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## Children's Magazines as Tools for (Not Only) Reading Education

The main aim of the article is to answer the question of how children's magazines may be used as tools for reading education, understood as building the habit of reading periodicals and books. It is generally assumed in the scholarly literature that periodicals for children may be an effective tool in building a reading habit. Unfortunately, this segment of the press market, just as all other segments, faces declining readership due to the expansion of digital media. This article constitutes a part of a planned series of articles devoted to various aspects of children's press. The author has already published two articles in the series, where he discussed the history of the children's press in Poland,<sup>1</sup> the place of children's press in the media market, and the relationship between children's press and children's literature since

children's periodicals are a special segment of the press market. On the one hand, they are subject to the regulations of the press law but, on the other, they are studied by not only media researchers but also teaching specialists and psychologists [...] [while] studies on children's press often refer to children's literature.<sup>2</sup>

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- 1 Cf. A. Adamski, "Historia i terażniejszość prasy dla dzieci w Polsce", [in:] *Nowe opisanie świata. Literatura i sztuka dla dzieci i młodzieży w kręgach oddziaływań*, B. Niesporek-Szamburska, M. Wójcik-Dudek (eds.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2013, pp. 321–334.
- 2 A. Adamski, "Czasopisma dla dzieci: między prasą a literaturą", [in:] *Nauki o mediach i komunikacji społecznej. Krystalizacja dyscypliny w Polsce. Tradycje, nurty, problemy, rezultaty*, A. Adamski, S. Gawroński, M. Szewczyk (eds.), Oficyna Wydawnicza Aspra, Rzeszów–Warszawa 2017, p. 363 [Unless indicated otherwise, English versions of quotations were translated from Polish].

Therefore, the article provides an overview and discusses the existing state of research and knowledge<sup>3</sup> to create the theoretical base and the starting point for further research, which will cover, for example, studies of the educational content in Polish children's periodicals, as well as the opportunities and the possible extent of their use in education by teachers and parents. One of the planned articles will also address the issue of advertisements in children's periodicals.

The article stems mainly from the discipline of the "science of social communication and the media", yet it has an interdisciplinary nature due to its references to teaching and psychology.

### Readership and multimedia

According to a report of the National Library, 38% of Poles read at least one book in 2017. Students and pupils exceed the national average: 75% of them declared that they read at least 1 book a year, while 19% declared having read over 7 books. Those results have been stable over the last decade (there was a considerable decline in 2004–2008).<sup>4</sup> Zofia Zasacka's research among secondary school pupils published in 2008 indicated that a decade ago only an insignificant number of pupils graduating secondary school admitted to not having read anything – only a few persons declared that within the six months prior to the study they had not read a single book (even the set books) nor any periodicals. 99% of the study subjects encountered the written word, while approx. 4% of the young people surveyed read periodicals but did not read books. In general, press material constituted a rather important and common source of reading for teenagers in their free time, yet they chose not only titles intended specifically for them but also those which they found at their homes and which were bought and read by their parents.<sup>5</sup> A similar study published in 2014 indicated the persistence of the above-mentioned tendencies; sadly, though, its authors completely omitted in their research methodology the role of children's periodicals in shaping the reading culture.<sup>6</sup> Pilot studies con-

<sup>3</sup> That was the author's conscious decision, which was necessary due to the structure of the planned series.

<sup>4</sup> *Stan czytelnictwa w Polsce w 2017 r.*, Biblioteka Narodowa, <https://www.bn.org.pl/download/document/1529572435.pdf> [accessed on: 1.10.2018].

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Z. Zasacka, *Nastoletni czytelnicy*, Biblioteka Narodowa Instytut Książki i Czytelnictwa, Warszawa 2008, p. 53.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Streszczenie raportu końcowego z badania „Czytelnictwo dzieci i młodzieży”*, Z. Zasacka (ed.), Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, Warszawa 2014. It may seem surprising that the case of using children's periodicals in shaping their reading habits is so often omitted in the scholarly literature, both Polish and international, even in studies devoted specifically to shaping reading habits and reading skills, e.g. J. Truskolaska, *Wychować miłośnika książki czyli czytelnictwo i okolice*, Maternus Media, Tychy 2007; N.K. Duke, M.K. Block, "Improving Reading in the Primary

ducted by Krzysztof Kruszka indicated that approx. 41% of young pupils admitted reading children's periodicals, yet he did not differentiate the results either on the basis of the children's sex or the place of residence (it was, actually, a local study and its results cannot be extrapolated to any national result).<sup>7</sup>

What is increasing is the number of hours a statistical Pole (including children and teenagers) spend in front of the television and surfing the internet. According to Mariusz Bugara:

in spite of the development of printing technology and the constant improvements in the attractiveness of various children's periodicals, that type of social medium [press – A.A.] has been recently losing to television and other commonly used forms of mass communication.<sup>8</sup>

Clearly the rapid civilisational changes which became prominent in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have also influenced people's relationships with the printed word. "Receptive play, commonly known as reading books or viewing images, is increasingly taking the form of watching films and various television shows."<sup>9</sup> Television and the internet have become one of the main sources of information regarding various domains of life. Due to the rapid development of electronic media and multimedia, the position of the family and school as the prime sources

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Grades", *The Future of Children* 2012, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 55–72; T. Jolls, M. Johnsen, "Media Literacy: A Foundational Skill for Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", *Hastings Law Journal* 2018, vol. 69, issue 5, pp. 1379–1408; D. Buckingham et al., *The Media Literacy of Children and Young People. A review of the research literature on behalf of Ofcom*, Ofcom, London 2005; H. Martens, "Evaluating Media Literacy Education: Concepts, Theories and Future Directions", *Journal of Media Literacy Education* 2010, no. 2:1, pp. 1–22; K. Erjavec, "Media Literacy of Schoolgirls and Schoolboys in an Information Society", *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies* 2010, no. 1, pp. 174–191; *Małe dzieci w świecie technologii informacyjno-komunikacyjnych. Pomiędzy utopijnymi szansami a przesadzonymi zagrożeniami*, J. Pyżalski (ed.), Wydawnictwo Eter, Łódź 2017.

