

**آثار الحلقات الأدبية على أداء واتجاهات الطلاب الذين
يتعلمون اللغة الإنكليزية كلفة أجنبية في القصة القصيرة
الإنكليزية**

**Effects of Literature Circles on EFL
Students' Performance and Attitudes in
English Short Story**

م.د. رائد نافع فرحان

Lect. Dr. Raed Nafea Farhan

المديرية العامة لتربية الانبار / قسم تربية هيت

General Directorate Education of Anbar\

Department of Education in Heet

E-mail: raedd5095@gmail.com

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحلقات الأدبية، الطريقة التقليدية، الأداء، وجهات النظر، الطلاب.

Keywords: literature circles, traditional method, performance, attitudes, students.



المخلص

توفر الحلقات الأدبية فرصة متميزة لدمج أساليب التدريس الناجحة مع بيئة تعليمية أفضل. التقنيات التقليدية لتدريس الأدب تخلق متعلمين سلبيين في عملية التعلم. وبالتالي، تستكشف هذه الدراسة إمكانات الدوائر الأدبية في كشف أداء الطلاب في اختبار الأداء وآرائهم في قاعة الأدب. تم استخدام تصميم دراسة شبه تجريبية في مدرسة ثانوية الدولاب في العراق، وشارك في هذا البحث أربعة وثلاثون طالباً. وتم جمع البيانات من الاختبارين القبلي والبعدي، وكذلك من الاستبيان. تم تحليل درجات الاختبار القبلي والبعدي تحليلًا وصفيًا باستخدام اختبار عينة مقترنة بيانات الاستبيان حلت احصائياً باستخدام الحزمة الاجتماعية للعلوم الاجتماعية إصدار ٢٦ أظهرت النتائج تحسن بدرجات الاختبار البعدي للطلاب وكذلك توجهات ومواقف ايجابية تجاه اعتماد ودمج الحلقات الادبية في تدريس القصة القصيرة وتشير هذه النتائج ان الحلقات الادبية حسنت درجات الطلبة وتوجهاتهم بوجوب استخدام هذه التقنية داخل صفوف الادب وتوصي الدراسة بأعداد بحوث مستقبلية لفحص وجهة نظر المدرسين بالحلقات الادبية ومحاولة دمجها بتدريس النصوص الادبية

Abstract

Literature circles provide a distinct chance to integrate successful teaching methods with a better learning environment. Conventional techniques of teaching literature create passive learners in the learning process. Thus, this study explores the potential of literature circles on students' performance and attitudes in the literature classroom. A quasi-experimental study design was employed at Al-Dulab secondary school in Iraq, and thirty-four students took part in this research. Data was collected from both the pre-and post-tests as well as the questionnaire. The pre-test and post-test results were analyzed according to a descriptive evaluation using a paired sample t-test. The survey questionnaire data was analyzed for descriptive statistics using SPSS version 26. The results show a statistically significant rise in the students' pre and post-test scores and a positive attitude towards integrating literature circles in studying the short story. This suggests that literature circles improved students' test scores and attitudes and should be used in literature classes. The study recommends conducting additional research to examine teachers' perspectives on literature circles following their substantial integration into teaching literary texts.



1- Introduction

Regarding the instruction and acquisition of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Iraq, literature has emerged as an essential component of language programs nationwide. Since it began, adding literature to language schools has changed slowly, going through several stages. The primary objective of literature in English component of the English language syllabus for Iraqi secondary schools is to improve students' English language ability by studying a specific selection of literary texts (Waham, 2024). Reading about various cultures and world views can enhance personal growth, foster character-building, and expand students' perspectives (Schrijvers & Janssen, 2017). Literature study can cultivate students' character, foster emotional maturity, and equip pupils with enhanced critical faculties (Al-Mahrooqi & Roscoe, 2012).

Teachers should create exercises and challenges to improve students' comprehension and admiration of literature. Evidence from classroom observations suggests that teachers frequently fail to align their instructional techniques with the specific needs of their students (Jones & Brownell, 2022). Hence, to ensure the successful implementation of the English literature component, teachers and learners must collaborate as partners in the classroom. Therefore, the main focus will be on customizing activities to ensure that students engage with the texts and with each other in ways that facilitate language acquisition, which is the literature circles technique (Clower, 2006).

The term "*literature circles*," are coined by Harvey Daniels, it refers to small, student-centered groups that engage in in-depth discussions on a piece of literature. Whittaker (2012) observed that discussions conducted in *literature circles* are characterized as "dynamic" and are hardly observed in classrooms. Literature circles are a process-oriented framework firmly based on Rosenblatt's transactional theory. It aids learners in remembering the transactions that take place while they read and derive meaning from literary works and enables them to express these insights naturally (Rosenblatt, 2018). Past studies indicate that facilitating literary interactions between EFL literature learners, the texts they are reading, and their classmates can improve their appreciation of literature and their acquisition of literary knowledge, enjoyment, and involvement (Armstrong, 2015).

literature circles allow students to debate and examine literature without adult supervision. *Literature circles* can improve students' literacy and enjoyment of reading in an inclusive educational context (Parker & Quigley, 1999). Allowing students to choose their texts and giving purposeful teaching in *literature circles* can encourage enthusiastic involvement (Whittaker, 2012). Hence, the researcher facilitates literary discussions using literary circle and interactional reader response theory to



improve students' skills. These debates encourage active learning and questioning lecturers' views (Roberts, 2019). The theory of transactional reader reaction says that students who are involved in literary circles are more likely to have a personal response to the text. Through peer chats, students are able to talk about their deepest thoughts and feelings, which isn't always possible in a traditional literature class. Even if learners lack the technical knowledge of a literary piece and struggle to comprehend it, they can still experience a sense of satisfaction and feel that they have contributed to the group debate.

