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EXPLORING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LITERATURE CIRCLES IN FOSTERING LEARNERS' CRITICAL THINKING AND DISCUSSION SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the effectiveness of literature circles in fostering learners' critical thinking and discussion skills in English classes. Using a quasi-experimental two-group pretest-posttest design, the study involved 80 Grade 11 STEM students from Isabela National High School–Senior High School, with 40 students assigned to the control group and 40 to the experimental group. The control group was taught through conventional literature teaching strategies, while the experimental group engaged in literature circle activities that emphasized student-led discussion, role-based participation, collaborative interpretation, and reflective analysis of literary texts. Data were gathered through critical thinking tests and discussion skills tasks administered before and after the intervention. Frequency, percentage, F-test, ANOVA for correlated samples, and eta squared were used to analyze the results. Findings revealed that both groups improved after instruction; however, the experimental group demonstrated greater gains in critical thinking, increasing from a pretest mean of 28.18 to a posttest mean of 46.88. Discussion skills also improved from 10.93 to 14.00. The computed eta squared values of .652 for critical thinking and .745 for discussion skills indicated large effect sizes, showing that literature circles had a strong and meaningful impact on learners' performance. The study concludes that literature circles are an effective student-centered strategy for enhancing analytical thinking, active participation, confidence, and meaningful classroom discourse among senior high school learners in authentic classroom contexts. It recommends the wider integration of literature circles in English instruction and other learning areas to promote higher-order thinking, collaborative learning, and deeper engagement with texts and comprehension.

Keywords: *Literature Circles, Critical Thinking Skills, Discussion Skills, English Instruction, Student-Centered Learning*

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, the ability to think critically and engage in meaningful discussions becomes more vital than ever. As students navigate a world filled with complex information, the development of critical thinking skills has become a primary goal of education, particularly in English classes where language is both a medium for expression and a tool for analysis. One effective pedagogical approach that has gained attention for promoting these skills is the use of literature circles. Literature circles involve small, student-led groups where learners engage in in-depth discussions about a shared text, fostering a collaborative environment that encourages students to take ownership of their learning.

The most recent results from the PISA or Programme for International Student Assessment have highlighted significant insights into the critical thinking abilities of Filipino students where they ranked second to the last. PISA, administered by the OECD or Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, evaluates educational systems worldwide by testing 15-year-old students' competencies in various domains, including Reading, Mathematics, Science, and more recently, creative thinking in 64 countries and economies worldwide.

Results of the study revealed that the Philippines scored an average of 14 points, which was second to the lowest next to Albania’s 13 mean score. The OECD has an average of 33 points.

The inclusion of critical thinking in the PISA (2024) assessment underscores the growing recognition of creativity as a critical skill for the 21st century. For Filipino students, the results indicate a mixed landscape. While some students have demonstrated a capacity for innovative problem-solving and original thought, the overall performance suggests that there is substantial room for improvement.

The data reveals that Filipino students often struggle with tasks that require them to generate, evaluate, and refine ideas—a core component of critical thinking. This finding points to potential deficiencies in the current educational approaches, which may be overly focused on rote learning and memorization rather than fostering creativity and critical thinking skills.

Addressing these challenges is crucial for the Philippines to equip its youth with the skills needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Emphasizing critical thinking in the curriculum, providing professional development for teachers, and integrating more creative problem-solving activities into classroom practice are essential steps towards enhancing students' creative competencies.

More importantly, while the latest PISA results on critical thinking among Filipino students highlight areas of concern, they also present an opportunity for educational reform. By prioritizing critical thinking in education, the Philippines can help its students become more adaptable, innovative, and prepared for the future.

Likewise, DepEd Order Memorandum No. 50 series of 2020 emphasizes the importance and need of developing and applying effective teaching strategies to promote critical and creative thinking, as well as other higher-order thinking skills.

In connection, as based on the 2023 NAT Results for Grade 12 students, Region 2 registered an improved performance wherein SDO City of Ilagan was Top 7 of the Top 10 Most Improved Schools Division Offices in the NAT Grade 12 from 2019-2023 focusing on three areas: Problem-Solving, Information Literacy, and Critical Thinking. In the comparative data from 2019 - 2023, SDO City of Ilagan Grade 12 students registered a 34.31 % to 45.83 % in Problem Solving, 32.67% to 46.84 in Information Literacy 32.25 % to 44.65 % in Critical Thinking. But despite the increase in performance, it was noted that the need for enhancement still prevails as the results are still further from the National and International Standards of proficiency (DepEd, 2023).