7 Cf. K. Kruszko, "Zainteresowania czytelnicze dzieci w wieku wczesnoszkolnym", *Lubelski Rocznik Pedagogiczny* 2015, vol. 34, col. 2, pp. 185–186.

8 M. Bugara, "Edukacyjny charakter prasy dziecięcej", *Edukacja i Dialog* 2001, issue 4(127), p. 62 [62–68], [http://edukacijadialog.pl/archiwum/2001,99/kwiecien,168/edukacyjny\\_charakter\\_prasy\\_dzieciecej,1130.html](http://edukacijadialog.pl/archiwum/2001,99/kwiecien,168/edukacyjny_charakter_prasy_dzieciecej,1130.html) [accessed on: 15.09.2018].

9 M. Kielar-Turska, A. Kołodziejczyk, "Przemiana kompetencji czytelniczych dzieci pod wpływem mediów elektronicznych", [in:] *Po potopie. Dziecko, książka i biblioteka w XXI wieku: diagnozy i postulaty*, D. Świerczyńska-Jelonek, G. Leszczyński, M. Zając (eds.), Wydawnictwo Stowarzyszenia Bibliotekarzy Polskich, Warszawa 2008, p. 148. J. Kumiega quoted a statement by one pupil in a television survey. When asked about what she reads, the pupil answered that her desire for learning about the world is completely satisfied by television and video. Cf. *Czasopisma dla dzieci i młodzieży w latach 1990–1996*, J. Kumiega, A. Leszczyńska (eds.), Wojewódzka i Miejska Biblioteka Publiczna im. Tadeusza Mikulskiego we Wrocławiu, Wrocław 1996, p. 9.

of information for a child have been reduced. Electronic media surely have their place in education; however, researchers have indicated their possible detrimental effect on the process of education and upbringing, especially if they are used incorrectly (i.e. in a passive, thoughtless and uncritical manner, completely submitting to their influence). The improper use of media may have a negative effect on the cognitive component of a child's personality (intellectual indolence, ethical and cognitive relativism, intellectual passivity), on a child's emotions and behaviour, and they may result in increased aggression. Excessive use of electronic media also has a negative effect on establishing and maintaining interpersonal relations.<sup>10</sup>

Numerous studies on the impact of electronic media on reading have been conducted. They indicated, e.g. that persons who are less proficient at reading are more willing to watch television. Children who are socially passive, who display fewer interests, have lower intellectual levels, and who have less affluent parents spend more time in front of the television. Additionally, it was indicated that children's reading proficiency translates to the amount of contact with television: children who are less proficient readers tend to choose television. Thus, it is worth stressing that the attitude to reading is not so much a result of the impact of electronic media as of reading proficiency. Therefore, it is likely that a child who has learnt how to read will strive to master the skill. What is also worth stressing is that the fact of becoming proficient at reading (which is subject to testing at school and to social evaluation) influences a child's self-esteem.<sup>11</sup>

If a child at a primary school level does not become sufficiently motivated to read, the child may develop functional illiteracy. Persons suffering from this condition have not achieved the proper reading proficiency and avoid contact with the printed word once they complete their education. Moreover, since they do not practice, they regress, and they lose the few skills they acquired.<sup>12</sup> Children who socialise in environments with high media noise resulting from electronic media quickly become accustomed to the condition of information overload. It results in changes in the brain (the number and structures of inter-neuron connections), as well as in compromising children's abilities to use analogue sources of knowledge such as books and printed periodicals.<sup>13</sup> Janusz Morbitzer stressed that

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. J. Izdebska, "Dziecko w świecie mediów i multimediów. Wyzwania dla edukacji szkolnej", [in:] *Dziecko - nauczyciel - rodzice. Konteksty edukacyjne*, R. Piwowarski (ed.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, Białystok-Warszawa 2003, pp. 90-91 [90-94].

<sup>11</sup> M. Kielar-Turska, A. Kołodziejczyk, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-149.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. J. Papuzińska, *Książki, dzieci, biblioteka. Z zagadnień upowszechniania czytelnictwa i książki dziecięcej*, Fundacja „Książka dla Dzieci”, Warszawa 1992, p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. M. Jędrzejko, D. Morańska, *Cyfrowi Tubylcy (socjopedagogiczne aspekty nowych technologii cyfrowych)*, Wyższa Szkoła Biznesu, Oficyna Wydawnicza Aspra-JR, Dąbrowa Górnicza-Warszawa 2013, p. 63.

the replacement of contacts with actual humans with a child–screen relation blocks the development of the so-called mirror neurons, which are responsible for learning through imitation, and which reflect other people's actions, intentions and emotions, thus serving a special role in communication processes. In the situation where that is coupled with the excessive number of stimuli with which children are incessantly bombarded, children's brains develop chaotic neuronal structures.<sup>14</sup>

