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STRATEGIES AND CRITERIA FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE READING MATERIALS SELECTION

Reading is of great importance for the modern educational process, as it opens access to leading sources of information, expands people's outlook, etc. Naturally, reading as a communicative skill and a means of communication is always used at the FL classes. However, the foreign language competence of most Ukrainian teachers remains insufficient. The purpose of the article is to single out the strategies and criteria for selecting the educational material to improve the level of teachers' foreign language competence in reading. Thus, the current study presents the criteria for selecting the foreign language texts for reading in a due regard to educational, psycholinguistic, linguistic, technical, socio-cultural aspects, with an appropriate set of options for each of them. The strategies of selecting foreign language texts, offered in this research, are relevant to the current tendencies prevailing in the formation of foreign language competence in reading. They include focusing on the topic envisaged by the curriculum and the objectives of the FL class; fixing linguistic, speech, sociocultural aspects that are necessary for the class; applying different ways of highlighting / marking the lexical units and grammar structures; enlarging fonts; providing audio support for students with special educational needs (visually impaired students). The developed strategies and criteria suggest that students with special educational needs should also be able to use the texts. With the aim of determining the level of Ukrainian teachers' foreign language competence in reading, a survey was conducted, which has enabled the authors to вугукштит the peculiarities of teachers' work with foreign texts, the lack of foreign texts that contain topics on various literary genres and reveal a sociocultural component. Eventually, the article offers certain approaches to the adaptation of foreign texts in terms of the learning objectives and students' communicative needs. The strategies and criteria, developed and proposed in this study, are a significant extension of the already existing tools that take into account new challenges in modern methods of foreign languages teaching. The prospective areas of further research are the study of the reading materials search engines and their effect on teachers' foreign language competence in reading.

Key words: strategies for selecting foreign language reading materials, criteria for selecting foreign language reading materials, adaptation of foreign language reading materials, foreign language competence in reading.

Читання в сучасному навчальному процесі відіграє виняткову роль, оскільки відкриває доступ до провідних джерел інформації, розширює світогляд тощо. Природно, що читання як комунікативне вміння та засіб спілкування повсякчас використовується на уроках іноземної мови. Незважаючи на це, іншомовна компетентність вчителів України залишається недостатньо сформованою. Мета статті – виокремлення стратегій та критеріїв відбору навчального матеріалу для вдосконалення рівня сформованості іншомовної компетентності в читанні вчителів. Так, запропоновано критерії відбору іншомовних текстів для читання з огляду на освітній, психолінгвістичний, мовний, технічний, соціокультурний аспекти з відповідним набором опцій для кожного з них. Запропоновані у праці стратегії відбору іншомовних текстів є релевантними сучасним тенденціям у методиці формування іншомовної компетентності в читанні. До них відносимо вибір ефективної пошукової системи; фокусування уваги на темі, яка передбачена навчальною програмою, та цілях заняття ІМ; фіксація необхідних для заняття мовних, мовленнєвих, соціокультурних аспектів; використання різних способів виділення / маркування лексичних одиниць та граматичних структур; збільшення шрифтів; аудіосупровід для осіб з особливими освітніми потребами (порушення зору). Виокремлені стратегії і критерії передбачають можливість використання текстів учнями з особливими освітніми потребами. З метою визначення рівня сформованості іншомовної компетентності в читанні вчителів України проведено анкетування, що дало можливість з'ясувати особливості роботи вчителів з іншомовними текстами, їх потреби, недоліки пошукових систем, брак іншомовних текстів, які б включали теми з різножанрової літератури і розкривали соціокультурний компонент. Запропоновано підходи до адаптації іншомовних текстів з урахуванням цілей навчання та комунікативних потреб тих, хто навчається. Розроблені стратегії і критерії роботи з текстами у цій праці є значним розширенням існуючих інструментів, що враховують нові виклики в сучасній методиці викладання іноземних мов. Перспектива подальших досліджень полягає в аналізі пошукових систем з добору матеріалів для читання для полегшення роботи вчителів та вдосконалення їхньої компетентності в читанні.