As a classroom teacher, the researcher has had the opportunity to engage with students from diverse backgrounds and academic levels. Over the years, he has observed a consistent pattern: many students struggle to think critically and approach problems with innovative solutions. This lack of critical and creative thinking often manifests as a reluctance to explore beyond standard answers, difficulty in generating original ideas, and a tendency to rely heavily on rote memorization rather than critical analysis.

As an English teacher with over a decade of experience, the researcher has observed a decline in students' critical thinking and engagement with literature. Previously, students eagerly analyzed texts like *The Great Gatsby* and *1984*, engaging in thoughtful discussions about complex themes and real-world issues. Today, however, such depth of engagement has become rare.

Many students now rely on surface-level reading—skimming texts, using summaries, and seeking quick answers—rather than exploring deeper meanings. Discussions that were once rich and analytical are often reduced to simple opinions, with students showing discomfort toward ambiguity and critical inquiry.

This shift is partly attributed to digital distractions and a culture of instant gratification, which prioritize speed over deep thinking. Additionally, students increasingly view schoolwork as tasks to complete for grades rather than opportunities for intellectual growth. As a result, critical thinking is often replaced by rote memorization and minimal analysis.

Despite this, a few students still demonstrate genuine engagement, though they are becoming the exception. This trend highlights the need for educators to intentionally

foster critical thinking, encourage open dialogue, and model deeper engagement with texts. Literature, after all, thrives on complexity and unanswered questions.

In response, the researcher emphasizes teaching the process of thinking—encouraging students to question, analyze, and build reasoned arguments. This study, therefore, explores literature circles as a strategy to promote critical thinking and discussion skills. Through collaborative dialogue, literature circles provide students with opportunities to analyze texts, express ideas, and engage with diverse perspectives—skills essential for both academic success and real-world application.

Through this study, the researcher aimed to investigate how literature circles can be effectively implemented in English classrooms and assess their impact on student's critical thinking and discussion abilities. By examining the structure, roles, and outcomes of literature circles, the research contributed to a better understanding of their potential to enrich the learning experience and prepare students for the demands of critical thinking in a globally connected society.

Research Questions

This study aimed to explore the effects of literature circles in fostering critical thinking and discussion skills in English classes.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. How does the control group perform in the critical thinking skills test and discussion skills task before and after the use of the conventional strategies?
2. How does the experimental group perform in the critical thinking skills test and discussion skills task before and after the use of the literature circles?
3. Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results of the control group in the critical thinking skills test and in their performance in the discussion skills task before and after the conventional strategy?
4. Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and posttest results of the experimental group in the critical thinking skills test and in their performance in the discussion task before and after the literature circles?
5. Is there a significant difference in the pre-tests of the control and experimental groups in the critical thinking skills test and in their performances in the discussion skills task before the administration of conventional strategies in the control group and literature circles in the experimental group?
6. Is there a significant difference in the post-tests of the control and experimental groups in the critical thinking skills test and in their performances in the discussion task after the administration of conventional strategy in the control group and literature circles in the experimental group?
7. How effective is the literature circle in fostering learners' critical thinking skills and discussion skills?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employs a quasi-experimental research design utilizing a two-group pretest-posttest approach to determine the effectiveness of the intervention. In this design, the participants were divided into two groups: one exposed to the treatment or intervention, and the other serving as the comparison group. Both groups were assessed before (pretest) and after (posttest) the implementation of the intervention, allowing the researchers to measure changes in performance and attribute improvements to the strategy applied. This design was chosen because it enables the identification of causal relationships while accommodating the practical constraints of conducting experiments in an educational setting. In a true experiment, participants are randomly assigned to treatment or control groups, ensuring that any differences observed can be attributed to the treatment or intervention. According to Budert-Waltz et al. (2026), in An introduction to the Quasi-experimental Design, quasi-experimental two-group pre-test and post-test design**,** is a powerful tool when you're studying the impact of an educational intervention—like literature circles—especially in real classroom settings where random assignment isn't always possible.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Isabela National High School-Senior High School, a premier secondary school in the province and is in San Vicente, City of Ilagan, Isabela. It offers two different Senior High School tracks, namely Academic and Arts and Design. The first track is further subdivided into strands. Under the Academic track are Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMMS), Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), and Accountancy, Business and Management (ABM). Currently, the INHS-Senior High School Department has approximately 2,500 senior high students and 80 faculty members. The accessibility of the setting served as the basis of why it was the chosen as the research environment.

