



*Simoneta Babiaková, Bronislava Kasáčová*

Matej Bel University, Faculty of Education,  
Banská Bystrica, Slovakia

## RESEARCH INTO THE PHENOMENA OF THE CHILD'S WORLD. NEW TRENDS, OLD CHALLENGES

*“People talk to you a great deal about your education, but some good, sacred memory, preserved from childhood, is perhaps the best education.” F. M. Dostoevsky*

**Abstract:** In recent years, we have been able to observe a stronger trend to explore the educational reality by way of scientific research. This results from the pressure on quantitative indicators and evidence-based arguments. International surveys focus mainly on educational effects and provide more or less accurate rankings of educational systems and the degree of learners' success, school and national rates.

In addition to these trends, however, it is also necessary to focus one's research on the real world of children and young learners in a holistic concept. Qualitative research strategies prefer more phenomenological and personalistic approaches based on exploratory and investigative scientific methods. Such approaches have been applied by the authors in previous studies: they have published several studies and two monographs dedicated to children who are about to begin their education and their understanding of the world. This research was supported by the VEGA 1/0598/15 “The Child at the Threshold of Education and its World” project. In this paper, the authors will present brief findings from these studies. The basic source was authentic children's testimonies to the significant phenomena of their world and childhood.

Building on these findings, we are currently focusing our research on the formation and development of the children's readability (supported by the VEGA 1/0455/18 “Research and Development of Readability with Younger School-Age Learners” project<sup>1</sup>). There are convincing claims that this phenomenon is the most important determinant of success in education and the development of creativity and critical thinking.

**Keywords:** Research on children's preconcepts, young learners, reader, phenomena of reader's interest, reading enthusiasm

### BADANIE ZJAWISK ŚWIATA DZIECKA. NOWE TRENDY I STARE WYZWANIA

**Streszczenie (abstrakt):** W ostatnich latach możemy zaobserwować silniejszy trend w odkrywaniu rzeczywistości edukacyjnej poprzez badania naukowe. Wpływ ten wy-

---

<sup>1</sup> This study is part of the VEGA research project no. 1/0455/18 „Research and Development of Readability with Younger School-Age Learners,” principal investigator: Simoneta Babiaková.

nika w szczególności z presji stosowania wskaźników ilościowych i argumentów opartych na dowodach. Międzynarodowe sondaże koncentrują się głównie na efektach edukacyjnych i określają mniej lub bardziej jednoznaczne rankingi systemów edukacyjnych, poziomy osiągnięć uczniów, wskaźniki szkolnych sukcesów w określonych przedziałach wieku uczniów. Okazuje się jednak, że oprócz tego trendu bardzo ważnym jest zwrócenie uwagi na rzeczywisty świat dzieci w ujęciu holistycznym. Jakościowe strategie badawcze preferują bardziej fenomenologiczne i personalistyczne koncepcje podejścia naukowego. Takie podejście autorki zastosowały w poprzednich badaniach, w wyniku których powstało kilka artykułów i dwie monografie poświęcone dzieciom na progu edukacji i rozumienia świata, w ramach projektu VEGA 1/0598/15 *Dziecko u progu edukacji i jego świata*. W obecnym, autorskim opracowaniu przedstawione zostaną krótkie wnioski z tych badań. Podstawowe ich źródło stanowią autentyczne wypowiedzi dzieci dotyczące znaczących zjawisk w ich świecie i dzieciństwie. Wykorzystując te odkrycia, obecne wysiłki badawcze autorek skoncentrowane są na celu formowania i rozwijania zjawiska czytelnictwa dzieci (wspartego przez projekt VEGA 1/0455/18 *Badania i rozwój czytelnictwa uczniów*). Istnieją przekonujące twierdzenia, że to zjawisko jest najważniejszym wyznacznikiem sukcesu w edukacji, rozwoju kreatywności i krytycznego myślenia.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Badania nad dziecięcą konceptualizacją świata, uczniami młodszymi, czytelnik, zjawisko zainteresowań czytelniczych, entuzjazm czytelnika

## Introduction

The end of the 20th century and the present day have been characterized by a trend of major quantification in all sciences and their research platforms. They strive for national and international measurability, comparability, and the demonstrability of effectiveness and evidence-based benefit. In pedagogical research, this trend has very strongly been enforced especially with respect to OECD comparative surveys, and not only with regard to the educational phenomena concerning children, students, schools, and teachers (PIRLS,<sup>2</sup> TIMSS,<sup>3</sup> PISA,<sup>4</sup> and TALIS<sup>5</sup>) but also with regard to social, economic, and political aspects.

