

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Developing Reading Competence Of Prospective English Teachers Through The Works Of Charles Dickens

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Abstract

Reading competence is a fundamental component of foreign language proficiency and plays a crucial role in the professional development of future English language teachers. For prospective teachers, reading is not only a means of acquiring linguistic knowledge but also a tool for developing critical thinking, cultural awareness, and pedagogical skills. Therefore, selecting effective and meaningful teaching materials is essential for improving students' reading competence.

KEY WORDS

Classic English literature, Theoretical Foundations of Reading Competence.

INTRODUCTION

Classic English literature, particularly the works of Charles Dickens, provides rich linguistic, cultural, and moral content that can significantly contribute to the development of reading competence. Dickens's novels reflect social realities, human values, and historical contexts while offering authentic language input. This article aims to explore methodological approaches to developing the reading competence of prospective English teachers through the use of Charles Dickens's literary works.

Theoretical Foundations of Reading Competence

Reading competence is a complex skill that includes the ability to understand, interpret, analyze, and critically evaluate written texts. In foreign language education, reading competence consists of several sub-skills, such as vocabulary recognition, grammatical understanding, inference-making, and discourse analysis. For future English teachers, reading competence also involves the ability to teach reading strategies and select appropriate texts for learners.

Modern methodology emphasizes communicative and

competency-based approaches to language teaching. According to these approaches, reading should not be limited to passive comprehension but should involve active interaction with the text. Literary texts, especially classical works, are valuable resources because they encourage deeper cognitive processing and emotional engagement.

Educational Value of Charles Dickens's Works

Charles Dickens is one of the most prominent figures in English literature, and his works are widely recognized for their educational potential. Novels such as *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield*, and *A Christmas Carol* present vivid characters, complex plots, and rich descriptive language. These features make Dickens's works particularly suitable for developing advanced reading skills.

From a linguistic perspective, Dickens's texts expose learners to a wide range of vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and syntactic structures. From a cultural perspective, his novels provide insight into Victorian society, social inequality, moral values, and human relationships. Such content helps

prospective teachers develop intercultural competence, which is essential for effective language teaching.

Methodological Approaches to Using Dickens's Works in Reading Instruction

Pre-Reading Activities

Pre-reading activities are designed to prepare students for the text and activate their background knowledge. When working with Dickens's works, teachers can introduce historical and cultural contexts, key vocabulary, and major themes of the novel. Activities such as brainstorming, predicting the plot, or discussing social issues related to the text help learners approach reading with greater motivation and understanding.

Integration of Digital Technologies

In modern teacher education, digital technologies play an increasingly important role in developing reading competence. When working with Charles Dickens's texts, digital tools such as e-books, audiobooks, and online annotation platforms can significantly enhance comprehension. Listening to audiobook versions while reading helps prospective teachers improve pronunciation, intonation, and overall understanding of complex sentences typical of Dickens's style.

Online discussion forums and learning management systems allow students to share interpretations, ask questions, and reflect on texts collaboratively. This interactive environment supports deeper engagement with literary works and encourages independent reading.

Task-Based and Project-Based Learning

Task-based learning is an effective approach to improving reading competence. While studying Dickens's works, students can be assigned tasks such as preparing character profiles, analyzing social issues presented in the novels, or designing lesson plans based on selected excerpts. These tasks require students to read actively and purposefully.

Project-based learning further develops professional competence. For example, prospective teachers can create mini-projects comparing Dickens's social themes with modern issues or adapting Dickens's texts for secondary school learners. Such projects combine reading, writing, speaking, and critical thinking skills.

Assessment of Reading Competence

Effective assessment is essential for monitoring progress in reading competence. Both formative and summative

assessment methods can be applied when working with literary texts. Formative assessment includes quizzes, reading journals, and class discussions, which provide continuous feedback.

Summative assessment may involve written analyses, presentations, or portfolio-based evaluation. For prospective teachers, reflective journals are especially valuable, as they encourage students to evaluate their own reading strategies and teaching potential.

Development of Metacognitive Reading Strategies

An important new aspect in reading instruction is the development of metacognitive strategies. Students should be taught how to plan, monitor, and evaluate their reading process. When reading Dickens's works, prospective teachers can learn to predict content, ask questions while reading, and summarize key ideas.

Teaching these strategies explicitly helps future teachers not only improve their own reading competence but also prepares them to teach reading effectively in their future classrooms.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Another innovative approach is integrating literature with other disciplines such as history, sociology, and ethics. Dickens's novels reflect the social and economic conditions of Victorian England, making them suitable for interdisciplinary analysis. This approach enriches reading comprehension and broadens students' academic perspective.

Pedagogical Value for Future Teachers

The use of Charles Dickens's works encourages reflective and humanistic teaching values. Through literary discussion, prospective teachers develop empathy, moral reasoning, and a deeper understanding of social responsibility. These qualities are essential for educators who aim to influence not only language development but also personal growth of their learners.

Differentiated Instruction in Literary Reading

Future English teachers have different levels of language proficiency and reading experience. Differentiated instruction allows educators to adapt tasks according to students' abilities. Stronger students may analyze stylistic devices and symbolism, while others focus on general comprehension and vocabulary development.

Using graded readers or adapted versions of Dickens's works

at initial stages can gradually prepare students for reading original texts. This step-by-step approach reduces anxiety and increases motivation.

While-Reading Activities

While-reading activities focus on developing comprehension and analytical skills. Students can be asked to identify main ideas, analyze characters, and follow the development of the plot. Tasks such as matching events, answering comprehension questions, and finding examples of descriptive language encourage active reading. For prospective teachers, special attention should be given to identifying teaching techniques and language features that can later be used in their own classrooms.

Post-Reading Activities

Post-reading activities aim to deepen understanding and promote critical thinking. Students may engage in discussions, write reflections, compare characters, or analyze moral and social messages in the text. Creative tasks such as role-playing, rewriting scenes, or modernizing the story can further enhance engagement. These activities help future teachers develop both language competence and pedagogical creativity.

Developing Professional Competence through Literary Reading

Using Charles Dickens's works in reading instruction not only improves language skills but also contributes to the professional competence of future English teachers. Through literary analysis, students learn how to design reading tasks, adapt complex texts for different proficiency levels, and integrate literature into language teaching. This experience prepares them for real classroom situations.

Moreover, working with classical literature fosters reflective thinking and ethical awareness. Dickens's focus on social justice, empathy, and human dignity encourages students to discuss universal values, which is particularly important for educators.

Challenges and Solutions in Teaching Dickens's Works

Despite their educational value, Dickens's texts may present certain challenges, such as complex language, long sentences, and unfamiliar cultural references. To address these difficulties, teachers should carefully select excerpts, simplify tasks without oversimplifying content, and provide adequate support through glossaries and explanations.

Using a step-by-step methodology and combining traditional reading strategies with interactive techniques can make Dickens's works accessible and engaging for prospective teachers.

CONCLUSION

The development of reading competence is a key objective in the training of future English language teachers. Charles Dickens's literary works offer rich opportunities for achieving this goal due to their linguistic depth, cultural significance, and moral value. By applying effective pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading methodologies, educators can significantly enhance students' reading competence and professional readiness.

Integrating classical literature into teacher education programs not only strengthens language skills but also shapes reflective, culturally aware, and competent English teachers. Therefore, the systematic use of Charles Dickens's works can be considered an effective methodological approach to developing the reading competence of prospective English teachers.

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