

Students' Attitudes towards Extensive and Intensive Reading and Instructors' Motivational Strategies

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Abstract

This paper analyses Kuwaiti undergraduate students' attitudes towards extensive and intensive reading, and the strategies instructors employ to motivate their students to do the required reading. Reading is the principal method of acquiring knowledge which enables students to learn about themselves and the world around them. Unfortunately literature and teachers' accounts illustrate a lack of habitual reading in Gulf Arab society (Shannon, 2003). The study used qualitative research methods to assess students' and instructors' perspectives; the student participants completed questionnaires and the instructors were interviewed. Findings of this research suggest that college students in Kuwait do intensive reading when reading is a compulsory component of the course, but not necessarily enjoy doing it. Instructors all agree that Kuwaiti students read less than an average college student and have almost no interest in reading for pleasure. The study is expected to help practitioners to have a better understanding of their students' strengths and weaknesses in reading and make the necessary changes in the curriculum to create more opportunities and instil a greater interest in reading.

Keywords: extensive reading, intensive reading, reading habits of college students

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Introduction

Reading is not only a way of acquiring new information and knowledge; it also builds maturity and widens awareness of contemporary issues (Kim & Anderson, 2011). In their study with adult readers, Kirsch and Guthrie (1984) find that reading also contributes significantly to job success, career development, and ability to respond to change. Reading is also regarded as one of the most important components in language learning. Especially when learners choose the text themselves, their motivation and confidence increase, which creates a more positive attitude towards reading and language learning, making students more effective language users (Blair, 2009).

Reading is a complex process and reading habits take time to develop. Shen (2006) identifies reading habits, as how often, how much, and what the readers read. A good reading habit is important for the development of personalities and mental capacities. By reading books frequently and having a good reading habit, the reader is able to analyse others' ideas, which helps one think more critically (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2001).

Reading has traditionally been divided into two types: intensive and extensive. Extensive reading entails learners reading as much as possible, for the purpose of pleasure or information, and is usually self-selected (Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009) whereas intensive reading may be described as the practice of particular reading skills, language features and close linguistic study of text. Intensive reading is predominantly used in English language teaching (ELT) throughout the world (Erfanpour, 2013). The general understanding, particularly among ELT practitioners, is that reading comprehension can be achieved by using both reading approaches in a complimentary way. For example, where extensive reading is encouraged, the teacher may have all the students read the same text so they can discuss the topic together or learn a specific skill such as writing an outline. In a class where intensive reading is mostly used, students may be asked to read texts of their own choice to report back on, in either an oral or written format.

Despite the importance of cultivating a healthy reading habit, recent research suggests that a growing number of young people do not read for pleasure. Furthermore, literature confirms a lack of reading culture or habitual reading in the Gulf Arab society: the average Arab child reads "six minutes" a year in comparison to 12,000 minutes his or her Western counterpart spends reading, according to the Arab Thought Foundation's 4th annual cultural development report (Al-Yacoub, 2012; Maqbool, 2015). The same report also adds that an Arab individual on average reads a quarter of a page a year compared to the 11 books read by an American and seven books by a British person. Another survey on reading habits in the Middle East, in April 2011, reaches similar conclusions. Only 1 in 5 read on a regular basis and among those under 25 – nearly 65 per cent of the 3,667 questioned, about 1 in 3 seldom or never read a book for pleasure (Al-Yacoub, 2012).

The lack of enthusiasm for reading among Arabs could also be observed in ELT classes. The place of English in the Arab countries is important as it is appreciated as the language of wider international communication and of business and technology. Also Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries' learners of English enjoy an advantage over many of their fellow Arabs as they use English in their daily lives because of the multinational and multilingual nature of the residents. However, despite the extensive use of English as a means of communication,

many Kuwaiti and other Gulf Arab students experience difficulties in learning English. English language teachers in Kuwait and in other GCC countries say that many students struggle to read at a level of proficiency appropriate to their current and future needs.

