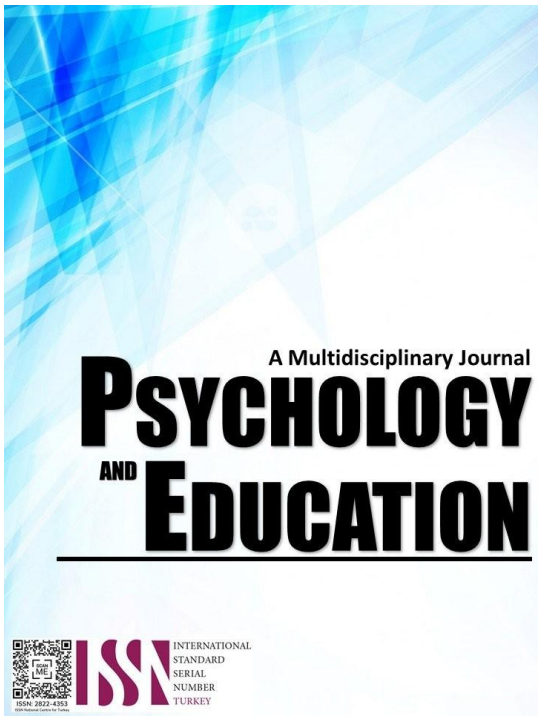
LITERATURE CIRCLES AS A STRATEGY IN LITERARY COMPREHENSION



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Research Article

Literature Circles as a Strategy in Literary Comprehension

Mark Kevin C. Marbani,* Kristopher M. Ngilangil
For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

This study determined the effect of Literature Circles in enhancing the level of competency in literary comprehension of the Grade 9 students of St. Paul University Surigao. It specifically assessed the level of competency, the implementation of the strategy, significant difference in the pre-test and post-test between the control group and experimental group, the perceptions of the students and the insights of the teacher in the usage of the strategy. Anchored on Reader-Response Theory and Collaborative Learning, the study employed a quasi-experimental, mixed-methods design. Findings revealed that students in the experimental group showed significant improvement in literary comprehension in Quarter 2 but no significant difference in Quarter 3, attributed to content complexity and implementation challenges. Qualitative data showed that Literature Circles promote engagement, peer learning, and analytical thinking, despite issues such as uneven participation and time constraints. The study concluded that Literature Circles is an effective strategy when applied with appropriate content and guided structure. It is recommended that integrating varied reading strategies and conducting further research on sustainable comprehension approaches.

Keywords: *Literature Circles, literary comprehension, collaborative learning, reader-response theory, Grade 9, quasi-experimental, reading strategies*

Introduction

In the 21st century, education prioritizes content knowledge and the development of core competencies such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, and cultural awareness—collectively known as 21st-century skills. These skills prepare learners to thrive in an increasingly globalized, information-driven world (Saavedra & Opfer, 2021).

Within this framework, literature holds a crucial place in the curriculum as it cultivates empathy, cultural understanding, and cognitive engagement. Literary texts allow students to explore diverse perspectives, question social norms, and develop reflective thinking, making literature a powerful medium for holistic education (Tomlinson & Costello, 2022).

Literary comprehension—the ability to interpret, analyze, and reflect upon literary texts—is an essential skill that supports language proficiency and personal growth. Ahmad et al. (2021) states that engaging with literature enhances vocabulary acquisition, improves syntactic awareness, and fosters analytical reasoning. Moreover, literary comprehension contributes to students' emotional and cultural intelligence, helping them make sense of human experiences across time and space (Kim & Cho, 2023).

Traditional approaches to literature instruction, such as teacher-centered lectures and written assessments, often limit opportunities for students to develop deeper engagement with texts. These methods may fail to promote critical dialogue and collaborative interpretation, which are vital in modern learning environments. In contrast, learner-centered strategies have gained attention for their effectiveness in promoting student agency and active learning (Bautista & Manuel, 2020).

One such strategy is Literature Circles, a structured, peer-led discussion format in which students assume rotating roles (e.g., summarizer, connector, questioner) to interpret a standard text collaboratively. Literature Circles encourage students to engage deeply with literature while fostering interpersonal and critical thinking skills (Fajardo & Garcia, 2021). Despite their proven potential, there remains a lack of focused research on the implementation and impact of Literature Circles in junior high school settings, especially in the Philippine context.

This study addressed this gap by determining the effectiveness of Literature Circles in enhancing the literary comprehension of Grade 9 students at Saint Paul University Surigao – Junior High School Unit. Through this investigation, the research aimed to promote innovative, student-centered approaches that align with 21st-century educational goals and support the development of literate, thoughtful, and collaborative learners.

Research Questions

This study determined the effect of Literature Circles in enhancing the level of competency in literary comprehension of the Grade 9 students of St. Paul University Surigao. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of competency in literary comprehension of the students in the control group and experimental group before the use of the literature circles strategy, based on their pre-test scores?
2. How did the teacher and the students use literature circles as a strategy in enhancing the literary comprehension of the grade 9 students?
3. What is the level of competency in literary comprehension of the students in the control group and experimental group after

the use of the literature circles strategy, based on their post-test scores?
4. Is there a significant difference between the pre-test performances of the control and experimental groups?
5. Is there a significant difference between the post-test performances of the control and experimental groups?
6. Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results of the control and experimental groups?
7. What are the perceptions of the Grade 9 students in the use of literature circles for literary comprehension?
8. What are the insights of the teacher in the use of literature circles for literary comprehension?

Literature Review

21st-Century Skills in Literature Teaching and Learning

The integration of 21st-century skills in education, particularly in teaching literature, has become a global priority. These skills—commonly identified as the "4Cs" (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity)—are considered essential for preparing students for the demands of the modern world (Saavedra & Opfer, 2021). Within literature education, these competencies are cultivated through tasks that promote interpretation, analysis, reflection, and expression.

Fanani et al. (2022) emphasize the necessity of embedding 21st-century skills into English language materials and literature instruction. Their study on vocational high schools in Indonesia demonstrates how texts can be used to develop collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking. When taught interactively, the researchers assert that literary texts can foster deeper engagement and higher-order thinking among students.

Likewise, creative digital storytelling has gained traction as a literature-based learning tool that enhances reading comprehension and students' technological fluency and creative capacities. Wijaya et al. (2021) found that students who participated in project-based literary storytelling developed significant improvements in creative thinking and digital literacy. These activities required learners to synthesize literary themes and recreate them through digital formats such as video production, thus aligning literary engagement with 21st-century skills development.

Similarly, Pertiwi and Ardi (2021) explored the implementation of project-based learning in senior high school literature classrooms in Indonesia. The study revealed that project-based approaches helped students become more autonomous, collaborative, and reflective readers. This method emphasized the integration of real-world tasks and literary analysis, allowing students to apply creative solutions while interpreting literary texts.

At the classroom level, teacher-based inquiry highlights the effectiveness of multimedia and collaborative strategies in literature instruction. Gilig and Dayagbil (2023), in a qualitative study conducted at John B. Lacson Maritime University, revealed that when teachers used inquiry-based questioning, vocabulary-building, and technology integration, students exhibited better engagement and developed improved critical and creative thinking. These strategies were perceived to align well with 21st-century educational objectives.

