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Der Einfluss der Titel auf Verstehen und Behalten von Lehrwerktexten im Fachunterricht

IV Elementarisierung und die Verständlichkeit von Texten

Zusammenfassung

In the current methodological instructions on reading too little attention has been paid to the significance of text titles. Their high value in the process of reading is stressed by the following arguments: titles organize text perception because they activate the knowledge of a reader and limit its scope, they allow for anticipation of the text content and aid directed reading (Mellwig 1982, Pitts 1992, Spiel 1990, Toigt 1997). Text anticipation limits perception processes and as a result span for the processes of comprehension and remembering is created. It may be assumed that a title and anticipation serve as a base on which a text sense is constructed. In order to perform their facilitative function titles must support the top-down processes in an active way. Unfortunately the form of a title may also block these processes.

An analysis of about 30 titles taken from Polish and German coursebooks in history, biology and geography has shown that the majority of titles have not met the abovementioned conditions and due to this fact they have barely any positive influence on reading and remembering. In many cases their influence proved to be negative, which was observed when a text title did not limit the activated knowledge properly.

The article begins with a description of text processing levels and a problem connected with limited capacity of working memory in order to present the influence of titles on text comprehension. Next, the article shows the results of research organized in Polish and German schools in which original and optimized coursebook text titles were used.

Incorporating optimized titles into coursebook texts resulted in increase of learning efficiency by 25 %, which was first measured directly after classes and for the second time after a week time. The experiments discussed in the article supported our research hypotheses. They also show why students have problems with learning history, biology and geography.