

Coming Together and Apart while Reading Popular Cultural Texts: Identities in Media Reception

Ewa Glapka

ewaglapka_ev@wp.pl, glapkae@ufs.ac.za

Abstract

Although reading is popularly considered to be a solitary experience, in linguistics and literature studies the social nature of reading has been widely recognized. Accordingly, it is posited here that due to their inherently interactive and interpersonal character, media texts cannot be related to other than intersubjectively. Based on data gathered during research on teenage media reception, this article demonstrates that the 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1991) constructed in media discourse provoke in readers a sense of belonging and sharing a specific identity, and that the trajectories of readers' emotional involvement also includes alienation from the textually constituted communities. The same dynamic of coming closer and away concerns the recipients' significant others to whom they relate intertextually in media discourse. In analyzing these issues, this study shows the social and psychological complexity of media consumption as well as the research value of exploring it for cultural and social studies.

Keywords: identity, media, popular culture, symbolic communities, transdisciplinarity

Introduction

Identity and text reception have been examined in a number of ways, but to merge the two objects of analysis within a single piece of research has been a relatively new approach in which identity is explored in terms of its appearances in specific contexts of interpretation (see Long 2003; Benwell 2009; Eriksson & Aronsson 2009; Glapka forthcoming). One of the earliest and most firmly established approaches to text reception has been Cognitive Stylistics (see Semino & Culperer 2002; Stockwell 2002). Another strand of research, developed under the rubric of the Constance School (see Iser 1978; Jauss 1982), has been premised on the idea that the formal organization of text determines how its meaning is 'decoded' by readers, which the assumption was reflected in analysts' primary concern with the text and only a remote, if any, interest in the recipient. Concerned with either the mental mechanisms underlying interpretation or with the role of the formal features of texts in the reception thereof, neither of the approaches has addressed the socio-cultural processes behind the production and consumption of media discourse. The socio-cultural implications of media reception became the central object of attention of the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies (henceforth BCCS) (see Hall et al. 1980), whose principal and confirmed assumption was that recipients of popular cultural texts co-construct their meanings rather than merely reconstruct the meanings following stable and predictable linguistic or cognitive patterns.

Recognizing the agency of individual media consumers, BCCS analysts undermined the legacy of the Frankfurt School, whose key theorists (Marcuse 1968; Horkheimer & Adorno 1972), also concerned with the receptive site of the 'circuit of culture' (du Gay et al. 1997), emphasized its desensitizing influence. The industrialized and commercialized culture, they claimed, developed within societies regulated by the capitalist relations of production, and subject to alike regulations of the market, turns individuals into the impassive consumers of the products of what they called the 'culture industry'. Although BCCS researchers complicated this undeniably simplistic and mechanistic view of cultural consumption, they did not propose any methodology of systematically examining individuals' engagement in the process. Consequently, this article considers, none of the aforementioned approaches has empirically accessed people's diverse styles of consuming popular cultural texts, and hence neglected the fascinating area of identity processes underpinning individuals' negotiation of their place and role in the 'circuit of culture'.

Discursive psychology in media reception

Interested in both the linguistic and social implications of media consumption, the current study seeks to demonstrate that with the analytic parameters set on the idiosyncrasy and the social contingency of media reception, the analysis of people's relationship to media texts can yield insight into readers' understanding of the world. As mentioned at the beginning, to explore text reception in terms of identity processes is an approach which has only recently been taken in the exploration of literature reception. With the analytic focus set on identity, this model of research has been premised on the methodology of discursive psychology (henceforth DP) (see Edwards & Potter 1992; Benwell & Stokoe 2005), which will thus be deployed also in the current inquiry of media reception.

In its own pursuit of the identity processes underlying the interpretation of media texts, the investigation also follows the methodology of DP but it contends that DP's programmatic involvement solely with the ethnographic contexts of discourse practice unnecessarily limits researchers who do not have an access to the naturally occurring data. Because of the mediated nature of discourse data gleaned from the artificially created contexts of talk, discursive psychologists deny them transparency and consider the interviews as problematic (Benwell 2009, p.301). Here it is proposed that, firstly, people's thoughts are mediated and conditioned by situational contingencies in any discourse practice. Secondly, the identity concerns which are believed by discursive psychologists to unduly influence individuals' identity work in the interview contexts are also salient in most (if not all) interactional settings. Therefore, by proposing to loosen the emphasis on the naturally occurring data, this article makes a case for considering research interviews a valuable method of data collection¹.