The problems of Arabic learners of English with English reading comprehension are documented by some data taken from the IELTS Annual Review of 2010 and 2011 (See Table 1). The data show that mean scores on reading tests were low for test-takers with Arabic as their mother tongue. The mean scores obtained by GCC students on both reading tests were the lowest among 40 countries.

Table 1**IELTS mean band scores for GCC Countries**

	<i>Listening</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing</i>	<i>Speaking</i>	<i>Ranking in Reading</i>
<i>Kuwait 2010</i>	5.3	5	4.9	5.7	(37th)
<i>Kuwait 2011</i>	5,3	4,9	4,8	5,6	(38th)
<i>Oman 2010</i>	5.1	5	4.9	5.6	(37th)
<i>Oman 2011</i>	5,3	5,1	5,0	5,7	(37th)
<i>Qatar 2010</i>	4,8	4,6	4,5	5,3	(40th)
<i>Qatar 2011</i>	4,8	4,6	4,5	5,3	(40th)
<i>KSA 2010</i>	5	4,9	4,7	5,7	(38th)
<i>KSA 2011</i>	4,9	4,8	4,7	5,6	(39th)
<i>UAE 2010</i>	5	4,7	4,7	5,4	(39th)
<i>UAE 2011</i>	4,9	4,8	4,7	5,4	(39th)

Note: Adapted from https://www.ielts.org/pdf/IELTS_Annual_review_2010.pdf and https://www.ielts.org/pdf/8330_3Y03_IELTSAnnualReview2011_web.pdf

Researchers looking into the reasons for the low reading proficiency level of Arabic learners of English cite some major factors such as lack of a 'reading culture' at home, in school and in the wider community; native language reading standards; cultural schemata; methods of teaching; backwash from testing; and learner motivation, interest and attitude (O'Sullivan, 2009). Also, experts define the keys to building reading comprehension as exposure, practice, and frequency of repetitions, nevertheless the oral culture which Arab children come from does not encourage them to read enough to develop strong literacy skills. While explicit instruction is supportive, text structure knowledge is indispensable for reading fluency and is an outgrowth of extensive reading experience (as cited in Bendriss & Golkowska, 2011).

In addition to little support for extensive reading at home and at school, and lack of critical reading skills, researchers frequently cite diglossia (having two dialects) and late exposure to Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as some of the reasons why Arab children find it difficult to develop reading competence (as cited in Bendriss & Golkowska, 2011). Horn (2015) states that despite the existence of MSA, different peoples in different countries use their own distinctive vernaculars (collectively referred to as Dialectal Arabic, or DA), which are grammatically and lexically less complex. DA has an exclusively oral form and is hardly ever written, which, according to Horn (2015) creates an obstacle in the process of reading acquisition. Arab children spend the first years of their lives with their families who do not speak to them in MSA. Thus, children encounter some difficulties when they start to read and write as they suddenly have to cope with a language that is syntactically, lexically, grammatically and phonologically different from theirs (Abu-Rabia, 2000). Unlike children from England, for example, who can expect to hear the same sentences they read in an English book or newspaper from their parents, Arab children start their schooling with the impression that reading is an academically arduous task, disconnected from the verbal reality of their world.

Purpose of the study

Reports like the one prepared by the Arab Thought Foundation (Al-Yacoub, 2012; Maqbool, 2015) and personal experiences of English and language teachers in Kuwait and in other Arab countries imply that many students struggle to read at a level appropriate to their current and future needs. However, there is a lack of literature in students' reading interests in Kuwait or the Gulf region and very little is known about the college students' reading habits. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyse the reading habits of Kuwaiti college students in an effort to understand the main reason behind their reluctance to read generally and in English. The study will try to answer the following questions:

- What are the Kuwaiti undergraduate students' attitudes towards extensive reading?
- What are the Kuwaiti undergraduate students' attitudes towards intensive reading?
- Do the Kuwaiti undergraduate students' attitudes towards extensive and intensive reading show similar patterns?
- What strategies do teachers employ to motivate their students to do intensive reading?