Despite these promising practices, Eslit (2023) notes a persistent gap in teacher readiness to implement 21st-century learning strategies in literature education. While many educators understand the importance of these competencies, they lack formal training and institutional support to incorporate them meaningfully. Eslit emphasizes the need for consistent professional development programs that focus on integrating the 4Cs into literature instruction.

Moreover, Saavedra and Opfer (2021) assert that although 21st-century skills are widely acknowledged, there remains a lack of systematic classroom implementation and assessment. Their research suggests that efforts to embed these skills in literature education have a limited impact without structured support and appropriate pedagogical models.

In the Philippine context, there remains a dearth of empirical studies focusing on the application of 21st-century skills in junior high school literature classes. Most existing research centers on senior high school or tertiary levels and often lacks contextual adaptation to local learning environments. As such, collaborative strategies like Literature Circles in the junior high school setting—particularly for Grade 9—have not been sufficiently examined. This study seeks to address this research gap by exploring how Literature Circles, as a student-centered and collaborative approach, can support literary comprehension and 21st-century skill development in a local educational setting.

Literary Comprehension

Literary comprehension is a multifaceted cognitive process that enables readers to construct meaning from texts through interpretation, analysis, and evaluation. Scholars have recently emphasized integrating interactive, culturally responsive, and student-centered strategies to enhance students' understanding of literature, particularly in secondary education.

Berne and Degennaro (2020) assert that interactive classroom discussions significantly foster deeper literary understanding by allowing students to engage in structured collaboration. This aligns with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in the development of higher-order thinking skills. Similarly, Gilles and Davis (2021) highlight that literature circles can improve middle school students' literary comprehension by encouraging connections such as text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-

world, essential in developing interpretative and critical thinking skills.

Fisher and Frey (2021) support the implementation of student-led discussions as a means of scaffolding literary comprehension. Their findings suggest that when students take ownership of dialogue about texts, their engagement and understanding deepen. Likewise, Daniels (2021) emphasizes that literature circles provide authentic spaces for student voice and choice, enhancing motivation and comprehension through reciprocal dialogue.

Zapata, Laman, and Riecken (2022) further advocate for dialogic pedagogy, especially in multilingual classrooms, to support the development of literary understanding. Their research underscores how open-ended questions and peer discussions foster critical engagement with the text. These findings are supported by Lupo, Strong, and McBee (2021), who argue that adaptive instruction tailored to adolescent readers promotes meaningful literary comprehension through differentiation and student relevance.

Additionally, Tompkins (2020) offers a balanced literacy model incorporating literature circles and reader-response strategies as an integrated approach to boost comprehension. Allington and Gabriel (2020) also stress the importance of daily reading practices and high-interest materials to improve the comprehension levels of all learners, particularly struggling readers.

Culturally responsive teaching also plays a vital role in literary comprehension. Hammond (2020) contends that connecting literary texts to students' cultural backgrounds and experiences activates prior knowledge and improves interpretive skills. Complementing this, Appleman (2022) suggests that teaching students to read literature through multiple critical lenses (e.g., feminist, reader-response, postcolonial) deepens their engagement and comprehension by encouraging multifaceted interpretations of texts.

Taken together, these studies reinforce the value of dialogic, differentiated, and culturally relevant approaches to literature instruction. They validate the effectiveness of literature circles in enhancing literary comprehension through collaboration, voice, engagement, and critical thinking—factors crucial to academic development in secondary education settings.

Teaching and Learning Literature

According to Skobo (2020), nowadays, teaching and reading literature in secondary and tertiary education is about to cease to be attractive to the 21st-century students enrolled in the courses conducted at departments of foreign languages as a result of an imbalance between the needs of the digital age that calls for the active use and immediate application of the latest technology in the education process and a lack of innovative teaching approaches involving the use of top online tools to teaching literature in Reading Comprehension in the digital age.

An additional problem is created by the fact that literature teachers desperately need to adapt their traditional literature courses covering long literary periods to satisfy the needs of their digital-native students, who would rather 'click, browse, share, and comment' online than write long essays concerning the works of the most prominent literary figures included in the syllabus.

The origin of this problem might lie in the fact that numerous studies deal with modern techniques and approaches to teaching and learning that involve the implementation of online educational tools in language teaching. Unfortunately, few of them deal with their application in literature teaching. This is the reason why more emphasis has been put on teaching linguistics and applied linguistics than teaching literature at universities. Be as it may, the rise of linguistics and research studies dealing with the application of online tools to language teaching contributed to the popularity of teaching language skills. It led to the decline of the importance of literature and, thus, its poor inclusion into the curricula and syllabi of colleges and universities.

Strategies in Teaching Literature

Teaching strategies refer to the various methods and approaches educators use to facilitate learning and help students achieve their academic goals (Espmaker & Tedenby, 2020). These strategies are essential components of effective instruction, playing a crucial role in guiding students toward meaningful engagement with texts and the attainment of learning objectives (Pungki & Suwartono, 2019).

Effective teaching strategies are not one-size-fits-all; they must be flexible and responsive to students' diverse needs, interests, and learning styles. By tailoring strategies to specific contexts, teachers can foster more inclusive, interactive, and engaging learning experiences. As Hayati et al. (2021) emphasize, active and varied approaches help prevent student disengagement and contribute to the overall success of instructional goals.

Espmaker and Tedenby (2020) highlight that well-chosen teaching strategies function as facilitators of learning, creating pathways for students to engage deeply with content. Similarly, Hayati et al. (2021) advocate for instructional diversity to maintain student interest and accommodate different learning modalities.

Recent scholarship also supports the integration of collaborative and student-centered approaches in literature instruction. Wilfong (2021) recommends structured group reading methods, such as Literature Circles, to shift away from passive instruction and foster student agency. Complementing this, Lupo et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of scaffolded collaborative practices, noting that such strategies enhance student comprehension and provide equitable access to complex literary texts.

Overall, the effective use of teaching strategies in literature fosters a dynamic learning environment where students not only comprehend texts but also develop critical thinking, collaboration, and engagement through purposeful and varied instructional

methods.

Literature Circles

Literature Circles are grounded in social constructivist theory, particularly the Vygotskian view that emphasizes the significance of social interaction and scaffolding in promoting cognitive development (Daniels, 2021). This theoretical perspective supports collaborative learning environments where students co-construct meaning through discussion, interpretation, and reflection. Literature Circles shifts the traditional classroom dynamic from teacher-centered to student-centered, providing opportunities for learners to explore texts deeply and collaboratively.

According to Daniels (2021), the role-based structure of Literature Circles promotes learner autonomy and supports comprehension development through structured, peer-led discussions. Each student assumes a specific role—such as summarizer, connector, or questioner—ensuring that every participant contributes uniquely to the group's understanding of the text. This design enhances student responsibility and encourages equal participation and deeper engagement with literature.

Fisher and Frey (2021) emphasize that peer-led interactions in Literature Circles foster critical thinking and academic discourse. When students are given structured opportunities to express and challenge ideas respectfully, they build higher-order thinking skills and cultivate a more nuanced understanding of the text.

Research by Zapata, Maloch, and Gainer (2022) and Berne and Degennaro (2020) further underscores the effectiveness of shifting from teacher-led to student-facilitated discussions. Their findings suggest that such instructional strategies cultivate independence, collaborative learning, and sustained engagement, all essential for meaningful comprehension.

Allington and Gabriel (2020) argue that emotional safety and structured participation are essential for active learning. Literature Circles creates a supportive environment that enables students to share ideas confidently, ask questions, and develop a stronger sense of voice, which collectively boosts comprehension outcomes.

