

Improving reading of longer texts

Academic Reading – Effective Reading

Reading for study purposes is a demanding activity and differs from the reading that we do in everyday life. It is demanding both because of the amount you are expected to read and the level of difficulty.

“Instead of the message slipping easily into your mind, as when you read a newspaper or a paperback, you find yourself having to concentrate to grasp it.” (Northedge, 2005, 101)

Task 1

Think about these questions, discuss your ideas with your ASK Tutor:

1. What is the purpose of reading at university?
2. Northedge (2005) stresses the importance of active engagement when reading at university. What do you understand this to mean?
3. There are a number of obstacles that can impede academic reading. These include unfamiliar vocabulary, a challenging academic style, long texts, complex information, ideas and opinions and reading in an unsuitable physical environment.

Discuss with your ASK Tutor how these can be overcome.

Task 2

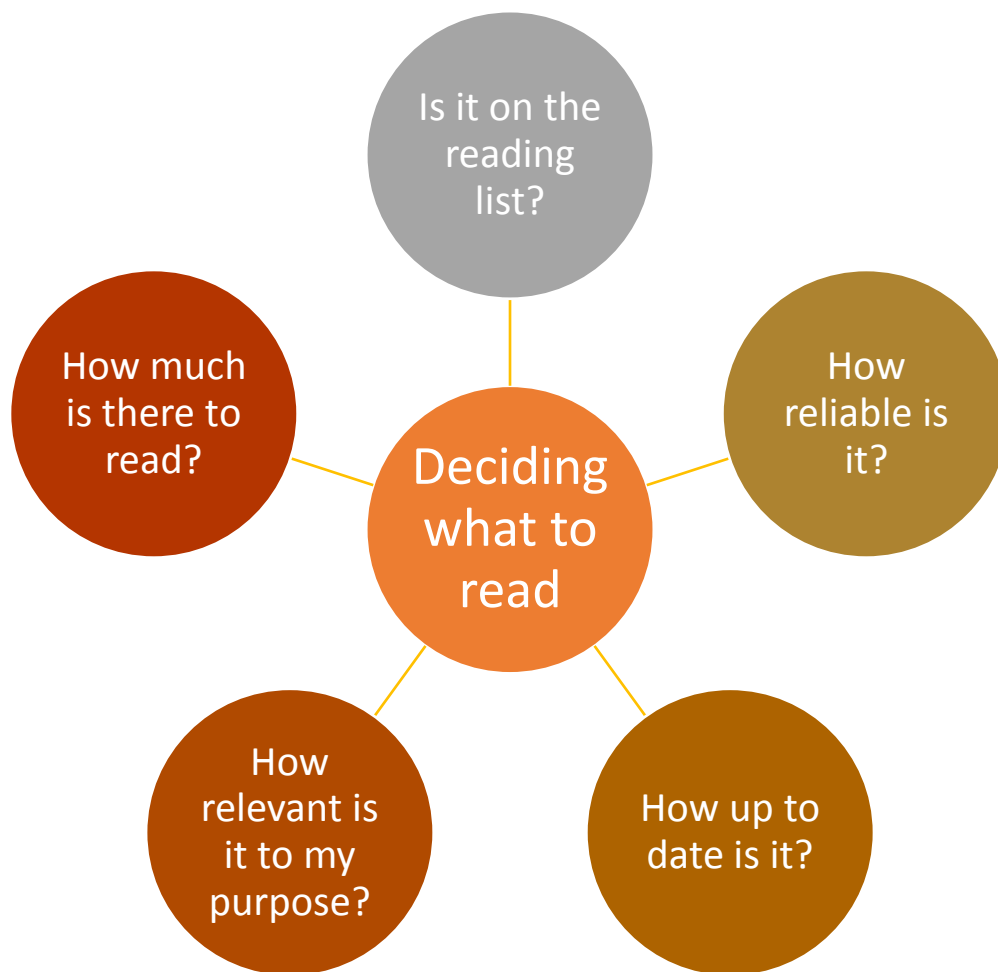
Think about the role the following play in effective academic reading.

