



CRITERIA FOR SELECTING ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONALLY ORIENTED TEXTS FOR DEVELOPING PHILOLOGY STUDENTS' READING COMPETENCE

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Abstract

The article examines the criteria for selecting academic and professionally oriented texts aimed at developing reading competence among philology students. It argues that text selection should be based not only on topic relevance, but also on language level, linguistic complexity, terminological density, professional value, communicative potential, and suitability for digital learning environments. The paper emphasizes that a carefully selected text functions as a key didactic resource for developing linguistic, cognitive, strategic, and professional reading skills.

Keywords: Reading competence; academic text; professionally oriented text; text selection; philology students; English language; CEFR; ICT; linguodidactics; reading strategies.

Introduction

In modern philological education, reading in a foreign language is no longer viewed merely as a receptive language skill or as a means of translating written material. It is increasingly regarded as a complex academic and professional activity through which students obtain, process, interpret, evaluate, and apply information. Grabe and Stoller [1] emphasize that reading involves the interaction of linguistic knowledge, cognitive processing, background knowledge, and strategic behaviour. Therefore, for future specialists in foreign languages, reading competence is of particular importance, since written texts serve as a source of linguistic knowledge, academic concepts, cultural meanings, professional terminology, and argumentative patterns.



The development of reading competence among philology students depends not only on the number of texts read or the quantity of tasks completed. A decisive role is played by the quality and methodological relevance of the texts selected for classroom and independent work. Alderson [2] notes that reading assessment and instruction should take into account different levels of comprehension, including understanding explicit information, making inferences, interpreting ideas, and evaluating textual meaning. This means that the selected text should create conditions not only for literal understanding, but also for analytical and critical work.

The issue of text selection becomes even more significant in the context of digital education. The use of ICT tools, online platforms, interactive exercises, automatic assessment, and digital feedback requires texts that are not only meaningful in content but also suitable for methodological adaptation in a digital learning environment. Robert [3] and Bespalko [4] consider educational technologies as didactic systems that should be connected with learning objectives, content, methods, and assessment. Therefore, text selection should be regarded as an essential stage in designing an effective system for developing students' reading competence.

The purpose of this article is to identify and methodologically justify the main criteria for selecting academic and professionally oriented texts for developing reading competence among philology students.

Literature review

Reading competence is understood in contemporary linguodidactics as a multidimensional ability that goes beyond the mechanical decoding or translation of a written text. It includes the ability to find relevant information, understand explicit and implicit meanings, interpret content in context, evaluate the author's position, and use the obtained information in academic, communicative, or professional situations. According to the CEFR Companion Volume [5], reading as written reception includes different forms of understanding written texts, ranging from identifying specific information to interpreting complex meanings and arguments.

This understanding changes the role of the text in foreign language teaching. A text is no longer treated only as a source of vocabulary and grammar. It becomes



a central didactic object through which linguistic, cognitive, strategic, sociocultural, and professional skills are developed. Nuttall [6] argues that the effectiveness of reading instruction depends greatly on the appropriateness of the text, its relevance to learners, and the way reading tasks are organized. Consequently, the selection of texts should not be based on a single parameter, such as topic or length, but on a set of interrelated methodological criteria.

Zimnyaya [7] views learning activity as a purposeful process in which motive, goal, and action are closely connected. This idea is important for reading instruction because a student does not simply decode a text but interacts with it in order to achieve a meaningful learning goal. If the selected text is related to the student's academic needs and professional interests, reading becomes more conscious and productive.

In communicative language teaching, the text is also regarded as a means of developing communicative readiness. Bim [8] and Passov [9] emphasize that language learning should be organized around meaningful communication rather than isolated language forms. From this perspective, academic and professionally oriented texts help students use reading not only for language practice, but also for solving educational and professional tasks.

Academic and professionally oriented texts have particular methodological value in this context. Academic texts introduce students to the language of science, the logic of argumentation, the structure of scholarly discourse, and the use of concepts and evidence. Professionally oriented texts connect reading instruction with students' future professional fields, such as teaching, translation, intercultural communication, research, and linguistic analysis. Serova [10] points out that professionally oriented reading is closely connected with the ability to search, select, understand, and use information for professional purposes.

