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在英文課堂中利用文學小圈圈培養臺灣高中生批判性思考

Using Literature Circles to Develop Critical Thinking Skills in a Senior
High EFL Classroom in Taiwan



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To My Beloved Parents

獻給我的父母



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國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士在職專班

碩士論文提要

論文名稱：在英文課堂中利用文學小圈圈培養臺灣高中生思考力

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論文提要內容：

思考是在歷史上是重要的教育目標，台灣英語教學環境過去較不重視，直到普通高級中學英文科 99 課綱納入批判性思考(critical thinking)與創造性思考(creative thinking)的培養後，才較重視。然而，多數英語教師仍關心該如何在教學現場融合批判思考。作者嘗試使用文學小圈圈(literature circles)引導學生閱讀，並透過學生提問、學生閱讀心得及問卷調查了解文學小圈圈對於學生思考力的提升。本文旨在研究文學小圈圈對南台灣高中生英文課堂上思考力之培養。本研究為質性個案研究，參與本研究的學生為高雄市某校三十七位高二學生。文學小圈圈教學為期七週，每週有兩節課的時間。閱讀教材為七篇短篇故事，改編自簡易小說讀本與教科書，第一和最後一篇為學生自讀，第二篇為教師示範，第三到六篇以文學小圈圈模式進行。本研究所收集的資料為學生針對第一和最後一篇自讀文章的提問和讀後感，以布魯姆(B. S. Bloom) 1956 年提出的認知領域教育目標分類 (A Taxonomy of Educational Objectives) 來分析學生的提問和讀後感，分為六類：一、知識；二、理解；三、應用；四、分析；五、

綜合；六、評鑑。

結果顯示，第一，學生的提問顯示，雖然他們在分析、綜合、評鑑等高層次方面無明顯提升，但能夠在問題中增加詮釋和應用層次。多數問題由“why”開始也顯示出批判思考能力。本研究並發現有些學生的提問無法符合六種認知層次，這些問題基於不相關細節與嬉戲般的想像力而無法回答，然而這仍可顯示出學生用故事的細節結合自己的假設與想像，而能培養部分批判思考力的發展。學生讀後感顯示出量與質的提升，在文學小圈圈後不但字數增加，並且能在一篇心得內融入更多思考層次，增加個人自我解讀以及批判模式。由學生的問卷更可看出學生覺得文學小圈圈對他們的語言能力、合作、社交互動、學習行為習慣與態度的改變，並且有助於思考力提升。有趣的是，學生似乎將文學小圈圈任務角色的困難度和思考力做關聯，他們認為繪圖者的角色較無法提高思考力因此最容易，而推論者、提問、連結者最能提升思考力，但也相對困難。學生在文學小圈圈面臨到分組討論、語言障礙、時間壓力、角色任務、以及閱讀素材方面的困難，因此也提供了相關建議。結論提出實行文學小圈圈於台灣英語教學現場的建議，並同時提出不足之處，以供將來研究與實務參考。

Abstract

Thinking has been an educational goal throughout the history (Scanlan, 2006; Wu, 2000), but it did not receive much attention in the Taiwanese EFL context until the publication of 2010 Guidelines for Senior High School English Curriculum which added critical and creative thinking skills. However, many English teachers are still concerned about how to incorporate critical thinking skills in regular EFL classes. Therefore, this study aims to explore how the implementation of literature circles leads to the development of critical thinking skills among senior high school students and how students perceive literature circles. The classroom research approach was used to conduct the study. The participants were 37 students in the second year of senior high school. During the seven-week study, the students read seven short stories: the first and last one were independent reading, the second one was the demonstration lesson, the third to sixth ones took the literature circles model. Student-generated questions and response logs in the first and last independent reading stories were collected and analyzed. The coding scheme used to evaluate students' questions and responses was adopted from Bloom's (1956) taxonomy: (1) knowledge, (2) comprehension, (3) application, (4) analysis, (5) synthesis, and (6) evaluation.

Important findings are summarized below. First, changes in student-generated questions suggest that the students had slight development toward critical thinking after literature circles. Even though the students did not have much increase in analysis, synthesis, and evaluation level, they added more interpretation and

application to their questions. The prevalence of “Why” questions also indicates the development of critical thinking. It was also found that some of the student-generated questions did not fit into any of the six cognitive levels because they were unanswerable with irrelevant details and playful imagination. However, some critical thinking is still developed through the process when the students integrate their own hypothesis and imagination based on the irrelevant details of the story. Changes in student-generated responses show the increase in quantity and quality with more variety of cognitive levels. The responses also suggest the development of students’ thinking in personal interpretive and critical modes. Students’ perception questionnaire shows the advantages of literature circles, including improvement in language proficiency, development in cooperation, social interaction, learning behavior, attitudinal change, and thinking cultivation. Interestingly, the students seemed to associate the difficulty of the tasks with thinking. Therefore, the task of illustrator was regarded as the easiest because it required less thinking demand, while the task of inferrer, questioner, and connector were viewed as the most helpful in developing thinking capability yet difficult tasks. As for the difficulties and suggestions, the students encountered difficulties in group discussion, language barrier, time pressure, difficult tasks, and reading materials. Suggestions were proposed to meet their needs. Pedagogical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future studies were presented as well.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background and Motivation

Throughout history the idea of thinking has been one of the key factors that lead to successful learning since Confucius' and Socrates' times (Scanlan, 2006; Wu, 2000), and critical thinking has been regarded as one of the primary objectives of education (Davidson & Dunham, 1996; Day, 2003; Facione, et al., 1995; Long, 2003; Tillman, 1994). In an increasingly global world, it is believed that critical thinking capacity, along with remarkable knowledge, is particularly required and of high priority for all professions (Braun, 2004; Halpern, 1998; Kegan, 1994; Klayczynski, 2001). People with strong critical thinking skills will learn how to learn and think clearly (Halpern, 1998), evaluate the validity of information available so as to "make purposeful judgments about what to believe or what to do" (Facione, Giancarlo, Facione, & Gainen, 1995, p. 3) and thus make personal, business or leadership decisions in the society.

Nowadays, unfortunately, students tend to lack critical thinking capacity and have shallow thinking (Pithers, 2000; Scanlan, 2006; Tsui, 2002). Literature cited several causes for such a problem. Patterson (1993) indicated that teachers do not "provide proper channels for developing critical thinking" (p.18), "students had not been challenged nor instructed to think beyond the levels of knowledge and comprehension" (p.16), and teachers do not expect students' thinking abilities. Teachers tend to lecture for over three quarters of the class hours (Tsui, 2002), and

ask fact-drawing questions of lower level (Martikean, 1973). Moreover, teachers had difficulty teaching problem solving and did not give students enough “wait time” to organize their thoughts and process answers mentally before they could respond to the questions (Whimbey, 1990). Some teachers are also seen to lack critical thinking skills and resistant to change (Scanlan, 2006). A student without critical thinking skills was even thought to be of lower intelligence because thinking was considered to be of innate intelligence (de Bono, 1990). Furthermore, the goals of educators do not emphasize the teaching of thinking process (Costa, 1989). Therefore, in the overcrowded curriculum, the teaching of critical thinking is also seen as an exhausting requisite (Wood, Viraimal, Kysilka, & Miller, 1990). In fact, critical thinking and learning should be integrated and viewed as an integral part, as Scanlan (2006) indicated, rather than being separated in the curriculum.

In Asia, the problem may be more severe. Asian learners are conventionally thought to be less inquisitive and passive thinkers because collectivist, rather than individual perspectives are valued in the society (Long, 2003; McBride, Xiang, Wittenburg & Shen, 2002). Additionally, Asian learners used to have the reproduction-oriented learning habits, which tend to stop them from questioning or evaluating the instructed knowledge (Tung & Chang, 2009). Furthermore, teacher guidance or assistance in critical thinking is rarely provided in the primary and secondary school curriculum due to the teaching load and time constraints (Chen, 1989; Chiodo & Tsai, 1995, 1997). It appears that Asian students are not given much opportunity to practice critical thinking skills throughout the entire education.

In EFL context in most high schools in Taiwan, the integration of critical thinking appears to be a challenge for the teachers because tests and exams are the most important elements, and learners are taught only to prepare for weekly quizzes

or monthly tests. However, the educational field responded to the needs of critical thinking by publishing the new Guideline for Senior High School English Curriculum (2010) where critical thinking were added and defined by the following basic and advanced abilities:

Three basic abilities:

- (1) Being able to compare, synthesize, and order various information
- (2) Being able to figure out the relationship between information based on the context.
- (3) Being able to distinguish facts from opinions.

Five advanced abilities:

- (1) Being able to analyze and synthesize the common points or conclusions among different information.
- (2) Being able to transfer the learned principles to new situations in order to solve problems.
- (3) Being able to synthesize the existing information and predict the possible development.
- (4) Being able to assess different information and propose reasonable judgments or suggestions.
- (5) Being able to synthesize and organize related information, and demonstrate creativity.

(cited in Shiau, 2010, p. 4-5¹)

Therefore, there is a need to explore what approaches help develop students' ability to think critically and to integrate critical thinking into regular curriculum to attain the goals.

Some researchers have explored cultivation of critical thinking skills and highlighted the importance of critical thinking instruction among ESL/EFL learners (Browning, et al., 1996; Davidson & Dunham, 1996; Day, 2003; Kamada, 1996,

¹ The excerpt was translated from the original Chinese version in Taiwan Ministry of Education website <http://www.edu.tw/pages/detail.aspx?Node=3015&Page=8657&Index=3>

Long, 2003; Stapleton, 2002). Studies have been done in ESL/EFL context to investigate the approaches to teaching critical thinking: collaborate critical thinking training was integrated in general courses in primary and secondary education curricula (Chiodo & Tsai, 1997; Chung, 2009; Yang & Yeh, 1991), content-based courses (Liaw, 2007) and reciprocal teaching (Shiau, 2010) in secondary and high school context, and critical thinking pedagogy in higher education (Fang et al, 2008; Huang & Lee, 2004; Liaw, 2007; Yang, Newby & Bill, 2005, Yeh, 2004, Yang & Chou, 2008).

Enhancing critical thinking through reading is a feasible approach in that Brown (2002) Day (2003), and Patterson (1993) found the strong connection between reading and writing. The characteristics of a thoughtful reader has the ability to relate, combine and process information, to make valid inferences, to determine relevancy, and to seek to understand instead of passively receiving information (Samules & Farstrup, 1993).

Literature circle, a peer-led activity in which small groups of students gathered together to discuss a self-selected piece of literature in depth (Schlick Noe& Johnson, 1999), is a way to engage students in the student-centered environment and promote social interaction and critical thinking (Kim, 2004). While placed in small (usually 4-6) temporary groups studying the same piece of literature, students are encouraged to read, comprehend the text, develop feelings, and thoughts from their personal experiences, and bring to the discussions their personal responses to literary text (Peterson & Eeds, 1990). In addition to enhancing reading, writing, conversing, listening, and interpreting skills (Peterson & Eeds, 1990), literature circle is also a way for students to learn from each other, gain self-confidence, discover important themes during reading, and have fun in a socially interactive environment. Moreover,

“students are observably more enthusiastic, attentive, and responsible for their own learning in this setting” (Pitman, 1997, p.19). In this community-like and non-threatening setting reluctant students or novice speakers of English are given an opportunity to not only hear a wide range of cultural perspectives, language, and points of views, but also collaborate, think critically, and negotiate meaning (Short & Klassen, 1993).

In Taiwan, Literature Circles (LCs) have been mostly applied in several elementary, junior high, senior high schools, and universities. Lin (2006) conducted a study to explore the effects of LCs on elementary bilingual classroom and English classes (Chan, 2008). Wu (2006) studied LCs implemented in junior high EFL classes and Lee (2007) focused on EFL oral communicative competence in junior high classrooms. In senior high classrooms, Hung (2010) investigated the effect LCs on EFL reading comprehension. LCs were more studied in college, technology universities, and university level EFL classrooms (Hsu, 2003; Hsu, 2004; Hsu & Sai, 2007; Lang, 2007; Chiang & Huang, 2005; Huang, 2008; Hsu & Liu, 2005; Lai, 2011). Among the studies, relatively few studies focused on the connection between LCs and critical thinking (Lai, 2011; Liao, 2009). The connection of LCs in senior high school in Taiwan and critical thinking development has not been emphasized. Therefore, it is important to explore a method to promote students’ critical thinking and provide possible solution for high school teachers. Since Literature Circles can be a useful method in promoting reading and critical thinking in L1 secondary classroom (Brignolo, 2010) and EFL freshman classroom (Lai, 2011, Liao, 2009), the purpose of this study was thus to explore how Taiwanese EFL high school students develop critical thinking ability through Literature Circles activities in regular English classrooms and the perception of the students toward this reading activity and their

development in critical thinking skills.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of integrating literature circles into high school English classes on cultivating critical thinking skills among high school Taiwanese EFL learners. In order to understand how literature circles develop these skills in EFL students, this classroom research will focus on literature circles as a pedagogical tool that builds critical thinking.

Research Questions

This study focuses on the following research questions:

1. To what extent do Literature Circles promote critical thinking among a group of EFL senior high school students in Taiwan? How do the students develop critical thinking skills during the Literature Circles?
2. How do the students perceive Literature Circles? What unique English learning opportunities are there? What challenges do the students encounter?

Significance of the Study

Since there have been few empirical studies on the development of critical thinking in Literature Circles in Taiwanese EFL high school context, the implementation of this study would provide further information about the connection between critical thinking and Literature Circles. The study will explore how LCs naturalistically help develop critical thinking among EFL senior high school students and how the students perceive LCs. Second, it will help EFL teachers gain a better understanding and insights of the implementation of LCs. Third, it will provide a possible way for Taiwanese EFL teachers to integrate critical thinking into their

teaching and thus help students solve the problem of shallow thinking, to attain the goals concerning critical thinking skills listed in the Guideline for Senior High School English Curriculum (2010).





CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Literature Circles promote critical thinking in a Taiwanese EFL high school context. This chapter will be divided into three main sections to provide a theoretical and literature background of the present study. The first section explains what critical thinking is and the teaching of it. The second section introduces Literature Circles (LCs) and the theories supporting LCs. The last section connects LCs and critical thinking followed by a summary of the above areas.

Critical Thinking

Brief History of Studies on Critical Thinking and Its Definition

Critical thinking has been involved in teaching throughout ages. It can be traced back to Socrates, the great philosopher of ancient Greece, who emphasized the significance of critical thinking through asking deep questions (Carroll, 2004). John Dewey (1909), an American philosopher and educator, also introduced the concept of “reflective thought” as an active thinking process instead of a passive thinking process. Critical thinking and learning to think has been listed as one of the educational goals (Halpern, 1997; Skilbeck, 1970), and it has also been studied in a wide variety of contexts. Nevertheless, there is a lack of consensus in the definition. Critical thinking is defined as “the educational cognate of rationality” (Siegel, 1988, p.32) with critical thinkers “appropriately moved by reasons” (p.2). Critical thinking

is also defined as the “reasonable and reflective thinking that is focused upon deciding what to believe and do” (Norris and Ennis, 1989, p.3), the ability to take charge of one’s own thinking and develop sound criteria for analyzing and assessing it (Elder & Paul, 1994), an ability to assess claims, beliefs, and arguments (Beyer, 1983, cited in Rafik-Galea & Nair, 2007), a kind of social practice that is culturally determined (Atkinson, 1997), and a process to find answers to difficult questions (Inch, et.al., 2006). The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems (Maiorana, 1992). Two most prominent characteristic of critical thinking are found to be skepticism and rationality (Wu, 2000). The National Council for Teachers of English in the United States defines critical thinking as the process in which the suspended judgment with logical inquiry and problem solving leads to an evaluative decision or action. The above definitions of critical thinking are complex and varied. In terms of L2 learning, Liaw (2007) summarized that “critical thinking involves the use of information, experience, and world knowledge in ways for L2 learners to seek alternatives, make inferences, pose questions, and solve problems” (p.51). Inspired by the above definitions, the operational definition for critical thinking in the present study was taken to be the learning process in which one can raise higher order questions and write responses of complex and higher cognitive levels. The participants’ higher level critical thinking skills will be evaluated with the Hierarchy of Bloom’s Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956), the rationale of which will be discussed in the section of Literature Circles and Critical Thinking.

Teaching Critical Thinking

Higher-order thinking skills are increasingly required for success in the

knowledge-based and rapidly-changing contemporary scenario. In the ever-changing and complicated world, critical thinking plays the crucial role in preparing students for the skills they need for the future, yet the issue of whether critical thinking should be taught and integrated into educational curriculum has been debated for years (Davidson & Dunham, 1996; Facione, Giancarlo, Facione, & Gainen, 1995; Long, 2003; Tillman, 1994). The opponents to teaching critical thinking stated that learners having been taught critical thinking still fall into logical fallacies, in which the reasons in their arguments often do not support the conclusion (Hirsch, 1996), that there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of critical thinking problem, and that teaching critical thinking actually do not help but hinder learning (Polson and Jeffries, 1985; cited in Woolfolk, 2004). On the other hand, supporters of the teaching of critical thinking advocated that critical thinking is a crucial element in learning reading, writing, speaking and listening (Woolfolk, 2004). It can also develop learners' intellectual skills (Barak & Doppelt, 1999), promote their intellectual growth, and increase their academic achievement (Browning, et. al., 1996; Kassem, 2005; MacKnight, 2000).

Generally, critical thinking is not strongly encouraged in Asian education. The learners in Asian countries are often deemed as passive recipients; the conventional authoritative instruction may stop learners from engaging in thinking (Browning, et. al., 1996; Kamada, 1996; Long, 2003) and collectivist rather than individual perspectives are valued in the society (Long, 2003; McBride, Xiang, Wittenburg & Shen, 2002). The reproduction-oriented learning habits tend to stop learners from questioning or evaluating the instructed knowledge (Tung & Chang, 2009). There is also the assumption that the teacher will make decisions on what to teach and how

to evaluate the learning of the students while learners are free of responsibility for their education (Brown, 1997; Patterson, 1993; Tillman, 1994). It was found in an early study of Coodlad (1983) that teacher talks occupied three quarter of the classroom time and the questions of the teachers often only required the children to recall facts instead of using higher level thinking skills. The predominant teacher talk in class was also mentioned in Tsui's (2002) study. Tillman (1994) further indicated that many young people seldom think beyond the lower comprehension level of Bloom's taxonomy. Generally speaking, Asian students were thought to be immature in critically thinking, less expressive and inquisitive. However, Liaw (2007) proposed that EFL learners did not lack the ability to think critically. Instead, they already developed in L1 a variety of critical thinking skills ready for L2 classroom.

Various approaches had been investigated to promote critical thinking in education. Collaborate critical thinking training was integrated in general courses in primary and secondary education curricula (Chiodo & Tsai, 1997; Yang & Chung, 2009), content-based courses (Liaw, 2007) and reciprocal teaching (Shiau, 2010) in secondary and high school context, and critical thinking pedagogy in higher education (Fang et al, 2008; Huang & Lee, 2004; Liaw, 2007; Yang, Newby & Bill, 2005, Yeh, 2004, Yang & Chou, 2008).

To explore the various techniques to teaching critical thinking, questioning seems to be an appropriate technique in the previous studies. Teaching critical thinking was regarded as teaching questioning because thinking was thus stimulated (Daniel & Lenski, 2007; Martikean, 1973). Commeyras and Sumner (1998) studied 18 students' questions during literature discussions. Even though they tried to guide them to ask questions they thought would promote thinking, the

students kept asking whatever they found interesting, curious, or confusing. The questions might not be based on enough support or information from the reading, or sometimes the students got off the topic, yet these questions were found to be good discussion questions as long as students kept talking about their questions.

Patterson (1993) found that fourth grade students improve their thinking skills and reading abilities by reading children's books and developing questions based on Bloom's taxonomy. Attitude toward school and social skills were also improved during students' interaction. Shiau (2010) conducted a six-week case study to investigate students' development in higher level thinking via reciprocal teaching. Student-generated questions were collected, analyzed, and coded according to a revised Bloom's taxonomy. Even though students were found to ask more lower level questions, their factual questions were more related to the main idea. Analysis and evaluative questions also increased along with a variety in the content of the questions.

Writing could also be a way to engage the students in thinking critically. Ghajar-Gahremani and Mirhosseini (2005) investigated the effect of dialogue journal writing in promoting EFL students' critical thinking and found this method to be an opportunity for students to express their voice. Liaw (2007) incorporated content-based instruction in teaching junior high EFL class in Taiwan, and then measured students' critical thinking skills with standardized test and by analyzing students writing with Bloom's taxonomy. The test result was not indicative while the depth of the students writing samples provided insights into students' use of higher-order thinking skills. Lo (2010) also identified Asian EFL students' critical thinking abilities from the emerged themes in students' written reflections to the news in their portfolios. The students were not given training of critical thinking.

Tung and Chang (2009) incorporated strategies (reading comprehension quiz, learning log, group presentations, essay-question reports) into the course design and found literature reading helped weak thinkers improve critical thinking skills, particularly in analysis. Even though students tended to repeat what was said or write something unrelated to the text in personal reflection, gradual improvement in better thinking patterns and habits were also found with the time and practice of the teaching/learning activities.

With the assistance of EFL teachers and adequate practice in thinking skills while learning English, the problem of the lack of critical thinking instruction either in Asian education in general or in EFL context in particular will be resolved. This indicates the need for the integration of critical thinking in educational curriculum, especially in second language teaching and learning.

Literature Circles

What are Literature Circles?

According to Daniels (1994), literature circles (LCs) are small, temporary discussion groups who have chosen to read the same book and they can decide portions of texts each time. While reading, the members are assigned different roles and given role sheets in advance. They are to rotate discussion roles each session (which may provide everyone with a new perspective each session), and discuss the text according to assigned roles. In this sense, LCs activity is a form of collaborative learning, since one of the key insights of collaborative learning is the need for clear tasks and roles in a group. When finishing, the groups share their reading in some way with the other classmates. They then select a new text or trade books, and then move to a new cycle of reading and discussion (Daniels, 1994).

Daniels (2002) proposed that literature circles consist of 11 key ingredients: 1) Students choose their own reading materials. 2) Small temporary groups are formed, based on book choice. 3) Different groups read different books. 4) Groups meet on a regular, predictable schedule to discuss their reading. 5) Kids use written or drawn notes to guide both their reading and discussion. 6) Discussion topics come from the students. 7) Group meetings aim to be open, natural conversations about books, so personal connections, digressions, and open-ended questions are welcome. 8) The teacher serves as a facilitator, not a group member or an instructor. 9) Evaluation is by teacher observation and student self-evaluation. 10) A spirit of playfulness and fun pervades the room. 11) When books are finished, readers share with their classmates, and then new groups form around new reading choices (p.18).

These key features defines an authentic and mature literature circle activity, while some variations of the forms of literature circles may apply to the students who are first learning to be engaged in the activity.

How Literature Circles Are Supported by Pedagogical Theories

The essential theories supporting LCs are collaborative learning and reader response theory. Unlike the traditional teacher-centered model of the classroom, LCs rely on the collaborative work in groups. The reader response theory also gives the readers the freedom to interpret the text based on their experiences.

Cooperative Learning and Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky's (1978) "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) is the most quoted theory to support the small, social group action consisting of learners with varying abilities. According to Vygotsky (1978), true learning is to move from a social level

when a learner interacts with more knowledgeable peers who lead the learner through scaffolded information to a level of increased understanding to individual thinking in which the content becomes meaningfully and personally relevant (Leal, 1993; Daniels, 1994; Lehman & Scharer, 1996; Pitman, 1997). Because learning is a social process of collaborating with others, students need to work together to accomplish shared group goals with essential individual accountability, and are communicating in a social environment in order to learn (Dewey, 1938, Short & Burke, 1991).

Reader Response Theory

As a strong support for literature circles, Rosenblatt's (1978, 1995) reader-response theory argues that literary text holds potential for meaning-making and a text will be useless unless a reader goes through it while giving one's own personal meaning. Readers construct their own meaning as they engage with a text in uniquely personal ways, and the transactions between the text and readers create a new text (Rosenblatt, 1978). Therefore, the group dynamic from peers of mixed ability levels and diverse cultural and ethnic identities would allow students to create more meanings in literature circles (Hsu, 2004).