---

<sup>2</sup> The aim of the IEA PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) is to monitor the level of reader's literacy with fourth graders. The fourth grade was chosen because it is at this age that learners quit learning to read and begin learning by reading. IEA Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

<sup>3</sup> The IEA TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) focuses on detecting the knowledge and skills from the area of mathematics and natural sciences of fourth grade learners at primary schools (population 1) and eighth grade learners at primary schools or fourth grade learners at 8-year high schools (population 2). It is done under the umbrella of the IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement), regularly in 4-year cycles with the Slovak Republic having been part of the research since 1995. IEA Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)

<sup>4</sup> PISA survey (<https://www.nucem.sk/sk/merania/medzinarodne-merania/pisa>) explores reader's, mathematical, and scientific literacy and, since 2012, also financial literacy.

<sup>5</sup> TALIS is an international study that aims at monitoring the working environment and conditions of teachers and school principals and the impact of educational policy on the work of teachers and school teaching (for example, the evaluation of teachers' work, the qualification requirements and work obligations of

The findings of these exact surveys have been available for several years, providing very useful knowledge that helps to improve the quality of schools, education, and even educational systems. Inspiring experience comes from the Polish educational system that has recently demonstrated some radical improvements in the achievement of Polish children and learners. This result certainly is indebted to a thorough analysis of findings and meaningful measures, ranging from the contents of education, through the methods and forms of schooling to the reform of the educational system.

Unlike in Poland, however, in Slovakia the achievement levels of Slovak learners in long terms remain around the average (compared to the OECD and EU countries), or even below the average, with respect to most indicators. One needs to emphasize what these results generally show about Slovak children:

- Slovak learners perform poorly in the category of reading comprehension.
- They achieve poor results in the area of the practical use of information.
- The children's results are socially conditioned which effectively means (as contextual surveys have shown) that the learners coming from a socially-inspiring environment are successful, while the children whose parents have a lower ability to support their educational efforts are and remain unsuccessful.

Having analyzed the findings, one can propose a skeptical introductory hypothesis that we have formulated as our research statement: school and schooling do not sufficiently fulfil their basic function, namely, to support the development of all learners to fully achieve their educational potential.

Reading, or, more precisely, reading comprehension is generally regarded as the essential condition for education and the beginning of one's studies. Quantitative research has dealt with this issue. We have already referred to international comparative studies; in the Slovak context, several authors have explored this theme (for example, Zápotočná, Petrová, 2011). The focus of our research does not merely duplicate the focus of the cited international surveys. We put an emphasis on the phenomenon that is closely related to reader's literacy but also brings a certain added value, namely, readability. We understand readability as a developed ability to read with interest. It is based on an international choice and pursued out of one's own will, both for a certain purpose and for one's pleasure and relaxation. Readability as one's quality and feature can in its peak form be identified with reading enthusiasm – the act of reading for pleasure. Our research shows that this phenomenon appears in an early age; it is observable with some second and third graders. However, some authors notice that readability withers away as children get older. The following stage of our research focus on exploring the reasons for this phenomenon.

## Methodology

When quantitative analysis cannot provide satisfactory answers to research questions, one needs to change one's research strategy. We respect the existing OECD research as very reliable findings, even though some skeptics in Slovakia tend to view it as misrepresenting and socio-culturally little adaptable to the Slovak context. We are right to believe that the role of pedagogical research is to strive for getting to know the reality in question as thoroughly as possible. Our research topic lies in an alternative view of readability; we do not seek to explore the phenomena that have already been subject to research, namely, the attributes of reader's literacy. Rather, we focus our attention on the related, implicit phenomena that complement readability. These include, in our view, the personality particularities of the reader, the social aspects of readability, and the readers' preferences in terms of content and genre in an age when readability becomes part of the human cognitive makeup – a younger school age.

