



**LIS students' reading habit analysis:
Analysis between Croatia, Slovenia and Austria**

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to provide an introduction to students reading habits and to present a study that authors have conducted in three Universities in Croatia, Austria and Slovenia. The primary objective of this research is an attempt to explore the reading habits of LIS students and their attitudes towards reading of professional

and other literature. In this paper can be found existing literature overview, results from authors research and conclusion about LIS students reading habits.

KEYWORDS: reading habits, students, reading time, multimedia

1. INTRODUCTION:

As it is well known, one of the most important factors in the education is the capability to read, understand and critically apprehend the text. To be capable of doing these students must develop their reading habits on a daily basis. The capability of understanding text and reading habits should be developed from early childhood through the whole life.

Reading habits are also a vital part of the lifelong learning concept. Everyone who wants to take part in learning society, including students, working people and senior citizens should be developing their reading habits through their whole life.

LIS students should be the first ones endeavoring to develop their reading habits and reading habits of their surroundings. Unfortunately, authors argue that LIS (Library and Information Science) students' reading habits are not sufficiently developed.

Because of this statement, the hypothesis of this paper is as follows:

LIS students' reading habits are not sufficiently developed. Teachers and teaching assistants are not taking the necessary steps to improve their

students' reading habits, nor do they apply multimedia techniques in their teaching processes in order to transfer knowledge.

The authors of this research argue that the emergence of "new technologies" has increased the number of tools that can be used in teaching. This research will explore the reading habits of LIS students taking into account their environment, family surroundings, knowledge of foreign languages, social status, and for upper classmen their academic success.

In a broader context, this problem can be observed throughout students' entire education; from early childhood to college age.

Some of the LIS students after they graduate will, perhaps, enter the European labor market and their reading habits can possibly reflect on their subsequent professional success. We are here referring to the concepts of lifelong learning, continuous professional development and possible career changes. This research will also touch on sociological criteria based on which we will try to define to what extent the social background influences the reading habits and abilities of students as well as the influence of television and

other mass media on reading habits of adolescents. Current research on this topic exists but it, does not include the study of LIS students from Croatia, Slovenia and Austria.

2. EXISTING LITERATURE OVERWIEV

The fact is that reading habits topic has come in the researchers focus in last decade and large number of book, booklets, papers and case-studies has been written on this topic.

Other researches of this topic tend to observe reading habits from persons' early age to the end of schooling. We did not, however, come across any research that deals with reading habits of LIS students.

Resources that deal with reading habits from the perspective of sociology point to the influence of television watching and the Internet on the reading habits of young people (Scharmm, 1961)

Through the study of sociology resources were introduced to the effect of television watching and the Internet on reading habits of young people (Avery, 1979).

Rayemaekers claims following: "...
television viewing has a negative effect on

reading time and habits of sixteen to eighteen year old students."
(Rayemaekers, 2002)

Although we mentioned only two authors who claim that Internet and television has negative effects on reading time and habits, there are numerous authors who are saying the same thing.

There is negligible number of authors who are arguing about positive effect of television on reading habits. Those authors see possible positive relation between watching television and reading habits, especially in those countries where subtitling is common practice. (Van der Voort, Beentjes, 1987)

Social scientists attribute great importance to heritage, social background and the environment, therefore we included these parameters in our methodology as well (Rosenmayr, 1979).

The reason for attributing importance to this factors is very simple and its based on the fact that in most cases, students from social families do not have equally developed reading habits as students from middle or high class families.

As we can see from this chapter, there is numerous articles written on this topic, but as we said before, we did not come across

research that examines LIS students reading habits.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research has been conducted in three countries, Croatia (University of Osijek, Department of LIS), Austria (Fachhochschule für Informationsberufe Eisenstadt) and Slovenia (University of Ljubljana, Department of LIS). We decided to conduct it in three different countries because we want to see what impact cultural differences and education policies in these countries will have on our results. We used focus group method for students and interview with professors and teaching assistants.

Authors decided to use focus groups to interview students because of possibility to encourage discussion between students about questions concerning reading habits. While students discussed about questions, examiners had take part as moderators. Authors thought that taking notes on the place could be contra productive and that notes can be inaccurate so we taped the sessions on dictaphone. We asked every group same 12 questions.

In Osijek 10 and Ljubljana 10 students participated in focus groups and five in Eisenstadt. Total number of student is 25.

