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Engaging language in academic text

Effective inter-cultural communication continues to be imperative, as the number of students studying in English internationally has become significant. As many academic instructors can attest, the ability to identify tone in textbook reading often goes undetected by many students of English as second language, thereby reducing the students' understanding that not all of their educational experience is dull and dry. Research abounds on cross-linguistic differences in humour, as well as the advantages of incorporating humour into language learning, but little information is available regarding humour recognition in academic materials. Based on three empirical studies done at a Canadian university on over 400 first year students from varying linguistic groups, this paper presents theoretical analyses of language students' difficulty in recognising humour in English academic text, as well as evaluating the effect of humour on overall reading comprehension and learning.