Our strategy is one of a phenomenological research paradigm. Its founders in philosophy were Edmund Husserl<sup>6</sup> and his follower Martin Heidegger who influenced many philosophers, psychologists as well as artists. In psychology, this school of thought has adherents especially in the field of exploring subjectivity<sup>7</sup> as a source for understanding society through getting to know the semantic contents that individuals bring to the world. Phenomenology has made an impact on political philosophy and ushered modern political science,<sup>8</sup> especially thanks to Hannah Arendt.

*Phenomenology* sees the point of departure for such research in descriptive psychology, or the science of essences that is based on lived experience, and argues that mental phenomena are not consciously developed but rather directly given. It has inspired the development of a new understanding of anthropology, psychology, psychotherapy, pedagogics, sociology, and, especially, methodological approaches and research in social sciences.<sup>9</sup> A school of existentialist thought, *phenomenological psychology* focuses on individual experience mediated through introspection, or self-examination. As such, it rejects interpretations driven by pre-made templates and patterns of behavior. In research, the *phenomenological approach* focuses on the subjective experience of individuals. It draws from the individual concept of personality, exploring one's inner life and experiences.

Our goal is to bring the researchers' attention back to the actual image of the child and to rendering his or her authentic utterances with the aim of understanding the ways children think, their imagination works, and their efforts and longings are directed. We

---

<sup>6</sup> Golomb J., *Psychology from the Phenomenological Standpoint of Husserl*. In *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 4, 1976, vol. 36, pp. 451-471.

<sup>7</sup> Vydrová J., *Podoby iného. Niekoľko poznámok k otvorenosti a rozštiepeniu Ja* [The Versions of the Other: Some Remarks on the Openness and Fissure of the Self]. In: NOVOTNÝ, K. – Fridmanová M. (eds.), *Výzkumy subjektivity. Od Husserla k Foucaultovi* [Exploring Subjectivity: From Husserl to Foucault], Praha: Pavel Mervart, 2008, p. 121 – 131.

<sup>8</sup> Hull, Margaret Betz, *The Hidden Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*. London: Routledge Curzon, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Hartl P. – Hartlová H., *Psychologický slovník* [A Psychological Dictionary], Praha: Portál, 2000. ISBN 80-7178-303-X

have opted for a qualitative phenomenological research, which has previously (“*The Child at the Threshold of Education and Its World*”)<sup>10</sup> helped us identify the significant phenomena related to the ways children perceive the world,<sup>11</sup> values, and spirituality.<sup>12</sup>

### Research problem and research aim

The aim of the VEGA research project no. 1/0455/18 “Research and Development of Reading Enthusiasm with Younger School-Age Learners” is to explore the readability of learners and to explore the reasons why it diminishes as children grow older. We seek to discover possibilities to stimulate the cognitive and the receptive and sensational dimension of readability in the period of primary education. In addition, we seek to identify the indicators that can be used to explore and timely diagnose early readability. Setting these aims is related to our deep conviction that reading and readability represent a gate to one’s schooling and education. It does not matter whether one gets one’s reading texts (books) in print or electronic form. What is more important in the process of developing readability, we argue, is one’s relationship and attitude to books and reading. By “attitude” we mean a value-loaded, both conscious and unconscious inclination to reading activities, contents, and social partners for reading and reading-related activities. The “relationship” emerges at the very moment when the child is able to perceive a connection between the acoustic and graphic aspects of language.

Children and learners establish their relationship to reading much earlier than adults believe they do. The relationship of a child to books and reading is built as soon as the stage of emerging literacy in a pre-school age. One of the aims of the VEGA research project no. 1/0598/15 “*The Child at the Threshold of Education and Its World*”<sup>13</sup> was to explore the pre-conceptions of children on the phenomena of linguistic and literary literacy. The findings have shown that the terms “reading” and “book” evoke with 6 to 7 year-olds associations related to adults reading in kindergarten and at home and are very rational in form. Soon after their enrollment in primary school, first graders responded to the question, “*Why do we need reading?*” very concisely with regard to the informative function of reading. “*So that we can learn...*” They also noticed its *educational* function: “*It has to do with thinking, so that we are smart.*” The fact that reading can also become one’s *hobby* was expressed by one child as follows: “*That we like it then.*” In response to the question, “*Why*

---

<sup>10</sup> Kasáčová B. et. al., *Dieťa na prahu vzdelávania. Výskumné zistenia a pedagogické inšpirácie* [The Child at the Threshold of Education: Research Findings and Pedagogical Inspirations], Banská Bystrica: Belianum, 2017. 302 p. ISBN 978-80-557-1292-5.