Selection and Description of Respondents

The respondents of this study were 80 Grade 11 students coming from two sections of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) strand under the Academic track of Isabela National High School-SHS Department. The students were enrolled in 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World as part of their curriculum for the second semester. These 80 students belonged to two classes with 40 students each. They were grouped as the control and experimental.

Data Gathering Procedure

To ensure the successful implementation of the study, a structured process of communication was followed to obtain approval from the relevant authorities and to coordinate with the school where the research was conducted. A letter of intent was provided to the Offices of the Schools Division Superintendent and School Principal,

explaining the purpose of the study, the benefits to the school and students, and the requirements for conducting the research. Once approval was granted, the researcher formally notified the school administration and coordinated with the school to ensure the smooth implementation of the study. The floating of the questionnaire followed after the coordination was done.

A pretest was administered to both control and experimental groups to determine the subjects' initial level of critical thinking skills. During the pretest, the respondents read a short story for about 30 minutes. After, the copies were taken from them, and another 60 minutes was allotted for answering the researcher-made test. The pretests of the two groups were gathered and tallied by the researcher and evaluated by an eligible statistician. Soon after the pretest, the control and experimental groups were taught using different strategies. The conveyance of these strategies was done in separate meetings in a period of 1 month during the 3rd Quarter of the Second Semester. Also, during the implementation of the strategy in a specific group, research subjects from both groups were tasked to do activities regarding the short stories. The control group was taught using the conventional approach to teaching literature. The researcher explained some thematic, and stylistic features of the text and literary content. The students tried to interpret the literary, social, political, and historical context of the text. Lectures, reading of notes, and explanations were utilized in the discussion. On the other hand, the experimental group used the literature circle strategy utilizing the same short stories. During this session, the researcher introduced the idea of the literature circle and the procedures for implementing this strategy. Then, the research subjects were grouped into five, consisting of 10 members. Guide questions were handed in during the implementation process based on their focus and task to profoundly discuss the text: Group 1: Characters, Group 2: Setting, Group 3: Plot, Group 4: Symbols, and Group 5: Theme. The groups were given the freedom to choose their desired topic for an in-depth discussion of the story. While the students were sharing their thoughts, the researcher roamed around to monitor the discussions. Throughout the procedure, the main features/procedures of the literature circle introduced by Daniels (2002) and Moses (2009), were strictly followed such as: 1. Students chose their topic for the material, 2. Groups met on a regular and predictable schedule on students' domination in the topic discussion, 3. Notes to guide students' deliberations, and 4. The teacher acted as a facilitator. Daniels outlines the Roles in Literature Circles 2.0: Project Manager (coordinates tasks, mediates conflicts, ensures deadlines), Trend-Spotter (connects the text to media, resources, and students' lives), Bias Detective (questions perspectives and biases), Graphic Designer (creates nonlinguistic responses using technology), Tweeter (summarizes reading in 140 characters with hashtags/links), and Investigative Journalist (verifies facts and gathers supporting information).

After the activities, a posttest—identical to the pretest—was administered to both groups. Scores were collected and analyzed by the same statistician to measure students' progress.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The data gathered were subjected to statistical treatment to facilitate the interpretation of the results. The following statistical tools will be used to analyze the data.

Frequency and Percentage Count. These were used to analyze the pre-test and post-test performance of the control and experimental groups.

F-Test. The F-test is a statistical test used to determine whether there are significant differences between groups or variances. It is commonly applied in studies comparing the effectiveness of an intervention.

The ANOVA for Correlational Samples. This was used to determine the significant difference between the pretest and post-test performances of the control and experimental groups.

ETA Squared. This is a measure of effect size for ANOVA models. It is a standardized estimate of an effect size meaning that it is comparable across outcome variables measured using different units.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. How does the control group perform in the critical thinking skills test and discussion skills task before and after the use of the conventional strategies?

Table 1
Performance of the Control Group in the Critical Thinking Skills Test Before and After the Use of Conventional Strategy

SCORE RANGE	DESCRIPTION	BEFORE (PRE TEST)		AFTER (POSTTEST)	
		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
49-60	OUTSTANDING	0	0	3	7.5
37-48	VERY GOOD	3	7.5	10	25
25-36	GOOD	14	35	14	35
13-24	FAIR	17	42.5	13	32.5
0-12	POOR	6	15	0	0
TOTAL		40	100	40	100

Table 1 shows the scores of the control group in their critical thinking skills test before and after the use of the conventional strategies like lecture and explanation of themes, characters, and literary elements, close reading and textual analysis, storytelling or read-aloud by the teacher, question-and-answer or Socratic discussions, guided reading with teacher support, group work for collaborative interpretation, graphic

organizers to map plot and characters, background/contextual study of the author or period, memorization and recitation of poems or passages, drill and practice of literary terms, traditional written outputs like book reports and essays and translation/paraphrasing of difficult text .

