



too frequent. In Czech conditions we went through a period where readers were primarily determined by number. Quantitative data like the number of titles read per time unit and the number of books borrowed from the library or placed on the home bookshelf were for a long time sufficient to determine the category of reader and somewhat pejoratively (and in case of children also pedagogically inappropriate) counterpart of the non-reader, too. So we are discovering the 'quantitative' aspects of children's reading. The data are usable only to a limited extent, its motivation remains unreflected.

With the development of interest in reader's psychology researchers are beginning to focus on perceptual disposition of the reader. This trend has a strong tradition, it is based mainly on personality psychology and sociology (Lederbuchová L., 2004). On this basis, the current theory of reading and readership is built as well as further methodologically divergent research directions. The numeric representation of reading is not a priori denied, but serves as a starting platform for next applications and analysis.

Children's reading in its psychosocial aspects is naturally the material for mixed research strategies. In this case, it is most reasonable to collect and analyze data using several methods, whose combination leads to gain the benefits of each. Proven is the research based on mixed model where we use both quantitative and qualitative methods within the particular phases of the research process. We compose both types of research questions and approaches to data collection (such as questionnaire combining closed and open questions, using psychometric techniques, etc.) and approaches to their analysis (Hendl J., 2005).

## **THE READER DESIGNATED BY NUMBER**

The initial stage of a comprehensive research on contemporary teen readers is the recognition, description and categorization of the quantity of reading. From the survey using questionnaire of classical type, we may from obtained frequencies detect how certain features of respondent's reading behavior are related to his reading habits (affection

for reading and satisfaction from it, intent individual reading, the need of talking about read texts, reading magazines versus reading books, the choice of book in competition of dynamic and attractive media, etc.). We believe it is still relevant and useful to follow those traditionally defined aspects of reading, such as the number of books read per certain time, frequency of reading, library visits, etc. In the structure of children's and adolescent reading dispositions each of these activities affects all others. By questionnaire it is possible to map out the basic outline of a young man's reading in his subjective view (reader's self-concept).

Issues around the design of the questionnaire for the detection of subjective meaning of readership adolescent view are concentrated in two groups. The first group consists of the formal requirements to the compilation of questionnaire items. Due to the age of the respondents (10–15 years) it is necessary to choose appropriate vocabulary and adequate style of questioning. This issue at first sight obvious is not always respected, and is largely determined by researcher's personality. The priority is always the aspect of respondent, because he must understand and be able to respond – to express his subjective reality in sense of the research project.

The second group of problems with the design of the questionnaire is associated with the content of individual items. We want to identify and evaluate respondent's personal mood for reading, which automatically increases his tendency to stylize answers. This is necessary to anticipate and so formulate questions or tasks that sounded as objectively as possible, as a simple survey on the common situation. We avoid any hint of evaluation in formulation of used items, the emotional coloration from the position of the interviewer is unwanted as well. On the contrary, we anticipate a strong emotional involvement of pubescents for certain activities and facts, and these findings (supported by developmental and social psychology of adolescents) we use in the formulation of items related to particular volatile aspects of their behavior in the role of reader.

The questionnaire is still a suitable substitute method of long-term observation. It mediates in a small space a large sum of good work-

able nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio data, which also may refer to reader's self-evaluation at this level yet (Homolová K., 2008, pp. 121-123). Reading designated by the frequency of partial expressions of respondent's reading behavior can be depicted by descriptive statistical indicators and is ready to be proven by series of tests of significance.

Using questionnaire consisting of closed items with a choice of one variant of the answer can be obtained the sum of nominal data (simple frequencies). For the data processing is suitable some of the nonparametric statistical tests (they are closed by only few presumptions and are not bound by characteristics or forms of distribution of the population samples). Of these, the simplest and reliable as well in the non-parametric test of significance chi-square ( $\chi^2$  test of independence,  $\chi^2$  test for four-field table).

If the research is realized in two or more levels, such as student's and teacher's view, it is possible also to detect the existence and significance of the difference between student's reading selfconcept and teacher's perception of their students as readers. For this aim it is appropriate to test statistical significance by Student's t-test.

