

## PRINCIPLES FOR TEXTS AND TASKS SELECTING IN TEACHING LSP

*Reading and extracting the necessary information from professional texts is one of the goals in teaching foreign languages for specific purposes (LSP) to university students. However, contents in their texts quickly lose their urgency due to the rapid technology development. There is also a lack of ready-made textbooks and the university teachers have to develop their own textbooks, thus selecting professional texts and developing tasks for them. Thus, defining the principles for professional texts selecting and tasks developing has its great relevance at the moment. This paper aims at determining these principles based on analyzing texts and tasks presented in modern textbooks for LSP. Based on the scientific literature review, the author sets the plan for the text and tasks analyses which includes: type of tasks, reading type, literary style and genre, volume (counted in printed characters), type of speech compositional form: narration, description or reasoning. The study showed that the tasks for LSP can be presented in four groups: developing grammatical and lexical skills, text understanding and monologue and dialogue skills. The texts and tasks in the textbooks for LSP are focused on developing skills for all reading types (study, survey, search, skimming). The most common reading type is search reading. Less common are the tasks to skimming reading skills. The texts volume varies from 500 to 2,500 printed characters with spaces. It depends on the type of speech compositional form in the text: narration, description and reasoning. The analyzed texts are presented in two literary styles: scientific and publicistic ones. The scientific style is represented by an academic genre (textbook). They describe various concepts, terms, subjects, processes, technologies, functions of specialists. Texts of publicistic style refer to industry publicism. They represent descriptions of various innovative subjects, mechanisms, phenomena, events, technologies. The author concludes that all analyzed aspects as a literary style and genre, the type of speech compositional form (narration, description, reasoning), text volume (in the number of printed characters), reading types, types of tasks are interrelated and specified and can be used as principles for texts and tasks selecting in teaching LSP. Text characteristics for different types of reading are also given.*

**Keywords:** language for specific purposes, textbooks for LSP, reading type, speech compositional form, speech style, language skills.

Today, the rapid development of scientific knowledge and technologies define success in the career of any specialist based on the continuous broadening and improving his professional competencies. An important role here is played by studying the latest scientific developments in professional journals not only in native, but also in a foreign language. Thus, one of the goals in teaching foreign languages for specific purposes (LSP) to university students of any specialties is to develop good skills for reading and extracting the necessary information from professional texts.

Today, there are a lot of textbooks and teaching materials aimed at developing reading skills in a foreign language for professionals in various fields. However, contents in their texts quickly lose their urgency due to the rapid technology development. Moreover, in many cases there is a lack of ready-

made textbooks for LSP for students in a number of professional fields. As a result, the university teachers have to develop their own textbooks, thus selecting professional texts and developing tasks for them. Therefore, defining the principles for professional texts selecting and tasks developing has its great relevance at the moment. This paper aims at determining these principles based on analyzing texts and tasks presented in modern textbooks for LSP.

Reading skill is one of the major verbal skills together with speaking, writing and listening. Scientifically, it is viewed as a specific type of speech activity (A. Leontiev (6), I. Zimnyaya (3), etc.) aiming to extract the information for solving verbal issues in different communicative situations (8).

According to the amount of information extracted

from the texts in a foreign language, the following types of reading are distinguished:

- **study reading** is a slow type of reading, its goal is 100% understanding the content of the text;
- **survey reading** is a fast type of reading, its goal is to get the main idea of the text, i.e. 75% understanding the content of the text (main ideas and supporting details);
- **skimming** is a fast reading, its goal is to view the text and determine if it is necessary to read or not, or to determine what questions are raised in it. The degree of understanding is not great;
- **search reading**, its goal is to find specific information in the text (9).

Reading professional texts is a specific form of active verbal written communication. Its main goals are to orientate, search, retrieve, receive, process and further applying the extracted information in labor, social or self-educational activities (4). Consequently, the specialist will need skills for all types of reading.

The skills for study reading are necessary for the maximum and detailed extracting the information contained in a foreign text.

In this case, the reader assumes that he will later have to reproduce or use the information extracted. This is due to the comprehension of information, its interpretation and the motivation for long-term memorization (all or a part of the information) during the process of reading. The texts read represent a special interest necessary for the further professional activities of a specialist (7).