What this analysis finds as central to its approach to media reception is DP's view of identity and of how it surfaces talk. By finding it applicable to studying media reception, the current exploration does not expect media-related talk to reveal any deeper structures of cognition. The talk (and the accompanying constructions of self) occasioned by media texts are approached as the social and discursive action situated in a particular context which shapes the meanings people arrive at. Thus, rather than assume that the content of talk is the effect of the same, stable mental and linguistic dispositions which are mobilized irrespective of time and place, this examination considers that both the content and form of talk are contingent on the formal organization and social dynamic of the context. With all this in mind, the discussion below is intent on presenting a transdisciplinary approach to media reception in which the discursive analysis of this form of cultural activity is deployed to investigate questions germane not only to discourse but also social and cultural studies.

Media discourse

The data explored in this article (passages selected from the transcripts of ca. one-hour interviews with teenagersⁱⁱ) are part of a larger set of data which were collected in a two-fold exploration of discourse production and consumption (see Glapka 2011). Following the survey of media reception patterns among 60 seventeen-year-old high school students in a small Polish town, I conducted interviews with a selected group of informants to compare the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses of media reception. The economy of research is a significant disadvantage of the micro-analytic and interpretive methodology, but the account of media reception which it rendered, although non-representative, allowed a richer and more profound understanding of the process.

The interviews were based on individuals' interpretation of the same prompt magazine that many respondents in the questionnaire indicated as their favorite. Although the discursive psychologists exploring literature reception have not been interested in how texts are mapped onto the receptive processes and have relied solely on text-related talk, this exploration included the examination of the discourse of the magazine (*Twist*, a monthly magazine for teenage girls). The analysis was conducted with the purpose of exploring any potential relations between the textual properties of the magazine and the ways in which readers involve themselves with its discourse.

In line with the media's new 'communicative ethos' (Scannel 1992), the magazines examined revealed a significant degree of *synthetic personalization*, which consists in the 'compensatory tendency to give the impression of treating each of the people handled "en masse" as an individual' (Fairclough 1989, p. 52). Accordingly, texts in *Twist* were found to emulate the relations of intimacy with the recipient by means of typical linguistic resources:

- (1) interrogative forms: 'You think that putting rouge on your cheeks is a fad?' (*Twist* 11/2009), personal pronouns: 'we', 'us', 'you'
- (2) imperatives: 'Doll yourself up like a catwalk model!' (*Twist* 8/2009)
- (3) deixis suggesting the shared perspective of time and place: 'here', 'there', 'then', 'now'
- (4) informal register, including lexis ('Get the buddy on your own ground') and emoticons ('Bikini and flip-flops are not enough :-))'
- (5) the use of English borrowings typical of youth talk: 'cool', 'hot'
- (6) presuppositions implying shared knowledge: 'You don't have to be afraid that dying hair will cause damage to the hair ends.' (*Twist* 11/2009)

The high social and emotional proximity implied in the textual properties of the magazine's discourse gives the appearances of a community of readers who share not only a fondness for the magazine but also the troubles and joys of their teenage lives. In the emergent 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983) of teenage girls, the border between the discursive practices of reading and writing and the social practices of showing and seeking mutual support becomes blurred. Vitaly, by merely examining the discourse of media, this article contends, researchers gain grounds to argue that the consumption of teen media culture proposes a highly personal and emotional style of involvement in it but they lack premises on which to confirm or deny that teenagers indeed engage themselves as personally in the popular media discourses as the media texts encourage them to. In the discussion below, moving dialectically between media discourse and the interviewees' relationships to it, I will demonstrate that their interpretative and identity work implies a significant degree of emotional engagement in the discourse but the relationships established do not yield any obvious patterns of media reception.

