

# Several Notes on Reading Strategies

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**Abstract:** Working in tourism industry we deal with many kinds of communication. For that reading skills are essential. The contribution concerns with the importance of having reading skills and of being acquainted with reading strategies.

**Key words:** reading strategies, effective reading, BookCrossing, annolighting, annotating

## 1. Introduction

Students and especially graduates of travel industry spend a lot of time working with different kinds of written texts. For that it is essential that their reading is efficient. To ensure that it is necessary for students to develop effective reading strategies. Effective reading involves understanding text structure, reading for different purposes and reflecting on reading. To know how students are skilled in reading and what they read in a foreign language I have decided to do a research on reading skills and habits. For that reason results from 372 students questionnaires were assessed and some conclusions were drawn.

## 2. Problems to Tackle

### 2.1. Distributing and completing the questionnaire

During the years 2008 and 2009 372 students from two schools (Czech University of Life Sciences Prague and College of Polytechnics Jihlava) were asked to complete a simple questionnaire. In the research there were included both full-time and part-time students. In the questionnaire, see the appendix, there are four types of questions. In the first part there are questions to find out what students read, in the next parts questions to find out how often and why they read and in the last part to find out whether they use a dictionary and how often they use it.

### 2.2 Assessment

All the students answers were carefully assessed. The results gained can be seen from following tables:

**Table 1:**

<b>What Students Read</b>													
Fiction	Non-Fiction	Magazines	Newspapers	Technical / scientific articles	The Internet information	User manuals	Songs	Foreign textbooks	Leaflets	Guidebooks	Application forms	Forms	Others (fairy tales, subtitles, e-mails, street notices, crosswords, etc.)
56	35	110	57	50	244	179	205	257	96	93	26	59	19

**Table 2:**

<b>How often students read – 372 students</b>					
Almost daily	2-3 times a week	Once a week	Once in 2-3 weeks	Once a month	Less
39	107	105	40	52	29

**Table 3:**

<b>Reasons for Foreign Language Reading</b>					
<b>Working / studying duties</b>	<b>Gaining information</b>	<b>Vocabulary enrichment</b>	<b>Improvement of foreign language knowledge</b>	<b>For fun</b>	<b>Others</b>
263	189	107	117	122	6

**Table 4:**

<b>While reading</b>				
<b>Reading without a dictionary</b>	<b>Looking up key words</b>	<b>Frequent looking up unknown words</b>	<b>Looking up every unknown word</b>	<b>Guessing from context</b>
41	163	154	45	1

### **2.3. Absence of Reading**

One of the most serious problems at schools is absence of reading. Most questioned students responded that they devote less time to reading than it would be appropriate. This research showed us that most of the students read texts in textbooks and on the Internet. We should also mention things like songs, leaflets or forms. So before we start to lead a discussion about the meaningfulness of being acquainted with reading strategies we should concentrate on the fact how to read for pleasure. It is not my task here to list here a number of different activities which could be attractive for students and could involve them in reading. Nevertheless there is one thing I have experienced and I was involved in during my teaching at Gymnázium of Doctor Aleš Hrdlička in the town of Humpolec.

### **2.4. BookCrossing**

As I have mentioned above it is important to make our students read more. For that reason it was decided at Gymnázium of Doctor Aleš Hrdlička in Humpolec to use for that an adapted version of BookCrossing. What is BookCrossing? BookCrossing is a time limited action, it is not only a game but also a competition to have fun. These are some facts about its origin. It started on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2004 in the cafe of French Institute in Prague as a non time limited action to support reading. The first one hundred books were put in the BookCrossing that evening, the next phase was in the town of Olomouc and then in Brno. The aim was to read books, to play with them, to get some knowledge. Free books could be found on buses, benches, trees etc. It was decided to use BookCrossing because of these reasons: to have fun, to get some knowledge about classical and modern literature, to revive our home bookshelves, and also to win a prize. For the organisation of the BookCrossing itself it was necessary to keep these categories:

1. Novels, classical literature, stories → novels, classical lit., stories, dictionaries
2. Fairy tales → fairy tales
3. Detective stories → novels, detective stories, classical lit., stories
4. Poetry → poetry
5. Magazines → magazines, poetry, novels, fairy tales, classical lit.
6. Non-fiction → non-fiction, novels, fairy tales, classical lit.

