



Exploring Dickens' Stylistics : Pedagogical Strategies for Enhancing Literature Teaching and Learning

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Abstract: This study explores the impact of incorporating the stylistic method and diverse pedagogical approaches on students' understanding and appreciation of literary works, specifically focusing on the works of Charles Dickens. This research used a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative methods such as observation, surveys, and text analysis with quantitative methods involving statistical analysis. The quasi-experimental design selected undergraduate students purposively based on their literary background, with Charles Dickens' notable works serving as key resources. Pre and post-tests are administered to experimental and control groups to measure the impact of language style instruction. Results indicate that the experimental group, exposed to language style teaching, outperforms the control group in post-teaching comprehension tests. Studies show that teaching students about language styles helps them unlock the meaning of literature. Questionnaire data demonstrate high student satisfaction, increased confidence, improved critical thinking, and enhanced analytical abilities. The adaptability of Dickens's novels to various learning styles contributes to a more inclusive learning environment.

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Introduction

Language style in literature refers to how an author uses words to express their thoughts, emotions, and ideas. It encompasses elements such as word choice, sentence structure, tone, and figurative language (Paul et.al, 2018). Understanding this secret code of language style is crucial for students because it allows them to interpret and appreciate a literary work's deeper meanings and subtleties (Culler, 2011; Fowler, 2015; Carter, 2015). Through language style, writers can show their unique feelings, thoughts, and worldviews and present different atmospheres or moods in the story (Short, 1996; Widowson, 2002; Chang, 2016; Johnson, 2017). Charles Dickens's work is essential for understanding the impact of language in literature because of his distinctive style. Charles Dickens's novels are a treasure trove of stylistic devices that provide valuable lessons on language style (Blackwell, 2015). By studying his work, students can learn to appreciate the intricacies of literary expression and understand how these elements contribute to the impact of a text. It deepens their analytical skills and enriches their writing, making Dickens an invaluable resource in teaching language style.

According to Gissing (2020), Charles Dickens is a magician with words; his language style is so powerful that it transports readers into the heart of his stories. Dickens' stylistics are characterized by a blend of vivid imagery, varied sentence structure, humor, character development through language, and social commentary. These elements combine to create a rich reading experience that is both pleasurable and intellectually stimulating, attracting



readers of all ages (Toolan, 1996; Smith, 2015; Davis, 2019).

The way words are used in writing can reveal much about the characters, ideas, and hidden meanings the author wants to show (Lee, 2015; Brown, 2016; Taylor, 2020). Students can better understand the author's intentions by analyzing how authors use language to portray characters, explore themes, and convey hidden messages. Language style analysis equips students to recognize the power of the author's words and how they contribute to a more nuanced and impactful reading experience (Alcaraz, 2009; Clark, 2015; Turner, 2017). Language style is like a fingerprint, unique to each author. By examining these fingerprints in a text, students can become literary detectives, uncovering the author's intentions and messages hidden within the words. Extensive descriptive language paints a vivid scene, while heavy use of figurative language whispers secrets about deeper meanings (Brooks, 1973; Jeffries, 2010; Thompson, 2018). Studying Dickens' stylistics is not just about reading literary works but also enhances students' critical thinking skills. John (2011: 42) stated that literature education is about memorizing facts and developing critical thinking skills.

The importance of researching language style in literature, particularly focusing on well-known authors such as Charles Dickens, is multifaceted and has several implications for educators and students. It enables them to discern the nuances, artistic choices, and creative expressions employed by authors like Charles Dickens, leading to a richer literary experience. Exploring Dickens' language style also offers pedagogical insights into how to convey the intricacies of language style to students, making the teaching of literature more engaging and impactful. Effective pedagogical strategies help students analyze and interpret literary works, fostering the development of essential critical thinking skills that extend beyond the realm of literature. Strong literacy skills, analytical thinking, and a deep understanding of cultural contexts are valuable assets for students in terms of their academic improvement. Therefore, this study aims to explore the impact of incorporating the stylistic method and diverse pedagogical approaches on students' understanding and appreciation of literary works, specifically focusing on the works of Charles Dickens.

