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ACADEMIC READING: COMPULSORY?
ON COMPULSORY READING FOR ACADEMIC COURSES - COURSES OF ACTION, ALTERNATIVES, AND GOAL ACHIEVEMENT

Abstract. *Reading occupies a central place in human life, and provides foundations for understanding one's world, as well as tools that help one in the world. Reading is identified as a method for acquiring new information, and reading abilities are expected to develop and improve over time. From a young age, children learn to read and write and are encouraged, both at home and in educational settings, to enjoy reading. Encouraging reading from a young age develops reading habits and the child's ability to better understand the surrounding world as an intellectual. In our technological era there is a sense of change that has also affected reading; schoolchildren and academic students prefer to play with technological instruments in their free time rather than read a book. Some see this as a change for the worse, but it also has its benefits. Following the technological change, new learning channels have emerged, both at school and in higher education, such as online learning, electronic books, virtual lessons, and so on. The current study investigated reading among students at the various departments of Ariel University, focusing on the question of whether students read the study material required for their courses and whether they use computers or paper. Despite the overall technological transformation, students in most departments prefer paper and books to use of computers for their studies.*
Keywords: *academic reading, electronic books, technology*

Introduction

Reference lists – what for?

- **Supplemental reading** of course textbooks is essential, as instructors normally do not teach all the required material in class.
- Reading textbooks helps students enhance their thinking, promotes academic reasoning, and imparts new principles and concepts that will help them succeed in the academic world.

Features of academic reading?

- **Compulsory**
- **Requires** reading skills: vocabulary (Hebrew, English), exposure and understanding of the existing theories
- **Exposure to inquiry capabilities:** criticism, order and organization, ethical judgment, etc.

Academic studies introduce students to a different world of thinking than that with which they were previously acquainted – one that involves **corroboration and references, intellectual property, innovativeness, and creativity.**

Academic reading requires reading skills, a large vocabulary, thorough understanding of the theories studied, investigative ability, criticism, organization, and so on. Academic studies present students with a different world of thinking that that with which they had been previously acquainted. According to a recent study, supplemental reading of textbooks is essential, as instructors normally do not manage to teach al the required material in class (Pundak, Herscovitz, & Shacham, 2010). Furthermore, reading textbooks helps students develop the quality of their reasoning, advances academic reasoning, and imparts new principles and concepts that will help them succeed in the academic world.

Research has shown that positive attitudes to reading generate positive reading experiences. These positive attitudes are acquired through years of support and encouragement by influential factors, which create the possibility of encouraging higher academic performance (Annamalai & Muniandy, 2013). However, even students who are not avid readings find the necessary motivation to prepare for exams and to read the required material (Akanda, Hoq & Hasan, 2013). Another study found that the students with high marks have a better feeling concerning their reading abilities than students with lower marks (Sheorey & Mokhtari, 1994).

In order for students to successfully pass the various courses, they must put at least three weekly hours of work into each course (Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2013), but according to the research results students make much less efforts

than expected of them. Reading is perceived by most students as a luxury, only possible during limited spare moments. Another reason may be the insufficient skills for organizing and understanding ideas and concepts arising from one's reading. Limited academic reading has a detrimental effect on the student's ability to achieve significant learning (Pundak, Herscovitz, & Shacham, 2010), which might lead to a lack of self fulfillment and lack of professionalism in the chosen discipline.

Technological change as a reason for the decline in reading

The entrenchment of the media, internet, and social networks has led to changes and transformations in modern life. In time, the internet has become an inseparable part of our life, and it affects various spheres, including reading habits. Akanda, Hoq and Hasan's (2013) study of the reading habits of Bangladeshi students, indicates that students do not read books not only in order to prepare for exams rather also for pleasure. In their free time, students prefer to watch television, play games on computers, tablets, and x-box, surf the web and social networks, over reading novels, fantasy, and nonfiction. The change is significant and it is affecting an entire generation, who spend most of their time facing a screen.

Until several years ago textbooks were the main tool used for learning. At present, students have a wide range of learning channels to choose from and most courses are accompanied by required materials available on the websites of academic institutions, which offer articles, presentations, videos, sample exams, and so on. These channels are probably why only a low proportion of students indeed choose to read textbooks. Another reason is the skills required in order to organize and structure concepts generated by the printed material. These skills are associated with organizing information, creating models, reading conclusions, and more (Pundak, Herscovitz, & Shacham, 2010).

