

## A VIEW ON THE LEVEL OF READING STRATEGIES OF THE SELECTED GROUP OF FIFTEEN YEARS OLD UKRAINIAN PUPILS

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**Abstract:** The paper presents results of the quantitative research on the level of reading strategies of fifteen years old pupils from Kyiv and Chernihiv region and their comparison with the results of Czech pupils of the same age (Vicherková, 2018). The research sample consisted of 121 subjects. The research data were obtained through the structured questionnaire. The main conclusion of the research is that Ukrainian pupils consider themselves reading literate. However, the fact contradicts the actual level of their reading strategies. The questionnaire items categorisation delimited the main factors influencing the fifteen years old Ukrainian pupils' level of reading strategies as well as the reading strategies level of the fifteen years old Czech pupils.

**Keywords:** reading strategies, fifteen years old Ukrainian pupils, reading development strategies, PISA international research.

### 1 Introduction

The current concept of the education process is based on the long-term need of the society to develop ranges of skills helping to effectively search and mainly to correctly possess and evaluate newly emerging information and to link them in context with the databases of information possessing a long-term validity. An information flow influences our personal, professional and public life.

#### 1.1 Dynamics of communication and teaching changes

The dependence of society on information is increasing, and it is essential to understand the dynamics of communication changes interdisciplinarily, complexly, while involving a broader context, but also regarding a more in-depth professional field specification. Both approaches towards the information content of data processing must be developed and formed in close relation to the informational form.

Not only traditional but also activational and complex methods, together with cooperative forms, should be applied in modern teaching. Different attitudes to the current demand for a didactically complex proposal of the reading literacy, reading strategies and critical thinking education focusing on lower secondary schools' pupils exist throughout European and international education context. On the contrary, the educational trends and schooling systems are more consistent in the current demand for reading literacy education for younger pupils (4–10 years) as is confirmed by the increasing interest of the pedagogical public in the results of ten years old pupils' reading literacy international research (PIRLS).

The interest of countries to participate in the international researches on the reading literacy focused on the sample of fifteen years old pupils varies. Various education systems prevent the publication of education results even on the national, regional and local level much less in the European or international scope. Countries are not unanimous in their approaches to publishing of the education outputs and joint examination of possible ways to increase the general education level. Isolation of education system and closing off from feedback on the educational attainment levels in various areas, such functional literacy (e.g. reading, mathematics, science, finance, information, digital technologies, etc.) causes that teachers and school management do not know the education level of pupils they teach. Non-transparency of education policy procedures allows to not lead individual school institutions to responsibility for the education results of pupils. International IEA (International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement) researches assumed that the participation of the high number of countries in the international researches PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), PISA

(Programme for International Student Assessment) or TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) might contribute to the effectivity of literacy-focused education development. The international research organisers as well as many academics in the role of IEA representatives "were convinced that if sufficient information on a sufficiently diverse group of countries were obtained, their analysis would reveal important patterns that could not be revealed within the systems. They aimed to identify factors that have a consistent and significant impact on learning outcomes" (Straková, 2016, p. 12).

#### 1.2 PISA Project and reading literacy

Despite specific barriers of several countries to participate in the international researches of reading literacy of fifteen years old pupils (PISA 2009, 2018), researchers stated that the most developed countries achieve better results in the PISA research while the countries of former Eastern bloc achieve better results in the TIMSS research. The finding was interpreted by the different approach to the teaching of analysed subjects" (Straková, 2016, p. 31). PISA Project analyses the competence level of fifteen years old pupils. The result analysis focused on the functional literacy, more specifically on the reading literacy (mathematical, scientific) allows comparison and objectively driven external view on the performance of educational systems throughout the European and world education reality. PISA researches (2000, 2009, 2018) focused on the reading literacy provide analytically processed data to identify positives and negatives of the pupils from respective countries. PISA results help to understand the uniqueness and characteristic features of research participants, who were ranked among the best and the worst. More than 500 000 pupils born in 2002 from 79 countries, participated in the 2018 PISA international research.

