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Age variable student's personal characteristics and their reader's preferences

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Abstract

The article is based on a research monitoring a relationship between personal characteristics of young readers and their poetry reading preferences. When implementing the research the semantic differential method and Q-methodology was used. The semantic differential has been adjusted in our earlier studies, when exploring poetry reception there are three factors observed in reading reactions of the respondents: comprehensibility, evaluation and impressiveness of selected poems. Q - methodology has been selected to observe the students' relation to human values, their personality characteristics and circumstances and their views on teaching of literature, especially poetry. The older respondents (14-15 years) are more independent, more critical of the authority of parents and teachers. When compared with the younger respondents (12-13 years) they have a greater resistance to poetry, they are moody and more sensitive. The older respondents show a greater understanding of the hidden humor of the nonsense poem, referring to their own school experience and at the same time they allow Prevert's text to reach them emotionally by the image of one of the many variants of the relationship between a man and a woman. They perceive the world around them as a more complex one than then the younger respondents who were impressed by the light Japanese five verse poem Oh designed primarily for adolescent readers.

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Keywords: semantic differential; Q-methodology; literature teaching; reception of poetry; reader's preferences;

1. Introduction

The understanding of how students perceive artistic text allows us in literary education to choose suitable texts for different age categories and select an appropriate methodological approach. One of the ways is the think-aloud approach which allows students to gain insight into the processes of the reception experienced by their teachers and vice versa (Earthman, 1992, Eva-Wood, 2004, 2008; HarkerPeskin, 1998). Another approach involves the monitoring of the reception of poetry by a quantitative research method and subsequent processing of the data by statistical methods which we may help us uncover the differences of the reception experienced by different categories of respondents. The paper attempts to establish relationships between personal characteristics of the respondents and their poetry preferences. In the previous studies poetry reading preferences of different categories of respondents have been observed, classified by age (12-19 years), by gender, according to their attitude to reading, to poetry, according to the field of study (humanities and science), according to their personality type of (extravert and introvert). The results have provided basic information about the differences in reading experiences between the established categories of the respondents in terms of three observed factors: comprehensibility, evaluation and impressiveness. To understand these results better we have focused the next phase of the research on a selected sample of 240 respondents (12-19 years) to further our understanding of the respondents' attitudes to human values, teaching methods as well as their personal characteristics, etc. Through these findings we want to obtain a better understanding of their assessment of the selected poems. In this way we develop the

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previously published results focusing on the differences between the students of primary and secondary schools - schools (Vala, 2012).

2. Research methods and implementation of the research

For the implementation of research the method of the semantic differential and Q-methodology has been used. The semantic differential has been adjusted in our earlier studies when exploring poetry reception, there are three factors observed in reading reactions of the respondents: *comprehensibility, evaluation* and *impressiveness* of selected poems. Students evaluated the poems that represent different artistic trends and are targeted at different age groups of readers. The poems were presented to the students anonymously in an attempt to secure that the respondents when considering the texts only did not let themselves to be influenced by their own extra-literary experience. We attempted to establish which type of poems they would prefer and the results obtained by this method were analysed within the context of the results obtained by Q-methodology within the same group of students.

Q-methodology was employed to follow the students' relationship to human values, their personal circumstances and personality characteristics and their views on the teaching of literature, especially poetry. The students sorted out forty Q-types which are the statements related to the field of the research and the degree of their agreement was obtained. The number of specific statements expressing the degree of their agreement was entered to the prepared form (Fig. 1). The statements they agreed with most were entered as much as possible to the left of the table (there was a space for one statement only), the statements they refused were entered to the right part of the table (one statement only as well). The other remarks were distributed according to the degree of consent in a standard manner; the largest number of statements (8) could be entered in the middle of the scale. The individual placement positions of the Q-types from left to right were assigned 10 points (maximum agreement) - 0 points (maximum disagreement).

The research was carried out at two elementary schools (students aged 12-15 years) and at two secondary schools (students aged 16-18). There were the total of 240 respondents. The article compares the results of the elementary school pupils in the age 12-13 years and 14-15 years.

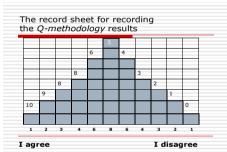


Fig. 1: The table of the Q-metodology results

3. Comparison of the results of the two categories of respondents

The overall results of all respondents (12-19 years) and an overview of 40 Q-types have been published previously (Vala, 2012). The focus of the present paper is on a detailed comparison of the results of both categories of the monitored respondents. Namely the Q-types with very significant differences in the assessment by the respondents (the difference in the order of 8 points or more) or minimal and zero differences will be considered (the difference 0-1).

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