

## TWO TYPES OF CONTEMPORARY READING STYLE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE PROCESS OF THINKING AND SCHOOL EDUCATION

### INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the basic skills which we skill in the process of education. Simultaneously it conditions education and enabling to continue it. Through reading we can obtain information, but also by using other skills such as perception and analysis, we can interpret the reality surrounding us. In the past, reading was one of those skills that enabled a person to be considered as intelligent and well educated. Today's education is more related to formal aspects, such as getting a diploma, that people more and more often reach without reading. As P. Bayard claims: "we are still living in a society where reading is a sacred act, although it can't be concealed that this society is in of slow decay state" (2008, p. 8). In today's digital world we stop reading books and instead we browse websites, watch television, and so on.

In subsequent reports of the National Library describing the state of reading in Poland the authors are emphasized that the higher stage of education, when pupils stop learning of reading, but they practical use of this skills, the level of reading decreases (Biblioteka Narodowa, 2011). Thus, the situation in which there are:

students who do not have to read even summaries of school reading, bookers who do not read catalogues, doctors who do not need to acquire additional knowledge, lawyers not interested in new laws or regulations. As we can see, you can deal with at school and at university, you can work in a profession, also such a higher education, being practically illiteracy. (Chymkowski, 2011, p. 3)

This situation is not only in Poland, but it is a global trend. But it is not that we do not read at all. It is true that the decline in book readership is a constant trend, but today's youth gets up in the morning and he does not turn on as his parent's TV, but he is turn on a computer and he browses the web.

So, the modern man also reads, but other things his parents were read in youth. Besides, he does it another way. Hence, the purpose of this text is to analyse two separate style of reading: the one is analogue reading patterns and it is coming from

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the pre-digital era. This style is slowly fading away. The second is the digital one, which is developing along with the digital media. In addition, I will be interested in the process that this change entails in terms of, in particular, changes in ways of thinking and interpretation of reality. Hence, in this article, after describing two contemporary reading styles: a new, web-based one, and classical style, based on printed sources, I describe the impact of reading changes on the mindset of individuals and reading skills in school. In the case of thinking, the key is: creativity and critical thinking, style and ability to interpret the surrounding reality, the ability to perceive and understand abstract concepts and the development or lack of development of cognitive needs of man. In turn, in the process of school education, the most important skills related to reading are: language culture, writing skills and the ability to conduct discussions.

## THE CHANGE OF READING STYLE

Our lives change with the development of digital technology. This pertains not only to the everyday functioning of a human being (he supports technology in communication, information, shopping, travel, etc.) but also the way of reading. Roman Chymkowski, together with Koryś and Dawidowicz-Chymkowska (2013), in the context of contemporary reading styles, designate two types of this: self-imposed reading and useful one. Voluntary reading is one that has always accompanied people. It consists of focusing totally on this activity while abandoning other activities at the time devoted to reading. Result of such reading is full engagement in reading, full-focus on the text, so to perform other activities is impossible. Such immersion in reading causes the so-called reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is not just reading letters, but above all understanding the meaning of the text that you read. The reader can tell the text as if in his own words, but not only this: he can also recreate the author's thought process and understand it and present the author's thesis. In addition, reading comprehension results in like conducting a dialogue with the author of the text. The reader does not necessarily have to agree with the presented theses. He can formulate his own opinions on the words given by the author and lead him to a sort of discussion. So, reading is also "understanding and interpreting many different narratives" (Miczka-Pajestka, 2012, p. 142) and creating "own, separate space of thought" (Łuszek, 2012, p. 9). Such reading process introduces man into the world of cultural heritage: "Reading brings man into the field of culture, incorporating his into the orbit of the world of values and universal texts" (Łuszek, 2012, p. 9). This style of reading in the context of the development of digital technologies becomes more and more rarer and it tends to disappear.

On the other hand, the useful reading can be combined with the development of digital technology. With the dominance of many stimuli that attack us from each side, and the development of the multitasking (Tapscott, 2009; Prensky, 2010),

which consists of simultaneous performance of many activities, focusing on reading only is more difficult, and for the younger generation is simply boring. Due to the focus on other purposes (e.g. listening to music, watching a movie, playing a computer game, browsing a mobile phone, social networking activity, etc.), it is difficult to turn off and focus solely on reading. Thus, the style of reading changes, and instead of focusing on reading, begins to rely on a cursory review of the page. Hence the scientists consist that modern readers “are rapidly becoming consumers of information who can quickly jump between commercial search engines, social networks, wikis, bookmarks, and electronic services” (Nicholas and Rowlands, 2008, p. 183). As the authors of report titled *Google Generation* claim, the modern *reading* is only a few seconds familiar with the abstract and keywords. Deeper forms of reading are fanning the book or quickly reviewing the text.