Connection between Critical Thinking and Literature Circles

Connections between Reading and Thinking

Reading can facilitate the development of critical thinking since "A reader must recognize patterns within text, fit details into these patterns, then relate them to other texts and remembered experiences" (*Critical Thinking and Literature-based Reading*, 1997, p.1). Reading and thinking are positively associated and strongly interrelated (Brown, 2002; Day, 2003; Patterson, 1993). In literature-based reading activity,

readers are able to exercise critical thinking skills when managing to understand, explain, and interpret the story as well as the implied meanings, investigate the plot, analyze causal relationships, make inferences, apply what has been learned to other context and real world, synthesize what has been read to something new interpreting, and are able to reason logically, solve problems and make evaluation (Brunt, 2005; Facione, 2007; Halpern, 1998; Lazere, 1987). Through reading readers can demonstrate the capacity to think critically and also the exposure to “multiple points of view and thus compelled to think and rethink their own ideas and actions” (Tung & Chang, 2009, p.292).

Literature Circles and Critical Thinking

Literature Circles are beneficial in helping to improve critical thinking skills (Schlick Noe, 2006; Daniels, 2002). LCs activity also has the attributes suggested by Browne and Freeman (2000) that nurture critical thinking: “frequent evaluative questions, encouragement of active learning, developmental tension, and fascination with the contingency of conclusions” (p.301). Literature circles could help the learners to build deeper comprehension and critical thinking skills through conversation in a collaborative environment (Ketch, 2005; Routman, 2000). Furthermore, as readers work through the text, they are also making text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections. According to Ketch (2005), the readers could connect the story simultaneously with their life experiences and question their own connections; they are also able to synthesize the story and infer the mining of the event, and make predictions (Ketch, 2005). The above skills of the readers fall under the cognitive domain of Bloom’s taxonomy (Ketch, 2005).

Originally, Bloom’s taxonomy divides educational objectives into three

domains, the affective, psychomotor, and cognitive (Clark, 2007). The “cognitive” domain, consisting of six cognitive processes- knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, according to Clark (2007), is a hierarchical list of thinking skills. The six processes are leveled from 1 to 6 and categorized from simple recall or recognition of facts to more complex and abstract mental level. Level 1-3 are considered lower order thinking while Level 4-6 higher order thinking. Level 1-Knowledge is simple recall of fact, Level 2-Comprehension is the understanding of the text, Level 3-Application is to take what has been learned in one context to another one, Level 4- Analysis is to be able to compare and contrast, to make inferences, and to analyze cause and effects, Level 5-Synthesis is the ability to take multiple information together and create something new, and the last one is Level 6-Evaluation, which is the ability to make judgment and evaluation. Even though the taxonomy does not define critical thinking explicitly, it includes the six levels that constitute critical thinking. Aviles (1999) suggested creating test items using this taxonomy to test students for critical thinking. Patterson (1993) also designed a practicum to promote critical thinking skills for 4th grade students by teaching them to read children’s books and develop questions/answers based on each level of Bloom’s taxonomy. Since Portland Public Schools (2004) suggested Bloom’s Taxonomy of Cognitive Domains to be a framework providing useful guide to increase cognitive demands through language, Liaw (2007) analyzed students’ writing samples using Bloom’s taxonomy to identify their critical thinking skills. Since the six levels of Bloom’s cognitive domains was widely adopted by previous studies to evaluate the complexity of students’ critical thinking skills, these six levels will thus be applied in the current study as the coding scheme to evaluate the development of critical thinking in Literature Circles.

Roles in Literature Circles Supported by Comprehension Strategies

With the strong connection of reading and thinking (Brown, 2002; Day, 2003; Patterson, 1993), the roles supported by comprehension strategies were chosen to help the students improve their reading and thinking. The original discussion roles in LCs, as recommended by Daniels (1994), are composed of four parts: a discussion director, who carries the responsibility to create good discussion questions and be the host for group discussions; a literary luminary, who chooses memorable passages from the text to read aloud; a connector, who connects relationships of people, places, and events in the text with readers' own life, personal concerns, other literary works or other writings by the same author; and, finally, an illustrator, who visualize the text by sketching, drawing, and other forms of graphics (Daniels, 1994). Daniels also suggests five other optional roles—a researcher (surveying the background information or any related topic), a summarizer (summarizing the text including the gist, key points, or the essence of the text), a character captain (describing briefly a key character in the reading), a vocabulary enricher (highlighting key or unknown words worth noticing), and a travel tracer (creating a map or diagram for the setting). To enhance the development of critical thinking skills, this study adopts Daniel's (2002) roles and the roles guided by comprehension strategies (Chilcoat, 2003). In the present study, four roles would be rotated in the LCs: summarizer—synthesizer in Chilcoat's (2003) role sheets (searching for key points, writing a summary, and thinking about the big idea the author wants to tell us), connector (looking for connection to self, to text, and to world), inferrer (recording the predictions and conclusions that can be inferred while reading the text), illustrator (drawing anything related to the reading). Finally, everyone in the group will need to play the role of

questioner (writing down any questions for group discussion) and write response logs.

Empirical Studies of Literature Circles in Taiwan

In Taiwan, Literature Circles (LCs) have been a popular reading activity mostly applied in elementary, junior high, senior high schools, and universities. Lin (2006) conducted a study to explore the effects of LCs on elementary bilingual classroom and found LCs beneficial in improving students' reading comprehension, positive attitudes toward storybooks, developing reading strategies and behavior, increasing interests and appreciation of literature, and develop imagination and creativity. The students also benefited from role sheets, cooperative learning, and writing reading journals. Chan (2008) also found positive results of literature circle in increasing sixth-grade children's reading motivation and reading ability in an English class. In junior high schools, Wu (2006) studied LCs and junior high EFL classes LC and Lee (2007) found positive effect of LCs on EFL oral communicative competence in junior high classrooms. In senior high classrooms, Hung (2010) found positive effect of LCs on EFL reading comprehension. LCs were more studied in terms of reading comprehension and attitude in college, technology universities, and university level EFL classrooms (Chiang & Huang, 2005; Hsu, 2003; Hsu, 2004; Hsu & Liu, 2005; Hsu & Sai, 2007; Huang, 2008; Lai, 2011; Lang, 2007). Among the studies, few studies focused on the connection between LCs and critical thinking (Lai, 2011; Liao, 2009). Lai's (2011) study focused on the performance of critical thinking abilities (measured by rise in levels of Bloom's Taxonomy) between in-class face-to-face and computer-mediated groups. Both groups were found to be positively affected after a year of LCs activities. The self-assessment of critical thinking survey indicated no significant difference between two groups. The qualitative data of student generated questions revealed growth in participants' critical thinking skills in both groups.

Students also claimed to improve their critical thinking skills and language skills such as reading and speaking.

Even with the positive result from Lai's (2011) study, the connection of LCs in senior high school in Taiwan and critical thinking development has not been emphasized. Therefore, it is important to explore a method to promote students' critical thinking and provide possible solution for high school teachers. The purpose of this study was thus to explore how Taiwanese EFL high school students develop critical thinking ability through Literature Circles activities and how they perceive the activities. The study aims to naturalistically see how LCs help develop critical thinking, with no intervention intended.

Summary

Based on the literature reviews, critical thinking plays a crucial role in education that facilitates the learning of the students. However, the instruction of critical thinking is not emphasized in Asian education, particularly in EFL context. In the TEFL field in Taiwan, since critical thinking skills were recently included among the objectives listed in the Guidelines for Senior High School English Curriculum implemented in 2010, there is a need to find out a teaching framework workable in the regular high school classroom. As existing empirical studies did not say much about this issue, this study intends to argue that literature circles could be a possible and applicable option to promote critical thinking in EFL classroom.



CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to employ a classroom research approach to collect and analyze data. This chapter will begin with a description of the setting, participants, and teaching materials of the present study. Then the procedure of the study will be described. After that, the instruments and procedures used for data collection, and data analysis will be presented.

Research Design

Setting

The present study was conducted in a senior high school in Southern Taiwan. It recruited both male and female students scoring about 80 in the PR value (percentile rank) in the Basic Competence Test (BCT) for junior high school students. BCT is the joint examination taken by every junior high school student in order to apply for senior high schools. Students are considered intermediate-level given that their PR value (80) is lower than that of many students in other schools.

Participants

Thirty seven second-year students from an intact English class participated in the present study, including 14 males and 23 females. They were either 16 or 17 years old and had been receiving compulsory English education for about six years starting from fifth grade. Students were evaluated on writing and reading by the quizzes in

class and the monthly examinations, and the latter take place three times in a semester. However, wide range of differences in English proficiency levels exists among the students: some are very good, while others may be extremely weak. The average of their English grades of the three midterms was 75 in the previous school year. The participants had six English classes per week, 50 minutes per class in the current school year. Their English teacher was the researcher.

Materials

The researcher surveyed senior high school English readers published by such local publishers as Sanmin, Lungteng and Far East and graded readers published by Cosmos, Oxford and Caves Books. Seven short stories were chosen for the study (See Appendix A). *Soapy's Choice* (Mowat, 2000) and *Tildy's Moment* (Mowat, 2000) were collected from Oxford Bookworm Library, *Witches' Loaves* (Oliviert, 1999), *One Hundred Dollars* (Oliviert, 1999) from Caves Bookstore Easy Readers, *After Twenty Years* (Stuart, 2007) from Cosmos Reading Room, *The Necklace* (Shih, et al., 2005) from Far East Senior High School Reader Book 5, and *The Lady or the Tiger* (Chou, et al., 2005) from Lunteng Senior High School Reader Book 5. The stories were chosen for the following reasons to assure the similarities: 1) they either had twist endings or had plenty of room for imagination; 2) five of the seven stories—*Soapy's Choice*, *Witches' Loaves*, *After Twenty Years*, *Tildy's Moment*, and *One Thousand Dollars*—were retold stories originally from the same author, O.Henry. The first and the last story, in which the results would be compared later, were both the retold versions of O.Henry's stories. In addition, the stories were adapted by the researcher so that they were similar in length and readability. The readability was based on Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Index in computer software. Table 3.1 shows the

readability and length of the stories.

Table 3.1

Readability and Length of the Stories

Short stories	Readability	Number of words
<i>Soapy's Choice</i>	3.9	1346
<i>Witches' Loaves</i>	4.5	1249
<i>After Twenty Years</i>	4.1	1171
<i>Tildy's Moment</i>	4.0	1034
<i>The Necklace</i>	3.9	1276
<i>The Lady or the Tiger</i>	4.3	1017
<i>One Thousand Dollars</i>	3.9	1374

The original literature circles (LCs) proposed by Daniel (1994) are groups who have chosen to read the same book and they can decide portions of texts each time. The students were supposed to choose their own book to read. However, given the limited time of the study (seven weeks) and the need to analyze comparable data across stories, the researcher chose the same set of materials for all the participants to read in LCs.

Procedure of the Study

The data collection consisted of three stages, lasting for seven weeks in October and November, 2010. For the first and seventh week of the study the time was one 50-minute period on a Thursday afternoon. From the second to the sixth week of the study, the time was two 50-minute consecutive periods every Thursday afternoon. At the preparatory stage, i.e., in the first week of the seven-week project, the researcher conducted an independent reading activity for participants. They were asked to read

the first story before class, and took a comprehension test in class. Then, they each generated six questions for the story using a worksheet that intended to help them generate questions (Appendix C) and wrote a response to the story using a response log (See Appendix D).

In the second week the researcher gave the participants a second story to read before class. The story was an adaptation of a short story which they had read in the previous semester. The researcher assumed they knew the story and thus gave no comprehension test but merely an oral review of the plot of the story. Then, the researcher introduced literature circles to the class and modeled the implementation of literature circles. Students were first given direct instruction and a modeling demonstration to show what was expected of them.

The literature circles were formed as cooperative groups. The demonstration of literature circles was divided into four parts. The first part was filling in the role-sheets and grouping. The researcher introduced the activity, modeled the four roles—summarizer, connector, inferrer, and then illustrator using a set of four role descriptions and role sheets adopted from Daniels (2002) and Chilcoat (2003) (See Appendix B). Table 3.2 below summarizes the tasks of different roles that the participants should complete in the group discussion. Participants were then divided into groups of four or five. The researcher told the participants that in the following four weeks, the participants would be randomly divided into nine literature circles groups, four to five students each. They were also told to sit in groups. They were asked to rearrange their seats and sit face to face. The researcher told the participants that they would sit with the same group members for the literature meetings in the following four weeks, from the third to the sixth week. They would have to rotate different roles each time as they have a literature discussion.

For the second part of the demonstration, the researcher modeled how to have a discussion based on the completed role sheets.

The third part was to generate questions. After the researcher's modeling, the participants were told that each of them would have to raise six questions using the Discussion Questions worksheet (See Appendix C). The teacher also explained that the purpose of raising questions were not to give a comprehension test, but to pose questions for groups to discuss. Then, every group shared their questions, chose six out of their gathered questions to answer together, and wrote the answers down. In this part, they all took on the role of Discussion Directors together. In the fourth part, the participants were required to write down their individual free-writing responses to the story using response logs (See Appendix D). No modeling was designed in this task and they were not instructed what to write and how to write it. Therefore, their writing could be seen as their own naturalistic development in critical thinking through the activity, instead of the effect of teaching intervention.

Table 3.2

Tasks of Four Roles in the Group Discussion

Roles	Tasks
Summarizer	The job of Summarizer is to prepare a brief summary of today's reading. The group is counting on Summarizer to give a quick statement that tells the key events, the main highlights, and the essence of today's reading.
Connector	The job of Connector is to find connections between the book and self or the world outside, and report to the group
Inferer	The job of Inferer is to record the predictions and the conclusions s/he infers when him/her reads, and report to the group.

Illustrator	The job of Illustrator is to draw anything related to the reading and present it to the group. It can be a sketch, cartoon, diagram, flowchart, or stick-figure scene about anything in the story s/he liked or thought was important: a character, the setting, a problem, an exciting part, a surprise, a prediction of what will happen next, his/her feelings, ideas or anything else s/he can think of.
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*Adapted from Daniels, H. (2002). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in book clubs and reading groups*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers. and Chilcoat, C. L. (2003). *Literature circles guided by comprehension strategies*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

At the second stage, starting from the third week to the sixth week, the participants read one story per week. Throughout the four weeks, they were required to read before class the following four adapted stories: *After Twenty Years* (Stuart, 2007), *Tildy's moment* (Mowat, 2000), *The Necklace* (Shih, et al., 2005), *The Lady or the Tiger* (Chou, et al., 2005) (See Appendix A). In the first 50-minute of the class, for the first five minutes, they rearranged their seats and sat face to face, followed by a 5-minute individual comprehension test. The comprehension test was administered to ensure the students read the story before class. To avoid the interference from multiple choice question that might guide the students to ask similar questions later, the comprehension test consisted of two parts: true or false questions and vocabulary translation, rather than multiple choice questions. Then for the following 20 minutes, the participants fill out their role sheets (See Appendix B), followed by a 20-minute discussion based on their roles. In the second 50-minute class hour, everyone posed six questions using the Discussion Questions worksheet (See Appendix C) based on the story for 15 minutes, followed by a group discussion to select six questions out of their gathered questions and answer them for 20 minutes. Finally, the participants wrote a free-writing response to the story in their response logs (See Appendix D) and literature circles self-evaluation checklists (See Appendix E) for the rest 15 minutes.

At the end of the second class, the researcher collected the completed role sheets, generated questions, response logs and self-evaluation checklists. Table 3.3 presents a summary of the time arrangements of activities.

Table 3.3

Summary of the Time Arrangement of Activities

Steps	Time	Activities
First Period		
Preparation	5 min.	Students rearrange the seats.
	5 min.	Students take the comprehension test.
Literature Circles	20 min.	Complete role sheets
Discussion	20 min.	Group discussions based on completed role sheets
Second Period		
Questioning	15 min.	Each student writes down six questions based on the story.
	20 min.	Each group selects six out of all the questions in the group to answers.
Response logs	15 min.	Students complete response logs and self-evaluation checklists.

At the last stage, the researcher conducted another independent reading session. Students were asked to read the last story before class, and then in class they first had a comprehension test, then they needed to posed six questions for the story (using Appendix C), and then wrote a response to the story in their response logs (using Appendix D). They were then asked to respond to the Chinese version of the Perception Questionnaire (See Appendix F) and were allowed to answer the questions in L1 so that they can express their ideas freely without language barrier. The questionnaire was used to collect students' perception toward their own learning from this activity. Table 3.4 presents a summary of the procedure of the study.

Table 3.4

Three Stages of the Literature Circles Activity

Stages	Time	Activities	Reading Materials
1	Week 1	Independent Reading	IN Story 1: <i>Soapy's Choice</i>
	Week 2	Demonstration of Literature Circles	Demo story: <i>Witches' Loaves</i>
2	Week 3-6	Literature Circles	LC story 1: <i>After Twenty Years</i>
			LC story 2: <i>Tildy's Moment</i>
			LC story 3: <i>The Necklace</i>
			LC story 4: <i>The Lady or the Tiger</i>
3	Week 7	Independent Reading	IN Story 2: <i>One Thousand Dollars</i>
		Perception Questionnaire	

Data Collection

Three sources of data were collected. First, student-generated questions in the first and last independent reading sessions were collected. Second, students' response logs for these two stories were collected. The last data source was the participants' responses to the Perception Questionnaire (Appendix F).

Data Analysis

The first research question, "To what extent do Literature Circles promote critical thinking among a group of EFL senior high school students in Taiwan? How do the students develop critical thinking skills during the Literature Circles?" was addressed by analyzing the discussion questions and response logs of the participants in the first and last stories. Coding sheets of six levels based on Bloom's taxonomy were created to categorize student-generated questions and responses into different

levels. The student-generated questions and responses were read multiple times by the researcher to identify their levels of cognitive domains as defined by Bloom (1956). The researcher also invited a senior high school English teacher to be the interrater to code the results independently. The results of the researcher and interrater were compared and reached the interrater reliability of 0.9. The following excerpts of students' questions and responses in this section were quoted directly from the student generated questions and responses without correction. Table 3.5 below presents an example of the coding sheet of the discussion questions, while Table 3.6 presents an example of the coding sheet of the response logs.

Table 3.5

The Coding Sheets: Types and Examples from Student-generated Questions.

Category	Examples
1.Knowledge	The text states that Gillian got \$1,000 according to his uncle's will. Student-generated Question: "Why did Gillian get the \$1,000?"
2.Comprehension	The text states that after knowing that \$50,000 would be given to him if he uses the money wisely, and otherwise Miriam Hayden would have it, Gillian tore up the letter stating his use of the money. Student-generated Question: "Does Miss Hayden get the whole money in the end?"
3.Application	The text describes events in which Gillian asked others what a man can do with a thousand dollars. Student-generated Question: "If I had one thousand dollars, what should I do?"
4.Analysis	The text states that after the blind man showed Gillian his bank book, Gillian returned to the law offices to ask about what Miss Hayden got from his uncle and then gave the money to her. Student-generated Question: "Why did Young Gillian see the blind then he just knew how to use the 1000 dollars? "

5.Synthesis	<p>The text states that Hayden took the \$1,000 Gillian gave her and Gillian wrote down how he spent the money.</p> <p>Student-generated Question: “If Miss Hayden didn’t take the money that Gillian gave her, what do you think he would do?”</p>
6.Evaluation	<p>The text states that Gillian gave the money to Hayden and then lied to the lawyer that he spend it on horse-racing.</p> <p>Student-generated Question: “How do you think about Gillian's behavior?”</p>

The response logs were also coded into the same six levels. Table 3.6 shows examples.

Table 3.6

The Coding Sheets: Types and Examples from Response Logs

Category	Examples
1.Knowledge	<p>“Old Bryson told Gillian many ways to use one thousand dollars, for example buy a happy home, buy milk for one hundred babies and save fifty of their lives, spend it in less than a half-hour in one of the city’s art shop, put a young man through university, move to a New Hampshire town and live very well for two years on it, pay to use a famous theatre for one night, but he didn’t accept.”</p>
2.Comprehension	<p>“In the story, Gillian’s uncle wanted Gillian to change his bad habit of using money in the past, so he made a test to Gillian is his will, wishing him can spend money in a wise, kind or unselfish manner.</p> <p>I think the story tells about a young man doesn't know how to spend the small deal of money. So he asked people how to use it. And he spends all 1000 \$ on his lover, Miss Hayden. Because he loves Miss Hayden, he gives up 50000\$ in the end of the story.”</p>

3.Application	“If I had one thousand dollars, I would spend it on someone who needs it or somebody I love, too.”
4.Analysis	“I didn’t know what the whole story was talking about as I first read it. And then I read about four times, and found the most important sentence might be “the you know I love you” said Gillian in a low voice. Maybe the author just wants us know we will give benefits to whom we love and used valuable things on what we life.”
5.Synthesis	(Alternative of the story) “He wasted it in his usual selfish ways, and \$50,000 was donated to the organization to help people. He spent all his money in a few months and became not so rich. This time, he thought he didn’t want to be controlled by money. He resolved to make money by himself. He wanted to become a real rich man and use meny in a wise way.”
6.Evaluation	“The advice which Old Bryson gives is the best I think. But Gillian doesn’t like it. So maybe he isn’t a good person.”

The results of the categorization from student-generated questions were used to compare the percentage of each level in the first and last stories to see if there were changes. On the other hand, in order to see whether there were differences in the students’ responses, the results of the categorization from students’ responses were analyzed to compare the times each level was used in the response logs. The results might suggest the development of critical thinking if the questions and responses were shifted to higher levels.

The second research question, “How do the students perceive Literature Circles? What unique English learning opportunities are there? What challenges do the students encounter?” was answered by investigating students’ responses to Perception Questionnaire. The participants’ replies were coded by the researcher.

In sum, the discussion questions and response logs were gathered and

categorized into six levels. A comparison of the levels used would show whether the participants learned to think deeper. The questions and response logs were also investigated to see to what extent the students develop critical thinking skills. In addition, the participants' responses to the Perception Questionnaire would explore the participants' self-report of the learning that literature circles activities could bring, especially in terms of thinking, and students' acceptance of these activities as well as other comments about these activities. The results will be presented in the next chapter.



CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the study in two parts. First, the results of student generated questions and responses in the first and second independent reading sessions will be analyzed to see whether there is any change in the levels of thinking. Second, students' responses to the perception questionnaire will be presented. The results are analyzed qualitatively.

Student-generated Questions and Responses

This section presents the results of categorization of student-generated questions and responses. The findings will show to what extent students' critical thinking skill had been promoted after the implementation of literature circles. As explained in Chapter Three, student-generated questions and responses were categorized into six levels based on the cognitive domain of Bloom's taxonomy. The results will help to answer the first research question: "To what extent do Literature Circles promote critical thinking among a group of EFL senior high school students in Taiwan? How do the students develop critical thinking skills during the Literature Circles?" In this chapter, to show the authenticity of the students' writing, the excerpts of students' questions and responses are quoted directly from their works; the researcher chose not to correct the ungrammatical sentences in the participants' questions and responses.

Categorization of Students' Questions

As described in Chapter Three (see 'Procedure of the Study' in Chapter 3), after students finished reading, they were asked to produce questions for discussion. Before the implementation of literature circles, they were asked to read the first story independently (Independent reading story 1). Then, after the five-week literature circles activity, they were asked to read the last story independently (independent reading story 2). Their discussion questions for these two stories were then collected and sorted into six levels by the researcher and a rater. Some of the questions were not able to fit into any of the six levels, and thus were coded as "others." The total number of questions for each of the levels is presented in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1. The percentage presented in the parenthesis is calculated by the number of 222 for each story because there were 37 participants asking 6 questions for each story respectively.