Method

The study used a qualitative research design in both strands. The qualitative data collection tool used in the first strand of the study was a questionnaire that contained 5 open ended questions requiring students to give short answers. The participants were 54 students – 20 male, 34 female – who took ENG 112 (Freshman Composition 2) from the author of the research. Besides writing a research paper, intensive reading is also a major component of this course and students are asked to read some essays, participate in class discussions, present their interpretations, and learn some key words related to the essays. Their comprehension of the reading texts is assessed through biweekly quizzes. The student papers were anonymous in order to encourage them to write their true feelings regarding the reading component of the course and their attitude toward reading in general. The questions were as follows:

1. Did you enjoy reading stories as part of your Freshmen Composition (Eng 112) course? Please explain why or why not.

2. Did you study for the quizzes? How long did you spend every week on average to read the story and study the vocabulary?
3. a. Other than schoolwork, do you read at home in your free time? If yes, how often?
b. What do you read? Can you name some of your favourite books/ authors or anything that you read?
4. How does reading make you feel?

In the second strand of the study eight instructors who taught ENG 112 during the time of the study were interviewed regarding their students' attitudes towards reading and the strategies the instructors adopt in the classroom to motivate them to read. All of the instructors had experience teaching writing and reading skills to nationalities other than Kuwaiti, therefore they were able to make comparisons based on their personal teaching experiences. The questions that were conducted to instructors were as follows:

1. What are your experiences and impressions about Kuwaiti students' reading habits?
2. What are the causes of these reading habits?
3. What are your solutions to overcome the problems encountered in reading classes?
4. What is your approach towards the use of technology in reading classes?

In the first strand, student papers, and in the second strand interview texts were coded and categorically analysed. The raw data was converted into categories by identifying and underlining key words and phrases reflecting student attitudes and instructors' perspectives.

Qualitative research findings and their interpretation were created by analysing the views of participants under certain categories. Due to the word count limitations of the article, only a few direct quotes were taken for each main theme to ensure internal reliability. No corrections were made in student quotes and even faulty uses of language were preserved.

Researcher's Role

In qualitative research, the "researcher is the instrument" (as cited in Golafshani, 2003); therefore, explicitly identifying oneself assumes an importance that it might not have in quantitative research. In this study, the researcher has been familiar with the reading habits and attitudes of Kuwaiti undergraduate students and she included her own students as well as her colleagues' students. Due to previous experiences, she may bring certain biases to this study. Although every effort has been made to ensure objectivity, these biases may shape the way she views and understands the data she collects and the way she interprets participants' experiences.

Findings of the First Strand

1. Overall perceptions of the intensive reading component

The first question of the qualitative survey was: "Did you enjoy reading stories as part of your Eng 112 course?" The question also asked students to give a brief explanation as to why they enjoyed or did not enjoy the experience. Out of 54 students, 23 students said they enjoyed the reading component of the course, whereas 22 of them said they did not enjoy it. Six students said they partially enjoyed reading the assigned essays.

The most commonly expressed reason for liking the reading component is 'the essays and stories were very interesting'. This was mentioned by almost all the students who said they enjoyed the compulsory reading component of the course.

The second major reason for enjoying the experience was more pragmatic, as some students had positive perceptions due to the contributions of the reading component to their language skills, such as reading, vocabulary and learning new things. Most students mentioned both reasons, and the following student quotes could give good examples to see this combined reason clearly:

"I enjoyed reading stories as part of my Eng 112 course because they were really interesting and it helped me learn new words and with my writing skills" (St 3).

"Yes I enjoyed reading stories as part of my coursework because I found them very interesting, different, and new themes and genres. In addition the stories were very beneficial and useful as I learned some lessons from them" (St 1).

"I actually enjoyed reading the stories because it taught me a lot of different vocabulary. Plus it is a fun way of getting grades and it also pushed me into reading more than I already do" (St 9).

Another reason expressed by a few students was "reading gave them a break from other courses". Although this was expressed by only three students, it was nice to see that for some students intensive reading had the same effect as extensive reading and they did not see reading only as a course requirement.

"I took 5 subjects this term which is quite a pressure on me; taking English and reading stories made me take a break from all the pressure I was in" (St 22).

"Yes because it gave me a break my other classes and it was different, plus I really liked half of the short essays" (St 16).

