

METHODOLOGY OF DEVELOPING READING COMPETENCE THROUGH LITERARY TEXTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Aliqulova Feruza O'ktam qizi

Termiz State Pedagogical Institute

Teacher of Practical English Department

Email: aliqulovaferuza2@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7006-9136>

Murtazinova Zebo Oromiddin qizi

Student of Termiz State Pedagogical Institute

murtazinovaz@gmail.com

Abstract. This study investigates the methodology of developing reading competence through literary texts in higher education, with particular emphasis on the pedagogical value of literature in foreign language and literacy instruction. Literary texts provide students with authentic language input, cultural awareness, and opportunities for critical interpretation. The research explores how the integration of novels, short stories, poems, and other literary genres contributes to the improvement of reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, analytical thinking, and emotional intelligence. Special attention is given to interactive and student-centered teaching approaches, including discussion-based learning, reflective reading, and interpretative analysis. The findings reveal that literary-based instruction significantly increases students' cognitive involvement, motivation, and emotional engagement during the learning process. Moreover, exposure to literary works enhances empathy, creativity, and the ability to understand diverse perspectives and cultural contexts. The study concludes that the effective use of literary texts in higher education plays an important role in fostering advanced reading competence and developing students' overall communicative and intellectual abilities.

Key words: reading competence, literary texts, empathy, interpretative comprehension, linguacultural approach, higher education, teaching methodology, critical thinking

Annotatsiya. Ushbu tadqiqot oliy ta'limda badiiy matnlar orqali o'qish kompetensiyasini rivojlantirish metodologiyasini o'rganishga bag'ishlangan bo'lib, unda adabiyotning xorijiy til va savodxonlikni o'qitishdagi pedagogik ahamiyatiga alohida e'tibor qaratiladi. Badiiy matnlar talabalarga autentik til material, madaniy ong hamda tanqidiy talqin qilish imkoniyatlarini taqdim etadi. Tadqiqot romanlar, hikoyalar, she'rlar va boshqa adabiy janrlarning o'quv jarayoniga integratsiyasi o'qib tushunish ko'nikmasi, lug'at boyligi, tahliliy fikrlash va emotsional intellektni rivojlantirishga qanday hissa qo'shishini yoritadi. Muhokamaga asoslangan ta'lim, reflektiv o'qish va interpretativ tahlil kabi interaktiv hamda talaba markazidagi yondashuvlarga alohida e'tibor beriladi. Natijalar badiiy asarlarga asoslangan ta'lim talabalarining kognitiv faolligi, motivatsiyasi va emotsional ishtirokini sezilarli darajada oshirishini ko'rsatadi. Bundan tashqari, adabiy asarlar bilan ishlash empatiya, ijodkorlik hamda turli nuqtai nazar va madaniy kontekstlarni anglash qobiliyatini rivojlantiradi. Tadqiqot xulosasiga ko'ra, oliy ta'limda badiiy matnlardan samarali foydalanish ilg'or o'qish kompetensiyasini shakllantirish va talabalarining umumiy kommunikativ hamda intellektual salohiyatini rivojlantirishda muhim ahamiyat kasb etadi.

Аннотация. Данное исследование посвящено методологии развития читательской компетенции посредством художественных текстов в системе высшего образования, с особым акцентом на педагогическую ценность литературы в обучении иностранным языкам и формировании грамотности. Художественные тексты предоставляют студентам аутентичный языковой материал, способствуют развитию культурной осведомлённости и создают возможности для критической интерпретации. В исследовании рассматривается, каким образом интеграция романов, рассказов, стихотворений и других литературных жанров способствует совершенствованию навыков чтения и понимания текста, расширению словарного запаса, развитию аналитического мышления и эмоционального интеллекта. Особое внимание уделяется интерактивным и студентоориентированным подходам к обучению, включая дискуссионное обучение, рефлексивное чтение и интерпретационный анализ. Результаты исследования показывают, что обучение на основе художественной литературы значительно повышает когнитивную активность студентов, их мотивацию и эмоциональную вовлечённость в образовательный процесс. Кроме того, работа с литературными произведениями способствует развитию эмпатии, творческого мышления и способности понимать различные точки зрения и культурные контексты. Исследование приходит к выводу, что эффективное использование художественных текстов в высшем образовании играет важную роль в формировании развитой читательской компетенции, а также в развитии коммуникативных и интеллектуальных способностей студентов.