Table 4.1

Total Number of Student-generated Questions in Independent Reading Story 1 (IN Story 1) and Independent Reading Story 2 (IN Story 2)

Question type Story	L1 (Knowledge)	L2 (Comprehension)	L3 (Application)	L4 (Analysis)	L5 (Synthesis)	L6 (Evaluation)	others
IN Story 1: Soapy's Choice	79 (36%)	66 (30%)	4 (2%)	46 (21%)	5 (2%)	3 (1%)	18 (8%)
IN Story 2: One Thousand Dollars	32 (14%)	74 (33%)	26 (12%)	45 (20%)	13 (6%)	4 (2%)	28 (13%)

Note: N=222 questions in total for each story

L= level of the question

Others: other question types that do not fit into the six levels

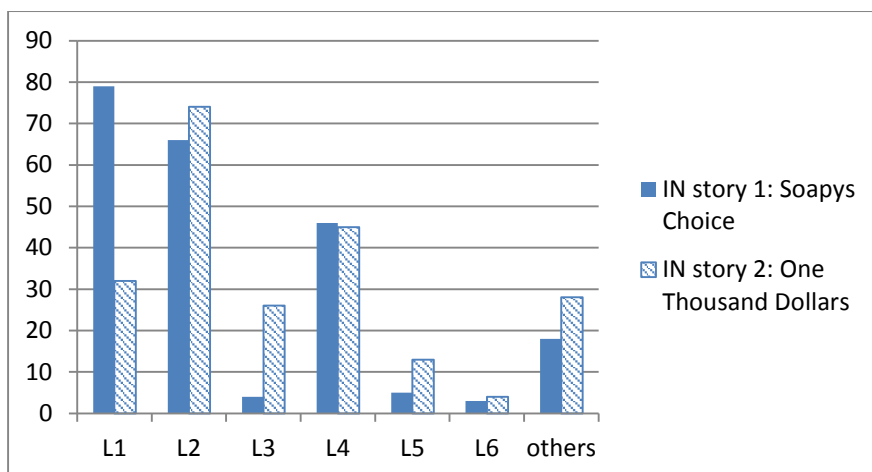


Figure 4.1 Comparisons of the Total Numbers of Student-generated Questions in IN Story 1 and 2

In the Independent Reading Story 1(IN Story 1), Level-1 questions were the most prevailing question type, with 79 out of 222 (36%) questions categorized in this category. Level-2 questions were ranked the second (30%), followed by Level-4 questions (21%). There were only a few questions in Level-3 (2%), Level-5 (2%), and Level-6 (1%). Eight percent of the questions did not fit into the six levels.

After the implementation of literature circles, the number of Level-1 questions was sharply decreased, as Fig. 4.1 shows. The number of Level-4 questions was slightly decreased, while the numbers of Level-2, 3, 5, and 6 questions were increased. Other questions were also increased in the last story. All these numbers did not show an obvious shift from lower to higher level questions, but a progress toward critical thinking could be found in the shift from knowledge to comprehension level and the development in application, synthesis, and evaluation levels. Even though students did not increase their Level-4 questions, Level-4 was shifted from the third most popular question type to the second one, which suggested that the other lower level questions were asked less frequently.

Shift from Knowledge Level to Comprehension Level

The sharp decrease in knowledge level questions and some increase in comprehension level questions indicated that the students began to ask more comprehension questions with text-implicit lower level inferences instead of asking only the lowest level text-explicit knowledge questions. In IN Story 1, students asked questions starting with “where, what, who, and why” that required some factual knowledge or the information stated explicitly in the text, such as “Where does Soapy live?” (Participant 12) or “What did Soapy throw and broke?” (Participant 35). The answers to these questions could be located without difficulty in the text. The fact that students asked 22% fewer knowledge level questions might suggest that they were able to think deeper.

On the other hand, students asked three percent more comprehension questions in IN Story 2. Although comprehension questions also belonged to lower level cognitive skills, it was reasonable that students asked these questions since they needed to comprehend the story beyond the level of facts and knowledge only. They needed to add their own interpretation based on the text. For example, in IN Story 2, students asked “Why Gillian’s uncle only gave him \$ 1000 at first” (Participant 2), “What will Gillian’s uncle think infer what will Gillian do?” (Participant 17), and “Why Gillian finally told a lie and tore up the letter into pieces?” (Participant 18). Students needed to read and comprehend the whole story to find out the answers. They also needed to search where the answers were in the text. Therefore, a slight increase in this level might indicate that students started to move forward to a higher level of understanding instead of facts recalling. However, these comprehension questions are still based on low-level inference.

Most Increase in Application Questions

There were 10 % more application questions asked in the IN Story 2. Students were possibly able to connect the stories to themselves after literature circles. In IN Story 1, students raised questions that required connecting themselves to a character or to the situation in real life. They also asked what they could learn from the story, such as “If you were Soapy, how you would feel when you are arrested?” (Participant 8), “If you go to church, *whether* you will think something beautiful?” (Participant 7), and “What do you learn from Soapy?” (Participant 22). In IN Story 2, students asked questions that not only linked themselves to characters and situations but also added their own opinions and share their own values and experiences. For example, “Is it true that some people will give their money to others in the world?” (Participant 34), which required the student to use their world knowledge to answer the question.

Students’ Analyzing Abilities across the Two Stories

In terms of analysis questions, there was one percent decrease in this level in IN Story 2. Students did not seem to improve in the analysis level. However, analysis was promoted from the third most asked question type in IN Story 1 (21%) to the second most asked one in IN Story 2 (20%). It was also found that most of the questions in this level started with “why.” The prevalence of “why” questions in both stories might explain students’ tendency to ask analysis questions either. Students were found to ask more “why” questions than “how” or “what” when given the opportunity to write questions for their discussion.

Some differences were also noticed in the shift of the question types from IN Story 1 to 2. In IN Story 1, the students already showed their ability to critically analyze the story by asking questions that required them to investigate the underlying

motives and reasons of an event or the behavior of a character. For example, they wondered the reasons that led Soapy into a poor situation. As the story mentioned “He thought of the days when he had a mother, and friends, and beautiful things in his life” (Appendix A- Story A). Students asked, “Why Soapy did not have any friends?” (Participant 6). They further used their knowledge and belief from their own life experiences and expanded the beautiful things in life to having a wife or children, which the story did not mention. For example, “Why Soapy don't have wife or children?” (Participant 38). Students were even able to further investigate the action of the others and speculate other possibilities and alternatives by asking “Why did not...”

Why Soapy's mother and friends did not help him? (Participant 18)

Why did he find a good job to earn the money? (Participant 3)

Why he don't find the other way to live with a nice, warm, prison, food and good friends? (Participant 28)

Soapy can do much more happier things, why he did not do that before arresting? (Participant 34)

From their life experience, they also raised doubts. For example, they asked about the reason why Soapy did not commit a more serious crime.

Why did not he do something more dangerous thing, like: robbing? (Participant 17)

Why he did not did something terrible and he can went to the prison immediate. For example: hit police? (Participant 2)

Why don't Soapy kill the people and then he can be arrested? (Participant 3)

They asked questions that were contrary to their assumption.

Why the waiter did not call the policeman when he did not pay money? (Participant 37)

They also questioned the crime of loitering, which might need some further investigation on the background of the particular historical period and culture. Seven questions were the paraphrases of the following questions.

Why the policeman arrested Soapy for loitering? (Participant10)
Why Soapy did not do anything and then arrested by the policeman?
(Participant 26)

The above examples show that the students could already ask many analysis questions before LCs. They demonstrated their ability to investigate underlying motives and reasons, discovered causal relationships, made higher level inferences, read with their life experiences, and questioned the part that contradicted with what existed in their background knowledge. Furthermore, they proposed their doubt and also showed their thinking of alternatives in the questions they asked.

Students also tried to ask questions that required them to analyze the arrangement of the plot and to infer from the text the underlying meaning. From the following two examples, students were able to ask what the author meant and what the plot meant here.

Why the author write the blind man has more one thousand dollars? (Participant 6)
Why did Young Gillian see the blind then he just knew how to use the 1000 dollars? (Participant 15)

In addition, students tried to investigate the relationship between characters that was not explicitly inferred from the text

Who is Miss Hayden? What is the relation between Young Gillian, his uncle and her? (Participant 29)

From the above examples, students were shown to be able to explore the reading in analytical level by exploring underlying motive and reasons, making higher level inferences, asking “Why didn’t”, raising their doubts regarding the reading, analyzing the authors’ intention as well as the meaning and arrangement of the plot,

and investigating the relationship between characters. Students seemed to be endowed with the analytical ability both before and after LCs.

Development in Synthesis and Evaluation Questions

Synthesis and evaluation questions are considered highest among all the cognitive levels. Even though students generated very few questions of these two levels, a slight increase of the quantity after LCs might suggest that students were able to develop their thinking toward higher cognitive levels. In IN Story 1, only 2 % of the questions were synthesis questions, and mostly the questions were about a prediction or hypothesis of what may happen or might have happened. For example, “What do you think he will do next time when he did not [is not] in prison?” (Participant 31), and “If someone can help Soapy. He will loiter?” (Participant 6). In IN Story 2, there were six percent more questions of this level posed by the students. Students asked questions about the prediction of what may happen, or the hypotheses of what might have happened, such as “What would happened to Gillian if Miss Hayden loved him?” (Participant 5), and “What will Miss Hayden do if she know what Gillian do?” (Participant 17). An increase in the quantity of synthesis questions was found to indicate that students could raise creative responses and propose alternative solutions.

There was only a slight increase in evaluation questions. In IN Story 1, the questions they posed were to solicit opinions, such as “What do you think about his behaving?” (Participant 17), to assess the situation of the character, such as “How poor Soapy was?” (Participant 5), and to distinguish facts from opinions: “Is it the truth that someone wears dirty old trousers and terrible shoes can’t pay the bill in expensive restaurant?” (Participant 19). In IN Story 2, students asked questions that

required the skill of stating opinion and form judgment, such as “Do you think he made good use for the one thousand dollars?” (Participant 1). It seemed that before LCs, students were able to ask a few evaluation questions to solicit opinions, to assess, to distinguish facts from opinions, and to form judgment. Improvement of this level was not clearly observed after LCs. It seemed more challenging for students to raise such evaluation questions.

Not in the Six Cognitive Levels

Some of the students’ questions did not fit any of the six cognitive levels. Compared with higher level questions, students actually asked relatively more questions which are not in the six levels, with eight percent in IN Story 1 and 13 % in IN Story 2. These questions are unanswerable questions with irrelevant details or playful imagination. Unanswerable questions of irrelevant details refer to the questions that are weak in the relevance to the topic and the details with irrelevant information are too trivial that they do not support the focus and main idea of the story. In IN Story 1, the participants picked unimportant things from the story such as the umbrella and focused on very trivial details. For example, the student asked “Who is the umbrella's owner? (Participant 10)” The umbrella was mentioned in the story when Soapy tried to be arrested by stealing it from a man but when Soapy insisted the umbrella was his, the man became uncertain about his ownership. However, who the owner is seems to be unanswerable because there is no further clue or relevancy to the main idea of the story. Another example is “Why the winter is cold? (Participant 4)” In the first paragraph of IN Story 1, the setting was in the winter and Soapy thought about how to deal with cold weather. The statement of the setting seemed to be a common sense that the winter is supposed to be cold, but the student who asked the

question simply changed it into one that was not suitable for discussion. In IN Story 2, however, the fact that more unanswerable questions were generated than those in IN Story 1 was surprising. For example, the students asked the questions that were clueless based on the story.

How Miss Hayden spends her money? (Participant 27)

Where does Gillian go after leaving the office? (Participant 11)

Even though Miss Hayden received the money and Gillian left the office after he talked with the lawyer in the story, there were no other clues given in the story to speculate about the way Miss Hayden would use the money or the place where Gillian would go. These questions were also irrelevant to the main idea of the story and seemed unanswerable. It was possible that they took the elements from the story and connected them to what they like to gossip about in the real life. For example, in IN Story 2, the participant had the imagination that the lawyer would steal the money, or the two male characters had hidden relationship.

Will the lawyer 私吞[misappropriate] all the money? (Participant 11)

Did Lawyer Tolman and Young Gillian have hidden relationship? (Participant 15)

In general, these questions that fell into the “others” category may seem way out of the cognitive levels, but sometimes students would take some of the elements in the stories and ask insensible questions and had fun in the discussion or creating something new. These questions also show students’ creativity.

In sum, the above findings were based on participants’ questions raised for the LC discussion, and the result clearly shows that certain growth was found in their development of critical thinking. Before LCs, knowledge questions were posed the most. After LCs, a decline of knowledge questions while an increase in comprehension, application, synthesis, and evaluation questions may suggest that students were able promote critical thinking. Among the changes, it was interesting to

find out that a large number of application questions were formed after LC and increased the most. Students improved to a greater extent the ability in application. They were able to use their experiences to make personal connections with the people or situation in the text. However, the participants did not show improvements in analysis questions because they already showed their ability to ask analysis questions before LCs. The increase of the questions that did not fit any of the six cognitive levels, though not directly related to the development of the cognitive level, still indicated the possible stimulus of students' creativity.

Categorization of Students' Responses

As described in the Method chapter (see Procedure of the Study), after students finished reading and raised questions, they were asked to write a response log. Their responses in the first and second independent reading stories were then collected and sorted into six levels by the researcher and a rater. It was also found that, as in the question types that they generated, some of the responses did not fit any of the six levels, and thus were coded under the label "others." The results of the categorization were used to compare the times each level was used (frequency) across the stories, as presented in the following Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2. The percentage presented in the parenthesis is calculated by the number of 46 and 77 for each story respectively. The proportion of these six levels along with others may be considered an indicator of the characteristics of students' writings and an illustration of the development in the higher level thinking.

Table 4.2

Frequency of the Six Levels Used in Student Response to Independent Reading Story 1 and 2 (IN Story 1 and 2)

Response type Story	L1 (Knowledge)	L2 (Comprehension)	L3 (Application)	L4 (Analysis)	L5 (Synthesis)	L6 (Evaluation)	others
IN Story 1: Soapy's Choice	1 (2%)	9 (20%)	12 (26%)	7 (15%)	4 (9%)	8 (17%)	5 (11%)
IN Story 2: One Thousand Dollars	1 (1%)	18 (24%)	23 (30%)	16 (21%)	3 (4%)	13 (17%)	3 (4%)

N=46 for IN Story 1, 77 for IN Story 2

L= level of the responses

Others: other responses types

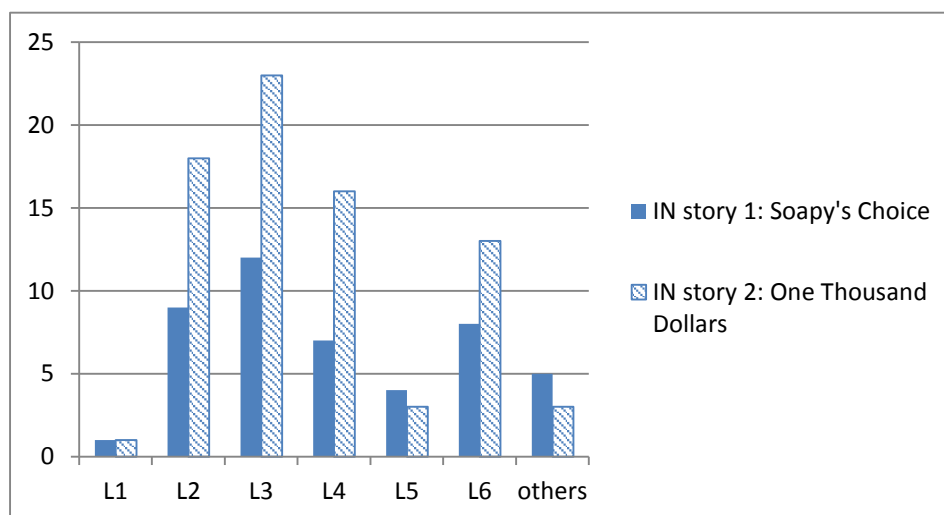


Figure 4.2. Frequency of the Levels Used in Student Generated Responses in Independent Reading Story 1 and 2

In IN Story 1, Level-3 (application) was the most eminent type in the responses, with 12 out of the total 46 times (frequency). Level-2 (comprehension) was ranked the second (nine times), followed by Level-6 (evaluation) and Level-4 (analysis), with seven and eight times respectively. Others that do not fit any of the six levels appeared in the responses five times, Level-5 (synthesis) were used four times. The least was Level-1(knowledge), which was only used once.

In IN Story 2, Level-3 was also the most prominent type (23 out of 77 times), the second was also Level-2 (18 times), but the third became Level-4 (16 times), followed by Level-6 (13 times), and Level-5 and Others were both used three times. The least used was still Level-1 (once). All these numbers show that students could develop their thinking by increasing the frequency of the higher levels used in their responses.

Increase in Frequency and Words/sentences

The first thing to be noticed was that the frequency of the levels used in the responses in IN Story 2 greatly increased from 46 times in IN Story 1 to 77 times. It seemed that students' responses were written with more variety of the levels.

Students were also found to increase the quantity of their sentences in the responses. In IN Story 1, the average sentences was 3.43. The total number of words was 1440, and 11.34 words for each sentence. In IN Story 2, the average number of sentences was 7.43, the total number of words 3874, and 14.08 words for each sentence. It seemed that after LCs, students' responses were lengthened. For example, one of the students who had made only a general comment without elaboration in IN Story 1 could elaborate her statement in IN Story 2. In the former story, she asked, "Very interesting!" (participant 20), in which she expressed her opinion, yet she did not give any support to elaborate her idea. In IN Story 2, the same student could write a more elaborate response and apply the story to life: "How to deal with money is difficult for me to answer. Because my desire is a lot [I desire a lot of thing], I can't control very well. I think the story telling me using money[knowing how to use money] is very important. I hope that I can quickly find the way to learn." (Participant 20).

From the above example, students were found to be able to elaborate more on their ideas after the LCs.

Few Knowledge Responses

In terms of the quality of thinking in students' responses, a deeper look at the levels of responses found that, first, only one knowledge-related response could be identified in each story. This result was very different from that of analyzing the

student-generated questions, in which knowledge level questions were one of the popular types before LCs but reduced the number after LCs. However, in the responses, LCs did not seem to play essential role in this level because students wrote very few knowledge level responses. It was possible that when writing responses, students tended to write in their own words and expressed their points of view instead of just repeating the story or merely writing down some facts.

Making Assocaitions in the Applcation Phase

There was a sharp increase in Levels-2, 3, 4, and 6. Among these levels, application responses were most prominent in both stories. It is possible that students tended to apply the story to themselves in the responses. When asked to write a response, rather than to ask questions, students tended to express themselves and apply a lot of text-to-life connections to other contexts. In IN Story 1, a student wrote:

Few days ago, I saw a report is about the man who just like Soapy. It's common to see in the city. There are many homeless people lives on the street. Maybe they want to work, but there are no opportunities for them. Soapy tried to do many bad things, just want to get in prison. (Participant 22)

This student applied the story to her knowledge of similar events in the world. She was able to comprehend the story and then connect the story to something that she knows. In this response, she reached both comprehension and application levels.

The following example in IN Story 2 suggested that a student was able to show the developed skills of application and analysis:

If you have one thousand dollars, what would you do? I think different people make different 決定[decision]. I can't understand why Gillian do so at all, but maybe he is really kind of [to] Miss Hayden. I think Gillian consider that love is more important than money. Money makes people more 疏離[aloof]. In the story, I see somebody different, he give his money to another who he loves and needed. I consider this mind is hard to find in present. If I have one thousand dollars, I will spend it on someone needed or somebody who I love too. Love can't be compared with money. Love is the most beautiful connection between you and me. Not many ways to let us happy but love can do so well and then

meantain[maintain] it made the world wonderful more. Now, if you have countless money, what will you do? (Participant 30)

The student first applied the situation in the story to personal experiences by saying “if I have...”, and then tried to analyze the meaning of the story with the statement “love can’t be compared with money. Love is...” In this response, the student was able to incorporate higher thinking skills at the application and analysis levels.

The following example was a comparison of the responses made by a student before and after LCs. He utilized the skills of application in both responses. In IN Story 1, the student demonstrated his comprehension of the story, and proposed a possible alteration of the story if one element of the story changed, which reached the level of synthesis, and then applied the story to his knowledge of the world he is living in.

It's not Soapy's day. Everything he wanted to do don't realize [doesn't happen]. Maybe he is poor so that his fate is also poor. If someone can help him, his life will be different. Nowadays, some people lost their job, Maybe they don't [have] the ability to live. (Participant 6)

In IN Story 2, even with some grammatical mistakes, the same students demonstrated his ability to write a longer comprehensive response in the following example and reached different cognitive levels by first describing what happened to Gillian in the story (comprehension level), analyze the meaning and lesson of “being humble” (analysis level), and compared the lesson he had learned to a concrete example from what he knew of the news about Chen, Shu-Chu (application level).

In the story, Gillian seem[seemed] to be anxious [about] how to spend the money. So he asked anyone he met. But he always thought [he would like] to buy something expensive. He did not use the money as his uncle did. Instead of Gillian 's way, his uncle spent the money on poor man, giving them \$10 and a ring. In the end, Gillian told us he spent the money on horse-racing. So I think if we [are] always humble, we will lose [something] then we get [something]. And the behavior can let us lose the money we have. Maybe today Gillian is a rich man, tomorrow he will be a beggar. To be rich [is] just a dream. Maybe we can

do like Gillian's uncle. We can help someone in poor, doing something for someone in need. If everyone can do so, the world can be more better [better]. No matter how small things we help someone. Say goes [As the saying goes], giving is happier than getting. But when we help someone, we can do like 陳素菊[陳樹菊, Chen, Shu-Chu, a vegetable vendor and philanthropist from Taitung in Eastern Taiwan]. No one knows when she helped someone. (Participant 6)

From the above examples, the students could gradually learn to elaborate more in the responses.

Presenting Viewpoints

Compared with the previous question raising section where students asked more knowledge and comprehension questions than the other levels, students were more likely to present their points of view in the responses. When presenting viewpoints, students often interpreted the story, which may contribute to the level 2 responses. In addition, they expressed their ideas with the marker labeled “I think/thought/suppose/believed/consider”. In IN Story 1, sixteen out of thirty seven students used these markers, and an increase was found in IN Story 2 where twenty seven students used these markers to express their opinions. It seemed that more students made use of these markers to express their personal viewpoints in writing responses. Students’ viewpoints could be organized under the following subheadings: 1) descriptive responses with interpretation, 2) analytical and critical responses, and finally, 3) evaluation in the responses.

1. Descriptive responses with interpretation.

Comprehension responses were the second most frequently used in both stories. Students wrote descriptive responses with interpretation, and more elaboration was found in IN Story 2. For example, the following responses demonstrated students’ ability to add interpretation into their comprehension responses by using “I think...”

I think it was not Soapy's day. What he do is always opposite from what he think. He wants to get in the prison but he can't. (Participant 11)
Soapy wants to get into the prison in the beginning because he has no money. So I think he is not the true scoundrel actually. (Participant 2)

In IN Story 2, the responses of this level were longer and more elaborate, as in the following example. The student expressed her thought in the interpretation.

After reading the story, I felt touching [touched]. The Gillian's late uncle might be close with Gillian. He bore in mind the interest of Gillian. He understood Gillian a lot, and wanted he [him to] become better. It's so touching. Gillian might [be] a man always spends money a lot and used money to buy many articles. [He] Just thought money is unimportant. Then Gillian's late uncle made him do something and emphasized that this is his will. He wanted Gillian to think over how he would do with one thousand dollars seriously. He might want him to do some meaning [meaningful] things. Finally, Gillian became convinced. He not only helped somebody but also not to spend money arbitrarily. Even the latter of the story, his late uncle left fifty thousand for him, he did not want [the money] but he was happy. How one thousand dollars effected [affected] Gillian great [greatly]! (Participant 14)

In this response, the student showed her comprehension of the story by writing a summary. She also added her own interpretation by inferring that Gillian's uncle wanted him to do meaningful things. Then, she added her own analysis of the influence the money had on the character.

2. Analytical and critical responses.

When presenting viewpoints, students tried to analyze the stories and achieved the analysis level.

I think Gillian think a lot for the \$1000. He asked lots of people how to use the money. But I consider if those people have the money, did [would] they really use [is as] what they said? I think love is magic that make a person give up so much money. And finally he become even happier than before. So sometimes money could help a person, but it could let a person feel annoyed. In the story, I did not understand why the blind man asked Gillian to see his bank book. Maybe that include [included] what he want to say to him. (Participant 17)

In addition, they questioned the story. In IN Story 1, one student questioned the story and made his own conclusion.

Why nobody help Soapy? People who live there aren't friendly and compassionate. (Participant 18)

Another student wrote in IN Story 1 her simple analysis of the story.

I think that the law is strange. Why he did many bad thing. (maybe it's just a trouble thing) but he did not be [was not] arrested; When he wanted to change his life, instead he was arrested. (Participant 6)

The same student also questioned the story in IN Story 2, but with more comprehensive levels.