Ключові слова: стратегії добору іншомовних текстів, критерії добору іншомовних текстів, адаптація іншомовних текстів; іншомовна компетентність в читанні, пошукові системи, медіакомпетентність.

The significance of the paper. Reading as a communicative skill and a means of communication is an important type of speech activity and the most common way of conversing in a foreign language. This form of communication provides passing of experience gained by mankind in various spheres of life, develops intelligence, enhances sensitivity, teaches, develops, educates [5].

In the process of FL teaching, the reading text performs a linguistic, professionally informative function and helps extract the information that the teacher needs to provide in the classroom, in accordance with the objectives of the lesson [3, p. 244]. Consequently, to operate effectively and ensure successful learning outcome, teachers themselves should develop foreign language competence in reading at a high level.

The analysis of basic research and publications. A considerable amount of literature has been published on reading competence and its effect on foreign language communication skills (Koreyba, 2011; Gómez, Fernando, 2012; Vavilina, 2012; Farooq, 2015; Asrifan, Ghofur, 2021), vocabulary acquisition (Krashen, 2013; Suk, 2017; Schmitt, 2019), grammar proficiency (Peyer, Kaiser, Berthele, 2010; Kim, Cho, 2015; Lee, Schallert, Kim, 2015), development of critical thinking skills (Albeckay, 2014; Zhou, 2015; Din, 2020), and overall academic performance (Lao, Krashen, 2000; Maleki, Zangani, 2007; Ghenghesh, 2015) of students on various education levels. Recently, however, there is a growing focus on expediency of using the Internet resources in the course of reading competence formation in foreign language classroom (Koreyba, 2011; Dao, 2014; Girón-García, 2015; Asgari, Ketabi, Amirian, 2019). Currently, scientists are discussing the integrated use of foreign language textbooks and online materials in the classroom (Brandl, 2002; Leone, Leo, 2011; Erbaggio, Gopalakrishnan, Hobbs, Liu, 2012; Cruz Rondón, Velasco Vera, 2016), as well as the future displacement of all traditional teaching aids by Internet materials (Koreyba, 2011).

The research carried out by the above-mentioned scholars mostly dealt with teaching reading in primary schools, teaching professional reading to students of technical, natural science, economic specialties and teaching professional reading to the prospective teachers of FL (with a broad use of the Internet resources). However, the specifics of selecting the educational material to improve the level of teachers' FL competence in reading has not been sufficiently investigated.

The purpose of the article is to distinguish the strategies and criteria for selecting the educational material to improve the level of teachers' foreign language competence in reading.

The discussion of basic material. Teacher's foreign language competence in reading is a complicated, dynamic set of knowledge, skills and abilities that allow to find, extract from the 'global network' [2], as well as realize and evaluate whatever necessary information from different sources. In addition, it is the willingness to apply this information practically, in the process of professional activity [1, p. 23]. Its success is stipulated by media competence, which is a constituent of the educational-strategic competence and is a set of knowledge, skills and abilities to use search engines, directories, etc. [2]. A high-level foreign language competence in reading also depends on the knowledge of types, genres of foreign texts and the peculiarities of their structure [3]. Besides, teachers' foreign language competence in reading presupposes the development of skills for different types of reading – detailed reading, introductory reading, search reading, review / selective reading, to promote successful application of reading communicative tasks [3, p. 244].

It is during the work with the text that teachers extract professionally oriented information and develop professionally significant skills and abilities (analysis, synthesis, comparison, forecasting, restoration of the whole from its components). At the same time, it is necessary to consider the purposes of teaching reading at practical classes, with a due regard to practical, educational, developing and educational objectives; the factors impacting the formation of competence in reading, the types of reading – introductory, selective or detailed; the stages of forming competence in reading; the system of exercises, as well as the assessment of competence in reading.

In order to determine the state of FL competence in reading, we have surveyed 100 teachers of primary, secondary and high schools all over Ukraine.