- setting targets;
- highlighting and underlining;

- mental paraphrasing;
- notes in the margins;
- questioning what you read;

Task 3 - Deciding what to read.

Stella Cottrell suggests that the following questions need to be considered when deciding what to read:



Task 4

You are going to read an article **Globalisation and Culture** by George Mason University economist and Cato adjunct scholar Tyler Cowen

Before you look at the article, think about these questions:

1. *How do you expect the article to be structured?*
2. *What illustrations do you expect to be included?*
3. *What do you think might be challenging about reading this article?*

Task 5

Look quickly through the article and identify features that help you to obtain an overview of the subject.

1. *How do the headings, boxes and illustrations facilitate understanding?*
2. *If you only had time to read one section, which would it be?*

Task 6

Without reading the article in its entirety, try to obtain an overview of the key point(s) being made in the article.

1. *Which sections are most likely to provide an overview?*
2. *Write a very brief summary of the main points being made in your own words.*

Task 7

After you have given your summary, consider these questions

1. *How successful was your summary?*
2. *What helped you to understand the section?*

Note taking;

Underlining;

Highlighting;

Questioning yourself;

Any other strategies.

3. *How did you cope with unfamiliar words?*

Task 8

Apply these techniques to a reading text for your next report.

Task 10

One way to improve your reading is through regular practice as this builds up your familiarity with specific genres and can help to extend your vocabulary.

In groups, pairs, or individually (and then with your ASK Tutor), identify academic or more general publications that could provide further reading practice materials.

General Publications	Academic Publications
<p><i>The New Scientist</i></p> <p><i>BBC Focus Magazine</i></p>	<p><i>Nature</i></p> <p><i>The British Dental Journal</i></p>

Globalization and Culture

*Critics of globalization contend that, even if increased trade promotes material prosperity, it comes with a high spiritual and cultural cost, running roughshod over the world’s distinctive cultures and threatening to turn the globe into one big, tawdry strip mall. George Mason University economist and Cato adjunct scholar **Tyler Cowen** has for years been one of the most insightful and incisive debunkers of that view. At a recent Cato Book Forum, Cowen discussed his newest book, *Creative Destruction: How Globalization Is Changing the World’s Cultures*. Cowen squared off against political theorist **Benjamin Barber** of the University of Maryland, one of the most prominent skeptics of globalization and author of the best-selling *Jihad vs. McWorld*.*

Tyler Cowen:

The core message of my last few books is that markets support diversity and freedom of choice, that trade gives artists a greater opportunity to express their creative inspiration. The preconditions for successful artistic creativity tend to be things like markets, physical materials, ideas, and inspiration. When two cultures trade with each other they tend to expand the opportunities available to individual artists. My book *Creative Destruction* outlines the logic of what I call a “gains from trade” model, and much of the book is devoted to a series of examples. I go back in history and look at some examples of poorer or Third World countries that have been very creative, and I find that trade played an important role in those artistic revolutions.

So if we look, for instance, at Cuban music or reggae music, we find that Cuban music was produced largely for American tourists who went to nightclubs in Cuba in the 1950s. Persian carpets started being produced in large numbers again in the 19th century, largely to sell to European buyers who sold to North American buyers. The blossoming of world literature—writers from Mahfouz to Marquez—the bookstore, the printing press, the advent of cinema around the globe are all cases in which trade has made different countries, different regions, more creative, given us more diversity. Countries do look more alike, but they look more alike in the sense of offering some commonly diverse choices. So today you can buy sushi in either France or Germany. This makes France and Germany more alike, yet in my view this is closer to being an increase in diversity than a decline in diversity.

