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Integrating Literature Circles Strategy (LCs) into Bilingual Curricula: A Pathway to Enhanced Writing and Storytelling Performance Skills in the Egyptian Japanese Schools

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2025 - 1447

Abstract:

This study examined the effectiveness of a literature circles strategy (LCs) based program in developing writing and storytelling performance skills among primary-stage pupils at the Egyptian Japanese school. The program attempted to address the potential benefits of a student-centered approach like the literature circles strategy. The study utilized the one-group quasi-experimental design. Participants in the study were fifth-year primary school students (25) at the Hurghada Egyptian-Japanese School. Tools of the study included writing and storytelling performance checklists, an LCs-based program (with student and teacher books and an online platform), in addition to the writing and storytelling performance skills tests. Results showed that there are statistically significant mean differences between participants' mean scores in the pre-post testing of writing and storytelling performance skills, favoring the post-test. This indicated the effectiveness of the literature circles strategy-based program over the participants. The study recommended focusing on the stages of writing and storytelling performance, including generating and organizing ideas and thoughts, using cohesive devices, and employing descriptive and persuasive language, in addition to presentation skills, as they promote pupils' writing and storytelling performance skills. The study delves into the importance of LCs concerning writing and storytelling while highlighting the role of LCS in improving these skills. Findings indicate that LCS has the potential to address writing difficulties and enhance storytelling performance skills. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how innovative teaching strategies like LCS can enhance language learning outcomes.

Keywords: Literature circles strategy (LCs), Writing, English Language Storytelling performance.

ملخص:

تناولت هذه الدراسة فعالية برنامج قائم على استراتيجية حلقات الأدب في تنمية مهارات الكتابة ورواية القصص لدى تلاميذ المرحلة الابتدائية في المدرسة المصرية اليابانية. سعى البرنامج إلى دراسة الفوائد المحتملة لنهج يركز على الطالب، مثل استراتيجية حلقات الأدب. استخدمت الدراسة تصميم المجموعة الواحدة شبه التجريبي. شارك في الدراسة ۲٥ طالبًا من الصف الخامس الابتدائي في مدرسة الغردقة المصرية اليابانية. تضمنت أدوات الدراسة قوائم تدقيق لأداء الكتابة ورواية القصص، وبرنامجًا قائمًا على حلقات الأدب (يتضمن كتبًا للطلاب والمعلمين ومنصة إلكترونية)، بالإضافة إلى اختبارات مهارات الكتابة ورواية القصص. أظهرت النتائج وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين متوسط درجات المشاركين في الاختبارين القبلي والبعدي لمهارات الكتابة ورواية القصص، لصالح الاختبار البعدي. وهذا يدل على فعالية البرنامج القائم على استراتيجية حلقات الأدب على المشاركين. أوصت الدراسة بالتركيز على مراحل أداء الكتابة ورواية القصص، بما في ذلك توليد الأفكار وتنظيمها، واستخدام أساليب الربط، وتوظيف اللغة الوصفية والإقناعية، بالإضافة إلى مهارات العرض، لما لها من دور في تعزيز مهارات الكتابة ورواية القصص لدى التلاميذ. وتتناول الدراسة أهمية مراكز التعلم فيما يتعلق بالكتابة ورواية القصص، مع تسليط الضوء على دور مراكز التعلم في تحسين هذه المهارات. وتشير النتائج إلى أن مراكز التعلم لديها القدرة على معالجة صعوبات الكتابة وتعزيز مهارات سرد القصص. وتساهم هذه الدراسة في تعميق فهمنا لكيفية مساهمة استراتيجيات التدريس المبتكرة، مثل مراكز التعلم، في تحسين نتائج تعلم اللغة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجية حلقات الأدب، الكتابة، أداء سرد القصص باللغة الإنجليزية.

Introduction:

English has emerged as a global language, playing an essential role in communication, education, and professional advancement. Teaching and learning English unlock a wealth of opportunities, enabling individuals to connect across diverse cultures, access extensive knowledge resources, and thrive in the international job market. In academia, English serves as the dominant language of research, technology, and higher education, making it essential for both students and scholars. Furthermore, proficiency in English fosters critical thinking, creativity, and cross-cultural understanding. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, mastering English empowers individuals to engage in global dialogues, promoting collaboration and progress. Therefore, prioritizing English education is crucial for personal growth and societal progress.