Contemporary reader reviews 1-2 pages of text and discards it, and he never goes back to it. Hence, he reads the text no longer than 3 minutes, and a book 4-8 minutes. This way, it is only possible to view chapter titles, drawings, tables, sometimes focus on text in some way highlighted (e.g. frames, bold) and read summaries (Rowland et al., 2008, p. 294-295). Then, on that basis, he makes up his mind about the material reviewed. So, the modern reader “uses the content in a random manner, looks for quotes, not the essence of it” (Gołębiewski, 2012, p. 12). According to Nicholas Carr (2008), he is focused on the efficiency and instance. Such reading is not limited to trivial, entertaining content such as websites, entertainment information, etc., but it also predominates in texts that require full engagement of the reader, i.e., scholarly texts, textbooks or reading. According to the authoress of this article, you should look for a contemporary decrease in reading level at this point.

For the new-type reader longer texts, not enriched with additional materials (such as images, sounds or videos) are simply boring. The reader is looking for information that connects the various channels of perception (sight and hearing, and in the case of computer games also touch) and is given in a short, condensed form. In addition, he expects to personalize the information through hypertext links, which will enable him to deepen the information he’s interested in. In the case of long narrative forms, which the follow to the author’s mind is required, he simply gets bored. The style of reading described in this paragraph is more and more prevalent in the case of modern readers, hence we may expect the development of this approach to reading.

## READING AND THINKING PROCESS

Both of the above-mentioned forms of reading combine with specific development or lack of development of the various skills associated with the reader’s thinking. These include creativity and critical thinking, style and ability to interpret the surrounding reality, the ability to perceive and understand abstract concepts, and the development or absence of development of cognitive needs development.

Among the goals of modern education is emphasizing education in young people critical thinking and creativity rather than the dominant in the previous epoch of using the information conveyed in large portions by the teacher. The omnibus, a man with a great deal of information in different fields – the ideal of an educated man in previous epochs, loses his *raison d'être*. Modern education is about finding the information you need and not learning by heart. Instead, we appreciate the expertise knowledge and the ability to use it creatively and not reproducibly.

It can be stated beyond any doubt that the traditional way of reading develops critical thinking. As described above, it is not only reads the author's message, but also it learns dialogue with him. It creates an openness to new opinion – it is acquainted the reader with many perspectives and many possible approaches to the problem.

In turn, the question is whether the contemporary reader, *educated* mainly on a review of Internet sources, can develop the above behaviour. Analyses indicate that he still shows great trust in the content of the Internet, which origin is unknown. Hence, in the case of online sources, there is a lack of ability to distinguish facts from opinions (websites other than those that are reliable, is full of untested, uncertain, manipulative or untrue sources).

Among the new type of reader, there is also an uncritical identification of the opinions of others, which is created by the copy-paste strategy. Thus, the contemporary reader does not distinguish professional sources based on the knowledge of the authorities, from sources written in easy form but created by laymen. A modern reader, easily identified with the opinions of others, has not developed critical thinking skills in the process of acquaintance with long texts created by competent and valuable authors. He does not read in a deep and reliable way, so he can't create a reliable argument and use the correct Polish language. It also has a problem in maintaining a culture of discussion, involving respect for the opinions of others and the ability to conduct discussions. Hence the popularity of the haters, i.e. people whose way of life is to offend other internet users.

Another skill acquired in the reading process is the ability to interpret the reality which surrounding us. Traditional reading makes it easy to make sense of our existence. Thanks to it we broaden our horizons, not only through the development of knowledge, but also through acquaintance with other than our preferred reception and understanding of the world in which we function. Thanks to the traditional reading style, our reality is no longer limited to today, here and now, which is forced by a new reading style. Due to the amount of provided information, the reader is limited to new sources. The relevance and validity of such information is short-lived. Traditional readers force the interpretation of the present in a broader context, such as historical or from the perspective of different fields of knowledge. The new style of reading is embedded in our contemporary postmodern existence, which seems to be a collection of one-day episodes and unrealized plans. On the other hand, traditional reading makes human existence more meaningful, and it creates a coherent history

from episodes. The specified text is understood in the context of the personal experience of the individual. As Bogdan Zeler writes:

The great importance attaches to the 'own experience' of the interpreter. The interpreter gives new meaning to the text by recalling the proper structures of being. Interpretation seems to be in this sense to be determined by a certain attitude of the interpreter, its competence, worldview preferences, etc. (Zeler, 1998, p. 176)

This feature of traditional reading is not able to replace the content drawn from the internet, in which the author is focused solely on himself and his experiences. Thus, the reader becomes secondary – the author is interested only in his own interpretation, not the opinion of others about his text.