Finally, the successful implementation of Literature Circles depends on explicit modeling and scaffolding. Lupo et al. (2021) stress the importance of role clarity, teacher guidance, and gradual release of responsibility, particularly at the beginning of the process. By modeling how each role functions and providing supportive materials, teachers can ensure that students fully engage with their texts and peers.

Literature Circles are a robust instructional approach backed by contemporary research and theory. They combine collaborative learning, student voice, and scaffolded structure to foster academic and personal growth in literary comprehension.

Literature Circles on Reading Comprehension

Numerous studies have demonstrated that Literature Circles significantly enhance students' reading comprehension. Bella et al. (2024) found that second-year baccalaureate students involved in Literature Circles outperformed their peers in summarizing, inferencing, and paraphrasing tasks. Rahman (2022) reported that Literature Circles were more effective than traditional methods in enhancing students' literal, inferential, and critical comprehension.

Jafari and Shokrpour (2020) also found that Literature Circles significantly improved comprehension through active discussion, providing opportunities for peer dialogue that deepened understanding. Similarly, Malekzadeh and Bayat (2021) emphasized that traditional instruction inhibits deep comprehension, reinforcing the need for student-centered approaches like Literature Circles.

Oyetunji and Abidoye (2021) report that passive learning environments limit student engagement, while interactive structures such as Literature Circles yield better learning outcomes by fostering student voice, autonomy, and participation.

Thomas and Kim (2019) highlighted that college students in developmental reading courses benefited from Literature Circles, showing improved reading achievement. Ma et al. (2025) concluded that Literature Circles effectively develop English language reading ability, emphasizing self-regulation and critical-thinking skills.

Teacher Insights into Literature Circles

Recent studies highlight the positive perceptions and experiences of teachers implementing Literature Circles across various educational contexts. Dewi (2022) emphasized that Literature Circles enhanced students' textual understanding and fostered meaningful peer collaboration and critical thinking skills. These outcomes underscore the strategy's relevance in modern, student-centered classrooms.

In their study on EFL classrooms, Hidayat and Musthafa (2020) observed that teachers who implemented Literature Circles noted improved reading motivation and student participation. The shift from passive to interactive learning was key to encouraging deeper engagement. Similarly, Mufidati and Purwati (2022) reported that teachers in online settings found Literature Circles helpful in promoting vocabulary development and classroom interaction, particularly in primary education. The structured yet flexible nature of Literature Circles made it adaptable for virtual learning environments.

Abdullah, Choo, and Samat (2021) explored how pre-service teachers responded to Literature Circles while studying Shakespeare.

Their findings suggest that the method enhanced both engagement and cognitive processing, indicating its usefulness even in more challenging texts and at the tertiary level. Pre-service teachers viewed the process as engaging and rigorous, positively impacting student autonomy and academic discourse.

In another study, Pradita (2022) found that Literature Circles served as a form of practical professional development. Teachers reported becoming more reflective in their planning and more intentional in creating discussion prompts that supported comprehension and critical inquiry. This aligns with the findings of Castro (2021), whose experimental research on Literature Circles in higher education demonstrated significantly higher analytical reading performance among students in the treatment group compared to those receiving traditional instruction.

Moreover, a 2023 mixed-methods study found that Literature Circles consistently increased student participation and enthusiasm, as perceived by classroom teachers. This was particularly evident when roles were clearly defined, and students were given autonomy over their discussions.

Overall, teacher insights from recent literature reveal that Literature Circles effectively promote student voice, collaboration, and comprehension; supportive of differentiated instruction and inclusive pedagogy; valuable for teacher professional growth and classroom innovation; and flexible enough for face-to-face and online environments. These findings affirm the strategy's role in fostering academic and social-emotional learning outcomes, reinforcing its place as a best practice in literature instruction.

Impact on Student Motivation and Engagement

Recent studies confirm that Literature Circles significantly enhance student motivation and engagement through increased autonomy, peer collaboration, and deeper involvement in reading tasks.

De Naeghel et al. (2022) emphasized that peer-led literature discussions foster intrinsic reading motivation by promoting a sense of relatedness, competence, and autonomy—core elements of self-determination theory. These motivational gains are especially evident when students feel supported by their peers and are given a choice in reading materials and roles.

Similarly, Powell et al. (2020) found that students engaged in peer-led reading groups demonstrated improved reading engagement and content retention. This was attributed to the dialogic nature of Literature Circles, which allow students to interact meaningfully with texts and one another. Robinson et al. (2020) supported this by noting that interactive reading structures such as Literature Circles led to heightened participation, greater enthusiasm, and positive reading habits.

In a study involving EFL learners, Talenta and Himawati (2023) concluded that Literature Circles significantly increased both quantitative engagement scores and qualitative indicators of reading interest, particularly in secondary education contexts. Students expressed greater enthusiasm for reading, a willingness to speak, and confidence in sharing interpretations, especially when participating in structured, role-based discussions.

Worthy, Consalvo, and Bogard (2021) investigated Literature Circles in middle school classrooms. They observed that even reluctant or struggling readers became more motivated and deeply engaged when allowed to select texts and lead their discussions. The element of choice and supportive peer dialogue were key in enhancing motivation.

Wati and Yanto (2023) also documented motivational benefits in vocational high school settings. Their findings revealed that participation in Literature Circles boosted students' reading self-efficacy, which fostered greater effort and enjoyment in literary tasks.

In tertiary education, Reading Circles Impact on EFL (2021) highlighted that over 85% of participating students reported increased motivation to express their ideas, research beyond the text, and engage more meaningfully with assigned literature. Similarly, Dini Amalia (2025) found that Literature Circles contributed to a notable increase in students' interest in reading and overall comprehension, demonstrating a positive feedback loop between motivation and academic achievement.

Overall, these recent studies confirm that Literature Circles transform reading into a socially interactive and personally meaningful activity. Encouraging voice, choice, and shared interpretation fosters a sense of ownership and engagement that traditional teacher-centered models often lack. The findings underscore the importance of adopting learner-centered approaches in literature instruction to cultivate lifelong reading motivation and critical thinking.

Synthesis. The reviewed literature reveals that traditional, teacher-centered approaches to literature instruction often fail to engage 21st-century learners, highlighting the need for more interactive, student-driven strategies. Literature Circles, as conceptualized by Daniels (1994, 2002, 2006), address this need by fostering collaborative, role-based discussions that encourage deeper literary comprehension. This approach aligns closely with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), which emphasizes the role of social interaction and peer collaboration within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in developing higher-order thinking skills. Like Vygotsky's theory, Literature Circles allow students to co-construct meaning through guided dialogue and shared tasks. While past studies emphasize the general benefits of Literature Circles in promoting engagement and analysis, the present study builds on this foundation by specifically examining their effectiveness in enhancing the literary comprehension of Grade 9 students, thus addressing a gap in empirical research at the junior high school level.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed the quasi-experimental mixed method design using Literature Circles as a strategy for enhancing the Literary Comprehension of the Grade 9 students. The design was deemed appropriate because it is practical and effective in real classroom settings. It allows the use of existing Grade 9 classes without disrupting their structure while still measuring changes through pre-tests and post-tests to infer the impact of Literature Circles. Adding qualitative data—like reflections and observations—helps confirm those results and explains how and why comprehension improved. This approach aligns with sociocultural theory by emphasizing social interaction as a learning driver.