As we mentioned, we have conducted interviews with professors and teaching assistants. We interviewed one professor in Ljubljana and Eisenstadt and three professors in Osijek. In Osijek we interviewed head of department and two teaching assistants. Total number of interviewed professors and teaching assistants is 5.

All professors and teaching assistants where asked the same 8 questions.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. STUDENTS

In the following chapter we will present results from focus groups and interviews. Answers are described form answer to answer and we also quoted some students.

Students from all three universities said that they read every day, mostly their professional literature but also novels, newspapers, magazines etc.

In their spare time, students from Ljubljana read printed materials; mostly books and students from Eisenstadt and Zadar spend

most of their spare time by reading internet portals.

Main motive for reading for students in Ljubljana is their hunger for knowledge, they don't feel that they are forced to read and time spent reading describing as pleasure. Zadar and Eisenstadt students find that reading in spare time is relaxing but when they read for their classes and examines they fell forced. Main reason for reading is their obligation to pass tests.

Croatian students also realize practical side of reading. Common opinion is that reading is tool to gain useful information for everyday living. Slovenian and Austrian students say that reading helps them in their professional and everyday life, and that individuals with better reading habits will gain better results on exams and in their professional life. We can quote one student:

“They read much faster; understand text better and they are capable to critically apprehend text.”

On the other side, students from Croatia are having different opinions about reading impact on their success. Most of students claim that reading is not vital part of learning process and that curriculum should be based on practical case-studies and examples. Their opinion is that professors forcing them to read a lot and neglect practical exercises. They are

convinced that they would gain better results from practical work instead of reading.

As one of the Croatian students said:

“If someone has very good reading habits it doesn't necessarily means that he we use them to gain better results.”

Author of this statement explained himself using the following argument:

“Someone can has the best reading habits, but in case that he doesn't use them properly, he will not profit from them”.

Also, all students from Croatia share opinion that reading is the best way to improve their vocabulary and imagination.

Concerning development of reading habits trough primary and high school, students from all three countries agreed that their teachers and professors did not put enough effort in developing their reading habits. When they thing about reading in primary and high school they think only about obligation to read novels in order to pass exams. This is the reason why some of the interviewed students don't like reading.

Slovenian Ministry of education is conducting *reading badge* program and a lot of students from Ljubljana do not approve it. They think about it is like some

kind of contra productive competition between students.

As one of the students said:

“I always thought that reading badge is ridiculous. It’s not a way to gain reading habits. I think that reading habits should be developed by reading books that students want.”

All students agree that reading habits are not in nature of some subject in primary and high school, like mathematics or physics. Only literature professors tried to develop their reading baits and unfortunately they did not have effect. All students stress that they developed their habits by themselves.

“School didn’t have effect at all. My reading habits were developed earlier by my family.”

I developed my reading habits by myself, members of my family didn’t have time for reading so I was trying to find interesting books by myself.”

Concerning the reading of professional literature every day based on faculty curriculum, students from Croatia are satisfied with the fact that their professors assign them daily reading in order to discuss about literature in class. They do not like method so much but they realize that their test results have improved. Also,

they want more multimedia in learning process, such as films, podcasts etc.

Austrian students find reading groups as a way to improve reading and they are sure that this method should improve their results; on the other hand, students from Slovenia do not want to have reading groups on their faculty. All focus group participants from Ljubljana said that reading is personal and that reading groups do not have effect at all. This is only question where we found diametrical opposite opinion between students.

Although, all participants do not fell special hostility towards reading, but they all say that literature written in English is their main problem, they are having hard time to understand professional expressions and in situations like that, they are frustrated. More literature in native language is common wish of all students.

All students have their private book collections at home but they minimize its effect on academic success. *“Only collection of dictionaries and encyclopedias could be helpful.”* Osijek students said.

While we were examining multimedia effect (TV and Internet) on students reading habits we came up with the following results.

Multimedia, especially Internet has become a vital part of their life. Students from Ljubljana spend very small amount of their time watching television. They rather listen to radio or surfing Internet.

Students from Eisenstadt spend most of their time watching TV or surfing internet and they do not listen radio at all. For Ljubljana and Osijek student main problem with television is lot of commercials.

One student said:

“Why I should wait movie to be broadcasted on TV when I can download it form Internet and its commercials free! “

Also, if there is a movie based on novel, students from Ljubljana will take novel to read and students from Eisenstad will take a film. Opinions on this subject in Osijek are divided.

All Ljubljana students claim that mass media do not distract them from reading at all, but students in Osijek and Esienstadt claims different. Their opinion is that TV and Internet is big threads to classical reading.