As presented, for the pre-test, among the 40 respondents, six or 15% of the them has poor scores. 17 or 42.5 of the respondents have fair scores. 14 or 35% of the respondents garner good remark while three or 7.5% of them have very good scores and none tallies an outstanding score. For the post-test, none scores poor. 13 or 32.5 of the respondents get fair scores. 14 or 35 of them tally good scores. 10 or 25% of the respondents register very good marks and three or 7.5% of them are outstanding.

The results imply that while conventional strategies can produce some improvement in students' critical thinking skills, their impact remains limited, as most learners still fall within the "Fair" to "Good" performance levels even after the intervention. The slight increase in higher performance categories and the elimination of the "Poor" level suggests that traditional methods may help build basic understanding but are less effective in developing higher-order thinking skills. This indicates a need to supplement or replace conventional approaches with more interactive, student-centered strategies that actively engage learners in analysis, evaluation, and discussion to achieve more substantial gains in critical thinking.

Table 2
Performance of the Control Group in the Discussion Skills Before and After the Conventional Strategies

SCORE RANGE	DESCRIPTION	BEFORE		AFTER	
		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
17-20	EXCELLENT	0	0	3	7.5
13-16	VERY GOOD	4	10 %	17	42.5
9-12	FAIR	23	57.5%	16	40
5-8	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	13	32.5%	4	10
TOTAL		40	100	40	100

Table 2 shows the performance of the control group in their discussion task before and after the use of the conventional strategies. Prior to the strategy, 13 or 32.5% needs improvement. 23 or 57.5% is fair. Four or 10% is very good while none is outstanding. After the strategy, four or 10% needs improvement. 16 0r 40% is fair, 17 or 42.5% is very good and 3 or 7.5% is excellent.

It can be gleaned that there is an improvement in the discussion skills of students. Through the use of the rubric, students improved in their participation, active listening, clarity and articulation, respect for others' opinions and critical thinking asserting the study of Sarigöz (2023) on Teaching the 21st Century Learning Skills with the Critical Thinking Technique that while conventional teaching (lecture) may still be useful — especially with

large classes or when introducing new information — it tends to be less effective in fostering student engagement, discussion participation, and active learning compared to interactive methods.

2. How does the experimental group perform in the critical thinking skills test and discussion skills task before and after the use of the literature circles?

Table 3
Performance of the Experimental Group in the Critical Thinking Test Before and After the Literature Circles Strategy

SCORE RANGE	DESCRIPTION	BEFORE (PRE TEST)		AFTER (POSTTEST)	
		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
49-60	OUTSTANDING	0	0%	17	42.5%
37-48	VERY GOOD	5	12.5%	20	50%
25-36	GOOD	19	47.5%	3	7.5%
13-24	FAIR	14	35%	0	0%
0-12	POOR	2	5%	0	0%
TOTAL		40	100	40	100

Table 3 shows the pre and post test scores of the experimental group in their critical thinking skills test before and after the use of Literature Circles strategy.

For the pre-test, it can be gleaned from the table that among the 40 participants, two or 5% has poor scores. 14 or 35% has fair scores. 19 or 47.5% is good. 5 or 12.5% is very good and 0% for outstanding. For the post-test, none is poor and fair. Three or 7.5% gets good rating. 20 or 50% improves to very good while 17 or 42.5% is outstanding.

This shows an upgrade in the Critical thinking skill of the students like analysis, interpretation, evaluation, inference, problem-solving, decision-making, creativity and reflection after the use of Literature Circle maintaining the claim of Castro's (2023) research which evaluated the effectiveness of literature circles in enhancing critical thinking skills among university students. The findings demonstrated that the experimental group employing literature circles scored higher in post-test assessments compared to the control group, highlighting the strategy's efficacy in fostering critical thinking.

It can be observed that the students improved results in the post-test attesting to the claim of Matmool and Kaowiwattanakul's (2023) Study which focused on the impact of literature circle activities on English-speaking and critical thinking skills. The findings

revealed that students demonstrated improvement in their English-speaking abilities as evidenced by pre-test and post-test results.