<sup>11</sup> Kasáčová B. – Krnáčová I., *The influence of the educational environment and socio-cultural context on shaping the hierarchy of children’s moral values*. In *Dobro dziecka: per-spektywa pedagogiczna i prawna*. Kraków: Akademia Ignatianum w Krakowie, 2017. - ISBN 978-83-7614-338-5. - pp. 203-234.

<sup>12</sup> Kasáčová B. – Hanesová D., *Current children and their moral world: a qualitative research – ways and results*. In *ICERI 2017 : 10th international conference of education, research and innovation, Seville : conference proceedings 2017*. ISBN 978-84-697-6957-7. pp. 1045-1054.

<sup>13</sup> B. Kasáčová et al., *Deti na prahu vzdelávania. Výskumné zistenia a pedagogické inšpirácie* [The Child at the Threshold of Education: Research Findings and Pedagogical Inspirations], Banská Bystrica: PF UMB, 2017, 302 p.

do we need books?”, they answered from the perspective of experience from their home environment, covering the relaxation function: “There are fairy stories [in them] and we read them. And children listen to them when Mommy reads for them, then I kiss Mommy good night and after she leaves, we go to sleep.” An aspect of pre-primary education has also developed: “So that our lady teachers can read them for us.”<sup>14</sup>

These findings from the previous research project inspired us to pursue this theme further. We formulated our research problem in the VEGA research project no. 1/0455/18 as follows: In addition to the reader’s literacy that the child achieves in the early school age, there also are other important factors of readability. Based on a theoretical analysis pursued in an interdisciplinary team, we have identified the following phenomena that we consider to be most important and would therefore like to explore them further: the personality qualities of the reader – *reader’s features*; the social setting that a child is rooted in, together with reading experience, sensations, and the need to share with others through conversations, recommendations, and book gifts – *social context of readability*; and the contents, genres, and forms that children prefer and like reading – *reader’s preferences*. In our summary of the research findings we enlist the root theories for the respective factors under review: reader’s features, social context of readability, and reader’s preferences.

The children’s relationship and attitude to reading undergoes a substantial transformation in the course of compulsory school attendance (6-16 year of age). Most children of a younger school age begin learning how to read and write with interest and curiosity. Almost every child looks forward to reading and writing as they begin school. A first problem may arise if a child, a learner, faces problems when practicing reading and the teacher or parents change the desire for reading in him or her to aversion through their insensitive approach.

### **Analyzing the curriculum from the perspective of the research aim**

It should be an explicitly formulated aim of primary education at the national level to foster the children’s relationship to reading in addition to the fostering of their ability to read. However, the National Educational Program<sup>15</sup> does not explicitly emphasize this aim anywhere. In the Description of the course “Slovak Language and Literature – Primary Education,” the section on 4th grade (primary school) reading the learners are to “improve their ability to read, especially with regard to reading comprehension and the style of reading with a correct intonation and an emphasis on recitation. They can understand the information that is both expressed and implied by a text.”<sup>16</sup> There is not a single mention about the issues such as reading as a hobby, reader’s interest, reading as experience, and mediat-

---

<sup>14</sup> S. Babiaková, *Children’s Preconcepts of Linguistic and Literary Literacy at the Threshold of Education*. In *Proceedings include at ICERI 2015 conference*. Sevilla: IATED, 2015, pp. 1339-1347.

<sup>15</sup> *Štátny vzdelávací program*. Primárne vzdelávanie. Jazyk a komunikácia [National Educational Program. Primary Education. Language and Communication].  
[http://www.statpedu.sk/files/articles/dokumenty/inovovany-statny-vzdelavaci-program/svp\\_pv\\_2015.pdf](http://www.statpedu.sk/files/articles/dokumenty/inovovany-statny-vzdelavaci-program/svp_pv_2015.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid [http://www.statpedu.sk/files/articles/dokumenty/inovovany-statny-vzdelavaci-program/sjl\\_pv\\_2014.pdf](http://www.statpedu.sk/files/articles/dokumenty/inovovany-statny-vzdelavaci-program/sjl_pv_2014.pdf) p.6

ed experience. By contrast, the National Educational Program standardly lists the following terms: text, understanding a text, searching for and deducing information, interpreting ideas in a text. In the general description of the field of education one can read that the expected aim of primary education is characterized as a “continuous development of reader’s abilities from the level of a naive reader to an advanced level of reading comprehension.”<sup>17</sup> Issues such as the relationship to books, literature, and reading or reading enthusiasm are not emphasized at all.