Media reception

A linguistic analysis is employed in the discussion of the following extract, in which one of the informants talked about her favorite articles in the magazine:

- Extract (1) INTERVIEWER: So why do you read *Twist*?
- ANNAⁱⁱⁱ: I like reading about those youth's problems, I find them interesting. And there are like different letters from young people, where they seek advice for instance, and that I kind of look differently at different issues.
- INTERVIEWER: Such as?
- ANNA: Well, well girls describe different situations there, so I know for instance what I can expect from life, that this kind of thing may happen to me too.
- INTERVIEWER: Could you show me the letter in this issue which you found most interesting, one which influenced your view-
- ANNA: Well for sure the article about the girl, who you know stole, smoked, drank, this too...
- INTERVIEWER: Mm, this true story?

R: Yes, this story.

INTERVIEWER: And what about this story? Do you identify somehow with her?

ANNA: No, no no, but I know that once I have read this story, I know that such people kind of exist, and that what can, that this may happen to anybody, that not everybody is so lucky, like, in life.

The extract illustrates how closely the textual and experiential worlds may come together in teenagers' involvement with media discourse. Anna aligns with the positioning patterns set in her favorite genre of texts. The narrative stories in the magazine are the first-person narratives written by teenage readers – the appearances of factuality and intimacy are enhanced by the elements of youth language as well as pictures of the authors (or of teenage models whose exposition in the setting often puts the images in contrast to the photos in the 'glossy' parts of the magazine). Anna indexes^{iv} her commitment to the discourse of the magazine through the implicit acknowledgment of its mediating role between readers and of the educational value of the mediation. The parallel claims of belief that the experiences described in the texts may be part of her own experience ratify the texts as legitimate representations of teenage life. Additionally, the interviewee establishes a communal bond with both the social actors depicted in the text and other readers of *Twist*. She works up the collective identity category by means of the somewhat fraternizing 'girls' and 'too' – the former resembling talk about one's friends, the latter constructing the relation of likeness.

Interestingly, within the extract, the high personal involvement is however mitigated. Once she is asked about her relationship to the magazine directly, Anna replaces the constructions of the shared identity of 'girls' with the distancing formulation 'such people' as well as the generalizing pronouns 'anybody' and 'everybody'. Also, the *extreme case formulation* (Pomerantz 1986) in the emphatic denial 'No, no no' contradicts the relationship which she earlier constructed implicitly. Of course, what motivated the speaker to defy the emotional engagement cannot be determined. It might suggest the uneasiness of admitting her relationship to the articles. Alternatively, if the disclaimers were not used to achieve a strategic distance from the content of her claims, they may have been the speaker's strategy of distancing from the interviewer or of maintaining control over the level of intimacy which Anna offered in the conversation. As such, the extract demonstrates the uneasy task of determining individuals' relation to media, most likely related with the intrinsically contradictory and dynamic character of the very relation.

In the Extract below another interviewee talked about an article which she found particularly interesting:

Extract (2) INTERVIEWER: Okay, anything else? Another letter or article?

MARTA: Here... I read some of them here 'cause I thought that maybe I could read and it maybe find it interesting, like for instance 'I dated two guys at the same time'. I read it and the girl here, I found it interesting cause she lived in a village and had two boyfriends and obviously in villages and stuff this sort of information spreads fast and stuff.

INTERVIEWER: Do you live in Gostyń or do you commute?

MARTA: No, I'm village [a village person]. Stara Krobia. And I know what it

is like, for instance, in a village. And I know that when somebody does something, then all people, especially the older ones, like gossiping.

INTERVIEWER: How does it make you feel?

MARTA: Well, I generally... I am not the kind of person people gossip about because I don't do things which people could talk about. Well, but I think that it's kind of funny cause those people, each of them will add something and a big deal will come out of it [mega-story], like some kind of a story which is not necessarily true.

INTERVIEWER: And if you started doing something which you would not see as wrong in any way and they started to laugh at you?

MARTA: I would definitely tell, for instance my mom, or I would go right away to those people and requested [sic/said] that this sort of thing makes me mad and I will not tolerate that. I would go saying that for sure. That's what I would do for sure.

As she explains her interest in the story, Marta works up several overlapping identities. The reader, age, gender and provincial self are enacted simultaneously as the interviewee constructs the relation of empathy with the protagonist of the story (a girl who also lived in a village). In this way she indexes her belonging to the symbolic community of the magazine readers (teenage girls) and to the local community of Stara Krobia. Additionally, how she establishes her relationship to the age-based community props up Marta's local identity. Throughout the extract, the youthful self is reinforced by positioning in the relation of *difference* (Bucholtz & Hall 2005) from the elderly members of her local community. The proximity to the protagonist and distance from the older people is also indexed by the prefix 'mega-', which is a distinctive feature of Polish youth talk. Marta projects her rural self directly (disclosing her place of living) and indirectly. Namely, constructing the rural community as irritatingly prying, she gives the enunciation the status of obviousness ('obviously'), which indexes her insider's knowledge of life in the country.