Short stories, poetry, and novels are all types of literature that have been an important part of the English curriculum in Iraq for a long time. However, the pedagogical method employed to instruct these subjects employs traditional methods, which might be noticed to lack the ability to provide substantial experiences for the learners (Shnawa, 2020). Traditional learning methods, such as mere dispensers of information or evaluators of competence, produce passive learners in the learning process (Mohammed & Hussein, 2021). Thus, learners do not participate actively during lectures and remain disengaged from the literature text they should read (Waham, 2024). The instructor frequently administers a final examination after delivering a series of lectures as part of the "Inform them and assess their abilities" method (Manzollilo, 2016). While these strategies may assist learners in their understanding, they are incapable of developing their critical thinking skills (Traore & Kyei-Blankson, 2011) and generating interest in perusing the assigned literature (Shnawa, 2020). This may be because the instructors, who typically lack training in teaching the literature component, encounter challenges in effectively implementing the most suitable strategy, approach, and method to instruct and manage the session (Brownell, 2006). So, it's time for Iraqi English-language schools to use new methods and techniques to teach literature. One method that could be used is *literature circles*.

As a researcher, I find *literature circles* to be very interesting. it guarantees that learners engage in substantial exchanges (both with the text and subsequently with their peers), so enhancing their appreciation for literature and their acquisition of literary knowledge. It serves as a platform for collaborative learning, encouraging students to share insights and interpretations. *Literature circles* facilitate the development of critical thinking skills in pupils through the analysis of plot, characters, and themes. Engaging in discussions within *literature circles* enhances language creation and fluency in the English language. This type of literary encounter equips learners with a unique opportunity to develop into independent, responsive, and self-reliant thinkers and critical readers. These learners will possess the ability to comprehend the occurrences and concepts presented in literary writings, develop a genuine admiration and



pleasure for literary works, and get higher scores on standardized assessments. As a researcher, I perceive *literature circles* as a powerful instrument for enhancing both language acquisition and personal development. In summary, my research demonstrates that literature circles have a substantial impact on the academic achievement and attitudes of "English as a Foreign Language" (EFL) toward English literature

Prior research has highlighted the beneficial aspects of utilizing literature circle techniques. However, there is a scarcity of studies that have quantitatively assessed the effects of incorporating these techniques in learning short stories. However, more studies have only examined student interaction and participation in *literature circles*, and none have examined its impact on test performance and attitudes. Hence, further research is required to examine the efficacy of literature circles in the literature classroom and their impact on teaching and learning. This quasi-experimental study aims to introduce the concept of a *literature circles*, designed to facilitate students' understanding of a short story through collaborative conversations with additional peers. The study objectives are: 1) To examine the effects of *literature circles* on students' performance in the literature classroom. 2) To investigate students' attitudes towards implementing literature circles in literature classroom. The research questions guiding this study are:

- 1- Does participation in literature circles have a substantial impact on students' performance?
- 2- In the context of the literature classroom, what perspectives do the students hold regarding the utilization of literature circles?

2- Literature Review

Literature Circles, established by Harvey Daniels in 1994, which is an educational strategy that promotes task-oriented and focused literary involvement. It involves students critically evaluating the texts they read. *Literature circles* are discussion groups where students lead and share their responses to literary texts. They bring their sentiments and opinions that their personal experiences have shaped to these talks (Widodo, 2016). Within the context of these circles, students engage in a significant amount of critical thinking and conversation with one another about the text that they are reading. A study by, Matmool and Kaowiwattanakul (2023), indicated that the students had developed critical thinking skills after participating in the *literature circles* activities. *literature circles* have the potential to enhance any mundane traditional approach to studying literature (Daniels, 1994). Daniels asserts that *literature circles* are a refined amalgamation of collaborative learning and individual reading within the framework of reader response theory. *Literature circles* offer



many benefits for both students and teachers. Most students who have taken part in *literature circles* think it differs from the typical reading class. Using *literature circles* has the benefit of empowering the reader by letting them actively participate in the *literature circles* and positively perceived it (Rahayu & Suryanto, 2021). A study by Egan (2008) argued that implementing choice in *literature circles* enables students to attain achievement and avoid frustration by autonomously choosing their books and selecting their classmates. According to Casey (2008), *literature circles* can improve the motivation of students who are disengaged and frustrated readers. In addition to students, teachers also derive advantages from utilizing *literature circles* in various educational settings. Literature discussions in small groups allow reading teachers to listen to students' perspectives (Çetinkaya & Topçam (2019), and had positive attitude and tendency toward the power of this technique in improving their students' production (Hassan, 2018). A study by Irawati (2016); (Chou 2022), stated that *literature circles* could enhance students' comprehension of the text, communication skills, and abilities. Thomas and Kim (2019), demonstrated that *literature circles* foster conversation, teamwork, and social contact in addition to increasing reading comprehension and textual engagement. However, Bernadowski (2013), in his study, indicated that *literature circles* increased university students' engagement with text and commitment to the classroom community, resulting in positive attitudes towards adopting this technique in the literature classroom. Additionally, it allows for the assessment of their understanding of texts, which can enhance classroom instruction, increase interest in literary work and promote the development of literacy skills to meet the diverse reading needs of learners (Daniels, 2023). Supporting this fact, Mills and Jennings (2011) stated that the teacher's job has shifted from being a facilitator in *literature circles* to becoming a learning process facilitator to instruct students in critical thinking and engaging in meaningful discussions about the book.