I have something [some] questions about the story. Why Gillian told Miss Hayden that “you know I love you, and other is Miss Hayden. Who is she? I guess that Miss Hayden was blind because one line said that “But you would noticed her eyes” Many rich people like Gillian’s uncle will give many person [people] who need help the will, instead their children. I think that it is good because it can help many people and let their children don’t think the money is like water. (Participant 16)

This response showed that in IN Story 2, the student incorporated the level of analysis, application, and evaluation in her responses. First, the student analyzed the reason why Gillian said such a line and then why she thought Miss Hayden was blind. Then, she applied the story to the life and said many rich people would do so, followed by her evaluation that the deed was good for a certain reason.

3. Evaluation in the responses.

When presenting viewpoints, students also added their own evaluation. For example, in IN Story 1, a student first described her prediction of the plot and her disappointment at the ending of the story, proposed a hypothetical situation in her synthesis response, and then applied what she read to a rule that she had read before.

It's a funny story. I thought Soapy can make up his mind and be a new man, who knows, he was caught in the end. Maybe Soapy will feel more hopeless if he comes out from the prison. It makes me think of a 定律[rule] that if somebody really want to get something, but he won't get it like what he expected. In other hands, if somebody really doesn't want something happen, but it will still happen. Soapy is a poor man. (Participant 32)

Another student showed some improvement across the two stories. In IN Story 1,

he expressed a simple evaluation of the story.

Soapy was so unlucky. The choice was not choosed [chosed] by him. When he wanted to be a new man, the policeman broke his idea. It is such a good satire. (Participant 5)

The same student also evaluated the story in IN Story 2. He was able to add application level to his evaluation and made text-to-life associations to himself.

If I have one thousand dollars, I don't know to use it in the best way. Maybe I can use it to help poor people or let my life be good. There are many ways to do. But I think I don't have the kind heart like Gillian. He is selfless and his selfless let me so surprise. He even doesn't want another \$50,000, because he feels content for his decision. I would not shake my head sadly like Tolman and Sharp. Instead I am happy to his decision. That is good. (Participant 5)

The student first applied the theme to himself about the way to use the money, and then made evaluation about what the best way would be to spend the money and about the character's behavior.

Another student also included his own evaluation in IN Story 1:

I think Soapy is a man whose heart is black and ugly. There is so many people like him sleeps in the part and streets. But there is something good in the world and we can't be sad every time. (Participant 10)

This response showed that the students could already apply the story to self, express points of view, made evaluation, but more support would be required to justify his evaluation that "Soapy is a man whose heart is black and ugly." However, the same student was able to elaborate more in his evaluation in IN Story 2.

The story tells that people can't be greed or you will lost [lose] something. And we should try our best to help people as Mr. Gillian's Uncle. We can donate clothes, foods and money when we find we have enough money to live even more than that. At this time, looking around your world. There will be many people starve to death needs us to help them. I think the blind man is a good man because he did not want Mr. Gillian's \$1000. He told him a crucial point. Although he has \$1785, he doesn't stop making money. Because he doesn't have much money to do something else. At the last passage, I don't understand what happened. Why Gillian lied to the lawyer? He has given &1000 to Miss Hayden. I think Miss Hayden will get the money. Because Mr. Gillian said he go horse-racing. But when she received the money, she would not realize. And Mr. Gillian will vanish in the corner then go to do what he wants to do. If I were Mr. Gillian, I would take the money to help poor people and donate things. If I

were Miss Hayden, I would tell the truth to the lawyer and find Mr. Gillian. Then I will give him money. (Participant 10)

In this response, the student was able to elaborate his idea, and incorporate comprehension, application, and analysis to his evaluation.

Very Few Synthesis Responses in Both Stories

Students made only a few responses of this level. Few of them were able to make creative responses, put parts together to form a new whole, create something new to solve the problems, and propose different answers and original ideas. For example, students who reached this level could ask “what would happen if...” so that they could propose an alternative or predict outcome. In IN Story 1, one of the students wrote, “If someone can help him, his life will be different.” (Participant 6). He proposed an alternative for Soapy, but his points were not elaborated. He did not write how different it would be. Another student wrote, “Maybe Soapy will feel more hopeless if he comes out from the prison.” (Participant 32). She made some prediction of what might happen. Another student made a totally different ending to the story in IN Story 1.

This time he became free again. He still remember why he would be arrested. He feels angry to the plice [police]. But when he thought of his mother, he think[s] he should do something good to society. (Participant 31)

The same student made a longer creative response to IN Story2.

After thinking [for] a few hours, he thought there must still have [be] a lot of money left by his uncle or why the lawyer want him to write down how he spend the money. Finally he spent the money helping sick people, and he write down the way how he spend money. After take [he took] the note to lawyer, the lawyer did tell him their[there] was a special part to his uncle’s will, and he did take the money that he had expect[ed] to. After he got what he want, he spend[spent] them as usual selfish and waste. He felt very happy and joy in being a rich man but he did not know there still a large amount of money. Finally, the money all donated to the organization to help people, because he did not use 50000 in a wise way. He spend out those money just in few months. Quickly, he become not so rich. This time, he thought he don’t want to be

controlled by money. He resolved to make money by himself. He want to become a real rich man and use the money in a wise way. (Participant 31)

Even though very few synthesis responses were observed in the result, longer piece of writing could be expected.

Other Sharing of Personal Feelings and Self-reflection

Students were also found to express their personal feelings and self-reflection in the responses. They might express their likes and dislikes of the story, and their difficulty and confusion they encountered during reading. For example, the following student expressed how he enjoyed reading IN Story 1.

This is a funny and little strange story. When I read it, I laughed and enjoyed it very much. Especially, the end of the story, Soapy was arrested just because of loitering. (Participant 8)

However, participant 8 expressed his dislikes and confusion of IN Story 2. He also pointed out the types of story he preferred. Even though he stated his dislikes of the story, he still tried to elaborate more by adding his own interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of the story, which made his response more comprehensible than the one in IN Story 1.

I have no idea what the story describes about. And I think it is more boring than all the other stories which we had seen before. I prefer to read fantasy or adventurous stories. I think the story tells about a young man doesn't know how to spend the small deal of money. So he asked people how to use it. And he spends all 1000 \$ on his lover, Miss Hayden. Because he loves Miss Hayden, he gives up 50000\$ in the end of the story. In the beginning of the story, I think Gillian is a 敗家子[wastrel]. Because he thought "If it had been ten thousand then he might really be able to do something with it/" The advice which Old Bryson takes is the best I think. But Gillian doesn't like it. So maybe he isn't a good person. (Participant 8)

The following student also expressed the difficulty and confusion of IN Story 2, but he tried hard to analyze the meaning of the story and proposed his question to the story. His confusion may stem from his insufficient life experience about love and

sacrifice in the theme.

I think this story is not easy to understand, because I have already read it for ten times but I still don't know what the story most want to tell, maybe it just tell us that "the happiness is more important than the money", but I don't know why give a woman a thousand dollars without response can let Gillian feels happy. This story make me fell[feel] very confuse. (Participant 4)

So were the following examples in which the students were expressing the difficulty of the story, but they also tried to explain it with more comprehensive levels. The student in the following example first stated the difficulty of the story, analyzed the story by raising her doubts, applied the story to herself and then proposed a synthesis response.

The story is very difficult for me. That story's plot makes me incomprehensible. I don't understand Gillian's doings. Why he asked lots of person spending one thousand dollars? Why doesn't he agreeable to his thinkings? If I were he, I would spend one thousand dollars buying something I wanted. Gillian who met the blind man is very lucky because the blind man help he to understand the new philosophy of life. If Gillian did not meet the blind man, the story's ending might be changed. (Participant 23)

The following example started with the student's reading process: first she did not understand, and then she tried to read it multiple times; during the process she was able to find the message she considered crucial to the plot of the story and the meaning the author wanted the readers to know.

I did not know what the whole story was talking about as I first read it. And then I read about four times, and found the most important sentence might be "the you know I love you" said Gillian in a low voice. Maybe the author just wants us know we will give benefits to whom we love and used valuable things on what we life. It's like—Old Bryson told Gillian to buy Miss Lotta Lauriere a diamond necklace because maybe Old Bryson loved her. And taxi driver wanted to open a bar because so that he could made more money that being a driver and did not need to drive around on the road anymore. A blind man said "ride in a taxi by daylight" because maybe he really wanted to do so, and looked this beautiful world along the street. And the last, I think that Gillian tore up the letter and lied to lawyer that he spent the money on horse-racing which means he did not spend the money in a wise way a his uncle's will; he did so because then Miss Mayden could receive \$50,000! He did so all because "You know that I love you..." (Participant 32)

A student made a complicated response that reached comprehension, analysis and

evaluation levels in IN Story 2. He also expressed his feeling and self-reflection about the difficulty and confusion he encountered during reading.

I think the story is more difficult than all the stories which we read before. The uncle made a will, but it did not seem that Gillian could receive the money easily. Maybe the main idea is his uncle wanted to change his mind. He was too waste before. Even though I still don't realize what Gillian and Miss Hayden talk about, the woman seems to be the winner at the will. I thought the woman actually love Gillian, there may be some problems [that] made the woman do the choice. Gillian was really sad. He could not get together with the woman. What a strange and sad story! (Participant 11)

The student thought the story to be more difficult because he didn't realize some of the plot. Nevertheless, he still summarized the story, analyzed the main idea and made his evaluation of the story.

Decline in the Responses not in the Six Levels

As in the student generated questions, some of the responses were not in the six levels. These responses were neither supported by evidence nor making any sense. Compared with the unanswerable questions raised by students, fewer responses not in the six levels were made. It seemed that when asked to write freely, the students had less difficulty writing something relevant. However, there were still some who made irrelevant responses. For example, the following students wanted to express their feeling and reflections, but they did not seem to understand the story. Another possibility was that they tried to make jokes.

I feel so humorous. I like the police man, he is so handsome. (Participant 1)
Uh Uh! I think Soapy isn't handsome as good as me, so he was arrested to the prison! And I think the policeman isn't smart as more as me, so he doesn't arrest the Soapy after he do a lot of bad thing! (Participant 13)

In IN Story 2, the students seemed to be more serious and did not make such jokes in their responses.

Another student who did not write anything in IN Story 1 tried to write something

in IN Story 2. Although not supported, the one-sentence response still showed the student's active attitude toward writing. "I think that Gillian had made a good decision [decision]. (Participant 12)"

From the above findings, students were found to have increased the quantity by writing longer responses as well as the quality by composing more elaborative and comprehensive responses to the story.

Students' Perception Questionnaire

This section explores participants' perceptions toward learning English via Literature Circles (LCs). This section will be organized under three subheadings: learning from LCs and group discussions, evaluation of task sheets in LCs, and students' difficulties and suggestions of LCs. The exploration was carried out by analyzing the participants' written responses to the Perception Questionnaire in Chinese (See Appendix F). To analyze the student responses to the 12 open-ended questions, the students' answers were translated, generalized, categorized, and are presented in Table 4.3. For the ease of discussion, the responses were translated into English by the researcher, and they will be discussed under the following four subtitles: (a) learning from LCs and group discussions, (b) self-evaluation of the development of critical thinking, (c) evaluation of the task sheets in LCs, and (d) students' difficulties and suggestions of LCs

Learning from Literature Circles and Group Discussions

To answer this part of the questions, the students' answers to questions 1, 6 to 9 were investigated. Question 1 was "What have you learned most from the literature circles?" Question 6 "What have you learned most from the group discussion?" Question 7 was "Do you think you have become a better thinker in the literature circles? Please explain." and Question 8 was "Do you think you have become a better

questioner in the literature circles? Please explain.” Finally, Question 9 was “Do you think you have become better at writing your response logs in literature circles? Please explain.”

Students’ responses to questions 1 and 6 will be analyzed together since they are actually closely related. Question 6 is part of question one because group discussion is the main essence in LCs. Question 1 aims to ask students their learning from LC as a whole, and question 6 investigates deeper into the learning opportunities that group discussions provide. As Table 4.3 shows, their responses are organized in the following categories: language proficiency, multiple perspectives, thinking skills, cooperation, positive social interaction and involvement, discussion skills, change of reading behavior and attitude.

Table 4.3
Learning from Literature Circles

Categories	Number of comments	Rank
language proficiency	44	1
multiple perspectives	20	2
thinking skills	20	2
cooperation	16	4
positive social interaction	10	5
discussion skills	8	6
change of reading behavior and attitude	6	7

note: the total number of comments is 74 (37 for two questions) One student’s comment may cover several areas, so the number of comments may exceed the number of student.

Among all, forty four comments out of 74 mentioned about the improvement of language proficiency; 20 comments were the learning of multiple perspectives, and 20 concerning thinking skills. Sixteen were about learning to cooperate with others. Ten were regarding positive social interaction, eight were about discussion skills, four leaned to change their reading behavior, and two were about the positive attitude toward learning.

Language Proficiency

Most comments were grouped under the theme of language proficiency. In this category, students mentioned their language proficiency and communication skills in general were improved, so were specific skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. First, about general skills, two students mentioned generally “some stuff to improve English” (Participant 10). “I learned the English different from the textbook. Because there are more daily life conversations in the story, I can learn daily life English”(Participant 32). Eight students indicated they learned how to express themselves in English. For example, “I learned to express what I thought via English” (Participant 1). When expressing themselves, they learned to communicate with others, and felt improvement regardless of grammar and accuracy. And they were more eager to speak English. For example, “I learned to express my reflection and thought in the response logs and tasks so I felt myself improving. Although I did not seem to improve my grammar, I still improved in expressing myself in English” (participant 30). Their communication skills improved. “I learned to communicate with others. Regardless of the correctness of the grammar, I have the courage to speak in English” (Participant 25).

Some of the students mentioned they improved their English particularly in the following specific skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. First, students thought they improved their reading comprehension. “I gradually learned to understand articles with many words” (Participant 4). In addition, they improved their reading speed, rate and fluency. One mentioned the reason he improved reading skills was “Because others read very fast, I would also increase my reading speed” (Participant 7). This means reading together with group can improve the reading speed. One said she knew how to “grasp the key points, and thus speed up my

reading” (Participant 17). One also mentioned the way he improved her reading speed. “I can read faster. I would mark and skip unknown words, browse the reading to get the main idea, and then it would be easier to go back to check the meaning of the unknown words” (Participant 11). In the above examples, the students not only improved their reading, but also learned some strategies to improve their reading. In addition to the improvement of reading fluency and speed, the students also expanded their vocabulary. Four students mentioned they enlarged their vocabulary size and rate. “I learned to know more unfamiliar words by looking up the words” (Participant 36). “I increased my rate to find out the meaning of the words” (Participant 9). When reading, they learned to solve the problem by checking the unknown words, increasing the speed in looking up words, and vocabulary size was expanded.

Second, in terms of writing, nine students said they improved their writing skills, fluency, and the ability to write more. One student mentioned “I could write freely regardless of the grammar, especially in the task of response logs. I found myself writing more every time, which give me a great sense of achievement, and I could also discuss with my group members. So I hope I will have this kind of course in the future” (Participant 8). Without the concern of grammar, the students learned to write more, and another student also said expressing herself in the task sheets helped her practice English writing. “I could practice writing. When writing the task sheets, I could express what I thought, and thus I could practice English writing” (Participant 32). Another student also mentioned she could write more after she learned to read more, ask more, and thus compare what others wrote with hers. “I did not know what to write in the beginning, so I wrote very little, but I was able to compare when I ask and read more” (Participant 18).

Third, besides writing, nine students also developed their speaking skills. “I

learned to express my opinion in writing and speaking English, so my speaking and writing ability improved!” (Participant 29). They also improved their speaking skills with the help of the group members. “I learned to speak English. I had very few opportunities to speak in English to our hearts’ content. This activity helps a lot in developing our conversation skills because we can correct each other’s mistakes through our conversation” (Participant 11). Because they needed to share in their group, their English had to be comprehensible. “I had to make myself clear and understood when I shared my part” (Participant 34). In our regular senior high school English classes, students in big class size seldom had chances to speak, so another student also mentioned her chances to practice speaking in LCs. They practiced more so that they could improve. “I practiced speaking English more. I seldom did it in my daily life.”(Participant 16). The following student seemed to feel more relaxed when speaking English. “I dare not speak English in front of others, but we need to read what we wrote out in every literature circle activity, so I became less nervous than before when reading English out” (Participant 15).

Fourth, one student said he improved his listening skills: “When we listen to others’ reports of their tasks, we can also train ourselves to see how much we could understand them” (Participant 36).

Multiple Perspectives

Students learned to express their opinions and respect multiple perspectives in LCs. When expressing and sharing their opinions in the group, they mentioned, “We have learned many different opinions” (Participant 19). “We could learn what others thought about this story” (Participant 16). “We could know what everyone thought about the same thing” (Participant 27). “We could hear about other’s unusual ideas”

(Participant 30). “When hearing about others presenting their roles, we can discuss and combine multiple opinions, and we had different viewpoints in our thought provoking questions” (Participant 34). In their discussion, they could even stimulate more ideas when they exchanged thoughts with each other. “When others talked about their ideas, we can listen to different ideas, and perhaps we could find something we hadn’t thought about, and thus stimulated more thoughts” (Participant 31). They could stimulate thoughts and exchange ideas from discussion.

I think we can stimulate a lot of thought and know others’ opinion and thus absorbed many different things, which cannot be achieved in regular classes.
(Participant 3)

The students found it interesting to listen to others’ opinions, which lightened the classroom atmosphere. “We could learn more from others’ different ideas. It’s more interesting than to read alone” (Participant 26). “I felt happier to listen to others in discussions” (Participant 28). Besides the fun during discussion, they also learned something from their arguments. “In the discussion, we could add fun because we had different answers. So in the process of arguing, we could get many unexpected answers that we could not come up on our own” (Participant 28). “We could learn to argue about right and wrong” (Participant 7). They were thus developing tolerance and open-minded attitude. “We were more able to accept others’ thoughts” (Participant 17). Furthermore, they could learn from others and reflected on themselves. “We could understand others’ thoughts and improve our own shortcomings” (Participant 3). “When others shared about their roles and their opinions, I could learn from them because I might have played the same role before. When their opinions and writings were different from mine, I could learn from them what I lacked and the parts I needed to improve” (Participant 32).

Thinking Skills

The students thought they improved their thinking skills in questioning and thinking strategies such as prediction, analyzing, summarizing, inferring, associating, drawing conclusions, and reading strategies. The students learned “most from questioning” (Participant 18), and “the skills of thinking about questions” (Participant 33). At the same time, they can stimulate their thoughts while questioning. “When raising questions, I would be more familiar with the story. I can use my brain and stimulate it” (Participant 23). Besides, they learned to predict, imagine, analyze, and develop their own personality. “I learned some aspects to see things. When reading stories I would predict, imagine, or analyze, and I also develop my own personality a little bit. Actually I was not that fond of reading English articles because I usually don’t understand them” (Participant 33). They also learned to analyze the story. “I learned most from practicing analyzing the whole story and find out the message the story wanted to tell us via different task sheets” (Participant 31). In addition, some of the students also learned to summarize and make connections.

I learned to think and write. When I read novels before, I just read through it and did not want to write the main idea and associate it with other story plots. Even though sometimes I might run out of words and couldn’t come up with something, I tended to write more fluently now. (Participant 15)

I learned to summarize and connect it to relevant things. (Participant 6)

The role summarizer can help me find out the key words and do some combination practice. (Participant 34)

Moreover, they learned to draw conclusion. “It is fun to discuss a conclusion together” (Participant 20). They also learned to infer. “I learned most from inferred! In the process of inferring, I learned to connect my prior knowledge to infer what might happen next. I learned to improve my thinking skills in the process” (participant 13). In terms of reading strategies, the student learned to use some strategies to improve their comprehension. For example, they could grasp the main idea and key points of

the story. “I learned to grasp the key points” (Participant 1). “I learned to grasp the key points of articles with many words” (Participant 24).

Cooperation

Students learned “the importance of cooperation” (Participants 1, 6, 9, 10, 12, and 35). They learned to help each other and keep the discussion going.

We could try to help our group if they don’t know how to write it. (Participant 6).
I asked my group member to help me with some unknown words. (Participant 7)”
We all help look up the unknown words together (Participant 24)
We could discuss with others so that we could have stronger impression and we could exchange our ideas. (Participant 35)

Students assigned roles themselves to play in the discussion. In order to make themselves understood, they need to pay attention to speaking. “Sometimes I can immerge in the plot by reading our loud (p.s. Our team would assign roles to members, and we would try our best to interpret the roles and made the sharing very funny). We also need to pay attention to our speaking. We need to speak clearly in case that others should ask us to repeat” (Participant 34).

Additionally, students needed to work hard in a group due to group pressure. “I learned that I had to preview the story or I would be a burden to our group. So I studied the story hard” (Participant 28). A student also reflected on himself for not working hard in the beginning. “I learned to cooperate. In the beginning I just fooled around” (Participant 1). Some of the groups had positive group interaction when they cooperated well. “I like my group. They all worked very hard. We would discuss the problems together and synthesized our opinions” (Participant 31).

Positive Social Interaction

The students could develop skills of positive social interaction, promote peer

relationship, add the fun, and involvement.

We had fun interacting with group members. (Participant 2)

We promoted our relationship among classmates. (Participant 8)

We enjoyed the feeling of being in a group! We did not try our best to speak English. Sometimes we speak Chinese, but it still felt great especially in the last two LCs. (Participant 20)

We can make jokes reading stories together. I felt much more involved (Participant 34)

We enjoy going off into wild flights of fancy with our members together (Participant 4)

Even though they talked something else, they still had fun working together. “I learned to cooperate, and we learned some gossip” (Participant 9). LCs can also increase the understanding among the students. “We understood our group members better” (Participant 20). “Group members need to develop their relationships and know each other better. They need to learn to express themselves without being shy” (Participant 22).

Discussion Skills

The students improved their discussion skills, such as asking for clarification. “Although I sometimes did not understand others, I would ask him/her to repeat” (Participant 35). They learned to respect others in the discussion. “I learned to respect the speaker XD” (Participant 10). They also learned various discussion skills.

I learned to laugh out loud and listen attentively at the right time. (Participant 5)

I learned some tips during discussions.(Participant 4)

Besides, I can also train my manners and behavior in the group discussion. For example, I have to maintain eye contact when my group member is speaking...This is really cool. (Participant 25)

Some tips in group discussions, such as maintaining eye contact with the speakers and keep smiling. (Participant 13)

To control the volume of my speech to make myself heard, and the speed of my speech to make myself heard more clearly. (Participant 23)”

Change of Learning Behavior and Attitude

Some students also changed their learning behavior more positively in terms of reading habit, speaking, and writing. “I seldom read English articles. In this way I could read more” (Participant14). “I practice speaking more” (Participant 16). “I gradually became used to writing in English” (Participant 15). Some student also developed positive attitude toward learning. “I have the courage to speak English” (Participant 19). “I am braver to express my thoughts. I dare to speak some English” (Participant 30).

Self-evaluation of the Development of Critical Thinking

This section will present the participants’ responses to the three questions, “Do you think LCs help you think deeper?”(Question 7) and “Do you think you become a better questioner?” (Question 8) “Do you think you become better in writing responses?” (Question 9) will be reported in this section. Table 4.5 summarizes the participants’ replies.

Table 4.5

Students’ Perceptions about their Improvement in Thinking

Questions	yes		neutral		no	
	N	P	N	P	N	P
Q7: Do you think LCs have helped you think deeper?	34	89%	4	11%	0	0%
Q8: Do you think you have become a better questioner?	32	84%	4	11%	2	5%
Q9: Do you think you have become better in writing responses?	28	74%	10	26%	0	0%

As shown in Table 4.5, 89 % of the participants responded positively on whether

they improved thinking skills, 84 % thought they improved questioning skills, and 74 % thought they improved in writing responses.

For Question 7, “Do you think LCs have helped you think deeper?” Almost all the students were positive in the development of thinking in LCs. With LCs activity, they had to think deeper about the story. “Yes, (LCs help me think deeper). Usually when I read novels, I wouldn’t think about the content of the story or to think about other endings” (Participant 16). Other factors such as cooperation, group work, and different roles and tasks in LCs also help them improve their thinking. First, students thought cooperation helped their thinking. “Yes, every one tried their best to cooperate, exchange thought, discuss, and then we can gather our thoughts, which definitely contribute to our thinking” (Participant 29). And due to group work, they would think more while having the fun in the discussion: “Yes, because we have less pressure when discussing with others. Unlike talking to teachers when we speak more seriously, we would try to make people laugh and thus we need to exercise our brain more” (Participant 28).