According to Nicolas Carr, the benefits of digital media come at a price: The internet changes the way the human brain operates, compromising people's ability to concentrate and contemplate things. Even if one does not use the internet, our brains are tuned to accepting information in that manner as if we were *online*, i.e. in the form of a broad and rapidly flowing stream of data which one has to scan for the main words, paragraphs, threads, and pieces of information.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the impact of audio-visual media is characterized by some ambivalence: they both present reality and obscure it; they inform and misinform (as they can easily mix facts with fantasy); they present variety in the world but at the same time, they limit people's visions; and they value and over-value things.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> J. Morbitzer, "Edukacja medialna (małego) dziecka", [in:] *Małe dzieci w świecie...*, p. 208.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. N. Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York 2011, pp. 5–11. It seems, however, that the changes had started much earlier, already in the age of television. Over two decades ago Derrick de Kerckhove posited that as a result of watching television, small children performed different eye motions while reading than proficient readers did: they "throw their eyes" at a page as if transferring the manner of watching a television screen to reading a text and thus they tried to compile the text out of separate pieces in order to understand the whole page. According to Kerckhove, "this may have an important cognitive impact: Instead of scanning text to create and store images, children who watch TV must quickly generalize from loosely connected fragments and reconstitute the object of vision. This is very different from labelling objects and stringing them together in coherent sentences. Text requires elaborate rules and conventions to avoid ambiguity. No wonder we need training to learn to read, and further education to interpret text fully. Nobody needs any instruction to watch TV. With TV, we are constantly rebuilding images that are neither complete on the screen nor in our mind. This is a dynamic process that bears some of the characteristics of our nervous systems. TV cuts up information into minimal and often unconnected segments, jamming together as much as possible in the shortest possible time. We complete the picture, making instant generalizations from a few clues. At the same time, programmers and editors have learned to take advantage of our readiness to fill in the gaps. This doesn't imply that we are making sense, just that we are making images. Making sense is another thing altogether, which doesn't seem to be essential for watching TV. *Odkrywanie nowej elektronicznej rzeczywistości*, trans. W. Sikorski, P. Nowakowski, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Wydawnictwo Mikom, Warszawa 2001. [English version: *The Skin of Culture*, Kogan Page, London 1997]

<sup>16</sup> Cf. B. Kostrubiec, "Mentalność audiowizualna dzieci i młodzieży", [in:] *Środki audiowizualne w katechezie*, S. Kulpaczyński (ed.), Wydawnictwo Polihymnia, Lublin 2004, p. 18.

## Intellect or emotions?

One should note that the final decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought a change in the views on readership and the reception of text illustrated in children's periodicals. Those changed views were mainly related to the contact between a text and its recipient. There was a shift of emphasis, from intellectual reception to the emotional extreme, with an emphasis on the role of subconscious processes occurring in the minds of young readers.<sup>17</sup> At this point it is worth remembering that in terms of the reception of a cultural communication, i.e. a literary text, two elements can be indicated: the understanding of the meaning of the content being communicated, and the reader's personal interpretation of it. Both elements are mutually relative and conditional. They are not always the stages which occur one after the other in a specific order. Often, they exist simultaneously, overlapping each other in time.<sup>18</sup>

To understand the content being communicated one must understand more than just individual signs or words. It rather requires the understanding of the meaning of the entire work. In the case of reading among small children, it is not rare for them to be able to sense and experience the meaning of a work despite not understanding one particular word (yet one should remember that for that the recipient must first understand the historical and cultural contexts of the work). A personal interpretation then is something more than an intellectual interpretation, as it consists of assigning to the content being read an emotional tint and having an intellectual approach to it (acceptance or rejection).<sup>19</sup>

## The need for media and reader education

Therefore, it is necessary to ensure media education. Its aim would be to offer children and the youth concrete knowledge and skills which would enable them to consciously and critically receive media communications. The ability to select and critically evaluate the content communicated by the media is one of the major aims of this branch of education. It is also extremely important to shape a critical approach to the media. The media education of children and adolescents offers the foundation for the development of a person who not only collects knowledge and experience, but also functions in an uninhibited way in the media society, who can utilise contemporary communication technology, and as

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. I. Konopnicka, "Edukacja czytelnicza dzieci w młodszym wieku szkolnym a ambiwalentny charakter współczesnych czasopism komiksowych", [in:] *Dziecko - nauczyciel...*, p. 382.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. A. Przecławaska, "Literatura dla dzieci i młodzieży a kształtowanie więzi międzypokoleniowej", [in:] *Wartości w świecie dziecka i sztuki dla dziecka*, M. Tyszkowa, B. Żurkowski (eds.), PWN, Warszawa-Poznań 1984, pp. 105-106.

<sup>19</sup> Cf., *ibid.*, pp. 106-107.

a result are able to develop their humanity and cooperate with others in creating the common good.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, one of the main tasks today is to help society understand the need to develop the eagerness for and the habit of reading.<sup>21</sup> Anna Łobos was right in saying that “in the age of the computer and other electronic means of communication one of the main problems is how to teach children to choose periodicals and books, use libraries, reading rooms, and the broadly defined cultural assets.”<sup>22</sup> With the right approach, electronic media do not have to be a threat to readership but actually prepare children for it and support it. It is important, though, for reading not be used only instrumentally (“I read to find out about something, learn something, avoid errors”) but to bring pleasure and to be a form of play. Obviously, that is an extremely demanding task for authors, parents and educators.<sup>23</sup>

The need to come into contact with a book can only occur in a child if the contact is introduced into the area of the child's personal experiences.<sup>24</sup> That mainly means creating strong motivation for reading and making the act of reading attractive and alluring. A child must be convinced that the act of reading can satisfy their various needs and desires. For that the act of reading must be surrounded with attractive activities verging on play and adventure, which can produce positive associations and result in a child's eagerness to maintain their contact with the printed word.<sup>25</sup> That is important considering the fact that teachers often use literary works as mere teaching tools expecting that the didactic analysis of a work is going to result in a controlled change in a pupil's knowledge. Reading, which used to be fun, becomes a mundane struggle with set books and

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20 Cf. D. Bis, “Edukacja medialna jako wymiar wychowania integralnego”, [in:] *W trosce o integralne wychowanie*, M. Nowak, T. Ożóg, A. Rynio (eds.), Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin 2003, pp. 472–474.