Respondents

The participants of the study were drawn from two regular sections of the Junior High School Unit of Saint Paul University Surigao. Grade 9 Saint Luke, with forty-one (41) students, served as the experimental group, while Grade 9 Saint John the Beloved, also with forty-one (41) students, served as the control group. Eighty-two (82) Grade 9 students were chosen to participate in the study. Convenience sampling was utilized to select these sections because they were readily accessible to the researchers and fit the study schedule during English instructional periods.

Table 1. *Distribution of Participants*

Section	Population	Sample
1. Saint John the Beloved	41	35
2. Saint Luke	41	35
Total	82	70

The table above presents the distribution of the student-respondents who participated in the study. From the total population of eighty-two (82) Grade 9 students across two regular sections—Saint John the Beloved and Saint Luke—a convenient sample of seventy (70) students was selected. Thirty-five (35) students from each section were included in the study. The remaining twelve (12) students were not part of the sample due to their involvement in athletic commitments during the data collection period, which affected their availability for participation in the intervention and assessment activities.

Instrument

This study utilized pre-test and post-test multiple-type questionnaires consisting of 30 comprehension-related questions taken from the Anglo-American Literary texts aligned with the content and most essential learning competencies of the 2nd and 3rd Quarters. To ensure balanced and valid coverage, the questions were organized according to a Table of Specifications that incorporated Bloom's Taxonomy levels.

Moreover, an interview questionnaire was also used to gather and record students' perceptions of using Literature Circles to enhance literary comprehension.

Validity

To ensure the validity of the research instruments, the materials and test items were reviewed and validated by experts, including the research adviser and the thesis panel of examiners. The questions were based on the Department of Education's Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) from English 9. Furthermore, the experts' feedback guided the refinement of the instruments to ensure alignment with the study's objectives.

Reliability

The reliability of the instrument was established through validation by subject matter experts, who reviewed the content for accuracy and relevance. Moreover, the questionnaire questions were categorized according to their competencies level in Bloom's Taxonomy.

Procedure

A formal letter was submitted to the Basic Education Principal of the institution to request permission to conduct the study and integrate the literature circle strategy into ReFlex's collaborative learning activities.

Upon receiving approval, the researcher proceeded with the study following ethical research protocols. A pre-test was administered to the two (2) regular sections to determine baseline performance.

The experimental group received instruction using the literature circles strategy, where students were grouped and given the liberty to assign roles (discussion director, summarizer, vocabulary wizard/word finder, connector, character analyzer, illustrator, and predictor). Meanwhile, the control group continued with the traditional or existing instructional method.

After the intervention, both groups were administered a post-test. These were conducted in two quarters: the Second Quarter and the Third Quarter. The collected data were then tallied, analyzed, tabulated, and interpreted using appropriate statistical tools to address

the specific research problems.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data gathered, the researcher used the following statistical tools:

Mean and Standard Deviation. These were used to assess the effectiveness of innovative technology-based approaches in teaching literature.

Descriptive Method. This method was applied to thoroughly explain and analyze the pre-test and post-test results from both the experimental and control groups.

Paired Samples T-Test. This statistical tool was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores within each group, thereby evaluating the effect of the literature circle intervention on student performance.

Independent Samples T-Test. This was used to compare the post-test scores between the group that participated in literature circles and the group that used the traditional method to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in outcomes between the two instructional approaches.

Cohen's d. This measure of effect size was used to determine the practical significance of the differences found. It helped assess how substantial the impact of literature circles was on student performance by quantifying the size of the difference between groups or test periods (pre-test and post-test). Values of 0.2, 0.5, and 0.8 were interpreted as small, medium, and large effects, respectively.

T-Test. This statistical tool was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the mean pretest scores of the control and experimental groups in one quarter. It was applied because the data were assumed to be normally distributed and measured at the interval level. The test helped establish whether the two groups were comparable in performance before the intervention was implemented.

Mann-Whitney U Test. This non-parametric statistical tool was used to determine whether there was a significant difference in the distribution of pretest scores between the control and experimental groups in another quarter. It was employed because the data did not meet the assumptions required for parametric testing. The test was used to confirm the equivalence of the two groups prior to the intervention, particularly when the data were ordinal or not normally distributed.

Paired T-Test. This statistical tool was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the pretest and post-test mean scores of the experimental group in one quarter. It was appropriate for this analysis because the data were assumed to be normally distributed and collected from the same group of participants before and after the intervention. The test helped measure the effect of the intervention by comparing the group's performance over time.

Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test. This non-parametric statistical tool assessed whether there were significant differences between the pretest and post-test scores of both the control and experimental groups in another quarter. It was employed when the data were not normally distributed or measured at the ordinal level. This test helped evaluate the change in performance within each group due to the intervention or regular instruction by comparing paired scores from the same participants.

Shapiro-Wilk Test. This test was used to assess the normality of the data prior to the application of parametric tests. It guided the selection of appropriate statistical tools—either parametric or non-parametric—based on whether the data met the assumption of normal distribution.

Thematic Analysis. This qualitative tool analyzed open-ended interview responses and written reflections regarding implementing literature circles. Through coding and categorization, recurring themes were identified to capture the perceptions of teachers and Grade 9 students regarding using literature circles as a strategy for enhancing literary comprehension. Themes reflected how students engaged with texts, collaborated with peers, and developed deeper understanding through structured discussion roles and group interaction.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the quantitative, qualitative, and analysis of the data gathered from the Participants.

Level of Competence of Students in Literary Comprehension Based on the Pre-test Scores

Table 2 illustrates the students' level of competence in literary comprehension based on their pre-test results. Table 2, as shown in the pre-test performances of the control and experimental groups before the implementation of literature circles as a strategy to enhance literary comprehension among Grade 9 students. Across two quarters, both groups performed below the expected standard, with all mean percentage scores falling under 75%, verbally interpreted as Poor and qualitatively described as Not Competent. Specifically, in Quarter 2, the experimental group obtained a mean score of 18.63 (62.09%) with a standard deviation of 5.92, verbally interpreted as Poor and qualitatively described as Not Competent, where it slightly outperformed the control group, which scored 16.26 (54.19%) with a similar standard deviation of 5.96 6 Poor and Not Competent. In Quarter 3, the control group marginally surpassed the experimental group with a mean of 11.77 (39.24%) compared to 11.14 (37.14%), though both remained below the satisfactory range.

Table 2. *Level of Competence of Students in Literary Comprehension Based on the Pre-test Scores*

Group	*Mean*	*SD*	*% Score (30)*	*Verbal Interpretation*	*Qualitative Description*
Experimental(Q2)	18.63	5.92	62.09%	Poor	Not Competent
Control(Q2)	16.26	5.96	54.19%	Poor	Not Competent
Experimental(Q3)	11.14	2.84	37.14%	Poor	Not Competent
Control(Q3)	11.77	2.84	39.24%	Poor	Not Competent

Legend: 90–100% – Excellent (Highly Competent); 85–89% – Very Satisfactory (Very Competent); 80–84% – Satisfactory (Competent); 75–79% – Fair (Less Competent); Below 75% – Poor (Not Competent)

This result reflects a common trend in secondary education: students often exhibit low comprehension before introducing interactive and collaborative reading strategies. According to Oyetunji and Abidoye (2021), the continued reliance on teacher-centered instruction may contribute to passive learning behaviors that inhibit student engagement and critical thinking in reading tasks. Likewise, Malekzadeh and Bayat (2021) stress that learners may struggle to understand literary texts beyond surface-level interpretations without exposure to cooperative learning frameworks. The pre-test findings, therefore, reveal the necessity of instructional reforms that foster learner engagement and collaboration.