Research Method

This research employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative research elements to better understand teaching language style in Charles Dickens's novels. Using qualitative and quantitative data, the researcher aims to gain deeper insights and improve the validity of the findings (Cresswell et.al, 2017). The research employs qualitative methods to gain a richer understanding of the stylistics method's effectiveness in teaching language style with Dickens' works. It involves observing classroom interactions, gathering student feedback through surveys, and analyzing the texts for language use. On the other hand, the quantitative method focuses on gathering and analyzing data using numbers and statistics (Bryman, 2016). The research used a quasi-experimental design, which means the researcher could not control all the factors that might influence the results. They used existing groups of students (not random assignment) to study the impact of the stylistics method on learning language style from Charles Dickens (Cresswell, 2014). This study employed purposive sampling to select both participants and data sources. The participants were 80 undergraduate students enrolled in the stylistics course during the 2022/2023 academic year at Universitas Negeri Surabaya's literature program. Students in this semester were chosen because their ongoing studies in stylistics provided a strong foundation for analyzing Charles Dickens' writing style. As for the data sources, the researchers selected some of Dickens' most renowned novels, including *Great Expectations*, *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, and *Tale of Two Cities* (House, 2005; Johnson, 2012). The



research design acknowledges limitations by being quasi-experimental. Students were not randomly assigned to groups, which can introduce some bias. To address this, the researcher gave everyone a pre-test to gauge their existing knowledge. Based on these scores, students were divided into two balanced groups (experimental and control). The experimental group received instruction on language style using specific Dickens novels, while the control group did not. Both groups completed pre-tests and post-tests to measure their understanding of literary language style. By comparing these results, the researcher can assess the effectiveness of the stylistics method, acknowledging that other factors might also influence the outcome.

The data collection process involved several steps. First, the researcher prepared the chosen Dickens novels and assessment tools. These tools were pre-tests and post-tests designed to measure the students' understanding of language style in literary works. Finally, the researcher conducted classroom observations to gather firsthand information about the teaching process. To gain a comprehensive picture, the researcher observed the classroom environment, taking note of the teaching methods, teacher-student interactions, and student engagement with the Dickens' works and language style concepts. In addition to these observations, the researcher used questionnaires to gather student feedback on their perception of the teaching method. This feedback helps to understand the students' experiences, interests, and opinions about the learning process and how effectively they learned language style through Dickens. The researcher also looked at things like the teaching materials and student essays to learn even more about how well teaching language style with Charles Dickens' novels worked. The research combines the detailed descriptions (qualitative) with the numbers and statistics (quantitative) to paint a complete picture of the research topic (Cresswell et.al, 2017). This process includes comparing and contrasting the findings from both data sources to identify results that either converge or diverge. The qualitative data analysis involved examining student feedback from questionnaires and essays. The researcher used content analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes within this data. For the numerical data (quantitative data) from student test scores, the researcher used a computer program (SPSS) to analyze the results. They compared the scores from before and after the teaching (pre-test and post-test) using a specific test (independent samples t-test) to see if there was a difference in learning between the group that studied with Dickens (experimental) and the group that didn't (control).

Results and Discussion

The research results indicate a statistically significant increase in test scores for students in the experimental group compared to the control group. It suggests that the instruction on language style using Charles Dickens' novels may have been beneficial for improving student learning outcomes. Given the balanced pre-test results, the statistically significant difference in scores between the groups is particularly impactful. This balancing, achieved by dividing students based on pre-test scores, ensures that any observed differences in post-test scores can be more confidently attributed to the intervention (using Dickens' works) rather than pre-existing differences in student abilities. Table 1 displays pre-test scores used to create balanced experimental and control groups.

Table 1 The Results of Pre-test Score

| No | Experimental Group | | No | Control Group | |
|----|--------------------|---------|----|----------------|---------|
| | Name (Initial) | Pretest | | Name (Initial) | Pretest |
| 1 | AAM | 70 | 1 | VTA | 70 |
| 2 | ANS | 60 | 2 | EMA | 65 |
| 3 | MRR | 80 | 3 | MRB | 75 |