The incorporation of the *literature circles* technique provides a multitude of educational benefits. *Literature circles* enable students to gain a deeper understanding and analysis of the book, using the provided questions as a basis for discussion, and fostering independence by generating thoughtful inquiries about the text (Casey, 2008). Moreover, circle talks showcase one's ability to communicate effectively through speech (Widodo, 2016). In order to actively participate in *literature circles*, a student must demonstrate the following capabilities: (a) the ability to summarize a chapter or section of a book, (b) the proficiency to formulate well-crafted discussion questions, (c) the talent to represent a preferred segment of a story visually, and (d) the aptitude to choose vocabulary words and make informed speculations about their meaning.



These skills empower students to accomplish journal responses and actively participate in group discussions effectively. Teachers can employ literary circles to foster a fervent and zealous interest in reading among students. *Literature circles* combine three crucial components (Irawati, 2016). The initial aspect is the experience that is shared. Students derive satisfaction from a collective encounter, facilitating their cooperation in studying and constructing comprehension. Furthermore, it provides students with the opportunity to access high-quality written material. Students can generate interpretations based on various levels of relevance found within the text. The third crucial element is the individual's response. Every student's involvement is vital to the conversation.

Readers develop an appreciation for their responses to the text, distribute them to others, and expand their comprehension. Reader response theory highlights the importance of the reader's role in interpreting texts and rejects the notion that there is a solitary or immutable meaning inherent in the text (Rosenblatt, 1994). Correspondingly, the *literature circles* technique unequivocally supports this idea. Engaging in literature circles results in learners developing a deep and personal connection with the text, leading to personal responses. *Literature circles* require learners to make predictions, construct visual representations, and establish links to personal experiences and other texts.

The study is significant because: First, teachers can teach the literature component in an effective way other than the traditional way by using an alternate technique (Farhan & Yusoff). Studies have demonstrated that using *literature circles* as a teaching method can be the most effective approach to actively including students in the learning process. The second significance is focused on the students. Students can engage in cooperative learning and connect with the literary text through dialogic discussions (Farhan, 2021). The third significance lies in its relevance to textbook makers, as the findings of this study can help them recognize the value of including *literature circles* in literature classrooms (Farhan, 2019). Furthermore, "The Canary" holds significant importance, as it is an officially recognized short story in the Iraqi school curriculum. Teaching literary text using this strategy can offer empirical evidence supporting the adoption of *literature circles* as a teaching method.

Synopsis of the short story "The Canary"

"The Canary" was written by Katherine Mansfield. It was first published after the author's death on April 21, 1923. A Lonely Woman tells the story in the first person. She talks about her pet canary, which died at an unknown date in the past. At the story's start, the woman expresses her sorrow over the demise of "the canary" and how it brings her solace when people notice where the cage used to be, as it also reminds her of him. The



woman recollected her previous inclinations, reminiscing about how she was once captivated by the allure of flowers and stars and how swiftly these affections shifted upon the arrival of "the canary" into her existence. She gives him some human traits by talking about his habits, attitude, and how great it was to have him around.

When the Chinese man approached her door that day with a small box full of a golden canary to sell, things got interesting, and her life changed. Since then, there has been a significant shift in her circumstances since she is no longer experiencing loneliness. Her fascination with the star and the sunset has waned as her sole focus now lies on him. Consequently, she proceeds to share her daily activities with him. On the first thing in the morning, she hangs him from a nail outside and watches everything he does until the end of the day, when she brings him inside. Ultimately, she appears to have accepted the reality that she will perpetually experience sadness and alone. This is due to the loss of her beloved and the subsequent abandonment, which will intermittently evoke feelings of sadness.

3- Methodology

The subsequent steps utilized in investigating the importance of English literature education in Iraqi institutions are delineated in this methodology. The methodology offers a structured approach for gathering and examining data to substantiate the research results and conclusions. A quantitative methods approach was used to plan this study. Pre-post tests and a survey questionnaire were conducted during the study.

3-1 Research Design

Experimental investigations can be conducted using many methodologies, including true and quasi-experimental designs. This study utilized a quasi-experimental methodology known as a one-group pretest, posttest design, which was derived from a system created by Cook and Campbell in 1986. The study utilized a one-group pre-test-post-test quasi-experimental design due to the inability to allocate participants to groups randomly. In other words, the researcher could not assign participants randomly because they only had access to a single intact class. The class had previously been pre-determined by the school.

3.2 Site and the Sample of the Study

The target population for this study is Al-Dulab secondary school, under the authority of the Ministry of Education, students enrolled in the 6th preparatory class in the academic year 2023-2024 located in Heet-Iraq. The school's population consists of 360 students; the sample was 34 students aged 17-20 years, more than 10 % of the target population. This study employed the non-probability convenience sampling method, specifically utilizing intact groups such as classes that were selected or provided access to participate in the study (Farrokhi & Mahmoudi, 2012).