Researchers worldwide utilize English as a universal medium to disseminate their research, convey discoveries, and exchange insights across diverse fields. In his study, Kurniawan (2024) found that learning English as a language has various benefits in several fields, including education, science, technology, business, travel, and tourism. This linguistic framework not only facilitates collaboration among scholars from various disciplines but also enhances the accessibility of knowledge to a broader audience. As the dominant language of academia, English plays a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of global research initiatives.

One of the primary purposes of learning languages is to facilitate communication, both oral and written. For decades, the approach of dealing with English as a subject requiring a specific level of proficiency has led students to concentrate on studying it primarily to achieve high grades. In response to this, communicative language approaches have emerged, empowering students to take ownership of their learning and actively engage with the subject matter. These approaches encourage students to

focus on learning English for the sake of communication, which, in turn, positively impacts their academic performance.

Productive language skills, namely writing and speaking, play a fundamental role in language classrooms as they stem from a well-perceived language through reading and listening (receptive language skills). Consequently, the development of reading and listening competencies inherently contributes to the enhancement of productive language skills. According to Van Huy et al. (2024), Mastering productive language skills, particularly speaking and writing, is vital for success in careers, education, and everyday social and civic life. By developing these abilities, individuals can communicate their ideas effectively, foster meaningful connections, and navigate diverse interactions with clarity and confidence. Scholars are thereby encouraged to refine their linguistic proficiency, ensuring that their contributions resonate effectively within the international scientific community.

Theoretical framework:

The current study emphasizes the development of productive language skills within bilingual contexts. It explores the effectiveness of implementing the literature circles strategy in Egyptian settings to enhance students' writing and storytelling performance skills. This study aligns with the philosophy of Egyptian Japanese Schools and supports their overarching objectives, as well as the principles of Education 2.0. Unlike traditional schools, students in Egyptian Japanese schools are not merely trained to pass exams. Instead, they are cultivated to embody various attributes that equip them to become thoughtful and responsible citizens in the future, fostering a strong body, a creative mind, and a well-rounded personality (holistic learning). They are taught to be independent, responsible, and adept problem solvers.

This research offers an overview of Education 2.0, with a particular focus on its themes and the cultivation of life skills. It

will also investigate the study variables associated with the LCS as an independent variable, while assessing writing and storytelling performance skills as dependent variables. Furthermore, the research illustrates how the study aligns with 21st-century skills, emphasizing the roles of both teachers and students in implementing the literature circles strategy.

Education 2.0 in Egypt:

Education 2.0, which emerged in Egypt in 2018, embodies a progressive approach to learning that emphasizes the holistic development of students. This educational framework encourages learners not only to acquire knowledge but also to cultivate essential life skills, prepare for the workforce, and develop their identities. In light of these principles, all lessons and activities within the Egyptian Japanese Schools must be thoughtfully designed to align with the core tenets of both the Egyptian Japanese educational model and Education 2.0. This study aims to focus on the integration of the Literature Circles Strategy (LCs) to enhance specific language skills in the context of Egyptian Japanese Schools, ensuring that students are equipped to thrive in today's dynamic world.

Figure (1) Themes and Skills of the Egyptian educational system 2.0, Source: Discovery Education tech book
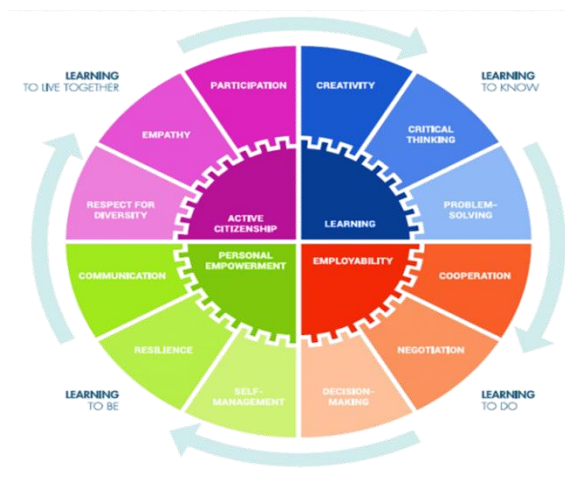
Education 2.0 is founded on four essential pillars as shown in Figure 1: learning to live, learning to work, learning to know, and learning to be. Each of these pillars encompasses a range of life skills pertinent to living with dignity, communicating effectively with others globally, engaging in various occupations, and pursuing knowledge. Acquiring knowledge (learn to know) involves scientific skills such as innovation, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Gaining workplace skills (learn to work) encompasses vocational abilities like cooperation, negotiation, decision-making, and productivity. Personal development (learn to be) includes skills such as communication, perseverance, self-management, and accountability. Lastly, fostering coexistence skills (learn to live) requires skills such as participation, empathy, and respect for diversity, alongside values and issues, such as mercy and consideration for environmental challenges.

