checking the bibliographic data of each reference (authors, year, volume, pages, and DOI) against the publisher's page or the source database, and by matching each statement in the manuscript with the content of the cited source. References whose publication identity could not be confirmed were not included. Figures and findings quoted from previous research were copied from the original sources and presented in accordance with their original reporting context, so that no data were altered or fabricated.

Trustworthiness

Credibility was pursued through source triangulation, that is, searching more than one database and using articles from diverse journals and countries, as well as theory triangulation through the

combination of three complementary foundations. Transferability was maintained by describing the context of the study, namely reading instruction in primary schools, together with the limits of the sources' coverage, so that readers can assess the applicability of the framework to other contexts. Dependability was pursued by documenting the databases, keywords, search period, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the synthesis matrix as an audit trail. Confirmability was maintained by linking every conceptual statement to the source it cites and by stating openly that the resulting framework is argumentative and has not been empirically tested.

Ethical Review

This study involves no human participants, personal data, or interventions, and therefore does not require ethics committee approval or an ethical approval number. The principle of scientific integrity is fulfilled by citing all sources completely, presenting the findings of previous research in accordance with the original reports, and avoiding plagiarism and data fabrication. Citations of the author's own work are stated openly and treated in the same way as other sources.

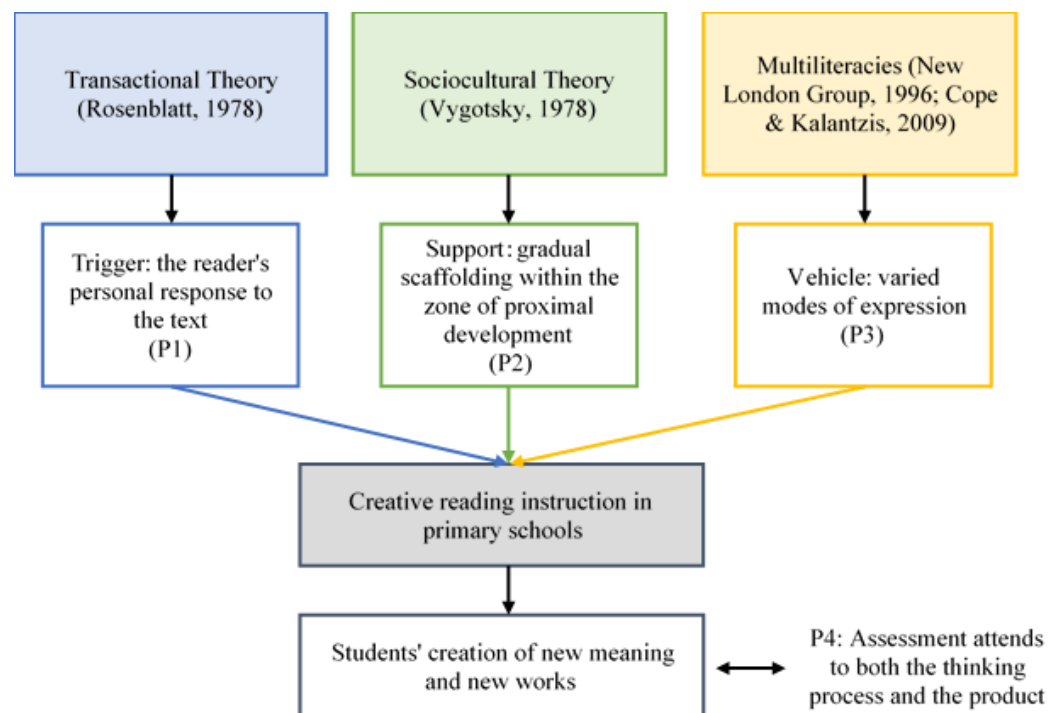
Findings

Thematic coding of the collected materials yielded four recurring themes, namely readers' personal response, graduated support, diverse modes of expression, and implementation constraints. The evidence comes from a variety of research designs. A review of 39 studies (1989–2024) on reader response (Momeni et al., 2026) and another review of 26 studies (1996–2020) on multiliteracies in language subjects (Báez-Bargellini & Meneses-Arévalo, 2023) provided the initial footing. A review of 15 studies examined multimode storybooks for creative reading (Nurajijah et al., 2026), and a review of 51 studies positioned creative thinking as a central competence of primary education (Fauzi et al., 2025). At the field level, a needs analysis involved 85 students and 11 teachers (Fudhaily et al., 2026).

