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## Teaching of Autonomous Foreign Language Reading in Technical University: Criteria for the Selection of Textual Material

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### Abstract

The article deals with the actuality of the development of students' self-dependence, with the actuality of finding ways to improve efficiency of learning of foreign language reading. The authors study the principle of selection of textual material for teaching of autonomous foreign language reading in a technical university. The selection of texts takes into account the complementary criteria, distributed in accordance with the stages of teaching of autonomous foreign language reading by students of a technical university and contributes to the development of the optimal basis for learning of foreign language reading by students of technical specialties.

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*Keywords:* Autonomous foreign language reading in technical university; criteria of texts selection; of autonomous foreign language reading in; development of skills in autonomous learning.

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### 1. Introduction

In the course of learning of a foreign language, the students have a set of opportunities to realize their own cognitive abilities. Awareness of the importance of actions for achievement of the educational purpose and acceptance by students of responsibility for the outcomes of learning will contribute to the independent organization of autonomous educational cognitive activity at further acquisition of a foreign language. Moreover, they intensify

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the process of teaching and learning of foreign language and may also increase competitiveness of graduates of technical universities.

Development of abilities in student's autonomous cognitive activity in technical university is expedient during the work with foreign-language texts, as foreign-language reading represents such speech activity, in which the students can independently manage and control their foreign language reading. It means student can make decisions independently at a choice of means, ways and methods of reading and also to bear responsibility for result of own educational activity to exercise control intension of the reading to the received result, what promotes development of skills in the autonomous foreign language reading.

The main base for implementation of autonomous reading is development of abilities to apply reading strategies and gradual acceptance by the student of responsibility for implementation of cognitive activity. One of the important problems of teaching in the autonomous foreign language is reading students of technical specialties is the principle of selection of text material. In the context of persistent reduction classroom studies hours in foreign language learning in Russian technical universities it is necessary strict selection of learning materials including texts selection. In this regard the main objective of this article is to consider selection criteria of text material for development of skills in the autonomous foreign language reading.

## 2. Literature review

According to Yu.V. Chicherina's opinion, the selected educational texts have to "correspond to communicative and cognitive interests and needs of students, complexity degree to their language and speech abilities in native and foreign languages, to support interesting information for each age group of students " (Chicherina, 2003).

Believe expert opinion S. I. Sharapova the choice of materials for reading has to correspond to interests of students, their aspiration in obtaining interesting, actual and professionally significant information (Sharapova, 2009).

S.K. Folomkina allocates the relevant signs of the text optimally suitable for reading the texts of professional subject:

"integrity;  
semantic completeness;  
completeness; authenticity of texts;  
language availability;  
the contents motivating students;  
information saturation and size of texts" (Folomkina, 2005).

Due to the research of the authors the technique of teaching in autonomous reading includes 3 stages: the first stage - acquaintance with reading strategy, the second stage – assimilation and application by students of strategy of reading, the third stage – application of strategy of reading and actions on their basis.

As the teaching of autonomous reading is realized at technical university at the elementary level of foreign language learning and is a preparatory stage for reading texts of professional subject in a foreign language, considering the relevant signs of the text divided to S.I. Sharapova, S.K. Folomkina, Yu.V. Chicherina, were allocated the following selection criteria of texts for teaching of autonomous foreign language reading students of technical universities:

- 1) accounting of foreign language level and professional abilities of students;
- 2) authenticity of texts;
- 3) correspondence of texts with age and interests of the students;
- 4) compliance of a text type to a type of reading;
- 5) informational content and relevance of text materials;
- 6) accounting of future professional activity.

These criteria are described in detail as follows in the next section of the paper.

### 3. Criteria for the selection of textual material for teaching of autonomous foreign language reading in technical university

Keeping up of motivation by foreign language reading and effective teaching of autonomous foreign language reading in technical university is affected by following selection criteria.

