T.C.
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

**USING LITERATURE CIRCLES IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG
LEARNERS**

THESIS

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Enstitümüz İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı Y1612.020013 numaralı öğrencisi Dilek KÖKLER'in "**Using Literature Circles in Teaching English to Young Leaners**" adlı tez çalışması Enstitümüz Yönetim Kurulunun 13.06.2019 tarih ve 2019/13 sayılı kararıyla oluşturulan jüri tarafından oybirliği/oyçokluğu ile Tezli Yüksek Lisans tezi 25.06.2019 tarihinde kabul edilmiştir.

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ONAY

Prof. Dr. Ragıp Kutay KARACA
Enstitü Müdürü

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that all information in this thesis document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results, which are not original to this thesis.

Dilek KÖKLER

FOREWORD

Extending my thanks to my supervisor Dr. Hülya YUMRU is a true joy for me. For her infinite patience, and significant help throughout my studies. Without her valuable assistance, enchanting reviews and insightful instruction, I would never have accomplished this research. Her assistance has meant a lot to me and I am very grateful to her.

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Last but not least, my genuine affection extends to all my students who have been with me to show the finest manner to bond them throughout the 20 years of my teaching profession.

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ABBREVIATIONS

EFL : English as a Foreign Language
LC : Literature Circles**.**

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USING LITERATURE CIRCLES IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

ABSTRACT

Literature circles are small, peer-led discussion groups whose members chose to read some stories, while reading each member takes notes and later everyone comes to the group with ideas to share. Each group follows a schedule for reading and meeting, holding regular conversations on the way through the book (Daniels,2002). Peed-led literature circles provide learners with an outstanding opportunity to familiarize themselves with authentic stories while working collaboratively in groups by establishing rules for responding and discussing and keeping on-task communication to reflect their understanding of what they are reading.

The idea of literature circles isn't recent, but it's hardly accepted in the EFL world. Similarly, many researches show that the implementation of literary circles through concepts is even less visible in the world of education. In addition, even the basics of literature courses are not favored by EFL educators to enchant their linguistic learning either. The purpose of this research was to investigate the benefits of using literature circles with young learners in EFL settings. Besides, it was an attempt to find out the possible challenges the teachers may experience in implementing literature circles in English lessons. The study was conducted in the second term of 2018-2019 academic year at a private primary school in İstanbul, Turkey. The participants in the study were 18 third grade beginner language proficiency students. The tools of data collection with a qualitative approach were semi-structured interviews, checklists and rubrics as self-assessment tools and the teacher's observation diary. The results of the data indicated that the students were exposed to authentic language that contributed to their learning while the use of age appropriate text also gave students the chance to connect and discuss their connections with peers. The students also identified with both the characters and events that increased their motivation to continue reading. Finally, it was observed that the learners liked choosing their own books, roles and projects. The research also examined possible issues that the teachers may experience, such as adjusting a comprehensive integrated reading writing program to young EFL learners and coping with the students' needs with different language abilities working in the same group to fulfill their tasks.

Keywords: *Reading, Authentic Short Stories, Concept-based reading, Literature Circles*

EDEBİYAT GRUPLARININ İLKÖĞRETİM ÖĞRENCİLERİNE İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETİMİNDE KULLANIMI

ÖZET

Son yıllarda yapılan araştırmalara göre yoğun okuma içeren edebiyat gruplarının İngilizce öğretiminde öğrencilere iş birliği, farklı bakış açıları kazanma, yetenekleri ortaya çıkarma, özgüven geliştirme, iletişim ve düşünme becerilerini geliştirme, kelime haznesi oluşturma ve ayrıntıları yakalama açısından çok fazla olumlu katkıları vardır. Daniels (2002) edebiyat gruplarının öğrencilerin seçtikleri kitaplara göre oluşturulmuş gruplar halinde belirli aralıklarla okudukları kitapları tartıştıkları bir öğretim yöntemi olduğunu belirtmektedir. Edebiyat gruplarının dil eğitimde kullanılması yeni bir yaklaşım olmamasına rağmen İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak okutulduğu çevrelerde hala pek kabul görmemektedir. En basit şekli ile bile edebiyat gruplarının İngilizce öğretmenleri tarafından da derslerini zenginleştirici bir uygulama olarak tercih edilmediği gözlemlenmektedir. Bu eylem araştırması yukarıda belirtilen gözlemleri göz önünde bulundurarak, İngilizcenin öğretiminde edebiyat gruplarının kullanılmasının avantajlarını araştırmış ve aynı zamanda öğretmenlerin bu grupları ilköğretim öğrencilerine İngilizce öğretmek için uygularken karşılaşabileceği olası zorluklarını saptamayı hedeflemiştir. Bu çalışma, 2018-2019 akademik yılının ikinci döneminde İstanbul'da özel bir İlköğretim Okulu'nda gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmaya İngilizce düzeyleri başlangıç seviyesinde olan 18 ilköğretim üçüncü sınıf öğrencisi katılmıştır. Çalışma verileri yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, öz değerlendirme araçları olarak kontrol ve değerlendirme listeleri ile öğretmen gözlem günlüğünden oluşmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın sonuçları edebiyat gruplarının İlköğretimde İngilizce derslerine uygulandığında öğrencilerin okudukları otantik hikâyelerin düşünme, tartışma ve yorum yapma becerilerinin gelişmesine ve bu hikayelerin içerdikleri kavramlar ile oluşan edebiyat gruplarında çalışan öğrencilerin de öğrenme süreçlerinin sorumluluğunu alma nokrasında ilerleme kaydettiği gözlenmiştir. Ayrıca edebiyat gruplarını ilköğretim sınıflarında uygularken İngilizce öğretmenlerinin sınıf yaşayacağı olası problemler incelenmiştir

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Okuma, Otantik Hikayeler, Kavram Bazlı Okuma, Edebiyat Grupları*

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter, presents the background of the study, the significance of the study, the aim of the research and the research questions and definitions of the keywords.

1.1 Background of the Study

As English language teachers, we all know, imagination and curiosity are the keys for students' learning. There have been serious discussions about how to nurture the natural interest of students and how to use their cognitive skills with the help of short stories. Although there are some educators, who have reconsidered their beliefs and actions to avoid surface level learning and try to discover more real-life based learning instructions in their classrooms, a significant amount of EFL teachers still depend on textbooks that usually fail to offer students life connections. As Widdowson (1984, p.72) points out "textbooks don't relate to context, and they are far from reality and them also self-contained, that is the reason only the language takes attention with the lack of humanizing influence." They usually don't take the risk of moving away from controlled exercises. As Broughton & Brumfit (1980) describe learning a language includes not only obtaining some grammar and vocabulary and a sensible pronunciation but it is also involves acquiring the ability to adapt the language to the circumstance, the participant and the fundamental purpose. Most language teachers are not aware of the fact that stories are quite beneficial to fulfil all requirements in learning English and fail to give a value of literature to their students. According to Brumfit & Carter (1986), "We are not using literature as the servant of language" (p. 24). The idea of literature circles has been used lately, but it is hardly implemented in EFL classrooms. In literature circles, the members of small reading groups perform their roles that lead to peer-lead discussions based on what is read. For students, as Daniels (1994)

describes it, it is falling love with the books that the students have read and having a pleasure to talk about them with their peers in small groups.