Almost half of the respondents (22 students) gave a negative response to the same question and said they didn't enjoy reading the essays in the course. The major reasons given for not enjoying this experience were: they don't like reading anyway, the essays were hard to understand, long and boring, they have more important courses, exams etc. to study, and they like reading other genres, i.e. the essays were not their type of reads. The student quotes below clarify the reasons for the negative perceptions:

"Well, not that much. I do not like reading in general. Moreover, most of the stories weren't very appealing to me" (St 49).

"Honestly I found the stories really long and I found it difficult to remember some details in the story" (St50).

"No, I didn't enjoy reading the stories because most of them are boring and long. I have other exams like accounting and Math to prepare for that is why reading a story is a waste of time." (St 44).

"I didn't really enjoy this stories because these kind of stories are not my favourite. I like reading fantasy books, I don't like reading real life and hard stories that I don't understand" (St 36).

Six students said they sometimes liked reading or liked some of the essays they had to read. Their reasons were similar to the negative responses: stories were long, boring and difficult.

"Sometimes yes and sometimes no because the stories were sometimes not that interesting for me because I feel like we must read it to get grades, but I wish it was enjoyable too" (St 24).

"Sometimes I enjoyed it, but sometimes I didn't because I don't understand the words" (St 30).

Responses to the first question asking about their attitude towards the intensive reading requirement of the course show that half the students enjoyed reading the essays in the textbook, but unfortunately half of them did not due to their busy schedule, boring essays and a lack of reading habit. A minority sometimes enjoyed reading the texts, the reasons for not reading all of them were similar to those who did not enjoy the experience, such as not finding them all interesting and not wanting to spend too much time on English and reading.

2. Student perceptions of their study time for the quizzes.

Students were assessed biweekly through vocabulary and comprehension tests related to the essays they were assigned. This component comprises 20 % of the coursework and to pass the course students need to study for the tests. This question asked whether the students studied for the quizzes and if they did, how long they spent to read the essay and study the vocabulary.

Interestingly, the number of students who said they studied were 37 out of 54, which shows a higher number than the ones who enjoyed reading the essays. 37 students read all the essays and studied the vocabulary lists. Most of them spent an average of one to two hours reading the story and studying the unknown words. The shortest time spent is 30 minutes, the longest time is three to four days.

The quotes taken from students are given below to describe their perceptions of study times:

"Yes, during the quizzes I study hard to get good grades. Usually I spend 3-4 hours" (St 29).

"I studied for the quizzes the day before. It didn't take me too long to read the story. I only read it the night before and I went through the vocabulary fast" (St 42).

"I studied for all the quizzes we took. I spent 3-4 days for reading the stories and one day for the quizzes" (St 17).

Sixteen students said they sometimes studied. These students said they sometimes forgot they had a quiz. When they studied, they scanned the essay and glanced at the vocabulary list. They asked their friends about the highlights of the essay. Students who said they studied for some of the quizzes are quoted below:

"Yes, sometimes an hour for the vocabulary and when I have a lot of work I just took a look at them" (St 32).

"Actually I do not always study for the quizzes. If I study for the quiz, I only study for the vocabulary and it take half an hour. Sometimes I read the story but not completely" (St 38).

"Sometimes. The quizzes were on Sunday which is the first day after the weekend. I play video games and relax on weekend and forget about the work I have to do which sometimes makes me forget to study" (St 28).

"I study the vocabulary and get just highlighted information of the story" (St 40).

Only one student acknowledged that he or she did not study enough for the quizzes.

"Most quizzes I did not study for it because I always forget about it and most of the stories are long" (St 33).

The numbers and student quotes show that whether they liked it or not, most students prepared for the essays either by reading the essay thoroughly for days or just scanning the highlights and glancing at the vocabulary. Very few students said they did not do enough work regarding the quizzes.

3. Student perceptions of their extensive reading habits

The third question in the questionnaire wanted to find out about students' extensive reading habits and attitudes. Most students said that they read the compulsory essays and only half of them said they enjoyed reading them. The purpose of this question was to see whether they read when there is no external requirement or pressure. This question has two sections, a. "Other than schoolwork, do you read at home?", and b. "Please name some books and/or authors you read"

a. Do they read?