Another feature that develops the traditional style of reading is the understanding of abstract concepts. The world of the internet and multimedia is literal world – film, computer game or virtual simulation. Hence, the modern reader, if he does not use traditional printed books, is beginning to have problems with understanding and defining abstract concepts which are not translated into a particular image. The lack of understanding of abstract concepts, which must follow the lack of development of abstract thinking, results in a lack of openness to the issues that humanity has fascinated since the dawn of history and it has been the basis of the cultural development of our civilization. For modern readers, classical problems, such as those associated with the classical triad of concepts: truth – goodness – beauty, become incomprehensible and unnecessary. The same applies to concepts of political philosophy such as justice, ideal state, etc., which result in the crisis of civil society development, because citizens, who are focused on their own existence, do not understand what the common good is.

The last feature that connects two ways of reading with the development of human thinking is the development of his cognitive needs. Traditionally, reading (books, then newspapers) has enabled people to broaden their existing knowledge. Today this role is taking over by the internet. Effective and purposeful use of its resources makes possible to reach within seconds practically any topic which interested to us. Hence, in recent times it has become dominant to define Western civilization as an information society or knowledge one. Information – a rare commodity, difficult to achieve in the past, today is democratic, i.e. regardless of the degree of education, place of residence or property status everyone can use it. However, cognitive development is not only about access to information, but also about the need to search for and use resources. Traditional readership automatically developed the cognitive needs of their readers. In the case of a new reading style, it seems that cognitive curiosity, i.e. broadening of knowledge or interests, is not too big. According to Łukasz Gołębiowski, the modern man "listens only to his own voice, he seeks the web to establish his own views, but not to alternative opinions" (2012, p. 73). This view is confirmed by the authors of report titled *Google Generation* (Nicholas and Rowlands, 2008; Rowlands et al., 2008). They combine the increased need to browse the web

with cognitive restrictions. According to the authors, the contemporary reader is devoting time to re-searching and to re-browse the web. Therefore, it is not enough time to discover new, unknown things whose cognition requires increased intellectual effort.

## READING AND SCHOOL EDUCATION

The reading style is also influenced to the skills learned in school education, i.e. reading involves with the language of culture, with the ability to write and the aforementioned ability to discussions.

In terms of reading relationships with the development of language culture, the difference between the traditional and the new reading style is appropriately attributed to Lukasz Gołębiewski. He claims that:

Life online does not leave space for focus, loneliness, reflection, true enjoyment, taste for poetics, to appreciate the syntax of the art, to enjoy the story, to decipher the complexity of intrigue. In the online world, there is no time for it. (Gołębiewski, 2012, p. 10)

According the cited author, this what isn't possible to achieve with a new reading style, the traditional one is develops. We inadvertently expand the vocabulary of both passive and active vocabulary by reading in a traditional way. By the immerse of reading also allows for the development of a linguistic unit in the use of correct spelling, proper sentence structure, or improvement of style in both written and oral statements. The use of electronic sources preclude education in this regard, not by a lack of reading skills, but due to the fact that such sources do not pay attention to the correct use of language. For people using Internet sources correct language is not a value. The people who repeatedly break the grammatical rules are not criticized there. This attitude is forced by the condensation of message and dominantly use of abbreviations. In addition, the scope of the vocabulary is limited, which instead of developing, is limited to colloquial expressions, easy to comprehend. With such wording, reliable sources, based on professional terminology, are lost.

Thus, we have smoothly shifted from the topic of linguistic correctness to the ability to write. As i claim above, the ability to correctly write is also closely linked to what and how we read. It also connects with the position and meaning of the reader to the writer. In the world of traditional books for the author, the reader as the commentator of his text was most important person. Due to this function, he had to be respected. Today this model has changed. On the one hand the universality of writing is increased. In the past, it was once an activity reserved for intellectual elites, people with unmatched mental horizons who shared with readers their opinions. Today writing becomes common, i.e. for many people it is a way of life. The internet is the platform of writing. At the same time, the approach to the

reader has changed. It is no longer important for an author who focuses solely on his own personal opinions. He considers that his opinions are the most important. Hence, it has become common practice that online writers are only interested in themselves. In his opinion, what he writes is interesting not only for him but also for his readers. Due to the change in style, the form of writing has changed, which is adapted to the needs of the author and his readers. Hence, he writes short texts that deal with everyday trivia.