Since the early 1980s, the communicative approach has been widely regarded as the most effective approach to teaching a foreign language, and the use of stories in EFL classrooms has also begun to gain importance due to its various advantages in facilitating language learning (Krashen, 1982). In the same light, previous studies have shown that the students who have no interaction with each other and practice foreign language mechanically have poor language performance in the real world outside the classroom. In her analysis, McKay (1982) states that despite the aim to use literature to teach language use, fewer people have used it to improve their language skills. There has been increasing concern over the texts we use as materials for EFL students. Using authentic materials to foster foreign language learning have received much attention over the past twenty years. Previous researchers have indicated that authenticity has a positive effect on teaching and learning English (Boyle, Burke, Brumfit & Carter 1986; Daniels, 2002; Furr, 2004 and Povey, 1984). Widdowson. (2003) is one of those scholars, and he focuses on authenticity too. He states that the idea is related to communicative language teaching and he also underlies that contrary to the popular belief authentic texts are not tricky to deal with in language classrooms as long as we know how to integrate them to our lessons and use them as a tool to improve language skills (Candlin & Short, 1986 as cited in Hall, 2015). Authenticity has been increasingly becoming an essential factor in the world of teaching foreign languages recently. Widdowson (1996) points out that authenticity becomes real when we prioritize communicative behavior in our classrooms, and it happens instinctively when we value the students' own experiences in the process of learning. Related researches indicate that children are natural language learners. They adopt language fast and efficiently when they are provided with an authentic environment and engaging materials. Current trends focus on this fact and literature has become something that has been widely accepted as a tool to encourage students to respond using a rich language, to involve in discussions reflecting their own experiences.

Back in the early 1980s, some teachers from Chicago aimed to develop the reading-writing approach (Daniels, 2002). Those teachers started to implement

literature circles to endorse especially reading and reflecting skills that comprise speaking writing in their classrooms. A few years, an ESL teacher called Martinez Roldan and Lopez Robertson were impressed by the success of literature circles with English speaking kids in Chicago schools (Daniels, 2002). They applied this success proven method with bilingual students in primary in North America for the first time. Interestingly enough, they found out that bilingual-students were successful in making connections with stories, and they were eager to join discussions. After twenty years, literature circles have still been implementing in many schools with both native and bilingual students. Another EFL teacher/researcher Furr (2004) tried literature circles with Japanese students, and according to Furr, those students were able to become incredibly active with the help of literature circles by sharing their ideas in English. Although Furr altered the first four principles of the method for applying it to the EFL schools, they still conducted their discussions in English. Despite the growing importance attached to the communication skills of students, English language teachers in Turkey usually favor explicit grammar teaching and rely too much on artificial texts in the course books. Although a large number of English teachers appreciate the advantages of the communicative approach, many Turkish language teachers tend to give less importance to using authentic texts to give their students meaningful input. It is not always easy for teachers to use authentic materials such as stories for various purposes such as administrative decisions, wrong book choice, but mostly lacks understanding of how to use stories to teach English. Implementing literature circles is, likewise, an innovative idea for language teachers in Turkey. Researchers have carried out several studies so far, and these studies are either using literature or literature circles to motivate English teachers and learners in different settings (Aytan, 2018; Hişmanoğlu, 2005 and Karatay, 2017).

1.2 The Significance of the Study

Because of recent researches, it is widely accepted that stories have a significant universal value to help young learners improve their understanding of language and also life itself. Research findings indicate that literature has been widely

considered to be the most authentic material in the field of teaching language. As Cameron (2001) points out, stories create an environment in which students are authentically exposed to rich language. Povey (1984) argues that literature improves all language skills because literature expands linguistic understanding by providing proof of comprehensive and subtle use of vocabulary. Daniels (2002) also underlines that children who join literatüre circles over longer periods of time will gain vocabulary,as well as create a dozen other important reading abilities,

Another benefit of using literature in our classrooms is that it can enrich our students' creativity. Additionally, Widdowson (1984) suggests that "rather than seeing literature for just reading drills, we should see the importance of its cultural content and accept literature as discourse and the study" (p.72). Finally, exploring a foreign culture through literature can increase learners ' understanding of this culture and build tolerance for them in their own lives. As Farrell and Jacobs (2010) underline, the students don't get the joy of learning when they are forced to read textbooks.

Reflecting on the benefits of reading in teaching English, recent developments have focused on a different application of reading groups: Literature circles. Such developments show that literature circles provide students with the pleasure of reading and the medium to talk about their understanding. As Daniels (2002) points out, literature circles improve both reading abilities and motivation in language classrooms. Literature circles have a significant influence on students' language development, including comprehensive skills, acquisition of authentic vocabulary and augmented responsibility and motivation. I believe that we can change our point of view from how we teach grammar to create a productive environment where students internalize the language to express themselves naturally using their thinking skills. Promoting student-led discussions with young learners is not very common in EFL classrooms in Turkey, which might be due to the traditional classroom teaching methods and inadequate linguistic competence of students. Furthermore, collaborative activities and benefits are usually ignored. Based on the arguments mentioned above, this study primarily attempted to explore the benefits of using literature circles with young learners.

1.3 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Short stories are easy to comprehend for children because of their shared values and contents, so the students are provided with a natural environment to engage in dialogues both with the teachers and their peers. Short stories also obviously have particular roles for the exposure of young learners to language and help create students ' reading skills. In the light of the factors mentioned above, the study aimed to investigate the benefits of using literature circles with young learners in EFL settings. Besides, it was an attempt to find out the possible challenges the teachers may experience in implementing literature circles in English lessons. Drawing on the aims of the study, the following were the research questions that framed this research:

- What are the benefits of using literature circles in teaching English?
- Are there any challenges in implementing literature circles in English lessons? If so, what are those challenges?

Therefore, this study is based on the view that by internalizing summarizing, questioning, predicting, clarifying in literatüre circles, students become efficient communicators in L2. Consequently, students are taught using unique methods to help them obtain those main skills while practicing their roles in literatüre circles.

2. LITERATURE VIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical background of the study. In the first part, the importance of reading in foreign language and also the role of stories in teaching are stated. Next section attempts to describe literature circles in EFL, concept-based reading and group work. The last part highlights assessment in reading, reading aloud and mini lessons as teaching strategies.

2.2 Definition of Reading and Its Importance

Recent developments in the field of education have led to renewed interest in using stories in English language classrooms. A considerable amount of research has been done and published on this topic and this chapter reviews related nature of reading. The chapter concludes with ways of integrating literature circles in EFL classrooms.

Since reading is a significant part of language teaching, we need to be familiar with the reading process. In the most straightforward way of viewing reading is a relationship between writer and reader, which allows a mental process to make it meaningful. According to Birch (2009), it is a complicated mental activity that contains a significant amount of specialized knowledge, and it must be acquired and learned through many processing strategies. Reading is a kind of communication where readers participate actively to create meaning.

Nuttall (1996) explains that why we read is to get the message. Barnett (1989) defines the skills of readers as receptive rather than passive. She claims that reading is an essential skill for the life of the human. We all know that many people around the world read many things a day. Newspapers, advertisements, signs, etc. We read whatever we write, and success depends on how skillfully we read. Grabe (2009) underlines that we engage in many different types of reading according to our purposes. He also highlights the importance of

connecting the background knowledge and beliefs to the text information. Readers own interests' preferences, and interpretation plays a vital role in evaluating and inferencing the text, whereas reading for comprehension is the most common style of reading.

In other critical study, Kucer (2014) highlights the importance of the relationship between the reader's language and the author's language. He suggests that if they have something in common, understanding occurs more easily while reading. Kucer also mentions cognitive process, background knowledge and purpose as crucial factors to generate the meaning. He states the knowledge of its own is not enough for reading without some processing mechanism.