When they are searching literature for their seminar papers, students from all three countries find Internet more convenient than books but not so accurate and relevant.

Most important thing from this focus group interview is something that we didn't hear at all.

From 25 students and more than two hours taped material, no one mentioned library as factor in developing reading habits.

4.2. PROFESSORS AND TEACHING ASSISTANTS

In second part of this chapter we will present results gained from interviews with professors and teaching assistants. In Ljubljana we interviewed professor Primož Južnič, Ph.D. and head of LIS department, in Osijek professor Damir Hasenay, Ph.D. and head of LIS department and teaching assistants professor Maja Krtalić and Sanjica Faletar-Tanacković, Ph.D.

Our interview partner in Eisenstadt was Professor Michael Zeller, Ph.D. currently professor of informatics at Fachhochschule Burgeland.

Interview with professors was constructed from eight question trough which we tried to get answers about their opinion on students reading habits, using multimedia in teaching process and problems their facing during the lectures concerning students reading.

As there are many problems in Croatia concerning Bologna Declaration, we asked our interlocutors about problems they are facing because of lack of classrooms, large student groups, incapability of individual tutoring and bad working conditions in general.

General opinion of all five professors is that students do not have enough developed reading habits and they are trying to improve them by giving them daily reading materials. Problem is in the fact that students should come on University already prepared to read every day and critically apprehend text. Unfortunately, that isn't the case.

Very often students don't understand point of text, cannot make difference between relevant and irrelevant. Professor Južnič claims next:

"... Students should read everything, not just professional literature. Our life is reading life; you cannot be LIS expert without reading."

Although, students' opinion is different all professors agreed that reading habits are very important in achieving better academic success.

"... Meaning of the word study is critically think about something that we read or heard. Student with good reading habits developed from early childhood have

certain advantage towards student without reading habits."

Professors from Croatia pointed out problems with adapting to Bologna Declaration standards in teaching. One of the foundations of Bologna is small student groups and individual work with students.

There are two main problems, large student groups, lack of infrastructure and teaching personnel. There is no intention to hide behind these problems but they are real and have a lot of effect on quality of teaching and students' success. As professor Hasenay said:

"We don't want to hide behind problems but we work in very difficult conditions. For example, our student groups are up to forty students and they should be up to fifteen, we don't have enough computers, staff and space to work with. One of the possible solutions is e-learning like Moodle. We should look up to Scandinavian countries and their way of conducting Bologna Declaration."

There is opinion among the professors that multimedia improves teaching process and all of them are trying to use it as much as possible. All of them use power point presentations on a daily basis and sometimes educational movies. They have realized that students apprehend information better when they see it on film. Nevertheless there is a certain level of skepticism when we come to question of comparison

between multimedia and written materials. Written materials still have advantage in comparison with multimedia. That is the main reason why professors would encourage forming of reading groups.

Teaching assistants from Osijek, prof. Krtalić and prof. Faletar-Tanacković are dealing with student's seminar papers, homework's and projects on daily basis. They are worried about the fact that almost all students are browsing Internet when they are searching literature for their work. In nowadays, it is very hard to find book or printed article in students' references.

Based on their experience, prof. Krtalić and prof. Faletar-Tanacković, are now "forcing" students to use printed materials.

"Every student's literature survey starts and ends with Internet."

Based on these interviews, authors came to conclusion that professors are not satisfied with their students reading habits and that students should work harder on developing them trough professional and other literature.

5. CONCLUSION

After conducting focus groups with LIS students and interview with their professors' authors believe that primary

hypothesis is confirmed. As a reminder we shall give it once more:

LIS students' reading habits are not sufficiently developed. Teachers and teaching assistants are not taking the necessary steps to improve their students' reading habits, nor do they apply multimedia techniques in their teaching processes in order to transfer knowledge.

Most of interviewed students don't have enough developed reading habits, and they don't give any special effort to improve them. Most of students find daily readings boring and obligating, nevertheless some students admit that daily reading is improving their success. Common wish of students is more multimedia in teaching process and they think that professors are not interested in using any of them besides power point presentations.

On the other hand, professors aren't satisfied with students reading habits and they would like to improve them, but they point out students' unconcern for their own development.

Professors from Croatia have a lot remarks on Bologna Declaration policy of education.

They point out very difficult conditions to work, lack of staff, computers etc. As closing word, we can say that television and Internet, in general, have bad influence

on reading time and habits of LIS students, professors are not satisfied with their level of understanding but students also are not trying to improve their reading habits and spend more time reading.

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