

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO DEVELOPING READING COMPETENCE THROUGH DICKENS'S WORKS

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Annotation

In the contemporary educational context, developing reading competence is considered one of the most important objectives of foreign language teaching, especially in the training of prospective English language teachers. Reading competence enables learners not only to comprehend written texts but also to analyze, interpret, and critically evaluate information. For future teachers, strong reading competence is essential, as it directly influences their professional performance, instructional decisions, and ability to teach reading skills effectively.

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The integration of literary texts into language education has long been recognized as a powerful means of enhancing reading competence. Among English literary figures, Charles Dickens occupies a unique position due to the richness of his language, the depth of his social themes, and the universal relevance of his works. Dickens's novels provide authentic linguistic input and cultural insight, making them especially valuable for advanced learners and teacher trainees. In recent years, innovative pedagogical approaches—such as digital learning, task-based instruction, project-based learning, and metacognitive strategy training—have significantly reshaped reading instruction. This article explores innovative approaches to developing reading competence through the works of Charles Dickens, focusing on their application in the education of future English teachers.

Theoretical Framework of Reading Competence

Reading competence is a multifaceted construct that includes linguistic, cognitive, and communicative components. Linguistically, it involves vocabulary knowledge, grammatical awareness, and discourse understanding. Cognitively, it requires skills such as inference, prediction, summarization, and critical analysis. Communicatively, reading competence enables learners to respond to texts through discussion, writing, and teaching practice.

Modern language pedagogy emphasizes a competency-based approach, where reading is seen as an active process of meaning construction rather than passive decoding. Learners are encouraged to interact with texts, relate them to prior knowledge, and evaluate their significance. For prospective teachers, reading competence also includes methodological

awareness—the ability to design reading tasks, select appropriate texts, and assess learners' progress.

Literary texts, particularly classical literature, are effective tools for developing higher-level reading skills. They challenge learners intellectually and emotionally, fostering deep engagement with language and content.

Educational and Linguistic Value of Dickens's Works

Charles Dickens's works are particularly suitable for developing reading competence due to their linguistic richness and educational significance. His novels feature diverse vocabulary, complex sentence structures, vivid descriptions, and expressive stylistic devices. These linguistic characteristics provide valuable exposure to authentic English and advanced language use.

From an educational perspective, Dickens's works address social issues such as poverty, inequality, child labor, justice, and moral responsibility. Novels like *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield*, and *A Christmas Carol* reflect the realities of Victorian England while conveying universal human values. This content encourages learners to think critically, empathize with characters, and engage in meaningful discussion.

For future English teachers, studying Dickens's works also enhances cultural competence. Understanding the historical and social context of the texts helps teachers explain cultural references and guide learners toward deeper comprehension.

Innovative Approaches in Teaching Reading through Dickens's Works

Digital and Multimedia Integration

One of the most significant innovations in reading instruction is the integration of digital technologies. When working with Dickens's works, digital tools such as e-books, audiobooks, interactive annotations, and online discussion platforms can greatly enhance reading competence.

Audiobooks allow students to listen to the text while reading, improving pronunciation, intonation, and comprehension of complex sentence structures. Digital annotation tools enable learners to highlight key passages, add comments, and share interpretations collaboratively. These tools promote active reading and deeper engagement with the text.

Online learning platforms also provide opportunities for asynchronous discussion, where students reflect on characters, themes, and language use. Such interaction fosters analytical thinking and independent interpretation.

Task-Based Learning

Task-based learning (TBL) focuses on meaningful tasks that require learners to use language purposefully. In the context of Dickens's works, tasks may include summarizing chapters, analyzing character development, identifying social themes, or comparing literary events with modern realities.

For prospective teachers, task-based reading activities develop both language competence and pedagogical skills. Students learn how to design tasks that encourage comprehension, interaction, and critical thinking. This approach transforms reading into an active problem-solving process rather than a passive activity.

Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning (PBL) is another innovative approach that effectively develops reading competence. Long-term projects based on Dickens's works may involve creating lesson plans, adapting literary texts for different proficiency levels, or conducting thematic research.

For example, students may work in groups to design a teaching unit based on *A Christmas Carol* for secondary school learners. This requires careful reading, text selection, task design, and assessment planning. Such projects integrate reading with professional practice, preparing students for real classroom situations.

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction recognizes that learners have varying levels of proficiency, interests, and learning styles. When teaching Dickens's works, instructors can differentiate reading tasks according to students' abilities. Advanced learners may focus on stylistic analysis and symbolism, while others concentrate on general comprehension and vocabulary development. Using adapted versions or graded readers at initial stages helps reduce cognitive overload and builds confidence. Gradual exposure to original texts ensures steady progress in reading competence.

Metacognitive Reading Strategies

Teaching metacognitive strategies is an essential innovation in reading instruction. Metacognitive strategies involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating the reading process. Prospective teachers should be taught how to predict content, ask questions during reading, clarify misunderstandings, and summarize key ideas.

Applying these strategies while reading Dickens's works helps students manage complex texts more effectively. Moreover, it equips future teachers with practical techniques they can teach to their own students.

Assessment of Reading Competence

Innovative reading instruction requires appropriate assessment methods. Both formative and summative assessment should be used to evaluate reading competence. Formative assessment includes reading journals, quizzes, peer discussions, and reflective tasks. These methods provide continuous feedback and support learning.

Summative assessment may involve analytical essays, presentations, portfolios, or lesson design projects. For prospective teachers, reflective journals are particularly valuable, as they encourage self-assessment and professional growth.

Interdisciplinary and Cultural Integration

Dickens's works offer excellent opportunities for interdisciplinary learning. Integrating literature with history, sociology, and ethics enriches reading comprehension and broadens academic perspectives. Discussing Victorian social conditions alongside modern issues fosters critical thinking and cultural comparison.

This interdisciplinary approach enhances the relevance of reading and encourages learners to see literature as a reflection of real-life problems and values.

Challenges and Solutions

Despite their advantages, Dickens's texts may pose challenges due to complex language, archaic expressions, and lengthy descriptions. To address these issues, instructors should carefully select excerpts, provide vocabulary support, and use scaffolding techniques.

Combining traditional literary analysis with innovative approaches ensures accessibility and motivation. Gradual progression from simplified texts to original works helps learners build confidence and competence.

Conclusion

Innovative approaches to developing reading competence through the works of Charles Dickens offer significant benefits for prospective English language teachers. By integrating digital technologies, task-based and project-based learning, differentiated instruction, and metacognitive strategies, educators can transform literary reading into an engaging and effective learning experience.

Dickens's works provide rich linguistic input, cultural insight, and moral reflection, making them ideal resources for advanced reading instruction. Their systematic and innovative use not only improves reading competence but also enhances professional readiness, critical thinking, and pedagogical creativity.

In conclusion, incorporating Charles Dickens's literary heritage into modern, innovative teaching methodologies is a highly effective approach to developing the reading competence of future English teachers and preparing them for the challenges of contemporary education.

Used Literature

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