Most of the sample were male, 26 (76,5%), while 8 (23,5%) were female students. The sample ranges from 17 to 20 years, typically corresponding to the 6th-grade level in preparatory classes. The majority of the pupils resided in the rural regions of Al-Anbar. The researcher was unable to balance the gender distribution of the sample in this study due to the quasi-experimental design, which limited their authority to do so.

3.3 The Procedures of the Study

The study examines the impact of *literature circles* on students' academic performance test performances and attitudes towards the short story 'The Canary.' The study utilized two quantitative instruments to address the investigation's research questions. During the first five weeks of the study, the researcher met with students to discuss the first part of the literary work. Then, in week 6 of the study, the researcher did the pre-test as planned. The intervention phase started in week six and ended in week 12. Almost twelve hours of literature circles were carried out during six weeks. Two hours are conducted each week. The participants were categorized into eight groups, each including four students, except the last two groups, which contained five.

Regarding the number of participants in each group, Brooks and Koretsky (2011) suggested that the ideal number of students in each discussion group should be between 4 and 6. After the intervention, in week 13, students were asked to do the post-test. Then, in week 13, students were asked to complete a survey questionnaire.

3 - 4 Data Collection

Data will be gathered through tests and a survey questionnaire.

3-4-1 Tests

Tests were given to the participants at the start of the study in week six and the end in week 12. There were a total of five questions in each test. Participants were obligated to respond to four questions. Tests are specifically formulated to assess the level of knowledge acquired by an individual following their exposure to a particular educational encounter (Rubin & Chisnell, 2008). This study utilized tests to evaluate the pupils' performance both prior to and following the intervention. Each test contained four open-ended, short-response questions, categorized into four stages of the Bloom's Taxonomy. Each test question was carried 25 marks, resulting in a total score of 100 for the entire test. Evaluators were given a marking scheme for the tests (Allen & Tanner, 2006). To confirm the validity of the test items, two specialists were tasked with examining the questions created by the researcher before the main study (during the pilot study). The specialists carefully modified and adjusted the items and omitted one item based on the four levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. The reliability of the test is Cronbach alpha at 0.86.



3-4-2 Post-Experimental Questionnaires

Another quantitative instrument that was utilized in the course of this study was a survey questionnaire. The post-experimental questionnaire was administered at the end of the study to assess the participants' attitudes after engagement with literature circles. The questionnaire was an adaptation of three questionnaires based on the work of Quin (2011), Abu (2006), and Alzahrani (2016). It consists of three sections. Section A (10 items) gathered data regarding the participants' personal and demographic backgrounds. Section B (15 items) dealt with the participants' 'opinions about learning literature, whereas Section C (15 items) "dealt with the participants' attitudes towards the *literature circles* approach". After the questionnaire was piloted, changes were made in response to the pilot study's findings. All adapted items except for demographic information items were tested to ensure reliability. The preliminary investigation demonstrated that the questionnaire's has outstanding reliability. The overall alpha (a) value of the items was 0.98.

3.5 Data Analysis

The pre- and post-test data and the survey were examined using quantitative methodologies. The tests were examined using descriptive statistics. The study used paired samples t-tests to compare the test scores for the experiment with a pre-test and a post-test. A paired sample t-test would show what effects of the independent variable (literature circles) on the dependent variable (test scores). The data from the questionnaire was entered into the SPSS program to obtain descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation. Upon the completion of the study, the post-experimental questionnaire was examined to ascertain whether students observed any alterations in their attitude toward literature following the implementation of literature circles.

3.6 Pilot Study

The pilot study serves as a preliminary step for the primary data collection, as it allows for testing and evaluating the instruments and materials used. The validity and reliability of the instruments and materials can be established by conducting the pilot study on a small group of students who are representative of the actual study sample. In order to assure the accuracy (validity) of the test items, specialists must analyze the questions and conduct a test reliability analysis on the responses provided by the students participating in the pilot test. In order to guarantee the reliability of the test materials, the researcher entered the students' pilot scores into SPSS software; the items showed a good alpha value (0.86).

All 30 adapted items for the questionnaire, except for informative data on demographics, were tested to ensure reliability. The value of the 30 items showed an outstanding alpha value of 0.98. Immediately following the completion of the pilot test, the questionnaire was reassembled to



guarantee that the researcher would develop an appropriate set of questionnaires. Another reason was to guarantee the study's dependability, which aimed to determine the participants' perspectives on literary texts. The pilot study was done before the actual study. The total number of participants was 8. The pilot samples of the study were not involved in the actual study. Before the pilot study, The goals and methodology of the study were explained to the students.

4- Findings and Discussion

The study is conducted to address the following research questions: 1) Does literature circles significantly impact students' literature test performance? 2) What attitudes do the students have on using literature circles in the literature classroom? These questions served as the foundation and as a guide to the study. They were frequently addressed to explore the influences of *literature circles* used in the component's classroom that affected the students.