The curriculum in its explicit and implicit forms also includes the influence of the teacher and his or her choice of aims<sup>18</sup> methods and forms. Primary school teachers use various reading strategies to develop reading comprehension and foster the readability of their learners. The primary schools that offer reading workshops for primary school learners are of no exceptions; learners also read in their spare time in the (afternoon) school club.

### Structure of the key terms of the research project and the research problem

At the heart of the research problem one can identify several relevant terms, with *readability* being, to our mind, the most central of them. Their hierarchy is depicted through the following chart

| <i>Intellectual and aesthetic aspects</i>     | Reader's literacy                   | <i>Cognitive and technical aspects</i> |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Artistic educational factographic text</i> | TEXT<br><i>Books media Internet</i> | <i>Factual educational text</i>        |
|   |                                     |  |
| Reading enthusiasm                            |                                     | Reading comprehension                  |
|   | READABILITY                         |  |
|   |                                     |  |
| Reader's interest                             | READER                              | Text deciphering                       |
| Reader's proficiency                          |                                     | Reading technique                      |
|   | Reader's literacy                   |  |

<sup>17</sup> Ibid [http://www.statpedu.sk/files/articles/dokumenty/inovovany-statny-vzdelavaci-program/svp\\_pv\\_2015.pdf](http://www.statpedu.sk/files/articles/dokumenty/inovovany-statny-vzdelavaci-program/svp_pv_2015.pdf) pp.6-7

<sup>18</sup> J. Gabzdyl, *The praxeological theory of aims, instructions and questions in the context of early school education*, Racibórz: Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa, 2012. - 164 s. ISBN 978-83-60730-59-1

We distinguish four hierarchical terms related to readability, namely, *reader's literacy*, *reader's proficiency*, *reader's interest*, and *reading enthusiasm*.

**Reader's literacy** is a first condition necessary to give birth to readability. It involves a comprehensive set of reading skills necessary to for effective textual work. Reader's literacy is conditioned by mastering a reading technique and reading comprehension. This, at the same time, enables the development of reader's proficiency.

**Reader's proficiency** refers to an ability to read independently and meaningfully in terms of both expression and content. A proficient reader reads effectively, persistently, and with concentration and captivation. The pace and rhythm of reading must meet his or her individual possibilities and needs.

**Reader's interest** refers to one's relationship to reading as something that one views as valuable and meaningful. The reader's interest is long-term in its focus and related to the motifs and orientation of one's personality.

**Reading enthusiasm** represents a state of emotional focus, a captivation with reading. It involves reading for pleasure and active searching for impulses, inspiration, and resources as well as sharing the reading experience. All three terms are closely related to readability, whereas reader's interest and reading enthusiasm represent a value added to reader's literacy.

Reading and readability are both a means and a goal of schooling and education. The research findings<sup>19</sup> have shown that children's readability emerges (“the birth of the reader”) much earlier than reader's competence. The latter consists of a complex structure of presuppositions and acquired skills. It includes *internal* presuppositions, such as mental maturity, linguistic and cognitive development, sense perception, interest, and motivation; and *external* presuppositions, such as impulses from school and home environment, the didactic competence of the teacher, and the social contacts of the child. Acquired skills refer to the mastering of reading skills and reading comprehension. Readability is related to reader's proficiency, reader's interest, and often also with reading enthusiasm – reading for pleasure.