The current study capitalizes on the characteristics of curricula in Education 2.0 when combined with student-centered approaches, all under the overarching framework of holistic education that distinguishes Egyptian Japanese schools from other educational institutions in Egypt. Therefore, the following section of this research explores literature circles as a student-centered educational model that emphasizes active student participation in an engaging learning environment.

Literature circles:

Literature circles strategy, also known as LCs, is not a new strategy for developing language skills. However, it was utilized decades ago to enhance reading specifically. Daniels (2002) defined it as "small, peer-led discussion groups whose members have chosen to read the same story, poem, article, or book" P. 2. It was used before under the name of "book clubs" or "reading groups" P. 1. While Varita (2017) claimed that LCs are "discussion groups where the readers gather for reading discussions not only for the pleasure of reading but to develop critical capacities for thinking and reading" P. 237. The literature circles strategy has gained its

reputation from the leading role of students in choosing the reading materials, engaging in discussions, sharing thoughts on what they read, and analyzing it collaboratively.

In the literature circles strategy, students assume various roles based on the reading material (e.g., book, story, poem), which encourages them to take responsibility for their responses and learn collaboratively based on their understanding of the text. According to Matmool & Kaowiwattanakul (2023) LCS involves five different roles: "Discussion leader, Summarizer, Connector, Word master, Passage person, and Artistic adventurer" P. 34. They also argued that this strategy offered many advantages through decades that it elevates language level, speaking and comprehension skills in addition to developing twenty-first-century skills such as critical thinking, and instructional and learning assessment.

The social nature of LCS facilitates peer-to-peer learning as they work on the text together under the guidance of the teacher. In their study, Ying & Hwa (2018) highlighted several advantages of literature circles. They found that these circles encouraged active participation among students, enabling them to establish personal connections with the texts and cultivate their interpretations. During discussions, students articulated their perspectives in English and offered support to peers who were struggling with vocabulary challenges. Observational data revealed their enthusiasm for discussing the events of the story. Additionally, they engaged in critical analysis, which led to a deeper understanding of the narrative (pp. 13-16). Therefore, literature circles draw on what students know in an engaging learning environment, allowing students to reflect on themselves and their experiences as well.

Writing and storytelling skills:

Productive language skills represented in speaking and writing are of high significance since Adawiyah (2018) expresses that "language, both spoken and written, is a tool to convey and share meaning, message, information, ideas, and perspectives" P. 1.

It has the power to perceive the written or spoken text from the writer's perspective and live the same experience through the use of appropriate vocabulary and visuals. In this introduction, we will explore the importance of writing as a language skill and review storytelling performance skills as a productive skill.

Writing is a fundamental language skill that works as a tool to communicate thoughts, express ideas, and convey information through diverse written forms. It serves as a means with tremendous impact on effective communication as pupils articulate their thoughts, emotions, and knowledge in a structured and organized manner, provided that it challenges pupils' critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Pupils' initial understanding of writing involves expressing their personal information. This suggests that the writing process is highly individualized, as pupils begin by narrating their own stories before exploring the world around them. In education 2.0 curriculum, pupils first learn about themselves (Theme one: I discover myself), then the world around them (Theme two: Myself and others), followed by their surrounding environment (Theme three: My society), and end with societal responsibility and appreciation of people who help us (Theme four: I am a responsible person).

Among the benefits of writing is its significant role in communicating and expressing thoughts. Elfa (2020) claims that writing "can express ideas, feelings and thoughts to the readers" P. 44 besides its ability to help pupils think critically due to its motivational power to encourage pupils to work step by step on both the word and sentence levels. It also allows pupils to reconsider structure, cohesion, coherence, organization, grammar, punctuation, and meaning. She also expresses that writing is social, as it has social features since it helps communicate thoughts and ideas to others. Writing is a powerful tool for conveying a specific message. This responsibility falls heavily on the writer, who must ensure that the message is concise, clear, and meaningful, leaving a lasting impact on the reader.