4- 1 Findings from the Pre and Post-Tests

Examining the pre-and post-test results for the experimental group will determine if the participants have gained a deeper comprehension of the significant events and concepts in the literary text following the introduction of literature circles. Table (1) indicates that in the pre-test, 10 participants (29%) achieved a score below 60, but in the post-test, just 5 participants (15%) had an average score below 60. More than half of the respondents in this category demonstrated improvement in their test scores following the adoption of *literature circles*. The second group showed that 17 participants (50%) of the total scored between 60 and 80 in the "pre-test", whereas in the "post-test", 19 participants (56%) gained a score between 60 and 80. Additionally, 7 participants (21%) scored above 80 in the third group in the pre-test exam. While in the post-exam, 10 participants (29%) scored above 80, after the adoption of literature circles, the number of respondents who achieved a mean score of over 80 has increased by more than three times.

The overall score indicates that the experimental group's test score has risen from 69.4 during the pretest to 73.9 during the posttest. The improved test scores indicate that the literary interactions that occurred during literature circles improved the individual readings of the participants (Parker & Quigley, 1999; Shnawa, 2020). The answer scripts of the experimental groups exhibited a diverse range of reactions to the stories in the final test. Surprisingly, the participants could effectively support their answers by closely referring to the text. After the implementation of literature circles, the experimental group exhibited good results, as evidenced by the findings presented in (Table 1), which illustrate that these outcomes indeed occurred.



The study's findings corroborate Irawati (2016), who concluded that small-group discussion fosters enhanced comprehension of text, elevated cognitive abilities, and enhanced communication skills among students, as well as Daniels (2023); Chou (2022) which demonstrates that students experienced improved reading comprehension, the acquisition of reading strategies, and an increased interest in literary works, also provide opportunity for discourse, collaboration, and social interaction following the implementation of literature circles (Thomas & Kim 2019). Furthermore, it corroborates Armstrong's (2015) assertion that literature circles enhance students' knowledge of literary texts and their enjoyment of and involvement in reading. This study affirms the conclusions of all the previous studies that literature circles can enhance the comprehension of the experimental group learners regarding the significant events and ideas in the literature texts.

Table (1) Frequency and Percentage of Students' Score in "Pre and Post" Tests

Score Range	Pre Test		Post Test	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Less than 60	10	29	5	15
60 to 80	17	50	19	56
More than 80	7	21	10	29
Total	34			
Overall Mean Score		69.04		73.09

The t-test results are presented in Table (2) shows a significant difference between the pretest and post-test in terms of their t-test score following the introduction of literature circles. The mean score in pretest was (68.35) whereas in the posttest was (76.88). The different values were t-test =, -4.44, and a statistically significant distinction between the pre- and post-tests was noted (p-value = 0.000).

Table (2) Paired Sample T-test Conducted on Experimental Group for Pre-test and Post-test

Dependent Variable	Test	Mean	t	Sig.
Experimental Group	Pre-test	68.35	-4.43	.000
	Post-test	76.88		

4-2 Findings from the Post-Experimental Questionnaire

Section A: Informative data on demographics



The most significant number of participants consisted of males (76.5%) and females (23.5%), ranging from 17 to 20 years old. The majority of those surveyed were from Al-Anbar, Iraq's rural areas, specifically in Al-Dulab, accounting for 97.1% of the population. The researcher believed that comprehending the English reading habits of those surveyed was crucial to the purpose of the study since it centered on their reading skills, proficiency, and English writing abilities. Two statements were conducted to ascertain this information, and it is evident that the individuals exhibited commendable reading habits. 94% of the participants reported engaging in daily reading in English, while 82.4% claimed proficiency in English writing. Three additional items were assessed: participants' preferences, understanding of English literature, and comprehension of short stories. In general, the participants rated their preference for short stories (79.4%) and English literature (76.5%) and comprehension of short stories (79.4%).

Section B: Students' opinion towards the learning of literature.

Section B of the questionnaire measured the opinions of students towards the learning of the literature through students' level of agreement with the statements in the section, where if the mean is closer to 1 means that students strongly disagree with the statements and if the mean is closer to 4 means students strongly agree with the statements. This section has a high confidence level (Overall Mean = 3.15, SD = .142). Since the study used a literary work for the literature circles, it is essential to find out what the participants thought about learning literature, see Table (3).

Table (3) Students' opinion towards the learning of literature.

No	Items	Mean	St.d
1.	I occasionally distinguish emotions I have failed to notice in my everyday existence through literature.	3.24	.431
2.	Literature enhances my comprehension of the experiences of those who possess dissimilar backgrounds from my own.	3.41	.500
3.	Engaging with literature frequently gives me a profound understanding of the essence of individuals and occurrences in my reality.	3.15	.359
4.	I often find connections between things that happen in literary texts and my own life.	3.26	.448
5.	Literature provides a means to comprehend those you would likely ignore in everyday circumstances.	3.32	.535



6.	Engaging with a literary book occasionally evokes a desire to modify my lifestyle.	3.41	.557
7.	I comprehend a literary book when I can connect it with my existential preoccupations.	3.41	.500
8.	I believe it is essential for individuals to allocate more time engaging in discussions or composing written works about literature.	3.50	.508
9.	Although literature may be effectively taught, I believe that high schools should not allocate excessive amounts of time to it.	1.62	.493
10.	I believe attempting to identify a piece of literature ruins its essence.	1.41	.500
11.	One aspect I particularly like as a literature student is having a lecturer who elucidates the meaning of a literary text.	3.47	.507
12.	Scholars and historians must engage with and study literary materials from prior ages.	3.38	.493
13.	I think that literature holds significant social relevance.	3.56	.504
14.	Literary works frequently simplify the complexities of life.	3.47	.507
15.	When I dedicate time to reading, I go for " literary " texts.	3.74	.448