Although some primary school learners master reading with ease, becoming ardent readers in their younger school age who often like reading books in their spare time, they gradually replace this favorite activity with other activities. Drawing from research, R. Rusňák argues that “non-readers” who have moved from the primary to the secondary level will not become readers again. To the contrary, readers sometimes become non-readers as they grow older.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> B. Kasáčová et al., *Deti na prahu vzdelávania. Výskumné zistenia a pedagogické inšpirácie* [The Child at the Threshold of Education: Research Findings and Pedagogical Inspirations], Banská Bystrica: PF UMB, 2017. P. Gavora, *Čtení dětem v rodině: výzkum důvodů, parametrů a praktik* [Reading to Children in Family: An Inquiry into Reasons, Parameters, and Practices]. In *Pedagogická orientace*, vol. 28, no.1, pp. 25-45.

<sup>20</sup> R. Rusňák, *Súčasné výskumy čitateľstva detí* [Current Research on Children's Readability]. In Liptáková, E. et al., *Integrované vyučovanie slovenského jazyka a literatúry na primárnom stupni školy* [Primary School Teaching Slovak Language and Literature via Integrated Education], Prešov: PF PU, 2011, p. 488.



Clearly, an appropriate choice of books and texts is of much importance for the development of children's readability. Both school and family ought to contribute to children being able to choose informative and artistic texts freely and consciously, thereby fostering their reader's proficiency and taste in literature. The child should experience readability and reading as open, pleasant, voluntary, enriching, stimulating, and continuous.

**Text** as a coherent speech act is a bearer of an intention to communicate. The intention of a particular text to communicate may aim at acquiring information, learning, changing the reader's views and attitudes, motivating to a certain action or pursuing the reader's literary experience. A motivation to read texts can also be the need to be informed, learn, get instructed or imagine, experience, relax. The content of educational text in textbooks usually represents didactically formulated information that aims at creating knowledge and mastering facts. The competence of the teacher does not lie in being able to work with all available textbooks but rather in choosing appropriate texts for various purposes and occasions. If the learners are to learn from them, the texts need to be well-arranged, comprehensible, systematic, age-adequate, and, especially, reader-attractive, motivating, stimulating curiosity, and fostering the imagination.

If the child is identified with information in textbooks when practicing reading, he or she will start to perceive reading first and foremost as a working tool. As soon as the learner masters the technique of reading, the parent and teacher will leave reading activities up to the learner. In this way, many children begin perceiving reading as a situation that is related to studying and acquiring information rather than to experiencing and spare time.<sup>21</sup> Reading experience requires a proficient reader who can read the text continuously, effortlessly, and with ease. In any case, it is important that the learner understands the text, that is, can identify the meanings of the text.

**Reading comprehension** represents a way to schooling and education but also to experience and relaxing. According to P. Gavora, reading comprehension is relational in nature.<sup>22</sup> It can only develop if the recipient identifies the elements of a text, objective reality, and one's own cognitive structure, relating them together. It is on the basis of the established relationships between these elements that one can uncover meanings. Comprehension is a complex cognitive act. It pursues an analysis and synthesis of various levels of a text. Despite its complexity, it mostly takes place very quickly, occurring together with listening to or reading of a text. The PIRLS study defines the respective levels of comprehension as depending on a degree of the cognitive participation of the reader.<sup>23</sup> In particular, it depends on the ability to identify the information that is explicitly formulated in the text, through deducing from the text and interpreting its content, to the integration of the information, its critical analysis, and evaluation.

---

<sup>21</sup> M. Fasnerová, *Prvopočáteční čtení a psaní* [Initial Reading and Writing], Praha: Grada Publishing, a. s., 2018.

<sup>22</sup> P. Gavora et al., *Ako rozvíjať porozumenie textu u žiaka* [How To Foster Reading Comprehension with Learners], Bratislava: Enigma, 2008

<sup>23</sup> E. Obrancová et al., *Čitateľská gramotnosť žiakov 4. ročníka: výsledky medzinárodnej štúdie* [The Reader's Literacy of 4th Graders: Results of an International Study], Bratislava: ŠPÚ, 2004.

Informative and literary texts should be selected sensitively with respect to the readers' age. It helps if the teacher leads his or her learners to regular reading, making the process of reading comprehension easier through conversation and activities.

**Book** is the essence of knowledge, a carrier of information, and a means of interest and enjoyment. In addition to acquiring new information or literary sensations, the reading of books helps cultivate one's native language, improving one's passive and active vocabularies. The reading of books introduces the learners to both our and other, far-away cultures as they learn about the life of people and animals and get to know the history and arts of both our nation and the whole world. Through books they learn to select information and use it creatively for their personal and educational needs. They improve the competence to learn, the problem-solving skills, and even the ability to work with information and communications technologies as all of these begin with working with books.