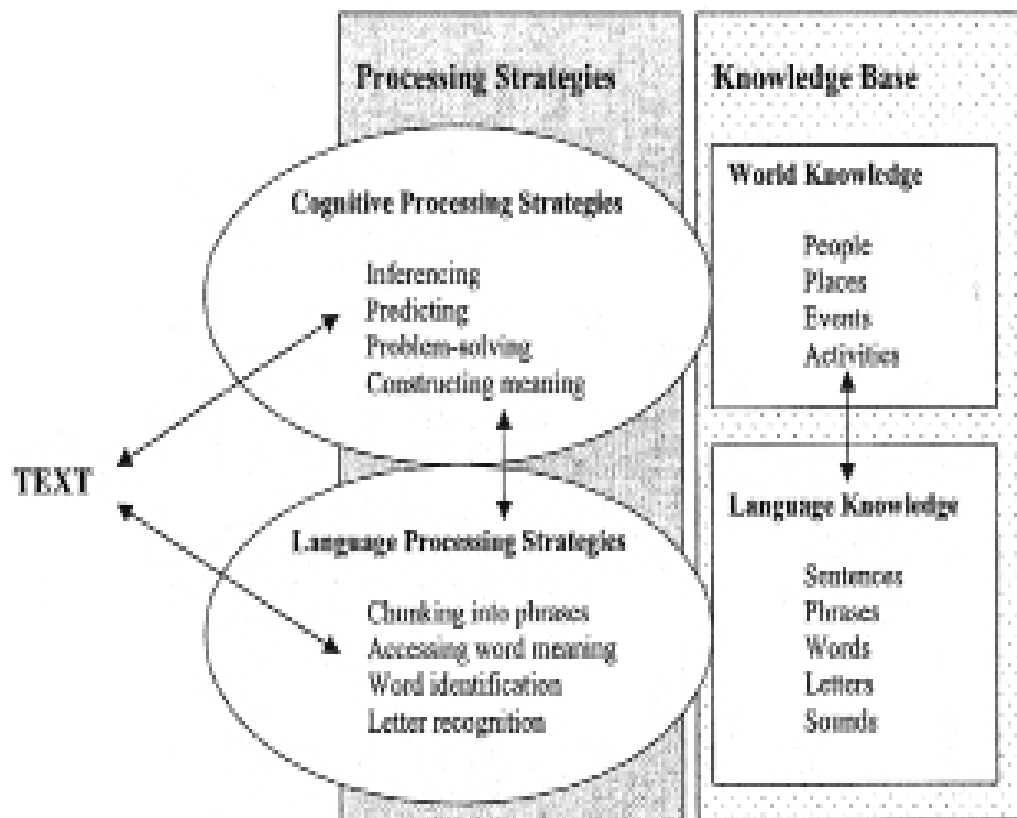**Figure 2.1:** A hypothetical model of reading with some sample processing strategies and types of knowledge (Birch, 2009, p.3)

Birch (2009) mentions processing strategies which occur in L1 reading and she emphases the fact that English L2 readers experience some special circumstances when learning to read English: first language interference, incomplete English understanding, and missing English handling strategies

Birch also (2009) draws attention to two kinds of processor. The first one is the Top-down model. The mental mechanism of the reader uses the world and the cultural knowledge to construct the meaning of the text. The second one is the Bottom-up model, which means the reader has a little understanding of language and processing strategies help readers to get meaning from written symbols. She also adds that reading process and processing strategies work together to get knowledge, ideas and meaning from the text. Widdowson (1984) argues that reading is not a response to the text, but it is a unique interaction between both the reader and the book. The characteristic of this relationship is very authentic, and it is done with an appropriate response. A broader description has been made by Grabe (2009), who argues the complex process of reading. He defines all those processes: We read what the writer tries to deliver. Reading is an interactive process because while the reader tries to understand what the text provides, he also brings background knowledge of him to combine the meaning of the text. It is also a cognitive process. Critical or strategic process requires all language skills to involve when we read. He underlines that a fluent reader has a flexible process, which means he composes the learning process and goals. In the meantime, Grabe argues that if a reader shifts his purpose, his comprehension becomes slower, but when his interests vary, he can fix the reading goals and skimming process. Grabe also describes reading as an evaluative process. He stresses that we evaluate how well we learn and how we respond to a text. According to Grabe, we have ongoing evaluations in the learning process, and this makes reading an act of learning. Every reading activity is also a learning process. The final is the linguistic or grammatical process, and in this process, reading comprehension is based on linguistic information.

2.3 Reading in a Foreign Language

As we all know, a considerable number of people read in a second language with different reasons. As Grabe (2009) discusses, learning is a must to develop their foreign language abilities to a particular point to accomplish more advanced tasks in their L2. Grabe also notes that since the skills of reading in L2 provides many career opportunities in modern life, it is vital to becoming a

skilled reader in a foreign language. That's why he draws our attention to the importance of creating meaningful contexts to foster students' reading abilities. As noted by and Vaughn & Linan (2004), to build both reading and language skills teachers need to teach comprehensive reading strategies explicitly and systematically.

Patrikis &Kern (2003) also emphasize the significance of reading by demonstrating that reading does more than chasing facts, that is more than explanatory, that raises questions, that awakens judgement and imagination. In the same light, Pritchard (1993) observes that while teaching them literature, we teachers need to encourage the power of a student as a literature reader, but as educated readers themselves. We also need to assist student readers expand their repertoires of literature reaction and interpretation.

According to Hadley (2002), the significance of understanding the motivation, abilities and policies of learners approaching a text with distinct background information becomes apparent when we consider the interactive aspect of reading. These are the important factors in L2 reading. Teachers need to consider these factors to enable them interact with the text intensively. Similarly, Lems, Miller & Soro (2010) believe that to create causal inference for both reading and writing, students have to read and write a good deal of English in and outside the classroom. Good literacy programs guarantee that reading and writing are the cornerstones of every day.

Eskey (1998, as in cited in Birch, 2009) underlines some struggles that L2 readers have while reading. She explains that native speaker students go through as they learn to read but L2 readers have to deal with some other factors such as lack of English knowledge, interference to fist language and missing processing styles. Eskey warns us about the importance of the bottom-up model for L2 learners. He explains that top-down processing and high-level strategies, such as predicting and interfering may be too much. He also argues that we shouldn't ignore the fact that language is a central problem in second language reading, and by the same token any educated guesses for meaning cannot replace accurate decoding at all. Bernhardt (2011) holds the same similar view on the interaction of the first and the second language in reading by describing it as follows. There are two channels to facilitate the interaction between the two

languages. The first one is from the native language, and another one comes from second language knowledge. These channels work together sometimes consciously or accidentally, sometimes incidentally but facilitating reading progress.

August and Sharan (2012) examine foreign language learners, and they point out that if these students are literate in their native language, they are able to acquire a second language more quickly and they are able to read promisingly through recent revolutions in non-English language reading programs. Grabe (2009) illustrates that the students' abilities help integrate L1 and L2 resources into a dual-language process system. According to Grabe (2009), L1 and L2 reading processes are the same but differ in some ways. L2 readers have limited linguistic knowledge when they first start reading in a foreign language. He describes the process in his major study as follows.

When learners start reading, they have a much smaller linguistic knowledge of L2. Their knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and discourse structure seems to be more limited and the process of L2 learners happens differently because there are two different systems in the cognitive process. Besides, L2 readers experience L1 constraints while transferring certain transferring skills, such as strategic goals and cognitive skills, some of which are useful in L2 reading process. He observes that L2 readers refer to their general knowledge of the world while reading L2 and it sometimes happens differently from their native language. Lastly, Grabe (2009) states that L2 readers sometimes have to deal with social and cultural assumptions that do not exist in their communities and they might be challenging for them to accept.

In the same vein, Dlugosz (2000) adds that while reading in L2, a child needs to memorize both the shape and the meaning of the words which is different from L1 reading process. Grabe (2009) also states that the purpose of reading is crucial to make progress in L2 reading too, and he says reading for pleasure is not the same as reading for information. Another critical factor he underlines is some activities that require a higher level of comprehension, whereas others focus on the understanding of main elements of the story.