There is a significant connection between writing and storytelling performance that this study takes advantage of by writing as a foundational skill for effective storytelling. Writing equips students with a sense of organization and preparedness, allowing them to perform with spontaneity and confidence. In storytelling performance, students present their stories directly to an audience. To be effective storytellers, they must receive proper training that emphasizes key elements of storytelling, such as creating a vivid mental image of the characters, plot, conflict, setting, and resolution. This is where writing plays a crucial role in the process. By utilizing literature circles, students can enhance their reading skills, which serve as a foundation for improved writing and ultimately lead to more compelling storytelling performances.

Storytelling has a rich history dating back to our ancestors, as it has transitioned from a powerful cultural tool to an essential educational method in schools and universities. Tinckler (2017) defines storytelling as "the practice of sharing a story aloud to a live audience of listeners without the aid or intermediary of a book. It is a direct communication and shared, lived experience between teller and listener" P. 320. Fauziah & Rahman (2021) also defined it as "an activity carried out by someone to convey a message, information / a mere fairy tale that can be done verbally / in writing" P. 108. Storytelling can be in written or oral forms, which emphasizes the connection between writing and storytelling performance, that writing paves the way for better storytelling.

Storytelling offers numerous benefits for students, including improved communication and presentation skills, as well as enhanced personal traits like motivation, confidence, and enthusiasm. Dewi (2021) states that storytelling significantly develops not only students' speaking abilities but also their higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) and critical thinking. He believes that storytelling can address challenges in teaching speaking, as it fosters communication among students, enhances their creative

thinking skills, and increases their engagement in classroom activities. Marsevani and Rahman (2022) support this perspective, highlighting that storytelling not only helps to overcome speaking difficulties but also boosts students' fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Additionally, it improves their ability to articulate specific details and descriptions effectively.

Writing and storytelling performance are closely related, as expressing ideas and thoughts in written texts enhances students' thinking skills. This process not only promotes clarity of communication but also gives students a sense of readiness, making their messages more organized and effective. Van Huy et al (2024) pinpoint that in today's world, owning strong communication skills is essential, as it is important to achieve success in various fields, especially in English, which is considered a global language. Therefore, students need to develop their proficiency in communication within it.

Roles of both students and teachers in LCS:

As a student-centered strategy, both teachers and students have specific roles that foster learning, allowing pupils to have ownership over their learning under the guidance of their mentors. According to Fitriana (2020), in literature circles, both teachers and students have diverse responsibilities. The teacher acts as a facilitator, encouraging students to engage in open, expressive discussions where they share both analytical insights and personal responses to their reading. This process deepens their comprehension of the text and their perspectives as readers. Meanwhile, the students drive the conversation by preparing notes, taking on assigned discussion roles, and actively participating through critical thinking, questioning, and exchanging ideas. The teacher assesses progress through observation, while students also reflect on their learning through self-assessment, fostering a collaborative and student-centered exploration of the work.

This special feature of LCS allows pupils to work collaboratively on the text they choose, each according to their assigned roles, which enables them to play multiple roles in the reading groups. Varita (2017) affirms that "LCS allows the students to have a group discussion leader, a summarizer, a word master, a connector, a culture collector, and a passage person in each group" P.235. He also claims that LCS is considered beneficial not only on the group level but also on the individual level, as students learn to work cooperatively and improve their critical thinking skills. Students' role rotation greatly influences their skills as they learn to be responsible, as they shape the groupwork based on the outcome of each assigned role.

Pupils have a pioneering role in literature circles; however, the teacher's role is fundamental in many aspects, as they facilitate the pupils' tasks by providing various reading materials to choose from, as well as assigning roles for the reading tasks, enabling pupils to work and learn together. Although the role of the instructor in storytelling is more like a facilitator, Bolkan et al (2020) argue that the role of the instructor is important in overcoming challenges related to telling stories as they believe that "telling stories in class is not a guaranteed way to impact student learning in a positive direction" P. 65 in that instructors should wisely select the genre of stories and relate them to instructional materials to make it easy for students to remember. They suggest that instructors need to be guided to confine stories to educational objectives based on the students' curriculum. They argue that incorporating storytelling into the curriculum would add more clarity and interest, even though storytelling outside of the curriculum may introduce unnecessary details and make it harder for students to focus their attention on the main points.

The nature of the roles assigned to pupils is determined based on the required task; however, most tasks incorporate common elements, that the group should have a leader to organize discussion within the group, in addition to a facilitator to explore the meanings

of new vocabulary, and a summarizer. Thus, it allows an elaborate analysis of the reading text based on pupils' insights and findings. In literature circles, pupils utilize role cards to monitor their progress, assessing their work and sharing ideas and thoughts. These role cards, also known as role sheets, as known from diverse research for promoting pupils' autonomous learning and keeping records of work for all group members.