Students also benefited from different roles (summarizer, connector, inferer, and illustrator) and tasks (questioner, response log). “The nature of roles is different, and the ways of thinking is thus different. So playing the role of different tasks each time helped me think deeper” (Participant 5). The students “learned to think more when asking and answering questions (questioner)” (Participant 13). “I never thought about the questions in the articles before the activity” (Participant 26). “I would have different perspectives of a question. I learned to think about the questions from the positive and negative sides” (Participant 11).

Students learned from “connector and response logs” (Participant 8). “I needed to think a lot for every task, especially ‘connector,’ which took me a very long time”

(Participant 15). They also combined connectors with other roles and tasks. “I would think deeper. While reading, I would make connections and infer what might happen next, and I would think about what I would write in the response logs” (Participant 25). Students not only connected to daily life but also analyzed the purpose of the writer. “Yes, I used to read through the story and that’s all. But now I have to think deeper about what the author meant and what I think would be helpful in my daily life” (Participant 35). The interaction with classmates also helped in the tasks. “I would compare and contrast my classmates’ ideas and mine, and practice inferring and making connections, so I have more thoughts about the article” (Participant 18). Furthermore, students also think the material used in the LCs helped them think deeper. “Yes. Some of the stories are more inspirational. It’s easier for me to absorb the story after reading when I use more thinking” (Participant 1).

For those who did not have negative responses but have neutral ones, they either thought the activity was tiring or they were already capable of thinking deeper. One student thought that this activity took a lot of effort: “my brain is mashed” (Participant 10). One still had problems speaking out. “I think reading can improve my thinking, but as for discussion, I feel awkward and I am not used to speaking out” (Participant 36). Some students already had critical thinking ability in their life: “I already like to let my imagination run wild when reading or daydreaming. I would also question whether the concept in the book is reasonable or not” (Participant 30). “I usually think a lot and associate to other things in my daily life” (Participant 6).

For Question 8 “Do you think you have become a better questioner?” Students’ responses may show that practicing asking and discussing questions with groups in LCs would help them improve questioning skills. Since question-raising may reflect their development of thinking, we can look further to see whether they did improve in

their thinking as well. For those who thought questioning improved their questioning skills, the factors were practice effects, group discussions, and thinking skills. First, they became better questioners with practice. “Yes, when I wrote more, there were more questions for me to pose. I could find better questions, instead of the easy questions” (Participant 32). Second, they learned to ask questions with groups. “Yes! We can discuss with group members and ask more and deeper questions” (Participant 25). In addition, they also learned other questioning skills. For example, “I need to modify the text into my own experience and think more ask deeper questions” (Participant 20). One student showed her ability to detect different levels by “asking questions of the same theme in different levels” (Participant 17). One could also analyze the story and ask questions. “Yes, I can understand what the author wants to tell us from the dialogues of the characters. And then I know what questions to ask” (Participant 38).

For those who did not think asking questions improved their thinking, one student thought he just changed a statement into a question, which might explain why there were many Level-1 knowledge questions. “When I couldn’t find any questions, I would change a statement directly into a question” (Participant 1). One was not serious with this task. “I did not take it seriously so I just asked a random and meaningless question” (Participant 11).

For those whose responses were neutral, their ability of asking questions would still improve with more group interaction. “We write our own questions respectively without talking. But discussing in a group can give me some inspiration to ask questions, so I can ask better questions later” (Participant 14).

The responses to Question 9 “Do you think you have become better in writing responses?” show how students responded to response logs. For those who thought

they improved in writing responses, the factors that contributed to their improvement were the freedom of the expression, practice effect, group discussions, and material. First, they improved when asked to express their thought freely without grammar concern. “I was not asked to use correct grammar, so I feel I can write smoothly and write whatever I want. But there were many mistakes” (Participant 11). “The more I write, the more daring I am to express my thoughts. I wouldn’t restrain my thinking due to grammar” (Participant 8). Second, students improved with more practice. “It’s not easy to write response logs, but I gained a great sense of achievement after I wrote for many times, especially when I wrote a long passage that I had never thought of” (Participant 38). Students also mentioned that Chinese helped her write down her responses. “Although I did not use the correct grammar, with more practice, I would know how to write and know how to express my feelings. I treated it as Chinese reflection and then transfer it to English” (Participant 35). Materials also contributed to their improvement in writing responses: “Some of the stories inspired me” (Participant 37). Third, students improved their response writing because of the group work in LCs. “In LCs we could discuss and exchange opinions, and I could also ask others if I don’t know how to write my responses” (Participant 2). “In our group discussions, we predicted what might happen next or tried to figure out the motivations of the characters, which all inspired me to write my response logs” (Participant 14). “In the process of group discussions, we would share summary and discuss questions, which helped us know the story better, and thus made it easier for me to write response logs” (Participant 13). “When I had nothing to write about, I could ask my LCs group members, and used their ideas as reference. Besides, we could stimulate different ideas in the discussion” (Participant 28).

Compared with the previous two questions, relatively more students (26%) did

perceive improvement in their response writing. They held neutral response to this question mostly due to individual work, difficulty in writing, too much thinking demand, and uninspiring materials. Some of them viewed writing response logs as an individual work, and thus LCs did not help a lot: “Writing response logs is more about writing what I thought, so I could do it without LCs” (Participant 25). Some thought it to be more difficult than other tasks (Participants 20, 33). One student thought “my brain is mashed and half of my brain cells died” (Participant 10), which might suggest that he was tired of thinking about what to write. One student mentioned that she would run out of words to write if the material did not make her think a lot” (Participant 27).

Evaluation of the Tasks in Literature Circles

This section will present students’ perception toward the role and task sheets in LCs. Table 4.6 showed the results of their evaluation of the tasks in terms of the easiest, hardest, most helpful in understanding the story, and most helpful in critical thinking.

Table 4.6

Evaluation of Different Tasks in Literature Circles

		Easiest	Most difficult	Most helpful (understanding the text)	Most helpful (thinking)
Summarizer	N	10	2	24	0
	P	22%	5%	59%	0%
	R	2	4	1	6
Connector	N	1	22	0	11
	P	2%	52%	0%	24%
	R	5	1	4	3
Inferer	N	5	6	2	16
	P	11%	14%	5%	36%
	R	3	3	3	1

Illustrator	N	25	2	2	1
	P	57%	5%	5%	2%
	R	1	4	3	5
Questioner	N	0	2	11	15
	P	0%	5%	26%	33%
	R	6	4	2	2
Response log	N	3	8	2	2
	P	7%	19%	5%	4%
	R	4	2	3	4

Note: N: Number

P: Percentage

R: Rank

N (Easiest) = 44

N (Most difficult) = 42

N (Most helpful in reading) = 41

N (Most helpful in thinking) = 45

The easiest task for most students was illustrator. Most students who chose this role to be the easiest said that when doing this task they did not need to think or write in English. It seemed to them that thinking and writing in English were demanding jobs. This may also explain that only 2 percent of the students thought this task to be helpful in thinking.

I only need to draw the story for the group to guess. I don't need to exercise my brain. (Participant 2)

Without the concern of good or bad in my drawing, as long as I can grasp the key points of the story, it is easy for me to draw what was inside my mind. (Participant 11)

It only took my hands to draw. I just need to understand 50 % of the story. I don't need to think a lot. (Participant 13)

There are some images in my minds when I read the story. When I did not fully understand the story, I would read it multiple times, and the summary of the story just appeared in my mind gradually. (Participant 38)

The most difficult task for the participants was connector. Over half of the participants (57%) thought this role to be most difficult. They did not find it helpful in understanding the text and almost a quarter of the students find it helpful in thinking. It is possible that the lack of life experience and the increase of thinking load made it difficult for the participants to do this task. First, students found it difficult because

they had limited life experiences. “If I neither read enough books nor see many things, sometimes I couldn’t come up with something to write about” (Participant 15), and “I usually don’t remember what happened around me, so my mind went blank when I needed to associate the story to myself or to the world” (Participant 4). Besides, they found it difficult because it required thinking. “It took me a lot of time to find something related to the story” (Participant 11).

The most helpful task in comprehending the text was summarizer. Twenty-two percent of the students found it the easiest role, but none of them found it helpful in thinking. “I needed to understand the story to write the summary” (Participant 36). Some of them also mentioned that the section of finding the key points in the task sheets also helped in the summarizer task. “I needed to write five key points, so I had to comprehend the article before I grasped the key points of the story and write the outline of the story” (Participant 32).

The Roles of Inferrer, Questioner, and Connector in Critical Thinking

When it comes to thinking, 36 % of the students gave most credits to inferrer because it required them to think (Participants 2, 12, and 37). Most of the students thought they learned to think when making inferences about the development of the stories. “Making inference can stimulate my brain to imagine and think about what might happen next” (Participant 24). “I could exercise my imagination and infer the cause and effect of the story” (Participant 21). Besides, from the role of inferrer they learned to further “look for the doubtful points of the story, and find out the keys to infer the happening of the story and the unexplained things” (Participant 28).

Analytical abilities were also developed. “By inferring what happens next and the personalities of the characters in the stories, I learned to read the stories multiple

times to analyze the characters and the plot and some hints in the story” (Participant 4). One student chose this role “simply because it is difficult” (Participant 36). The students seemed to associate thinking with difficulty.

The second most helpful role in thinking was questioner (33%). The student could cultivate thinking ability when trying to ask good and rich questions for others to discuss.

My brain cells worked very fast because I had to think about good discussion questions. (Participant 5)

We could elicit different questions if we ask good discussion questions. (Participant 6)

I had to think about what kind of questions are better ones instead of boring ones so that others could answer them with more thoughts. (Participant 32)

The other task worth mentioning is Connector. Twenty four percent of the participants also found it helpful in thinking because they had to make associations. “Connector had to read the story, associate it to what I read and experienced” (Participant 22). “Connector required us to make connections to self, books, movies, or even to the whole world. The wide range of association could stimulate our thinking and enrich our imagination” (Participant 29).

Students’ Difficulties in Literature Circles and Their Suggestions

This section will present the participants’ responses to the last three questions in the Perception Questionnaire: “What has troubled me most in LCs?” “What improvement can be made?” and “other comments.”

Students’ Difficulties of Literature Circles

Some students’ difficulties in Literature Circles were also evident in this study. Students’ difficulties, shown in Table 4.7, would be discussed in the following five

categories: (1) breakdown in group discussions, (2) language barrier (3) time pressure, (4) difficult tasks and reading material.

Table 4.7

Students' Difficulties in Literature Circles

Categories	Number of the students	Rank
breakdown in group discussions	13	1
language barrier	8	2
time pressure	4	3
difficult tasks	1	6
reading material	2	5
others	3	4

Most students encountered the difficulties in the group discussions. They had interferences in their own groups as well as from other groups. They also had their own reflection about their performance in their own groups. First, some students had difficulty inside their own groups. Most complained that their group members did not cooperate in the discussions:

Some group members did not cooperate and they did not read their story.

(Participant 37)

If one of the group members did not cooperate or influence others, then the whole group would fall behind. Sometimes we even had to delay our break.

(Participant 35)

Sometimes we insist on our own opinions and we couldn't reach agreement.

(Participant 27)

A student mentioned that they might deviate to other topics when they expressed their own opinions. (Participant 14) One said his group was a little bit too quiet. (Participant 2) and one mentioned that they sometimes had communication problem. (Participant 4)

Some students also complained about other groups. They thought other groups to be disturbing. "Some groups were too noisy, so I couldn't finish my words" (Participant 7). "Sometimes other groups would make noise after they finished their discussions, which made it difficult for me to listen to my own group members" (Participant 38).

The noise from other groups thus interfered their discussions. Some students also

reflected on themselves about their performance in the group that might cause inconvenience to their group:

Sometimes I couldn't finish my writing so I felt embarrassed to have my group members wait. (Participant 14)

Sometimes I did not finish reading the story because I had a lot of other tests to prepare for. Thus it would be difficult to finish my task and be a burden to my group members. (Participant 15)

The second most difficult part that students mentioned was language barrier.

They thought that their low English proficiency influenced their reading:

I did not understand many words, patterns and grammar when I was reading the stories. (Participant 1)

I had to look up all the words I did not know in the story. (Participant 5)

I had little vocabulary. It took me a lot of time to clarify the real Chinese meaning from the context. (Participant 38)

I felt very shy when speaking in my "poor" English. I often had funny pronunciation! (Participant 30)

I was afraid that I couldn't share my opinion due to my lack of vocabulary. I also couldn't think of questions. (Participant 19)

When I was writing, I usually did not know which word to use. When I was reading, I had to read for many times to understand the story if there were too many unknown words for me. (Participant 31)

I couldn't comprehend the reading and the thought very quickly. (Participant 33)

I wish I could use the correct grammar when writing. (Participant 31)

Thirdly, Students also feel great time pressure when doing the tasks.

"Sometimes time was not enough, especially when the story we wrote about was more difficult" (Participant 8). "Sometimes time was not enough for me to add something to the response log or to finish it" (Participant 16). When they have other homework or the midterm was coming, they felt unwilling to do this activity: "I felt very troublesome to do this activity before the midterm exam" (Participant 10), and "I wouldn't find LCs fun if I had a lot of other homework" (Participant 22).

They also had difficulty with the tasks and reading material. For example, one student mentioned the task of the Connector: "The job of Connector is the most

difficult part. Sometimes I just couldn't think of anything in common with myself, other movies or novels" (Participant 32). Besides, some of the reading materials were difficult for them: "Sometimes I did not understand what the author wanted to talk about. Sometimes I just did not have the "fu"[feelings] to write something in the task sheets" (Participant 25). "Some stories were difficult for me to grasp the main idea, or I couldn't read between the lines. Thus the task sheets were more difficult for me" (Participant 17).

Students' Suggestions for Literature Circles

Students had a variety of suggestions for Literature Circles, Table 4.8 summarizes their responses in the following seven categories: 1) group discussion, 2) time and the procedure of the activity, 3) the tasks of Literature Circles, 4) material selection, 5) motivation, 6) language instruction, and 7) self-reflection.

Table 4.8

Students' Suggestions for Literature Circles

Categories	Number of the students	Rank
group discussions	7	2
time and the procedure of the activity	10	1
the tasks of Literature Circles	3	3
material selection	2	4
motivation	2	4
language instruction	1	5
self-reflection	3	3

First, most students had suggestions for their group discussion. They hoped to find their own group members instead of being randomly grouped by the teacher. "I still think we should find our own group member. If we were grouped with someone unfamiliar, we couldn't be 'high' in spirits." (Participant 16). Some students wanted to change their group members from time to time.

I hope to change groups after two or three times so that they might learn more, and know better someone who they did not have to chance to talk. (Participant 25)

I hope to change groups periodically. On one hand, I can cooperate with more people. On the other hand, I want to see new faces. (Participant 36)

I want to change groups often because I don't want to be with the same people. (Participant 37)

Some student emphasized the importance of cooperation from other members. "I hope my group members could be more attentive and read the story in advance, or it's impossible for us to discuss! I hope they could write English words whole-heartedly! Since this is a cooperative activity, we should be responsible for our own jobs and do our job! It would lose the whole point of group work if only a few of us do the job. So we should reflect on ourselves about our own attitude toward cooperation" (Participant 29). Another student was also upset about the unequal amount of talking and sharing in the group. "I hope everyone in my group can express their opinions. Equal amount of talking is necessary. Some people talked a lot, but some people did not say anything. I hoped they could respect others' opinions and stop being so stubborn" (Participant 28).

Second, about the time and procedure of LCs, some students thought they needed more time in the discussion and more preparation time (Participants 4, 19, 23, and 27). Before the discussion, "Everyone should move the desks and chairs faster, or it would take up the time" (Participant 8). During the discussion, "the process of exchanging opinions should be smoother" (Participant 33), and after the discussion, "the groups can take turns having a representative ask the whole class the questions of their groups for other groups to answer. In that way we will know more about what other groups thought, and we will check if our questions can make other groups brainstorm" (Participant 32). Some students wanted to have a break before the midterm exam. "I want to study before the midterm exam" (Participants 15, 22).

Some students had suggestions about the roles and tasks of LCs. “One more role could be added to the group of 5 members, such as a role who could rewrite the story or ‘if I were one of the characters in the story.’ In this way, we did not have to repeat the same role” (Participant 32), and “We can add different task, such as “fantasy weaver,” who can rearrange some elements in the plot and thus write an alternative ending” (Participant 5).

About the material selection, some students were not happy to read a story without a specific ending. “Don’t give us stories with ends that made us speechless, such as Tiger or Lady” (Participant 5). “I did not feel good when I found there was no ending or problems toward in the end of the story, thought there is limitless space for imagination” (Participant 10).

Some students hoped to be motivated more and they found the activity meaningless or boring. “In the beginning, I found the activity meaningless, and thus I was unwilling to do it” (Participant 1). Some students wanted to add fun and variety to the activities. “We could have other entertaining activities, so that we did not have to stick to our own tasks. It would be less boring. It looks we were doing similar things every time” (Participant 24). “We hope to add little fun games after we finished discussion. The game may need the group to cooperate so that we can develop our attachment to the group” (Participant 28).

About language instruction, a student hoped the teacher could correct their mistakes in word usage and grammar (Participant 19). She was worried about her mistakes in writing when she wrote freely and happily. But she also mentioned that in this way the teacher should work harder.

About their self-reflection, instead of giving suggestions, some students reflected on themselves in the hope to improve this activity. For examples, “I should

speed up in every task. I should work harder on the assignment” (Participant 35). “I should speak more English and less Chinese. I should be more active and aggressive” (Participant 20), and “Sometimes I switched Chinese or I would ask my group members a lot about the pronunciation of the words during the discussion. I hope I could ask less in the next discussion” (Participant 30).

There were still other positive feedbacks from the students. Even though it took them time to read every story, they appreciated the new and interesting way to learn English (Participants 14, 18, 23, 25, 30, 36, and 38). One student mentioned he wanted to have such activities to read novels later (Participant 8). Another student looked forward to LCs because she “did not have the chance to read so many English stories before”, so she felt happy, and she also found it helpful in reading and writing (Participant 31). A student mentioned that it was interesting because she did not have to study grammar in the LCs. “The story is more interesting than the textbook. (I think if we need to study the grammar in the story, it would be “tasteless”....I did not mean to skip all the textbook. If don’t study the textbook, then I would fail in exams)” (Participant 16). Besides, a student enjoyed LCs because “when I finished my task, I could also give some advice to my group member. I felt happy. Especially when the class is over, I felt contented with a sense of achievement” (Participant 30). LCs could “promote the relationship among students” (Participant 16), and to “learn in a happy atmosphere” (Participant 18). A student enjoyed LCs because of the free and fun atmosphere. “Literature circles are part of my happy life. I did not have to follow the schedule of the textbook so tightly. I did not have to be embarrassed in a group. It was more fun than reading magazines, because we can read aloud the story together very crazily (If I did it at home, I would be regarded as a nut). We can learn something different and feel that life is beautiful. Thank you” (Participant 34).

Summary

To sum up, this chapter presented the results of student generated questions and responses in the first and second independent reading stories as well as the results from students' perception questionnaire. Student generated questions showed the *shift* from knowledge level to comprehension level, the increase in application questions, students' analyzing abilities across the two stories, the development in synthesis and evaluation questions, and some questions not in the six cognitive levels. Student generated responses showed that they increased the frequency of different levels and the words and sentences. There were few knowledge responses in their responses but mostly application responses with the students' own association. They also tended to present viewpoints in descriptive responses with interpretation, in analytical and critical responses, and also in evaluation responses. However, there were very few synthesis responses in both stories, while there was other sharing of personal feeling and self-reflection. Decline was also found in the responses not in the six levels. From students' perception questionnaires, what students learned from the LCs and discussion are language proficiency, multiple perspectives, thinking skills, cooperation, positive social interaction, discussion skills, and change of learning behavior and attitude. In their self-evaluation of the development in critical thinking, students generally gave positive responses. Their evaluation of the task sheets in Literature Circles also showed the tasks that helped develop students' thinking. Finally, students' difficulties of Literature Circles and their suggestions were also presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The purpose of this study is two-fold. First, it intends to explore to what extent literature circles (LCs) promote critical thinking. Second, it aims to investigate students' own perception of applying literature circles to regular EFL classes. After the report of the results in chapter four, this chapter will provide answers to the two research questions, compare the findings of the present study with other related studies, and explain other findings. The findings will be analyzed in the following two subsections: Literature Circles and Critical Thinking Skills, and Students' Perception of Literature Circles.

Literature Circles and Critical Thinking

In answering the first research question "To what extent do Literature Circles promote critical thinking among a group of EFL senior high school students in Taiwan? How do the students develop critical thinking skills during the Literature Circles?" the finding of the changes in student generated questions and responses has shown that students have slight development toward higher level thinking in their question raising and response writing after LCs.

Changes in Student-generated Questions

Adding Interpretation and Application into the Questions

As reported in the previous chapter, at the end of the activities, although students

did not have obvious improvement in asking questions above analytical levels from Levels-4 to 6 (i.e. analysis, synthesis, and evaluation questions), their improvement in thinking can be found in the sharp decrease in Level-1 (i.e. knowledge) and increase in Levels-2 to 3 (i.e. comprehension and application). Furthermore, the eminent question types among all were shifted from Level-1 to Levels-2 and 4, which is likely to suggest some improvement of critical thinking.

After LCs, instead of asking questions only based on the facts of the story, the students added their own interpretation and thus promoted their questions to higher levels. What this finding implies is that LCs seem to help the students shift their focus of reading from mere knowledge recalling to interpretation where students start to ask questions that require them to see the whole picture of the text. Furthermore, similar to the results of Shiau's (2010) and Lai's (2011), the participants are found to ask more application questions (see Table 4.1, p. 33). The fact that application questions were posed a lot, consistent with the previous studies (Kim, 2004; Lai, 2011; Short, 1993), suggests that the participants are able to make more connections between the text and personal life experiences and share their personal connections in the discussions.

Traces of Development in Higher Level Thinking

The result of students' questions shows that analysis (i.e. Level-4) questions did not increase while synthesis and evaluation questions had only slight increase. Different from the findings in the previous study (Lai, 2011), LCs do not seem to promote the students' questions to high cognitive levels (i.e. Levels-4 to 6). A possible explanation for this is that the development of higher level critical thinking in generating questions takes longer time than other levels. Even though there appears to

be stagnation in Level-4 questions, the result still reveals a shift of focus to higher level thinking. Level-4 is shifted from the third most prominent question type in IN Story 1 to the second most prominent in IN Story 2. In line with the abilities demonstrated by the students in Shiau's (2010) study, the students in the present study demonstrated their ability to investigate underlying motives and reasons, discovered causal relationships, made higher level inference, read with their life experience, and questioned the part that contradicted with what existed in their background knowledge. Furthermore, they raised doubt and also showed their thinking of alternatives behind the questions they asked.

Synthesis and evaluation (i.e. Levels-5 and 6) questions were not frequently asked in both stories. However, the fact that the students still asked 6 % more synthesis questions suggests that they were still able to generate more creative questions and propose alternative solutions. Yet, the themes of synthesis questions of both stories are similar: prediction or hypothesis of what may happen or might have happened. There is also only a slight increase in evaluation questions. The students did not seem to improve a lot in raising such high level questions to solicit opinions, to assess, to distinguish fact from opinion, and to state opinion and form judgment. It seems that when raising questions, it is not easy for students to raise evaluation questions.