Clearly, as Marta does her interpretative work, she discloses the burden of living in a rural community. The extract makes it thus evident how tightly linked identity processes and the practices of media consumption are – the interpretative work triggers in the girl the feelings of empathy which are based on the speaker's self-disclosed sense of being monitored and judged by her locals. Interestingly, within the same extract, Marta denies giving her locals any reasons for rumors. How she makes the claim accountable illuminates her moral and social disposition (see Drew 1998). It implies that Marta considers being the object of gossip as something embarrassing, which indexes her tacit alignment with the community's social and moral norms. As mentioned, her talk reveals the tension accompanying the life of a teenage girl in a small community. That the teenage self which the interviewee articulates is problematically related to her rural background can be observed in the number of affective and evaluative stances. These take the form of extreme case formulations (repeated formulations 'I know') paralleled by the constructions of personal opinion ('I think', 'funny'). The troubled relationship with the community is also evident in the emotionally charged statement 'requested' through which she seems to be shoring up some agency and strength in managing her relations with the environment.

As can thus be seen, Marta used the media-related talk not only to establish her age identity but also organized the talk as the discursive space where she could

symbolically confront herself with the society in which she lives from an empowered subject position – by assessing the norms of her local environment and articulating her right to demand respect from them. This illustrates how having teenagers talk about media texts can help researchers in eliciting a good deal of information about their social worlds and their relationship to them.

The patterns of positive identification with the magazine's discourse were not the only ones observed in the interviews. For instance, in the extract below it can be seen that the same practice of text interpretation was used by another interviewee to construct a completely different age identity:

- Extract (3) INTERVIEWER: What made you stop reading it, if you could be more specific?
- KAROLINA: I've noticed that they want to be cool and that it so forced how they want to be so cool, and how they try to go into this youth slang, and stuff like that. And these tests they seemed to me so I don't know, like typically for the youth. And they all became so nonsensical to me cause I had already known what I was like and I didn't need to read a [psycho-]quiz telling me what I am like.
- INTERVIEWER: I get it, the so-called psycho-quizzes.
- KAROLINA: And so, for instance, I liked horoscopes, quizzes, I still like them because they turn out right. And those quizzes seem to me so, I don't know, like typically for the youth and some adolescents, and stuff. And so they seemed to be so nonsensical 'cause I had already known what I was like and I didn't need to read a quiz [telling me] what I am like.

Throughout the interview, Karolina presented herself as a self-proclaimed critic and an erstwhile avid reader of *Twist*. In the extract, she props up the identity by taking evaluative stances to both the editors and (implicitly) the recipients of the magazine. The editors are constructed as making the unsuccessful attempts to insincerely fraternize with the young readers. The readers are referred to by means of the diminutive form of the Polish word for 'adolescents' (Pol. 'małolaty'). The grammatical diminutive (Pol. 'małotatki') suggests the intentionality of Karolina's identity work in which she positioned herself in a relation of difference to other (probably not much younger) girls. Based on different levels of maturity, the distance is shored up when the diminutive is combined with the generic formulation 'some'. In tandem, the former indexes the infanthood and naivety of *Twist* readers and the latter implies she has 'grown out of' the magazine's target group.

The constructions of personal detachment predominate over the whole passage. The generalizing and distancing discourse markers 'some' and 'and stuff', evaluative stances 'forced' and 'nonsensical', as well as the Polish pejorative formulation for 'talk' ('go into' for Pol. 'gadać') do the contextual work of simultaneously reinforcing Karolina's censorious position to the magazine and indexing her age identity of a girl who has matured enough to become critical of the media's appeals to adolescents. Karolina's critical attitude to her peers is also indexed by her regular reliance on laughter. The evaluative stance displayed through laugh tokens is constructed as both shared with her friends and one which she reinforces her basically individualistic orientation (repeated 'to me'). All this evidently works in the service of 'self-praise'

(Pomerantz 1978), i.e. assessing Karolina's own reader self and increasing the emotional and mental distance between other teenage readers and herself.