Papalia (1987) also examines the impact of having a purpose in reading and underlines its importance for language development and meaningful

communication. Another scholar Kern (2014) states that literacy is viewed as a part of necessary skills, and foreign language teaching is usually centered on the grammar and functional activities in lower level curriculums. He says it is also essential to bear in mind that reading is often done to teach grammar and vocabulary, but if a student is not good at mastering the elements of a text, reading in L2 usually becomes a problem. Kern also expresses that efficient reading requires both language and context knowledge to get more to get the motivation to go further. It is widely accepted in the field of teaching language that while acquiring reading skills children can increase the number of words they have learned. Renandya and Jacob (2016) mention that the development of vocabulary with extensive reading and the opportunity of exposing many kinds of words only happen in meaningful texts. They also draw attention to the limitation of quality and quantity of language input in the classroom and they underline the fact that language learners should be exposed to the more abundant and higher number of oral and written language by the help of teachers in classrooms.

Grabe (2009) suggests that we need to make sure that students fully understand the aim of reading task otherwise they may perform poorly not because of a lack of comprehension but a lack of awareness of the real goal of the text.

2.4 Concept Based Reading

Erickson (2008), who is the first designer of Concept-Based learning, describes it as a model of the curriculum with interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary units. These units that are coherent and clear are formed intellectually, internationally, horizontally, and vertically. She also states that literature has some basic concepts, and they are beneficial for comprehending and responding to the text, critical thinking, and having a purpose for reading. Some examples of those concepts are Power, Love, Identity, Fear, etc. Erickson (2008) puts Comprehension, Response, Evolution and Critical Stance and Purpose into a subcategory, and she places Voice, Organization, Fluency and World Usage into another category. Erickson also suggests that language teachers should use the concepts of culture and communication to start with, and she believes that these concepts engage students' thinking and interest.

Short (1999) argues that the benefits of using broad concepts are quite noticeable because they provide natural connection across different topics or units. She explains that concept-based reading is necessary to foster profound and transferable learning. The students also develop their ability to inquire and connect to the real world. In her classroom experiment, Short (1999) promoted active engagement of the students by leading them performing actively rather than just being passive learners.

2.5 Using Stories in Teaching English

Cameron (2001) points out that stories provide students with an environment where their involvement is high, and their language is rich and authentic. She adds that the students are given a text with ideas or topics that are much broader than daily classroom language learning. In this vein, Cameron also notes that if the teachers bring the world into the classrooms by using stories, they will create a learning environment with different demands for the foreign language for themselves.

Hall's research (2015) examines the functions of literature in teaching English and emphasizes that literature is most appreciated and meets language learning requirements. Short (1999) mentions how her students' questions varied after she read a story about different perspectives. She also underlines posing different questions about the story made reading groups collaborative thinkers.

Collie and Slater (1993) give some reasons why we should include literature in our teaching curriculum. For Collie and Slater, literature provides valuable, authentic materials about human issues, and they are timeless. Another useful contribution of literature is cultural enrichment that helps students deepen their understanding of life and the culture of the language that they are learning. Language enrichment is also crucial for students because they enrich their perceptive skills such as reading and authentic vocabulary as well as productive skills such as writing and speaking. They underline that authentic vocabulary can be transferred to more daily language. The last benefit of using literature in classrooms that they mention is personal involvement. Collie and Slater (2004) explain it as an imaginative engagement in literature, learners can shift their focus beyond more mechanical aspects of the foreign language system. When

the reader spends some time exploring a text, he or she is included in the book naturally.

Likewise, Lazar (1993) discusses that using literature in the classroom provides an essential opportunity for students to handle complex, fresh and unexpected language while they are learning. She also draws attention to the purpose of using stories, which is vital for inquiring literary competence in L2. Kern (2014) observes that literacy is seen as a part of essential skills and foreign language teaching focuses on accuracy and grammar and other functional activities in lower level curriculums. He also warns us to determine the aim of reading stories carefully. He adds that teachers often center vocabulary and grammar teaching while reading, and it usually creates a problem if a student is not good at linguistic elements of the text. Moreover, Hall (2015) suggests that if we think literature as stories, extensive reading promotes vocabulary acquisition mainly while processing the language in texts.

As noted by Trimarco (2011), since stories have narrative structures and stylistics, they offer discussions topics for groups and classroom activities and also for writing tasks. He emphasis that by the help of appropriate writing strategies, students can easily be assigned to do creative writing. Students get benefits from stories because they equip students with useful ideas to complete the gaps that an author leaves for them. Hall (2015) draws our attention to the language of literature, and he states that the language of stories is more interesting, varied and considerably different than unreal dialogues in supermarkets or any other places. Hall also attempts to discuss the reluctance of foreign language learners while studying literature, and according to their observation, the students feel so because he doubts its contribution to their oral skills. He highlights that the students are conversely much more receptive to literature than it had been thought before.

Some authors are mainly interested in the connections between the stories and the students' own life. Garvie (1990) is one of those scholars who implies the importance of the relationship between the text message and the experience of the student and how it leads children to understand reading materials. Garvie says this is the most critical factor that make the book more meaningful for students. He adds that an appropriate story is a handy tool for language

development with its great variety of purposes, which can be used to improve the learners' language skills, especially their speaking skills. He underlines that the students' thoughts need to be provoked to enable them to express themselves, and that's why stories create a productive classroom environment.

Povey (1984) argues that literature boosts all language skills because it broadens linguistic knowledge by showing extensive and dramatic use of advanced vocabulary accurately. According to Povey, another advantage of using literature in our classrooms is that it can enrich the creativity of our students. Fyre (1979, as cited in McKay,1982) argues that teachers witness not only the admiration of literature but also transmitting creative energy from literature to students. Additionally, Widdowson (1984) suggests that, rather than seeing literature for just reading drills, we should be aware of the importance of its cultural content and accept literature as discourse and the study.

2.6 Literature Circles

Literature circles is a reading model, which began back in the early 1980s with some teachers who were organizing reading groups in their classrooms. It was modified and first implemented by Daniel (1994) to make valuable contributions to students helping them to be lifelong readers.

Allan, Ellis, and Pearson (2005) define literature circles as groups of four or five children do regular reading when coming together and discuss and reflect on a book of their choice. They suggest that this approach turns reading into an active and preferable social activity. They observe that if teachers promote free-flowing and meaningful talk of each student, this can correctly make a significant contribution to their understanding of both the story and them as readers. Aguilar (2010) examines literature circles and states that they are perfect settings where cooperative learning takes place. She adds that literature circles teach kids how to be an independent learner and support each other while learning. In terms of underlying the importance of cooperation in learning, we see Widdowson's (1984) remark that illustrate that collaboration can only happen if they are allowed to enter into each other' s world.

Vygotsky states (as cited in Chaplin,1978). that students get an opportunity to recognize higher levels of cognitive processing when they interact in a social environment. Similarly, Serravallo (2010) examines the importance of giving autonomy to students to choose their books to read. She observes that for students it not only about the books to be preferred but also setting goals for themselves and learning strategies for themselves while reading

Collie and Slater (2004) pose an important question by asking, "Why does a language teacher use literature, especially when there is no specific request for examination to do so and there is limited time?" (p. 5). They answer this question themselves by claiming that using literature means having plenty of authentic and enduring materials about human issues. Neamen and Strong (2001) believe that the students' choice creates ownership that allows them to take a suitable path for themselves while performing in their groups. Cremin (2009) points out that by the literature circles, the students can generate ideas and get knowledge from their peers and provide support to others through meaningful interaction and playful exploration. Neaman and Strong (2001) examine the benefits of using literature -circles. They suggest that these reading groups teach students how to cooperate and how this method helps create a community of learners with common goals. They suggest that by forming literature circles teachers support students as they let them meet on equal basis without concerning their reading abilities to fulfil a shared project.