The findings from the pre-test reinforce the urgent need to integrate more interactive and student-centered instructional strategies to improve literary comprehension. The poor performance across both groups suggests that traditional instructional approaches may not effectively meet learners' comprehension needs. Implementing Literature Circles—structured peer-led discussions—can provide a more dynamic and supportive environment for reading, particularly for struggling learners. Jafari and Shokrpour (2020) note that Literature Circles significantly improve learners' motivation and comprehension by promoting active engagement, collaboration, and deeper textual analysis.

Furthermore, this baseline data supports the application of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which asserts that students learn best through social interaction within their Zone of Proximal Development. Literature Circles, by design, position students to learn from their peers, thereby scaffolding higher-order thinking skills. As such, the low pre-test scores provide a rationale for adopting Literature Circles as an intervention that can shift student performance from passive reception to active literary inquiry.

Usage of Literature Circles as a Strategy in Enhancing Literary Comprehension of Students

Implementing Literature Circles in the English 9 Anglo-American Literature subject during the Second and Third Quarters of School Year 2024–2025 marked a shift toward a more collaborative instructional approach. Integrated into each unit's Collaborative Learning station and documented in the teacher's Paulinian Learning Log (see Appendix I), this strategy aimed to enhance literary comprehension while fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and student autonomy—core values of both contemporary pedagogy and Paulinian education.

To prepare students for this interactive reading format, the teacher delivered competency-based lessons that built foundational knowledge of literary elements and analysis strategies. Following Daniels' (2021) framework, students were assigned specific roles—summarizer, questioner, vocabulary enricher, and discussion director—to ensure equitable participation and meaningful contributions. This role-based structure encouraged diverse interpretations, accountability, and active engagement, minimizing passive participation (Allington & Gabriel, 2020).

Supporting this structure, the teacher employed scaffolding strategies such as modeling text analysis, teaching literary devices, and posing guiding questions. These practices helped students transition from guided practice to independent analysis, aligning with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and supporting learners within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Hammond, 2020; Fisher & Frey, 2021). With the right tools and gradual support, students gained the confidence and competence to conduct their interpretive inquiries.

Further variation in group roles—such as connectors, illustrators, character analysts, and predictors—enabled students to examine texts through multiple analytical lenses. According to Lupo et al. (2021), this diversity of perspectives enhances comprehension by making abstract literary concepts more accessible. Each student's input became essential to the group's understanding, reinforcing the importance of collaboration and cognitive engagement in learning.

A key component of the strategy was the teacher's shift from direct instruction to facilitation. The teacher empowered students to lead discussions, pose questions, and interpret texts independently by stepping back. This student-centered approach encouraged autonomy and deeper engagement with literature. As Zapata, Maloch, and Gainer (2022) and Berne and Degennaro (2020) emphasized, giving students ownership of learning fosters critical thinking and sustained interest.

Literature Circles also created space for collaborative dialogue, where students clarified ideas, addressed misconceptions, and co-constructed meaning through peer-led discussions. These conversations facilitated the exploration of literary themes, symbols, and character motivations while encouraging respect for diverse interpretations. As Gilles and Davis (2021) point out, Dialogic interaction transforms reading into a socially constructed learning experience that deepens comprehension.

The teacher implemented formative and summative assessments to monitor learning, including observation checklists, comprehension quizzes, peer and self-evaluations, and reflective journals. These tools captured a holistic view of student progress, supported metacognitive reflection, and allowed instructional adjustments. Tompkins (2020) and Fisher and Frey (2021) noted that such reflective assessment promotes personalized, effective comprehension strategies.

In sum, Literature Circles in this study demonstrated the effectiveness of structured, student-centered collaboration in improving literary comprehension. The teacher fostered an environment conducive to critical thinking and meaningful interpretation through planning, scaffolding, role differentiation, peer dialogue, and ongoing assessment. The success of this strategy underscores the value of shifting toward learner-driven, discussion-based models in literature education.

Level of Competence of the Students in Literary Comprehension Based on the Post-test Scores.

Table 3 illustrates the students' level of competence in literary comprehension after using the Literature Circles strategy based on their post-test results.

Table 3. *Level of Competence of the Students in Literary Comprehension Based on the Post-test Scores.*

Group	*Mean*	*SD*	*% Score (30)*	*Verbal Interpretation*	*Qualitative Description*
Experimental(Q2)	24.22	4.40	80.76%	Satisfactory	Competent
Control(Q2)	21.91	5.19	73.05%	Poor	Not Competent
Experimental(Q3)	13.57	3.56	45.24%	Poor	Not Competent
Control(Q3)	15.09	3.34	50.29%	Poor	Not Competent

Legend: 90–100% – Excellent (Highly Competent); 85–89% – Very Satisfactory (Very Competent); 80–84% – Satisfactory (Competent); 75–79% – Fair (Less Competent); Below 75% – Poor (Not Competent)

Table 3 displays the post-test performances of the control and experimental groups following the implementation of literature circles as a strategy to enhance the literary comprehension of Grade 9 students.

In Quarter 2, the experimental group showed a notable improvement, achieving a mean score of 24.22, equivalent to 80.76%, verbally interpreted as Satisfactory and qualitatively described as Competent. In contrast, the control group scored a lower mean of 21.91 or 73.05%, verbally interpreted as Poor and qualitatively described as Not Competent. This difference suggests the literature circles positively impacted the experimental group's literary comprehension in Quarter 2.

These results align with existing literature supporting the effectiveness of literature circles in promoting deeper understanding, peer collaboration, and active engagement with texts (Gilles & Davis, 2021; Zapata, Maloch, & Gainer, 2022). However, the results in Quarter 3 present a more complex picture. Both groups continued to perform below expectations, with the experimental group scoring a mean of 13.57 (45.24%) and the control group slightly higher at 15.09 (50.29%), where both are verbally interpreted as Poor and qualitatively described as Not Competent. While both sets of scores are disappointing, the decrease in performance for the experimental group may be influenced by several factors, such as differences in literary content complexity, time constraints, or implementation fidelity during the third quarter.

The inconsistency in performance across quarters suggests that while literature circles can enhance comprehension under the right conditions, their success may depend on how they are structured, facilitated, and aligned with students' needs (Wilfong, 2021). Additionally, the improved post-test performance of the experimental group in Quarter 2, compared to its pre-test score, supports the intervention's potential for impact when effectively applied.

This outcome supports recent instructional assessment frameworks emphasizing that post-test results yield valid insights only when baseline equivalence between groups is confirmed, as shown in Table 1 (Fisher & Frey, 2021). Therefore, while literature circles appear to be a promising strategy, particularly evident in Quarter 2 outcomes, further investigation into contextual and instructional variables is necessary to ensure consistent efficacy across different content periods.

Significant Difference between the Pre-test Results of the Control and Experimental Groups

Table 4 illustrates the significant difference between the pre-test results in the Second Quarter and the Third Quarter.