Consequently, the ways in which the reader and their age selves collate in Karolina's reception of the magazine is another example of the media's accompanying presence in teenagers' identity processes. It is unlike Anna's and Marta's reception of *Twist* in that rather than put up the relation of sameness and closeness, Karolina expressed her emotional distance both from the magazine and its 'regular' readers by denying them maturity and simultaneously claiming it for herself. As can be seen, even if media discourse is negatively valued by recipients, its role in making sense of who they are (and who they are not) is undeniable. The apparent process of alienation from the symbolic community to which she once belonged gives her the sense of agency in becoming the person whom she wants to be.

Data discussion

Restricted by the space allowed, the article provides only three examples of individuals' involvement with media discourse to demonstrate the socio-cultural and psychological intricacy of media reception that I sought to bring out by exploring it discursively. Nevertheless, although limited to the three transcripts, the discussion clearly indicates that while negotiating our relationship to media texts, we negotiate not only our identities of the consumers of popular culture but also gender, age, social identities and other facets of selfoccasioned in context. As could be seen, the investigation which moves dialectically between the textual features of media discourse and the ones of media-related talk allows showing how the former are mapped onto speakers' talk as well as how the latter reveals individuals' diverse styles of media consumption and identity work. The relationality and intersubjective quality of media discourse examined were reflected in its recipients' relationship to the magazine – both in how they positioned themselves to other readers and to their significant others, whom the texts made contextually relevant by consequently referring to girls' social and personal life.

Although the magazine's discourse cannot have been the sole reason of the girls' high personal involvement in it, their situated engagement with the discourse must have been to some degree contingent on the magazine's appeals to readers' affective and social needs of finding one's own sense of self through defining one's belonging to a specific community. Critics have not been unanimous in their interpretations of the social implications of the synthetic personalization accompanying the conversationalization of contemporary media. Whether the discourse processes are the symptom of the 're-feudalization' (Habermas 1989) or democratization (McDonald 2003) of the public sphere has yet to be settled. The position which is hereby taken is not straightforward either.

On the one hand, it could be argued that the relationships created textually by media producers are artificial and reproduce disturbing discourses (see Talbot 1992, 2010; Bauman 2004; Frost 2001). Following Talbot (1992), the synthetic relations of sisterhood in the magazines targeting young girls realize the hidden agenda of commodification. Nevertheless, as could be seen, girls in the study were attracted to teens' narratives of experience, rather than to the texts concerning the consumption of commodities (see Currie 2001 for similar findings among Canadian girls reading teen

magazines). At the same time, it is not argued here that the interpersonal style of media discourse may not be disturbing to its recipients. Texts in *Twist* were found to revolve around various forms of relationship (mainly the heterosexual relations with boys and the heterosocial ones with peers and relatives). As such, the magazines reinforce in the girls the concept of self which is anchored in the discourse of other-centeredness (see Lazar 2002) – they encourage readers to think and talk about themselves primarily in terms of their relations with significant others. In turn, the article proposes, the girls who are exposed solely (or predominantly) to this media discourse may find it difficult to talk and think of themselves as independent selves and consequently learn to draw their sense of self-worth from the intensity and quality of their relationship with significant others.

What may arouse interest is why the appeal of the symbolic community offered by teen magazines does not apparently consist in its promise of an easy way of attaining one's identity through consumption, as many critics of media's commodifying influence pose. The explanation advanced here is that readers may find membership in the symbolic community of readers sharing their personal experience particularly appealing because it is easier to manage than the one in the embodied communities. The separate contexts of production and reception reduce the degree of reciprocity involved in the 'para-social interactions' (Horton & Wohl 1956), thus allowing participants of the communication to draw on their own resources in meaning construction. Because of the mediated nature of participation in the magazine-based communities, they offer more freedom and security – the meanings which their members derive for themselves from specific texts are not subject to immediate corrective of peers. By the same token, the degree of one's involvement in the discourse is the individuals' independent decision. For example, the underlying vectors of identity work underpinning the girls' media reception were both connectedness and alienation.