21 Cf. G. Leszczyński, “Współczesna literatura dla dzieci – gatunki, tematy”, [in:] *Dziecko i książka. Materiały z ogólnopolskiej konferencji Biblioteka Narodowa 27–28 października 2003 roku*, G. Lewandowicz-Nosal (ed.), Biblioteka Narodowa, Warszawa 2004, p. 15. The author also noted that “the society buys few books not only due to their relatively high prices. No one needs convincing to buy clothes, food, televisions, computers, cellular phones or cars. Yet people must be encouraged to buy books or visit theatres as those are not natural human needs, and for a person to develop and retain them, the person requires careful stimulation and long-term strategies.” (ibid., p. 15) That also applies to buying periodicals, including those for children.

22 A. Łobos, *Język czasopism i programów telewizyjnych dla dzieci*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2003, p. 8.

23 Cf. M. Kielar-Turska, A. Kołodziejczyk, *op. cit.*, pp. 154.

24 Cf. J. Papuzińska, *Inicjacje literackie. Problemy pierwszych doświadczeń dziecka z książką*, Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, Warszawa 1981, p. 13.

25 Cf. J. Papuzińska, *Książki, dzieci, biblioteka...*, p. 19.



the required discussions and analyses in class, which are often very conventional and stereotypical.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, when discussing the need to stimulate the passion for reading among children, researchers mainly indicate how a child can benefit from the reading process. They provide such key terms as: support of personal development, providing interesting experiences, stimulation of imagination, and providing answers to difficult questions.<sup>27</sup>

A child's entire environment must be engaged in the process, i.e. not only the school and the school library. Parents, grandparents and guardians should be engaged in the child's reading initiation. They should do it by organising joint activities, increasing competences, and inspiring self-development, and they should engage in discussions.<sup>28</sup> Initially, it is up to the teachers and parents to shape a child's range of reading interests, as they can suggest some materials while discouraging others. In time, as a child becomes more proficient with reading and displays a lower need to remain close and in contact with adults, the significance of the peer group increases, including in terms of the selection of reading material.<sup>29</sup> This is already noticeable in pre-schoolers, parallel to the considerable increase in a child's ability to manage their own actions.<sup>30</sup>

## Reading and a child's development

The fact of remaining in constant contact with books and periodicals plays an important role in supporting and inspiring pupils' diverse multifaceted development – in terms of knowledge, emotional development, and the development of their imaginations.<sup>31</sup> A person who comes into contact with illustrations and text always becomes a participant of the social process of communication, while a message in the form of text and images, included in, e.g. children's periodicals, becomes learning material: a child processes and records it in their memory, even if unintentionally.<sup>32</sup> Images and illustrations which we view as children naturally model and shape our imagination. To some degree, adults throughout their lives use those images which settled in their memory during their childhood and school years. Chil-

<sup>26</sup> Cf. K. Krasoń, *Dziecięce odkrywanie tekstu literackiego – kinestetyczne interpretacje liryki*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2005, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. I. Konopnicka, *Edukacja czytelnicza...*, pp. 382–383.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. J. Papuzińska, *Książki, dzieci, biblioteka...*, pp. 20, 25.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. K. Krasoń, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. L. Nicz, "Czasopismo 'Miś' w pracy wychowawczo-dydaktycznej przedszkola", [in:] *Innowacje i zmiany w nauczaniu początkowym*, A. Kargulowa (ed.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 1985, p. 46.

<sup>31</sup> I. Konopnicka, *Edukacja czytelnicza...*, p. 382.

<sup>32</sup> I. Konopnicka, *Czasopisma dziecięce w kształceniu wczesnoszkolnym*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, Opole 2006, p. 17.



dren, as recipients, often lack critical apparatus, which is why the artistic qualities they record in their childhood memory are often the basis for their later aesthetic preferences. In fact, the first works of art that children view are illustrations in children's periodicals and books, which is why the images in periodicals and books must meet high aesthetic standards, and they must also be believable and free of ambiguity.<sup>33</sup>

Thanks to their special influence, children's periodicals may become an element which links the contents of a child's experiences in their home with that which they receive from other media and which applies to various facts and phenomena occurring in the social environment and nature.<sup>34</sup> Illustrations in children's periodicals become like building blocks for children's conceptual constructs. They are the concrete elements enriching a child's observations and helping them connect them in chains. They help them understand facts and situations. It must be stressed, though, that moving images viewed on a television screen do not offer the same opportunities as static images, e.g. illustrations in periodicals. That is because static images offer more opportunities for questions to be asked while viewing them, share experiences, and listen to other people's explanations. Also, they can be stored if a child is interested in them – they can return to them at any time, which is impossible in the case of dynamic television images.<sup>35</sup> The same applies to tablets and smartphones –

many children who experience the three-dimensional world rich in polysensory stimuli through flat two-dimensional screens experience the so-called video deficit. [...] Additionally, flat screens prevent them from learning about reality in a spatial manner, and the eyesight in such a situation does not develop the ability to correctly interpret the images the brain receives.<sup>36</sup>