The survey was conducted anonymously, which was announced in the questionnaire. The participants gave their informed consent for participating in the study, as well as were informed of the withdrawing possibility, with no ensuing consequences.

In the course of the survey, it has been ascertained that 100% of the teachers use foreign language texts for reading at their classes daily – 94% of them use educational texts for reading with the aim of improving language and speech competencies (lexical and grammatical competencies, competencies in speaking, writing, translation, etc.), 64% – to get acquainted with socio-cultural information and 47% – to improve students' reading skills. At the same time, 58% of the respondents evaluate the textbook (in terms of expediency and effectiveness of educational texts for reading) as good, and 30% – as satisfactory; in terms of motivational value – 12% rate the current textbook as unsatisfactory, 17% – as satisfactory, and 52% – as good.

Taking into consideration the fact that texts for reading are used at FL classes systematically and none of the current textbooks have been rated as excellent, 42% of the respondents search for textbooks on their own on a regular basis and another 41% – from time to time. 77% of the respondents search for educational texts for reading on the Internet, and 24% – in an authentic textbook that is not basic for learning. Among the respondents who search for educational texts for reading on the Internet, 24% are familiar with specially designed search engines for educational texts for reading and another 40% have a vague idea of their existence. Thus, 35% have heard about or sometimes use the VIEW system, whereas 23% – the REAP and READ-X systems. The same number of respondents (18%) have chosen the Fern, the iSTART-ALL and the WERTi systems, 11% – KANSAS. A small percentage (2%) use the Academia and DerDieDaf systems. 65% of the respondents search for educational texts for reading in the above systems due to the availability and relevance of educational materials posted there. However, only 17% of teachers rate these search engines as excellent.

The vast majority of the respondents (95%) make queries in the Google search engine most frequently. Finding the necessary text in Google is an extremely time-consuming task. Apart from that, teachers often have to develop didactic materials or to adapt the texts they found in this search engine independently.

For this reason, we also interviewed teachers regarding the key qualities and characteristics they are guided by, when selecting texts. For 94% of the respondents, it is important that educational texts for reading should contain some relevant information about national and

cultural traditions, 59% select the texts, relying on the number familiar and unfamiliar words, 42% pay attention to keywords and text size. For 35% of the respondents the genre affiliation of the text is important, while 23% prefer texts with graphic accompaniment. 75% of the interviewed teachers find it essential to deal with topical relevance of the text, whereas 59% choose the authenticity and availability of didactic materials and 41% – thematic content. Only 24% of the respondents, when selecting a text, rely on its ‘feasibility’, and 17% - on its adaptability. 77% of the respondents choose fairy tales for primary school students, 59% – songs, 42% – rhymes and 35% – letters. In secondary schools, teachers prefer to work with letters (77%), life stories (65%), posts on social networks (71%), songs (35%) and fragments from literary works (30%). In high school, they focus on newspaper articles (94%), life stories (53%), posts on social networks (59%), fragments from literary works (65%) and reports (48%).

30% and 42% of the respondents, respectively, adapt educational texts for reading regularly or occasionally. 100% of the respondents, if necessary, make the selected texts for reading easier by reducing the number of words (30%), simplifying grammatical constructions or replacing them with simpler ones (71%), changing complex words for simpler and lighter synonyms (65%).

20% of the respondents teach students with special educational needs. According to statistics, in Ukraine, 19345 students with special educational needs study in inclusive classes. In the academic year 2019–2020, 35% of the total number of secondary education institutions arranged inclusive education (The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2019). Approximately 60-80% of children in Ukraine are visually impaired, while more than 17% of primary school students have various speech disorders (a considerable part of children overcome these disorders by the end of primary school). Consequently, it is obvious, why for 65% of the surveyed teachers it is important that textbooks for reading should contain colored accents on the key language aspects, audio and graphic features. 24% think it is important that texts should contain a minimum number of long words and sentences, another 12% prefer texts with a larger font.