At the same time, text selection should take into account students' level of language proficiency. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages provides a useful basis for matching texts and tasks with learners' abilities [5]. At lower levels, texts with clear structure, familiar topics, limited terminology, and explicit information are more appropriate. At higher levels, students may work with texts containing implicit meanings, argumentative structure, specialized terminology, intertextual references, and opportunities for critical interpretation.



Thus, the theoretical basis for selecting texts in the development of reading competence is formed by the integration of competence-based, communicative-cognitive, strategic, and digital-didactic approaches. From this perspective, the text is not a supplementary classroom material, but a key resource for developing students' reading, professional, and digital literacy.

Research methodology

In the process of developing reading competence, the text performs several interconnected functions. First, it serves as a linguistic resource, since it exposes students to vocabulary, grammar, syntax, discourse markers, and stylistic features of the target language. Second, it functions as a cognitive resource, as it requires students to understand ideas, establish logical relations, identify cause-and-effect links, make inferences, and evaluate information. Third, it acts as a professional resource, particularly when its content is related to the students' future specialization.

For philology students, texts should not be limited to general everyday topics. Although such texts may be useful at the initial stages of language learning, they are insufficient for developing academic and professional reading competence. Harmer [11] stresses that learners should be actively engaged with texts through purposeful tasks, prediction, discussion, and interpretation. This is especially relevant for philology students, whose future professional activity involves working with language, culture, discourse, translation, and education.

A professionally selected text should encourage students to move from surface comprehension to deeper interpretation. This means that the text should allow different levels of work: identifying the main idea, understanding details, interpreting implicit meanings, evaluating arguments, expressing personal opinion, and applying the information in a new context. Anderson [12] underlines the role of metacognitive strategies in reading, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating comprehension. Therefore, text selection is closely connected with the design of reading tasks and the development of reading strategies.

Main Criteria for Selecting Academic and Professionally Oriented Texts

The selection of texts for developing reading competence among philology students should be based on several key criteria. These criteria are interrelated and should be considered as a unified methodological system.



1. Correspondence to Students' Language Level

The first criterion is the correspondence of the text to the students' level of language proficiency. A text that is too simple may not stimulate intellectual effort, while a text that is too difficult may cause frustration and reduce motivation. The CEFR Companion Volume [5] makes it possible to relate reading tasks to specific levels of language proficiency and to organize gradual progression from basic understanding to complex interpretation.

2. Linguistic Complexity

Linguistic complexity includes lexical, grammatical, syntactic, and stylistic features of the text. For philology students, this criterion is especially important because they are expected not only to understand content but also to notice how meaning is constructed through language. Grabe and Stoller [1] argue that successful reading depends on the interaction between lower-level linguistic processing and higher-level comprehension processes.

3. Terminological Density

Terminological density refers to the number and complexity of specialized terms used in the text. For philology students, terminology is an important part of professional development. Nation [13] emphasizes the importance of vocabulary knowledge for reading comprehension, especially when learners work with academic and specialized texts. Therefore, terminology should be introduced gradually and supported by context, glossaries, or pre-reading activities.

4. Professional Relevance

Professional relevance is one of the most important criteria in selecting texts for philology students. A text should be connected with students' future academic and professional activities. Serova [10] considers professionally oriented reading as a form of information activity that prepares students to work with texts relevant to their future profession. In philological education, such texts may deal with language teaching methods, language acquisition, translation problems, cultural communication, literary analysis, phonetics, grammar, discourse, or digital literacy.



5. Communicative and Pragmatic Value

A text should also have communicative and pragmatic value. This means that it should be possible to use the information from the text for discussion, problem-solving, comparison, presentation, writing, or project work. Passov [9] emphasizes that foreign language learning should be connected with meaningful communication. Therefore, a text with communicative value encourages students to interact with its content and express their own position.

6. Strategic Potential

A selected text should allow the use of different reading strategies. These may include skimming, scanning, predicting, identifying keywords, making inferences, recognizing the author's attitude, evaluating arguments, and reflecting on the content. Anderson [12] states that strategic and metacognitive awareness helps learners control their reading process more effectively. Thus, texts with strong strategic potential support the formation of independent readers.