Literature circles and motivation:

Motivation is a key factor in the learning process, driving students to engage with, persist in, and achieve their academic goals. It helps students exert more effort while they enjoy what they do. A motivated student is more likely to stay focused and interact effectively. The classroom environment plays a crucial role in fostering motivation by creating supportive and engaging learning experiences. In literature circles, pupils engage in reading tasks that they choose by themselves, which provides a motivating factor for pupils. They schedule meetings to work together inside or outside school based on their preference, which promotes better interaction and deepens discussion on the reading text.

The power of the literature circles stems from their ability to motivate students to use English in bilingual classrooms. By engaging in group discussions, students feel encouraged to confidently participate and share ideas and thoughts with their peers. Furthermore, they are more likely to communicate in the target language. Unlike conventional methods of learning, LCS empowers and promotes students' learning (Daniels, 2002). When students are actively involved in their learning, they are more motivated and confident, taking ownership of their learning.

In their study of the effectiveness of literature circles, Ying & Hwa (2018) found that LCS has a significant impact on improving students' interaction, motivation, and responsibility, as students had several opportunities to create connections between their personal experiences, which led to enhanced comprehension as well. They

also claim that LCS is based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, as students' comprehension of the texts improved through peer interactions during literature circles. Within these discussions, learners supported one another by sharing their perspectives, listening to group members' interpretations, and collectively evaluating the story based on their understandings.

In LCS, pupils enjoy learning through reading previously selected reading texts they chose by themselves, determine a regular meeting schedule, identify their tasks before working within the group, analyze the reading text based on their assigned roles, and present their final work under the guidance of the teacher, who explains the task, scaffolds learning and facilitates work within the group.

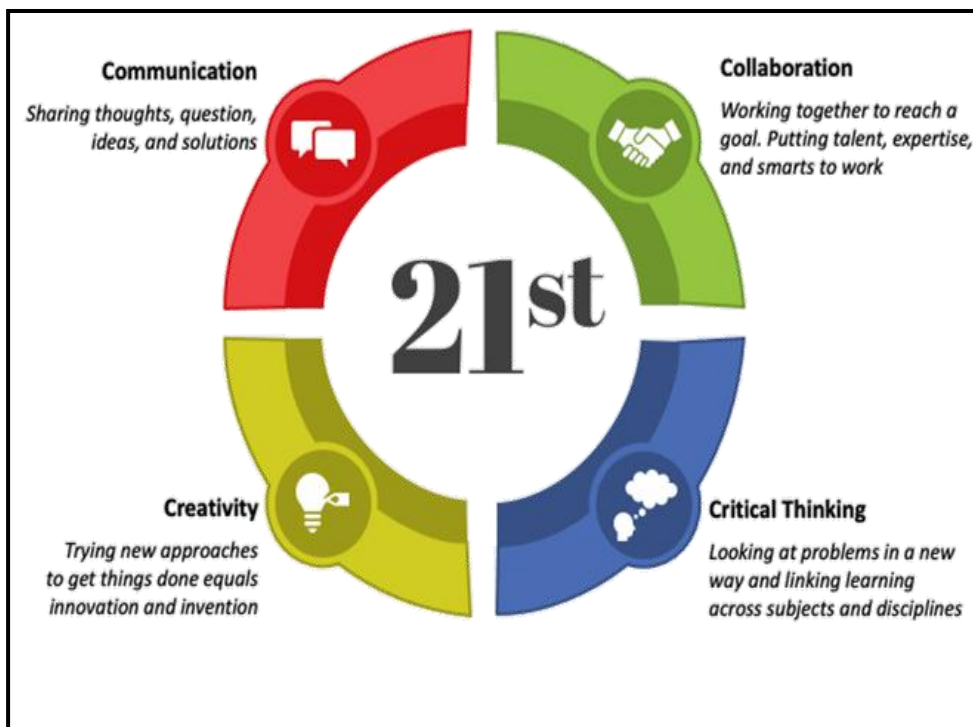## Literature circles and the 21st - century skills:

In today's rapidly changing world, education requires going beyond traditional academic knowledge to prepare students with 21st-century skills. These competencies are essential for success in a globalized, technology-driven society. Key skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, digital literacy, and adaptability help learners solve complex problems, innovate, and thrive in diverse environments. It is necessary to equip pupils at a young age to own these skills so that they become well-prepared to cope with these changes.

