Journal of Social Studies Education Research, 2017, vol.8, N3, pages 215-226

English textbooks for Russian students: Problems and specific features

Solnyshkina M., Vishnyakova O., Gafiyatova E., Gabitov A.
Kazan Federal University, 420008, Kremlevskaya 18, Kazan, Russia

Abstract

© 2017, Association for Social Studies Educa. All rights reserved. The research identifies the complexity level of eight texts from Spotlight 11 used in Russian TEFL to prepare students for National Unified Exam in English and assess their reading skills. The results of the analyses conducted with the help of T.E.R.A., an automated text processor, prove that all texts fell within the range of 6 – 9 Flesch-Kincaid grade levels which correspond to the English language proficiency of the target audience. We also revealed the absence of a clear progression in difficulty across the eight texts in the continuum which may cause unpredictable test results and contribute to demotivation of students. The results also show that the indices of narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion and deep cohesion measured with T.E.R.A. do not grow but fluctuate across the continuum of the texts either. Aiming at selecting authentic texts with steadily growing complexity of each of the above mentioned parameters, we recommend to incorporate the suggested algorithm of text analysis into TEFL practice in Russia. T.E.R.A. is viewed by the authors as a tool able to provide educators with a solid foundation to select texts, develop curriculum, design assessment tasks and otherwise address academic needs of a target audience.

Keywords

Narrativity, Readability, Syntactic simplicity, Text complexity, Texts analysis

References

[1] Crossley, S.A. & McNamara, D.S. (2016). Adaptive Educational Technologies for Literacy Instruction. York, NY: Routledge.

[2] Duran, N.D., Bellissens, C., Taylor, R.S. & McNamara, D.S. (2007). Quantifying text difficulty with automated parameters of cohesion and semantics. In: Proceedings of the 29th annual meeting of the cognitive science society (233-238). Mahwah, NJ: Eribaum.

[3] Erbilgin, E. (2017). A comparison of the mathematical processes embedded in the content standards of Turkey and Singapore. Research in Social Sciences and Technology, 2(1): 53-74.

[4] Gabitov, A.I. & Ilyasova, L.G. (2016). Use of automated instruments of text analysis to provide proper difficulty level of English language educational materials. Problems of Modern Pedagogical Education: Pedagogy and Psychology, 53(3): 101-108.

[5] Heibert, E.H. (2009). Interpreting Lexiles in online contexts and with informational texts. Seattle, WA: Apex Learning.

[6] Kiselnikov, A.S. (2013). Formulas of readability as a text analysis tool. In: Language. Society. Consciousness: Collection of articles (247-253). Kazan: Fatherland.

[7] Lee, D.Y.W. (2001). Defining core vocabulary and tracking its distribution across spoken and written genres. Journal of English Linguistics, 29: 250-278.

[8] Mauch, J. & Tarman, B. (2016). A Historical Approach to Social Studies Laboratory Method. Research in Social Sciences and Technology, 1(2): 55-66.

[9] McNamara, D.S., & Graesser, A.C. (2012). Coh-Metrix: An automated tool for theoretical and applied natural language processing. In: Applied natural language processing and content analysis: Identification, investigation, and resolution (188-205). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

[10] McCarthy, P., Graesser, A.C. & McNamara, D.S. (2006). Distinguishing genre using Coh-Metrix indices of cohesion. Poster presented at the annual meetings of the Society for Text and Discourse, Minneapolis, MN.

[11] McCarthy, Ph.M., Lightman, E.J., Dufty, D.F. & McNamara, D.S. (2006). Using Coh-Metrix to assess distributions of cohesion and difficulty: An investigation of the structure of highschool textbooks. In: Proceedings of the 28th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society (190-195). Mahwah: Eribaum.

[12] Narrativity (n.d.). In: Oxford Living Dictionaries. Retrieved from https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/narrativity.

[13] Pearson, D.P. & Liben, D. (2015). The Progression of Reading Comprehension. Retrieved from https://docs.gatesfoundation.org/documents/literacyconveningprogressionofcomprehension .pdf.

[14] Readability Formulas. Free readability tools to check for Reading Levels, Reading Assessment, and Reading Grade Levels. Retrieved from http://www.readabilityformulas.com/.

[15] Rowe, M., Ozuru, Y. & McNamara, D.S. (2006). An analysis of a standardized reading ability test: what do questions actually measure? In: Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of the Learning Sciences (627-633). Mahwah: Erlbaum.

[16] Solnyshkina, M.I. & Kiselnikov, A.S. (2015). Text complexity: study phases in Russian linguistics. Tomsk State University Journal of Philology, 6(38): 86-99.

[17] Solovyev, V. & Ivanov, V. (2016). Knowledge-Driven Event Extraction in Russian: Corpus-Based Linguisti. Computational Intelligence and Neuroscience, Article ID 4183760, dx.doi.org/10.1155/2016/4183760.

[18] Tarman, B. (2016). Innovation and Education. Research in Social Sciences and Technology, 1(1): 77-97.