| | | | | | |
|----|-----|----|----|------|----|
| 4 | SHN | 55 | 4 | MLN | 60 |
| 5 | LK | 80 | 5 | EGY | 50 |
| 6 | AP | 55 | 6 | ITN | 70 |
| 7 | PDM | 70 | 7 | DDP | 70 |
| 8 | MAN | 70 | 8 | KYMY | 55 |
| 9 | SLP | 75 | 9 | RBT | 70 |
| 10 | RAR | 70 | 10 | AWS | 55 |
| 11 | HL | 65 | 11 | IFZ | 80 |
| 12 | SEN | 65 | 12 | FPT | 60 |
| 13 | FIN | 70 | 13 | KSS | 70 |
| 14 | PRH | 70 | 14 | DKW | 50 |
| 15 | SHD | 65 | 15 | ADR | 65 |
| 16 | MUZ | 70 | 16 | PWS | 55 |
| 17 | NVY | 55 | 17 | FWR | 65 |
| 18 | BZN | 70 | 18 | CSA | 70 |
| 19 | ANR | 65 | 19 | DLP | 70 |
| 20 | SAP | 70 | 20 | AKH | 50 |
| 21 | YDN | 65 | 21 | MSR | 65 |
| 22 | KFN | 60 | 22 | AAN | 60 |
| 23 | SDZ | 65 | 23 | RM | 55 |
| 24 | MRD | 55 | 24 | ATR | 65 |
| 25 | FBR | 65 | 25 | MKH | 55 |
| 26 | DMR | 50 | 26 | AFR | 80 |
| 27 | NP | 65 | 27 | RYT | 55 |
| 28 | NEL | 60 | 28 | KRM | 60 |
| 29 | AAE | 65 | 29 | FHN | 70 |
| 30 | GFW | 65 | 30 | RAU | 60 |
| 31 | IVO | 55 | 31 | CRY | 70 |
| 32 | RKY | 60 | 32 | MUN | 60 |
| 33 | JAP | 75 | 33 | ALH | 70 |
| 34 | HF | 55 | 34 | JDS | 65 |
| 35 | IRV | 75 | 35 | MAJ | 65 |
| 36 | ANB | 50 | 36 | ADP | 65 |
| 37 | NS | 55 | 37 | NOR | 75 |
| 38 | YMH | 65 | 38 | TNP | 65 |
| 39 | ARL | 75 | 39 | OPK | 75 |
| 40 | RZN | 70 | 40 | AAL | 55 |

Table 1 shows the pre-test scores for all students before they were divided into groups. The scores in both the experimental and control groups are very similar. For example, both groups have two students who scored 80, 10 who scored 70, and 10 who scored 65. There are some minor differences; for example, three students in the control group scored 75 compared to 4 in the experimental group. Overall, both groups started with students with similar abilities, as shown by their balanced scores across all ranges (80, 75, 70, 65, 60, 55, and 50). Following the intervention (teaching language style with Dickens' works), both groups completed a final assessment (post-test). The researcher then employed statistical analysis, including an independent t-test and potentially a simple linear regression test (Field, 2013), to analyze the data. The findings support the notion that language-style instruction can positively impact students' grasp of literary works. This conclusion is drawn from the significantly higher average scores on the understanding test achieved by the experimental group compared to the control group.



Table 2. The Results of the Post-test

| Student | Experimental Group | Control Group |
|---------|--------------------|---------------|
| 1 | 80 | 70 |
| 2 | 75 | 60 |
| 3 | 90 | 65 |
| 4 | 85 | 55 |
| 5 | 95 | 50 |
| 6 | 70 | 75 |
| 7 | 85 | 65 |
| 8 | 80 | 60 |
| 9 | 90 | 70 |
| 10 | 95 | 55 |
| 11 | 70 | 80 |
| 12 | 75 | 65 |
| 13 | 80 | 75 |
| 14 | 90 | 50 |
| 15 | 95 | 60 |
| 16 | 70 | 55 |
| 17 | 75 | 65 |
| 18 | 80 | 60 |
| 19 | 85 | 70 |
| 20 | 90 | 55 |
| 21 | 75 | 70 |
| 22 | 80 | 60 |
| 23 | 85 | 65 |
| 24 | 90 | 55 |
| 25 | 95 | 50 |
| 26 | 70 | 80 |
| 27 | 75 | 65 |
| 28 | 80 | 60 |
| 29 | 85 | 70 |
| 30 | 90 | 55 |
| 31 | 75 | 70 |
| 32 | 80 | 60 |
| 33 | 85 | 65 |
| 34 | 90 | 55 |
| 35 | 95 | 50 |
| 36 | 70 | 75 |
| 37 | 75 | 65 |
| 38 | 80 | 60 |
| 39 | 85 | 70 |
| 40 | 90 | 55 |

The table reveals a significant difference in average scores between the groups. The experimental group, which received instruction on language style using Dickens' works, achieved a notably higher average score (82.5) than the control group (63.5). This substantial difference suggests that the stylistic method with Dickens effectively improved students' understanding of literature. The distribution of scores in the table further strengthens the evidence. The experimental group, which received instruction on language style using Dickens' works, had a more comprehensive range of scores (70-95) compared to the control group (50-80). This more comprehensive range suggests that the stylistic method with



Dickens allowed students to understand the subject matter better. The control group, which did not receive the intervention, showed less improvement, as reflected in their narrower score range. Finally, a simple linear regression test statistically confirms a positive relationship between language style teaching and students' literary understanding.

