Reading life-stories

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presentation

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1. Who and Where Is the Reader?
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4. Why Life-Stories?
5. Three Methods of interpretation
6. Conclusions
1.1 Who and where is the reader?

- **1st division**: intra-textual
- **2nd division**: professional
- **3rd division**: extra-textual

- **Common**: within a context
- **Common without any context**
a concrete, empirically based person with a specific background, i. e. established in one’s time and place, in one’s socio-cultural milieu and over the course of life
2.1 reading life-stories – a pattern

- **life-story axis, CV structure**: family background, pre-school, early, late and post-school age…; not only *what* is said is important but also *when* (in which part of the life cycle) this occurs

- **thematical axis**: reading out loud by parents, the first book, initiation into adult books, banned books, library attendance, other mass media activities

- **method of recording and transcription**: a dialogue transcribed into the first-person narration

- **anonymity**: only narrator’s age, profession and region are stated
2.2 reading life-stories – a method

- **common readers**, not only those with a positive attitude to reading (avid readers)
- **age** of our narrators: 15 – 101 years
- the method of **recording**: mostly per one session
- the whole **Czech Republic** (67 places)
- 138 narrators (the final base)
- recording **period**: 2009 - 2015
3. Main inspirations

• Germany, Poland, Australia, England, U. S. A.
• quantitative sociology (biographical method), oral history, cultural studies
• narratology (narrative reasoning, narrating life)
4. Why life-stories?

- they are able to **connect** together a lot of matters of different natures
- they **do not exclude** a thematical way of asking, however, converse is not true
- they shed light predominantly not on data but on testimonies and **motivations**
- they have a great **hermeneutical potential**
5. Three ways of interpretation

by means of...

• …generations (4 generations: Radio g., TV g., PC g., Internet g.)

• …phenomena (33 thematical points of intersection)

• …particular narratives (8 life-stories representing specific types of readership)
6.1 Reading life-story – another point of view

- **the first**: the first contact with a book, reading out loud by parents
- **the second**: learning to read (in the school)
- **the third**: a step into adult reading
- **the fourth**: reading out loud to our own children (grandchildren)

- summing up: **family** - the most important reading environment
6.2 Conclusions

- a **cultural portrait** of the last cca. 70 years of the Czech society
- reading life-stories have to do not only with reading; they can show **much more**
- huge **differences and shifts** within both the big socio-cultural time and the small life time
- reading life-stories provide not only data and utterances but also, and predominantly, **motivations and reasons**
- the **life-story method** is able to transmit much more than the thematical or focus interview
thank you for your patience and cooperation...