Thirty nine students said they read at home in their free time. 15 students responded negatively to this question.

Eleven students said they read in English, ten prefer reading in Arabic and six of them read in both languages. The frequency of reading ranges from one to two hours every day to sometimes and once a month. Most students expressed a preference for online reading rather than reading printed materials. Some quotes below from "reading students" can give us an idea about undergraduate students' voluntary reading attitudes and habits:

"I read at home a lot, mostly Arabic because I am fascinated by the Arabic language. I read poetry, literature, novels and educational books as well. I read at least 2 books a month, but I read many articles, something close to 3-4 articles a week" (St 37).

"I read in the social media in both languages, newspaper, sometimes magazines and stories" (St 45).

"I tend to read more at home in my free time. I normally read more in English than I do in Arabic because my education and interest was in English. My reading time is for about four to six hours a week" (St 22).

"Yes I actually read English books mostly, but if I consider reading online then yes I do read a lot. But the books, to me it depends on my mood if I wanted to read or not" (St 9).

"I read quite a lot. I have to finish a book or two each day. Even in my breaks I read, it became a habit and I can't stop reading. I prefer English more than Arabic. Usually or every day, so basically reading became a part of my life" (St 41).

Fifteen students expressed that they don't read other than schoolwork in their free time. Some students explained why they don't read and what they do alternatively. The most common reason for not reading is that they find reading books boring. Most of the students who responded negatively associate reading with books only and say they don't read books, but they read articles or newspapers online, although the question does not explicitly ask them whether they read books or something else. Students who don't read have other pastime activities, most of which are taking place in front of a screen.

"No, I have better things to do at home" (St 53).

"No, I am wasting my time by watching TV or doing something" (St 47).

"No, I never read any books or poems at all, neither in English or Arabic. Reading is my least preferable thing to do. I only read if I am forced to, i.e. because it is important for my studies" (St 49).

"I do not read books other than schoolwork. But when I read, I like to read articles online, articles that are scientific attract me. Articles about new inventions also attract me. If I saw any topic while scrolling down the pages that I am on, and the topic was eye catching I would directly go into it, no matter if it was in English or Arabic" (St 31).

b. What do they read?

Students who expressed a liking for reading in their free time mentioned some genres and/or some book titles and authors. The reading list could be summarized as follows:

Genres: Literature (novels, stories, poems), Newspapers, Magazines, Blogs, Islamic books, Biographies / History

Book titles / authors: Harry Potter, Twilight, The Secret, Hunger Games, Danielle Steel, Agatha Christie, Fifty Shades of Grey, Stephen King, Jane Austen.

These are some frequently mentioned genres, names and titles that are elicited from student responses. The list shows students prefer reading popular and trendy books, best-sellers and also online reading materials such as newspapers and magazines. Islamic books and Quran are also mentioned by students who expressed a preference for reading in Arabic.

4. Student perceptions of their feelings towards reading

When students were asked to express the way they feel about reading, 37 out of 54, approximately three quarters of them, expressed a positive attitude towards reading. The majority

of the students like reading and they feel reading makes them happy, calm, and relaxed. They also feel *“more sophisticated, confident, and more knowledgeable as a result of reading”* (St 37).

“The moment you open the page and escape from the world into a story that is more interesting, get to the characters' world” (St 10).

However, 16 students expressed a negative attitude towards reading and they said they find it boring and a waste of time, they get sleepy when they read, and they think reading is a hard work.

When reading is a compulsory component of the course, Kuwaiti undergraduate students read more than they normally do, but half of them don't enjoy doing it. Other than textbooks, they also read magazines, newspapers, and literature. The majority prefer English to Arabic. Around a quarter of the students find reading quite boring, but the majority of them find reading inspiring, they see it as a sophisticated activity, particularly if they like the reading material.