Pundak, Herscovitz, and Shacham (2010), who examined features of reading, indicate that students taking basic science courses taught at colleges and universities do not read the textbooks. Students find it difficult to maneuver between their many academic responsibilities. The study found that most students are not interested in making use of textbooks to better understand the theory underlying their studies, rather they are mostly used to help solve exercises and problems.

Reading habits

Types of reading: Reading for pleasure and reading for study.

Reading habits have different definitions in the literature (Davidovitch & Druckman, 2016):

- How one organizes one's reading, acquired from an early age.
- The frequency of reading, quantity read, and contents of the reading material

The acquired reading habits remain with one over life and have an effect on one's academic life as well.

Researchers examined students' reading habits and found an association between reading habits and demographic variables, academic performance, and professional growth. Reading was also found to improve one's vocabulary, offer ideas for new topics, and expand horizons.

The research (Davidovitch & Druckman, 2016) also indicates that:

- **Positive attitudes to reading** generate positive reading experiences.
- Positive attitudes are acquired through the **support and encouragement of influential factors** over the years, which create possibilities for encouraging higher academic performance.
- Students **read for utilitarian reasons.** Even those who are not avid readers find **the necessary motivation to prepare for exams** and to read all the required material.
- **Students with high marks** have a better feeling concerning their reading abilities than those of students with lower marks.
- A correlation was found between reading in academia and in one's free time - and gender, reading culture (effect of home/school), and technological development. Female students were found to have a more positive attitude to reading than male students. Female students read more than male students for pleasure and to improve their knowledge. **Reading culture:** The greater the reading culture at home, the higher the chance that the child will not neglect reading as an adult. The home must be part of a model of reading.

But in practice:

- **Time:** In order for students to successfully pass their various courses, they must work at each course for at least three hours a week, but **students were found to make less of an effort than expected**. Reading is perceived as a luxury.
- **Insufficient proficiency** in organizing and understanding ideas and concepts arising from one's reading. Limited academic reading has a detrimental effect on the student's ability to achieve significant learning, which might lead to lack of self fulfillment and lack of professionalism in the specific discipline.
- **Technological change – The textbook is the main learning tool**. Nowadays, students have a wide range of **learning channels at their disposal and most courses are accompanied by the required materials that are available on the websites of academic institutions**, which offer articles, presentations, videos, sample exams, and more.
- Only **a low proportion of students choose to read textbooks**, which impart a proficiency necessary for organizing and understanding the ideas

generated by the reading (organizing information, creating models, reaching conclusions, etc.).

- There is **a rising trend of using internet sources for learning**. There has been considerable development in the field of electronic information databases, but students still tend to rely on printed material, and particularly on books and class notes.

Reading from a screen versus reading from paper (Simon, 2001; Leff & Harper, 2006; Vandenhoek, 2013)

- An attempt has been made to understand the differences between learning from a screen and learning from printed text. The technological differences themselves are not the answer; rather **the reader's learning process varies.**
- Findings indicate that it is not the media that affects learning, rather **efficient management of the learning process.**

The rationale of the current study

This study continues a previous study on the subject (Davidovitch, Yavich & Druckman, 2016) and it deals with the following questions:

1. Do students read (articles and books) and to what extent?
2. Do students use computers and to what extent?
3. Do students use social networks for learning and to what extent?
4. Do students prefer to use computers or paper and books, and to what extent?

In this study the researchers hypothesize that students' reading habits are indeed changing. Therefore, the researchers hope to find evidence of the following assumptions:

a. In the reading habits of students from the various departments, those of students from the Faculty of Social Studies and the Humanities will be greater than that of students from other faculties. The reason is that these students study non-scientific disciplines that require a higher level of academic reading and research reasoning than students in other faculties.
b. A positive correlation will be found between factors affecting reading and reading habits in general. Namely, the more stimulants for reading the higher the reading habits overall.
c. Overall, the reading habits of female students will be more developed than those of male students.
d. Computer use will be greater than manual use (books, etc.).

Method
Aim of the study

The current study examined reading habits among students of social sciences and the humanities, natural sciences, and engineering, at Ariel University. The aim of the study was to investigate whether students' habits of reading the material in the syllabus and the references have changed, and how and to what degree has the introduction of the electronic media affected these habits.

Participants

Participants consisted of 252 students של Ariel University, from various faculties: engineering, natural sciences, social sciences, media and communications, architecture, and health, a total of 113 men and 139 women. The age range was 18-40. The students were sampled randomly.