PISA Project is organised in all OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) member states, but other countries and economic regions can participate as well. The further term will follow the prepared trend of international comparison. 2021 PISA research will be focused on the mathematical competency and recently on an innovative subject – creative thinking. For 2024, PISA plans (besides constant interest in reading, mathematical and scientific literacy of pupils) to test the ability of pupils to learn in a digital world and to perform voluntary testing of the competency in foreign languages. Scientific question categories (PISA, 2018) are delimited as scientific competencies, knowledge categories (i.e. theories, procedural and epistemic knowledge). Development of the individual's cognitive edge and critical thinking level, as well as positive behaviour patterns formation, take place in the course of education. PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS, PIAAC and other researches influence trends in the educational policy of many countries. Many countries attend different international researches focused on reading literacy, e.g. Ukraine attended TIMSS research (2007, 2011) and most recently also the PISA research (2018).

#### 2 The value of Education as perceived by foreigners living in the Czech Republic

More than 500 thousand foreigners live in the Czech Republic. About 15 000 pupils (from Ukraine, Slovakia, Vietnam etc.) are educated at the Czech primary schools. P. Kobzová (2019, in Vyhňálková, Plischke) performed research on the value of education as perceived by Ukrainian pupils attending primary schools in the Czech Republic. The study analysed the value of education and level of the Czech and Ukrainian education systems by the scope of the Ukrainian pupils' parents. The reflection of differences between the Czech and Ukrainian education context confirms that "respondents positively evaluate the effort of Czech teachers to expose pupils to the curriculum using more interesting forms, games, projects, excursions and

with support of many school supplies. However, the progress in the Czech school is quicker, and the knowledge of pupils may be shallow while in Ukraine, the learning is deeper, children are given more tasks..." (Kobzová, 2019, in Vyháňková, Plischke, p. 50). Education is a path to self-realisation, social prestige, right, need and obligation for children and adult Ukrainian population. The accessibility of quality education is limited by the financial status of families and by the current political-economic situation of Ukraine. Ukrainians make up an active group of foreigners educated at various types of schools abroad, including the Czech Republic. Many factors (external and internal) influence the quality of education, of which the level of reading strategies of the participants in the educational process also appears to be a key factor.

### 3 Reader-oriented background

The pedagogical public supporting the performance of reading literacy research in the broader international context and within the life-long learning highlights the need to elaborate reading-oriented theoretical background for reading literacy development to the application planes across the field. Absence of theoretical background supporting the development of reading strategies of lower secondary school pupils is evident also in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Ukraine. Czech pupils achieve poor results in international researches (PISA 2009, 2018) focused on reading literacy. Many European countries prevent their participation in the international reading literacy researches for various internal and external political reasons, nevertheless the interest in the education of future teachers in the sphere drawing from the theoretical concepts of preconceptions and aspects of constructivism (in the sense of activity concept) is increasing as was also mentioned by Paris, Paris (2001). The authors also mentioned the importance of strategic learning development throughout the strategic reading, which positively contributes to pupils' reading literacy even during autoregulation practice. The interest to educate the future generation of teachers in communicative, information, digital, mathematical, scientific literacy as a part of functional literacy dynamically increases. Harits et al. (2015) and Deyo (2018) highlighted the importance of formation of pupils' and adolescents' preconceptions in relation with the understanding in the communicative process focused on the development of functional literacy by the form of interactive ability to lead participative dialogue in the international context. The growing number of educational policy representatives understand that the level of reading literacy is closely linked to the economic, social and cultural environment. Abilities of a teacher in the sphere of functional literacy is directly related to the level of skills of pupils under the teacher's influence. E.g. Gavora (2002, 2003, 2005) was interested in the problem of literacy models in Slovakia as well as J. Doležalová (2005) and D. Vicherková (2018) in the Czech Republic. The term "reading strategies" was defined in the 1980s. Dijk and Kintsch (1983) pointed out the importance of understanding the term "reading strategies" by its description: "We have an explicit goal to be reached, the solution of a problem. And there may be specific operations, mental steps, to be performed to reach that goal. These steps are under our conscious control, and we may be at least partly able to verbalise them so that we can analyse the strategies followed in solving the problem." (Dijk, Kintsch, 1983, p. 68). If the reader intentionally checks the understanding of written information, they consciously use reading strategies as was highlighted by Afflerbach, Pearson, Paris (2007). The requirement of implementing reading strategies in learning is currently gaining intensity. D. H. Tracey & L. Morrow (2012) were interested in the theoretical approaches to literacy development. Vicherková (2016, 2018) and Paličková (2019) highlighted factors influencing the specific system in the regularity of the use of the necessary reading strategies at the stage of their training (e.g. a range of deliberate procedures in the implementation of reading activities) and reading skills (a range of automated reading activities procedures) and reading competencies. "Due to the increasing pressure on the increase of for-learning culture as a starting point for the pro-learning society, the examined pupils consider including successful

learning activity interactive learning" (Vicherková, 2018, p. 424).