Daniels (2002) examines how to form those circles. He points out that four or five people meet to read books of their choices but not by their abilities, interests or teacher assignment. Those groups are not permanent but task - oriented.

Daniels made a list of steps that are applied in literature circles in L1:

- Students are allowed to select the texts,

- Students form groups of 4 or five people according to their book preference,

- Each group regularly studies different genres of books,

- Students share with their peers when they finish the books and then form new groups for a new reading circle,

- Groups meet to reflect and discuss their reading on a regular, fixed schedule,

- Group members write or draw notes to help them while reading and discussing,

- Students generate the topics for their discussions,

- Group meetings consist of natural dialogues about books; that's why text-to-self connections and open-ended inquiries are appreciated,

- The teacher is an arranger, and she/he doesn't act as a group member,

- Evaluation is performed by teacher observation and self- evaluation of students,

- The classroom has a spirit of playfulness and fun.

Daniels also (2002) underlines that the student choice is the heart of the literature circles because these circles depend on free reading. When it comes to the teacher role, Daniels argues that it is facilitating and essential because they need to perform a sophisticated and artful work with literature circles. He makes clear that teachers should do mini-lessons for the beginning and debriefing for the closing of the reading sessions. He continues by offering some insights from his research on literature circles. According to Daniels (2002), it is essential to a have teacher who aims to be a model and takes the first step to acknowledge them. He also emphasizes that allowing learners to choose their books with teacher advice and some other books for reading throughout the lesson is extremely useful.

Furr (2004) is the first language teacher who applied literature circles in EFL classrooms, and he modified the first four steps to apply in EFL classrooms. Those are as follows:

- Teachers select appropriate books for students,

- Reading groups are formed temporarily depend on students' book preference,

- Dissimilar groups usually study on the same text,

- At the end of the reading, the student accomplishes a common task as the teacher often has a conference with each group to help them with any difficulties they may have.

In terms of choosing the right books, Daniels (2006) underlines that the materials for literature circles should be manageable to create a medium where speaking and understanding take place smoothly.

2.7 Group Work

Blatchford and Kutnick (2014) define group work as an amount of time that students do productive task actively and having meaningful interaction with each other. Richards (2011) points out that it is vital for a teacher to acknowledge the advantages of various types of groping strategies in order to enhance learning, particularly for those with low capacity to achieve accomplishment in whole school environments.

Cheong (2010) underlines that group tasks do not always improve the students' skills unless we follow the principals of cooperative learning to ensure students develop the necessary skills. According to his analysis of collaborative learning, it is vital to design group tasks and assessment strategies to reach teaching and learning targets. Serravallo (2010) observes that with the implementation of group-based learning the students get the opportunity of being familiar with what and how other students think about the task.

Widdowson (1984) points out that speaking takes place in the aural medium and is performed face-to-face in interaction or as part of dialog rather than as an isolated remark without connection with what has been said, thus emphasizing that speaking is a reciprocal exchange involving both receptive and productive parts.

Papalia (1987) suggests giving more importance groups work where students have the freedom to work together and learn from other group members educators can create significant interactions in their classrooms. Similarly, Murdoch (2009) proves that groups that aim to do collaborative work create a learning environment where students can develop necessary interpersonal skills for effective social interaction.

As Serravallo (2010) points out, it is easier for students to reach their peers when they have difficulties. According to her personal experiences, she also states that we need to bear in mind seeing students as individuals and

differentiating the responses in the medium of group work to meet their needs. It is necessary because we should understand how children take information and get the meaning and reflect on their learning.

Similarly, Cheong (2010) found that the flow of knowledge not only exist between the teacher and the students but also between student-student when they are in group work. Student-student interaction is less noticeable, but what is crucial is student should be practicing their all skills and developing appropriate aptitudes in group work.

2.8 Reading Assessment

Numerous studies have been attempted to explain assessment in reading (Burke, 2014; Grabe, 2009; Murdoch, 2009; Serravallo, 2010). They all underlined how important assessment is in reading. Serravallo (2010) also states that it is essential for a good reading teacher to understand what the students do, how they do it so that the teachers can assist them to think deeper and do better. She also observes that the teachers need to have an assessment strategy to enable them to make decisions to differentiate their instructions for small groups or whole class teaching.

She underlines two kinds of assessment: The first one is formative assessment that informs us about what the students do in the process of learning and also allows us to review, alter and determine instruction according to the student needs. According to Serravallo (2010), summative assessments are the end of the learning measurements, which are done at the end of the study or a certain period of time to demonstrate the students' learning. She underlines that both assessments indicate the accomplishments of the teachers and the students.

Carnell, Lodge &Watkins (2006) underline that to evaluate their own learning, the students need to have an ongoing experience. The abilities the students need to learn can be fostered through a variety of daily activities and appropriate strategies for age and level. Grabe (2009) explains that all standardized reading assessments attempt to reflect reading comprehension abilities. He also argues that reading assessments tasks to assess only reading comprehension are usually reliable, but it is generally hard to use those texts to capture all reading abilities

and especially authentic reading in the real world. As argued by Hall & Burke (2009), reading assessment tasks measure the ability of decoding, and interpreting the knowledge of word meaning and grammar. They also focus other aspects of reading, such as the time devoted to reading, types of text and responses to what is read. Hall &Burke also list some reading assessment approaches such as:

- Miscue analysis and checklists

- Running records and cloze procedure

- Language and literacy conferences

- Self-and peer assessments

- Portfolios and Logbooks

- Essay and book reports

- Drawings and photos

- Oral and written retellings

- Book reports and one-on conferences

- Descriptive reading scales and observational recorders

Wilson and Murdoch (2006) draw our attention to the connection between thinking and assessment. They argue that although teachers usually assess students' thinking without realizing, they evaluate their product of thought. They underline that students' involvement becomes essential if assessment and goal setting matter. They especially mention different types of journals such as open-ended, double or triple entry journals and dialogue journals as well as thinking checklists.

Serravallo (2010) claims assessing engagement is very important, and it is the responsibility of the reading teachers. Drawing on her own experience, she underlines the assessment implications for small groups are also essential. She observes that we need to identify who is engaged and who is disengaged. According to Serravallo (2010), assessing Fluency Print Work Strategies and Comprehension are the other areas to be considered.

2.9 Reading Aloud

Gamble (2008) defines read aloud as a dramatic event, and she adds that children can comprehend a written text better when the book is read aloud by an adult reader than when they read it by themselves. The first reader understands it, and his understanding allows him to use signs, gestures and intonations for children to comprehend during reading aloud sessions. Miller (2006) finds advisable to give importance to reading aloud because by doing so, teachers help students build up necessary skills such as listening, speaking and also enrich their vocabulary. She mentions her own experiences and underlines the fact that when she had reading loud times with her class, she became a model of fluent reading for them and students discovered the joy of reading. Hall (2015) argues the value of the oral presentation shouldn't be neglected because reading aloud usually solve structural vagueness or difficulties.