On the personal response theme, pre-service teachers demonstrated aesthetic transaction through self-involvement and literary judgment (Kamlun et al., 2026), and primary school students who connected stories with their own experience showed improved literary literacy (Mardi et al., 2025). On the graduated support theme, a guided reading program based on Vygotsky's theory was associated with better reading comprehension (Arguido et al., 2025), and the literacy scores of students at an Islamic elementary school (*madrasah ibtidaiah*) rose from 62.4 to 81.2 (Suryani & Fauzi, 2025). On the diverse modes theme, a multiliteracies model had a positive effect on fifth-grade students, particularly on reading comprehension (Fudhaily & Rahman, 2022). On the constraints theme, limited facilities and teachers' unfamiliarity hindered implementation (Selayani & Bayu, 2023), accompanied by limited internet access, resources, and training (Kusumaningrum et al., 2024).

The four themes were integrated into the conceptual framework in Figure 1. Transactional theory acts as the trigger through readers' personal response (Momeni et al., 2026; Rosenblatt, 1978), sociocultural theory as the sustaining structure through graduated support (Arguido et al., 2025; Vygotsky, 1978), and multiliteracies as the vehicle for diverse modes of expression (New London Group, 1996; Lim, 2023; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). The three converge on the creation of new meaning and works, while assessment of process and product connects attainment with the design of subsequent instruction.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Creative Reading Instruction Derived from the Synthesis of Three Foundations



P1–P4 denote the propositions in Table 1. Table 1 summarizes the contribution of each foundation, its limitations when standing alone, and the four derived propositions. These propositions remain conceptual arguments that have not been tested in the field.

Table 1: Conceptual Synthesis of the Three Foundations and the Study Propositions

Foundation	Contribution to creative reading	Limitations when standing alone	Proposition
Transactional theory (Rosenblatt, 1978; Momeni et al., 2026)	Meaning arises from the transaction between reader and text. The aesthetic stance becomes the starting point for personal response and new works, realized through literary discussion and free response or creative writing.	Does not detail graduated support for students who are not yet able to respond independently.	P1. Initial activities open room for students' personal responses before analytical tasks.
Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Maryam et al., 2026; Suryani & Fauzi, 2025)	Abilities grow through interaction and assistance in the zone of proximal development. Scaffolding sustains understanding gradually, and Vygotsky-based approaches are reported to improve students' literacy scores.	Does not specify the forms of response and modes of expression that instruction aims at.	P2. Teacher support is responsive and gradually reduced as students' independence increases.

Multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Nuroh & Fatikhasari, 2025)	Literacy is multimodal and multicontextual. Students become designers of meaning through diverse media and modes.	Implementation in primary schools depends on facilities and teacher readiness (Kusumaningrum et al., 2024), and it does not by itself explain the process of experiencing the text.	P3. Post-reading tasks provide diverse modes of expression (in line with the need to strengthen the creative production stage; Fudhaily et al., 2026).
Integration (the framework of this study)	Personal involvement becomes the trigger, graduated support becomes the sustaining structure, and the diversity of modes becomes the vehicle.	Argumentative and not yet empirically tested.	P4. Assessment attends to the thinking process as well as the product.

Note: The limitations column is the author's analysis of the tendencies of each foundation when used alone, not an assessment of the quality of the works cited.

Discussion

Earlier reviews have examined reader response (Momeni et al., 2026) and multiliteracies (Báez-Bargellini & Meneses-Arévalo, 2023) as separate strands. The question underlying this study is how transactional theory, sociocultural theory, and multiliteracies can be combined as a foundation for teaching creative reading in primary schools. It arose because Indonesian students' reading attainment in PISA 2025 lagged behind the OECD average (OECD, 2026), the School Literacy Movement has not been fully optimal (Lestari et al., 2024), and the Merdeka Curriculum is constrained by teacher readiness and learning resources (Masrurah et al., 2024). The synthesis results show that the three foundations are complementary: personal response becomes the trigger, graduated support becomes the sustaining structure, and diverse modes become the vehicle. This finding is important because literacy improvement requires effective and sustained implementation (Gillon et al., 2024).

A less expected result is that the evidence at the primary level focuses more on improving literacy and reading comprehension than on producing new works. Vygotsky's approach was reported to raise the literacy scores of students at an Islamic elementary school (madrasah ibtidaiyah) (Suryani & Fauzi, 2025), whereas the review of multimode storybooks treats creative response only as one of several learning outcomes (Nurajijah et al., 2026). Preliminary research on fifth-grade students reported the effect of a multiliteracies model on reading comprehension and creative writing (Fudhaily & Rahman, 2022), and a subsequent needs analysis found that students' imaginative engagement while reading is high but their production of new works is weak, while teachers' need for strategies is lowest at the creative production stage (Fudhaily et al., 2026). This pattern reinforces the reason a framework is needed that places the production of works as an explicit goal of reading instruction at the primary school level

The synthesis results are consistent with Rosenblatt's theory that creative reading requires the aesthetic stance, that is, living through the experience during reading, rather than merely the efferent stance oriented toward information (Anandari et al., 2024; Rosenblatt, 1978). Support comes from findings that visual aids can enrich the aesthetic experience without reducing comprehension of content (Mendhakar et al., 2025) and that students who connect stories with their own experience display more reflective responses (Mardi et al., 2025). A similar pattern appears among pre-service teachers, who form personal judgments of works through aesthetic transaction (Kamlun et al., 2026). The implication is that creative reading instruction needs to provide room for the aesthetic stance without eliminating the efferent stance when students need information from the text, so that teachers need to manage the balance between the two according to the purpose of reading. The aesthetic stance thus becomes the foothold for the birth of new responses and works in classroom reading activities.