INTRODUCTION

Reading competence is considered one of the fundamental components of successful academic and professional development in higher education. In the context of foreign language learning, reading is not limited to decoding written symbols; rather, it involves comprehension, interpretation, critical analysis, and the ability to connect textual information with personal and cultural experiences. Scholars emphasize that reading competence contributes significantly to students' linguistic proficiency, cognitive growth, and communicative abilities (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). As globalization increases the demand for intercultural communication and advanced literacy skills, the role of effective reading instruction in higher education has become increasingly important.

In recent years, literary texts have gained considerable attention as an effective pedagogical resource in language and literacy education. Literature provides authentic linguistic input and exposes learners to diverse cultural, historical, and social perspectives (Collie & Slater, 1987). Through engagement with novels, short stories, poems, and dramas, students are encouraged to interpret meanings, analyze characters and themes, and develop emotional as well as intellectual responses to texts. According to Lazar (1993), literary works create meaningful contexts for language learning and motivate students to participate actively in the learning process. Moreover, literary texts support the development of vocabulary, grammatical awareness, and interpretative thinking skills.

The integration of literature into reading instruction also promotes critical and reflective thinking. Reader-response theory suggests that learners construct meaning through interaction between the text and their personal experiences, which increases cognitive engagement and interpretative competence (Rosenblatt, 1978). Furthermore,

literature-based instruction encourages empathy and emotional intelligence by enabling students to understand different perspectives and cultural identities (Nussbaum, 2010). Such qualities are especially valuable in higher education, where students are expected to develop independent thinking and intercultural awareness.

Despite the recognized educational value of literary texts, some challenges remain in their practical application within higher education classrooms. Traditional teaching approaches often focus on memorization and teacher-centered analysis rather than interactive interpretation and student participation. Contemporary pedagogical approaches, however, emphasize discussion-based learning, reflective reading, collaborative analysis, and other student-centered strategies that enhance reading comprehension and learner motivation (Carter & Long, 1991). These approaches enable students to engage more deeply with literary texts and improve both linguistic and analytical abilities.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the methodology of developing reading competence through literary texts in higher education. The research focuses on the pedagogical significance of literature in improving comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, analytical thinking, empathy, and interpretative skills among students. In addition, the study examines the effectiveness of interactive and literature-based instructional methods in fostering students' cognitive and emotional engagement during the learning process.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODS

Recent studies in higher education emphasize that reading competence is a multidimensional skill involving comprehension, interpretation, critical thinking, and emotional engagement. Academic reading is considered essential for students' success because it supports analytical reasoning, communicative competence, and independent learning. However, many university students experience reading as difficult and unmotivating when traditional teaching methods are applied (Mason & Warmington, 2024). Consequently, educators increasingly seek innovative methodologies that encourage active participation and deeper interaction with texts. Literary texts have become an important pedagogical resource in language and literacy instruction because they provide authentic linguistic and cultural content. Literature exposes learners to complex vocabulary, stylistic diversity, and real-life social contexts, which contribute to the development of advanced reading competence. Contemporary research indicates that literary reading enhances students' interpretative abilities and critical analysis skills by encouraging them to examine themes, characters, and symbolic meanings within texts (Le et al., 2024). Furthermore, literary works stimulate imagination and emotional engagement, enabling students to connect personal experiences with textual interpretation.