## Words and images

Therefore, children's press seems to be a tool for reading education and as something which encourages children to read. It should be stressed that both children's press and literature are not limited to text. They also include rich illustrations. It is generally assumed that children perceive the external world in terms of words

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. A. Boguszewska, "Ilustracja książkowa jako środek wychowania estetycznego", [in:] *Edukacyjne konteksty rozwoju dziecka w wieku wczesnoszkolnym*, K. Kusiak, I. Nowakowska-Buryła, R. Stawinoga (eds.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 2009, pp. 342–345.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. L. Nicz, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>35</sup> Cf., *ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>36</sup> J. Morbitzer, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

and images. In terms of images, they receive that which influences their senses directly (i.e. scents and sounds as well), while words are symbols thanks to which they acquire information on things past or future, or distant, as well as on general and abstract content.<sup>37</sup> Children's literature and press are the main sources of this information. The limits of the external world are also expanded by images, in the form of illustrations and photographs, which communicate direct information on things or events. Therefore, children's external world consists of verbal and image-based elements.<sup>38</sup>

That does not, of course, only apply to children. It is widely accepted nowadays that a person's reception of the external world and their internal perceptions are based on both words and images. The entirety of the processes involved in acquiring knowledge is therefore conditioned by the verbal-image nature of human cognition. However, if one were to consider visual and verbal communication as separate codes, one should introduce the principle of double perception. In this, images and words do exist in the reception of the world, but they form two separate sources of knowledge. Another way is offered by Allan Paivio's theory of dual coding. Here, the visual and verbal pieces of information, which constitute two separate codes, are recorded in human memory as two separate systems.<sup>39</sup> That would suggest the need for compliance between the content of a text and the content of the accompanying illustrations: "the verbal-visual message should repeat the same pieces of information both in the verbal and the visual layers to facilitate remembering, as the more diverse the stimuli are, the higher are the chances that one will be remembered."<sup>40</sup>

Grzegorz Łuszczak stressed that communication via a visual text results from the combined effort of three elements: the author of the visual text, the visual text itself, and the viewer (recipient). That means a text is not perceived in the communication process as something passive but rather a subject which in its own way

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. I. Konopnicka, *Czasopisma dziecięce...*, pp. 16–17. Of course, one cannot limit the role of words to mere conveyors of details. The very informative function of words may be of a descriptive or evaluative-intentional nature. There is also a whole host of non-informative functions of words, e.g.: creating situations in reality – the performative function; expressing emotions, will or judgements (expressive function). Additionally, there is a wide array of expressions of impressive nature (questions, imperatives and requests, persuasion, manipulation). Finally, there are the phatic function (maintaining contact), creative function (creating a work of art, expressing thoughts and convictions), and the mystery function (participation in religious events). Cf. R. Grzegorzczkova, "O tak zwanej reprezentatywnej funkcji języka w świetle nowszych badań psycholingwistycznych", *Język a Kultura* 2008, vol. 20: *Anniversary Volume*, A. Dąbrowska (ed.), pp. 131–132.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. I. Konopnicka, *Czasopisma dziecięce...*, pp. 16–17.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. N. Pater-Ejgierd, *Kultura wizualna a edukacja*, Wydawnictwo Centrala, Poznań 2010, p. 147.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

observes the viewer and changes them while it itself undergoes a change. Thus, it becomes a proposition (a provocation) for an interpretation by the recipient. Yet in this situation the viewer is also an active creator of the communication process, as by viewing the text the viewer decodes the information included in an audio-visual text. In doing so, the viewer applies their own understanding to the text and undergoes a change as well.<sup>41</sup>

It is generally assumed that the iconosphere has achieved a considerable advantage over the logosphere:<sup>42</sup> images prevail over words and they have begun to oust them. Researchers indicate that both academic studies and common observations of the surrounding world and everyday life indicate that images speak to participants of culture with more ease and efficiency than words.<sup>43</sup> And they are

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<sup>41</sup> G. Łuszczak, "Media w dydaktyce katechetycznej", [in:] *Wychowanie w wierze w kontekście przemian współczesności*, R. Buchta, S. Dziekoński (eds.), Księgarnia św. Jacka, Katowice 2011, pp. 271-272. However, it should be noted that due to the development of digital media and, in turn, the hyper-media nature of communications, the role of the recipient has also been changing. Due to the interactive nature of the media, the models of media communication described within the "one-for-many" pattern have lost validity in many areas and are now better described within the "many-for-many" pattern. Due to the blurring of the line between the recipient and the sender, the division into active and passive recipients is also not valid any more. And the situation, first of all, carries many other consequences (which are often described as threats), and, secondly, it is not as simple as it might seem. In terms of the possible threats, researchers indicate the recipient's loss of the sense of reality, as the recipient believes that the media are not as much part of their world as they themselves have become part of the world of the media, and they live in a peculiar media immersion. To some extent that may be the result of a constant diffusion between the three types of communication: informative, persuasive and propaganda (as well as other types of communications, as indicated in note 35 - A.A.). Vide M. Polaczek-Bigaj, "Rola odbiorcy we współczesnym przekazie medialnym", *Państwo i Społeczeństwo* 2017, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 194-196. As for the matter indicated by the word "secondly", which applies to a deeper complexity of the situation than might seem: it is not directly related to the topic of this article, yet it applies to the ambiguity in the evaluations regarding the areas of the influence of "traditional" media (press, radio, television) and professional editorial boards and journalists. In short, often in the literature on the subject one might find opinions stating that despite the pretence of interactivity and the regular recipient's ability to operate as the sender, the influence of professional journalists and large broadcasters in the area of shaping public opinion is, despite some visible erosion, still quite high, while bloggers and citizen journalists may supplement the media discourse and fill the gaps in it (especially in topics considered as inconvenient) but they cannot replace or eliminate professional editorial boards and big broadcasters.