It was possible to change the book within the given category. And what happened with the books left? All the left books were collected and put into the school library. I have to mention that the books were given to students by sponsors to have fun and enjoy reading. What were the rules? During the month of April it was possible to find a book at any place at school. On the plastic cover of the book there should have been the official BookCrossing label.

You had to decide whether to take the book or not. In case you liked it, you could keep it. Then you had to take off the plastic cover, to put it on one of your books which you did not need anymore and to bring it to school. That book then became a part of BookCrossing and it was necessary to hide it anywhere at school. In case you did not like the found book you could leave it. When you changed the book, you had to send a short email with a note what kind of change you did. All the emails were carefully checked and in the end of the month the assessment was done. The students with the most reported changes were awarded with prizes from sponsors. I think that such an event does not lose its attraction and it can be applied not only at basic or secondary schools but with the same success at tertiary educational establishments, particularly when it is organized by students themselves.

### 3. Reading Strategies

There is a big range of reading strategies to improve comprehension. In this paper I am going to list some of them and to deal only with the chosen ones. When you read, it is often useful to highlight, underline and annotate the text as you go on. This emphasises information in your mind, and helps you to review important points after you have finished studying the text. These all mentioned activities belong to active reading. It helps you focus on material being read. The most used reading strategies seem to be the following: **Annolighting a Text** (an active reading strategy linking concept of highlighting key words and phrases in a text and annotating those highlights with marginal notes), **Annotating a Text** (an active reading strategy providing a number of useful acronyms that students can use to remember different elements of writer's craft when reading and annotating a text), **Collaborative Annotation** (this strategy engages students in a process of co-constructing their interpretations of a text through a collaborative annotation activity), **Summarizing** (a strategy for developing coherent but brief expressions of larger ideas by focusing on key words and main ideas), **Anticipation Guide, Checking out Framework, Conversation across Time, Dense Questioning, Frame of Reference, Inferential Reading, Interactive Notebook, Key Concept Synthesis, Listening to Voice, Metaphor Analysis, Parallel Note-taking, QAR** (Question-Answer Relationship), **Questions Only, RAFT** ( students choose a Role, an Audience, a Format, and a Topic on which to write in response to their reading), **Reciprocal Teaching, Sociograms, Think Aloud, Transactional Reading Journal**, etc.

For further information see: <http://www.greece.k12.ny.us/instruction/ela/6-12/Reading/Reading%20Strategies/reading%20strategies%20index.htm>

### 4. Conclusions

Why I am dealing in this paper with reading strategies? When strategies are used reading seems to be more purposeful, it becomes more effective, strategies make reading more enjoyable, and it should be taken into account that enthusiastic readers use strategies naturally. To avoid boredom students should be provoked to read for pleasure by different events or activities. It seems that one of such activities could be BookCrossing.

#### Literature:

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**Appendix**

<b>Foreign Language Reading</b>		
<b>Form of studies:</b>	<b>Age:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Foreign languages:</b>		
<b>What do you read? (tick possibilities)</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- fiction</li> <li>- non-fiction</li> <li>- magazines</li> <li>- newspapers</li> <li>- technical or scientific articles</li> <li>- the Internet information</li> <li>- user manuals</li> <li>- songs</li> <li>- texts in foreign language textbooks</li> <li>- leaflets</li> <li>- guidebooks</li> <li>- application forms</li> <li>- forms</li> <li>- others (please specify)</li> </ul>		
<b>How often do you read in the stated foreign language?</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- almost daily</li> <li>- 2 -3 times a week</li> <li>- once a week</li> <li>- once in 2 -3 weeks</li> <li>- once a month</li> <li>- less (how often?)</li> </ul>		
<b>Reasons for foreign language reading: (please tick appropriate item/s)</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- working / studying duties</li> <li>- gaining information</li> <li>- vocabulary enrichment</li> <li>- improvement of foreign language knowledge</li> <li>- for fun</li> <li>- others (please specify)</li> </ul>		
<b>When reading:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I read without a dictionary</li> <li>- I only look up key words</li> <li>- I often look up unknown words</li> <li>- I look up every unknown words</li> <li>- other ways (please specify)</li> </ul>		