### **Conclusion**

Based on structured group interviews with children of 10 and 13, in our pilot research project we have identified *several reasons* why children do not read or have stopped reading. Based on the comparison of the accounts by younger and older children, certain phenomena and facts have emerged, through which one can describe the loss of interest in reading as learners grow older. We describe our root theory, categorized according to the factors of readability, as specified above:

#### ***Reader's features***

1. They cannot choose a book since they never choose the books they read themselves. They either only read the books from their compulsory reading lists in school or otherwise do not have an opportunity to choose what they like. Many children do not realize that the library and book store are places of reader's inspiration.
2. Today's children have less time to read books of their own choice as they are preoccupied by an abundance of homework and extra-school activities. Their busyness further increases with their age.
3. Older children have free access to technologies, the engagement with which often becomes the way they spend their spare time. Most fifth to ninth graders have their own smartphones with access to the Internet as well as their own tablet or computer at home. They spend much more time being engaged in passive online activities than reading books; on the Internet they do not search for literary contents and coherent texts but rather prefer social networks.
4. Children spend much less time reading books, preferring watching TV or playing computer games instead.
5. Children lack patience, opting for watching films if they are given a choice. Today's learners are demanding and impatient. If the text in a book is not engaging, the book does not attract their attention and they leave it. The children often indicated that they find reading boring.

6. Children have problems with concentration. If a text is demanding, difficult and requires a greater cognitive commitment, some children cannot concentrate on it. If the children do not understand the text they read or cannot remember what the text is about, they lose the motivation to read.

### *Social context of readability*

#### *school*

7. Having passed on to middle school (8th to 9th grade), children lose their “facilitators” as this role was often played by their teachers or school club instructors.
8. Teachers do not systematically foster the developing readability from elementary school (1st to 4th grade), and the reader’s interest of learners is sometimes even seen as an obstacle to pursuing school tasks.
9. Schools require reading activities mostly with the aim of mastering educational contents. However, they do not support reading out of interest and for pleasure; there is a lack of reading culture. Teachers do not provide learners with space for reading the books of the latter’s own choice in school.
10. Children are afraid of reading because they expect to be tested for their reading performances. Excellent readers are compared to weaker ones.
11. Both teachers and parents sometimes use reading as a form of punishment.
12. In school, learners are forced to read with a speed and at a time that do not suit their personalities.

#### *family*

13. Children do not find motivation in their families because their parents do not read books. Even though they do not spend much time with their parents, they still copy the latter's behaviors. Today, if some parents do not read books, it is very likely that their children will not read books either.
14. We have discovered that parents do not read for older children, and neither do they talk together about books. A book becomes an increasingly rare gift as children grow older.

### *Reader’s preferences*

15. When children “leave behind” typical children’s literature, they do not find an adequate replacement.
16. There either is a lack of relevant literature for teenagers, or otherwise they are not aware of it because there is nobody to advise them.
17. Book fans prefer adults’ literature.
18. As children grow older, the time spent with a book is less and less attractive for them since they prefer real and virtual social networks.

Based on what we said above, one can identify four groups of the reasons why the child reader “withers away” or the obstacles to the development of learners as readers. These can be categorized as follows:

- Reasons inherent to children and caused by maturation
- Reasons caused by neglecting by school and teachers of the systematic support of reading
- Reasons due to the resignation of parents
- Reasons due to the editorial policies of publishing houses and children’s libraries

At this stage of our research, which was done by way of a qualitative strategy and analysis of structured group interviews, we can claim to have completed an introductory exploration of the research problem. What will follow is a quantitative inquiry by way of a survey addressed to learners of two age groups, namely, 10-year-olds and 13-year-olds. The structure of the survey has been established on the logic of the phenomena discovered about the identified factors.

The results of the survey are expected to reveal the indicators of readability decreasing as children grow older. We also plan to pursue a Slovak-Polish comparison.