If we think of societies that have very well developed markets—for example the United States—what we find happening is not that everyone, for instance, buys or listens to the same kind of music. As markets have allowed suppliers to deliver products to consumers, we've seen a blossoming of different genres of music. In the 20th century the United States evolved rock and roll, rhythm and blues, Motown, Cajun music, many different kinds of jazz—ragtime, swing, stomp—heavy metal, rap. The list goes on. When I look at the empirical evidence from societies with well-developed market economies, I find that what people want to buy is not fixed or biologically constructed. When the cost of supplying products goes down, people tend to use culture to differentiate themselves from other people, to pursue niche interests, to pursue hobbies. It's the poorer or more primitive societies in which people specialize in one type of consumption. If you go to pygmy society in the Congo, for instance, the pygmies produce splendid music; it's truly beautiful. But the pygmies really have just one kind of music, and the richer societies with more markets have given us more diversity, more competing kinds of music.

What globalization tends to do is increase difference, but it liberates difference from geography. We're used to a certain pattern or model of difference. Different peoples are different, and they live in different places. So there's what Tibet looks like, there's what Mexico looks like, and there's what Indiana looks like. We rapidly identify difference with locale. But that's only one kind of difference. Another kind of difference shows up in the paths we choose to take through our lives, and I believe that individuals will always wish to choose different paths for their lives. It may be the case 300 years from now, if the world globalizes enough, that Mexico, Tibet, the United States, and Thailand won't necessarily be so geographically distinct. Crossing a border may be less of a shock than it is today. But I think we will still find other kinds of differences that are liberated from geography, that are differences among individuals. And those, I think, will be even more vital than they are today.

Benjamin Barber:

One of the problems of globalization and cultural borrowing and cultural mimicry is that they depend, not on isolated cultures, but on authentic cultures. And I quite agree that the "authentic" culture is itself a cultural product of earlier cultural interactions, so it's not the

fixed item that critics sometimes suggest. Nonetheless, we all know the difference between getting crêpes in Dijon and getting them in a New York place called Les Halles. Even though you do get something like the original product, there's a real difference between those crêpes. When we borrow across cultures, we are, as Plato would suggest, on a second or even a third level of reality, so we're distancing ourselves. That's OK, that's always going to happen, obviously. When you come back to the States and have an Indian tandoori experience in Arlington, it's not going to be the same as you might have in Bombay, but it is still a kind of tandoori experience and will remain such as long as in Bombay there's the authentic tandoori experience. But when Bombay, like Arlington, is simply a theme park of world cultures in which everyone is roughly alike, in that they have the same diversity of offerings, that diversity becomes increasingly simulated, and the authenticity from which those experiences come essentially disappears.

Euro Disney, outside Paris, now gets more visitors than Paris does every year. I'm sure that, among other things, people go to the French theme park at Euro Disney to sample French culture along with Danish and German and other cultures that are there. Some might think they'd do better to travel the 17 kilometers into Paris. In effect, the "theme-parking" of culture, which is part of globalization and part of the theme-parking of our world is, yes, a kind of diversity, but it is the diversity of the theme park. It is increasingly synthetic; it's increasingly distanced from the authentic origin. Increasingly, it takes a toll on that authentic origin, as when an American crêpe maker ends up back in Paris selling the American version of crêpes to people in Paris who don't make them anymore because there's a much cheaper global product they can get in place of what they've had. Globalization has a tendency to move that process forward at alarmingly dispiriting rates.

A second argument has to do with standardization and homogenization. I've got a nice quote here from an executive at Bayer aspirin, who says: "A lie has been perpetuated for years and years. The lie is that people are different! Yes, there are differences between cultures, but a headache is a headache, and aspirin is aspirin." And, of course, Bayer aspirin is Bayer aspirin, which is even better. I think Tyler makes some very wise, culturally based arguments to show that, in fact, this kind of uniformity and homogenization, at least on the aesthetic level, isn't always as alarming and as extensive as it might seem. But the focus on the aesthetic dimensions of diversity misses the essence of what global homogenization is about. It's perfectly true that there's probably far more diversity today than there was a hundred years ago in London, where the availability of Indian and Chinese and Japanese and Indonesian and French food is much greater than it was when all you had were places where you could get roast beef and pudding, or pubs where you could get some sausages with your beer. In that sense, you could say that the English are much better off than they were. But this is to misunderstand, for example, the influence of fast food. Many people argue that fast food actually increases diversity, in that it caters to different tastes. And aesthetically, that's true, but it misses what fast food does to homogenize and, indeed, what fast food is about.