## THE READER IN THE INDIVIDUAL MEANING OF READING CONCEPTS

Research and diagnosis of adolescent readers also contains a question concerning the causes and motivations of obtained quantitative data. We know that teens do read or do not read, but we are still far from knowing everything about their thinking about reading as a social phenomenon. Therefore in our research design we want to define the place and role of reading and readership in the life and **semantic space** of contemporary adolescents.

For this purpose seems to be the most appropriate the use of selected methods of behavioral research, especially psychometric techniques. The structural position of the concept, for example 'reader' or 'book', according to its subjective meaning for the adolescent respondent could be evaluated by the **semantic differential** method (vicariously could be

applied the affective scale). This specific (and very sensitive) method is based on defining the individual psychological meaning of conceptions by choosing the position of each concept on bipolar scales, e.g. ‘good – bad’, ‘strong – weak’ or ‘fast – slow’.

Together with M. Chráska (2007) we start from the assumption that each term has beside the common cultural significance (socialized), also its connotative meanings (individual).

A sample of the terms must be selected to represent some of the semantic space of studied phenomenon. According to F. N. Kerlinger (1972, p. 550) that’s the most important work. When measuring personal attitudes, which the attitudes to phenomenon of reading to a certain extent are, it is necessary to choose terms very carefully. For the examined phenomenon of adolescent’s readership in previously realized researches (Homolová K., 2008) we chose a higher number of terms related not only to being a reader, but also to out-of-reading reality. Now it appears to be functional a significant reduction in terms towards the reader’s personality. In the semantic differential filling form the most important are these concepts: ‘readership’, ‘book’, ‘reading’ and especially ‘the reader’, ‘being a reader’ and ‘I-reader’.

Then the semantic differential form can look like on table no. 1.

Table 1. The Reader

<b>The Reader</b>								
good	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	bad
young	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	old
clever	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	stupid
thick	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	thin
active	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	passive
pleasant	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	unpleasant
beautiful	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	ugly
strong	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	weak
heavy	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	light
in	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	out
sharp	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	blunt

Table 1. The Reader (continued)

<b>The Reader</b>								
useful	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	useless
interesting	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	boring
dense	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	sparse
fast	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	slow

Bipolar scales are usually chosen according to the nature of concepts, but to the acquisition of relevant data we are always choosing them from the original Charles Osgood's list of 50 tested scales (Chrásková M., 2007, p. 225-226). Nevertheless, it is advisable to verify the factor charge of the scales by factor analysis.

In the next stage of development of a stable form of semantic differential usable in contemporary adolescent reader's research, scales for assessing the reading concepts should be adjusted accordingly. This allows subsequent effective handling of quantitative data – linear distance calculation, creation of D-matrices, Student's *t*-test, analysis of the cluster distance by D-statistics – for efficient qualitative interpretation.

## THE READER IN THE SYSTEM OF NORMS AND VALUES

Contemporary adolescent readers are characterized – in addition to the frequency of reading behavior symptoms and in addition to reading concepts located significantly close to the center of their general semantic space – also by a tendency to attribute the **value** to reading and reflect in it their personal standards. It is convenient to use **Q-methodology** (Q-technique, Q-ranking, a W. Stephenson's set of psychometric and statistical procedures) (Kerlinger F. N., 1972, p. 563) as a method for classifying objects in order (and assigning numbers to subsets of objects for statistical purposes). In basic way it consists in respondent's distribution of offered cards with statements associated with inquired problem into several stacks (with fix number of statements in each stack).

The use of Q-technique properly appeals to adolescent's often very clear-cut attitude toward offered facts. Thus it is possible to achieve an image of respondent's own self-reflected reading needs, interests and expectations and to effectively triangulate the whole issue.

Appropriately selected Q-types represent statements about reading, the role of reader, respondent's own reading, including verbalized possible views of reading and various attitudes to books, e.g.:

1. Reading is important.
2. Being lettered is good for life.
3. Reading develops personality.
4. Tell me what you read, and I'll tell you who you are.
5. Reading develops imagination.
6. Today's young people do not read.
7. Reading broadens the mind.