2.10 Mini Lesson

Calkins (2011) argues that mini-lessons offer teachers some opportunities to present reading strategies, and they are also suitable for students to think aloud in group discussions. She adds that mini-lessons provide teachers with some time to teach in one- on- one conferences or whole class sessions. Fountas (2018) describes reading mini-lessons as a brief lesson that allows teachers to teach effective reading strategies explicitly at a particular point in time. She argues that mini-lessons are essential and beneficial to make understanding visible.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This action research study had two aims. The first aim was to investigate the benefits of using literature circles for the students. The second one was to identify the possible challenges that the teachers may experience in implementing literature circles in English lessons. The objective of this chapter is to present the research design, the context and the participants of the study, the data collection instruments, and the data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

This study is designed as an action research study. As described by Burns (2010), action research aims to identify an issue as part of a class or problem area to bring about changes and improvements in practice. Action research helps the teachers to become researchers as well to provide solutions to the problems that they identify in their teaching. During action research, the teachers are engaged in reflections. Those reflections are mostly ongoing evaluations. Burke (2014) argues, many formative or ongoing assessments are not graded, but instead are used as feedback methods to support students enhance their work before the summative assessment. This study employed qualitative data collection instruments. The data collection instruments consisted of a researcher diary, weekly semi-structured interviews conducted with the students and the rubrics. I preferred to choose those instruments to see how the transitions take place in my lessons, and they helped me to build up my next lesson plan with new possibilities for classroom practice. The data also played an important role to evaluate my teaching to identify the weak and strong points. In other words, the data indicated me what was happening or what was not happening in my class.

3.3 The context and the Participants of the Study

The eight-week action research study was conducted in the spring term of the 2018-2019 academic year in private Yönder School in Istanbul, Turkey. The school offers twelve hours of English courses a week.

Purposive sampling strategy was used when choosing the participants of the study. I believe that choosing participants purposefully help the researcher determine the problem and the research questions. Burke (2014) states that the teachers must prepare the students carefully for anything about the study before, during and after the study. I tried to do so by informing them our objectives comprehensively to make sure they do not feel isolated. The participants of the study were a total of eighteen Grade 3 students studying in the same class. They were at the age of nine with no habit of speaking English to interact with neither the teacher nor each other. Generally, the whole class teaching strategy was the only approach which was being implemented by English language teachers in the school. During my research, we had two hours of additional English lessons a week, and those lessons were allocated for my research.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

The data of this study were gathered from six instruments. These instruments involved Observation diary, Semi-structured interviews conducted with the students, Rubrics, Checklists, Reflection paper (Heart Maps). The following presents detailed information about the data collection instruments of the study.

3.4.1 Self -Assessment

Spiller (2000) discusses that we should coach and let the students practice before we give a new assessment which they are not familiar with. Wilson & Murdoch (2009) state that evaluation has been accepted in recent years not only as a measure for achievement but also as a measure for thinking progress. Hall and Burke (2009) describe assessment as a tool for using performance and a piece of good evidence that can be used by learners themselves.

I believe that assessment is an essential part of the teaching process and should be involved in collecting and analyzing the skills and behaviors of the student.

It should also be designed to give us an idea of how students act at every level of learning. In addition, teachers need to be an active part of the assessment process to ensure that it is also evidence of their thinking skills and self-reliance.

Self-assessment was one of my data collection tools. I always recognize that self-assessment emphasizes the formative aspects of assessment. Burn's study (2010) offers some critical insights into self-assessment. Burns states that this kind of self-evaluation style is beneficial to develop a respect for the feelings of the students and the value of giving feedback. In his detailed work, Boud (2016) explains that self-assessment encourages learners to appreciate their progress in learning and achievements based on their own and other evidence. I agree with Bound because I believe that self-assessment provides students with an opportunity to think about learning progress and also allows them to make a trustful judgment about themselves. Likewise, Spiller (2000) argues that only after recognition of what needs to be learned can further learning to be made possible. She also underlines that a self-assessment can motivate further learning if a student identifies his-her progress in leaning. Based on my own experience, I can say that self- assessment can foster responsibility of and independence for learners.

3.4.1.1 Rubrics

Rubrics were used to measure the student's attitudes, and their level of participation in discussions. In addition, the students were given rubrics to evaluate their performance in literature circles. Stevens & Levi (2005) state that at its most, a rubric is a scoring tool that lays out the specific expectations for an assignment. My aim to use rubrics was to guide the students to assess themselves and take their learning responsibility. I also let the student's asses their attitudes towards reading by using age-appropriate rubrics. I view the rubrics as indicators of my students' learning process, and these rubrics make a positive contribution to the learning environment, therefore they should be the subjects of formative assessment in many stages of learning. Since rubrics are made up of established criteria for evaluating students, I used them not only to evaluate their performance, but also to identify their reading skills during learning in different periods. Rubrics help the students clarify expectations and

provide opportunities for self- assessment, and feedback and they also allow students to improve their future assignments. My first rubric was to get their reflection of reading books individually, and I saved them from comparing with their latter performance and thinking.

3.4.1.2 Checklists

Hall& Burke (2009) argue that checklists measure the level of language competence in the second language and leads directly to the strategies to ease its acquisition. They also add that they are essential to indicate the amount of transition between English and target language. Hall&Burke (2009) also point out that checklists help students get organized and show them what to do next. It is beneficial to guide their thinking.

I applied the checklist with the comment sections during reading aloud time and literature circles and gave feedback instead of grades. My aim was to use list was to see the student reflections of the learning target and tell how students are achieving the goal. Hall &Burke (2009) point out that formative indicators such as checklists show how students extend and deepen their learning.

3.4.1.3 Heart Maps

Heart Maps were used as reflecting documents to show the students' thinking skills and also basic language competence by engaging them in writing and speaking activities. Heard (2016) claims that heart maps are to encourage the students to go into what is essential for their lives and to be a volunteer to tell what they keep in their hearts. I have been using heart mapping for almost five years, and it has always been a great tool to inspire the students to write and think about what might go to the map from their heart. Since the students are required to write their matters and share it with their peers, it is also a great way to elicit their language competence in writing and speaking.

3.4.2 Observation diary

Observation diaries are used to reflect the students' attitudes to the stories and literature circles. Richards & Farell (2005) argue that journals help teachers record events in their classrooms, and they provide the teachers with new perspectives of how learning takes place. An observation diary also shows the

students' attempts to take their responsibility in learning and their production of language. I used my observation diary to make regular entries to reflect on my thinking and teaching. I always value reflections and view them a kind of opportunities to learn from. I kept my observation diary as a tool for analyzing what was going well or not in my class in terms of teaching and learning English. Burns (2010) explains that the actual use of language and the students' attitudes can be gathered via observation and used as information to develop new strategies. Marion (2003) describes two kinds of observations: organizational and educational. The first one contains activity, description, participant organization, content, student modality and materials. The latter includes verbal interactions.

My observation diary contained some notes to remind me of their reflections and the dialogues among my students while they were on task. I used them in order to build my next lesson. The notes were taken during the teaching sessions and the interviews, and they were reformed according to some other subsections. Eken (2017) draws our attention to another benefit of keeping an observational diary. She explains that observation diaries are useful for other related people such as school counsellors to refer them when it is needed. Hall& Burke (2009) also add that teachers need to consider observing different contexts and texts in order to make new arrangements for each child. They also mention that keeping observational diary make teachers better observers of children and learning environment.

3.4.3 Semi-structured Interviews

According to Cohen and Crabtree (2006), semi structured- interviews involve a set of instructions given to the interviewers to get reliable qualitative data. Burns (2010) expresses that while preparing questions, we should consider some flexibility in line with how students respond. In addition, and interviews allow us to make comparisons. These informal interviews can help students develop their social and emotional skills. They are also helpful in making students feel that their thoughts and feelings are valuable and necessary to build a learning community.

Having interviews with students is useful for me to see how to help them in their diversity and flexibility in the learning process. That was the reason why I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews with the students for the data collection, which enabled me to see in-depth and sincere reflections of the leaners in literature circles. The students who I had interviewed were chosen randomly to provide a framework for the research. Semi-structured interviews included three questions to elicit their experience in reading and performing their roles in literature circles (Appendix I).

3.5 An Eight Week Literature Circles Instruction

The goal of the eight-week literature circles Instruction was to give the students an opportunity to take their own responsibility through reading and working collaboratively and actively interacting with peers using major skills while trying to connect with the assigned reading.