**Survey reading** requires the ability to read the text quickly for getting general idea about the information contained in it. Specialists read to grasp the general idea, meanwhile he is interested not only in what this text is about, but also what exactly is said on various issues. While reading, he decides if the information is - "new" / "known", "interesting" / "not interesting", "clear" / "unclear," etc. To make such a decision, the reader just gets the general line of the content, proofs, etc., often not because he cannot reach a full, deep understanding, but because he does not need it at the moment.

**The skimming reading** skills are necessary to look through the book, journal, article, etc., in order to get the most general idea of the contents in its theme, the main issue, etc. and then determine, if it is of interest to him (the reader). Skills for search reading are necessary for reading and viewing the texts, searching for certain data (formulations, figures, definitions, etc.), which are known to be contained in the text or a chapter of the book, etc. This shows that to solve specific professional problems the student should master all reading types in a foreign language. Thus, teaching various reading types should become one of the main goals in teaching university students of all specialties.

In teaching process, the reading goals are set in the pre-text or post-textual tasks to the text.

Example tasks for survey reading:

- *Read the text and say if the sentences are true or false.*
- *Choose the correct answer (from three to four options).*
- *Make a plan of the text.*
- *Skim the text and title it.*
- *Read the text and present it as a scheme.*
- *Give your opinion about what you read.*

Example tasks for learning reading:

- *Put your questions to the text.*
  - *What do you think about...?*
  - *What is the main idea of the text?*
  - *Identify the main and secondary information in the text.*
  - *Make translation of the passage describing ...*
  - *Make summary of the text.*
- Sample tasks for search reading:
- *Define the theme of the text.*
  - *Find the following ... in the text.*
  - *Answer the questions ...*
  - *Find in the text the following facts.*
  - *Say if the facts .... are mentioned in the text (2).*

To develop principles for text selecting, it is also necessary to consider some of text features recommended for this or that type of reading.

According to well-known methodologists (S. Folomkina (9), N. Galskova and N. Gez (2) and others), literary style and genre the text belongs to is of great importance for teaching various reading types. In developing skills for ESP, texts of scientific style and industry journalism (publicistic style) are likely to be the most important.

The language of science is governed by the aim of the scientific prose style of, which is to prove a hypothesis, to create new concepts, to disclose the internal laws of existence, development, relations between different phenomena, etc. The language means used, therefore, tend to be objective, precise, unemotional. The first and most noticeable feature of this style is the logical sequence of utterances with clear indication of their interrelations and interdependence. A second and no less important feature, and perhaps the most conspicuous, is the use of terms specific to each given branch of science. The general vocabulary employed in scientific prose bears its direct referential meaning, that is, words used in scientific prose will always tend to be used in their primary logical meaning. The scientific style has the following genres: educational text (textbook), monograph, dissertation, scientific article, abstract, review, etc.

The general aim of publicistic style is to exert a constant and deep influence on public opinion, to convince the reader or the listener that the

interpretation given by the writer or the speaker is the only correct one and to cause him to accept the point of view expressed in the speech, essay or article not merely through logical argumentation but through emotional appeal as well. Due to its characteristic combination of logical argumentation and emotional appeal, publicistic style has features in common with the style of scientific prose, on the one hand, and that of emotive prose, on the other. Its coherent and logical syntactical structure, with an expanded system of connectives and its careful paragraphing, makes it similar to scientific prose. The manner of presenting ideas, however, brings this style closer to that of belles-lettres, in this case to emotive prose, as it is to a certain extent individual. This style has the following genres: brief news item, headline, announcements, journalistic article, essay etc. (1).

N.D. Galskova and N.I. Gez in their book "Theory of teaching foreign languages" discuss the following text features for teaching reading at school:

- for survey reading, relatively large narrative texts are used; the degree of information density is low, their understanding allows the loss of some secondary information (more than 25%); the language material should not cause any serious difficulties, unfamiliar words (no more than 5-7 per page) should not affect perceiving the basic information of the text;

- for study reading, texts of a descriptive type are used; their volume is several times smaller than texts for survey reading; information density of such texts is high; the reader strives for full and most detailed perception of text information;

- for search reading, the text volume should be several times more than for survey reading; the information density of the texts is of no significant importance for this reading type (2).