Findings of the Second Strand

1. Experiences and impressions about Kuwaiti students' reading habits

All the instructors that were interviewed agreed that Kuwaiti students are not motivated to read and they have little interest in reading for pleasure. All instructors have teaching experiences outside Kuwait (mostly the USA, England, and Egypt) and they stated that Kuwaiti students read less than an average college or high school level student they have taught. Three instructors pointed out the differences between girls and boys and added that two genders behave very differently in their reading habits.

“One day one of my students said I am wasting my life reading. That tells you the attitude of students here. ... They tell me they have better things to do than reading” (P 3).

“The general attitude is ‘why are we doing it? It is not necessary’” (P 2).

“(Referring to the male students) they are almost proud of telling you that they don't read, they say things like ‘this is the longest essay I have ever read’. I don't understand why they want to embarrass themselves saying such things” (P 4).

2. Causes for the lack of motivation to read

The instructors gave various reasons for the lack of motivation their Kuwaiti undergraduate students have. The list below shows the commonly mentioned reasons:

- It is an oral culture, not reading-writing. The culture does not value reading as much as speaking.
- Global decline in reading as a result of an interest in technology & online activities
- They are not trained to read, no emphasis on reading in family or in school.
- They are not motivated to learn anything because they are financially sated.
- They don't find the essays and themes interesting

Some direct quotes taken from interviews exemplify the perspectives of instructors:

“Possibly the materials they read aren't that interesting to them. The texts from our books tend to be Western based, except for ‘The Telephone’ which has somewhat Arab culture in

it. Students still were not enthusiastic to read it and even discuss it. Yet, with this being said, they read on their mobiles all day long when it comes to social media. Possibly because it is interesting to them” (P 7).

“This is not a reading culture, it is an oral culture but I remember from my father who used to teach at Kuwait University 20-25 years ago that Kuwaiti students were more committed to education and they would read whatever they were assigned. They have changed a lot. I think there is a change in the younger generation and now they are more computer and technology oriented. They may read something on the internet, but not in the book. I think this is a global thing” (P 3).

“If you drive a Maserati and are just back from the Maldives, you wouldn't have the intrinsic motivation to read more and succeed at college. They think they will inherit the father's business and that's it” (P 4).

As pointed, the major cause for the lack of motivation to read is the cultural and social emphasis on speaking and listening rather than reading and writing. However the latest developments in technology have also impacted the already low levels of interest, diverting young people's attention to online activities.

3. Solutions to overcome this problem

Strategies adopted by the instructors could be listed as below:

- Grading (quizzes, presentations, participation in discussions are rewarded and graded)
- Interactive & Oral Discussion
 - One student presents the essay and the rest of the class assess, ask questions
 - Teacher asks thought provoking questions
 - Team work, pair work, competition
- Connecting
 - Find texts that match their background/interests,
 - Finding themes in the texts that may attract interest
 - Coming up with supporting materials depending on gender and background of students
- Reduce the fear of reading
 - Using traditional strategies, skimming, scanning, finding the main idea etc.
- Read it in class (open your books and read silently)

Some reading instructors have made the following comments:

“I try to get students to find the connection in the stories they read with what relates to them in their lives. I try to get them to think about what the author is trying to get across and why the subject is important” (P 7).

“They have to read the essay and have the quiz. I also ask 2-3 students to do a presentation on the essay and I tell them the rest will have to ask questions to the presenters, they have to participate. Everybody gets evaluation sheets; they have to evaluate the presenters. They write comments, what they have missed, what they have

misunderstood, so it becomes a very interactive activity. Reading becomes an oral discussion and they respond more to oral activities. I am not only grading them but also allowing them to use their oral skills. This strategy is working very well because 70% of them come to class prepared” (P 3).

“I force them to read, many often we read in class. If the stories are not very long, I give them a limited amount of time and we do silent reading or I give them quizzes. This is the only thing I could do” (P 4).

4. Role of technology in reading classes

When interviewees were asked about the role of technology and their attitude towards the role of technology in the classroom, they generally made comments related to their students' interest in reading online. Very few of them gave details about what they themselves do to increase students' attention to the reading assignment in hand. Some examples are given below:

“Students do like to use their iPads. Many students have asked if the textbooks have an e-book that they can download easier. Technology has helped the fact that they use it for their own entertainment such as Facebook, Twitter and so on. They do read for entertainment purposes, but not necessarily in English” (P 7).