Table 4
Performance of the Experimental Group in their Discussion Skills Before and After the Literature Circles Strategy

SCORE RANGES	DESCRIPTION	BEFORE		AFTER	
		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
17-20	EXCELLENT	2	5%	10	25%
13-16	VERY GOOD	9	22.5%	14	35%
9-12	FAIR	19	47.5%	14	35%
5-8	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	10	25%	2	5%
TOTAL		40	100	40	100

Table 4 shows the performance of the experimental group in their discussion task before and after the use of the Literature Circles Strategy. Prior the administration of Literature Circles Strategy, it can be gathered from the table that among the 40 participants, 10 or 25% has Needs Improvement remarks. 19 or 47.5% is fair. Nine or 22.5% is very good and two or 5% has excellent rating. After, only two or 5% needs improvement. 14 or 35% for both poor and very good while 10 0r 25% is excellent.

This shows a great improvement in the discussion skills of students confirming again the claim of Castro (2023) that Literature Circles effectively foster critical thinking and discussion skills. Moreover, the students' testimonies speak of the effectiveness of using Literature Circles. *"In the group you felt like you had to do your part so you would have stuff to talk about. Literature circles make me feel "I belong" in the conversation and this gives me the chance to be more involved and participative challenging my skills and honing my potential to be more critical and discerning."* John (not his real name) said. Meanwhile, Jane (not her real name) further said *"I find it easier to understand the text because the system of division of roles in reading makes her understand more and her insight become deeper about the story."* While Justine (not her real name) believed that reading has become an enjoyable journey for me using Literature Circle. *"Before I usually read English stories at home by myself, but now I have the chance to voice my opinion in group and listen to others' opinions."*, she stressed.

3. Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results of the control group in the critical thinking skills test and in their performance in the discussion skills task before and after the conventional strategies?

Table 5
Test of Significant Difference between the Pre-test and Post-test Results of the Control Group in the Critical Thinking Test and in Their Performance in the Discussion Skills Task Before and After the Conventional Strategies

Group	TEST SCORES	Test	Mean	Significance of F	Decision	Remarks
Control	CRITICAL THINKING TEST	Before	**23.85**	.000	Reject Ho	There is Significant Difference
		After	**33.1**			
	DISCUSSION SKILLLS TASK	Before	**9.93**	.000	Reject Ho	There is Significant Difference
		After	**12.93**			

Table 5 shows the test of significant difference between the pre-test and post-test of the control group in the critical thinking test and in their performance in the discussion task before and after the conventional strategies using Analysis of Variance F-test at .05 level of significance.

As shown, the significance of F values between the pre-test and post-test of the control groups in the critical thinking test and their performance in the discussion task before and after the conventional strategies were less than .05 resulting to the rejection of null hypothesis which means that there is significant difference between the pre-test and posttest of the control group in the critical thinking test, and the control group in their performance in the discussion task before and after the conventional strategies.

The findings affirm that conventional teaching strategies can still enhance students' critical thinking and discussion skills, as evidenced by the significant improvement in post-test results. This supports the idea that structured, teacher-centered approaches remain effective in facilitating learning when properly implemented. Similar findings were reported by Lee et al. (2016) and colleagues, who found that even traditional instructional methods can contribute to improvements in learners' critical thinking, though more student-centered approaches yield greater gain

4. Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and posttest results of the experimental group in the critical thinking skills test and in their performance in the discussion task before and after the literature circles?

Table 6
Test of Significant Difference between the Pre-test and Post-test Results of the Experimental Group in the Critical Thinking Test And in Their Performance in the Discussion Task Before and After the Literature Circles

Group	TEST SCORES	Test	Mean	Significance of F	Decision	Remarks
Experimental	CRITICAL THINKING TEST	Before	**28.18**	.000	Reject Ho	There is Significant Difference
		After	**46.88**			
	DISCUSSION SKILLLS TASK	Before	**10.93**	.000	Reject Ho	There is Significant Difference
		After	**14.00**			

Table 6 shows test of the significant difference between the pre-test and post-test of the experimental group in the critical thinking test and in their performance in the discussion task before and after the Literature circles using Analysis of Variance F-test at .05 level of significance.

As shown, the significance of F values between the pre-test and posttest of the experimental groups in the critical thinking test and their performance in the discussion task before and after the literature circles are less than .05 resulting to the rejection of the null hypothesis which means that here is significant difference between pre-test and posttest of the experimental group in the in the critical thinking test in their performance in the discussion task before and after the Literature Circles.