### **Bibliography:**

1. Babiaková S., *Children’s Preconcepts of Linguistic and Literary Literacy at the Threshold of Education*. In *Proceedings include at ICERI 2015 Conference (1339-1347)*, Sevilla: IATED, 2015.
2. Fasnerová M., *Prvopočáteční čtení a psaní [Initial Reading and Writing]*, Praha: Grada Publishing, a. s., 2018.
3. Gabzdyl J., *The praxeological theory of aims, instructions and questions in the context of early school education* Racibórz: Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa, 2012. - 164 s. ISBN 978-83-60730-59-1.
4. Gavora P. et al., *Ako rozvíjať porozumenie textu u žiaka [How To Foster Reading Comprehension with Learners]*, Bratislava: Enigma, 2008.
5. Gavora P., *Čtení dětem v rodině: výzkum důvodů, parametrů a praktik [Reading to Children in Family: An Inquiry into Reasons, Parameters, and Practices]*. In *Pedagogická orientace*, 2018, vol. 28, no.1, pp. 25–45.
6. Kasáčová B. et. al., *Dieťa na prahu vzdelávania. Výskumné zistenia a pedagogické inšpirácie [The Child at the Threshold of Education: Research Findings and Pedagogical Inspirations]*, Banská Bystrica: Belianum, 2017. 302 p. ISBN 978-80-557-1292-5.
7. Kasáčová B. – Krnáčová I., *The influence of the educational environment and socio-cultural context on shaping the hierarchy of children’s moral values*. In *Dobro dieťa: perspektywa pedagogiczna i prawna*. Kraków: Akademia Ignatianum w Krakowie, 2017. - ISBN 978-83-7614-338-5. - pp. 203-234.
8. Kasáčová B. – Hanesová D., *Current children and their moral world: a qualitative research – ways and results*. In *ICERI 2017: 10th international conference of education, research and innovation*, Seville: conference proceedings 2017. ISBN 978-84-697-6957-7. pp. 1045-1054.

9. Obrancová E. et al., *Čitateľská gramotnosť žiakov 4. ročníka: výsledky medzinárodnej štúdie* [The Reader's Literacy of 4th Graders: Results of an International Study], Bratislava: ŠPÚ, 2004
10. Rusňák R., *Súčasný výskumy čitateľstva detí* [Current Research on Children's Readability]. In Liptáková Ľ. et al., *Integrované vyučovanie slovenského jazyka a literatúry na primárnom stupni školy* [Primary School Teaching Slovak Language and Literature via Integrated Education]. Prešov: PF PU, 2011, p. 488.
11. Source: <https://citaty-slavných.sk/citaty-o-knihach/>
12. Golomb J., *Psychology from the Phenomenological Standpoint of Husserl*. In *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 4, 1976, vol. 36, pp. 451-471.
13. Vydrová J., *Podoby iného. Niekoľko poznámok k otvorenosti a rozštiepeniu Ja* [The Versions of the Other: Some Remarks on the Openness and Fissure of the Self]. In: Novotný K. – Fridmanová M. (eds.), *Výzkumy subjektivity. Od Husserla k Foucaultovi* [Exploring Subjectivity: From Husserl to Foucault], Praha: Pavel Mervart 2008, pp. 121 – 131.
14. Hull M. B., *The Hidden Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, London: Routledge Curzon, 2002.
15. Hartl P. – Hartlová H., *Psychologický slovník* [A Psychological Dictionary], Praha: Portál, 2000. ISBN 80-7178-303-X
16. Zápotočná O. – Petrová Z., *Medzinárodné merania čitateľskej gramotnosti a ich význam pre pedagogickú prax* [International Surveys of Reader's Literacy and Their Significance for Pedagogical Practice]. In *Rozvoj funkčnej gramotnosti v kontexte medzinárodných porovnávacích štúdií PISA a PIRLS* [The Development of Functional Literacy in the Context of PISA and PIRLS International Comparative Studies]. Bratislava: Štátny pedagogický ústav, 2011, pp. 51-58

#### Contact Details:

— Prof. PhDr. **Bronislava Kasáčová**, PhD.

Faculty of Education, Matej Bel University, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia  
bronislava.kasacova@umb.sk

— Associate Professor PaedDr. **Simoneta Babiaková**, PhD.

Faculty of Education, Matej Bel University, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia,  
simoneta.babiakova@umb.sk