The entry requirement is a quasi-normal distribution. It provides the necessary condition for the use of the correlation coefficient when comparing attitudes of different groups of respondents (boys and girls, younger and older adolescents) and subsequently constructing R-matrices. If our goal is to create a model of contemporary teen reader, too, for further work with the data obtained by Q-ranking the technique of factor analysis is chosen.

The use of Q-technique is accompanied by certain structural disadvantages. These include determining the number of Q-types for each stack. From 60 to 120 is the recommended number of statements, but the author has a good experience also with 40 statements, in case of miniature sorting with 10 Q-types, too. Decisive for this reduction is the aspect of time and relative intensity of this technique for the respondent. Custom Q-types should be chosen so that they touch as much aspects of the reading phenomenon as possible within a certain number of them, and so that they are understandable.

In any case, the use of Q-technique is a good way of simultaneous triangulation (a procedure in which quantitative and qualitative methods are using at the same time). We can say that examined the

phenomenon is characterized by sufficiently reliable information and its image can be considered as objective.

Described mixed-method strategy is based on awareness of the need to look at reading as a structure whose main components are the interests and needs of a reader. They are updated in various relationships in the overall process of reading and also in the reading behavior of adolescents, in their reading attitudes. On reading and readership it is possible to look at one side analytically as at individual reading activities and their relationships. On the other hand, the conscious of relationships prevents to evaluate and interpret these reading symptoms in isolation.

The design of a specific (and complex) research tools for measuring adolescent readers is a crucial matter for the whole research design. Only the relevant screening methods can bring us real usable data.

## **SELECTED RESULTS FROM PILOT USE OF THE MIXED-METHOD RESEARCH DESIGN**

We have researched and described how and what contemporary pubescents read using above described strategies (Homolová K., 2007a; 2007b; 2008b, collectively 2008a). Here are the main findings of our study, which uncover the psychosocial (and pedagogical-didactic) aspects of contemporary young people's (pubescent's) reading.

The qualitative development of the personality of a pubescent is always accompanied by changes in his or her reading needs and interests. At the same time, young people develop a more mature reading attitude – their reading experience and competence changes. Taking into consideration the current trends in social development towards informational utilitarianism and pragmatism, the structure of the reading characteristics of contemporary pubescents is dominated by relaxational needs (followed by the need for knowledge). This is linked to young people's needs for saturational and entertaining reading. Gender also plays a significant role.



Children's reading in pubescence is now more influenced by external factors than it used to be, especially the more aggressive media forms (television, film and internet). The reading activities of pubescents (influenced by the relatively stable developmental constants of growing up) demonstrate a dynamic structural interconnection. If we look more closely at the substance of their activities, we discover a loosening the links from the previous contacts with literary (not only artistic) texts, and a change in the general cultural maturity of the pubescent. In this way we confirm the theory on the existence of a highly dynamic complex of children's, or pubescent's reading needs, interests, motivation, extent, and frequency of reading. However, we can only recognise the functions of their reading by monitoring the current and „variable“ reading habits of pubescents and comparing them with the descriptions of the „traditionally“ stable characteristics of readers.

To uncover the essence of contemporary pubescent's reading, we have progressed from recognising their superficial structures towards understanding their deeper structural connections. It was in our interests to find out how pubescents see themselves as readers. The following findings offer us structured information about the actual state of contemporary pubescent's reading, which was collected from questionnaires focussing on the quantity and quality of this phenomenon.

Young readers (13- and 14-year-olds) do not read books (here books are a synonym for reading) regularly, with the most common answer being that they read one book per month. Pubescents read magazines much more often, with an average of more than two per month. Pubescent boys and girls occasionally go to the library, when they need to. If we consider visiting the library as an expression of being a reader, then today's pubescents are readers. The specific nature of their reading is determined by their reading needs and interests, which are reflected in their attitudes, preferences and motivation. Pubescents like reading. They like reading entertaining magazines the most, and prefer reading novels over educational literature. Their favourite genres are short stories, followed by novels and poems. The themes which most attract them are adventure books, sci-fi and fan-

tasy stories, as well as humorist short stories and books about nature and animals.