Research tool

The study utilized a reading habits questionnaire developed by researchers for this study. Its significance in the current study is 0.82. The questionnaire was comprised of 55 items, and responses were given on a 5-level scale from 1=not at all, to 5=very much.

In the questionnaire the researchers sought to examine how the students describe their reading habits with regard to the following measures:
   a. Reading habits (5 items)
   b. Motivation for reading (4 items)
   c. Expectations for the future with regard to learning and reading (6 items)
   d. Learning habits (15 items)
   e. Quantity of study information on the internet versus books (2 items)
   f. Thorough use of the various search engines, meaning extensive and thorough search (5 items)
   g. Is the search performed in more than one language (3 items)
   h. Types of preferred exams (3 items)
   i. Planning and organization of the schedule (7 items)
   j. Manner of online conduct (2 items)
   k. Attitudes regarding academic teaching (3 items)

The instruction given in the questionnaire was as follows: "We request your participation in a survey on students' reading habits, aimed at enhancing the efficiency of teaching methods. The questionnaires will be analyzed anonymously. Your opinions are important for us in order to illuminate the topic of teaching and learning methods in the digital era. Thank you for your cooperation."

Sample items from the questionnaire:

	Not at all	Very little	Moderately	Often	Very much

Reading habits	Read study materials on the computer					
Which of the following elements had the greatest effect on your literary tastes?	University lecturers					
Learning habits	The library is a reliable source for academic assignments					

Research procedure

The study was carried out with a Google Docs file that the researchers posted on Facebook groups whose members are students of Ariel University studying at the various departments that we investigated. The questionnaire included a short explanation of the topic studied. The questionnaire also included demographic questions on the respondent's age, sex, schooling, and department, followed by a reading habits questionnaire composed of 55 items based on self-report of the measures listed above in the section on the research tool. The researchers also sought to examine whether students read non-academic texts and to what degree, in order to try and include students' overall reading habits.

Research findings

The first research question dealt with the extent of reading by students in the various departments. A significant difference was found between the extent of reading by students in the various departments ($F_{(5,243)}=5.16$, $p<0.01$).

	Media and communications	Engineering	Economics	Social sciences	Health sciences	Architecture	F (5,243)
Mean	3.445	2.846	2.975	2.98	2.89	2.98	5.16
Standard deviation	0.67	0.57	0.637	0.456	0.476	0.599	

Further analyses (using the Scheffe test) show that students of media and communications (M=3.445, SD=0.67) read more than students of engineering (M=2.846, SD=0.57), students of economics (M=2.975, SD=0.637), students of behavioral sciences (M=2.98, SD=0.456) and students of health sciences (M=2.89, SD=0.476). No significant difference was found between the reading of students of media and communications – and of students of architecture.

In light of these tests, our first hypothesis regarding reading habits was not confirmed. The reading of students from the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Humanities was not found to be of a significantly greater extent than that of students from other faculties. Then a t-test for independent samples was conducted to examine the difference between the reading of men and women, and no significant difference was found (p>0.05). Therefore, our third hypothesis that the reading habits of female students would be greater than those of male students was refuted.

The second, third, and fourth research questions were collapsed into one issue on the difference between use of computers and use of paper in order to answer the following questions:

- Do students use computers and to what extent?
- Do students prefer to read printed material or computers, and to what extent?
- Do students use social networks for learning and to what extent?

In order to examine students' preferences regarding use of computers or of paper, the intra-subjects variability between use of computers and manual use (paper, books) was analyzed. In order to examine the intra-subjects variability between use of computers and use of paper or books, a t-test for dependent samples was conducted, and the mean use of paper and books was found to be significantly higher (M=3.145, SD=0.837) than use of computers (M=2.989, SD=0.787) ($t_{(251)}=3.084$, $p<0.01$).

	Mean	SD
Use of computers	2.989	0.787
Use of paper	3.145	0.837

Differences between the schools in use of computers and use of paper and books were also examined. A t-test for dependent samples was conducted, finding that students who had studied at state religious schools prefer paper and books (M=3.24, SD=0.963) over computers (M=2.998, SD=0.758) ($t_{(96)}=-2.90$,

p<0.01), but no significant difference was found between computer and manual usage among former students of state schools.