It is pivotal for educational institutions to incorporate 21st-century skills into their teaching and learning practices, as these skills facilitate pupils' transition from the conventional methods to more advanced ways to communicate, learn, and live decently. In literature circles, pupils read, discuss, and analyze texts depending on their prior knowledge and experiences. Additionally, they communicate with their peers in the group to complete the task, as well as taking responsibility for their learning, and committing to the assigned tasks and roles.

Within literature circles, pupils develop comprehension skills, lead discussions, find resources to look for information, solve problems, and present their final work creatively. Literature circles strategy fosters critical thinking throughout the discussion among pupils as they not only read but also complete a task related to the reading text that requires analytical and critical thinking skills.

Effective teaching aims at helping pupils and qualifying them to cope with changes and accept them in response to the rapidly evolving world. Anugerahwati et al (2021) claim that the 21st-century education covers the 4Cs: Communication, Critical thinking, Collaboration, and Creativity as shown in Figure 2. Mahmud & Wong (2022) argue that numerous institutions have started to integrate 21st-century skills into their curriculum design to more effectively equip students for success in the workplace and ongoing career growth.

Figure (2) 21st–Century skills, Source: Research Gate

At the critical level of comprehension, Rahman (2022) claims that the literature circles strategy cultivates vital 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative discussion as pupils evaluate texts and justify their interpretations, they enhance their ability to process complex information, a crucial competency in today's knowledge-driven world. He also argues that "by applying the literature circle method, the pupils are guided to read critically, compare ideas in the text, and think about the text's big ideas and messages implied in the written text" P. 12. By connecting these ideas to their personal experiences, students engage in higher-order thinking, identifying key details and developing logical reasoning essential components of critical thinking. This process not only enhances comprehension skills but also formulates pupils' thinking abilities and skills.

Among the several benefits of LCs, as Fitriana (2020) expresses, is that students learn "responsibility and accountability" P.13. They become responsible for their learning and committed to their assigned roles and timeline schedules. Moreover, they become lifelong learners as they learn independently and confidently, which consolidates their learning and supports it. She also claims that making connections and relations between what they learn and their real life fosters learning and makes it more lasting.

The discussion surrounding 21st-century skills highlights the significant role of technology in contemporary educational environments. The integration of technological tools in the classroom not only enhances efficiency but also facilitates the completion of required tasks more rapidly and with greater ease. This underscores the transformative impact of technology on the learning process, enabling educators and students to engage with content in innovative ways that align with modern demands. In recognition of the important role that technology plays, Herrera & Kidwell (2018) developed an updated version of LCs called Literature Circles 2.0 to enhance students' technological abilities. He employed technology in group roles selection and held a

comparison between roles in traditional literature circles and roles in literature circles 2.0, as shown in Table 1.

In Table 1, Herrera & Kidwell (2018) compared the traditional roles in Literature Circles (based on Harvey Daniels' 1994/2002 model) with updated "Literature Circles 2.0" roles, which incorporate modern skills like digital literacy and critical media analysis. On one hand, the traditional literature circles focused on basic literacy and comprehension skills through structured roles: discussion director, connector, questioner, illustrator, summarizer, and researcher.

Table (1) Roles in Traditional Literature Circles (Daniels, 1994, 2002) VS. Roles in Literature Circles 2.0 (Herrera & Kidwell, 2018, P.17)

Table I
Roles in Traditional Literature Circles vs. Roles in Literature Circles 2.0

Roles in Traditional Literature Circles (Daniels, 1994, 2002)	Roles in Literature Circles 2.0
Discussion Director: Oversees the discussion and holds group members accountable.	*Project Manager*: Helps group members coordinate responsibilities, mediate conflicts, and meet deadlines.
Connector: Identifies elements in the text that relate to students' lives, other texts, and world events.	*Trend-Spotter*: Uses internet and media resources to connect to background knowledge, other texts, and other content areas to explain and make prediction about the book.
Questioner: Raises questions to clarify, analyze, and critique the text.	*Bias Detective*: Critically questions the text to raise issues of the influence of the author's or character's perspectives and biases.
Illustrator: Develops a graphics or nonlinguistic interpretations in response to the text.	*Graphic Designer*: Uses technology to develop graphics or nonlinguistic interpretations in response to the text.
Summarizer: Prepares a summary of the assigned reading.	*Tweeter*: Prepares a 140-character overview of the assigned reading, perhaps utilizing hashtags or links to make wider connections.
Researcher: Finds and shares background information about a topic related to the book.	*Investigative Journalist*: Checks facts in the book, and finds information that will help the group understand it more completely.