Prevalence of "Why" Questions and the Relationship with Critical Thinking

The prevalence of "Why" questions may also suggest students' ability to think beyond just the knowledge level and move toward comprehension and analysis level. Among the student-generated questions, the majority started with "why," which usually fit into Level-2 comprehension questions that required lower level inference,

or into Level-4 analysis questions with higher level inference critical thinking skills. Before and after LCs, Level-2 is ranked the second and first most asked questions (30% and 33 %) Level-4 is ranked the third and second most asked level in frequency (21% and 20%). This results indicate that students ask more “why” questions than “how” or “what” when given the opportunity to write questions for their discussion. “Why” questions, according to Morgan and Saxton (1991), serve as excellent educational questions that engage and motivate the students to discover and understand their world. According to Thomas (1988, p. 552), “Thinking about why questions-and-answers gets to the center of what teaching is all about, touching on motivation, behavior, and learning itself.” Since “why” questions could engage students in the reading and motivate them to learn, it makes sense that students in the present study asked more “why” questions in their discussion and further make associations with their own world. Consistent with Commeyras and Sumner’s (1998) study, the students also tend to ask “why” as open-ended questions to facilitate discussion. Level-4 “Why” questions in the result of the study are mostly used to solicit explanations, investigate the underlying motives and reasons of an event or the behavior of a character, and make higher level inferences. The students further applied their knowledge and belief from their own life experience, and raised doubts to the stories they read, or to imply alternatives by asking “Why did not...” Congruent with the results of Shiau (2010)’s study, the students in the current study could read with their colorful life experiences, instead of simply reading with their knowledge of words and grammar. In this way they could not only question the writers about the arrangement of the plot but also raise their doubts when the story contradicted with what existed in their prior world knowledge. Besides questioning the plot contrary to their assumption, they also posed the questions regarding the analysis of the context

when the background of the story was unfamiliar to them and further investigation on the background of the period and culture was needed. In IN Story 2, in addition to the above skills, students also tried to ask questions, as in the findings in Shiau's (2010) study, that require them to analyze the arrangement of the plot, infer the underlying meaning from the text, and to investigate the implicit relationship between characters, which suggest the relationship with students' development of critical thinking.

Other Unexpected Findings in Students' Questions

It was found that students asked a lot of seemingly unanswerable questions that showed digressions and did not fit into any of the six levels. And the number of questions of this kind did not reduce but increased in IN Story 2. These questions are based on irrelevant details that cannot be inferred from the text, or inferences from the story elements without enough clues, information and support for students' speculation.

Even though these questions seem not to help develop critical thinking, the outrageous nature of the questions may actually stimulate students' creativity, add fun to group discussions, facilitate the discussions, make the conversation open and natural, as well as develop some critical thinking. The students thus enjoyed a different atmosphere by asking whatever questions they wanted to talk about.

Consistent with Commeyras's (1994) and Commeyras & Sumner's (1998) study, the result shows that actually whatever students' questions are, they are the 'right' or good discussion questions as long as they make the students curious, interested, or confused. The digression of the discussion is also natural because students learn by talking together and they take the questions either into real life to make personal connections or even get off the questions to have their wild imagination in the

digression.

In addition, the unanswerable questions students raised might also require inferences from the hypothesis based on the story elements, similar to Commeyras and Sumner's (1998) study. Even though there were not enough information and support for students' speculation, the students, though might not be plausible, could still integrate their ideas and develop their own way to explanation themselves in the discussion. Accordingly, some critical thinking is developed through the process of thinking and questioning the unanswerable questions.

Changes in Student-generated Responses

Increase in Quantity and Quality

As reported in the previous section (See Table 4.2, p.43), at the end of the LCs activity, students increased not only the quantity but also the quality of their writing. Besides improvement in language proficiency in terms of increasing the quantity of their writing, the development of higher level thinking can also be seen in their responses. The most noticeable difference is the increase in the frequency of Levels-2, 3, 4, and 6 used in the responses, which adds variety to their responses and suggest that LCs could enhance students' abilities in making comprehension, application, analysis, and evaluation responses. The students increased the quality by adding different levels and thus increased elaboration to their responses. In addition, the reduction of responses that do not fit into any of the six levels may suggest they develop thinking toward the six cognitive levels to some extent.

Promoting Thinking in Personal Interpretive and Critical Modes of Response Writing

Contrary to the previous question-raising session, the students wrote very few

Level-1(knowledge) responses both before and after LCs. Knowledge level responses are in accord with the descriptive mode of journal writing presented by Ada (1988, cited in Cummins, 1989). Descriptive mode was the first in Ada's four modes of writing: (a) descriptive, (b) personal interpretive, (c) critical, and (d) creative. In this present study, the students wrote very few Level-1 strict descriptive responses. This mode deals with the strictly descriptive questions such as *What happened?*; *Who did what to whom?*; *When?*; and *Where?* The facts are objective and presented without any particular personal interpretation or critical evaluation. Instead, the increasing use of comprehension, application, analysis, and evaluation levels in the responses suggests that the students can incorporate the second and third modes in the responses. The result shows that when writing responses, students are likely to write in their own words and express their points of view rather than just repeating the story or writing down some descriptive facts, that is, they tend to present viewpoints using Ada (1988)'s personal interpretive and critical modes. The dominance of personal and critical mode is also consistent with the result of Ghahremani-Ghajar and Mirhosseini's study.

Personal concerns and connections were salient in their responses, which is similar to Lo (2010)'s findings. The result suggests that students would write from their personal views freely without constraints when told to write down whatever comes into their mind in the free writing response logs. When asked to write the responses freely, the students would add their personal feelings or views in the responses. An evidence to support the fact that students' tendency to write in "personal interpretive and critical modes" is their use of first person pronoun and the markers such as "I think/ thought/ suppose/ believed /consider /feel /felt" in their responses to express their feelings, reflections, connections, analysis, and opinions. The result is consistent with Lo's (2010)

study that students tend to present their viewpoints by using “I think.”

The use of the second mode (personal interpretive mode) more in the responses is reflected mostly in students’ Levels-2 and 3 responses. The increasing use of Level-2 indicates that the students are able to describe the plot in their own words and make text-based interpretation, and the increasing use of Level-3 also shows students’ ability to associate the story with their personal experiences and thoughts. That explains why the majority of the students made personal application in Level-3 responses. Different from the previous question raising sessions where students did not ask many Level-3 questions but gradually improved after LCs, here in the responses students already showed their preference for personal applications before LCs and they showed improvement after LCs. Application is thus the most prominent response strategies for the students both before and after LCs. The students also shows improvement in Level-3 using response strategy of “making text to life connections” (Beach & Marshall,1991; Ho, 2005) The students’ ability to write application responses is enhanced as they related the text to their own values and experiences, drew upon their repertoire of personal experiences and make associations. When applying the story to self, students used “If I...” pattern so that they can relate to their own experiences. By using “I, me, and my” as key words, they put themselves into the characters’ life to feel as if they lived through the protagonist’s encounters and experience the suffering and confrontation or the characters. The students thus make associations with the stories, and interpret the stories in their own ways, which is consistent with Lin’s (2006) finding. Furthermore, besides the connection to personal context related to students’ life, the connection also extend to their personal value and interests, cultural backgrounds and social contexts. The students connect the story with the above mentioned different contexts as Lo (2010)

found out in her study. When the students connect the issues with other contexts, they need to activate their background knowledge, as in Báez's (2004) seven categories of association where the first one is to make associations and interpretations using background knowledge. The students can construct the meaning when they associate the story with their background knowledge from their values and experiences and information regarding their communities, i.e. local knowledge, and foreign communities, i.e. global knowledge (Báez, 2004). In students' application responses, clues of students' critical thinking abilities can be found when they compare and contrast their personal or different context, analyze the similarity or difference using knowledge. This may also promote critical thinking ability. The students' application responses thus suggest the development of critical thinking because Condon and Kelly-Riley (2004) indicated that one of the criteria of critical reflection is that the students can connect issues in the story with other context. In addition, consistent with previous literature, these connections have potential in triggering deeper thinking (Babalioutas & Papadopoulou, 2007; Lin, 2006; Shiau, 2010; Stapleton, 2001; Vojnovich, 1997).

Students' Perception of Literature Circles.

The data collected from students' perception questionnaire will be used to answer the second research questions "How do the students perceive Literature Circles? What unique English learning opportunities are there? What challenges do the students encounter?" In analyzing the data, the following three subsections will be further explored: (a) advantages of literature circles, (b) students' perception toward critical thinking, (c) students' difficulties and suggestions.

Advantages of Literature Circles

Based on students' self-report in the Perception Questionnaire, the benefits of LCs are the improvement of language proficiency, multiple perspectives, thinking skills, cooperation, positive social interaction, discussion skills, change of reading behavior, and positive attitude toward learning. Students' learning from multiple perspectives and the development of thinking skills will help to answer the questions regarding the development of critical thinking, and thus will be discussed in the next section.

Improvement in Language Proficiency

The majority of the students claimed to improve their language proficiency, which agreed with the results in Tsui's (2002) study. According to the previous studies, face-to-face literature discussions have many benefits in second language learning (Alwood, 2000; Brown, 2002; Chiang, 2007; Day, 2003; Ediger, 2002; Hsu, 2004; Kim, 2004; Lin, 2002; Pitman, 1997). The results in the current study show that the students thought they improved their reading, vocabulary, writing, speaking and listening as well as communication skills. These are consistent with previous studies that LCs benefited students in reading (Huang, 2008; Kim, 2004; Lai, 2001; Pitman, 1997; Sloan, 1991), vocabulary learning (Huang, 2008; Lai, 2011; Sloan, 1991; Zieger, 2002), writing (Huang, 2008; Hung, 2010; Lai, 2011; Pitman, 1997; Sloan, 1991), speaking and listening (Lai, 2011; Pitman, 1997) and communicating in English (Huang, 2008).

This study found that LCs improve students' reading comprehension and help to promote their reading proficiency. The students benefited from LCs in that they understood the stories better and acquired a better reading comprehension, which is

similar to other researchers' findings (Carr, Purcell, & Bolitho, 1999; Huang, 2008; Hung, 2010). As in Huang's (2008) finding, the students can increase reading speed when reading with others. Besides, like the benefits of facilitating vocabulary in literature reading (Huang, 2008; Lai, 2011; Sloan, 1991), LCs also benefit students' vocabulary learning. Students in the current study said from LCs and group discussion, they learned to speed up the rate of looking up unknown words in the dictionaries or to ask and discuss the words with their group members. Gradually they can expand the size of vocabulary bank.

LCs were also reported to enhance students' writing skills as well as reading and writing fluency. With practice in the response writing, students claimed to improve writing skills by writing more, which is also consistent with Huang's (2008) finding that writing was one of the effects of journal writing" (Huang, 2008). Even though students' grammar and accuracy of the sentences still needed to be improved, they showed some development in writing proficiency. According to Báez (2004), the language development was from the interactions and there was the evolving nature of language competence. Similar to Baez's (2004) finding, the students in current study also tend to write more, produce more discourse, and participate in conversation by talking, sharing and arguing together, which serves as a valuable starting point to language development. According to Báez (2004), since learning is a continuous process, it is natural for the students to refine syntactic aspects to a certain extent and still have progress to make. This might explain that even with syntactic mistakes, the students attempted to construct more elaborate discourse and to incorporate more vocabulary and expressions in the responses.

Students also claimed to improve listening when they tried to understand what others said. They also improved speaking when they expressed themselves in a

relaxing, comfortable, stress-free and less intimidating discussion environment without any anxiety of expressing themselves. The comfort zone motivated the students to learn English in a less stressful environment and thus echo the positive results reported in previous studies (Cotton, 1991; Patterson, 1993; Vojnovich, 1997). The students can also increase their self-confidence and became confident with the ability to express their viewpoints in the LCs, similar to previous studies (Bedel, 2011; Lai, 2011; Lin, 2006). In a group, they could also improve speaking because they could correct each other and made themselves understood. Thus their speaking skills and communication skills were enhanced.

Development in Cooperation, Social Interaction, Learning Behavior and Attitude

Students also learned to cooperate in a group to make the discussion go smoothly. In the process they developed social skills to interact with others, and thus promote positive social interaction, peer relationship, learning motivation, positive attitude and involvement in the reading. First, to make the discussion go smoothly, they need to cooperate with others and thus learned to be responsible for the reading assignment and task sheets in a group. They learned to reflect on themselves for not being responsible or active in participation. In LCs, the students need to create their group dialogues and discussion to help each other to achieve a goal (Lin, 2006; Wood, Roser, & Martinez, 2001). Since the students need to achieve the goal of accomplishing LCs tasks in their group, they were able to share in the cooperative learning environment and put their minds and strength into practice. Therefore, they could reach the common goal to get the discussion going. Second, cooperative learning in small groups of LCs also contributes to students' development of communication and social skills when they interact with partners in the group.

discussion, consistent with the findings of Lin (2006) and Huang (2008). When exchanging their opinions in group discussions, the students learned the social skills suggested by Daniel (2002, p.240): “be tolerant, piggyback on ideas of others, speak up when you disagree, respect differences, disagree constructively, don’t attack” and the discussion skills “take turns, listen actively, make eye contact, lean forward, nod/confirm/respond, share airtime, include everybody, don’t dominate, pull other people in, don’t interrupt, speak directly to each other, receive other’s ideas, stay focused/on task, be responsible to the group” (Daniel , 2002, p.240).

Besides, similar to previous findings (Bedel, 2011; Chiang, 2007; Lai, 2011; Lin, 2006; Hsu, 2004; Kim, 2004; Martinez-Roldan and Lopez-Robertson, 1999; Sai & Hsu, 2007), LCs also facilitate positive social interaction, promote peer relationship, motivation, positive attitude and active involvement. Students enjoy the fun atmosphere in the discussion; due to the less threatening and less stressful learning community in LCs, students could increase their participation and motivation to learn English. Students may experience a different type of language learning and enjoy the group discussions because of the genuine communication. The classroom interaction between peers was thus brought to life, and the pleasant experience of reading also facilitate them to develop positive attitude toward reading, motivate them to read, and encourage them to become actively and deeply involved in reading and discussion activities

Students’ Perception toward Critical Thinking

Students’ Perception of Their Improvement in Critical Thinking

Students’ positive response to questions 7, 8 and 9 in the perception questionnaire provide support for their development in critical thinking. According to

the participants' self-report, 89 % of the students thought LCs deepen their thinking because of cooperation, group work, different tasks, and materials in LCs. Eighty-four percent of the students thought they became better at questioning because of practice effect, group discussions and the acquiring of thinking skills, and 74 % thought they became better in writing responses because of the freedom of self-expression, practice effect, group discussion, and the stimulating or interesting material.

Furthermore, from question number 1 and 6, students also referred to the improvement in critical thinking as the advantages of LCs and group discussion. Their thinking was facilitated by exchanging thoughts and using thinking skills. When students were provided with the opportunities of exchanging thoughts and opinions, they felt confident when expressing their viewpoints; the exchanges of their thoughts, particularly with the association of their personal experiences or knowledge, promoted higher level of critical thinking skills as well as effective learning, consistent with previous findings (Goh, Dexter & Murphy, 2007; Lai, 2011; Li & Cao, 2006; Moore & Marra, 2005; Yang, 2008; Zhang, Gao, Ring & Zhang, 2007). The reading and discussion of literature also provided the readers with a vicarious experience and a mental exercise, as Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (2005) proposed in their study, to view situation from different angles, and thus developing multiple perspectives. Under the well-constructed cooperative LCs group, the students also learned to respect different perspectives from others. Furthermore, the rotating LCs roles/tasks also prompt the students to interpret the text from various aspects, thus forming multiple interpretations as proposed in Huang's (2008) study. Among different LCs roles and tasks, the questioner was particularly regarded by the students as a skill contributing to their thinking development. They claimed to use their brains to raise questions and to think about questions. They learned by asking questions, as

suggest in Commeyras and Sumner's (1998) study. In terms of thinking skills, the students claimed to have improved their thinking skills in grasping the key points, predicting, imagining, analyzing the story, associating the story with prior knowledge, drawing conclusions, and inferring from the story with the help of group discussion and task sheets. Such development indicates the change of their reading behavior and the development toward higher level cognitive thinking skills.

The Association of Difficulty of the Task Sheets and Thinking Development

Among the six roles and tasks, illustrator was considered the easiest, and summarizer the second easiest. These two tasks were considered by the students least helpful in thinking. The students seemed to associate the difficulty level of the task to the thinking development. That is, the students might think that the less the demanding of thinking, the easier the task. From their comments, as an illustrator, they neither needed to think nor to understand the full text, and there were already images inside their mind while they were reading the stories. They seemed to associate the seemingly low demand of thinking in text as the easy job. In fact, the seemingly easy job of illustration could involve the comprehension strategy of visualizing. According to Keene and Zimmermann (1997), imagery can facilitate the students in making the words concrete and enhance understanding. It can also bring joy and stimulate imaginative thinking. Creating mental image may develop students' creativity and imagination according to Lin (2006). The students' artistic talent and imagination also help inspire and explore the students' multiple intelligences (Lin, 2006). For the second easiest task, summarizer, the students did not find it helpful in thinking, but they found it most helpful in understanding the story, like the previous study (Shiau, 2010). Even though none of the students found it helpful in thinking

development, they actually learned to grasp the key points of the story and write the outline, thus developing their reading strategies. While summarizer was considered difficult and challenging task in the previous studies (Chern, 2005; Shiau, 2010) for its inherently challenging task requiring a complex combination of different skills, in the present study, students seem to consider being summarizer to be not as difficult. It was probably because the other tasks such as the connector were relatively more challenging with high demand for thinking.

On the other hand, the three roles of inferrer, questioner, and connector were regarded as the most helpful in thinking while connector and inferrer were considered the most and second most difficult jobs. One student directly mentioned that she chose the role of connector to be the one most helpful in thinking simply because of the difficulty level. In addition, even though only five percent of the students considered questioner the most difficult job, none of them found it the easiest. When it comes to the role of inferrer and its benefits in thinking, the students mentioned they could exercise their imagination, analyze the characters, plots and the cause and effect to look for some hints in the story. In this way, they could infer the possible explanations of the unclear points or something not explained in the story.

For the questioner task, the student cultivated their thinking capacity when trying to ask good discussion questions so that others could answer them more thoughtfully. In accordance with the previous research (Lin, 2006), the students could extend their thinking and also tried to ask rich and good discussion questions instead of boring ones so as to stimulate active group discussion and creative responses. The more they practice, the more they could polish their questioning skills.

Different from the result of preference in Huang's (2008) study where the illustrator was regarded as least favorite while the connector was the most liked role,

the student in the present study found connector the most difficult role (52%) and the third most helpful role in thinking (24%). In Huang's (2008) study, the possible reason why the students like connector was because the connections of the story with their experiences help them understand the characters and the stories better. The student in the present study seemed to have difficulty making connections with their limited life experiences. They might also lack the training to associate what they have experienced with the new knowledge. They also found the role difficult because it required thinking. As a result, almost a quarter of the students found the role of connector helpful in thinking. Thinking seemed to be a demanding skill for the student in the process of doing the task sheets.

Students' Difficulties and Suggestions for LCs

The students also encountered difficulties and frustrations in the LCs, including breakdowns in group discussions, language barrier, time pressure, difficult tasks, and reading materials. The major difficulty for them is the breakdowns of group discussion when the members of the group did not finish the reading or their jobs in advance or did not cooperate or participate in the group discussion. The noise from other groups may also become interference. Therefore, in order to have better cooperation, the students suggested that they might choose their own group members, or change their group members from time to time so that they can see new faces. Equal amount of talking and sense of responsibility were also regarded essential in their cooperation and sharing. Second, the language barrier for the students with lower English proficiency also led to frustration for them in the reading or discussion process. Language barriers, as in Lo (2010)'s study, are one of the reasons why students lacked critical reflection and those who have better proficiency are more

capable of expressing themselves clearly. Therefore, as in the findings of Chern's (2005) and Shiau's (2010) studies, language instructions by the teacher were suggested. The students expected to be corrected by the teacher regarding their word usages and grammar. Third, the students also had time pressure when they found the story difficult to understand so they did not have enough time to finish the reading and tasks, and when they had other homework or approaching midterm exam. Therefore, they suggested that more time required for the preparation and discussion, and the LCs discussion should be halted before the midterm exam. In addition, to use the time more efficiently, time should not be wasted moving the desks and chairs to groups before the discussions and smoother discussion when exchanging opinions was also suggested. Fourth, the difficulties with the tasks and materials also troubled them. They found it difficult doing a certain task, such as connector. They also had a hard time doing the task sheets when the material was difficult for them to express their thoughts. Their suggestions regarding tasks and materials were not directly related to the difficulties they encountered. They suggested adding more tasks such as "If I were the character" or "fantasy weaver" so that groups with five members do not need to repeat a certain role. They also suggested reading stories with specific ending. However, they also mentioned that the story without specific ending provided them with limitless imaginations.

Besides the suggestions in response to their difficulties, other suggestions were also provided for the researcher's reference. Group sharing time was suggested after the LCs so that they could brainstorm the ideas in class. Fun games requiring the group to cooperate and variety of the activities were also suggested to increase their motivation so that they would not repeat the same things and felt bored or detachment to the groups. However, some of them reflected on themselves for not performing

well enough in the activities by not doing their tasks faster, or not working harder, and speaking Chinese in the discussion. They hoped to improve these parts. Generally, the students appreciate the new and interesting way to learn English, promote their interest in reading novels later.

Summary

This section summarized the analysis of the findings in this study. The results indicated the relationship between literature circles and higher level thinking. From the data based on the student generated questions, students were found to add interpretation and application into the questions, some traces of development in higher level thinking were also found, their critical thinking ability was particularly associated with the prevalence of “why” questions, and the students’ creativity were also found in other unexpected findings. From the data based on the student generated responses, thinking was promoted in the increase in quantity and quality of their writing, especially in personal interpretive and critical modes of response writing. Furthermore, according to the students’ perception of literature circles, not only did they appreciate the advantages of LCs (improvement in language proficiency, development in cooperation, social interaction, and learning behavior and attitude) but they also claimed to develop their critical thinking. The association of difficulty of the task sheets and thinking development was also investigated. Finally, students’ difficulties and suggestions of LCs were discussed for the teachers’ reference in the future research.



CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This chapter first provides the summary of the study and the findings. It then discusses the pedagogical implications of the findings and the limitations of the study. Finally, suggestions for future research and final remarks will be provided

Summary of Findings

The purpose of the study was to investigate the development of integrating literature circles into high school English classes on cultivating critical thinking skills among high school Taiwanese EFL learners. The research questions are “To what extent do Literature Circles promote critical thinking among a group of EFL senior high school students in Taiwan? How do the students develop critical thinking skills during the Literature Circles?” and “How do the students perceive Literature Circles? What unique English learning opportunities are there? What challenges do the students encounter?” In order to understand how literature circles develop these skills in EFL students, this classroom research collected data from students’ generated questions and responses and their perception questionnaire. The major findings of the study are summarized as follows. From the student generated questions, some traces of development in higher level thinking were found when students was able to add interpretation and application into their questions, particularly the prevalence of “why” questions. Students’ creativity were also found in other unexpected question types. From the data based on the student generated responses, students were found to

promote their thinking in the increase of quantity and quality of their writing, particularly in personal interpretive and critical modes of response writing. Furthermore, students' perception of literature circles also indicated their appreciation of LCs and they benefited from the activity in improvement in language proficiency, development in cooperation, social interaction, and learning behavior and attitude. The students also claimed to develop their critical thinking through the process. In addition, based on their perception, it seemed that the more difficult the tasks of LCs are, the more they can cultivate critical thinking. Finally, students also provided their problems and some suggestions regarding the breakdowns in group discussions, language barrier, time pressure, difficult tasks, and reading materials. Generally, the students appreciate the new and interesting way to learn English, and believed it to promote their thinking.

Pedagogical Implications

Several pedagogical implications were drawn from the results of the present study. First, the results of the study suggest that Literature Circles can help learner not only improve their language proficiency, facilitate cooperation, discussion skills, and social interaction, change their learning behavior and attitude toward learning English in the fun atmosphere, but also promote their thinking in adding interpretation and higher order cognitive skills into their questions and responses. Therefore, it is possible for the language teachers to adopt this activity into their regular EFL classroom not only to meet the objectives of language development but critical thinking. Second, students' difficulty in the role of connector suggests that topic familiarity of the stories may help facilitate their associations to the story. The selection of the materials can serve as a trigger to their critical thinking. In addition,

the students' lack of reading experience suggests that more outside reading classes are recommended to not only enrich their reading experiences but also help them make associations in the text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world levels. Finally, students are found to show their creativity also when they go off the topic. Even though more teacher guidance or control in their discussion is suggested to help students maintain at task, some deviation of the discussion may add the fun to this reading activities, thus lighten the atmosphere and stimulate their creative thinking.