Qualitative multicase study (Velčovská, 2019) was focused on a problem of the development of reading strategies on the lower secondary schools in the Moravian-Silesian Region in the Czech Republic. The study analysed learning of Czech and English throughout the communication and reading focused didactic games. It highlighted the need to teach pupils to think critically by using activation methods and RWTC methods (e.g. I.N.S.E.R.T., Five-leaf, Four corners, etc.) when reading the text. The transfer of expertise and research outputs, not only from the international researches on reading literacy but also from regional researches on reading strategies, is performed by Department of Education and Adult Education at the Faculty of Education, University of Ostrava in the Czech Republic which performs the research of curriculum, study motivation, professional orientation, reading strategies of pupils of engineering-oriented secondary technical schools in the Moravian-Silesian Region. The organisation of other topical regional researches of reading abroad, e.g. in Slovakia, Georgia, Ukraine belongs among other notable activities of young researchers. The first outputs from the research of fifteen years old primary school pupils on Ukraine point out the current need for education in the field of critical and strategic thinking teaching, problem-solving, pupil motivation and meta motivation for reading, varied range of student reading strategies when reading different types of texts, etc. Harmonisation of effective autoregulation and external management contribute to the success in learning.

### 4 Methodology of quantitative research on fifteen years old pupils in Ukraine and the Czech Republic

Methodological framework of the research is formed by the curricular document (Framework Education Program for Primary Education) with target competence focus e.g. on three key competencies (learning competence, problem solving competence, communicative competence) and selected outputs of international researches PISA (2000, 2009, 2018) with the focused on the reading literacy development.

#### 4.1 Research methodology

The pilot phase of the research was performed in September 2018 on the sample of 10 fifteen years old pupils (of Ukrainian origin) who live in the Czech Republic and attend the 9th year of the primary school in Ostrava and Opava. A survey was performed on the sample of selected pupils. The structure of the questionnaire corresponded to the concept of the structured interview with 15-year-old pupils in elementary schools in the Moravian-Silesian Region (Vicherková, 2018).

Based on the previous experience, the research was based on the identical approach but used a different research method – structured questionnaire. The research was carried out from June 2018 to January 2019 on the sample of 121 pupils attending three primary schools in Ukraine, in Kyiv and Chernihiv region. Fifteen primary schools (rural and urban) in Kyiv and Chernihiv region were addressed. Only two urban schools expressed their interest to participate in the research. The research sample was selected intentionally. Data collection was performed in person through a structured questionnaire and via two submitters (Doctoral study programme student of Ukrainian origin and mentor – academic).

#### 4.2 Evaluation of selected items of the questionnaire

Problem questions of structured questionnaire were classified into four categories, including:

1. Reading experience and reading needs
2. Use of reading strategies
3. Relationship to reading at school
4. Reflection of the value of reading

#### 4.2.1 Reading experience

The target group of the respondents answered the question about reading for joy or knowledge. A group of 81 (66.94%) respondents stated they read for joy, 40 (33.06%) respondents stated they do not read for joy.

A higher number of 87 (71.90%) pupils stated they read for knowledge and a considerably smaller group of 34 fifteen years old pupils (28.10%) stated they do not read for knowledge. Reading for knowledge, tied with the need to prepare for school through reading, slightly prevails over reading for joy.

Sixty-two respondents (51.24%) stated they have a home library and 59 (48.76%) stated they do not have a home library.

Fifteen years old pupils answered the question about a reading role model at home without significant differences in number. Group of 59 (48.76%) pupils stated they have a reading role model and a group of 62 (51.24%) stated they do not have any reading role model.

Group of 79 (65.29%) pupils, more active in reading, answered they read more than three books during the previous year and 42 (34.71%) pupils, more passive in reading, stated they did not read more than three books during the previous year.

Another item analysed the problem of pupils' relationship to books, reading need and pupils' motivation to choose and read a book of own interest from the offer of the public library. 42 (34.71%) pupils answered they visit a library, and more than a half – 79 (65.29%) respondents answered they do not visit a library. According to the previous research (Vicherková, 2018), 145 (47.39%) Czech pupils visit a public library regularly as compared to 42 (34.71%) Ukrainian pupils.