Summing up, the following plan of the professional texts analysis will be presented:

1. Type of tasks.
2. Reading type.
3. Literary style and genre.
4. Volume (counted in printed characters).
5. Type of speech compositional form: narration, description, reasoning.

To analyze the texts, we used the following textbooks published by *Pearson, Oxford University Press* and *Cambridge University Press*:

1. *English for the Energy Industry* (by S. Campbell);
2. *English for the Financial Sector* (by I. MacKenzie);
3. *English for Construction* (by I. Frenedo);
4. *Infortech. English for computer users* (by R. Santiago);
5. *Business Result* (by D. Grant).

## Results.

### Types of tasks.

The analysis showed that tasks to texts can be divided into four groups, depending on the kind of skills they develop:

1. tasks to develop grammatical skills;
2. tasks to develop lexical skills (usually terminology);
3. tasks to check text understanding;
4. tasks to develop monologue and dialogue skills;

Example tasks for the first group:

- *Complete the text with the correct form of the verb (article, adjectives, passive forms ...).*

- *Look at the text and put the verbs in the bold into the table below.*

Example tasks for the second group:

- *Complete the text with the correct word or expression.*

- *Complete the nouns with suitable verbs (adjectives).*

- *Match the words from the text to their definitions.*

- *Find the words in the article with the appropriate meaning.*

- *Read the text and make notes about the features of ...*

Example tasks for the third group:

- *Answer the questions.*

- *Decide whether the statements are true or false.*

- *Put the sentences (parts) into the right order.*

- *Read the text and complete the chart.*

- *Read the text and complete the table.*

- *Read the text and choose the correct answer.*

- *Read the text and match the headings with the gaps at the start of each paragraph.*

Example tasks of the fourth group:

- *What do you think about ...? Give your reasons.*

- *Do you agree with .... Give your reason.*

- *How is the problem solved in your country (city)?*

- *Imagine that you are one of the directors of a company. What can you do?*

- *Discuss advantages and disadvantages.*

- *Read the text and discuss the figure in your own words.*

- *Read the text and underline the facts and circle the opinions.*

**Reading types.** The analysis shows that the texts and tasks in the textbooks for LSP are focused on developing skills for all reading types. The most common reading type is search reading. There are also tasks to develop skills for study and survey reading. Less common are the tasks to skimming reading skills (Table 1).

Table 1. Reading types.

Reading type	%
Study	21
Survey	36
Search	43
Skimming	3

We should note that sometimes there is no clear line between the reading types. In most cases, tasks to one and the same text may develop more than one reading type, for example, survey and search reading, skimming and survey, etc.

**Literary style and genre.** The analyzed texts are presented in two literary styles: scientific and publicistic ones.

The scientific style is represented by an academic genre (textbook). The information density is medium or below the average. The illustrative material is widely used. There are no emotional and expressive means. The type of information in these texts is factual.

The texts analyzed are characterized by the narrative abstractness, which is manifested in words with abstract meanings, terminology and present tense of verbs. These texts have a simple syntax. The average sentence length is 15-20 words. The most common type of sentences is a simple sentence, complicated in some cases by participial phrases. There are also complex sentences with, as a rule, one, and rarely two, subordinate clauses. The function of such texts in the textbook is to introduce new lexical units.

Texts of publicistic style refer to industry publicism. They represent various problems in a particular branch of science or technology, and therefore they are often the topic for various discussions, i.e. they are aimed to develop dialogue or monologue skills. The density of information is medium or below average due to the words and phrases with evaluating meanings, reasoning, opinions, etc. There are no many terms in these texts. The basic group of lexical units is the vocabulary with abstract or concrete meaning. Geographical names, names of institutions, enterprises, companies, etc. are widely used. From the point of view of grammar, these texts use different tense forms: the present, the past and the future. Simple and complex sentences, participial turnovers, subordinate clauses are widely used.

**Volume.** The texts volume varies from 500 to 2,500 printed characters with spaces. As the analysis showed, the volume depends on the type of speech compositional form of the text. Narrative texts are rather short, but reasoning texts are the longest (table 2).

Table 2. Text volume.