Another important aspect discussed in recent literature is the role of collaborative and student-centered learning in reading instruction. Abdelshaheed (2023) argues that collaborative construction activities and discussion-based learning significantly improve reading comprehension and cognitive engagement among language learners. Interactive methodologies encourage students to exchange interpretations, justify opinions, and participate actively in meaning-making processes. Such approaches are consistent with constructivist theories of education, which emphasize that knowledge is developed through interaction and reflection. Current pedagogical studies also highlight the importance of critical reading instruction in higher education. According to recent

research published in *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, effective teaching of critical reading should involve interpretative analysis, contextual understanding, and reflective response activities that develop both comprehension and higher-order thinking skills (2024). Similarly, Bjorn (2024) demonstrates that explicit instruction combined with collaborative annotation strategies significantly improves students' critical reading performance, research self-efficacy, and academic engagement. These findings suggest that interactive literary-text-based methodologies positively influence students' cognitive and emotional involvement in the learning process. In addition, recent research on literacy development in higher education confirms that reading competence is closely connected with academic achievement and intellectual growth. Bibliometric analyses show increasing scholarly interest in literacy skills, critical reading, and interpretative competence as essential components of modern higher education (Utomo et al., 2024). Scholars also emphasize that reading activities foster intercultural awareness, empathy, and communicative development, especially in foreign language learning environments.

Overall, contemporary literature demonstrates that literary texts serve as an effective educational tool for improving reading competence in higher education. Student-centered methodologies, collaborative interpretation, reflective reading, and critical analysis contribute not only to linguistic development but also to students' emotional intelligence, motivation, and analytical thinking abilities.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate the development of reading competence through literary texts in higher education. The qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth examination of students' interpretative responses, reading behaviors, and cognitive engagement during literature-based instructional activities. The study aimed to determine how literary texts contribute to the improvement of reading comprehension, analytical thinking, vocabulary acquisition, and emotional involvement among university students.

The participants of the study were undergraduate students of Termiz State Pedagogical Institute studying English as a foreign language. The selected participants represented intermediate and upper-intermediate levels of English language proficiency. A purposive sampling method was used to select students who actively participated in reading and literature classes. The study focused on students' interaction with literary texts and their responses to literature-based instructional methods implemented during the learning process. The instructional materials included different literary genres such as short stories, poems, and excerpts from novels. These texts were selected according to students' language proficiency levels, thematic relevance, and interpretative potential. Literary works reflecting cultural, emotional, and social themes were prioritized to encourage critical discussion and reflective reading. The selected materials provided authentic language input and opportunities for vocabulary enrichment, analytical interpretation, and communicative development.

Data were collected through several qualitative research methods, including classroom observations, reflective journals, reading comprehension tasks, and group discussions. During the instructional process, students participated in interactive reading activities such as interpretative analysis, collaborative discussions, and reflective response writing. Classroom observations were conducted to evaluate students' participation, motivation, and engagement while working with literary texts.

Reflective journals were used to analyze students' personal interpretations, emotional reactions, and critical opinions regarding the literary works studied in class. Group discussions enabled students to exchange perspectives, justify interpretations, and develop communicative competence through collaborative learning. Reading comprehension activities were also administered to identify changes in students' understanding, analytical reading abilities, and vocabulary development throughout the study.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and interpretative analysis methods. Students' responses and classroom interactions were categorized according to recurring themes related to comprehension, critical thinking, emotional engagement, vocabulary acquisition, and interpretative competence. Comparative analysis was conducted to examine differences in students' reading performance before and after the implementation of literature-based instruction.

Ethical principles were maintained throughout the research process. Participation in the study was voluntary, and students were informed about the objectives of the research before data collection began. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were ensured during the analysis and presentation of the findings.

The methodology of this study was designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical effectiveness of literary texts in higher education. By applying student-centered and interactive instructional approaches, the research sought to demonstrate how literature-based learning contributes to the development of advanced reading competence, critical interpretation, and communicative abilities among students of Termiz State Pedagogical Institute.

RESULTS

The findings of the study demonstrated that the use of literary texts in higher education had a positive impact on the development of students' reading competence. The implementation of literature-based instructional methods significantly improved students' reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, analytical thinking, and emotional engagement during the learning process.