Before implementing literature circles, I planned to apply reading aloud lessons with literature response to encourage the students to read a book and reflect on it. An authentic story was used for reading aloud time to create a base for the discussion time. The students were given different levels of authentic readers to read and work collaboratively in their literature circles. The students were asked to fill in the reflection papers at the beginning, during and at the end of study.

3.5.1 Selecting books

Teachers should consider choosing the right the most appropriate texts for their students to make the best use of literature in EFL contexts. In particular, EFL classroom literature must reflect the interests of students, the social/cultural values of the story, the level of language of students. We can provide them with the books with clearly written instructions and illustrations. For instance, craft and recipe books, information books on nature, adventure, or particular science subjects, sports books on any topic of interest tales with humorous exaggeration stories illustrating young people dealing with problems and overcoming struggles, predictable stories with strong characters. Similarly, it is also vital to choose books with multiple levels for literature circles, so that the students with

various linguistic levels get involved in reading groups. I believe that there are some other points to consider when choosing the best books for reading lessons. If we teach young learners, we should be aware that curiosity is the key concept to draw their attention, therefore the books that we select should foster their intellectual curiosity. Kuze (2015) highlights that it is not very common to give special consideration to the possibility of making personal connections with texts while choosing them, but rather to linguistic-based selection.

Since the participants of the current study were not members of my own classrooms, I did not take a risk by giving them the books that are highly complex in terms of language and cultural level. I chose approximately fifty non-ELT books with the concepts of our world, so the students got the opportunity to make a connection with their own lives while reading them without having any serious problems to comprehend them. I also wanted to be sure that they gained confidence and a solid interaction with what they read as well.

There were fiction and non-fiction books, and the students were allowed to choose them according to their interests and also the concept they decided to work on. Brumfit (1986) states that the text we provide to our students should contain descriptions and arguments as well as narratives to engage them in reading activity. I firmly believe from my experience that age-appropriate authentic texts contain "real language" that we want our students to explore in order to be successful communicators of that language in the real world. In the same way, Takahashi (2015) reports that authentic stories can be viewed not for teaching purposes, but real-life communication. Furthermore, those texts are often preferred by some teachers because of their realistic and natural language. I assume that those are the factors we cannot find in any ELT readers, which specially are developed or simplified as teaching materials. Grabe (2009) discuses that in case of having difficulties in understanding the text due to the insufficient L2 competence, the students rely on the situational model where they combine background knowledge with the text information and use it for a practical interpretation of the text in accordance with the goal of the reader

3.6 Implementing Literature Circles

There are several ways to establish literature circles. Since a classroom environment that supports risk-taking and the student productive environment must already be established to have successful literature circles, I thought it would be ideal to start my lessons with reading aloud to build up book-based discussions. Traditional whole-class and teacher-oriented environment does not support collaborative learning that is the spirit of literature circles. The teacher has to provide other age appropriated reading strategies to create a learning environment that supports literature circles. In addition, the roles of the teachers and the students should be clearly defined to conduct the group work smoothly at the beginning. If the students have poor competence when they first get involved in book discussions, they should be encouraged and supported by both the teachers and their peers. Although some teachers prefer to use traditional role sheets to guide reading and performing in the circles, instead of using those sheets, I let them free so that they can take responsibility for their own performance. I briefly guided all the students in mini lesson sessions to ensure that all the students were comfortable with the strategy. Since I needed to establish a relationship with the class, I thought starting with reading aloud could help me to build an emotional bridge between myself and the students. Reading aloud is also beneficial to create a meaningful context in conducting literature discussion. I considered these two contexts while choosing the books to conduct reading and thinking aloud time with them. We need to get a sense of idea with the books we want for our reading lessons. That is the reason I always ask myself these questions assuming the answers may assist me in crafting my lesson:

- What would we have for a good discussion?
- What kind of books help me lead them to deep thinking?
- Which story shows us a way to connect our beliefs to practice?

Week 1 Lesson 1

Aim: The main emphasis to establish a classroom agreement and getting to know each other.

Materials: Some white paper and coloring pencils

Strategy: Mini Lesson, Name Game, Question and Answers**,** Singing Emotion Rap

Assessment**:** Teacher observation diary

Procedure: <u>Mini Lesson</u>*:* Fountas & Pinnel (2018) describe mini lessons as a concise and focused lesson on any aspect of sufficient reading work in the classroom that children need to understand explicitly at a particular time. Similarly, Lambrou (2015) points out that mini lessons take place in the beginning of the lessons for ten-minutes and that the students are required to develop and present teaching materials. Drawing on this explanation, I introduced my

Students the need for forming some rules for our class and then explained how we constitute an agreement to follow during our learning time. And then, we formed our classroom agreement as stated in the following:

- Put your hand up to say something

- Listen to each other

- Ask for permission to leave your seat

- Make your dear teacher happy

Finally, I implemented an ice breaker with the students.

<u>Name game</u>*:* I used *Snowball* to help them know each other. In this game, each kid takes a piece of paper and writes both his name and the questions the teacher writes on the board: *Where do you live? What is your favorite lesson?* When they finish writing, they start throwing the ball to each other. The one who gets the ball reads the name and asks one of the questions to the student whose name is written on the paper. Next, to create a fun and enjoyable learning environment, we sang a chant. My second objective was to teach them some basic vocabulary related to emotions to support them as they talk about their feelings as stated in the following:

If you are Happy – wear a smile.

- Angry __ girl your teeth

- Sleepy __ give a yawn

- Excited __ shout hooray

- Scared ___ scream out loud

I also aimed to explain the objective of the lesson with basic but straightforward words. Then I used some words to signal them to understand their background. Those words were related to life, and the concepts in the story and they were also helpful to encourage them to make a connection with their own lives. I found it easier to start from known to unknown, that's why we focused on *Animals, Environment, Family* and *Adventure* to guide them deeper thinking. I also showed them a picture of my dog, Teddy to have a real conversation about animals with the belief that sharing my life experiences would urge them to share their experiences and to reveal their attitude toward animals. In this activity, they often talked about their families, likes & dislikes, and where they live. Their utterances were generally as follows:

- "I have a brother" "I have got a sister "

- "I live Maltepe " "I love dogs and cats."

- "I like Fenerbahçe" "I like English"

- "I not like cats" " I do not have a dog "

Week I Lesson II

Aim: Introducing the book and practising listening and speaking skills

Materials: Dog Breath (Pilkey, 2004)

Strategy: Picture Walk, Read Aloud and Book Discussions

Assessment: Heart Map to get to know them more closely and also assess their written language competence (Appendix I).

Procedure**:** I introduced Dog Breath, a book with sixteen pages and had a cover discussion with the whole class, and then let them predict what was inside the book. I firmly believe that teachers should have an opinion about the book to have a respectful conversation with the kids.

I let them look at the pictures while I was turning over the pages and I didn't allow them to see the end of the story When I was applying the picture walk, we also had a book talking time with comment, question and answers. I wrote the

essential vocabulary on the board such as horrible breath, trouble, family, unhappy and get rid of. Then I started reading the book without commenting or asking any questions about it. Gamble and Yates (2008) state that reading aloud is a dramatic event: The interpretation and understanding of the adult reader allow him or her to highlight the clues and the signs needed to fill the text's gaps. Serravallo (2010) also points out that when a teacher or an adult reads the book aloud, the level at which children can understand the written text is much higher than when the child reads it alone. In order to have a successful read aloud session, I always try to choose a book slightly higher than their level as long as the content is age appropriate and exciting enough to keep their attention. Kauffman (1996) argues that individuals, family and cultural stories could foster discussion and reflection.