Table (3) displays the average mean scores of the statements that reflect the participants' views on the literature learning. The average scores are calculated as follows: "Through literature, I often discover emotions that I have overlooked in my daily life" (Mean = 3.24). "Literature enhances my understanding of the perspectives and encounters of individuals who possess different characteristics or backgrounds than myself" (Mean = 3.41). "Regularly engaging with literature often provides me profound understanding of the fundamental nature of individuals and occurrences in my surroundings" (Mean = 3.15). "I often notice similarities between occurrences in literature and personal life" (Mean = 3.26). "Literature allows one to comprehend individuals they would typically disregard in normal circumstances" (Mean = 3.32). "Reading a literary text sometimes motivates me to consider changing my lifestyle" (Mean = 3.41). "When I can relate a literary text to my concerns about life, I begin to understand it" (Mean = 3.41). "People should spend more time discussing or writing about literature" (Mean = 3.5). The other two negative statements of participants' opinions reveal that students perceive literature positively. Most of the experimental group disagree with the



negative statements. However, a closer look at the mean score would show that the experimental group perceived the literature more positively (Nader Sharhan & Janfeshan, 2024). Besides, they also benefitted through natural talks and making connections between books and their own lives. The average scores obtained are as follows: Despite the effectiveness of literary instruction, "I believe that high schools should not allocate excessive time to it" (Mean = 1.62). "I find that attempting to identify a piece of literature detracts from its value" (Mean = 1.41).

The results from the remaining five items indicate that the experimental group, who participated in literature circles, achieved a much higher average score in the positive remarks. The average scores are calculated as follows: "One of the aspects i appreciate most as a literature student is having a lecturer who provides a clear interpretation of a literary text" (Mean = 3.47). "Academics and historians should adopt the habit of perusing literary works from bygone eras as indicated by a mean score of" (Mean = 3.38). "I firmly believe that literature holds social significance, as evidenced by a mean score of" (Mean = 3.56). "It is often observed that works of literature simplify life's complexities despite their actual difficulty", with a mean score of (Mean = 3.47). "When I dedicate my time to reading, I prefer to engage with literary texts", as indicated by a mean score of (Mean = 3.74).

Section C: Attitudes towards literature circles to teach literature.

This study presented the implementation of literature circles for the first instance in the literature classroom. The aim was to improve the participants' answers and make reading and understanding the literary texts easier. This was the first-ever introduction of a new technology into what was often traditional. This section's fifteen Likert scale questions can be put into two overarching domains: attitudes toward utilizing literature circles to learn literature, and affective outcomes resulting from the integration. This section gets a high degree of agreement (Overall Mean = 3.25, SD = .133). the participants were required to offer responses on a scale ranging from 1 to 4, where 1 represents "Strongly Disagree," 2 represents "Disagree," 3 represents "Agree," and 4 represents "Strongly Agree." Table (4) presents the results of what the respondents thought regarding the questions in the questionnaire. This study shows that a mean value between 3 and 4 signifies substantial agreement and reflects a favorable disposition. Mean values ranging from 2 to 3 are regarded as representative, whereas values between 1 and 2 signify a minimal degree of concurrence. Please refer to the table for further details.



Table (4) : Participants' attitudes toward literature circles within the literature classroom

No	Items	Mean	S.td
1	I enjoy learning literature using Literature Circles.	3.68	.475
2	I like learning Literature using Literature Circles.	3.62	.493
3	It is boring to study literature using Literature Circles.	1.44	.504
4	Literature Circles is a useful technique for studying Literature.	3.53	.507
5	Literature Circles is an interesting technique for studying Literature.	3.47	.563
6	The activities in literature circles are interesting.	3.47	.563
7	I am tired of the activities in Literature Circles.	1.53	.507
8	It is fun to do the activities in Literature Circles.	3.32	.475
9	The procedures of Literature Circles are easy to understand	3.68	.475
10	Literature Circles is the best technique to study literature.	3.44	.504
11	Literature circles facilitate students' involvement and interaction in comprehending the short story.	3.50	.508
12	Literature circles foster a secure and self-assured educational setting by facilitating student collaboration in comprehending the short story.	3.47	.507
13	Literature circles enhance students' active participation and immersion in comprehending the short story.	3.56	.504
14	Literature circles facilitate the development of stronger interpersonal connections among students within their group.	3.53	.507
15	Literature circles helps students feel motivated to learn short stories.	3.65	.485

Overall, the first category had a significant consensus (Overall Mean = 3.11, SD = .167). Eight out of ten items had a high average score, ranging from 3.32 to 3.68, while two had low average scores of 1.44 and 1.53. The participants showed favorable dispositions toward utilizing literature



circles for literature learning and teaching. “The participants unanimously expressed their enjoyment in learning through the utilization of literature circles” with an average rating (Mean = 3.68); they also indicated “a strong affinity for learning literature” with an average rating (Mean = 3.62). Furthermore, “the people who took part in literature circles were a valuable and successful method” as shown by the average rating of (Mean = 3.53). “They found this technique interesting” with an average rating (Mean = 3.47), and “the activities associated with literature circles were also deemed attractive” with the same average rating (Mean = 3.47).