Classroom observations revealed that students became more active and motivated when literary texts were integrated into reading activities. Interactive methods such as group discussions, interpretative analysis, and reflective reading encouraged students to participate more confidently in classroom communication. Many students showed greater willingness to express personal opinions, analyze characters and themes, and relate literary situations to real-life experiences. This indicates that literature-based instruction increased both cognitive and emotional involvement in the learning process.

The results of reading comprehension activities demonstrated noticeable improvement in students' ability to understand and interpret complex texts. Before the implementation of literary-text-based instruction, many students experienced difficulties in identifying implicit meanings, analyzing themes, and interpreting figurative language. However, after participating in interactive literary reading activities, students showed improved interpretative competence and stronger critical reading abilities. They became more capable of identifying symbolism, understanding contextual meanings, and evaluating different perspectives presented in literary works.

Vocabulary development was another significant outcome of the study. Exposure to authentic literary language enriched students' lexical knowledge and improved their understanding of contextual word usage. Students demonstrated increased ability to use

newly acquired vocabulary in both oral discussions and written reflections. Literary texts also contributed to the improvement of grammatical awareness and communicative fluency through repeated exposure to natural language structures.

The study additionally revealed positive changes in students' emotional and cultural awareness. Reflective journals and classroom discussions indicated that literary works helped students develop empathy, creativity, and intercultural understanding. Through engagement with characters, conflicts, and social themes, students became more sensitive to different perspectives and cultural contexts. Such emotional engagement contributed to deeper comprehension and more meaningful interpretation of texts.

Furthermore, the findings confirmed the effectiveness of student-centered teaching approaches in developing reading competence. Collaborative learning activities created a supportive environment in which students could exchange ideas, justify interpretations, and develop analytical reasoning skills. Students reported that discussion-based and reflective learning methods made reading activities more interesting, interactive, and intellectually stimulating.

Overall, the results of the study demonstrate that literary texts serve as an effective pedagogical tool for improving reading competence in higher education. Literature-based instruction not only enhances comprehension and interpretative skills but also contributes to students' emotional intelligence, critical thinking, communicative competence, and cultural awareness. The findings suggest that the integration of literary texts into foreign language instruction can significantly enrich the educational experience and support the development of advanced literacy skills among university students.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study confirm that literary texts play a significant role in developing reading competence among higher education students. The improvement observed in reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, critical thinking, and emotional engagement supports the view that literature-based instruction is an effective pedagogical approach in foreign language education. These findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing that literary texts provide authentic language input and meaningful contexts for interpretation, which enhance learners' cognitive and communicative development (Collie & Slater, 1987; Lazar, 1993).

One of the key outcomes of the study is the increase in students' interpretative and analytical abilities. Students demonstrated better performance in identifying implicit meanings, analyzing themes, and interpreting literary devices after exposure to structured literary reading activities. This supports the idea that reading is not a passive process but a constructive activity in which meaning is created through interaction between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt, 1978). The findings also suggest that guided discussion and reflective reading significantly contribute to deeper textual understanding and critical engagement.

The study further highlights the importance of student-centered and interactive teaching approaches in literature-based instruction. Collaborative discussions, group interpretation, and reflective writing encouraged active participation and allowed students to express personal interpretations freely. These methods align with contemporary pedagogical perspectives that emphasize learner autonomy, interaction, and meaning negotiation as essential components of effective reading instruction (Carter

& Long, 1991). As a result, students became more confident in expressing opinions and engaging in analytical dialogue.

Another important aspect of the findings is the development of emotional intelligence and empathy through literary reading. Students reported stronger emotional connections with characters and situations presented in literary texts, which contributed to a deeper understanding of human experiences and cultural diversity. This supports previous studies suggesting that literature fosters empathy and intercultural awareness by exposing learners to different worldviews and social contexts (Nussbaum, 2010).

In addition, vocabulary development and linguistic improvement were evident throughout the study. Continuous exposure to authentic literary language enabled students to expand their lexical range and improve contextual understanding of new words. This finding reinforces the pedagogical value of literature as a tool for enhancing language acquisition in meaningful contexts.