Table 4. *Significant Difference between the Pre-test Results of the Control and Experimental Groups*

Group		*Mean*	*T*	*Df*	*p-value*	*Decision*
Pretest - Q2	Experimental	18.6	1.67	68	0.099	Accept Ho
	Control	16.3				

** if the p-value is <0.05, then there is a significant difference*

Group		*N*	*Median*	*U*	*p-value*	*Decision*
Pretest – Q3	Experimental	35	11.1	513	0.239	Accept Ho
	Control	35	11.8			

** if the p-value is <0.05, then there is a significant difference*

The results in Table 4 show no significant difference between the pre-test scores of the control and experimental groups in both Quarter 2 and Quarter 3. In Quarter 2, the experimental group had a mean score of 18.6 while the control group scored 16.3, with a p-value of 0.099, and in Quarter 3, median scores were 11.1 and 11.8, respectively, with a p-value of 0.239. Both p-values are above the 0.05 threshold, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This result confirms that both groups started from an equivalent baseline in terms of literary comprehension.

This statistical equivalence is highly beneficial for the study. It supports the internal validity of the research by ensuring that any improvement seen in the experimental group's post-test scores can be confidently attributed to the literature circles strategy and not to pre-existing advantages (Fisher & Frey, 2021). The intervention's effect is isolated and can be more clearly measured.

Moreover, these results provide strong foundational support for the positive impact of literature circles. The fact that both groups began at similar comprehension levels strengthens the argument that the higher post-test scores of the experimental group in Quarter 2 (as seen in Table 6) were due to the effectiveness of literature circles in improving literary comprehension. This supports recent research emphasizing the value of collaborative learning environments in which literature circles enhance student voice, engagement, and in-depth understanding of texts (Gilles & Davis, 2021).

The findings also resonate with contemporary interpretations of Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, which stresses the importance of peer interaction and scaffolding in cognitive development. In literature circles, students collaboratively interpret and analyze texts, allowing them to work within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and attain comprehension levels that may be beyond their reach (Hammond, 2020). With pre-test scores showing group parity, the experimental group's later gains suggest that this socially interactive learning structure was particularly effective in enhancing literary comprehension.

Additionally, researchers such as Tompkins (2020) and Zapata, Maloch, and Gainer (2022) highlight that the credibility of quasi-experimental studies depends largely on the initial equivalence of the groups being compared. In this case, that criterion is met, validating the experimental design and strengthening the reliability of the findings regarding literature circles as an impactful instructional strategy.

In essence, the lack of pre-test difference reinforces the study's conclusion that literature circles have a measurable and positive impact on students' literary comprehension, as seen in the improved performance of the experimental group. This strengthens the case for integrating literature circles into Grade 9 English instruction as an evidence-based, student-centered approach to enhance engagement and understanding.

Significant Difference between the Post-test Results of the Control and Experimental Groups

Table 5 illustrates the significant difference between the post-test results of the control group and experimental groups in the Second and Third Quarters.

Table 5. *Significant difference between the Post-test Results of the Control and Experimental Groups*

Group		*N*	*Median*	*U*	*p-value*	*Decision*
Posttest – Q2	Experimental	35	25	431	0.033	Reject Ho
	Control	35	23			
Posttest – Q3	Experimental	35	13	448	0.053	Accept Ho
	Control	35	15			

** if the p-value is <0.05, then there is a significant difference*

Table 5 shows the comparison of post-test performances between the control and experimental groups after the use of literature circles. In Quarter 2, the experimental group achieved a higher median score of 25, while the control group scored 23. The difference between the two groups was statistically significant ($p = 0.033$), indicating that students who participated in literature circles performed better in literary comprehension tasks than those who did not. This result supports that literature circles can enhance student understanding by fostering deeper engagement, collaborative interpretation, and meaningful discussions around texts (Gilles & Davis, 2021; Zapata, Maloch, & Gainer, 2022).

In contrast, the results in Quarter 3 show no significant difference between the two groups. The experimental group had a median score of 13, slightly lower than the control group's 15. Although there was a small performance gap, it was not enough to be considered statistically significant ($p = 0.053$). This suggests that while literature circles had a positive effect in Quarter 2, their impact in Quarter 3 was less evident. One possible explanation is that the literary materials' nature or the tasks' complexity in Quarter 3 may not have aligned as well with the collaborative approach of literature circles, limiting their effectiveness.

These findings imply that literature circles can be a powerful strategy for improving comprehension, particularly when the reading materials are well-suited to student discussion and interaction. However, their success also depends on how effectively they are implemented and how well they match the learning context (Wilfong, 2021; Lupo et al., 2021). The overall pattern still favors literature circles as a promising approach to developing literary understanding among students.

Significant Difference between the Pre-test and Post-test Results of the Control and Experimental Groups

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Table 6 illustrates the significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results of the control group and experimental group in the Second and Third Quarters.

Table 6. *Significant Difference between the Pre-test and Post-Test Results of the Control and Experimental Groups*

Group		*Mean*	*T*	*Df*	*p-value*	*Decision*
Experimental- Q2	Pretest	18.6	-12.8	34	< 0.001	Reject Ho
	Post-test	24.2				

** if the p-value is <0.05, then there is a significant difference*

Group		*N*	*Median*	*W*	*p-value*	*Decision*
Control- Q2	Pretest	35	16	0.00	< 0.001	Reject Ho
	Post-test	35	23			
Experimental- Q3	Pretest	35	11	0.00	< 0.001	Reject Ho
	Post-test	35	13			
Control- Q3	Pretest	35	12	0.00	< 0.001	Reject Ho
	Post-test	35	15			

** if the p-value is <0.05, then there is a significant difference*

The data presented in Table 6 reveal a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test performances of the control and experimental groups, as indicated by p-values less than 0.001 in all cases. The experimental group in Quarter 2 demonstrated a marked increase in mean scores from 18.6 to 24.2, with a t-value of -12.8 and a p-value well below the 0.05 threshold, indicating a statistically significant improvement.

Similarly, in Quarter 3, both the control and experimental groups showed gains in median scores, with the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test produced p-values < 0.001, signifying meaningful improvements. These findings suggest that the instructional approaches applied during the intervention period, particularly those involving collaborative and student-centered strategies, contributed to enhanced student performance.

Significant differences support the notion that structured group activities and guided literary discussions can improve comprehension outcomes, consistent with recent research highlighting the impact of socially interactive learning environments on literacy development (Gilles & Davis, 2021; Hammond, 2020).

Qualitative Analysis

This part presents the qualitative interpretation utilizing the Thematic Analysis Method in the Effectiveness of Literature Circles to enhance the Literary Comprehension of Grade 9 students.

Students' Perceptions on the Use of Literature Circles in Literary Comprehension

Table 7 illustrates the Perception of the Students on the Use of Literature Circles as a Strategy in enhancing Literary Comprehension.