Additionally, the participants found “engaging in these activities within literature circles enjoyable” as indicated by an average (Mean = 3.32). They also found “literature circles to be easily comprehensible”, with an average (Mean = 3.68). Finally, the participants regarded literature circles as “the most effective technique” with an average (Mean = 3.44). The participants disagreed with the statements: “studying literature using Literature Circles is boring” (Mean = 1.44), and they are “tired by the activities in Literature Circles” (Mean = 1.53).

Regarding affective outcomes, participants expressed positive views on literature circles. They believed “literature circles promote student collaboration and interaction while learning the short story”(Mean = 3.50). Additionally, “literature circles create a safe and confident environment” (Mean = 3.47) and “promote students' involvement and engagement” (Mean = 3.56). Participants also noted that literature circles “help students build strong relationships with group members” (Mean = 3.53) and “feel motivated” (Mean = 3.65).

The present study examined the opinions and attitudes of students registered in the sixth preparatory class. The results show that the subjects felt very positively about using *literature circles* in the literature classroom. We can assume from this that the students in the experimental group had a greater respect and enjoyment for literary works after taking part in literature circles. These are similar to the study by Bernadowski (2013), which found that integrating literature circles in the literature classroom resulted in participants' positive attitudes and increased engagement with the text.

Relatively, the present study's outcomes substantially reinforce the conclusions drawn from earlier studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of small groups in helping learners internalize the read texts. Learners in these groups are guided by external and social interactions, which facilitate their learning process (Armstrong, 2015). The results show that students liked reading and discussing it in small groups. This is because the small groups would allow them to participate in the talks (Egan, 2008; Rahayu & Suryanto, 2021; Çetinkaya & Topçam, 2019).



In addition, the findings are consistent with those of other investigations in stressing that literature circles promote students' collaboration and interaction (Daniels, 2023), strong relationships with group members (Shnawa, 2020), increase learners' comprehension and critical thinking skills (Mills and Jennings, 2011); (Traore & Kyei-Blankson, 2011). Looking at Table (4), we can deduce that participation in small group discussions can change the perception of preparatory EFL literature learners towards literature. These learners realize that literature is not so 'boring' and 'difficult' after all, and that it is in fact "fun to compare, discuss, react, and critique" (Egan (2008) in their groups rather than "in a scary arena of the whole class" (Widodo, 2016).

5. Conclusion

This study's primary goal was to ascertain whether literature circles substantially influenced students' performance in literature tests and their attitudes towards Katherine Mansfield's work, specifically "The Canary". Harvey Daniels (1994), small student-centered groups via *literature circles* foregrounded this study. The current investigation examined the potential of *literature circles* in facilitating and enhancing development in the students' knowledge and attitudes, which were measured through tests and surveys. The overall findings indicate a significant difference in the preparatory EFL learners' attitudes towards literature after their experiences with *Literature Circles*. The study's findings indicate that learners are very relaxed and comfortable in small group discussions such as *literature circles*. The findings also show that this less threatening environment created by literature circles encourages learners to be more receptive to literature. The scores on the post-test show that there was a significant change between the pre-test and the post-test. These results show that people who read the short story as part of the literature groups could do much better on the test. The results from the survey show that students who participated in literature circles groups have positive attitudes towards implementing *literature circles* as a technique in reaching literary texts in literature classrooms. The study recommends conducting additional research to examine teachers' perspectives on *literature circles* following their integration into teaching literary texts for a substantial duration.



REFERENCES

- Abu (2006) Learning Style Preferences in the Comprehension of Literary Texts. Putra Malaysia: Ph.D. Thesis.
- Allen, D., & Tanner, K. (2006). Rubrics: Tools for making Learning Goals and Evaluation Criteria Explicit for both Teachers and Learners. *CBE—Life Sciences Education*, 5(3), 197–203.
- Al-Mahrooqi, R., & Roscoe, A. A. (Eds.). (2012). *Literature Teaching in the EFL Context: New perspectives*. Sultan Qaboos University Academic Publication Board.
- Alzahrani (2016). The effect of using online discussion forums in blended learning courses at Saudi universities. University of Newcastle: Ph.D. Thesis.
- Armstrong, M. (2015). Using Literature in an EFL Context to teach Language and Culture. *The Journal of Literature in Language Teaching*, 4(2), 7–24.
- Bernadowski, C. (2013). Improving the Reading Attitudes of College Students: Using Literature Circles to Learn about Content Reading. *Journal on English Language Teaching*, 3(3), 16–24.
- Brooks, B. J., & Koretsky, M. D. (2011). The Influence of Group Discussion on Students' Responses and Confidence during Peer Instruction. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 88(11), 1477–1484.
- Brownell, M. T., Adams, A., Sindelar, P., Waldron, N., & Vanhover, S. (2006). Learning from Collaboration: The Role of Teacher Qualities. *Exceptional children*, 72(2), 169–185.
- Casey, H. K. (2008). Engaging the Disengaged: Using Learning Clubs to Motivate Struggling Adolescent Readers and Writers. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 52(4), 284–294.
- Çetinkaya, F. Ç., & Topçam, A. B. (2019). A different Analysis with the Literature Circles: Teacher Candidates' perspectives on the profession. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 7(4), 8–16.
- Chou, M. H. (2022). Using Literature Circles to Teach Graded Readers in English: an Investigation into Reading Performance and Strategy use. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 16(2), 144–163.
- Clower, S. M. (2006). Using Literature Circles to Improve Literacy Skills of English Language Learners.
- Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D.T. (1986). The Causal Assumptions of Quasi-Experimental Practice: The origins of quasi-experimental practice. *Synthese*, 141–180.
- Daniels, H. (1994). *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered*



Classroom. (No Title).