	State schools (n=120)		State religious schools (n=97)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Use of computers	2.998	0.758	2.95	0.71
Use of paper	3.24	0.96	3.1	0.754

Upon examining differences between the various faculties in use of computers and use of paper or books, a t-test for dependent samples was conducted and a significant preference for use of paper and books (M=3.085, SD=0.48) over use of computers (M=2.62, SD=0.474) ($t_{(17)}$=-2.818, p<0.05) was found at the Faculty of Health Studies. According to the results, in the behavioral sciences as well there is a significant preference for use of paper and books (M=2.996, SD=0.63) over computers (M=2.57, SD=0.53) ($t_{(61)}$=-4.75, p<0.01). In the other departments, no significant differences were found between computer usage and manual usage.

In order to examine students' use of social networks for learning, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted in order to examine differences in use of social networks for studies between faculties. A significant difference was found between four of the five faculties (F(5,241)=7.497, p<0.01).

	Media and communications	Engineering	Economics	Social sciences	Health sciences	Architecture	F (5,241)
Mean	1.775	2.85	2.94	2.38	3.12	2.86	7.497
Standard deviation	0.92	0.57	1.35	1.14	1.22	1.27	

Further analyses (using the Scheffe test) regarding use of social networks for studies show that students from the Faculty of Media and Communications use social networks significantly more (M=1.775, SD=0.92) than students of health sciences (M=3.12, SD=1.22), social sciences (M=2.377, SD=1.14), economics (M=2.94, SD=1.35), and architecture (M=3.38, SD=1.17). No significant differences were found for students of engineering in use of social networks for studies.

In order to examine differences between men and women in the use of social networks for studies, a t-test for independent samples was conducted, and

no gender-based differences were found in the use of social networks for studies.

In addition, a t-test for independent samples was conducted in order to examine differences between types of schools in use of social networks for studies. The test found that former students of state schools use social networks for their studies (M=2.86, SD=1.27) significantly more than former students of state religious schools (M=2.44, SD=1.22, $t_{(215)}$=2.44, p<0.05).

	State schools (n=119)	State religious schools (n=96)
Mean	2.87	2.44
Standard deviation	1.26	1.22

The second hypothesis was that a positive correlation would be found between factors affecting reading and overall reading habits. In order to examine the hypothesis of differences between the factors that influence students' reading, a one-way repeated measures analysis of variance was held. The findings show that there is indeed a significant difference and that friends have a greater effect on students' reading than parents (F=46.96; df=2.89, 724.28; p<0.01).

Factors influencing reading	Mean	SD	N
1. Parents	3.00	0.083	252
2. Teachers at school	2.448	0.081	252
3. Lecturers at university	2.329	0.085	252
4. Friends, acquaintances	3.27	0.079	252

A Bonferroni adjustment shows significant differences between the influence of friends and parents on students' reading (p<0.05) and that of friends and of teachers and/or lecturers (p<0.01). In addition, parents' influence on students' reading was significantly higher than that of teachers and/or lecturers (p<0.01). The discrepancies are conspicuous, and the largest differences are between the influence of friends and parents – and that of teachers and lecturers.

In order to explore the association between reading, use of social networks for studies, influential factors who encourage reading, and the number of technological instruments used by students:

- A Pearson correlation was performed between the variables, and a significant negative correlation was found between reading and use of social networks for studies (r=-0.179, p<0.01), such that the greater the reading the less the use of social networks. A significant positive correlation was found between reading and influential factors who encourage reading (r=0.392, p<0.01) – the greater the influential factors who encourage reading the more students read. No significant correlation was found between reading and the number of technological instruments (p>0.05).

- A significant negative correlation was found between use of social networks for studies and influential factors who encourage reading (r=-0.25, p<0l.01), such that the more influential factors who encourage reading the less use of social networks for studies. No significant correlation was found between use of social networks for studies and the number of technological instruments (p>0.05).

- Another significant correlation was found between influential factors who encourage reading and the number of technological instruments (r=-0.135, p<0.05). The more influential factors who encourage reading, the less technological instruments.

The variables	1	2	3	4
1. Reading	-	**0.179-	**0.392	-0.080
2. Use of social networks		-	**0.251-	0.072
3. Use of influential factors who encourage reading			-	*0.135-
4. Number of technological instruments				-

Conclusion and discussion. The digital resources available to students help them by increasing access to content worlds on all topics. However, students' preferences are conservative compared to life in the digital world. In all the academic faculties examined in the study, students prefer to read printed material over material on a screen. This finding is surprising, considering the current digital generation. While many students prefer to watch television and

surf the web in their spare time rather than reading books (Akanda, Hoq & Hasan, 2013), in the academic field the preference for printed material is retained. Hence, technology indeed changed the reading habits of the current generation, but not the reading habits involving the academic world, although the internet is full of accessible academic aids. The conclusion, based on the research findings, is that despite life in a digital world and easy access to information, academic institutions must reconsider use of electronic databases, as despite all the technological developments there is still a preference for paper and books.