Based on that, it can be seen that the micro-analytic study of media reception problematizes the view of the process advanced by critics lamenting the commodifying and standardizing effects of 'culture industry' on people's thoughts and behaviors. The study clearly implies that media texts give readers the opportunity to experience the moments of enhanced self-reflexivity and agency. Obviously, the media consumption may not be the only opportunity to experience such moments. However, on the basis of an even limited amount of data it can be seen that media discourse is a vital site where youth's identity processes take place. Crucially, the study demonstrates that they do not consist in the individuals' impassive subjection to the media's identity-formatting influence. Rather, by reading, talking and thinking about their relationship to media, teenagers experience a form of self-discovery during which they negotiate their location in the surrounding reality and their individual ways of interpreting the reality. Finally, it can be seen that as media recipients we are not only members of our local cultures and (e.g. age-based) subcultures but also of symbolic communities – such as the ones whose construction was examined above. Vitaly, membership in the communities may have a profound influence on how we understand our membership in the wider cultural communities.

Methodological implications for transdisciplinary research

The article sought to prove that the linguistic mode of reception studies is an effective tool by means of which the sociological knowledge about our consumption of culture can be made more profound. The methodology presented here is capable of generating not only the knowledge about media reception. The analysis illuminates the 'social order' of particular groups of informants, i.e. 'their implicit values and systems of accountability, and their careful management and negotiation of subjective experience' (Benwell 2009, p. 300). Hence, examining how the accounts of transparency and equitability are negotiated when people interpret texts and contextualize them in their socio-cultural conditions of living casts sidelight on various realms of the speakers' lives. The implicitness of the accounts, the article argues, guarantees that the data are less skewed by the self-presentational concerns because the concerns are in first place related with the participants' consumer identities, rather than with any other. In turn, even if the effect of the 'essential visibility' (Edwards 1995) of research interviews is undeniable, the analysts can use them to elicit a significant amount of information which is less saliently affected by the visibility than it would be if the informants were directly asked about the relationship with, for instance, their local community or peers.

At the same time, although the value of any of the specific linguistic and sociological methodologies is not denied here, it is posited here that the research and explanatory capabilities of the two strands of research are limited in the following ways. The sole analysis of texts is incapable of generating findings which would be sufficiently contextualized in the socio-cultural setting of media consumption. The sociological tradition is vulnerable to ignoring the vagueness of social reality which is communicated in discourse. The analytic rigor of case-based discourse studies can serve as a vital complement to the sociological explorations which are based on broad analytic categories.

Finally, a study like the one of which part is presented in the current article could be conducted anywhere in the world – the increased mediatization of social life has become one of the key qualities of late modern culture. As it has already taken place in research on literature reception (Benwell et al. 2012), the article posits the necessity of conducting such transnational research projects in reference to media consumption. By addressing teenagers, the present analysis was driven by the conviction that it is necessary to study their media reception as they are considered the most avid but also vulnerable consumers of popular culture. Nonetheless, it cannot be ruled out that there are other media audiences, or specific media which need to be given priority in the exploration which attends to the socio-cultural and psychological complexity of media consumption and which takes the advantage of discourse analytic methods in gaining insight into its mechanisms. As indicated, by drawing closer, the textual and sociological vein of reception studies can generate a transdisciplinary framework of investigating people's consumption of media. Advancing this specific approach, this article sought to show that media reception studies provide a convenient ground for pursuing the questions which have been the driving force of not only audience research but of many disciplines interested in how people draw on the surrounding social and cultural discourses to make sense of themselves and the world.