Speech compositional form	Text volume (in printed characters)
Narration	700-1,500
Description	500-1,200
Reasoning	1,000-2,500

The analysis shows that in texts of textbooks for LSP all kinds of speech compositional forms are encountered. However, their ratio is not the same and depends on the types of skills that form tasks to texts (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratio of speech compositional forms.

Speech compositional form	%
Narration	24
Description	69
Reasoning	7

Let us consider each composition-speech form in more detail.

**Narration.** Texts with such speech compositional form represent various events and processes occurred at a particular time and place (5).

Tasks for such texts are focused on searching for certain facts, developing grammatical lexical skills, i.e. they belong to the first, second and third group of tasks. The reading type is survey and search. Stylistically, such texts refer to industry publicism.

As these texts are localized in time and space, they always have indicators of time and place in which there is a problem. This is manifested in using dates, geographical names, names of various enterprises and organizations. From the point of view of grammar, such texts use various forms of the verb: the present, the past, the future.

**Description.** Stylistically, these texts refer to two speech styles: scientific and publicistic. The scientific style is represented by textbook genre. The publicistic style is represented by news items.

Texts of scientific style represent a description of various concepts, terms, subjects, processes, technologies, functions of specialists. The density of information in such texts is low, due to the use of definitions for various concepts, descriptions of the qualities of various objects and phenomena, examples, etc. They are usually used to present new vocabulary and terminology, leading into a new topic. Therefore, for the texts the second and third groups of tasks are used. Type of reading is search and study ones.

Very often such texts are characterized by abstract narration, which is manifested in the specific

choice of lexical and grammatical means. They have terms and terminological expressions, words with abstract meanings, with no emotional and evaluative vocabulary. The present tense of verb and verb forms predominates and the passive voice is widely used.

Publicistic texts represent descriptions of various innovative subjects, mechanisms, phenomena, events, technologies, but unlike texts of the first type they are linked to a concrete place and time. Very often these texts present various problems in this or that industry branch and attract attention to the public and professionals.

Tasks for such texts are aimed at developing lexical and grammatical skills, as well as developing monologue skills as the students have to give their own opinions and evaluations of the problems presented. Thus, there are all types of tasks for these texts. Reading type is survey, study, search and skimming. The vocabulary of such texts are represented by words with concrete meanings, as well as geographical names, proper names (names of institutions, companies, names and surnames of people, etc.), abbreviations, numerical data. These texts use the present tense of the verb and verb forms. The passive voice of verbs is also widely presented.

**Reasoning.** This speech compositional form is represented only by industry publicistic texts. These are usually problematic articles where the author offers different opinions on a particular problem and possible solutions.

The volume of such texts ranges from 1,500 to 2,500 printed characters. Tasks for such texts refer to the second or third group. The typical reading types are survey and skimming.

Vocabulary is represented by words with concrete (terms, different names, and surnames, geographical names, numerical data, etc.) and emotional meanings. The temporal forms of the verb and the verb forms are different. Modal verbs and expressions can be used: need, should, can, be able, be allowed, have to.

## Conclusions

Summing up, the following LSP text characteristics for different types of reading can be presented:

### Study reading

Type of tasks: tasks for the developing lexical and grammatical skills.

Volume: 500-1,000 printed characters.

Literary style and genre: scientific (educational) and publicistic (news) ones.

Type of speech compositional form: narrative, description.

### Survey reading

Type of tasks: tasks for text understanding and developing the monological and dialogical skills.

Volume: 1,000-1,500 characters.

Literary style and genre: publicistic articles

Type speech compositional form: narration, description, reasoning.

### Search reading

Type of tasks: tasks for developing lexical skills and text comprehension.

Volume: 1,000-2,500 characters.

Literary style and genre: publicistic articles, educational texts.

Type speech compositional form: narration, description, reasoning.

### Skimming

This reading type can be done for each type of genre, composition-speech form and volume. The task for skimming is usually given as a primary task in a set of tasks for developing some other skills, i.e. monological and dialogical ones.

To conclude, all analyzed aspects as a literary style and genre, the type of speech compositional form (narration, description, reasoning), text volume (in the number of printed characters), reading types, types of tasks are interrelated and specified and can be used as principles for texts and tasks selecting in teaching LSP.

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