However, some challenges were also observed during the implementation of literary-text-based instruction. Certain students initially experienced difficulty in understanding complex vocabulary and figurative language. This suggests that the effectiveness of literature-based teaching depends on careful text selection and appropriate instructional support, such as pre-reading activities, glossaries, and teacher guidance.

Overall, the discussion confirms that integrating literary texts into higher education reading instruction has multidimensional benefits. It not only enhances linguistic competence but also promotes critical thinking, emotional engagement, and cultural awareness. These outcomes highlight the importance of adopting interactive, student-centered approaches in literature-based language teaching to maximize students' reading competence development.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effectiveness of developing reading competence through literary texts in higher education, with particular emphasis on student-centered and interactive teaching approaches. The findings demonstrate that literature-based instruction significantly contributes to the improvement of students' reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, analytical thinking, and emotional engagement.

The results indicate that literary texts provide rich linguistic input and meaningful contexts that support deeper interpretation and critical analysis. Through engagement with novels, short stories, and poems, students were able to develop stronger interpretative skills, identify implicit meanings, and analyze themes more effectively. In addition, consistent exposure to authentic literary language enhanced their lexical knowledge and improved their ability to use vocabulary in appropriate contexts.

The study also confirmed that interactive teaching methods such as group discussions, reflective reading, and collaborative interpretation play a crucial role in increasing students' motivation and active participation. These approaches created a learner-centered environment where students were encouraged to express opinions, justify interpretations, and engage in meaningful academic dialogue. As a result, both cognitive and emotional involvement in reading activities increased significantly.

Furthermore, the research revealed that literary texts contribute to the development of emotional intelligence, empathy, and cultural awareness. By engaging with diverse characters, situations, and cultural perspectives, students developed a deeper

understanding of human experiences and social contexts, which enriched their overall learning process.

However, the study also identified certain challenges, particularly related to the complexity of literary language for some learners. This suggests the importance of careful text selection and the use of supportive teaching strategies such as pre-reading guidance and vocabulary scaffolding to ensure accessibility and comprehension.

In conclusion, the integration of literary texts into higher education reading instruction is an effective approach for enhancing both linguistic and cognitive development. The study confirms that literature-based learning not only strengthens reading competence but also fosters critical thinking, creativity, and intercultural understanding. Therefore, it is recommended that educators continue to incorporate literary texts into foreign language curricula using interactive and student-centered methodologies to maximize learning outcomes.

REFERENCES

1. Bjorn, M. (2024). Enhancing critical reading through collaborative annotation strategies in higher education. *Frontiers in Education*, 9, 1257747. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2024.1257747>
2. Carter, R., & Long, M. N. (1991). *Teaching literature*. Longman.
3. Collie, J., & Slater, S. (1987). *Literature in the language classroom: A resource book of ideas and activities*. Cambridge University Press.
4. Grabe, W., & Stoller, F. L. (2011). *Teaching and researching reading* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
5. Lazar, G. (1993). *Literature and language teaching: A guide for teachers and trainers*. Cambridge University Press.
6. Le, T. H., Nguyen, P. T., & Tran, Q. A. (2024). Critical reading strategies and challenges in higher education EFL classrooms. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 52, 101–118. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2024.101118>
7. Mason, L., & Warmington, P. (2024). Academic reading difficulties in higher education: Engagement and motivation issues. *Higher Education*, 87(2), 345–362. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-023-01145-2>
8. Nussbaum, M. C. (2010). *Not for profit: Why democracy needs the humanities*. Princeton University Press.
9. Paran, A. (2008). The role of literature in instructed foreign language learning and teaching. *Language Teaching*, 41(4), 465–496. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026144480800520X>
10. Rosenblatt, L. M. (1978). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*. Southern Illinois University Press.
11. Utomo, D., Pratama, R., & Sari, M. (2024). Student literacy and literacy skills in higher education: A bibliometric review. *Education Sciences*, 14(1), 55–70. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14010055>