Table 7. *Students' Perceptions on the Use of Literature Circles in Literary Comprehension*

Significant Statements	*Formulated Meanings*	*Emergent Themes*
"I liked reading more when we had group discussions. It was fun to hear what others thought about the story." "Literature circles help you understand a stony better because everyone share their ideas. When you talk about a stony like "The lottery," you get to hear different thoughts from others, which helps you think about the story in new ways. Sometimes, other people notice things you might have missed, like how the Characters act or what certain events mean." "Talking in a group also helps us understand the main ideas of the story. For example, in the story "The Lottery.' Discussing how everyone just follows the lottery without thinking if it's right or wrong. Talking about how Tessie reacts when she is picked makes you think about how people might act when something unfair happens to them.	Many students reported that literature circles made reading more enjoyable and interactive. The collaborative format helped transform reading from a solitary task into a social activity. Students expressed that the group discussions and shared roles made literary exploration less intimidating and more engaging. This positive emotional response contributed to increased motivation and willingness to read more attentively.	Enhanced Engagement and Enjoyment in Reading
"Sometimes I didn't understand what a part meant, but when someone explained it, I got it better." "It helps us to have deeper comprehension, because we can be able to understand what the meaning is in the given text and improves our vocabulary and	Students perceived literature circles as helpful in deepening their comprehension of literary texts. Hearing diverse interpretations and explanations from peers helped them grasp complex ideas, themes, and character motivations. The discussions often made	Improved Understanding and Critical Thinking

understanding in literature and in life."	students reconsider their initial understanding and develop a more nuanced text analysis.	
"I used to be shy about sharing my ideas, but in our group, I felt comfortable talking." "By also discussing, it helps us to learn and discover new deep words that we can use in the near future. This also improve our grammar and improves our way of a composing sentence. It is really helpful to our knowledge about literature."	Several students highlighted that literature circles helped them become more confident in expressing their thoughts and opinions. The structured roles gave them a clear sense of purpose in the discussion, and the supportive environment encouraged participation, even among more reserved students.	Increased Confidence and Communication Skills
"Everyone had different ideas, and that made the story more interesting to me." "For me, talking with others has made me think more about Goodman Brown's choices. See that his journey might be about facing his own fear or debts, which I didn't fully notice before, Literature circles helps us see different angles of the story, which changes the way we understand it."	Students appreciated the collaborative nature of literature circles. They acknowledged the benefit of learning from their classmates and emphasized that the group setting encouraged teamwork and mutual respect. Many noted that hearing multiple viewpoints enriched their interpretation of the text.	Value of Peer Learning and Collaboration
"The roles helped us stay focused, but sometimes I didn't know how to do my task well." "Literature also help us focus on specific role or task, Participants supports argument with quotes, developing critical thinking.	Feedback indicated that students found the assigned roles both helpful and challenging. Some felt the roles gave structure and direction, which made the discussions more organized. Others mentioned that rotating roles allowed them to experience different aspects of literary analysis. However, a few students expressed that certain roles felt repetitive or complex without enough guidance.	Relevance and Application of Roles

To explore Grade 9 students' perceptions regarding the use of literature circles to enhance literary comprehension, qualitative responses were analyzed and categorized into key themes. These themes reflect students' experiences, attitudes, and reflections on how literature circles influenced their engagement with literary texts.

Enhanced Engagement and Enjoyment in Reading. Many students reported that literature circles made reading more enjoyable and interactive. The collaborative format helped transform reading from a solitary task into a social activity. Students expressed that the group discussions and shared roles made literary exploration less intimidating and more engaging. This positive emotional response contributed to increased motivation and willingness to read more attentively.

"I liked reading more when we had group discussions. It was fun to hear what others thought about the story." (see appendix l line no. 9)

"Literature circles help you understand a stony better because everyone share their ideas. When you talk about a stony like "The lottery," you get to hear different thoughts from others, which helps you think about the story in new ways. Sometimes, other people notice things you might have missed, like how the Characters act or what certain events mean." (see appendix l line no. 11)

"Talking in a group also helps us understand the main ideas of the story. For example, in the story "The Lottery.' Discussing how everyone just follows the lottery without thinking if it's right or wrong. Talking about how Tessie reacts when she is picked makes you think about how people might act when something unfair happens to them. (see appendix l line no. 13)

These responses suggest that Literature Circles foster emotional engagement and intrinsic motivation—factors essential to reading comprehension and long-term academic success. Recent research confirms that when students are emotionally connected and socially engaged during reading tasks, their comprehension and retention improve (Lupo et al., 2021; Ivey & Johnston, 2023). This indicates that integrating socially interactive practices such as Literature Circles in the classroom enhances engagement and contributes to building a sustained reading habit.

Improved Understanding and Critical Thinking. Students perceived literature circles as helpful in deepening their comprehension of literary texts. Hearing diverse interpretations and explanations from peers helped them grasp complex ideas, themes, and character motivations. The discussions often led students to reconsider their initial understanding and develop a more nuanced analysis of the text.

"Sometimes I didn't understand what a part meant, but when someone explained it, I got it better." (see appendix l line no. 15)

"It helps us to have deeper comprehension because we can be able to understand what the meaning is in the given text and improves our vocabulary and understanding in literature and in life." (see appendix l line no. 17)

These insights affirm the value of peer dialogue in constructing literary meaning. Collaborative interpretation aligns with the principles of dialogic teaching, which emphasize reciprocal learning and critical thinking (Boyd & Markarian, 2022). Literature Circles, when implemented with proper scaffolding, enable students to articulate and refine their interpretations, thereby improving their analytical and inferential skills (Zapata et al., 2022).

Increased Confidence and Communication Skills. Several students highlighted that literature circles helped them become more confident in expressing their thoughts and opinions. The structured roles gave them a clear sense of purpose in the discussion, and the supportive environment encouraged participation, even among more reserved students.

"I used to be shy about sharing my ideas, but in our group, I felt comfortable talking." (see appendix l line no.19)

"By also discussing, it helps us to learn and discover new deep words that we can use in the near future. This also improve our grammar and improves our way of a composing sentence. It is really helpful to our knowledge about literature." (see appendix l line no. 21)

Literature Circles foster both academic and socio-emotional growth. A student-centered and low-risk discussion format empowers learners to participate actively, which builds oral communication and language fluency (Hammond, 2020). This is particularly impactful in diverse classrooms where confidence-building opportunities are essential for inclusive learning (Gonzalez & Freire, 2021).

Value of Peer Learning and Collaboration. Students appreciated the collaborative nature of literature circles. They acknowledged the benefit of learning from their classmates and emphasized that the group setting encouraged teamwork and mutual respect. Many noted that hearing multiple viewpoints enriched their interpretation of the text.

"Everyone had different ideas, and that made the story more interesting to me." (see appendix l line no. 23)

"For me, talking with others has made me think more about Goodman Brown's choices. See that his journey might be about facing his own fear or debts, which I didn't fully notice before, Literature circles helps us see different angles of the story, which changes the way we understand it." (see appendix l line no. 25)

These reflections support the idea that peer collaboration promotes metacognitive awareness and the ability to approach texts from multiple perspectives. As emphasized by Fisher and Frey (2021), collaborative comprehension strategies like Literature Circles develop individual literacy skills and collective meaning-making, enhancing interpretative depth and empathy among learners.

Relevance and Application of Roles. Feedback indicated that students found the assigned roles both helpful and challenging. Some felt the roles gave structure and direction, which made the discussions more organized. Others mentioned that rotating roles allowed them to experience different aspects of literary analysis. However, a few students expressed that certain roles felt repetitive or complex without enough guidance.

"The roles helped us stay focused, but sometimes I didn't know how to do my task well." (see appendix l line no. 27)

"Literature also help us focus on specific role or task, Participants supports argument with quotes, developing critical thinking. (see appendix l line no. 29)

This highlights the importance of teacher facilitation and role-specific training in Literature Circles. While structured roles can enhance accountability and comprehension, insufficient clarity can hinder discussion quality. As Lupo et al. (2021) noted, the success of structured literacy activities depends on consistent scaffolding, modeling, and reflective practices. Teachers must provide differentiated support to ensure students understand and fulfill their roles effectively.