Limitations of the Study

There are a few limitations in this study. First, the number of the participants was too limited, which might pose limitations in the richness of the data and the generalizability of the findings to a larger context. The participants in this study were intermediate level high school students in southern Taiwan; therefore, the results may not be generalized to a larger context in Taiwan. Second, the study only lasted for seven weeks, which was relatively short to yield more significant results. Third, it is uncertain whether the participants' development in critical thinking resulted only from LCs. They might also be exposed to other reading from other subjects. Fourth, the assigned reading material may affect the motivation of the students. Since the reading materials used in this study were assigned ones for the convenience of the research, not self-selected ones as in traditional LCs, the participants might not be interested in reading the assigned stories, thus not actively motivated or involved in LCS.

Suggestions for Future Study

Based on the findings of the present study, several suggestions are provided to facilitate the future studies related to LCs and critical thinking.

First, other sources of data can be collected. Due to the scope of the present study, only student-generated questions and responses in the first and last stories as well as the final Perception Questionnaire were collected and analyzed. Future studies can examine the gradual change throughout the whole LCs activities. Besides, since critical thinking is multi-dimensional in nature, more studies are needed to explore other factors that might play a role in the development of critical thinking. For examples, the responses to the students' questions during discussion or other role sheets in Literature circles can be further investigated. Therefore, broad evidence related to the development in their critical thinking ability can be examined.

Third, future studies can extend the scope of the present study by comparing the development of critical thinking into different groups of students with different language proficiency levels, genders, or urban/suburban schools, to further investigate whether their English proficiency, genders, and regions was related to their critical thinking skills

Fourth, future studies may be done with more guidance from the teachers with direct teaching of the critical thinking strategies before/during/after Literature Circles. It is possible that with the guidance of teacher assistance and the direct teaching of critical thinking strategies students can enhance the development of thinking skills during the process. Teaching strategies toward critical thinking would make this kind of study complete. Future studies can also be done to provide teachers with a more complete picture of the application of a critical perspective in Literature Circles in the EFL classroom.

Conclusion

In Taiwan, the issue of incorporating critical thinking into foreign language

teaching has been formally addressed in the 2010 Guidelines for Senior High School English Curriculum. As the findings of this study suggests, Literature Circles can help facilitate the development of students' critical thinking skills outside the textbooks in the regular classes, and thus can be a possible activity to be implemented in regular EFL classroom in Taiwan.





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Appendixes

Appendix A: Reading Materials

Story A: Soapy's Choice²

Soapy moved uneasily on his bench in Madison Square, New York. He looked up at the sky and a dead leaf fell onto his arm. Winter was coming, and Soapy knew that he had to start thinking of ways to deal with the difficulties of colder weather.

He wanted three months in a nice prison, with hot meals to eat and warm bed to sleep on. Also, he would have good company with whom to spend the winter days. For the past several winters, the prison on Blackwell's Island had been Soapy's home. This was how he usually spent his winters. And now it was time, because, at night on his seat at the square, it was so cold that three newspapers did not keep out the cold.

So Soapy was determined to go to prison, and at once began to try his first plan. It was usually easy. He ate dinner in an expensive restaurant. Then he told them he had no money and they called a policeman. Nice and easy, with no trouble.

So Soapy left his seat, and walked slowly along the street. Soon he came to a bright restaurant on Broadway. Ah! This was all right. He just had to get to a table in the restaurant and sit down. That was all, because, when he sat down, people could only see his coat and shirt, which were not very old. Nobody could see his worn trousers. He thought about the meal – not too expensive, but good.

But when Soapy went into the restaurant, the waiter looked at him suspiciously and saw Soapy's dirty old trousers and terrible shoes.

Suddenly, strong hands turned him round and helped him out into the street again. So now he had to think of something different. Soapy walked away from Broadway and soon he found himself on Sixth Avenue. He stopped in front of a shop window and looked at it. It was nice and bright, and everybody in the street could see him. Slowly and carefully he picked up a stone and threw it at the window. The glass broke with a loud noise. People ran round the corner and Soapy was happy, because the man in front was a policeman. There he stood still, with his hands in his pockets, and smiled at the sight of the policeman. 'I'll soon be in prison now,' he thought.

The policeman came up to Soapy. 'Who did that?' he asked.

'Perhaps I did. Don't you think that I might have had something to do with it?'

Soapy replied in a friendly voice.

But the policeman knew that people who break windows do not stop to talk to policemen. They run away. And just then the policeman saw another man, who was running to catch a bus. So the policeman ran after him. Soapy watched for a minute. Then he walked away. No luck again! He began to feel cross because he was twice

² Adapted from Mowat, D. (2000). *Soapy's Choice*. *New Yorkers Short Stories*. Oxford Bookworm Library. Oxford University Press, 9-16.

unsuccessful.

But on the opposite side of the road he saw a little restaurant. 'Ah, that'll be all right,' he thought, and he went in. This time nobody looked at his trousers and his shoes. He enjoyed his meal, and then he looked up at the waiter, smiled and said, 'I haven't got any money, you know. Now, get busy and call the cop. And do it quickly. I'm tired! Don't keep a gentleman waiting'

'No cop for you!' the waiter answered. He had a thick voice and red eyes. He called another waiter, who was larger and stronger. 'Hey! Jo!'

Another waiter came, and together they threw Soapy out into the cold street. Soapy lay there, very angry. With difficulty, he stood up slowly. His nice, warm prison was still far away, and Soapy was very unhappy. He felt worse because a policeman, who was standing near, laughed and walked away.

Soapy moved on, but he walked for a long time before he gained enough courage to try again. This time it looked easy.

A nice young woman was standing in front of a shop window. Not very far away there was also a policeman. Soapy moved nearer to the young woman. He saw that the policeman was watching him. Then he said to the young woman, with a smile, 'Why don't you come with me, my dear? I can give you a good time.'

The young woman moved away a little and looked more carefully into the shop window. Soapy looked at the policeman. Yes, he was still watching. Then he spoke to the young woman again. In a minute she would call the policeman. Soapy could almost see the prison doors. Suddenly, the young woman took hold of his arm.

'OK,' she said happily. 'If you buy me a drink. Let's go before that policeman sees us.'

And poor Soapy walked away with the young woman, who still held on to his arm. He was very unhappy.

At the next corner he ran away from the woman. Suddenly he was afraid. 'I'm never going to get to prison,' he thought.

Slowly, he walked on and came to a street with a lot of theatres. There were a lot of people there, rich people in their best clothes. Soapy had to do something to get to prison. He did not want to spend another night on his seat in Madison Square. What could he do? Then he saw a policeman near him, so he began to sing and shout and make a lot of noise. This time they must send him to prison. But the policeman turned his back to Soapy and said to a man who was standing near, 'He's had too much to drink, but he's not dangerous. We'll leave him alone tonight.'

What was the matter with the police? Soapy was really unhappy now, but he stopped making a noise. How could he get to prison? The wind was cold, and he pulled his thin coat around him.

But, just then, inside a shop, he saw a man with an expensive umbrella. The man put his umbrella down near the door, and took out a cigarette. Soapy went into the shop, picked up the umbrella, and, slowly, he began to walk away. The man came quickly after him. 'That's my umbrella,' he said.

'Oh, is it?' Soapy replied. 'Then why don't you call a policeman? I took it, and you

say it's your umbrella. Go on, then. Call a policeman! Look! There's one on the corner.'

The umbrella man looked unhappy. 'Well, you know, perhaps I've made a mistake. I took it from a restaurant this morning. If it's yours, well, I'm very sorry...'

'Of course it's my umbrella,' Soapy said.

The policeman looked at them – and the umbrella man walked away. The policeman went to help a beautiful young girl to cross the road.

Soapy was really angry now. He threw the umbrella away and said many bad things about policemen. Just because he wanted to go to prison, they did not want to send him there. He could do nothing wrong!

He began to walk back to Madison Square and home – his seat.

But on a quiet corner, Soapy suddenly stopped. Here, in the middle of the city, was a beautiful old church. Through one purple window he could see a soft light, and sweet music was coming from inside the church. The moon was high in the sky and everything was quiet. For a few seconds it was like a country church and Soapy remembered other, happier days. He thought of the days when he had a mother, and friends, and beautiful things in his life.

Then he thought about his life now – the empty days, the dead plans. And then a wonderful thing happened. Soapy decided to change his life and be a new man. 'Tomorrow,' he said to himself, 'I'll go into town and find work. My life will be good again. I'll be somebody important. Everything will be different. I'll...'

Soapy suddenly felt a hand on his arm. He jumped and looked round quickly – into the broad face of a policeman!

'What are you doing here?' asked the policeman.

'Nothing,' Soapy answered.

'Then come with me,' the policeman said. "You're arrested for loitering."

'Three months in prison,' they told Soapy the next day.

Appendix A: Reading Materials (continued)

Story B: Witches' Loaves³

Miss Martha Meacham kept the little bakery on the corner (the one where you go up three steps and the bell sounds when you open the door).

Miss Martha was forty, her bank-book showed a savings of two thousand dollars, and she had a kind heart. Many people have married whose chances to do so were not as good as Miss Martha's.

Two or three times each week a gentleman came into her bakery. She began to take an interest in him. He was middle-aged, wore glasses, and spoke English with a strong German accent. His clothes were a little old and worn, but he looked clean and had very good manners.

He always bought two loaves of stale bread. Fresh bread was five cents a loaf. Stale ones were two for five. Never did he call for anything but stale bread.

Once Miss Martha noticed some red and brown paint on his fingers. She was sure then that he was an artist and very poor. No doubt he lived in a small room where he painted pictures, ate stale bread, and thought of the good things to eat in Miss Martha's bakery.

Often when Miss Martha sat down to eat her dinner, she would think of the poor, gentle-mannered artist. She wished that he might share her tasty food instead of eating his dry bread in a cold, little room. Miss Martha's heart, as you have been told, was a kind one.

One day she decided to test her idea about whether or not he was an artist. She brought from her room a painting that she's bought at a sale earlier in the week. She placed it against the wall behind the bread counter.

It was a painting of Venice complete with churches, water, boats, and a beautiful sunset. No artist would fail to notice it.

Two days later her gentleman came in.

"Two loaves of stale bread, if you please," he said in his strong accent. "You have here a fine picture, Madame," he said while she was putting the bread in a bag.

"Yes?" says Miss Martha, smiling to herself. "I do so enjoy good art and" (no, it was still too early to say 'artist') and paintings," she said instead. "You think it is a good picture." "The point of view and the direction of the lines do not appear true to one another" he said, half in German. "Good day, Madame." He took his bread, touched his hat and hurried out.

Yes, he must be an artist. Miss Martha took the picture back to her room. How gentle and kind his eyes shines behind his glasses. What a fine mind he had! To be able to judge good art so quickly. And to live on stale bread! But of course, life is difficult for the best artists until they are discovered.

What a fine thing it would be for the art world if a mind like his could be helped by two thousand dollars in the bank, a bakery, and a warm heart to—Oh, but these were just day-dreams Miss Martha.

³ Adapted from Oliviert, D. (1999). Witches' Loaves. *Best Short Stories of O. Henry*. Easy Readers. Caves Bookstore Yohan Publications, 1-6.

Often now when he came to the bakery, he would talk for a short while across the counter. He seemed to enjoy Miss Martha's pleasant words. He continued to buy stale bread. Never a cake or any other of her delightful baked goods.

She thought he was beginning to look increasingly thin. Her heart badly wanted to add something more to his dry bread. However, she knew that artists were proud people, and she was afraid to hurt that pride by giving him something for nothing.

Miss Martha began to wear her favorite blue dress behind the counter. She also began using a bottle of special beauty preparation on her face, because it made her skin look healthy.

One day the gentleman came in as usual, put his five cents on the counter and called for his two stale loaves. While Miss Martha was reaching to get them, a great noise came from outside. Bells started to ring loudly, some men were shouting, and soon several big fire trucks passed in front of the bakery.

The gentleman hurried to the door for a look outside, as anyone would. At that moment, an idea came into Miss Martha's head which she acted upon at once.

On a table behind the counter was a pound of fresh butter that had been brought to the bakery just an hour earlier. Quickly Miss Martha made a deep cut in each of the two loaves, placed a large amount of butter into each one, and then pressed the loaves back together again.

When the gentleman finally turned around she was already putting the loaves into a bag. When he'd gone, after an especially nice little talk, Miss Martha's heart was smiling broadly.

Later she wondered –had she been too forward? Would he enjoy her little gift? But surely it was all right for a lady to offer a gentleman a bit of butter.

For a long time that day Miss Martha thought about her surprise. She thought of her gentleman there in his room painting his beautiful picture. Soon he would lay down his paints and prepare to eat his daily lunch of dry bread and water. He would open the loaf and –ah! Miss Martha wished she could be there to see it. Would he think of the hand that placed it there as he ate? Would he—

The front door bell sounded loudly. Somebody was coming in, making a great deal of noise. Miss Martha hurried to the front.

Two men were there. One was a young man whom she had never seen before. The other was her artist.

His face was red, his hat was on the back of his head, and his hair was disorderly. He shook both his hands angrily at Miss Martha.

"Foolish woman!" he shouted loudly in German, followed by several other unkind words which she did not understand.

The young man tried to pull him away.

"I will not go," he said angrily, "until I tell her." He hit the top of Miss Martha's counter a number of times.

"You have destroyed me," he cried, his blue eyes burning behind his glasses. "I will tell you. You are a troublesome old cat!"

Miss Martha felt suddenly very weak. She could not believe what he was saying. Finally, the young man took him by the arm.

“Come on,” he said, “you’ve said enough.” He pulled the angry one away from the counter and out the door to the street. Then he came back.

“I guess you ought to be told ma’am,” he said, “what the problem is. That’s Mr. Blumberger. He’s an architectural draftsman. We work in the same office.”

“He’s been working very hard now for three months on a plan for a new city hall building. He finished drawing the lines in ink yesterday. You know, a draftsman always makes his drawing in pencil first before he uses the ink. When it’s done he removes the pencil lines with stale bread because it works so well.

“Blumberger’s been buying the bread here. Well, today, Blumberger’s plan isn’t good for anything now except maybe to light a fire.”

Miss Martha walked slowly into the back room. She took off her favorite blue dress and put on the old brown one she usually wore. Then she picked up the bottle of beauty preparation and dropped it out the window.



Appendix A: Reading Materials (continued)

Story C: After Twenty Years⁴

The policeman made his rounds up the avenue. There were few people around. His assigned area was one where most shops closed early at night. Now and then, a person might see the lights of a liquor store or an all-night small restaurant, but the majority of the doors belonged to business owners who had already gone home several hours ago.

About halfway down one block, the policeman suddenly slowed his pace. In the doorway of a dark entrance to a hardware store, a man leaned. He had an unlit cigarette in his mouth. As the policeman walked up to him, the loiterer spoke quickly.

"It's all right, officer," he said, reassuringly.

"I'm just waiting for a friend. We made an appointment twenty years ago. Sounds a little funny to you, doesn't it? Well, I'll explain it to you if you'd like to make certain everything is all right. About that long ago, there used to be a restaurant where this store stands – 'Big Joe' Brady's restaurant."

"Until five years ago," said the policeman. "It was torn down then."

The man in the doorway struck a match and lit his cigarette. The light showed a pale, square-jawed face with keen eyes and a little white scar near his right eyebrow.

"Twenty years ago tonight," said the man, "I ate here at 'Big Joe's Brady's with Jimmy Wells, my best friend and the best guy in the world. He and I were raised here in New York, just like two brothers, together. I was eighteen, and Jimmy was twenty. The next morning, I was to go out to the West to make my fortune. You couldn't have dragged Jimmy out of New York; he thought it was the only place on earth. Well, we agreed that night that we would meet here again exactly twenty years from that date and time, no matter what our conditions might be or from what distance we might have to come. We figured that in twenty years, each of us ought to have our destiny worked out and our fortunes made, whatever they were going to be."

"It sounds pretty interesting," said the policeman. "But 20 years is a rather long time. Haven't you heard from your friend since you left?"

"Well, yes, for a time we wrote to each other," said the man. "But after a year or two, we lost track of each other. You see, the West is a pretty big place, and I kept moving around pretty frequently. But I know Jimmy will meet me here if he's alive, for he always was the most loyal friend in the world. He'll never forget. I came a thousand miles to stand in this door tonight, and it's worth it if my old friend turns up."

The waiting man pulled out an expensive watch. Small diamonds in the wristband sparkled in the faint light of a street lamp.

"Three minutes to ten," he announced. "It was exactly ten o'clock when we parted here at the restaurant door, twenty years ago."

"You did pretty well out in the West, didn't you?" asked the policeman.

"You bet! I hope Jimmy has done half as well. He was a little lazy, though, even if

⁴ Adapted from Stuart, B. J. (2007). After Twenty Years. *Short Stories of O. Henry*. Cosmos Culture. Darakwon Publishing Company, 86-101.

he was a good fellow. I've had to compete with some very smart men to make my fortune. A man can get lazy in New York."

"I'll be on my way. Hope your friend comes around all right. Are you going to leave if he doesn't show up exactly on time?" the policeman said.

"No way!" said the other. "I'll give him half an hour at least. If Jimmy is alive on Earth, he'll be here by that time. So long, officer."

"Good night, sir," said the policeman, passing down the street.

There was now a slight, cold rain falling, and the wind had become stronger. The few pedestrians on the streets hurried gloomily and silently along with their coat collars turned high and their hands in their pockets. And in the door of the hardware store, the man who had come a thousand miles to keep an appointment with his boyhood friend, no matter how ridiculous it seemed, smoked his cigarette and waited.

About twenty minutes he waited, and then a tall man in a long overcoat, with the collar turned up to his ears, hurried across from the opposite side of the street. He went directly to the waiting man.

"Is that you, Bob?" he asked, doubtfully.

"Is that you, Jimmy Wells?" cried the man in the door.

"Incredible!" exclaimed the man.

"It's Bob, true to his word. I was certain I'd find you here if you were still alive. Well, well, well!—twenty years is a long time. The old restaurant is gone, Bob; I wish it had lasted so we could have had another dinner there. How has the West treated you, old man?"

"Excellent; it has given me everything I wanted. You've changed lots, Jimmy. I never thought you were so tall. You're quite a few centimeters taller than I remember."

"Oh, I grew a bit after I was twenty."

"Doing well in New York, Jimmy?"

"So-so. I have a position in one of the city department. Come on, Bob; we'll go around to a place I know of and have a good long talk about old times." The two men started up the street, arm in arm. The man from the West had become excited by success. He was beginning to tell the story of his career. The other, hidden in his overcoat, listened with interest.

At the corner stood a drugstore, brilliant with electric lights. When they came into this light, each of them turned at the same time to look upon the other's face.

The man from the West stopped suddenly and released his arm.

"You're not Jimmy Wells," he snapped. "Twenty years is a long time, but not long enough to change a man's nose from long and thin to short and wide."

"But it sometimes changes a good man into a bad one," said the tall man. "You've been under arrest, 'Silly' Bob. The Chicago Police Department thought you would come to New York. They want to have a chat with you. You'll come quietly, won't you? That's the smart thing to do. Now, before we go on the police station, here's a note I was asked to hand you. You may read it here at the window. It's from Police Officer Wells."

The man from the West unfolded the little piece of paper handed to him. His hand

was steady when he began to read, but it trembled a little by the time he had finished. The note was rather short.

Bob,

I was at the appointed place on time. When you struck the match to light your cigar, I saw it was the face of the man wanted in Chicago. Somehow I couldn't do it myself, so I went around to get a plain clothes man to do the job.

Jimmy



Appendix A: Reading Materials (continued)

Story D: Tildy's Moment⁵

If you do not know Bogle's Family Restaurant it is your loss. The restaurant, situated on Eighth Avenue, is not a famous place, but if you need a large cheap meal, then Bogle's is the place for you. You get your money's worth--in quantity, at least.

There are two rows of tables in the room, six in each row. At the cashier's desk sits Bogle, cold, sordid, slow, smouldering, and takes your money. There are also two waitresses and a Voice. The Voice comes from the kitchen.

One of the waitresses was named Aileen. She was tall, beautiful, and full of life. The name of the other waitress was Tildy. She was dumpy and plain-faced, not beautiful.

The customers at Bogle's were Aileen's slaves. Six tables full she could wait upon at once. They were happy to wait a long time for their meals because they could look at her. They who were in a hurry restrained their impatience for the joy of merely gazing upon her swiftly moving, graceful figure. They who had finished eating ate more that they might continue in the light of her smiles. Every man there--and they were mostly men--tried to make his impression upon her. Aileen knew how to successfully hold a conversation with twelve people and work hard at the same time. And all the men wanted to take Aileen dancing or give her presents. One gave her a gold ring and one gave her a little dog.

And poor Tildy?

Tildy with the blunt nose, the hay-coloured hair, the freckled skin, the bag-o'-meal figure, had never had an admirer. In the busy, noisy restaurant not a man followed her with his eyes when she went to and fro in the restaurant save now and then when they glared with the beast-hunger for food. Nobody laughed and talked with her. Nobody asked her to go dancing, and nobody gave her presents. Tildy was a good waitress, and the men tolerated her. They who sat at her tables spoke to her briefly. But when she stood by the tables, the men looked round her to see Aileen.

But Tildy was content to work with no thank. She was Aileen's friend; and she was glad to see her rule hearts and drew the attention of men. But deep inside, she, too, wanted a man to love her.

Tildy listened to all Aileen's stories. One day Aileen came in with a black eye. She told Tildy that a man following her hit her because she did not want to kiss him. Tildy listened to the adventure with breathless admiration. No man had ever tried to follow her. She was safe abroad at any hour of the twenty-four. 'What bliss it must have been to have had a man follow her and to have had a black eye for love!' Tildy thought.

One of the men who came to Bogle's was a young man called Mr Seeders, who worked in a laundry office. Mr. Seeders was thin and had light hair. He knew that Aileen was not interested in him, so he sat at one of Tildy's tables, said nothing, and ate his fish.

One day when Mr Seeders came in for his meal, he drank too much beer. There

⁵ Adapted from Mowat, D. (2000). Tildy's Moment. *New Yorkers Short Stories*. Oxford Bookworm Library. Oxford University Press, 27-32.

were only two or three customers in the restaurant. When Mr Seeders had finished his fish, he got up, put his arm round Tildy's waist, kissed her loudly, and walked out of the restaurant.

For a few moments Tildy stood petrified. Then Aileen said to her, 'Why, Tildy! You naughty girl! First thing I know you'll be stealing some of my fellows. I must keep an eye on you, my lady.'

Suddenly Tildy's world changed. She understood now that men could like her and want her as much as Aileen. She, Tildy, could have a love-life, too. Her eyes were bright, and her face was pink. She wanted to tell everybody her delightful secret. When the restaurant was quiet, she went and stood by Bogle's desk.

Her eyes were shining; she tried not to let her words sound proud and boastful.

"A gentleman insulted me to-day," she said. "He hugged me around the waist and kissed me."

'Really!' Bogle answered. This was good for business. 'Next week you'll get a dollar a week more.'

And when, in the evening, the restaurant was busy again, Tildy put down the food on the tables and said quietly, 'Do you know what a man in the restaurant did to me today? He put his arm round me and kissed me!'

Some of the men in the restaurant were surprised; some of them said, 'Well done!' Men began to smile and say nice things to her. Tildy was very happy. Love was now possible in her grey life.

For two days Mr Seeders did not come again, and in that time Tildy was a different woman. She wore bright clothes, did her hair differently, and she looked taller and thinner. Now she was a real woman because someone loved her. She felt excited, and a little afraid. What would Mr Seeders do the next day he came in?

At four o'clock in the afternoon of the third day, Mr Seeders came in. There were no other people at the tables, and Aileen and Tildy were working at the back of the restaurant. Mr Seeders walked up to them.

Tildy looked at him, and she could not speak. Mr Seeders' face was very red, and he looked uncomfortable.

'Miss Tildy,' he said, 'I want to say that I'm sorry for what I did to you a few days ago. It was the drink, you see. I didn't know what I was doing. I'm very sorry.'

And Mr Seeders left.

But Tildy ran into the kitchen, and she began to cry. She could not stop crying. She was no longer beautiful. No man loved her. No man wanted her. The kiss meant nothing to Mr Seeders. Tildy did not like him very much, but the kiss was important to her – and now there was nothing.

But she still had her friend, and Aileen put her arm round Tildy. Aileen did not really understand, but she said, 'Don't be unhappy, Tildy. That little Seeders has got a face like a dead potato! He's nothing. A *real* gentleman wouldn't ever apologize!'