The author's readers are interested in the issue that he is making. They do not expect intellectual reflection. Texts are written quickly, cursively, without deepening their theses (most authors are not aware that their theses require thorough arguments). They do not pay attention to their linguistic form, so they are written carelessly, without attaching importance to linguistic correctness. This is due to the dominance of short forms of communication such as text messages or tweets. Hence, there is widespread tolerance for ambiguity, inconsistency and short acronyms. Authors are not aware that their short and cursory opinions lead to misunderstandings and erroneous conclusions. Short form requires a brief presentation, so the contemporary reader expects for such form. This phenomenon is also related to the copyright issue. Authors, writing their own in a quick, careless and effortless way, do not know how much time and commitment they need to write and publish a good, worthy book. Hence, they do not respect the work of the creators. They believe that they are free to dispose of the intellectual property belonging to others. Hence, the belief that people reading traditionally and in a modern way increasingly divide. We may say, that: people brought up in the culture of the written word (especially in print culture) speak differently, think otherwise and otherwise perceive the world (Dukaj, 2010). People who read briefly and primarily digital forms become new illiterate. They do not understand the longer written text, they can't remember or recreate from memory its main assumptions. This practice is associated with impoverishment of the vocabulary, so they have trouble with creating independent, elaborate statements – both verbal and written.

The final point in this text, and at the same time related to the skills in school education that is linked to reading skills, is the culture of discussion. As i have illustrated in this text, traditional reading allows you to broaden your vocabulary, get acquainted with arguments that we would not have come up with, so look at the world far from the one presented by us. Well-argued author's reflections stimulate us to discuss with his views. If we want to argue our own, different standpoint, we must make an intellectual effort to strengthen our position. It encourages us to think further, to seek points of nonconformity with the author and/or weak points in his arguments. We also want to look for positions, opinions and information that would strengthen our opinion. This is the paradox, that this skill disappears in the internet. The multitude of opinions presented on the Internet should stimulate discussion. Instead, the so-called *I like it culture*, where the arguments of supporters and opponents of a given position are limited to raising the thumb up or down. Thus, the argumentation is

completely ignored. Hence, modern man, reading modern, adapted to modern, fast times way, simply loses his skills of argumentation.

## CONCLUSION

It seems that the new way of reading is the very attractive to modern man, but we should not focus on it at the expense of traditional reading. The article shows that traditional reading, although less attractive, offers many skills that are also essential to the modern educated man. Without them, he will not be able to make full use of his potential, despite the resources and opportunities available to him (access to any information). Hence, without the development of traditional reading skills (and at a high level) it is not possible to fully exploit the potential that digital reality and information society are provided. Thus, it will not be possible to transform the present (information) society into a knowledge society whose idea is to fully develop the capabilities of the human individual.

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**Keywords:** traditional way of reading, digital way of reading, ways of thinking, skills shaping in the education process

**Abstract:** In this article, the issues of coexistence of two reading styles were described. The first way of reading is the analogue (traditional, classical) reading. This type of reading is related to immerse reading. Simultaneously the new type of reading (digital reading) coexists. It is associated with the development of reading of the web content. Traditional style is disappearing, while digital style is growing. With the coexistence of the two reading styles, the functions associated with this process are evolving or disappearing. The article focuses on changes related to the process of thinking (creativity and critical thinking, the style and ability to interpret the surrounding reality, the ability to perceive and understand abstract concepts, and the development of cognitive needs) and skills developed in the process of education (language culture, writing skills, and discussion skills).

## DWA WSPÓŁCZESNE STYLE CZYTANIA ORAZ ICH WPŁYW NA MYŚLENIE I ZMIANY W EDUKACJI SZKOLNEJ

**Słowa kluczowe:** czytanie tradycyjne, czytanie cyfrowe, sposoby myślenia, umiejętności kształtowane w procesie edukacji

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł podejmuje kwestie dotyczące współlistnienia dwóch stylów czytania. Pierwszym z nich jest znane od zawsze tzw. czytanie analogowe (tradycyjne, klasyczne), związane z dogłębnym zapoznaniem się z lekturą. Wraz z nim współlistnieje nowy (cyfrowy) styl czytania związany z rozwojem czytania treści internetowej. Styl tradycyjny ma charakter zanikający, podczas gdy styl cyfrowy coraz bardziej się rozwija. Wraz ze współlistnieniem dwóch stylów czytania rozwijają się bądź zanikają funkcje związane z tym procesem. W artykule skupiono się na zmianach związanych z procesem myślenia (kreatywność i myślenie krytyczne, styl i umiejętność interpretacji otaczającej rzeczywistości, umiejętność percepcji i rozumienia pojęć abstrakcyjnych oraz rozwój potrzeb poznawczych człowieka) oraz umiejętnościami kształconymi w procesie edukacji (kultura języka, umiejętność pisanie oraz umiejętność prowadzenia dyskusji).