The question examining whether the pupils participate in an interactive discussion about the text was focused on the context of the problem, the need to discuss and share information from the text at school and home environment. Group of 51 (42.15%) Ukrainian fifteen years old pupils stated they discuss the text at home or school. More than a half, 70 (57.85%) pupils answered they do not discuss the text at home or school.

An interesting discovery is that only 36 (29.75%) fifteen years old pupils from Ukraine stated they need a teacher's exposition to understand the read and more than a half, 85 (70.25%) do not need a teacher's exposition to understand the text. It is clear from the data above that more pupils prefer autonomy in the procession and evaluation of information.

The question, about pupils' preference for certain topics, was focused on the problem of thematic reading. 67 (55.37%) pupils stated they prefer a particular topic and group of 54 (44.63%) pupils stated they do not prefer thematic reading. Ukrainian fifteen years old pupils prefer thematic reading they are interested in from the perspective of education, interests and personal activities.

#### 4.2.2 Selected reading strategies

Another part of the structured questionnaire was focused on communicative strategies, thought processes, reading strategies helping fifteen years old Ukrainian pupils to understand the written text. 78 (64%) pupils search for the main idea to understand the text and 43 pupils (35.54%) do not search for the main idea to understand the text.

As for the use of other reading strategies that help pupils to understand the text, a group of 48 (39.67%) pupils stated they create a synopsis (structure) of the text and a group of 73 (60.33%) pupils stated they do not create a synopsis (structure) to understand the text. Fifteen years old pupils also stated that:

- Only 33 (27.27%) pupils use the strategy of posing ancillary questions to understand the text (during and after the reading)
- 59 (48.76%) pupils search for the context about the information read to understand the text
- According to 74 (61.16%) respondents, quiet reading is prevalent at school

#### 4.2.3 Reading at school

Use of different information sources, i.e. the learning sources such as textbooks, worksheets, expert texts, everyday texts, media and digital texts etc. form another topic of the research. A group of 112 (95.56%) Ukrainian pupils stated that the textbooks of the native tongue are understandable, only 9 (7.44%) Ukrainian pupils considered native tongue textbooks not understandable. In comparison with the research of the Czech pupils (Vicherková, 2018), the Ukrainian pupils consider textbooks of their native tongue as understandable in a more significant number than the selected group (251, 82.03%) of the Czech fifteen years old pupils.

- 117 (96%) Ukrainian pupils work only with textbooks at school
- 101 (83.47%) Ukrainian pupils only read books as school duties
- 73 (60.33%) Ukrainian pupils consider work with text at school as crucial for their everyday experience
- 34 (28.10%) Ukrainian pupils read and analyse the text only in the native tongue learning
- 96 (79.34%) Ukrainian pupils think that the topical interlinking in the native tongue textbooks exists
- 77 (63.64%) Ukrainian pupils stated that learning activities contribute to the understanding of the text and its remembering

#### 4.2.4 Reflection of the text

Reflections on the value of the text in terms of both life needs and human rights can be considered as a critical area of research intentions that have shown that:

- 85 (70.25%) of respondents consider reading a life-long process
- 99 (81.82%) of respondents consider reading a life-long need
- 100 (82.64%) of respondents consider themselves reading literate
- 55 (45.45%) of respondents consider a book the most relevant source of information
- 19 (15.70%) of respondents dedicate more time to reading books than other media
- 9 (7.44%) of respondents consider a book their friend

The traditional grip of the reading value and strategical thinking in the current digital age is estimated similarly weak by fifteen years old Czech and Ukrainian pupils. According to the research (Vicherková, 2018), 263 (85.95%) Czech pupils stated they dedicate more time to watching other media than reading books; the results are very close to the opinion of fifteen years old Ukrainian pupils, 102 (84%) of whom stated they do not dedicate more time to reading books than watching media. Both groups (the Czech and Ukrainian pupils) also agreed (according to Vicherková, 2018) on:

- Majority of 267 (87.25%) Czech and 100 (82.64%) Ukrainian consider themselves as reading literate although:
- 242 (79.08%) Czech pupils do not consider books as the most significant source of information, and 138 (45.10%) of Czech pupils do not consider the book their best friend,
- 66 (54.55%) Ukrainian pupils do not consider books the most significant source of information,
- 112 (92.56%) Ukrainian pupils do not consider books their best friend.