References

- Anderson, B. (1991), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, London.
- Atkinson, P. & Silverman D. (1997), 'Kundera's immortality: The interview society and the invention of the self', *Qualitative Inquiry* vol. 3, pp. 304-25.
- Bauman, Z. (2004), *Identity*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Benwell, B. (2009), "'A pathetic and racist and awful character": Ethnomethodological approaches to the reception of diasporic fiction', *Language & Literature* vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 300-15.
- Benwell, B. & Stokoe, E. H. (2005), 'University students resisting academic identity', in *Applying Conversation Analysis*, eds K. Richards & P. Seedhouse, Palgrave, Basingstoke.
- Benwell, B., Procter, J., Robinson, G. (2012), *Postcolonial Audiences: Readers, Viewers and Reception*, Routledge, New York.
- Bucholtz, M. & Hall, K. (2005), 'Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach', *Discourse Studies* vol.7, no. 4-5, pp. 585-614.
- Currie, D. (2001), 'Dear Abby. Advice pages as a site for the operation of power', *Feminist Theory* vol. 2, no. 3: 259-81.
- Drew, P. (1998), 'Complaints about transgressions and misconduct', *Research and Social Interaction* vol. 31, pp. 295-325.
- du Gay, P., Hall S., Janes, L., Mackay, H. & Negus, K. (1997), *Doing Cultural Studies: The story of the Sony Walkman*, Open University, Milton Keynes.
- Edwards, D. (1995), 'Sacks and psychology', *Theory & Psychology* vol. 5, no. 4: 579-96.
- Edwards, D. & Potter, J. (1992), *Discursive Psychology*, Sage, London.
- Eriksson Barajas, K. & Aronsson, K. (2009), 'Avid versus struggling readers: Co-constructed pupil identities in school booktalk', *Language & Literature* vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 281-99.
- Frost, L. (2001), *Young Women and the Body: A Feminist Sociology*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
- Glapka, E. (2011), 'Media discourse consumption and quality of life – Polish adolescents reading their favorite magazines' in *Health and Well-being in Adolescence. Part 2: Media*. 2011. ed M. Kaczmarek, Bogucki Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Poznań.

- Glapka, E. (forthcoming), Reading bridal magazines from a critical discursive perspective. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.
- Hall, S., Hobson, D., Lowe, A. & Willis, P. (eds). (1980), Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-1979, Routledge, London.
- Heritage, John. (1984), Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Horton, D. & Wohl, R. R. (1956), 'Mass communication and para-social Interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance', Psychiatry vol. 19, pp. 215-29.
- Hutchby, Ian and Robin Woofit. (1998), Conversation Analysis: Principles, Practices and Applications. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Iser, W. (1978), The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Reception, Johns Hopkins University Press, London.
- Jauss, H. R. (1982), Toward an Aesthetic of Reception. (Translated by Timothy Bahti.) University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Lazar, M. (2002), 'Consuming personal relationships: The achievement of feminine self-identity through other-centeredness' in Gender Identity and Discourse Analysis, eds L. Litosseliti & J. Sunderland, John Benjamins, Amsterdam.
- Long, E. (2003), Book Clubs: Women and the Uses of Reading in Everyday Life, Chicago University Press, Chicago
- Pomerantz, A. (1978), 'Compliment responses: Notes on the co-operation of multiple constraints' in Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction, ed J. Schenkein, Academic Press, New York.
- Pomerantz, A. (1986), 'Extreme case formulations: A way of legitimizing claims', Human Studies vol. 9, no. 2-3, pp. 219-29.
- Ochs, E. (1992), 'Indexing gender', in Language as an interactive phenomenon. Rethinking context, eds A. Duranti & Ch. Goodwin, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Scannel, P. (1992), 'Public service broadcasting and modern life', Culture and PoweKarolina: A Media, Culture and Society Reader', in eds P. Scannel, P. Schlesinger & C. Sparks. Sage, London.
- Semino, E. & Culpeper, J. (2002), Cognitive Stylistics: Language and Cognition in Text Analysis, John Benjamins Amsterdam.
- Stockwell, P. (2002), Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction, London, Routledge.
- Talbot, M. (1995), 'A synthetic sisterhood: False friends in a teenage magazine', Gender Articulated: Language and Socially Constructed Self, in eds K. Hall & M. Bucholtz, Routledge, London.

Talbot, M. (2010), *Language, Intertextuality and Subjectivity: Voices in the Construction of Consumer Femininity*. Lambert Academic Publishing, Saarbrücken.

Taylor, S. (2001), 'Places I remember: Women's talk about residence and other relationships to place', *Auto/Biography* vol. 9, pp. 33-40.

ⁱ See Atkinson & Silverman (1997) and Taylor (2001) for more discussion.

ⁱⁱ The translations of transcripts are mine (see Appendix).

ⁱⁱⁱ The interviewees' names have been changed.

