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Improving Students Reading Comprehension Through Charles Dickens Works

Aliqulova Feruza O'ktam qizi

Teacher of faculty of languages, Termiz State Pedagogical Institute, Uzbekistan

Abstract: This article aims to thoroughly examine various issues related to enhancing students' reading comprehension skills through written texts. A key factor in improving these skills is providing students with engaging reading materials, such as comics, novels, short stories, and storytelling, which can capture their interest. Additionally, other aspects of reading development are worth exploring, including effective teaching methods, the advantages, and the challenges of using written texts in reading instruction. Achieving a high success rate in improving students' reading abilities is crucial to ensuring they gain valuable input for mastering or advancing their English skills. However, enhancing reading comprehension is a complex process that requires discussion to identify the most effective approach.

One of the most effective ways to enhance students' comprehension skills is through exposure to classic literature. Among the many renowned authors, Charles Dickens stands out as an excellent choice for improving reading comprehension due to his rich language, vivid characterization, and complex themes. This article explores how Dickens' works can be used as a tool to enhance students' reading comprehension skills.

Keywords: Reading comprehension, written text, methods, Charles Dickens.

Introduction: English consists of four essential skills: reading, speaking, listening, and writing. However, this paper specifically focuses on reading skills. Additionally, there are various methods and approaches to teaching reading, including theoretical perspectives on reading comprehension and an analysis of effective strategies for improving it. One particularly effective method in reading comprehension will also be reviewed.

Implementing the right strategy can significantly enhance students' ability to understand written texts.

Based on four actions in the cycle, six steps were identified as effective in enhancing reading comprehension through text structure tasks. These steps include:

1. Asking students to identify the type of writing used by the author.
2. Encouraging students to analyze how the author organizes the text.
3. Guiding students to determine how the text is structured and developed.
4. Having students work in pairs to classify ideas into groups.
5. Instructing students to identify the main idea of each paragraph.
6. Encouraging students to analyze how the paragraphs are interconnected.

From these steps, it is evident that they assist students in constructing meaning and integrating information from the text effectively.

Reading also plays a crucial role in expanding vocabulary. This means that through reading, we can achieve multiple benefits simultaneously. There is no doubt that reading is one of the essential skills. When teaching reading to enhance students' comprehension, the focus should go beyond traditional or classical methods, such as simply answering common questions. Instead, it should encourage students to understand and interpret the structure and meaning of the text. This approach not only involves identifying the main idea, as emphasized in classical theories, but also includes activities like retelling passages concisely or summarizing them in their own words.

Reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning from a text. Its goal is to understand the overall message rather than focusing solely on individual words or sentences. The result of reading comprehension is a mental representation of the text's meaning, which integrates the reader's prior knowledge. Since readers have different skill levels and ages, their approach to comprehension may vary. Learning to read involves grasping meaning from texts, emphasizing comprehension. Essentially, reading for meaning is an effort to understand the text, encompassing all activities related to this process.

The most crucial aspect of teaching reading is fostering independent and autonomous readers. This involves not only providing instruction but also shaping students' perceptions and attitudes toward reading. Encouraging curiosity through engaging written texts

can inspire students to develop a genuine interest in reading. The true essence of teaching lies in helping students deeply understand the material, rather than simply presenting information and assuming they will grasp it. The goal is to create a lasting impact that motivates students to continue reading on their own.

According to researchers, another effective way to enhance students' comprehension is through text structure tasks. Engaging students in oral activities related to text structure helps them process and integrate information more effectively. For example, asking students questions about the text's structure can make it easier for them to understand comprehension questions. However, teaching reading comprehension in a diverse classroom, where students come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, presents challenges. In such cases, teachers must take personal responsibility and initiative to improve the learning environment and ensure all students can effectively develop their reading skills.

The Significance of Charles Dickens' Works

Charles Dickens, a prominent figure in English literature, is known for his intricate storytelling, social commentary, and memorable characters. His works, such as *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*, offer students an opportunity to engage with challenging texts that enhance their reading abilities. Through his novels, students encounter various literary techniques, historical contexts, and moral dilemmas that deepen their understanding and interpretation skills.

Enhancing Vocabulary and Language Skills

One of the key benefits of using Dickens' works in reading instruction is the exposure to rich and sophisticated language. His novels contain a vast array of vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and figurative language. By reading and analyzing Dickens' texts, students can expand their vocabulary and improve their language proficiency. Teachers can encourage students to identify unfamiliar words, use context clues for meaning, and apply new vocabulary in their writing and discussions.

Developing Critical Thinking and Interpretation Skills

Dickens' narratives often involve complex characters and intricate plots that require students to think critically. His use of irony, symbolism, and foreshadowing challenges readers to analyze deeper meanings within the text. Teachers can facilitate discussions and activities that encourage students to make inferences, draw connections between events, and evaluate character motivations. This analytical approach fosters higher-order thinking skills that are

essential for strong reading comprehension.

Understanding Social and Historical Contexts

Another significant advantage of reading Dickens' works is the exposure to historical and social issues of the 19th century. His novels provide insight into themes such as poverty, social injustice, and the class system, which allow students to develop a broader understanding of historical contexts. Teachers can use Dickens' texts to prompt discussions on historical background, compare past and present societal issues, and encourage students to reflect on the relevance of these themes today.

Engaging Students Through Interactive Activities

To maximize the benefits of reading Dickens' works, teachers can incorporate interactive activities such as:

- Group discussions and debates: Encourage students to discuss themes, character choices, and moral dilemmas found in Dickens' novels.
- Creative writing exercises: Assign students to rewrite a scene from a different character's perspective or create a modern adaptation of a Dickensian story.
- Dramatic readings and role-playing: Engage students by having them perform key scenes from Dickens' works to enhance their comprehension and interpretation skills.
- Comparative analysis: Encourage students to compare Dickens' themes and characters with contemporary literature and real-world issues.

CONCLUSION

Charles Dickens' works serve as a powerful resource for improving students' reading comprehension. Through exposure to rich language, complex narratives, and historical contexts, students develop essential literacy skills that enhance their ability to analyze and interpret texts. By integrating Dickens' novels into reading instruction through engaging activities, educators can foster a deeper appreciation for literature while strengthening students' reading comprehension skills. Ultimately, the timeless relevance of Dickens' themes ensures that his works remain an invaluable tool in literary education. The concept of teaching reading through written texts is not a new approach; rather, it is a classical theory that has been adapted to fit modern conditions. To ensure success, potential challenges and drawbacks should be anticipated and carefully prepared for. Recognizing and addressing these factors can lead to significant benefits and positive outcomes. However, if common issues are ignored or left unaddressed, the process becomes merely superficial. Therefore, the key lies in making informed decisions about how to tackle

obstacles and find solutions proactively, rather than revisiting the same problems repeatedly.

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