### 4.3 Evaluation of hypotheses

The evaluation of hypotheses (H1a - H1d) is related to the use of a certain kind of reading strategy and the idea that pupils consider themselves reading literate. The research did not confirm that:

- pupils who search the main idea to understand the text consider themselves reading literate more frequently than pupils who do not search the main idea to understand the text; (hypothesis H1a)
- pupils who create a synopsis (structure) of the text consider themselves reading literate more frequently than pupils who do not create a synopsis (structure) of the text; (hypothesis H1b)
- pupils who ask ancillary questions to understand the text consider themselves reading literate more frequently than pupils who do not ask ancillary questions to understand the text; (hypothesis H1c)
- pupils who search for additional context about the information during reading consider themselves as reading literate more frequently than pupils who do not search for context during reading. (hypothesis H1d)

The research confirmed that:

- fifteen years old pupils who stated they read for joy consider books the most significant source of information; (hypothesis H2)

Tab. 1: Detected and expected frequencies related to H2

Pearson's chi-square = 7.7691      degree of freedom = 1      significance p= 0.0053			
Question A1	Question D5 (yes)	Question D5 (no)	Line totals
yes	44 (3.82)	37 (44.18)	81
no	11 (18.18)	29 (21.82)	40
Column totals	55	66	121

- fifteen years old pupils who stated they read for knowledge consider books the most significant source of information; (hypothesis H3)
- pupils who stated the influence of extracurricular activity on the choice of a book search additional context about the information more frequently than other pupils; (hypothesis H4)
- pupils who have their home library read more books in one year than pupils who do not have their home library; (hypothesis H8)
- pupils who read more than three books during the last year discuss with someone (at home, at school) about the text more frequently than pupils who did not read three books last year; (hypothesis H9)

The research also did not confirm that:

- pupils who have their reading role model discuss with someone (at home, at school) about the text more frequently than pupils who do not have a reading role model; (hypothesis H5)

Tab. 2: Detected and expected frequencies related to H5

Pearson's chi-square = 1.3309      degree of freedom = 1      significance p= 0.2486			
Question A4	Question A7 (yes)	Question A7 (no)	Line totals
yes	28 (24.87)	31 (31.13)	59
no	23 (26.13)	39 (35.87)	62
Column totals	51	70	121

- pupils who have their own home library consider themselves reading literate more frequently than pupils who do not have a home library; (hypothesis H6)
- pupils who read and examine the text only in the learning of native tongue do not consider work with text (reading and analysis) necessary for their everyday experience (everyday life); (hypothesis H7)

### 5 Discussion

The research confirmed the effectivity of diagnostic tool (structured questionnaire) and delimited the factors influencing the level of reading strategies of fifteen years old pupils in the selected regions of Ukraine. The research of reading strategies of pupils of Moravian-Silesian region in the Czech Republic (Vicherková, 2018) and current results of the questionnaire (2019) confirmed the fact that pupils consider themselves reading literate, but the results of their reading strategies level do not correspond with the opinion. Czech pupils were classified as below average in the previous research of reading literacy (PISA, 2000, 2009) due to their results of the reading literacy tests.

Four problem areas were delimited by the categorisation of question items of the questionnaire as a classification of factors influencing the level of reading strategies of selected fifteen years old pupils in Ukraine.

Hypotheses H1a, H1b, H1c, H2, H3, H4, H7, H8 and H9 were confirmed consistent with the research (Vicherková, 2018).

Hypotheses H1d, H5 and H6 were not confirmed consistent with the research (Vicherková, 2018).

### 6 Conclusion

The analysis of the educational reading reality by the scope of fifteen years old pupils from selected Ukrainian regions confirmed that:

- more than half of Ukrainian and Czech pupils do not consider books the most significant source of information
- most of the Czech and Ukrainian pupils consider themselves reading literate
- most of the Czech and Ukrainian pupils dedicate more time to watching media than reading books

Description of current state of education in the sphere of pupils' learning strategies and description of readers' learning of fifteen years old pupils from selected areas of Ukraine, characteristics, analysis, evaluation and self-evaluation of factors influencing the understanding of written information, metacognitively focused on the reflection of selected fifteen years old Ukrainian pupils of Kiev and Chernigov region can be outlined as the key outputs of our research. We consider the comparison of research results of Czech and Ukrainian fifteen years old pupils to be a significant output of our research.

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