Contemporary young people most prefer to read for fun and relaxation, and less for learning about something new. They like to talk about what they read because they have a need to talk, and most often because they like to compare their experiences and assessments with the opinions of their friends who have read the same book, or because they want to confirm that they have understood, what the book was about. A similar percentage of pubescents do not like to talk about reading unless they are asked about it (most often in school). The main reason for this unwillingness is that they do not like reading in principle, or talking about it. Some pubescents admit that they are worried that their opinions are different from the opinions of others who have read the same book.

When young people have to read the compulsory books (in school), half of them understand these books and enjoy reading them, while the other half do not understand them, do not enjoy reading anymore and give up on reading. If today's pubescents should choose between a book from their favourite genre and the film made according to it, on the assumption that they did not previously know either of them, they would certainly choose to watch the film. They prefer watching films because they offer a greater experience, with the possibility of seeing and hearing everything. However, they sometimes prefer the book, because they like to imagine the story in their own eyes, or to create their own personal film of it. If 13- and 14-year-old pubescents put themselves into the hypothetical position of being adults, who do not need to read for school anymore and may only watch TV and films, they see themselves as continuing to be readers. We did not ask them if they only saw their future reading in terms of newspapers and magazines, as the important fact for our purposes, is that young people still count on reading as a part of their future lives. The possibility of implementing reading as a pedagogical category in the school and educational process may be developed on the basis of these findings.

Being a reader, in its psychosocial aspect, is a collection of attitudes and motivations for the concrete expressions of reading behaviour. If

the pubescent pupils see themselves as readers, but their teachers do not see them in the same way, we considered it desirable to understand the deeper reasons for this difference. We found out what individual psychological meanings today's pubescents give to terms which are usually associated with reading. From the results we reconstructed the general semantic space of today's young people. We used the same methods to identify their semantic reading space.

Pubescents restrict their general semantic space (the fields which they consider to be important for their person) as highly interactive and informational. Notions which are of great individual significance for today's young people, or the things that influence them, are the internet, TV, cinema, film and magazines. These form the active and attractive (according to the scores for the factors of activity and evaluation) centre of their semantic space. Outside of them (towards the edges of their semantic space) we can find the „quite significant“ notions of books, reading, I-reader, author and teacher of literature. Today's pubescents give little significance to notions such as reader, literature, novels, being a reader, reading books and also to literary education and reading for school. The notable (and statistically significant) difference between highly significant notions and those of little significance from the formula of semantic differentials, tells us something about the tendency of pubescents to grasp both sets of notions, or phenomena, which they represent, as distinctly different. So it may be stated that „expressing oneself generally“ and „expressing oneself as a reader“ still have quite different meanings for a pubescent.

Young people agree that reading is important and that being well-read is good for life. They accept that reading develops a person's character, fantasies and horizons. Pubescents also took a positive attitude to the statement that „the more the person reads, the more he knows“. However, they also admit that today's young people do not read, do not need to read, and that what they really need to know cannot always be found in books. Most of them did not agree that they were active readers.

According to pubescents, a reader is a person who reads a lot of books. In connection with this statement, some young people claim that

everybody who regularly reads books is a bit strange. Young people do not express themselves in the system of social roles as readers, because they would look stupid in front of all their friends if they said that they like reading. According to most pubescents, being a reader is not cool. They are motivated to read more intensively if they enjoy the reading, but also by the requirements of school or any other feeling of necessity. On the other hand, they are not motivated to broaden their vocabulary or to read important works of literature. It is a total waste of time to try to make pubescents appreciate the artistic values of literature, such as the linguistic value of classic literature and the importance of the author for the nation's literary fund. In competition with modern interactive media, and with the primary orientation towards the dynamics of time, young people are only interested in the life which they can find in magazines. A book with too many pages is boring. Films are more lively for them, and because they don't like reading, they wait till „it will be on TV“. More of them agreed with the statement that „it isn't necessary to read books, I can find everything on the internet“.

Psychosocially oriented children's reading research represents now the functional way to effective measuring and understanding the specific developmental shifts, structural changes of reading attitudes and activities, their properties and relations. Mixed-method researchfully meets these needs.

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