*Accounting of level of language and professional abilities of students.* The students of 1 year of studying at technical university have no background knowledge in the specialty. Professional subject areas are studied from the fifth semester at technical universities in Russia, therefore is inexpedient to offer in the first semester to students foreign language texts of professional subject. According to the didactic principle of accessibility the training material has to be available and feasible for students. Therefore at a choice of texts in the course of teaching of autonomous foreign language reading it is necessary to move "from the simple – to difficult". At the first and second stages of autonomous foreign-language reading students of technical specialties are given small texts. Level of linguistic difficulty of texts has to increase gradually. Texts have to correspond to subject of the educational program at technical university, for example poetry, fairy tales, and authentic texts. Such texts have an entertaining character, acquaint with culture and literature of the learned language, and promote increase of motivation of students to foreign language reading. Also pragmatical texts can be used, such as recipes, proposal, plans, schemes, railway schedules etc. By the reading materials choice for teaching in autonomous reading at the third stage it is necessary to be guided by semantic contents of texts, considering professional interest of students. Criteria for text selection have to focus attention to future professional activity of students (Sharapova, 2009). Therefore at the third stage of autonomous foreign-language reading are offered students volume popular scientific texts of the increased linguistic difficulty which prepare students to the reading of the texts in professional subject area.

*Authenticity of texts.* The authentic text is created by native speakers and specially isn't adapted (Sharapova, 2009). Such text reflects the natural language use, meets modern lexical and grammatical standards of the learned language. Authentic texts support and increase motivation of students as they realize prospects of availability of the knowledge from foreign-language sources of information.

Correspondence of texts with age and interests of the students. The text materials should meet requirements of linguistic and psychological factors: correspond with the age and mental abilities of the learners, answer their emotional and informative inquiries.

*Compliance of a text type to a type of reading* (on a way of realization of the purpose of reading. It is necessary to consider skills in what type of reading (according to S. K. Folomkina's classification) must be developed. For example, for development of skills in skimming type of reading (directly and fluently) are used large quantities and easy material. In the course on development of skills in word by word type of reading, according to S. K. Folomkina, small, popular scientific texts are used (Folomkina, 2005). In this technique during the work on this type of reading also pragmatical texts are used advertising of an intensive course of learning of foreign language and others. In development of skills in scanning type of reading are used small texts: advertising, announcements, schedules of traffic, announcements of movies, etc. The accounting of types of reading on a way of realization of the purpose in process of teaching of autonomous reading will help students to organize purposefully work on the text in a foreign language, to learn to manage a type of reading depending on the purpose, will help students to know methods of conscious, purposeful educational activity, and also to increase work speed by reading the foreign-language text.

*Informational content and relevance of text materials.* "Informational content of the text is contents of new information and new sense for the reader" (Sharapova, 2009). New and useful information has pragmatic value for reader. This criterion is realized in selection of advantage texts, describing actual problems, except for texts, in which the retrospective analysis of the considered phenomenon is necessary (Goryunova, 2012). It increases cognitive activity of students, motivates to search, acquaintance and studying of foreign-language sources of information including in the professional area.

*Accounting of future professional activity.* This criterion is important at the third stage of autonomous foreign-language reading of students at technical universities. The level of proficiency in a foreign language at this stage allows using of popular scientific texts with a small component of professional terminology. At a choice of popular scientific texts it is necessary to consider studied subject area. S. K. Folomkina pointed the personal importance of

foreign-language material for students appears as a result of correlation the text and future profession (Folomkina, 2005). It stimulates cognitive activity and increases motivation of students to foreign-language reading actual for future engineer's texts.

Described criteria for the selection of textual material contribute to purposeful educational activity of students, answer their emotional and informative inquiries, increase work speed by reading the foreign-language text, increases motivation of students to foreign-language reading and favour the effective organization of process of teaching of autonomous foreign language reading in technical university.

#### 4. Conclusion

The criteria are fundamental for the offered techniques in autonomous reading and are distributed according to training stage to autonomous foreign-language reading students of technical universities. At the first and second stage the following criteria have paramount value: accounting of level of language and professional abilities of students; authenticity of texts; correspondence of texts with age and interests of the students; compliance of a text type to a type of reading. At the third stage, when students already have knowledge and abilities corresponding to level group A1 – A2+ (according to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) and have some background professional knowledge, the following criteria have paramount value: compliance of a text type to a type of reading; informational content and relevance of text materials; accounting of future professional activity.

Selection of texts taking into account the allocated complementary criteria which are distributed according to stage of teaching of autonomous reading promotes formation of optimum base for training of students of not language specialties in autonomous foreign-language reading. The actual, informative, authentic texts corresponding with the level of language and vocational training of students stimulate cognitive activity allow holding and increasing of motivation of students in the foreign-language reading. The appreciating of reading types will help students to learn how to organize independent study by reading of foreign-language text managing it due to learning objectives and reading purposes. Development of these skills helps students to make progress in the organization of their own autonomous cognitive activity.

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