



Ain Shams University
Faculty of Women
For Arts, Science, and Education
Curriculum and Instruction Department

**A Strategy Based On Literature Circles Group Discussions
and Cooperative Learning To Develop Some English
Reading Comprehension Skills Of
Preparatory Stage Students**

A Thesis
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By
Jawharah Salem Alsharif

Supervised by
Prof. Aida Abd El Maksoud Zaher
Professor of Curriculum and Methods of Teaching English
Faculty of Women, Ain Shams University

Dr. Amira El Amir Khater
Associate Professor of Curriculum and Methods of Teaching English
Faculty of Women, Ain Shams University

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

(وَقُلْ رَبِّيَ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا)

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Abstract

Name: Gawhara Salem Al-sherif

The title: A strategy based on Literature Circles Group Discussions and Cooperative learning to Develop Some English Reading Comprehension Skills of Preparatory Stage Students.

University: Ain shams university, Faculty of Women, Department of Curriculum and methods of Teaching.

The current study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of literature circles group discussions and cooperative learning strategy in developing the reading comprehension skills of a sample of Second Year Preparatory Stage King Fahd Experimental School, Nasr City, Cairo. To collect the data needed for testing the research hypotheses, two tools were designed namely; the reading comprehension skills list, and the reading comprehension pre-posttest. The pre- post test experimental design was used for conducting the experiment of this research. The sample involved (20) students from Second Year Preparatory Stage King Fahd Experimental School, Nasr City, Cairo. The teaching strategy was the independent variable whereas developing the reading comprehension skills was the dependent variable .The SPSS was used for the statistical analysis of the data. Research results supported the study hypotheses as they showed that there was a statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the overall mean scores on the pre and post administration of the achievement test that was designed to measure the experimental group's literary reading comprehension skills, in favor of the post administration. It was concluded that: 1) the teaching strategy proved to be effective in developing the target reading comprehension skills of the novel. 2) There was an indication that integrating both cooperative learning principles, and literature circles group discussion activities and role tasks could improve and develop students' reading comprehension skills of the novel.

Key Words: Literature circle group discussion, cooperative learning strategy, Reading comprehension.

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The researcher

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Chapter One

Introduction and Problem

Chapter One

Introduction and Problem

Introduction

The ability to use a language in a communicative way is not just a single unified skill. Most recent studies has divided language ability into four separate skill areas; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Reading is considered one of the most important skills which help to build vocabulary and lead to lifelong learning and improvement in first and second language skills. Reading is important for the following reasons:

-It develops personal creativity, allows the student to form and construct in their minds how a certain character looks like and how to imagine a certain scene and gives the student a chance to practice creativity and critical reading.

- It improves the student's capacity to grasp principles and ideas (<http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/500/528.html>)

- It develops critical thinking so that students will be able to think and take their own decisions early in their education, preparing them to “the real world (<http://www.peopleoffaith.com/benefits-of-reading.htm>)

-It develops proficiency in language, leading to development of other skills and increasing vocabulary (US Department of Education: 2006).

-It helps students to get knowledge of new things which enlarge their interests.

-It develops the positive values in students' life.

(<http://www.ccboe.net/teachers/>)

-Reading increases students' ability to focus on their text, and solve their problems (<http://www.kernel.uky.edu/2001/text/0131/09aarts.shtml>)

Reading is a complex process involving a network of cognitive actions that work together to construct meaning (Baker and Brown 2002; Block and Pressley 2002; Pearson 2002). Reading is viewed as an interactive process between the reader and the text through which meaning was constructed, but importantly, it is also seen as an intentional thinking process (RAND, 2004). Hence, to read effectively, learners should be able to use comprehension not just to understand the meaning but also to comprehend inside ideas.

As Tierney (2005) stressed, reading could not occur without comprehension, so, to comprehend, a reader must have a wide range of capacities and abilities that include: attention, memory, critical analytic ability, inference, visualization ability, motivation, and various types of knowledge (vocabulary domain and topic knowledge, linguistic and discourse knowledge and knowledge of specific comprehension strategies). As a reader begins to read and complete an activity, some of the knowledge and capacities change (NRP, 2000). The features of text have a large effect on comprehension. During reading, the reader creates different representations of the text that are important for comprehension. These include: surface code or understanding the exact

wording of text and text base or understanding the idea units representing meaning (NRP, 2000). This helps comprehension by allowing the students to visually understand what they have read and attain the information in their long term memory.

Moreover, to know more about comprehension there are actually three main levels or strands of comprehension: literal, inferential and critical comprehension. (Zahran, 2010). These are not only three levels but there are lots of classifications which will be mentioned in detail in chapter (2).

1-literal comprehension: the shallow or direct comprehension, which includes everything related to the thorough and deep knowledge and understanding of the words, with the increase in the number of words, it also includes understanding the literal apparent meaning and learning the meanings of words and grasping the main idea, and secondary ideas, under which falls a set of sub-skills, they are:

- Identifying people in reading text.
- Identifying times in reading text.
- Arranging events in reading text upon occurrence.
- Identifying text keywords and frequency of occurrence
- Determining the synonyms of words in reading text.

2 - Inferential comprehension: it is the process of the reader which links between the signals of context and various hints on one hand and the inter-relation of sentences on the other hand, to get the meaning and

the required information from the text, and know the purpose of the writer, under which falls a set of sub-skills, they are

- deducting the main idea of reading text
- deducting the secondary ideas of the reading text
- deducting implied meanings in reading text
- deducting results from facts included in text introductions

3 - Critical comprehension: this skill enables the reader to appreciate the importance of what he reads and determines the accuracy of the news that he reads. This ability can be developed when the teacher discusses with his students what they read, and asks them to explain their point of view in the reading text, under this skill falls a set of sub-skills, they are:

- Differentiating between facts and opinions.
- Developing an opinion regarding an act or phenomenon appeared in the reading text.
- Distinguishing between the related and non-related ideas to the subject.

As a part of a balanced strategy, the most powerful facets of using reading comprehension with literature circles is this dynamic interaction or transaction among readers in the group and between readers and the text. This practice encourages, even demands, that students become active participants first in reading their books and second in the group discussions.

Greef (2002), Berne & Clark (2008) say that the benefit of literature circles is reading comprehension because literature circles can bring students together to work in a community and that facilitates understanding a text and helps them to grasp the meaning of a literary work. Meanwhile, reading comprehension may become the tool that helps learners in developing understanding of other cultures, which means giving the students the opportunity to further their ability to differentiate, evaluate, generalize, and think critically. Therefore, Reading literature is pleasurable; though it is fictional it is still so realistic grasping human life, soul and culture.

More specifically, Daniels (2005) stressed that the best way to teach reading comprehension is through Literature Circles group discussions, as it does not only represent a fun activity for the students, but also it has the power and dynamics to change students from passive, shy and conservative students to yearning students to quote their texts supporting their discussions during their different role tasks.

Kahn (2005) & Crum (2006) assured that the literature circle role tasks were effective where the classroom was a student-centered one and the teacher's role is just a facilitator. These role tasks were considered scaffolds as teachers can avoid or replace them according to the situation. Accordingly, Bedel (2011) suggested that using literature circles in teaching can facilitate learning literary text by giving students