Fast food isn't about the food. It's about fast, and fast is an assault on how we live. It's an assault on social behavior. It's an assault, for example, in Europe, on the three hour

Mediterranean meal for which the family comes home—mom and dad come home from work, the kids come home from school—and sit together for three hours. It's an assault on the idea of food as a social ritual, with which you have extended conversations. It's an assault even on the French idea of the café as a place to sit and read the paper. It's not, by the way, that you can't sit in a Paris McDonald's and read the paper and drink wine, because McDonald's does in fact make those local adjustments. But that goes very much against what fast food is about. What it's about is fast volume, individual customers coming in, eating, and getting out. In fact, McDonald's low prices depend on volume, and volume depends on turnover.

Fast food is the perfect food for a busy industrial economy, where you don't really want people to take three hours off. A lot of businesspeople complained about Spain and Italy and France in the old days, how hard it was for them to adjust to the modern economy. Three-hour meals (followed in some of those cultures by a long siesta) took the heart out of the workday. Fast food puts the heart back into the workday by turning food back into a fueling-up ritual. That's fine if consumption is what you're looking for, but if the social values, the religious values, the familial values of food are what you're about, then fast food is a disaster whether it's fast burgers, fast fries, or fast tandoori. The vaunted diversity is a superficial diversity under which lies a homogenizing culture of productive work and consumption. The work of shopping, the work of making goods to buy, is the homogenizing factor that is right below the surface, that we miss when we talk about the quality of the food and whether McDonald's offers only burgers or, as they're beginning to do now, various other kinds of food.

There's a third issue that goes to the heart of our topic. Tyler makes the mistake that all pro-market commentators make of assuming that somehow markets, if not perfect, are nearly perfect, that there are no inequalities, that monopolies are just sort of accidents and can be avoided, and that power doesn't really affect the market's reciprocal relations. The problem is that when America meets another culture, it's not, as you might imagine here, just two guys in the woods. It's not an American wearin' his Nikes and eatin' his burgers meeting up with a Nigerian who's singing a different kind of music, and they have a little exchange, and when it's done the American's a little different—a little more Nigerian—and the Nigerian's a little different—a little more American—and we're all the better off for it. Rather, you've got to imagine the American armed, sort of like the soldiers in Iraq are armed, with all of the goods and brands of modern technology, modern commerce, hard and soft power, hegemonic economic power over the globe, hegemonic military power over the globe. That's the culture that's meeting up with some little Third World culture that's got some Navajo blankets or some fusion music that we'd kind of like to collect.

Finally, let me just say a word about values. My book was called, not just McWorld, but Jihad vs. McWorld. It may be that, to many of us, Westernization, globalization, Americanization, the spread of McWorld look like the spread of diversity. Apparently, for a lot of other people around the world— especially people living in fundamentalist Islamic cultures, in fundamentalist Judaic cultures, in fundamentalist Hindu cultures, and, indeed, in

fundamentalist Protestant cultures here in the United States—McWorld appears an aggressive, secularist, materialist attack on their values and what they care about for their children. And their response is, not to write a bad review of Tyler’s book, but to pick up a bomb or a gun and go to war with us. I would argue that terrorism today, though it has lots of motives that have nothing to do with globalization, also does have something to do with globalization. It has to do with what is seen as the monolithic, secularist, materialist homogenization of cultures in ways that imperil and endanger the special values—not aesthetic, but religious and moral values—that people hold dear. Unfortunately, some people are willing to kill to try to preserve what they have. If we are insensitive to those people or simply persuade ourselves that they are wrong to think that globalization is homogenization or a peril to values, we will be engaged, not in an argument, but in a series of unending and devastating wars. And that’s why I think that these arguments are of much more than just academic concern.

CATO INSTITUTE (2003) Globalisation and Culture [Online] Available from: <http://www.cato.org/policy-report/mayjune-2003> (Accessed: 26th June 2015)