Vygotsky's theory explains that creativity in reading does not appear spontaneously but is grown through graduated support in the zone of proximal development (Suryani & Fauzi, 2025; Vygotsky, 1978). Its relevance is reinforced by a study that views teachers as learning designers who combine pedagogy, content, and technology to facilitate students' creative potential (Rigopouli et al., 2025). In cross-cultural early reading, language support given gradually fosters students' independence in interpreting texts (Wu & Abu Bakar, 2025), and a guided reading program based on this theory is associated with better reading comprehension in primary schools (Arguido et al., 2025). These findings indicate that scaffolding is not merely technical assistance but a mechanism that gradually shifts responsibility for thinking from teacher to student. Designing a learning environment that provides room for meaningful interaction between teachers and students thus becomes a prerequisite for the growth of reading creativity.

Multiliteracies views contemporary literacy practices as diverse in mode and context, so that students are positioned as designers of meaning (New London Group, 1996; Maamuujuv, 2025; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Strategies for using multimodal texts in Indonesian language lessons are seen as optimizing students' literacy (Saputra et al., 2025). However, this result is not entirely consistent with the evidence on implementation. In third grade, multiliteracies is associated with better reading interest (Raihan, 2024), yet limited facilities and teachers' unfamiliarity keep its implementation from being optimal (Selayani & Bayu, 2023), and teachers' positive attitudes have not been followed by adequate facilities, strategies, and technological skills (Jayanti & Damayanti, 2023). Proposition P3 in Table 1 therefore needs to be adapted to school conditions, for example by starting from simple modes of expression that are available, so as not to add excessively to teachers' burden.

This synthesis has implications for assessment and reading culture. Assessment of creative reading ideally measures the reader's thinking process in constructing meaning, not only the accuracy of answers, but in line with assessment approaches that emphasize interaction and social context (Kushki, 2024). Because creative reading is related to speed reading and critical reading, assessment that focuses on only one aspect risks overlooking students' attainment in other aspects (Afifah et al., 2023). Another implication is the strengthening of reading interest as a foundation, given that the development of reading literacy rests on habituation, development, and learning that foster students' interest (Noeraeni et al., 2025). Without a strong reading culture, applying the three foundations risks failing to yield optimal results, however good the instructional design teachers prepare. These two implications need to be considered together in designing creative reading instruction.

The propositions in Table 1 can be formulated as general hypotheses that can be tested in subsequent research. First, instruction that opens room for personal response before analytical tasks is expected to produce more varied reading responses and works. Second, teacher support that is gradually reduced is expected to increase student independence, in line with peer scaffolding behaviors that appeared at every stage of a writing task (Tinggie et al., 2023). Third, the provision of diverse modes of expression, which can be enriched with local wisdom (Amelia et al., 2026), is expected to broaden students' creative space. Fourth, assessment of process and product is expected to capture students' attainment more fully. Testing these hypotheses also needs to take into account the twenty-first-century skills that support students' readiness to think creatively (Zuhri et al., 2024). These hypotheses remain general and need to be operationalized into measurable indicators in specific classroom contexts.

This study integrates three fields that have tended to develop separately, namely creative reading, the psychological foundations of reading, and multiliteracies. A bibliometric and systematic review of 51 studies shows that creative thinking has become a central competence of twenty-first-century primary education (Fauzi et al., 2025), whereas studies that explicitly combine it with multiliteracies in reading instruction remain rare in the author's searches. Classroom action research on story writing through pictorial media focused on improving fourth-grade students' new story works (Khairani et al., 2025). The novelty of this study lies in a theory synthesis that produces a new framework, not merely a descriptive review (Jaakkola, 2020), with a contribution in the form of a new perspective on a phenomenon that has been understood separately (MacInnis, 2011). The position of this study relative to previous research underscores the integrative gap it seeks to fill. The comparison is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparison of the Focus of Previous Research and the Position of this Study