Appendix A: Reading Materials (continued)

Story E: The Necklace⁶

She was one of those pretty, charming young ladies, born, as if by mistake, into a family of clerks. She had no hopes, no ways of becoming loved and married to a man either rich or respected; and she allowed herself to marry a petty clerk in the office of the Board of Education.

She was unhappy, as one out of her class. She suffered continually, feeling herself born for all kinds of luxuries. Yet she had neither beautiful dresses nor expensive jewels, nothing. All these things, which another woman of her position would not have noticed, tortured and angered her. And she wept for whole days from regret and from disappointment.

One evening when her husband returned, he had a large envelope in his hand. "Here is something for you," he said.

She drew out a card, on which were printed these words:

*The Minister of Education and his wife
ask the honor of Mr. and Mrs. Loisel's company
Monday evening, January 18,
at the Minister's home.*

Instead of being delighted at this opportunity to join such a high-class social event, she threw the invitation upon the table murmuring: "What do you suppose I want with that?"

"But, my dear, I thought it would make you happy." He was upset at the sight of his wife weeping. "What is the matter?" he asked.

With great effort, she controlled herself and responded in a calm voice: "Nothing. Only I have no dress. Therefore I cannot go to this party. Give your card to some colleague whose wife has nicer clothes than I."

Sad as he was, he answered her patiently: "Let us see, Matilda. How much would a suitable dress cost?"

She said, "Four hundred francs ought to cover it."

He turned a little pale. Nevertheless, he answered: "Very well. I will give you four hundred francs. You can buy one dress"

The day of the ball approached and Mrs. Loisel seemed sad and anxious. She said to her husband one evening: "I have no jewelry to wear. I would prefer not to go to this party. I don't want to look so poor in the midst of rich women."

Then her husband suggested: "Go to your rich schoolmate, Mrs. Forestier, and ask her to lend you her jewels."

She gave a cry of joy. "Of course!" she said. "I had not thought of that!"

The next day she went to her friend's house and told her story. Mrs. Forestier went to her closet, took out a large jewelry box, opened it, and said: "Choose, my dear."

She saw at first some bracelets, then some pearls, then gold and jewels. She could not decide what to take. Suddenly she discovered, in a black box, a superb necklace of

⁶ Adapted from Shih, Y. H., et al. (2005). *The Necklace. Far East English Reader for Senior High Schools Book 5*. Taipei, Taiwan: Far East Co., Ltd.

diamonds. Her hands trembled as she took it up. She asked nervously,

“Could you lend me this?”

“Why, yes, certainly.”

Very delighted, she embraced her with passion, and then went away with her treasure.

The day of the ball arrived. Mrs. Loisel was a great success. She was the prettiest of all. She was elegant, gracious, smiling, and full of joy. All the men noticed her and wanted to waltz with her. Even the Minister of Education paid her some attention. She danced happily with enthusiasm. She felt greatly admired.

She left the party toward four o'clock in the morning. Her husband threw around her shoulders the coat she had brought for returning home. The coat was not an expensive coat, and she felt embarrassed. She wished to hurry away in order not to be noticed by the other women who dressed themselves in rich furs.

Loisel tried to stop her. “Wait! You will catch cold. I am going to call a cab.” But she would not listen and went down the steps rapidly. When they were in the street, they saw no cabs. They walked along, shivering, and finally found an old cab by the river. It took them to their door, and they went up to their apartment. They were very tired.

It was all over for her. She removed the coat from her shoulders and stood before the mirror, for a final view of herself. Suddenly she cried out and turned toward her husband excitedly: “I have—I have—I no longer have Mrs. Forestier’s necklace.”

Her husband said in dismay: “What! It is not possible.”

They looked in the folds of the dress, in the pockets, everywhere. They could not find it. Finally, Loisel got up and went out to look for the necklace. Toward seven o'clock he returned, with nothing, and said: “We must do something to replace this jewel.”

They went from jeweler to jeweler, until they found a shop with a necklace that seemed to them exactly like the one they had lost. It would cost them thirty-six thousand francs.

They borrowed the money, a thousand francs here, five hundred there, without even knowing whether they could pay it back. Finally, they went to get the new necklace, and Mrs. Loisel took it to Mrs. Forestier, who opened the box as her friend feared she would. If she should notice the substitution, what would she think? Would she take her for a robber?

Mrs. Loisel now knew the horrible life of necessity. She did her part, however, without complaining. They sent away the maid and moved to a smaller apartment. She learned the heavy cares of a home, the hard work of a kitchen. She washed the greasy pans and the dirty clothes; she took the garbage to the street each morning and brought up the water, stopping often on the stairs to breathe. And, dressed like an ordinary woman of the people, she went to the grocer’s with her basket on her arm, shopping, bargaining to the last coin of her miserable money. Her husband, meantime, worked evenings, and nights, too.

This kind of life lasted for ten years. At the end of ten years, they had paid everything back, including the interest.

Mrs. Loisel seemed old now. She had become a strong, hard woman. Her hair was badly dressed, her hands red, and she spoke in a loud tone. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she would seat herself before the window and think of that evening, of that ball where she was so beautiful and so admired.

How would it have been if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? Who knows? How strange life is, and how full of changes! How small a thing will ruin or save one!

One Sunday, as she was taking a walk, trying to forget the cares of the week, she suddenly noticed a woman walking with a child. It was Mrs. Forestier. She was still young, still pretty. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. She approached her. "Good morning, Jeanne. I am Matilda Loisel."

Her friend uttered a cry of surprise. "Oh! My poor Matilda! How you have changed—"

"Yes, I have had some miserable days—and all because of you—"

"Because of me?"

"Do you remember the diamond necklace that you lent me? Well, I lost it. I returned another to you. That was exactly like it. And it has taken us ten years to pay for it. But it is finished and I am now content."

Mrs. Forestier said, "You bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?" "Yes. You did not notice it then? They were just alike."

She smiled with a proud and simple joy. Mrs. Forestier was touched and took both her hands as she replied:

"Oh! My poor Matilda!" Those diamonds were false. They were not worth over five hundred francs!"

Appendix A: Reading Materials (continued)

Story F: The Lady or the Tiger⁷

Once upon a time in a land far away, there lived a semi-barbaric king. The king liked to punish crime and reward virtue. However, he had his own special way. When one of his people was accused of a serious crime, the king would put the accused person on trial in his arena. People would gather in the king's arena to see the special trial.

When the day of the trial came, the people gathered in the arena in the center of the town. In the arena, the king sat high on his throne. When he gave the signal, a door opened beneath him. Then, the accused person stepped out into the amphitheater. There were two doors side by side directly opposite the accused person. They were exactly alike. The accused person then had to make a decision. He had to walk to one of these doors and opened it. It was his free choice to decide which door to open. He could open either door he wanted. But the door he opened would decide his fate. He would have only luck to guide him.

If he was unlucky, he would open the door with one tiger waiting inside. The tiger was cruel and hungry. Then, it would immediately eat him and tear him to pieces. This meant he was guilty. His bloody death was the punishment. However, if he opened the other one, a beautiful lady would come out. This proved his innocent right away. The king then rewarded the man. He would marry the beautiful lady and the man in a ceremony right there in the arena. It didn't matter if the man already had a wife and family. It didn't matter if he already had someone he loved either. The king would have the wedding immediately held. Then the people shouted happily. This form of trial was very popular with the people. When they gathered together in the amphitheater on one of the great trial days, they never knew whether they were going to witness a bloody killing or a joyous wedding. They might go home sadly for the death of the person. Or, they might go home happily for the marriage.

The semi-barbaric king had a beautiful daughter. He cherished her very much. She was the apple of his eye. As a matter of fact, the princess was madly in love with a secret lover, a handsome young man. But this young man was of low social position. Therefore, they had to keep their love affair a secret from the king. But one day the king found out the secret. He saw the two hugging in the palace garden. He was very angry. He immediately called his guards. He asked them to put the young man into prison. Next, the king set a date for his trial in the public arena.

On the day of the trial, people came from far and near to witness the fate of the young man. The king and his daughter sat opposite the two doors in the arena. All was ready. Then, the king raised his hand. He gave the signal. The trial was about to begin. As he did so, a door beneath them slowly opened. Slowly, the princess's lover walked into the arena. He was tall, beautiful and fair. He was so handsome a young man that the audience all admired him. The people had not seen such a grand youth in the country. They looked at him in wonder. No wonder the princess loved him! And

⁷ Adapted from Chou, C. T., et al. (2005). *The Lady or the Tiger. Lungteng English Reader for Senior High Schools Book 5*. Taipei, Taiwan: Far East Co., Ltd.

what a terrible thing for him to be here! Why was he here on trial for his life because he loved the princess?

As the young man went into the arena, he turned to bow to the king. He looked at the princess, however. That is because he was sure that she knew the secret of what lay behind the two doors. He wanted the princess to tell him. And it is true. She did know behind which door the tiger waited and behind which door the beautiful lady stood. She also knew that the lady was the most beautiful and most desirable lady in the entire country. Sometimes, she had seen, or imagined she had seen, her lover talking to the lady. Their conversation might have been only for a moment or two. But she thought they must have had said a lot of things in a short period of time. They might have been talking about something unimportant, but how could she know for sure? For this reason, the princess was very jealous.

The young man kept looking at the princess. His eyes met hers. His eyes seemed to ask "Which?" He waited for her answer. Now, as the princess looked down at her lover, she was afraid. She imagined him opening the door to the fierce tiger. The tiger would eat him! But then she pictured him opening the other door. How her soul burned in pain as she imagined her lover and the beautiful lady rushing into each other's arms! If she let the tiger have him, would it be better? Then, he would wait for her in heaven. But if she did not help him, then she knew she would be haunted forever by nightmares. She could easily prevent the bloody death of her lover. But she was still struggling.

With anxious eyes, the young man silently asked the princess to save his life. And in a moment, the princess made her decision. With no further hesitation, she raised her hand. She moved it slightly and quickly to the right. No one but her lover saw her do this. Every eye in the arena but his was on the young man. Everyone was wondering which door he would open, and what lay behind the chosen door. Everyone was waiting. Every heart stopped beating.

Then, the young man turned. He walked slowly across to the two doors. Without the slightest hesitation, he went to the door on the right. Then he opened it. Which came out of the door: the lady or the tiger?

Appendix A: Reading Materials (continued)

Story G: One Thousand Dollars⁸

“One thousand dollars,” said Lawyer Tolman, “and here is the money.”

Young Gillian gave a short laugh.

“It’s such a difficult amount to receive,” he explained. “If it had been ten thousand then I might really be able to do something with it. Even fifty dollars would have been less trouble.”

“You heard your uncle’s will,” continued Lawyer Tolman. “I must remind you. According to the will, you must tell us, in writing, just how you spend this \$1,000.”

“I know” said the young man in a friendly manner.

Gillian went to his club. The members included some of the city’s rich and famous men. There he looked for Old Bryson.

Old Bryson was about forty. He sat quietly in a corner, reading a book.

“Hey, Old Bryson,” said Gillian. “I’ve a sad and funny story to tell you. My late uncle left me one thousand dollars. What can a man do with a thousand dollars?”

“I thought,” said Old Bryson, showing little interest, “that your uncle was worth about half a million.”

“He was,” agreed Gillian, joyously. “And that’s why it’s so funny. He has left the whole bag of money to help sick people. The housekeepers each receive \$10 and a ring. His nephew gets \$1,000.”

“You’ve always had enough money to spend,” noted Old Bryson.

“Lots,” said Gillian. “Uncle always gave me more than enough.”

“Any other family members?” asked Old Bryson.

“None.” Gillian looked at his cigarette. He played with it nervously for a moment. “Well, there is a Miss Hayden. She lives in my uncle’s house. She’s quiet and musical—the daughter of somebody who was unlucky enough to be his friend. I forgot to say that she, too, got the ring and \$10. I wish that was me. Then I could order two bottles of fine wine; I could give the ring to the waiter. And then forget about the whole business. Once again—tell me what to do with the money.”

“A thousand dollars,” Old Bryson began, “means much or little. One man may buy a happy home. A thousand dollars would buy milk for one hundred babies and save fifty of their lives. You could spend it in less than a half-hour in one of the city’s art shops. It could put a young man through university. You could move to a New Hampshire town and live very well for two years on it. Or you could pay to use a famous theatre for one night. Then people would come and listen to you. You could tell them how difficult it is to receive money from a rich uncle.

“That’s not very funny, Old Bryson,” said Gillian. “I asked you to tell me what I could do with a thousand dollars.”

“You?” said Bryson, with a gentle laugh. “Why, there’s only one thing you can do. You can go buy Miss Lotta Lauriere a diamond necklace. Then take yourself off to a farm in Idaho. “

⁸ Adapted from Oliviert, D. (1999). One Thousand Dollars. *Best Short Stories of O. Henry*. Easy Readers. Caves Bookstore Yohan Publications, 62-71.

"Thanks," said Gillian. "I think you're right. I did want to spend it all at one time."

Gillian then went to the Columbine Theatre by taxi.

He went to see Miss Lotta Lauriere. She was an actress. And she was preparing before the play began. "Now, what is it Bobby? I'm going on in two minutes."

"How would you like a necklace? I can buy you one for one thousand." Gillian asked.

"Oh, whatever you say," replied Miss Lauriere.

"Say, Bobby, did you see that necklace Delle Stacey had on the other night? Twenty-two hundred dollars at Tiffany's."

"Miss Lauriere for the opening scene!" cried the call boy outside.

Gillian returned to the taxi.

"What would you do with 1,000?" he asked the driver.

"Open a bar," said the taxi driver quickly. "I could make lots of money. I know a good place. It's a four-story building on a corner. On the second story—a Chinese restaurant; third floor-haircuts and beauty salons; fourth floor-card games and poolroom. If you were thinking of giving the mon—"

"Oh, no," said Gillian, "I just wanted to know. Drive until I tell you to stop."

Eight streets down Broadway Gillian opened the door and got out. A blind man sat upon a seat on the sidewalk selling pens and pencils. Gillian went out and stood before him.

"Excuse me," he said, "but would you mind telling me what you would do if you had a thousand dollars?"

"You got out of that taxi that just drove up, didn't you?" asked the blind man.

"I did," said Gillian.

"I guess you are all right," said the blind pencil dealer, "to ride in a taxi by daylight. Take a look at this, if you like."

Her took a small book from his coat and held it out. Gillian opened it and saw that it was a bank book. It showed that the blind man had a savings of \$1,785.

Gillian returned the book and got into the taxi. He asked the driver to take him to the law offices of Tolman and Sharp.

"I bet your pardon," Gillian asked Mr. Tolman, nicely, "but may I ask you a question? Was Miss Hayden left anything by my uncle's will besides the ring and the \$10?"

"Nothing," said Mr. Tolman.

"I thank you very much, sir," said Gillian, and out he went to his taxi. He gave the driver the address of his late uncle's home.

Miss Hayden was writing letters in the study. She was small and thin and clothed in black. But you would have noticed her eyes. Gillian walked in with his usual manner of looking at the world as unimportant.

"I've just come from old Tolman's," he explained. "They found a new part in the will. He willed you a thousand dollars. I was driving up this way and Tolman asked me to bring you the money. Here it is." Gillian laid the money on the table.

Miss Hayden turned white. "Oh!" she said, and again "Oh!" Gillian half turned and looked out of the window.

“I suppose, of course,” he said, in a low voice, “that you know I love you.”

“I am sorry,” said Miss Hayden, taking up her money.

“There is no use?” asked Gillian, almost light-heartedly.

“I’m sorry,” she said again.

“May I write a note?” asked Gillian, with a smile. She supplied him with paper and pen, and then went back to her chair.

Gillian wrote down just how he spent his thousand dollars in these words:

“Paid by the family bad boy, Robert Gillian, \$1,000 because of the happiness owed by Heaven to the best and dearest woman on earth.”

His taxi stopped again at the law offices.

“I have spent the thousand dollars,” he said happily. “And I have come to report just how it was spent. There is quite a feeling of summer in the air—don’t you think so, Mr. Tolman?” He placed the letter on the lawyer’s table.

Mr. Tolman didn’t touch the letter. He went to a door and called the other lawyer, Sharp. Together they walked back, holding a set of papers. Then Tolman began to speak.

“Mr. Gillian, there was a special part to your uncle’s will. He asked us not to open it until you had let us know how you spent the \$1,000. Since you have done as he asked, Mr. Sharp and I have read the special part of his will.”

“If you spend the money in a wise, kind or unselfish manner, then you can have another \$50,000. But if you have used this money as you have used money in the past—that is, with poor judgment—then Miriam Hayden will have the money instead. Now, we will look closely at your letter.

Mr. Tolman reached for the letter. But Gillian was a little faster in reaching for it. He quickly tore up the letter into small pieces. Then, he put them in his pocket.

“It’s all right,” he said, smilingly. “There is no need to open it. I don’t suppose you understand the horse-racing anyway. I lost the money on the races. Good-day to you, gentlemen.”

Tolman and Sharp shook their heads sadly. For they heard him singing happily in the hallway as he was leaving.



Summarizer

Class: _____ Circle: _____ Name: _____ No: _____

Story read _____ Date: _____

You are the **Summarizer**. Your job is to prepare a brief summary of today's reading. Your group is counting on you to give a quick statement that tells the key events, the main highlights, and the essence of today's reading.

Useful Expressions

In my words, this story is about...

First...next...then...finally

I learned...from this story

Key points or events:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Summary:

What Big Idea does the author possibly want us to think about?

* Adapted from Daniels, H. (2002). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in book clubs and reading groups*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers. and Chilcoat, C. L. (2003). *Literature circles guided by comprehension strategies*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.



Connector

Class: _____ Circle: _____ Name: _____ No: _____

Story read _____ Date: _____

You are the **Connector**. Your job is to find connections between the book and yourself or the world outside.

Useful Expressions

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The story reminds me of... ● That reminds me of... ● This story makes me think of... ● In the story...in the real life...I think... ● The characters (names) remind me of... ● My reaction is.....because ● If I were...I would... | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Compare and contrast at least two characters to yourself, your family, or your friends. ● Compare and contrast the story or the characters to other books/ what happens in the world |
|--|---|

* text to self: (connecting the reading to your own life)

Location: Page # _____ line ¶ _____

* text to text: (connecting this book to other writings, maybe a book or a movie) Location: Page # _____ line ¶ _____

* text to the world: (connecting this story to events in the world)

Location: Page # _____ line ¶ _____

* Adapted from Daniels, H. (2002). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in book clubs and reading groups*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers. and Chilcoat, C. L. (2003). *Literature circles guided by comprehension strategies*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.



Inferer

Class: _____ Circle: _____ Name: _____ No: _____
 Story read _____ Date: _____

You are the **Inferer**. Your job is to record the predictions and the conclusions you infer as you read. You will need to conclude and predict based on something from the text and your own feelings about why you think it will happen next. Remember to use your own experience to read between the lines as you infer.

Useful Expressions

I think...because

I bet...because

I wonder if....because

I imagine...because

I suppose...because

I predict...because

I think I will learn...because

Conclusions:

1. _____

Page _____ line _____

2. _____

Page _____ line _____

3. _____

Page _____ line _____

Predictions:

1. _____ Page _____ line _____

2. _____ Page _____ line _____

3. _____ Page _____ line _____

* Adapted from Daniels, H. (2002). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in book clubs and reading groups*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers. and Chilcoat, C. L. (2003). *Literature circles guided by comprehension strategies*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.



Illustrator

Class: _____ Circle: _____ Name: _____ No: _____

Story read _____ Date: _____

You are the **Illustrator**. Good readers make pictures in their minds as they read. Your job is to draw anything related to the reading. It can be a sketch, cartoon, diagram, flowchart, or stick-figure scene about anything in the story you liked or thought was important: a character, the setting, a problem, an exciting part, a surprise, a prediction of what will happen next, your feelings, ideas or anything else you can think of.

Presentation plan: Show your drawing to your group. Don't let your classmates see your written description, but let them guess and talk about it first. Then you can tell them about it.



-----fold the paper along this line during your presentation-----

Your descriptions of the drawing

* Adapted from Daniels, H. (2002). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in book clubs and reading groups*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers. and Chilcoat, C. L. (2003). *Literature circles guided by comprehension strategies*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Appendix C: Worksheets of Questions

Discussion questions (Questioner—Discussion Directors)

Class: _____ Circle: _____ Name: _____ No: _____

Story read : _____ Date: _____

Write down some good questions for others to talk about. (You can start with "Who/when/where/what/why/what if/how....etc.")

Questions about today's reading:

Q1:

Q2:

Q3:

Q4:

Q5:

Q6:



Appendix D: Response Log (Free Writing)

Response log Story read: _____ No: ____ Name: ____

Write your response to the story

A large, light gray watermark of the National Chengchi University logo is centered on the page. The logo is circular, featuring a stylized flower or cloud shape in the center. Inside this shape are the Chinese characters '政大' (Chengchi University). The outer ring of the logo contains the text '國立政治大學' (National Chengchi University) in Chinese and 'National Chengchi University' in English.

Appendix E: Literature Circles Self-Evaluation

Evaluate yourself each time on your participation during literature circles:

Class: No: Name: Date:

Checklists for the meeting

Before the meeting	check
I finished reading	
I marked the parts I wanted to share	
I brought my book	

In today's LC, I...

During the meeting	check
Listen:	
Smiled in a friendly way	
Faced the person who was speaking	
Make good eye contact	
Nodded or somehow showed I heard my classmates	
Listen carefully to everyone's ideas	
Took notes on what others say	
Books open to the same page	
Respond and share:	
Called people's names	
Using appropriate voice levels	
Responded to others	
Used the text to support an idea	
Repeated parts I was not sure about	
Asked questions about what classmates said	
Asked clarification questions when confused	
Asked classmates to repeat or re-explain parts that confused me	
Compared the book to my experiences	
Compared the book to another book	
Compared the book to the outside world	
Stayed on topic	
People took turns speaking	
Asked good questions	

My total score: _____ (increasing/ decreasing by _____ points)

Rate your group's performance: (circle)

1 - Very Poor 2 - Poor 3 - Average 4 - Good 5 - Excellent

Appendix F: Perception Questionnaire (in Chinese)

小圈圈問卷調查 Class: No: Name:

請反思這幾周我們在課堂上閱讀七篇故事的經驗，以及進行小圈圈閱讀其中五篇的經驗。請盡量忠實表達自己的意見，寫越多越好!

Story 1: Soapy's Choice

Story 2: Witches' Loaves

Story 3: After Twenty Years

Story 4: Tildy's Moment

Story 5: The Necklace

Story 6: The Lady or the Tiger?

Story 7: One Thousand Dollars

1. 你覺得這幾次小圈圈的活動中，學到最多的是甚麼? 請說明。

2. 哪個任務對你來說最簡單? _____ (請寫代號)

(A) Summarizer 摘要 (B) Connector 連結 (C) Inferrer 推論 (D) Illustrator 繪圖 (E) Questioner 提問

(F) Response log 讀後感

請說明理由

3. 哪個任務對你來說最困難? _____ (請寫代號)

(A) Summarizer 摘要 (B) Connector 連結 (C) Inferrer 推論 (D) Illustrator 繪圖 (E) Questioner 提問

(F) Response log 讀後感

請說明理由

4. 哪個任務對你來說最能幫助你了解文章? _____ (請寫代號)

(A) Summarizer 摘要 (B) Connector 連結 (C) Inferrer 推論 (D) Illustrator 繪圖 (E) Questioner 提問

(F) Response log 讀後感

請說明理由:

5. 哪個任務對你來說最能激發你思考? _____ (請寫代號)

(A) Summarizer 摘要 (B) Connector 連結 (C) Inferrer 推論 (D) Illustrator 繪圖 (E) Questioner 提問

(F) Response log 讀後感

請說明理由

Appendix F: Perception Questionnaire (in Chinese) (continued)

6. 你覺得在小組討論的過程中，讓你學到最多的是甚麼？

7. 你覺得小圈圈的學習方式讓你變得比較會思考嗎？請說明。

8. 你覺得小圈圈的學習方式讓你變得比較會問問題嗎？請說明。

9. 你覺得小圈圈的學習方式讓你變得比較會寫讀後感嗎？請說明。

10. 這次的小圈圈活動最讓我困擾的是：

11. 這次的小圈圈活動可以改進的地方是：

12. 其他想法