- Daniels, H. (2023). *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in book Clubs & Reading groups*. Routledge.
- Egan, M. B. (2008). *Implementing Literature Circles in a Fourth Grade Classroom*.
- Farhan, R. N. (2021). *Utilization of Online Discussions to Enhance Students' Engagement with William Golding's "Lord of The Flies"* (Doctoral dissertation, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia).
- Farhan, R. N., & Yusoff, Z. S. (2019). Integration of Facebook Messenger in the English Literature Classroom: Learners 'Attitudes and Perceptions. *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, 7(6), 988–999.
- Farhan, R. N., & Yusoff, Z. S. (2019). Online Discussion via Facebook Messenger: Impact on Students' Test Performance of William Golding's "Lord of the Flies.". *International Journal of Innovative Technology and Exploring Engineering*, 9(2), 4782–4787.
- Farrokhi, F., & Mahmoudi–Hamidabad, A. (2012). Rethinking Convenience Sampling: Defining quality criteria. *Theory & practice in language studies*, 2(4).
- Hassan, H. S. (2018). Instructors' Attitude on the Use of 'Literature Circles' in Teaching Literature. *Polytechnic Journal*, 8(2), 142–158.
- Irawati, D. (2016). Effectiveness of Literature Circles on Students' Reading Comprehension. *IJOTL–TL: Indonesian Journal of Language Teaching and Linguistics*, 1(3), 179–192.
- Jones, N. D., Bell, C. A., Brownell, M., Qi, Y., Peyton, D., Pua, D., ... & Holtzman, S. (2022). Using Classroom Observations in the Evaluation of Special Education Teachers. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 44(3), 429–457.
- Manzollillo, M. (2016). Teaching Literature Through Online Discussion in Theory and Practice. *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 18(2), 4.
- Matmool, W., & Kaowiwattanakul, S. (2023). *The Effects of Using Literature Circle Activities on English–Speaking Skills and Critical Thinking Skills of EFL Learners* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Phayao).
- Mills, H., & Jennings, L. (2011). Talking about Talk: Reclaiming the Value and Power of Literature Circles. *The Reading Teacher*, 64(8), 590–598.
- Mohammed, S. A., Hussein, S. A. B., & Sayer, I. M. (2021). Challenges and Opportunities of Teaching Literature in Kurdistan Region of Iraq. *Journal of University of Human Development*, 7(3), 61–68.



- Nader Sharhan, A., & Janfeshan, K. (2024). The Perceptions of Iraqi EFL Preparatory School Teachers about Literature Spots in Iraqi English textbooks. *Cogent Education*, 11(1), 2298610.
- Parker, S. M., Quigley, M. C., & Reilly, J. B. (1999). Improving Student Reading Comprehension through the Use of Literacy Circles.
- Quin (2011) Student Responses to Instructional Activities in the Literature in English Classroom. Universiti Putra Malaysia: Ph.D. Thesis.
- Rahayu, E. L. R., & Suryanto, B. (2021). Literature Circles in Reading Class: Students 'Participation and Perception. *Celtic: A Journal of Culture, English Language Teaching, Literature and Linguistics*, 8(1), 65–77.
- Roberts, D. (2019). Higher education lectures: from passive to active learning via imagery?. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 20(1), 63–77.
- Rosenblatt, L. (1994). *The Reader, The Text, The Poem – With a new preface and epilogue*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (2018). The Transactional Theory of Reading and Writing. In *Theoretical models and processes of literacy* (pp. 451–479). Routledge.
- Rubin, J., & Chisnell, D. (2008). *Handbook of Usability Testing: How to Plan, Design, and Conduct Effective Tests*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Schrijvers, M., Janssen, T., Fialho, O., & Rijlaarsdam, G. (2017). The Impact of Literature Education on Students' Perceptions of Self and Others: Exploring Personal and Social Learning Experiences in Relation to Teacher Approach. *L1–educational studies in language and literature*, 1–37.
- Shnawa, R. Z. (2020). Teaching English Literature In Iraqi Preparatory Schools After 2013. *Multicultural Education*, 6(1).
- Thomas, D. M., & Kim, J. K. (2019). Impact of Literature Circles in the Developmental College Classroom. *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, 49(2), 89–114.
- Traore, M., & Kyei-Blankson, L. (2011). Using Literature and Multiple Technologies in ESL instruction.
- Waham, J. J. (2024). The Significance of Teaching English Literature in Schools in Iraq. *Pedagogia: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 13(1), 56–60.
- Whittaker, C. R. (2012). Integrating Literature Circles into a cotaught Inclusive Classroom. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 47(4), 214–223.
- Widodo, H. P. (2016). Engaging Students in Literature Circles: Vocational English Reading Programs. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 25(2), 347–359.