Hence, the results indicate that the students show a significant improvement in their achievements in both critical thinking test and in their discussion skills affirming the study of Johnson & Johnson (1999) on Learning Together and Alone: Cooperative, Competitive, and Individualistic Learning exploring the impact of cooperative learning methods, including Literature Circles, on students' ability to think critically and engage in collaborative discussions. The researchers found that students in cooperative learning environments, such as Literature Circles, demonstrated higher levels of critical thinking and problem-solving skills compared to students in competitive or individualistic learning settings. The study suggests that when students work together in small groups to discuss and analyze literature, they are more likely to challenge each other's ideas, refine their arguments, and develop a deeper understanding of the material.

Hence, the results indicate that the students show a significant improvement in their achievements in both critical thinking test and in their discussion skills supporting Daniels' (2001) foundational work on Literature Circles which highlights how the strategy encourages students to think critically about texts while engaging in meaningful discussions. Daniels emphasizes that the collaborative nature of Literature Circles fosters an environment where students can develop their analytical skills, articulate their ideas,

and listen critically to the perspectives of others. Daniels found that literature circles help students engage with the text in a deeper way than traditional classroom discussion. This deeper engagement leads to more sophisticated critical thinking, as students are encouraged to not only interpret the text but also critically assess it in relation to their own ideas and those of their peers.

The data tend to show that when Literature Circles are implemented properly (with small groups, discussions, roles, peer interaction), students improve on measurable aspects of reading comprehension, textual analysis, reasoning, and critical thinking — more so than with traditional lecture-based or individual reading-only strategies.

5. Is there a significant difference in the pre-tests of the control and experimental groups in the critical thinking skills test and in their performances in the discussion skills task before the administration of conventional strategies in the control group and literature circles in the experimental group?

Table 7
Test of Significant Difference in the Pre-tests Of the Control and Experimental Groups in the Critical Thinking Test and in Their Performances in the Discussion Task before the Administration of Conventional Strategy for the Control Group and Literature Circles in the experimental group

SKILLS	Group	Test	Mean	Significance F	Decision	Remarks
CRITICAL THINKING) TEST	Control	Pre-test	**23.85**	.037	Reject Ho	There is Significant Difference
	Experimental	Pre-test	**28.18**			
DISCUSSION SKILLLS TASK	Control	Before	**9.93**	.130	Accept Ho	There is No Significant Difference
	Experimental	Before	**10.93**			

Table 7 shows the test of significant difference in the pre-tests of the control and experimental groups in the critical thinking skills test and in their performances in the discussion skills task before the conventional strategies for the control group and Literature Circles in the experimental group using Analysis of Variance F-test at .05 level of significance.

For the pre-tests of the control and experimental groups in the critical thinking skills test, the significance of F value is less than .05 resulting to the rejection of null hypothesis which means that there is significant difference in the pre-tests results of the control and experimental groups in the critical thinking skills test.

As presented in the table, the significance of F value in the performances of the control and experimental groups in the discussion skills task before conventional

strategies for the control group and literature circles in the experimental group is greater than .05 resulting to the acceptance of the null hypothesis which means that there is no significant difference in the performances of the control and experimental groups in the discussion skills task before conventional strategies for the control group and literature circles in the experimental group.

Hence, the results indicate that the students in the experimental group show better performance in their critical thinking skills test than those students in the control group. On the other hand, the control and experimental groups show no significant difference in their discussion skills task performance although the experimental group has a higher result than the control group.

This proves the study of Gilles (2007) on Improving Reading Comprehension and Critical Thinking through Literature Circles which focused on high school students participating in literature circles, with an emphasis on how this model improved both reading comprehension and critical thinking skills. The study found that students in literature circles were better able to analyze texts, make connections between the material and real-world contexts, and engage in more thoughtful discussions. The results suggest that literature circles are an effective way to foster higher-order thinking in students. The interactive nature of the method encourages students to evaluate texts more critically, improving not only their comprehension but also their ability to discuss ideas in a structured and respectful manner.

6. Is there a significant difference in the post-tests of the control and experimental groups in the critical thinking skills test and in their performances in the discussion task after the administration of conventional strategy in the control group and literature circles in the experimental group?