Teacher's Insights in the Use of Literature Circles for Literary Comprehension

To explore the teacher's insights regarding the use of literature circles to enhance Grade 9 students' literary comprehension, qualitative data from the teacher's reflective statements were analyzed. The following themes emerged, highlighting perceived benefits and observed challenges in implementing this strategy. Table 8 illustrates the insights of the Teacher on the use of Literature Circles as a strategy in enhancing Literary Comprehension.

Table 8. *Teacher's Insights on the Use of Literature Circles for Literary Comprehension*

Significant Statements	*Formulated Meanings*	*Emergent Themes*
"They were more prepared and took their tasks seriously."	Students developed accountability through peer-led discussions and task roles.	Student Autonomy and Responsibility
"They were analyzing characters and asking deeper questions."	The strategy encouraged analysis, inference, and evaluation of text.	Development of Critical Thinking
"Even the shy ones became more involved in the group discussions."	Students became more active, especially those who were usually passive.	Increased Engagement and Participation
"I had to model how each role worked before they got used to it."	Early confusion with roles highlighted the necessity of modeling and instructional support.	Need for Teacher Scaffolding
"They understood the story beyond the surface through listening and discussion."	The collaborative approach allowed for multi-perspective analysis, deepening students' understanding of the text.	Enhanced Literary Comprehension

Promotion of Student Autonomy and Responsibility. The teacher observed that literature circles empowered students to take ownership

of their learning. Through assigned roles and peer-led discussions, students became more responsible for reading, preparing, and contributing to group conversations without heavy teacher dependence.

"I noticed students became more independent in understanding the story, and they were more prepared when it was their turn to share."

This supports the notion that Literature Circles foster learner autonomy by decentralizing the classroom and giving students meaningful roles in learning. According to Hammond (2020), learning environments that prioritize student voice and responsibility cultivate intrinsic motivation and deeper engagement. The independence cultivated in Literature Circles is particularly valuable for adolescent learners, who thrive when given structure and freedom.

Development of Higher-Order Thinking Skills. According to the teacher, literature circles prompted deeper levels of thinking among students. The strategy required them to recall content and analyze, infer, and evaluate textual elements through meaningful discourse.

"They were not just retelling the story—they were analyzing characters, connecting ideas, and asking deeper questions."

This finding underscores the role of collaborative dialogue in promoting higher-order thinking. As students engage with multiple perspectives, they sharpen their inferential and evaluative skills—cornerstones of critical literary comprehension. This also mirrors dialogic teaching frameworks that prioritize reasoning over rote responses.

Fisher and Frey (2021) highlight that structured peer interaction fosters analytical rigor by encouraging interpretation, questioning, and evidence-based responses. Similarly, Zapata et al. (2022) assert that Literature Circles elevate cognitive engagement by actively processing text ideas in group settings.

Improved Classroom Engagement and Participation. The teacher emphasized that literature circles made the reading sessions more dynamic and inclusive. Even quieter students participated actively due to the smaller group setting and structured expectations.

"Students who usually don't talk much in whole-class discussions were suddenly very active in their small groups."

This suggests that Literature Circles create an inclusive space that promotes equitable participation. By lowering the pressure of whole-class discourse, small-group dynamics help reluctant speakers gain confidence and contribute more meaningfully. This is vital in diverse classrooms where learner backgrounds and confidence levels vary.

Allington and Gabriel (2020) stress that engagement increases when students feel socially and emotionally secure. Literature Circles, through predictable structures and shared roles, offer that safety. According to Gilles and Davis (2021), inclusive participation is a key benefit of literature-based discussion models in middle-grade classrooms.

Importance of Teacher Guidance and Scaffolding. While the teacher praised the benefits of literature circles, she also stressed the need for clear modeling, training, and ongoing guidance—especially in the early stages—to ensure that students understood their roles and could engage meaningfully with the texts.

"At first, students were confused about their roles. I had to model how each role worked before they got used to it."

This highlights the need for ongoing teacher support when implementing student-led strategies. Role clarity, consistent modeling, and formative feedback are essential to ensure students engage with tasks meaningfully. Teachers must balance facilitation and autonomy to make the strategy sustainable and effective.

Lupo et al. (2021) argue that scaffolded literacy practices ensure equitable access to complex tasks like discussion and interpretation. Daniels (2021) recommends explicit role instruction for successful Literature Circle implementation.

Positive Impact on Literary Comprehension. The teacher believed that students' overall comprehension improved through this strategy as they engaged in collaborative sense-making and tackled texts from multiple perspectives.

"Their insights got deeper as they learned to listen to others' interpretations. They understood the story beyond the surface."

This demonstrates that peer collaboration enhances interpretive depth. When students discuss, challenge, and extend each other's ideas, they build a more nuanced understanding of themes, character motivations, and symbolism—essential elements of literary comprehension.

According to Ivey and Johnston (2023), students learn more effectively when socially constructing meaning from texts. Fisher and Frey (2021) further explain that comprehension is reinforced when students co-construct knowledge in structured, collaborative reading environments.

Conclusions

Based on the foregoing findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

Students in both the control and experimental groups were not competent in terms of literary comprehension.

The literary circles strategy was utilized in the English class under the collaborative learning phase of the lesson.

While the control group remained "not competent," the experimental group reached the "competent" level in quarter 2 after using the literature circles strategy. However, during quarter 3, the experimental group remained "not competent" even after using the literature circles strategy. The perceived reason is that students found it hard to concentrate on tasks due to overwhelming school activities.

The use of literature circles strategy increased the level of literary competence in literary comprehension of the students in the experimental group during the 2nd quarter.

Literature circles strategy was effective not only in the increased of the level competency in literary comprehension but also students found it engaging, collaborative, and supportive of their own learning.

Literature circles is an effective strategy in enhancing the literary comprehension of students. This was supported by the results where there was an increase in the level of literary competence in students' literary comprehension.

In light of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are given.

Traditional teaching strategies should be replaced with literature circles and other related strategies to ensure enhancement in the literary comprehension of students.

Teachers may continue using the literature circle strategy in enhancing the literary comprehension of students; however, it must be implemented carefully and properly.

In the continuous use of the literature circles, the teachers must strengthen the strategy by looking into the phases where the strategy is at its weakness and make improved interventions.

Teachers should integrate various reading strategies, such as predicting, questioning, summarizing, making inferences, and visualizing, to improve students' comprehension skills. These strategies can be used before, during, and after reading to deepen understanding.

School administration should establish extensive reading programs encouraging students to read for pleasure. Providing access to a wide range of books in school libraries can foster a reading culture that supports comprehension development.

Future studies should explore how literature circles can be adapted to different subjects, age groups, or learning environments. It would also be valuable to investigate the long-term impact of such strategies on students' overall literacy development.

Future studies explore other innovative and context-based reading strategies beyond literature circles, such as reciprocal teaching, close reading, and reader response approaches, especially in EFL or multilingual classrooms.

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Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Mark Kevin C. Marbani
Saint Paul University Surigao – Philippines

Dr. Kristopher M. Ngilangil
Surigao del Norte State University – Philippines