“I tried to find some thought-provoking, discussion questions, I posted them on the portal and I graded the classroom discussions. At least I accomplished them to open up the book and read that part of the essay. I always try to empathise with my students, “read the assignment, come to class, sit down, answer the comprehension questions...” I find it boring and I try to spice the lesson up and in this case technology comes handy. Even simple things like opening a Wikispace on the portal and asking them to respond to the question... interactive discussions increase their motivation to get involved in the text assigned” (P 5).

“If students are required to follow a line of argument through sustained multi-paragraph prose then I don't see technology helping to that. Technology and instructional material have compounded the MTV generation words ...until reading looks like your bulletin board... That reading will not achieve the kind of reading ability they need. It dazzles, it keeps them busy like Fisher-Price toys dangling over the baby's crib. If that is still what we expect them to do, I can't see technology is helping us with that” (P 1).

Results and Discussion

Research carried out around the globe show similar results in undergraduate students' reading attitudes and habits. Malaysian Polytechnic students spend quite a significant amount of time surfing the Internet, playing computer/mobile games and other technology-related activities compared to reading. Reading is only regarded as a minor activity during their leisure time. They also feel that there are other ways to learn new things than by reading as they find reading boring and not motivating (Annamalai & Muniandy, 2013).

A study done on 395 American college students showed that a staggering 62% of the students surveyed spend an hour or less reading their assigned materials and only 6.1% spend more than one hour reading. Only 24.8% of the participants complete assigned readings before class. Approximately 89% of the students in the study believed they could receive a C or better

without completing any of the assigned readings (Baier, Hendricks, Gorden, Hendricks, & Cochran, 2011).

A study on three Swedish universities with 1200 students demonstrates that many students report some degree of non-compliance with reading assignments and a small group of students express active resistance to completing reading assignments. Although textbooks were perceived as valuable, students reported a preference for learning course content from other resources, such as lectures and lecture notes. Textbooks were perceived as alternatives, rather than complements, to attending class (Pecorari, Shaw, Irvine, Malmstrom, & Mezek, 2012).

Research studies seem to demonstrate that college students are not necessarily good readers. Even though college students are often required to read advanced academic texts, they are not necessarily equipped to evaluate and synthesize the information (Kim & Anderson, 2011). What is more, there is a global reluctance to read printed materials. Students prefer spending time on online activities. They read more when the reading material is online, as it is always accessible, there is no risk of losing the book / printed material. They could access anywhere and anytime, which provides them with a great flexibility.

Conclusion

In the light of the findings, with this new generation of college students, course designers should make modifications in the way courses are delivered. First of all, if they want to encourage students to read, reading must be compulsory component of the course as students feel obligated to read to get good grades. However, keeping in mind that online course materials attract more student interest than printed materials, faculty members should incorporate Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into course format, and keep up with the latest technological innovations in education. The design and presentation are also of great importance in keeping the students' interest. Interesting and useful reading materials should be accessible online as young people are mostly interested in the World Wide Web, social networking, blogging, etc.

While adapting education systems to the constantly developing technological advancements, training of educators is of great importance. Teachers should be encouraged to utilize online texts. Students stated that motivation by teachers is effective in developing reading habits.

The author would like to conclude the paper by citing a student who seems to have summarized the motto of this generation in his response: "*Reading books: sucks, Reading online: rocks!*"

About the Author:

Inan Deniz Erguvan received her PhD in Educational Administration in Marmara University, Istanbul in 2010 and joined Gulf University for Science Technology, Kuwait in 2010. Dr Erguvan's research interests mainly lay within educational administration, in particular higher education management. She analysed the impact of privatisation of higher education institutions for her dissertation and she is making cross cultural analysis on this phenomenon. She has also worked on topics such as internationalization of universities, the use of internet communication technologies in the ELT classroom, and reading habits of undergraduate students.

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