The basic task of the survey was to find out the peculiarities of teachers’ work with foreign texts (whether they use texts from Internet resources, or authentic textbooks, which search engines they are familiar with and whether they use them in their professional activities, what criteria they rely on when selecting texts, etc., if teachers take into account additional criteria while selecting texts to facilitate the reading of foreign language texts by students with special educational needs).

The survey has shown that foreign language teachers mostly use ineffective commands when selecting texts, as they enter keywords and the desired level of text complexity into the search bar in a majority of cases (either through the letters A1, A2, B1, or just words «every day language», «scientific language», «subordinate clauses», etc.

Thus, we distinguish the following strategies for selecting texts for reading: choosing an effective search engine; focusing on the topic envisaged by the curriculum and the FL objectives; fixing linguistic, speech, sociocultural aspects, necessary for a FL class; using different ways of selection / marking of lexical units and grammatical structures; enlarging fonts; providing audio support for students with special educational needs (visually impaired).

Thus, with the help of special search engines, teachers can search the Internet for relevant language learning materials that meet both the current level of language proficiency and the thematic interests of the course participants. When investigating educational texts, teachers have the opportunity to choose a topic, determine language complexity in terms of vocabulary and grammatical constructions (e.g. sentence types, tenses, verb forms, lists of specific word, etc.) and in this way to select the most appropriate texts. Special search engines help FL teachers to consider the needs of the course participants and ensure their success in learning. Nevertheless, they do not consider all the necessary aspects of selecting foreign language texts for reading.

An important factor of teachers’ foreign language competence in reading is the selection of criteria for foreign language teaching materials. In this regard, we suppose it is necessary to identify strategies and criteria for obtaining educational texts for reading.

Having analyzed available sources, we offer the criteria, which may be grouped in compliance with the following five aspects: *Educational Aspect*, *Psycho-Linguistic Aspect*, *Technical Aspect*, *Lingual Aspect*, and *Sociocultural Aspect*.

In accordance with the *Educational Aspect*, the topics of the texts should implement the purpose of the FL lesson, correspond to the curricula for different types of secondary schools, as well as to practical, educational, and developing objectives of FL learning.

It is essential to point out that FL teachers also teach children with special educational problems. Therefore, a necessity exists to develop additional criteria for working with texts. We believe it is of great importance to work out the criteria for selecting texts for reading for visually impaired students.

In addition, the selection of texts is considerably affected by the type of reading: a) introductory reading – reading with an understanding of the main content of the text; b) review / selective reading – reading with the aim of obtaining necessary information c) detailed reading – reading with a full (detailed) understanding of the text. All topics that are revealed in the texts should correspond to the curriculum; the content of the texts is expected to meet practical, educational, and developing purposes.

In compliance with the *Psycho-Linguistic Aspect*, students should enjoy reading (texts should be age-appropriate: a) primary school texts; b) secondary school texts; c) high school texts, and coincide with students' interests). Besides, reading should have certain benefits (texts should promote personal development) and meet students' communicative needs and interests (texts must comply with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: elementary user (A1, A2); independent user (B1, B2); experienced user (C1, C2)). When selecting texts for reading, the FL teacher has to take into account a motivational component, such as a reward, for instance (positive feedback, assessment, book as a gift, certificate). There are also a few other criteria that may enhance students' motivation: a place for reading (classroom, home, computer classroom, reading clubs, reading picnic, reading conferences); social forms of working with texts (a) individual (independent) reading, b) reading in pairs, c) reading in large or small groups, d) frontal reading, e) dramatization); means and forms of reading control (control by a teacher (printed or media tasks), individual work / self-control (reader's diary, portfolio, blog), control by a partner, a group (pair work, wall newspaper, chat).

Another crucial aspect of selecting texts is the *Technical Aspect*. The obstacles to the availability of print, audio, and visual media are much easier to overcome by means of web technology. Affordable design improves the overall experience and users' satisfaction, especially in different situations and on different devices. This means that students with disabilities can equally perceive and understand navigation, as well as interact with web accessibility and web tools.