On the other hand, literature circles 2.0 adapts traditional roles to 21st-century learning needs, integrating technology and critical thinking in roles such as project manager, trend-spotter, bias detective, graphic designer, tweeter, and investigative journalist, which prepares students for digital communication, collaborative problem-solving, and critical engagement with information.

In implementing the Literature Circle Strategy with role cards, Anugerahwati et al (2021) suggest using the Zoom Meetings platform as LCS has different roles that can be distributed in the rooms in the Zoom breakout, and each room has several students. They assert that LCS should be highly regarded by educators, as it can enhance students' critical thinking and reading comprehension skills, while also offering engaging activities in both physical classrooms and online platforms. Additionally, they recommend that this strategy should be employed regularly to further improve and optimize students' critical thinking abilities, which is essential in 21st-century education.

Aims of the study:

The current study aims to:

1- Identify the writing and storytelling performance skills that are needed for fifth-grade pupils in their EFL classes.

2- Compile a program based on the Literature Circles Strategy (LCS) to develop writing and storytelling performance skills

3- Investigate the effectiveness of the Literature Circles Strategy (LCS) in improving writing among pupils in the Egyptian Japanese schools.

4- Investigate the effectiveness of the Literature Circles Strategy (LCS) in improving storytelling performance skills among pupils in the Egyptian Japanese schools.

Questions of the study:

The primary question of the study is:

How does integrating the Literature Circles Strategy (LCS) into bilingual curricula enhance writing and storytelling performance skills among pupils in the Egyptian Japanese schools?

This main question can be divided into four sub-questions as follows:

1- What are the writing and storytelling performance skills among fifth-grade pupils that are needed for fifth-grade pupils in their EFL classes?

2- How to design a program based on the Literature Circles Strategy (LCS) to develop writing and storytelling performance skills?

3- What is the effect of using LCS on developing writing and storytelling performance skills for the Egyptian Japanese schools' pupils?

4- What is the effect of using LCs to promote student engagement, critical thinking, and peer collaboration in a bilingual setting?

Method of the study:

The methodology of the research includes participants of the study, the design of the study, and the variables of the study, as explained below.

Participants of the study

The researcher utilized a one-tailed group design with pre-post testing. Students participated in a pretest, followed by exposure to the training program. Subsequently, a post-test was administered to evaluate their writing and storytelling performance skills. The target sample comprised both male and female participants of similar age.

Design of the study

The research employed a quasi-experimental group design characterized by the implementation of pre- and post-intervention assessments focused on writing and storytelling performance skills.

Variables of the study

This research investigates three key variables: the independent variable is the Literature Circle Strategy (LCS), employed as a pedagogical approach to enhance students' writing and storytelling performance skills. The dependent variables encompass both writing and storytelling performance skills, which serve as the primary outcomes of interest in this study.

Instrumentation:

The researcher employed a variety of instruments and materials to conduct the study, including checklists for assessing writing and storytelling performance skills, as well as a curriculum analysis of the Connect Plus student book. Additionally, a literature circles-based program was developed, comprising a student's book, a teacher's book, and an online platform to facilitate learning. To evaluate student performance, writing and storytelling performance skills tests were administered, each accompanied by a detailed rubric for accurate assessment.

Results:

The study produced both quantitative and qualitative results. T-test analyses were conducted to assess the study hypotheses and determine their significance levels. The sample comprised 25 pupils from the fifth grade at the Egyptian Japanese Schools. The results demonstrated a significant difference in mean scores between pre- and post-testing in both writing and storytelling performance, favoring the post-testing. Additionally, qualitative data were gathered through participants' feedback and reflections throughout the treatment period. The findings indicated that students experienced heightened motivation, a sense of responsibility, and increased self-confidence as pupils showed enthusiasm and eagerness to engage in discussions and activities within the program at each stage of the intervention.

Discussion and interpretation of the results:

Results obtained from the pre- and post-testing revealed significant mean differences in the mean scores of the participants. These differences were primarily observed in their ability to master both writing and storytelling performance skills. This development is attributed to the effect of the independent variable (the literature circles strategy) over the dependent variables. Additionally, the results indicated that the program based on the literature circles strategy was effective in designing the activities of the course. These significant results can be attributed to the following factors:

1- Using the literature circles strategy-based program as a pedagogical student-centered approach, which reviews writing and storytelling performance steps and key elements.

