*The Empathetic Reader in the Society of the Future. Literacy and Social Skills in the Polish Language Education in Primary School*

The dissertation concerns the conditions, theoretical base and the evaluation of practical realization of a a methodical concept that can be described as “empathetic literary education”. It is based on the assumption that reading literature can strengthen the empathy of the readers. The appearance of an affective perspective in literary studies emphasizes the importance of the reader's emotions as a semantic component of a literary text. The increase in readers' awareness of their own emotions, necessary to understand the message of literature, inspires therefore to look for ways to teach the language of emotions in the course of literary education. A key component of social and emotional competences is empathy.

The American Responsvie Classroom methodology, focused on social and emotional learning, has become the inspiration to investigate the phenomenon of empathy in Polish language education and to develop methodological proposals for teachers of the second stage of education.

Observations and diagnoses of the society prove that: soft skills, emotional intelligence, the ability to cooperate, stress management and empathy are main areas that should be developed among students. The society of the future will need empathetic citizens - cosmopolitans who can resolve disputes in a peaceful manner, people with social competences enable to co-create democratic communities open to dissimilarity.

The first part of the work presents an overview of the definition of empathy related to psychological, sociological and literary theories. Presented research reports confirm the impact of reading on the level of empathy as well as an afterthought on the teachers' approach to shaping empathic attitudes of students.

The forms of empathy in the reading process discussed in Part II are the inspiration for the concept of literary imagination – the sensitivity to other people’s needs based on contact with the literature and also on relational interpretation connected with the theory of affects and observation of the reader's experience. An increase in empathy, sensitivity and openness to others caused by contact with literature may become the effect of the described interpretative practices. This opportunity is determining the direct postulate of including the intentional teaching empathy and social competences in Polish language education. The author emphasize the necessity of enabling students to freely feel the reading experience which means experiencing and naming emotions that arise in contact with the text; and the freedom of interpretation based on the feelings evoked by the text.

Part III of the dissertation describes the changes in the functions of children's literature from its beginnings to the present day. These changes determine the necessity to select books that meet the needs and fit capabilities of students, books close to their experience and valuable in form and content. The current core curriculum does not always meet these postulates, nor does it directly help to increase students' empathy although it includes the necessity of reading artistic literary texts. The analysis of the reading proposals contained in the documents regulating Polish language education at the 1st and 2nd level of education is included in the 4th part of the dissertation.

The need to consider empathy as one of the main goals of literary education and to change the teachers' approach to working with text in Polish language lessons by "freeing up interpretation" was justified in the fifth part of the dissertation, entitled *For a new paradigm - reading for life*. The presented postulates are also related to the forecasts concerning the competences of the members of the future society presented in Part VI. Empathy and social competences will be most important skills of future generations due to their impact on building interpersonal relationships, which are the basis for effective functioning in the communities of the 21st century. Part VI also presents an overview of teachers' opinions on the presence of social competences in education and the resulting conclusions.

Part VII describes the *Responsive Classroom* approach and its organizational elements, teaching methods and strategies used by teachers in American schools. A review of research proving the effectiveness of this methodology in social and emotional learning and in strengthening students’ academic skills is also presented. Elements of the *Responsive Classroom* methodology, adapted to the conditions of Polish education, along with appropriately selected books, constitute a tool for improving empathy of Polish primary school students.

The effectiveness of teaching methods and activities designed on the basis of theoretical considerations and inspired by the *Responsive Classroom* methodology was tested during an action study carried out in a primary school. The report on the actions taken is included in the VIII part of the discussion.

The conclusions from the action research were used to create reading recommendations and methodological guidelines for teachers of the Polish language at the second stage of education.

The use of empathic literary education can support students in improving empathy and developing reading and social competences. Intentional and deliberate actions of the teacher, taking into account the autonomy of students, basing didactic work on an in-depth relationship and selecting valuable readings are effective and proven ways to strengthen the effectiveness of the learning process of young people.