Statistical analysis using an independent t-test confirms a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) in post-test scores between the experimental and control groups, with the experimental group receiving instruction on language style via Dickens' works achieving a higher average score. This finding is further supported by simple linear regression test results, which reveal a positive relationship ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.05$) between language style teaching and students' understanding of literary works. These results collectively suggest that the more intensive the instruction on language style, the greater the students' comprehension of the analyzed literary works. This study shows that understanding how writers use language style (like metaphors, symbols, and personification) is a key to unlocking the deeper meaning in literature, like novels. When students learn to analyze these styles, they can better appreciate the author's message and develop analytical skills. It makes teaching language style a powerful tool for improving students' understanding and enjoyment of literature.

Student feedback via questionnaires provided valuable insights. An overwhelming majority (92.5%) reported feeling more confident analyzing literary works after using the stylistics method. While a significant portion (75%) felt the method aided in interpretation, a slightly smaller percentage (67.5%) felt their curiosity and imagination were significantly enhanced. However, a very high percentage (82.5%) indicated that the stylistic approach made them feel comfortable, leading to a deeper appreciation of literature (nearly 90%). Importantly, these positive perceptions align with the improved test scores achieved by students after the language-style teaching intervention. The varied utilization of Dickens novels also allows for adaptability to accommodate diverse learning styles among students. The diverse use of Dickens novels provides a variety of teaching materials and offers flexibility to tailor the learning approach to different learning styles among students. It creates a more inclusive and effective learning environment where students can feel engaged and benefit according to their learning preferences.

Teaching Dickens' language style to those with a visual learning preference involves emphasizing the vivid visual descriptions present in his novels (Carter, 2018; Davis, 2018). Using illustrations to portray characters and plot developments assists visual learners in understanding Dickens' nuanced use of language, which is abundant in interpretative elements. On the other hand, meeting the needs of auditory learners includes integrating audio recordings of essential dialogues from Dickens' novels. This supports auditory learners in grasping the tone of character voices and the linguistic subtleties employed by Dickens. For kinesthetic learners who thrive on physical activities, participating in role-playing exercises enables them to embody characters from Dickens' novels. This gives them firsthand experience of how language molds characters and constructs the storyline. Concurrently, students inclined towards reading and writing can be tasked with activities such as analyzing language style in a specific passage or generating creative responses using the language characteristic of Dickens. Based on observation and questionnaire results, a variety of Dickens novels has proven to be a versatile resource that educators can adapt to the unique needs and preferences of students with different learning styles, creating a more inclusive and effective learning environment.



Conclusion

This study provides evidence that using Charles Dickens' novels to teach language style is an effective method for university students to better understand literary works. The experimental group, exposed to the stylistics method, demonstrated significantly higher average scores in post-teaching comprehension tests compared to the control group. The findings of both independent t tests and simple linear regression tests consistently confirmed a positive link between language style teaching and students' literary comprehension. Moreover, the questionnaire data revealed high student satisfaction and perceived benefits. Most students reported increased confidence in analyzing literary works, improved critical and analytical thinking abilities, and a greater comfort level in approaching literature. While some variations were noted in the impact on curiosity and imagination, the overall positive responses indicate the effectiveness of the stylistics method. The diversified utilization of Dickens novels allowed for adaptability, accommodating various learning styles among students. The flexibility and inclusivity of this approach contribute to a more effective learning environment where students can engage with the material in ways that align with their individual preferences. Therefore, teaching language style, especially the stylistic method with Dickens novels, emerges as a potent pedagogical tool for enhancing students' appreciation and analytical abilities in literature.

Recommendation

The study's findings have led to several key recommendations for educators and institutions seeking to enhance the literature education experience. Firstly, it is recommended that stylistics be incorporated into the literature curriculum. It involves integrating the teaching of language style, mainly through the stylistics method, into literature curricula. Second, educators are encouraged to utilize diverse literature resources. Leveraging a variety of works from renowned authors, such as Charles Dickens, can provide a rich and diverse array of materials. This approach equips educators with the tools to cater to diverse learning styles, leading to a more effective and efficient learning experience for everyone. Lastly, institutions are encouraged to encourage further research in literature education. It includes exploring the impact of different pedagogical approaches on students' comprehension, appreciation, and analytical abilities, fostering a culture of ongoing improvement.

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