Table 8
Test of Significant Difference in the Post-tests of the Control and Experimental Groups in the Critical Thinking Skills Test and in their Performances in the Discussion Skills task after the Administration of the Conventional Strategy for the Control Group and Literature Circles in the Experimental Group

SKILLS	Group	Performance	Mean	Significance F	Decision	Remarks
CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS	Control	Post - test	33.10	.000	Reject Ho	There is Significant Difference
	Experimental	Post - test	46.88			
DISCUSSION SKILLS TASK	Control	After	12.93	.120	Accept Ho	There is No Significant Difference
	Experimental	After	14.00			

Table 8 shows the test of significant difference in the post-tests of the control and experimental groups in the critical thinking skills test and in their performances in the discussion skills task before the conventional strategy for the control group and literature circles in the experimental group using Analysis of Variance F-test at .05 level of significance.

For the post-tests of the control and experimental groups in the critical thinking skills test, the significance of F value is less than .05 resulting to the rejection of the null hypothesis which means that there is a significant difference in the post-tests results of the control and experimental groups in the critical thinking skills test.

As presented in the table, the significance of F value in the performances of the control and experimental groups in their performances in the discussion skills task before the conventional strategies for the control group and literature circles in the experimental group is greater than .05 resulting to the acceptance of the null hypothesis which means that there is no significant difference in the performances of the control and experimental groups in the discussion skills task after the conventional strategies for the control group and literature circles for the experimental group.

Hence, the results indicate that the students in the experimental group show better performance than the students in the control group in their critical thinking skills test. On the contrary, on their discussion skills test, the control and experimental groups show no significant difference in their discussion skills task although the experimental group has a higher result than the control group supporting Moeller and Moeller's (2002) study on Using Literature Circles to Improve Reading, Writing, and Critical Thinking Skills of High School Students. This study examined high school students who participated in literature circles as part of their English Language Arts Curriculum. The findings showed that literature circles helped students improve not only their reading comprehension but also their ability to think critically and engage in discussions about the themes, characters, and plot of the texts. The study concluded that literature circles provide a unique opportunity for high school students to practice critical thinking in a social context, improving their ability to articulate complex ideas and respond to the arguments of others. The researchers noted that students were more confident in their discussion skills and better able to engage in reflective thinking.

7. How effective is the literature circle in fostering learners' critical thinking skills and discussion skills?

Table 9
Effect Size of Literature Circles in Fostering Learners' Discussion Skills Critical Thinking Skills

Group	Tests	Mean	N	Significance of F	ETA Squared	Effect Size
CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS	Pre-test	28.18	40	**1.7E-17**	.652	Large Effect
	Posttest	46.88	40			

DISCUSSION SKILLS	Pre-test	10.93	40	**1.7E-17**	.745	Large Effect
	Posttest	14.00	40			

Table 9 presents the effect size of the Literature Circle in fostering learners' discussion skills and critical thinking skills using Eta squared (η^2) as the measure of effect size.

As shown in the table, the mean score for discussion skills increased from 10.93 in the pre-test to 14.00 in the post-test, while the mean score for critical thinking skills improved from 28.18 to 46.88. The significance of F values for both variables is 1.7E-17, which is far below the 0.05 level of significance, indicating a highly significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results.

In terms of effect size, the computed Eta squared values are .745 for discussion skills and .652 for critical thinking, both of which are interpreted as large effect sizes. This means that a substantial proportion of the improvement in students' discussion and critical thinking skills can be attributed to the use of the Literature Circle.

These results suggest that the Literature Circle is highly effective in enhancing both discussion skills and critical thinking skills of learners. The large effect sizes indicate that the strategy has a strong and meaningful impact on students' learning outcomes, supporting the use of collaborative and interactive approaches in developing higher-order thinking skills.

The results affirm The Effect of Literature Circles on Students' Critical Thinking and Discussion Skills by Maloch (2002) which investigated the role of literature circles in developing students' critical thinking and enhancing their ability to engage in meaningful discussions. Literature circles are small, student-led groups that discuss a shared book or text. Students in these groups take on specific roles (such as summarizer, questioner, connector, etc.), which helps foster deeper engagement with the material and encourages diverse perspectives. The study found that students involved in literature circles demonstrated significant improvements in their critical thinking skills. This was especially true for students who took on roles that required them to analyze and question the text deeply, such as the "questioner" or "critic." The structured format of literature circles helped them develop analytical skills through peer interaction, interpretation, and argumentation. Students engaged in literature circles learned to communicate more effectively. They had to present their viewpoints, listen to others, defend their ideas, and build on the ideas of their peers. This promoted collaborative learning and developed their ability to engage in thoughtful and respectful debates and the study also highlighted that students were more engaged and took ownership of their learning during literature circle discussions. They became more confident in expressing their thoughts, questioning ideas, and responding to others in a reflective manner.