<sup>42</sup> D. Bis defined it as the "eye-centric culture." Cf. D. Bis, *op. cit.*, p. 473.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. A. Lepa, *Mity i obrazy*, Archidiecezjalne Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, Łódź 1999, p. 30. At this point one could quote K. Kofta who stated that "contemporary colour magazines are intended for the new generation of children and teenagers who developed in the world of television and video, in the world of images not letters." As cited in: D. Żebrowska, "Kulturotwórcza rola

much easier to remember (it is referred to as the mnemonic superiority of images effect. It requires, however, a specific organisation of the content which must be rather simple and not too detailed).<sup>44</sup> In the case of primary school children, the learning process features a prevalence of images over text (though one should bear in mind that a child experiences the world not so much exclusively through vision as through various sensory experiences: motion, auditory, and image-based; it is also worth bearing in mind individual perception preferences, i.e. visual, auditory or kinaesthetic sensory recipients). As time goes by, the role of images in education gradually evolves towards an equal existence of images and words<sup>45</sup> (though in the age of multimedia, the process may be distorted, which could even result in changes in brain function, as indicated by Nicholas Carr). Despite this, researchers agree that the strongest visual-auditory effect can be achieved when verbal information is illustrated by visual information.<sup>46</sup>

Therefore, some people advocate including comic books in education and assigning them more value. They could be treated as unconventional teaching tools, since picture stories are eagerly read by children; they have become a part of the mass culture, and they can no longer be omitted or eliminated from children's reading lists.<sup>47</sup> According to Serge Tisseron, comic books, just like films, feature a script, editing, and the development of individual sets. Yet unlike in the case of films, the medium of a comic book is paper. Thus, a comic book introduces a child into the world of the conventions which govern the images of various kinds. Comic books offer another advantage: they help children understand the basic division between *objective images*, which we view, and our representations, i.e. so-called *internal images*. This division teaches them about tolerance and triggers their curiosity. It helps them become accustomed to the fact that each person sees the same image differently. It triggers curiosity because one must ask other viewers about their opinions on the jointly viewed image to find out about them.<sup>48</sup>

That does not, however, affect the stipulation of the need to educate children to engage with the written word. In the image civilisation, a person's interest in the written word should be considered as something exceptional, particularly considering the fact that the printed word is one of the most difficult forms in which

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współczesnych polskich czasopism młodzieżowych", [in:] *Edukacja kulturalna w społeczeństwie obywatelskim*, J. Żebrowski (ed.), Gdańskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, Gdańsk 1997, p. 149.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. N. Pater-Ejgierd, *op. cit.*, pp. 147–148.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. B. Krasieńska, "Rola wizualnych przekazów informacji w docieraniu do najmłodszych czytelników", *Biblioteka i Edukacja* 2016, issue 10, <http://www.bg.up.krakow.pl/newbie/index.php/bie/article/view/158/157> [accessed on: 27.12.2018].

<sup>46</sup> Cf., *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> I. Konopnicka, *Edukacja czytelnicza...*, pp. 386–387.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. S. Tisseron, *Dziecko w świecie obrazów*, trans. E. Burakowska, Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, Warszawa 2006, p. 54.

words appear – and one must remember that reading (and listening in the case of younger children) and understanding is extremely important not only because of a child's school education, but because it is one of the habits necessary for their future life.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, more value should be assigned to teaching children how to read, and to reading to them, as the very activity of reading aloud constitutes the start of an interpersonal relationship between the reader and the child-listener. Through listening, a child acquires the ability to focus their attention. In doing so a child utilises their sensory, imagination and conceptual resources, their readiness for deep experiencing, and their ability to absorb information in their own unique manner. The ability to focus on the content of auditory communication is quite significant. A child who can achieve that level of concentration while listening to something is able to become completely engaged in a present situation, appreciate the beauty in a moment, and the charm of everyday matters.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, a child develops and expands their logosphere.<sup>51</sup> Thus a child become a person who is receptive, internally beautiful and rich, open to knowledge, with a keen interest in the world and people, and is eager to explore and create.<sup>52</sup>

That does not change the fact that for contemporary periodicals to attract readers, they must be printed in colour and on good-quality paper. The cover is also important (it must be coloured and clever, composed according to the principles

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49 Cf. A. Łobos, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

50 [author not credited], *Jak zachęcać dzieci do czytania*, article published on the Polish Committee of the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education and Care OMEP website, <https://omep.org.pl/jak-zachca-dzieci-do-czytania/> [accessed on: 17.09.2018].