^{iv} Indexing is meant here as signalling a specific particular social meaning by means of language.(see Ochs 1992)

Appendix – interview extracts (in Polish)

- Extract (1) INTERVIEWER: Przede wszystkim, jakbyś mi mogła powiedzieć dlaczego czytasz Twista?
 ANNA: Lubię właśnie te takie problemy czytać młodzieżowe, interesuje mnie to. I też różne są listy od młodzieży, żeby się poradzić na przykład, i też potem inaczej patrzę na różne sprawy.
 INTERVIEWER: To znaczy?
 ANNA: Nooo...no dziewczyny tam opisują swoje różne sytuacje, no to wiem na przykład czego mogę się spodziewać w życiu, że coś takiego też może mnie dotknąć.
 INTERVIEWER: A mogłabyś wskazać mi list z tego numeru, który Cię najbardziej zainteresował, i który jakoś wpłynął na Twój świat-
 ANNA: No na pewno tutaj był ten artykuł o tej dziewczynie, co tak właśnie kradła, paliła, piła, to też...
 INTERVIEWER: Aha, ta historia prawdziwa?
 ANNA: Tak, ta historia.
 INTERVIEWER: I co z tą historią? Ty się z nią identyfikujesz jakoś?
 ANNA: (Stanowczo) Nie, nie nie, ale wiem, że, jak przeczytałam tę historię to wiem, że tacy ludzie istnieją właśnie, i wiadomo co kogo może, każdego, może spotkać taki los, że nie każdy ma dobrze, na przykład, w życiu
- Extract (2) INTERVIEWER:: Dobra, coś jeszcze? Jakiś list, albo jeszcze jakiś inny artykuł?
 MARTA: Tutaj niektóre tak przeczytałam, bo stwierdziłam, że może przeczytam, może mnie zainteresuje, chociażby na przykład „Spotykałam się z dwoma facetami jednocześnie”. Przeczytałam, i ta dziewczyna tutaj, to mnie zaciekało, że ona była z wioski i miała dwóch chłopaków, a wiadomo, na wioskach i w ogóle wszystkie informacje się rozchodzą w takim typowo szybkim tempie i w ogóle.
 INTERVIEWER: Ty jesteś z Gostynia czy dojeżdżasz?
 MARTA: Nie, ja jestem wioska. Stara Krobia. I wiem jak jest, na przykład, na wiosce. I wiem, że kiedy ktoś coś zrobi to wszystkie, na przykład starsze, osoby lubią plotkować.
 INTERVIEWER: A jak Ty się z tym czujesz?
 MARTA: No ja ogólnie...na mój temat nie mają co plotkować, bo nie robię jakichś takich rzeczy, które by były tematem do rozmów. No, ale uważam, że to jest troszkę takie śmieszne, bo te osoby, każda potem doda od siebie coś jeszcze i wyjdzie jakaś mega historia, która nie jest tak do końca prawdą.
 INTERVIEWER: No, a gdybyś na przykład coś zaczęła robić, co uważałabyś za dobre, słuszne, a oni by właśnie Cię wyśmiewali.
 MARTA: Na pewno bym powiedziała o tym, na przykład mojej mamie, albo po prostu poszłabym do tych osób i zażyczyła sobie tego, że takie coś mnie tylko denerwuje i nie życzę sobie, żeby o mnie rozmawiano. Na pewno bym poszła.
- Extract (3) INTERVIEWER: Co sprawiło, że przestałaś go czytać, tak konkretniej?
 KAROLINA: Zauważyłam, że oni tak próbują na siłę być super, i młodzieżowym

slangiem gadać, coś tam. Czy jakieś te testy, czy coś.

INTERVIEWER: No tak, te psychozabawy tak zwane.

KAROLINA: No i ja na przykład lubiłam horoskopy, testy, do teraz lubię bo mi się sprawdzają. A te testy to mi się wydają takie jakieś, nie wiem, typowo pod młodzież i jakieś maolatki, coś tam. No i takie bezsensowne mi się wydawały, bo już wiedziałam jaka jestem i nie musiałam czytać testu jaka jestem.

Transcription notes

- , short pause in the flow of talk
- . full stop, stopping fall in tone, not necessarily end of sentence
- ... longer silence
- ? rising intonation, not necessarily a question
- : prolongation of immediately prior sound
- [] transcriber's descriptions rather or in addition to transcriptions
- () inability to hear what was said
- Mm I agree a lot/yes, go on