

Criteria for selecting texts for skimming reading

Reading has always been a significant component of cultural, spiritual and social life. As students move into their 3rd year of studies, they are faced with the problem to use a number of texts in new and different domains. These texts should be engaging and challenging and on a range of topics. Appropriate texts provide models from which to learn as well as opportunities to practice. The term ‘appropriate texts’ is used to describe texts which have features that make them more accessible for students. The focus of interest in the reading lesson is neither language nor content, but both of them together as students should learn how language is used for conveying content. That is why criteria should be organized into characteristics of the language, layout and content and these criteria provide guidelines when selecting texts. Obviously, a text should be at the right level of difficulty for students. The proportion of new lexical items depends on the aim of reading. In our case, it is to teach students to differentiate and get only important information from the text ignoring unknown words if they do not interfere with understanding. So texts should not contain many new words. If there are many, students will be continually distracted and will very likely slow themselves down by referring to a dictionary, which is not the aim of this very reading. Another criterion for selecting texts should be the inclusion of a variety of texts on the familiar subject to appeal to the students. It is very difficult to do good work with a dull book. For skimming reading it is necessary to select material not only interesting but worth spending time on. Of all things above, exploitability is arguably the most important after interest. A text that can not be exploited is of no use for teaching even if students enjoy reading it. When students exploit a text, they make use of it to develop their competence as readers.

As it was mentioned above, when selecting texts it is necessary to consider the following aspects: the level of students’ literacy skills, students’ prior knowledge and experiences, students’ interests, the supports and challenges of the text. Texts should provide a framework that gradually introduces strategies required for skilled reading.