To be more precise, the hypothesis was that the reading habits of students from the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Humanities would be greater than those of students from other faculties. Students of media and communications were found to do significantly more reading than students from the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Humanities, and that those who read the least are students of engineering and economics. A possible reason for this finding is that the former study non-scientific subjects that require thorough study of the theories taught, inquiry abilities, and criticism, more than among students of engineering. Moreover, at the Faculty of Media and Communications students may be given assignments that require them to read the study material, while the academic assignments of students of engineering are based on solving problems. Thus, this find refutes our hypothesis that students from the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Humanities read more than students from other faculties.

Possible influential factors affecting reading habits were also examined. Our hypothesis was that a positive correlation would be found between influential factors who encourage reading and overall reading habits. The findings indicate that friends influence students' reading more than parents and parents more than lecturers, while the least influential factor is school teachers. The literature review shows that a reading culture at home increases the child's chance of growing up to be a reader (Parelta, 2010). Since parents constitute a model for reading, it may be concluded that homes with no reading culture will be less of a stimulant for students in their academic life. Furthermore, differences in reading were examined between types of schools. Reading by former students of state religious schools was found to be significantly higher by former students of state schools. Thus, it is evident that the culture of reading experienced by children in the process of development shapes their reading habits in subsequent academic life and in general.

Another hypothesis examined is that female students would surpass male students in overall reading habits. In contrast to our hypothesis, no gender-based differences were found with regard to reading. This finding contradicts those of a study conducted in Pakistan, which found that female students read more than male students (Dilshad, Adnan & Akram, 2013). A possible

explanation may have to do with the student's faculty rather than sex. Namely, at the Faculty of Media and Communications, which requires a great deal of reading, students are required to read more than students of engineering where more emphasis is given to solving problems.

Finally, the effect of technology on students' reading habits in the various faculties was examined as well. While our hypothesis was that use of electronic information would surpass use of printed textbooks and material, manual usage was found to have preference over computers. This finding is compatible with those of researchers who examined students' preferences for reading from a screen and reading from paper, and found that the most conspicuous preference for reading is for printed material (Vandenhoek, 2013). Moreover, women were found to display a greater preference than men for manual usage, significantly more than for computer usage. Furthermore, participants who had studied at state religious schools preferred use of paper and books to use of computers. Examining the differences between the various faculties, students at the Faculty of Health were found to have a significant preference for use of paper and books than for computers. According to the results, in the behavioral sciences as well there is a significant preference for use of paper and books over use of computers. In the other departments, no significant differences were found between use of computers and manual use.

The current research findings indicate a negative correlation between influential factors who encourage reading and the number of digital instruments. Namely, the more stimulants students have for reading the less technological instruments they have, such as Smartphones, tablets, etc. It appears that students with many stimulants for reading prefer books and paper over technological instruments. This finding is worthy of further study, as despite the current digital era there is still a preference for paper and books.

Possible ways of encouraging reading

1. **References** – note the article's link on the syllabus. Download a pdf file to the website.
2. **Presentations** – Hebrew? English? A combination?
3. Presenting an article as part of the student's mark?
4. Encouraging students to summarize an article – as a bonus?
5. A question in English on the test? Worth a bonus?
6. **Proportion**: Define a required percentage of references in Hebrew and in English.
7. Encouraging joint reading
8. **Assistance with articles** – by lecturer or teaching assistant?
9. **"I believe in research**: References are a research tool" – conscious and ethical interest in academic research, as an academic language
10. **Connection between academia and public discourse**: responsibility for shaping public consciousness

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THE SEMANTIC PECULIARITIES OF THE COMIC EFFECT REALIZATION IN THE ENGLISH ANECDOTE

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Abstract. *The given article is devoted to the problem of the semantic peculiarities of the comic effect realization in the English anecdote. The article gives the definition of the term «anecdote». In this issue the semantic means such as paronomasia, anagram, polysemy, antonymy, homonymy and phraseologisms are analyzed. It investigates their functional peculiarities, quantitative and qualitative characteristics.*
Keywords: *anecdote, comic effect, semantic means, humour, functional peculiarities.*

Humour in terms of expansion of the intercultural communication is able to optimize communication of different cultures, making it efficient and comfortable, or destroy communication. The latter may be due to the fact that what is considered funny in one culture may be offensive in another one.

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