To make students work as effectively as possible, the selected texts are supposed to: be accompanied by audio materials (spoken aloud for people who cannot see the screen and who can hardly read); be enlarged to certain font sizes, or displayed on Braille devices (for visually impaired students); contain colored accents on key lexical units, grammatical structures, theme, problem or the main idea of a story; have different writing styles depending on the relevance of the information presented in the text; contain a minimum number of long words and sentences; be supported by graphic organizers (concept maps, story maps, cognitive clusters). The FL teacher should select texts and reading sources with a due regard to the possibility of changing the foreground and the background contrasts (the foreground text should sufficiently contrast to the background colors); scale the text to 400% or switch line spacing; adjust the sound volume by, for example, turning the background sound down or turning it off to avoid any interference or distraction.

In regard to the survey results, the most important things to be born in mind when selecting a text for reading are its size and structure.

The *Lingual Aspect* requires particular attention to: lexical units (internationalisms, geographical names, abbreviations); morphology (articles, nouns, adjectives, pronouns, adverbs, prepositions, particles, verbs, tense forms: Active and Passive Voice, conditional sentences); syntax (simple sentences, interrogations (with and without interrogative words), compound, complex and infinitival constructions)); style: colloquial (everyday life, family and friends), literary genre (stories, novels, plays, verses, fairy-tales, legends), formal features (formal relations, autobiography, business correspondence, certificates), journalistic features (social life, newspaper or magazine articles, speeches, reports), popular science, scientific literature (science, technology, education, production).

The *Sociocultural Aspect* is also of great significance. It might be divided into Sociolinguistics (phraseological units, proverbs, sayings, collocations) and Country Studies (history, geography, education, religion, traditions, customs, holidays, outstanding people in different fields, national and cultural peculiarities (greetings, adieus).

An important factor in the work with texts is their adaptation for teaching purposes [4]. Hereby, the teacher can apply various approaches to text adaptation, in compliance with the objectives of a foreign language classroom.

Text adaptation can be done: 1) by eliminating certain words or by eliminating partial texts; 2) by rearranging and compressing; 3) by omitting unfamiliar words or complex syntactic constructions; 4) by omitting certain parts of the text; 5) by changing or rearranging; 6) through extensions or additions, which can be carried out within a running text or inserted outside the text as an additional text in the form of explanations or comments; 7) adaptation takes place through description.

Text adaptation enables the teacher to diversify the tasks for foreign language texts, as well as to pick out the options, which he / she needs for a certain grade or group of students. This ensures differentiation and individualization of FL teaching.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. The strategies and criteria, developed and proposed in this study, are a significant extension of the already existing tools that correspond to the new challenges in modern methods of foreign languages teaching. When selecting texts for reading, teachers should not focus only on grammatical structures or topics. They have to regard different options of educational, psycholinguistic, technical, linguistic, and sociocultural aspects, combine them, considering the communicative needs of students and people with special educational needs. It is worth emphasizing that appropriateness of the text is not a constant value. It depends on age, communication needs, interests, social forms of work with the text. The teacher can vary the set of criteria, according to the topic, objectives, stage of the lesson, level of students' proficiency. The strategies, criteria and approaches that we offer in this study for selection and adaptation of foreign language texts are designed not only to expand the already existing tools for working with texts, but also to improve the level of teachers' foreign language competence in reading.

The study does not cover all the aspects of the problem. Among the prospective areas of further research is the study of the reading materials search engines and their effect on teachers' foreign language competence in reading.

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and reveal a sociocultural component. Eventually, the article offers certain approaches to the adaptation of foreign texts in terms of the learning objectives and students' communicative needs. The strategies and criteria, developed and proposed in this study, are a significant extension of the already existing tools that take into account new challenges in modern methods of foreign languages teaching. The prospective areas of further research are the study of the reading materials search engines and their effect on teachers' foreign language competence in reading.

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