51 A. Lepa noted that in its broad meaning, the logosphere means the entire layer of a word in the environment of a person – thus it is unimportant what position the word occupies. It may be even dominated by the iconosphere (the image layer) or the sonosphere (the sound layer). Moreover, every human has their own logosphere; every person's logosphere is different, just like their subjective reception and experiences. Within its exact meaning "logosphere is the special social environment where in a special manner a person is influenced by a word, which the person treats as their primacy, both in their own environment and in specific interpersonal relations." Cf. A. Lepa, "Logosfera jako środek wychowania do mediów", [in:] D. Bis, A. Rynio, *Media w wychowaniu chrześcijańskim*, Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin 2010, pp. 80–81. The author was also right to indicate that in the contemporary philosophy of science, the term *logosphere* is used in another meaning: some researchers argue the presence of the so-called logic space distinguished by the existence of meaning in it, and it is referred to as logosphere. Lepa, however, defined his understanding of the term as the "sociological approach." Cf. A. Lepa, *Pedagogika mass mediów*, Archidiecezjalne Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, Łódź 1998, p. 178. I discussed the matter in more detail in the following article: A. Adamski, "Fotografia a słowo w prasie", [in:] *Media audiowizualne i cyfrowe wobec wyzwań współczesnego społeczeństwa*, A. Adamski, A. Gralczyk, K. Kwasik, M. Laskowska (eds.), Wydawnictwo Elipsa, Warszawa 2012, pp. 275–289.

52 [author not credited], *Jak zachęcać...*

of graphic design and modern editing). A periodical should also discuss matters in which children are interested in an accessible manner and without excessive didacticism.<sup>53</sup>

A richly illustrated children's book has a similar impact as a periodical, yet a periodical has the advantage of being released periodically, providing ever new content,<sup>54</sup> and repeating genre patterns while diversifying them – thus a child has the chance to develop their knowledge and their understanding of the need to vary their approach depending on the genre and the literary convention of a text, and they have the ability to seek specific kinds of content.<sup>55</sup> As Krystyna Kuliczowska aptly noted:

a book offers a child a one-time strong experience with unidirectional tension [...], while a periodical accompanies [...] them every day, it stimulates their interests in a multifaceted manner, it enriches elusive and abstract observations of phenomena with facts, it nourishes both their intellect and imagination, it shapes their practical mind, it satisfies their desire for entertainment, and, finally, it introduces a child to current affairs, community life and to a whole host of peers scattered throughout the country.<sup>56</sup>

Research shows that children can defend hard copy periodicals (even if sometimes they lose in the battle for children's attention). They argue that: paper works even without electricity and it does not require any devices, the physical sensation of coming into contact with paper is pleasant and it offers positive sensory stimulation, the information provided in printed material is reliable and valuable, while it is more difficult to think and analyse it while sitting in front of a computer; periodicals offer attractive bonus material, children can read them together with their parents, and, finally, they better remember content provided in hard copy.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. *Czasopisma dla dzieci i młodzieży...*, p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Z. Sokół, "Oblicze współczesnych czasopism dziecięco-młodzieżowych", [in:] *Młody czytelnik w świecie książki, biblioteki i informacji*, K. Heska-Kwaśniewicz, I. Socha (eds.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 1996, p. 122.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. M. Lisowska-Magdziarz, "Barbie wyrusza do pokonsumpcji (i nie ma przy sobie gotówki). Trening postaw konsumpcyjnych w magazynach ilustrowanych dla dzieci", [in:] *Dziecko w świecie mediów i konsumpcji*, M. Bogunia-Borowska (ed.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2006, p. 60.

<sup>56</sup> K. Kuliczowska, "Dzieci czytają czasopisma", *Dziennik Polski* 1948, issue 244; as quoted in: S. Frycie, *Literatura dla dzieci i młodzieży w latach 1945–1970. Tom II – baśń i bajka, poezja, książki dla najmłodszych, utwory sceniczne, grafika, czasopiśmiennictwo, krytyka literacka*, Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, Warszawa 1982, p. 174.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. B. Staniów, K. Biernacka-Licznar, "The press without children, children without the press? Contemporary magazines for children in Poland", *Toruńskie Studia Bibliologiczne* 2011, issue 2(11), p. 64.

## More than just literacy training

Apart from stressing the educational functions of literature and press for children and teenagers and their importance for shaping reading habits, the ability to think in a linear fashion and focus on larger more complex texts, some studies indicate the “social function of literature.” It is understood more broadly than the educational function and it means “all the transformations of the social reality, the production of new values and relations in interpersonal relations, which form as a result of readers’ experiences.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, when children regularly read periodicals intended for them (not necessarily strictly educational as there are not so many of those on the Polish market<sup>59</sup>) it has a profound impact on children’s minds as they reach outside the simple effect of absorbing the content of articles and illustrations. Apart from the already mentioned habit of shaping the ability to read and understand and comprehend longer texts, one could also list:

- educating and preparing readers of newspapers and periodicals, intended for both teenagers and adults, and preparing them to read those in the future. Children’s periodicals develop the habit of buying and reading press in children (thus teaching them to purchase reading material and also to seek out specific content);<sup>60</sup>
- creating opportunities for introducing children to operate within the media market: how media work, who publishes them, why some periodicals emerge while other disappear, etc. One could also introduce children to various forms of the coexistence and functioning of press titles with other types of media, as the publishers of children’s periodicals nowadays utilise various strategies, e.g. of linking new periodicals with characters of specific cartoons or products (e.g. Lego bricks; based on ZKDP data, in the first half of 2017, the Lego Ninjago periodical was the leader in paid distribution among all children’s periodicals), and they change the frequency of releasing periodicals (many periodicals start out as bimonthlies and quarterlies but when it becomes apparent they may gain a better market position, they change to monthlies). Yet periodicals can just as easily disappear from the market, and the decisions are made solely by the