No	Study	Type and level	Main focus
1	Saputra et al. (2026)	Study of junior high school students	Creative reading ability in the appreciation of literary works
2	Mardi et al. (2025)	Primary school	Literary literacy through digital media and a contextual approach
3	Arguido et al. (2025)	Primary school	Vygotsky's theory applied to reading comprehension through a guided reading program
4	Wu & Abu Bakar (2025)	Early readers, cross-cultural	Language scaffolding based on the zone of proximal development in early reading
5	Momeni et al. (2026)	Systematic review (1989–2024), primary and secondary classrooms	Application of reader-response approaches in the classroom
6	Báez-Bargellini & Meneses-Arévalo (2023)	Systematic review (1996–2020)	Multiliteracies in language learning: multimodal genres, pedagogy, diversity
7	Nurajijah et al. (2026)	Systematic review, primary school	Multimode fable storybooks for creative reading skills
8	Fauzi et al. (2025)	Bibliometric and systematic review, global primary education	Creative thinking and pedagogical innovation
9	Fudhaily & Rahman (2022); Fudhaily et al. (2026)	Primary school, grade V	Effect of a multiliteracies model on reading comprehension and creative writing; needs analysis for multiliteracies-based creative reading instruction
10	This study	Conceptual study, primary school	Synthesis of transactional, sociocultural, and multiliteracies theory for teaching creative reading

The results of this study need to be interpreted cautiously for three reasons. First, the resulting framework has not been empirically tested in primary school instruction, so claims of its effectiveness are argumentative and the four propositions should be read as hypotheses, not tested findings. This limitation is common in conceptual articles and calls for methodological support so that the conceptual contribution can be lifted to the stage of empirical testing (Heinonen & Gruen, 2024). Second, this study does not undertake all stages of a systematic review, so the literature coverage may not represent the whole field and relevant studies may not have been captured (Grant & Booth, 2009; Page et al., 2021). Third, the synthesized materials vary in design, level, and context, for example pre-service teachers, cross-cultural early readers, and secondary school students, so their applicability to primary classrooms in Indonesia needs to be considered contextually.

Future research can follow four mutually continuous directions. First, research and development are needed to translate the four propositions into operational instructional designs validated by experts and teachers. Second, classroom action research can test the application of P1 to P3 repeatedly in classes with different characteristics, so that teacher support and diverse modes of expression are adjusted to students' readiness. Third, a quasi-experiment can compare students' work production between classes that apply this framework and classes that learn conventionally. Fourth, assessment instruments that measure the thinking process as well as the product (P4) need to be developed and tested for validity. Research in schools with limited facilities, paying attention to strategies for strengthening digital literacy (Fatmawati, 2025), is also needed so that this framework can be applied equitably across various primary school contexts.

Conclusion

This conceptual study aims to synthesize Rosenblatt's transactional theory, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, and the multiliteracies framework as a foundation for teaching creative reading in primary schools. The synthesis results show that the three are complementary. The aesthetic stance in transactional theory positions students' experiential and personal engagement as the starting point for the birth of new meaning and works, the principle of scaffolding in sociocultural theory shows that this ability grows gradually through teacher assistance and social interaction, and multiliteracies extends the application of both principles to various modes of representation so that creative reading is not limited to printed text. Their integration is formulated in four pedagogical propositions (Table 1).

For the advancement of knowledge, this study shows that creative reading in primary schools cannot be understood separately from the psychological foundations and literacy frameworks that surround it, and that three fields that have tended to be discussed separately can be combined in a single framework. Its main contribution is that framework, not a ready-made instructional model, so its value lies in providing an argumentative foundation for subsequent research and instructional design. This study has limitations: the framework has not been empirically tested, the study does not undertake all stages of a systematic review, and the synthesized materials vary in design and level. Even so, the framework can still serve as a directed and testable foothold for developing multiliteracies-based creative reading instruction in primary schools.

The recommendations of this research are divided into several parts. For teachers, reading instruction should begin with students' personal engagement with the text before moving to analytical tasks, be given graduated support that responds to students' needs, and make use of various modes of representation so that students' creative expression is not limited to written text alone. For schools, support in the form of teacher training and the provision of multimodal literacy facilities should be prioritized, given that the gap between the idea of multiliteracies and classroom practice has so far been caused more by limits on teacher capacity than by the absence of the concept itself.

For policymakers, literacy-strengthening programs such as the School Literacy Movement need to broaden their orientation from literal comprehension to the creation of new meaning, including in teacher training and assessment, given that Indonesian students' reading attainment in PISA 2025 remains below the OECD average (OECD, 2026). For future researchers, this conceptual framework should be followed up through development research, classroom action research, or quasi-experiments to test its practical validity, including formulating creative reading assessment instruments that measure the thinking process as well as the products students generate.

Ethics approval

Not required.

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Competing interests

All the authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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Underlying data

Derived data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author on request.

Declaration of artificial intelligence use

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