2- The writing and storytelling activities encouraged active engagement among the pupils through performance-based methods within the reading groups.

3- In accordance with the established program, a comprehensive toolkit was designed, consisting of individual role cards, group role cards, individual role-based assessment forms, group role-based assessment forms, a meeting schedule template, and materials to facilitate final presentations. This toolkit served as an essential resource for enhancing organizational roles and responsibilities within the framework of the program.

4- The LCS's ability to promote pupils' learning and establish connections between what they study and their real lives.

5- The teacher's role in providing students with curricula-related materials that help them academically achieve better, in addition to developing personal traits such as leadership and confidence.

6- Fostering motivation and confidence that stems from the pupils' freedom in the story's selection and discussions.

7- Integrating technology represented in digital storytelling helped pupils recognize characteristics of the storyteller and identify key elements of storytelling, considering pitch changes, tone of voice, the use of facial expressions, and body language.

The findings of the study indicated that literature circles play a crucial role in fostering active pupils' participation by encouraging meaningful discussions about texts. There was a strong connection identified between the four language skills in English, as pupils not only enhanced their receptive language skills, but also developed more powerful productive language skills. They selected stories and poems to read (reading), engaged in discussions about their readings in English (speaking), listened to and watched digital stories, and took notes to discuss them with their peers in the reading groups (listening). Additionally, they used role cards to record their findings and crafted their own paraphrased and summarized versions of the stories (writing). Finally, they confidently presented their work to their peers (storytelling).

Therefore, the literature circles strategy not only enhances pupils' academic skills but also develops their personal and social traits. During the presentations, pupils role-played characters from the stories, explored the themes, and highlighted conflicts. They prepared props and visuals to help convey the message, utilized body language and physical expressions to engage the audience, and aimed to evoke the audience's attention and emotions while sharing their feelings and attitudes.

Discussions led by pupils resulted in a deeper comprehension and better processing and analysis of the story events by pupils themselves. Employing the literature circles strategy within the classroom added an enjoyable and collaborative environment where they learn and perform tasks according to what they read or watch, making personal connections and running discussions while the teacher observes, guides, and facilitates the workflow of the activities. Integrating the Literature Circles

Strategy (LCs) into bilingual curricula such as in Egyptian Japanese schools can significantly enhance writing and storytelling skills. This strategy not only improves language skills but also makes learning more interactive and meaningful.

Recommendations:

In light of the present study results and conclusion, the following would be recommended:

1- Given its effectiveness in improving writing and storytelling performance, schools should implement the literature circles strategy in their curriculum.

2- Integrating the literature circles strategy in bilingual settings to improve productive language skills such as writing and storytelling.

3- Integrating 21st-century skills into the literature circles strategy to promote pupils' mental and academic growth.

4- Using technology and AI-powered video creators to foster pupils' listening and help them pronounce words correctly within the literature circles strategy.

5- Allow teacher-training programs to provide professional development for teachers in LCS facilitation techniques, such as scaffolding and adapting materials for diverse pupils to allow individualized instruction.

6- Focus on cross-cultural issues through diverse reading recommendations within the literature circles strategy.

7- Develop pupils' presentation and storytelling performance through participating in multimodal storytelling activities.

8- Integrate literature learning in the syllabi of primary school pupils to motivate better comprehension and communication.

9- Focus on the dual communication among pupils during the literature circles strategy implementation in the target language, given the appropriate scaffolding by the teachers.

Suggestions for further research:

In light of the study findings and results, the following are suggested for further research:

1- Conducting more research on pupil-led learning strategies to promote their learning and mental growth.

2- Focusing on designing a balanced program based on the four language skills to foster pupils' language development.

3- Investigating the effect of using the literature circles strategy on literature development among primary school pupils.

4- Explore the effect of virtual LCS on pupils' engagement and motivation through virtual classroom applications by modifying the teachers' and pupils' roles.

5- Studying the long-term effect of LCS on bilingual pupils' writing and storytelling performance skills.

Conclusion:

The results obtained from the study included two distinct types of results: quantitative results derived from pre- and post-testing scores and qualitative results obtained from pupils' feedback and reflections. The results derived from the pre-post testing of writing and storytelling performance skills using the literature circles strategy favored the post-testing. This asserts the significance of using the literature circles strategy (LCS) in developing participants' writing and storytelling performance skills. Additionally, the qualitative study results highlight the positive impact of LCS on participants as they reveal enhanced confidence, enthusiasm, and motivation towards writing and storytelling activities.

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