



Preserved Animal Bodies or Images of Living Animals – What Would the Secondary School Pupils Prefer to See in Zoology Classes?

Jan Mourek¹, Barbora Polcarová²

Preserved zoological specimens have been traditionally used as teaching aids in biology classes at Czech schools to demonstrate animal features. Recently, they are largely replaced by photographs of living animals, which are easily available to the teachers via the Internet. Surprisingly, there is a lack of published evidence based on empirical data, which form of presentation of animals is more attractive for the pupils. We therefore examined, if secondary school pupils rate real zoological specimens, mounted in jars with conservation liquids, as more attractive than photographs of the same living animals in their natural environment. Further, we studied, the factors, which may influence the pupils' preference for mounted animals vs. photographs. Our study included 176 pupils (age 15 - 18 years) of the 1st and 3rd grade of five secondary schools (gymnasia) in Prague. First, the pupils filled a questionnaire, focused on their demographic data, interest in biology and sensitiveness to potentially phobic stimuli of animal origin. Second, they participated in a preference test. In the preference test, we offered them 28 objects - 14 jars with mounted animal bodies and 14 photographs of the same living animals in their natural environment - and asked them to rank the objects from the most to the least attractive one. In general, we did not find significant difference in attractiveness between the real animal bodies and photographs of living animals in general, but a significant difference between animal species, regardless on the form of presentation. The pupils' preference for mounted specimens vs. photographs negatively correlated with their sensitiveness to potentially phobic stimuli related with animals or animal product, such as blood, dead bodies and organs.

Keywords: *preference, teaching aids, mounted animals, photographs, interest, disgust;*

¹ Faculty of Science, Charles University (Czech Republic)

² Faculty of Science, Charles University (Czech Republic)