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<sup>58</sup> A. Przecławski, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>59</sup> The main qualities of educational periodicals include: the prevalence of educational content, often in the form of themed issues, presenting an extensive analysis of a specific matter; publications based on knowledge and familiarity with facts; an excellent level of editorship; cooperation with schools and parents and psychological and educational support for them; promoting self-reliance among children and stimulating their intellectual and emotional development; support of children’s creativity, play and expressiveness; bonus material – usually in the form of posters. The best example of this among Polish periodicals is the *Świerszczyk* biweekly, a periodical with a long and fine history (currently being released by the Nowa Era publishing house). Then, there are the periodicals published by the Cogito Group: *Kumpel*, *Victor Junior*, *Victor*, and *Cogito*. Cf. B. Staniów, K. Biernacka-Licznar, *op. cit.*, pp. 52–56.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. M. Lisowska-Magdziarz, *op. cit.*, p. 60.



publishers based on ongoing analyses. There is also a clear tendency for supporting periodicals by creating multimedia online platforms, which are related by a common theme. Nowadays, publishers treat children's periodicals and teenager magazines as a "promising segment", which allows one to expect it will develop further<sup>61</sup>;

- this thematic linking of various media products intended for a specific recipient is sometimes defined as Disneyfication. It may lead to blurring of the line between advertisements and their objects (considering the points of view of the sender and the recipient). Thus, children's periodicals somewhat condition children to processing advertisements. On the one hand, they help build consumer attitudes (though when in excess one would be hard pressed to consider this aspect as desirable), but, on the other, they offer an opportunity for children to talk to their parents and educators about developing not only consumer but also altruistic attitudes, and about the fact that advertising messages are not always credible, that they can be misleading, and that they are shaped to best fulfil the intentions of publishers and broadcasters.<sup>62</sup>

In the conclusion of this article it must be stated that children's periodicals play a profound role in the shaping of reading habits, and, in turn, in media education. In the following articles within the intended series I shall discuss the matter in more detail and support it with qualitative and quantitative research.

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. J. Sopyło, "Klapnięte uszko 'Misia'", *Press* 2010, issue 7(174), p. 54; J. Mejer, "W 2016 roku najaktywniejszy był segment prasy dla najmłodszych i najstarszych", <https://www.press.pl/tresc/47064,w-2016-roku-najaktywniejszy-byl-segment-prasy-dla-najmlodszych-i-najstarszych> [accessed on: 28.12.2018]; J. Korucu, "Lego Ninjago liderem segmentu pism dla dzieci", [https://www.press.pl/tresc/50224,\\_lego-ninjago\\_-liderem-segmentu-pism-dla-dzieci](https://www.press.pl/tresc/50224,_lego-ninjago_-liderem-segmentu-pism-dla-dzieci) [accessed on: 28.12.2018]; "Media dziecięce", *Media&Marketing Polska*, insert by an advertising company, September 2012, [http://pic.media.com.pl/pic/SKLEP/Do\\_pobrania/2012/Media%20dzieciece\\_09\\_2012.pdf](http://pic.media.com.pl/pic/SKLEP/Do_pobrania/2012/Media%20dzieciece_09_2012.pdf) [accessed on: 28.12.2018].

<sup>62</sup> Cf. H. Pilzak, "Demiurgowie masowej wyobraźni – o wpływie mediów na zainteresowania czytelnicze młodych odbiorców literatury", [in:] *Nowe opisanie świata. Literatura i sztuka dla dzieci i młodzieży w kręgach oddziaływań*, B. Niesporek-Szamburska, M. Wójcik-Dudek (eds.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2013, pp. 376–377.

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Andrzej Adamski

## **Czasopisma dla dzieci jako narzędzie edukacji (nie tylko) czytelniczej**

### *Streszczenie*

Głównym celem artykułu jest odpowiedź na pytanie, w jaki sposób czasopisma dla dzieci mogą być narzędziem edukacji medialnej, rozumianej jako wychowanie do odbioru środków przekazu, ale również jako budowanie nawyku czytelnictwa prasy i książek. Hipoteza: W literaturze przedmiotu powszechnie przyjmuje się, że prasa dla dzieci może być efektywnym narzędziem budowania nawyku czytelnictwa. Jednak ten segment rynku prasowego, podobnie jak pozostałe, musi zmagać się z tendencjami do spadku czytelnictwa prasy i książki w zderzeniu z ekspansją mediów cyfrowych. Metodologia: Autor analizuje dane zastane (m.in. raporty z badań) oraz opracowania naukowe z zakresu wpływu mediów, pedagogiki, edukacji medialnej oraz psychologii mediów. Artykuł ma charakter teoretyczny. Jest osadzony w dyscyplinie „nauki o komunikacji społecznej i mediach”, ale ma charakter interdyscyplinarny z uwagi na odniesienia do pedagogiki, edukacji i zagadnień technologicznych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** prasa dla dzieci, edukacja medialna, edukacja czytelnicza, czytelnictwo.

## **Children's Magazines as Tools for (Not Only) Reading Education**

### *Summary*

The main aim of the article is to answer the question of how children's magazines may be used as tools for media education understood as educating children on how to process media, and also as instilling the habit of reading periodicals and books. Hypothesis: It is generally assumed in the scholarly literature that periodicals for children may be an effective tool in encouraging a reading habit. Unfortunately, this segment of the press market, just as all other segments, faces declining readership due to the expansion of the digital media. Methodology: An analysis the existing data (e.g. study reports) and academic analyses in terms of the impact of the media, pedagogy, media education, and media psychology. The article is

theoretical in nature. It stems from the discipline of the “science of social communication and the media”, yet it offers an interdisciplinary approach, due to its references to pedagogy, education, and technology.

**Keywords:** children’s press, media education, reading education, readership.

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