Conclusions

The findings showed the effectiveness of literature circles' effectiveness in developing students' critical thinking skills, as they were encouraged to analyze texts

more deeply, question ideas, and consider multiple perspectives. Additionally, students demonstrated improved discussion skills through Literature Circles, including active listening, respectful disagreement, and building on the ideas of others. The collaborative nature of literature circles fostered an environment where students felt comfortable expressing their opinions and engaging in higher-level thinking.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are given:

1. Education planners are encouraged to integrate Literature Circles into the curriculum, provide teachers with training on facilitating meaningful discussions, and develop resource packages that support critical-thinking instruction. They should strengthen performance-based assessments, allocate funds for reading programs, and promote a school-wide culture of reading. Monitoring and evaluation systems must be established to track student progress and improve implementation, while research and innovation should be supported to inform evidence-based decisions. Finally, planners should ensure inclusive approaches for diverse learners and strengthen collaboration among teachers, parents, and community stakeholders to sustain the development of students' critical thinking skills and discussion skills.

2. School administrators and educational leaders should prioritize creating a supportive environment for strategies that enhance students' critical thinking skills and discussion skills, such as Literature Circles. They should ensure that teachers receive ongoing professional development, provide necessary learning materials, and allocate resources for reading programs and classroom libraries. These leaders must establish clear guidelines, encourage consistent implementation, and monitor progress through regular classroom observations and data-driven evaluation. Additionally, they should promote a school-wide culture of reading, support inclusive practices for diverse learners, and foster collaboration among teachers, parents, and community partners. They mut sustain programs that strengthen student engagement, comprehension, and higher-order thinking.

3. Supervisors should guide and support teachers in implementing strategies that develop students' critical thinking skills and discussion skills, such as Literature Circles. They should provide coaching, mentoring, and feedbacking to ensure fidelity in instructional practices while helping teachers integrate discussion-based and student-centered approaches. Supervisors must monitor classroom implementation, review lesson plans, and evaluate student outcomes to identify areas for improvement. They should also facilitate access to professional development, instructional resources, and best practices, while encouraging collaboration among teachers. They must promote reflective practice, data-driven decision-making, and adherence to inclusive strategies to ensure that teaching interventions effectively enhance students' analytical, communicative, and critical thinking abilities.

4. Because literature circles positively improve critical thinking skills and discussion skills, teachers are encouraged to use them regularly, especially in literature or language

classes. This strategy can be adjusted for different grade levels and abilities. To make it more effective, teachers should provide clear guidelines, assign roles (like discussion leader or summarizer), and give guiding questions to keep discussions focused and organized.

5. Literature circles can be used in other subjects like history, science, and social studies to help students think critically and connect ideas across topics. Teachers should also form diverse groups so students can share different perspectives, making discussions richer and improving critical thinking.

6. Future researchers must explore the long-term effects of literature circles on students' academic performance and how this approach impacts other skills, such as writing or problem-solving. They must investigate how different group sizes or specific modifications to the literature circle model affect student outcomes. Additionally, they must explore the impact of literature circles in virtual or hybrid learning environments could provide valuable insights for the evolving educational landscape.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The researchers ensured that this study was conducted in accordance with accepted ethical standards in educational research. Prior to the conduct of the study, permission was secured from the concerned school authorities, including the Schools Division Superintendent, school principal, and other relevant offices. The purpose, procedures, and significance of the study were clearly explained to the participants and concerned personnel. Since the respondents were Grade 11 students, appropriate consent and assent procedures were observed, ensuring that participation was voluntary and based on proper understanding of the study.

The researchers upheld the rights, welfare, privacy, and dignity of all participants throughout the research process. Student-respondents were informed that their participation would not affect their grades, academic standing, or relationship with their teachers. They were also given the freedom to withdraw from the study at any stage without any penalty. All data gathered from the pretests, posttests, and discussion skills tasks were treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic and research purposes.

To protect the identity of the respondents, no real names were disclosed in the presentation, analysis, or interpretation of data. Responses, scores, and testimonies were presented in aggregate form or through pseudonyms when necessary. The researchers also ensured fairness by applying appropriate instructional procedures to both the control and experimental groups. Furthermore, the study avoided any form of harm, discrimination, coercion, or undue influence. Proper acknowledgment of sources was observed to maintain academic honesty and integrity. Overall, the study complied with ethical principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, beneficence, and respect for participants.

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