7. Cultural and Sociocultural Value

Since philology students work with language as a cultural phenomenon, texts should also have cultural and sociocultural value. They should introduce students to different cultural contexts, values, traditions, communication styles, and social issues. Harmer [11] notes that meaningful texts can stimulate discussion and help learners connect language learning with real-life and cultural contexts.

8. Suitability for Digital Learning Environments

In modern education, texts should also be evaluated according to their suitability for digital use. A text selected for ICT-based reading instruction should be adaptable to interactive tasks, online tests, automatic feedback, multimedia support, and independent learning. Robert [3] argues that information technologies in education should serve didactic aims rather than function as isolated technical tools. Therefore, digital suitability should be understood as the possibility of transforming a text into level-based, strategy-oriented, and interactive learning tasks.



Table 1. Criteria for Selecting Texts for Developing Reading Competence

Criterion	Methodological Significance
Language level	Ensures correspondence between text difficulty and students' proficiency
Linguistic complexity	Helps control vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and discourse features
Terminological density	Supports gradual development of professional vocabulary
Professional relevance	Connects reading with students' future academic and professional activity
Communicative value	Allows discussion, interpretation, problem-solving, and further use of information
Strategic potential	Enables the use of skimming, scanning, inferencing, critical reading, and reflection
Cultural value	Develops sociocultural and intercultural awareness
Digital suitability	Makes the text adaptable to ICT-based tasks, assessment, and feedback

Results and discussions

The analysis of theoretical and methodological sources allows us to identify several important findings. First, text selection directly influences the quality of reading competence development. Second, academic and professionally oriented texts are especially relevant for philology students because they connect language learning with future professional activity. Third, text difficulty should be correlated with students' CEFR level and gradually increased. Fourth, texts should have strategic potential, allowing students to practise skimming, scanning, inferencing, critical reading, and reflection. Fifth, in digital learning environments, texts should be suitable for interactive tasks, automatic assessment, and feedback.

The selection of academic and professionally oriented texts is one of the key didactic conditions for developing reading competence among philology students. The analysis shows that a text used in foreign language education should not be chosen randomly or only according to its topic. It should correspond to students' language level, linguistic background, academic needs, professional interests, and the methodological objectives of reading instruction.



The study confirms that academic and professionally oriented texts have considerable potential for developing not only linguistic knowledge but also cognitive, strategic, sociocultural, and professional skills. As Grabe and Stoller [1] point out, reading is a complex interaction of linguistic, cognitive, and strategic processes. Therefore, the selected text should encourage students to work with information at different levels: literal understanding, interpretation, inference, critical analysis, and reflection.

Alderson [2] also emphasizes that reading involves more than identifying explicit information; it requires the ability to understand deeper meanings, interpret textual relations, and evaluate content. From this perspective, text selection becomes a methodological mechanism that helps students move from simple comprehension to analytical and reflective reading.

The criteria proposed in this article — correspondence to language level, linguistic complexity, terminological density, professional relevance, communicative-pragmatic value, strategic potential, cultural significance, and suitability for digital learning environments — may serve as a practical basis for designing reading materials for philology students. These criteria make it possible to connect the content of the text with the goals of language education, future professional activity, and the development of independent reading strategies.

Conclusion

In the context of ICT-based education, the role of text selection becomes even more important. Digital tools can support reading instruction only when the selected texts are methodologically appropriate and can be transformed into interactive, level-based, and strategy-oriented tasks. As Robert [3] notes, information technologies in education should serve didactic aims rather than function as isolated technical instruments. Thus, the effectiveness of digital reading instruction depends on the integration of text, task, strategy, assessment, and feedback.

Consequently, the selection of academic and professionally oriented texts should be regarded not as a technical stage of lesson preparation, but as an essential component of the methodology for developing reading competence. A properly selected text helps philology students expand vocabulary, understand professional terminology, analyze arguments, interpret cultural meanings, evaluate



information critically, and apply reading results in academic and professional contexts.

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