Furthermore, using facial expression and gestures help children understand the plot and fill in the gaps of in story during reading aloud time. While choosing a book for reading aloud time, I need to bear in mind that books serve different purposes and using the right materials enable students to make connections with their lives initially. When start to read the story to my students I always have some exaggerate facial expressions and gestures. Children listen to the story attentively and eagerly and sometimes interrupt me to say something about the events of the story. I always avoid finishing the story to foster their curiosity and make them talk about their prediction.

Week II Lesson I

Aim: The emphasis was on providing opportunities for students to make meaning from reading and speaking skills.

Materials: Dog Breath Book (Pilkey, 2004) (Appendix II)

Strategy: Mini Lesson, Prediction and Book discussion

Assessment: Teacher observation and visualization (Appendix III).

Procedure: After completing reading aloud and writing the keywords on the chart, we moved on prediction time. Speaking was emphasised by letting them predict the end of the story. I modelled them how to predict in the mini lesson. Prediction is a tool to encourage them to talk about their thoughts and feelings. We practiced how to use clues and illustrations to imagine what would happen

next in the story. Berne & Clark (2008) underline that if the students are unfamiliar with group talk, the teacher's intervention enables them to use strategies clearly and to reflect on this use in a public manner. When only one student connects with his previous understanding, the teacher names it and thus shows what he has accomplished for himself. During the prediction activity, the students started learning to listen to each other which is believed to be the first step in developing tolerance for different ideas. Prediction was also beneficial for clear statements and practising target vocabulary. I aimed to show how to blend story clues with our experience and tried to teach a kind of related language. Then got them start practising polite conversation starters such as:

" I predict_____"
"I agree with _____ because _____",
"I disagree with _____because_____"
"I don't understand _____"
"I am confused _____" (Appendix IV).

These starters were written on a poster to hang near the board. Lastly, they were assigned to visualise their favourite pet and write why they love them. Then the students shared their illustrations with their partners.

Week II Lesson II

Aim: Practising retelling and prediction

Materials: Dog Breath Book (Pilkey, 2004)

Strategy: Mini Lesson, retelling and prediction.

Assessment: Checklist to assess their understanding of the book (Appendix IV).

Procedure: The lesson started with revising the characters of the story, plot and the target vocabulary. As they were trying to retell the story, I indicated the emotion words on an anchor chart to encourage them to use those words while describing the feeling of the characters and themselves. I asked them interpersonal questions to get them to make personal connections with the story. The questions were:

- What would be your solutions?
- Do any of the characters change?
- Was there a character you didn't like?
- What makes the characters happy/sad in the story?

We a had class discussion to seek answers to those questions, and I also assigned the students to write and draw predictions on a piece of paper. They were also asked to offer their own solutions for the problem in the story. They stated their solutions by drawing and labelling their pictures. Complete and incomplete papers were collected at the end of the lesson to be used for the next activity.

Week III Lesson I

Aim: Practising silent reading.

Materials: Copies of Dog Breath.

Strategy: Mini lesson, silent reading, collaborative learning.

Assessment: Teacher observation dairy and reading rubrics (Appendix V).

Procedure: I explained to them why we read the book silently in the mini-lesson and underlined that they might write down some questions that they would like to ask the class members. I disturbed the copies of Dog's Breath and we dropped everything and started to read the copies of the book silently for ten minutes. While they were reading, I monitored them and took notes for my observation diary. At the end of the lesson, some students asked a few questions about the story and got the answers from their classmates during the reflection time. Early finishers were asked to complete their incomplete papers from the previous lesson.

Week III Lesson II

Aim: Practising responding to literature by writing.

Materials: Dog Breath, some white papers, coloured pencils.

Strategy: Responding to literature, collaborative learning.

Assessment: Teacher observation and student reflection papers (Appendix VI).

Procedure: I presented them with several strategies to reflect on what they had understood including *storyboard, Venn diagram, visualization* and *a letter to one of the characters of the story.* According to Pritchard (1993), the goal of using responsive strategies is to help our students to develop a basis for reflection and interpretation and help them to see what they bring to the texts

from their own experiences and emotions and what the text makes them feel and believe. The students were free to choose one of these strategies to respond to the book that they read. Six of them preferred to do a storyboard, three of them decided use Venn diagram to make a comparison between another character from a different book and one from the Dog's Breath. Seven of them picked up writing and drawing the dog's emotions and thoughts. The rest wanted to write a letter to the kids in the book. According to my observation, the reason the majority of them selected the story board was because they were able to write both drawing and word level. The small proportion of students chose letter writing this might be because writing could be linguistically difficult for this age group.

Week IV Lesson I

Aim: Defining concepts and practising speaking with the target vocabulary

Materials: Blackboard and Anchor Chart

Strategy: Brainstorming on concepts, Mini Lesson and Pair Work

Assessment: Teacher observation and Reflection Paper

Procedure: I showed them how to do brainstorming by modelling the strategy in the mini lesson. I asked a question to encourage them to make a mind film of the story to elicit the vocabulary of the text.

"What comes to your mind when you think of the story and Holly? They came up with: Love, Dog, Brother, Sister, Grandma, City, Cinema, Tree, Family, Sun, Mountain, Mom, Father, Smelly, Mouth, Rollercoaster, Sad, Happy, Bad, Burglars, Angry, Brave

I wanted to make sure that they all knew the vocabulary and let them do the pair work. They tried to draw at least two target vocabulary on their journals then they explained those words to their partners using very basic level of English. I signalled them to change their partners and each student has two partners during pair work session.

I wrote these words on an Anchor Chart, which I usually use it as a reminder of the lesson or unit process. Heard (2016) argues that Anchor charts help students

remember specific strategies, procedures and concepts as a part of a productive environment.

Week IV Lesson II

Aim: Exposure to class discussions and forming reading groups

Materials: Anchor Chart and Board

Strategy: Mini Lesson and Whole Class discussion (Circle time)

Assessment: Teacher observation and my reading Journal (See Appendix VII)

Procedure: In the mini lesson, the students were explained with an appropriate language how to form a group according to their choice of concepts. Since I realized they had no definite idea what a concept meant, I informed them that these sentences were great words because they contained many phrases in their bodies. So, we integrated all the phrases into subcategories and lastly gathered the ideas to work in literature circles. Family, Adventure, Animals, Environment were the concept we agreed on. Since it was questionable whether they understood exactly the importance of the words clearly or not, by providing examples from several books in different genres, I intended to clarify these concepts to them. Then I let one idea be chosen by each group and they did.

Week V Lesson I

Aim: Introducing literature circles

Materials: Five boxes of books in different genres

Strategy: Mini Lesson and Student-teacher conferences

Assessment: Teacher observation diary

Procedure: I scheduled three lessons to present literature workshops. The first lesson would allow the students to get to know the books precisely, and then they would understand exactly what their tasks are in their groups, not just their own tasks, but also other students in their groups.

At the beginning of the lesson I explained them the reason why I put them together in the mini-lesson, I wanted the students to comprehend what the literature circles were and how they would be doing to fulfill their tasks. I also

aimed to make it clear that, while carrying out their tasks, all the steps would be taken on their own.

Week V Lesson II

Aim: Encouraging the students to state their opinions and choices

Strategy: Mini Lesson and making preferences

Materials: Anchor Chart for literature roles (Appendix VIII), books in different genres

Assessment: Teacher observation diary

Procedure: Literature circles were represented and all examples of each task were provided in the mini-lesson with the Dog Breath (Pilkey, 2004). Four roles were explained to them explicitly and I allowed them to ask any questions about the roles and before choosing their tasks. According to Daniels (2002), if we have small temporary groups in our classrooms, we should let the students form their groups based on the book selection. He also claims that that students must learn to select their materials to read, and this is an essential aspect of literature. By distributing the books that were earlier classified according to the concepts they had selected, I did the same thing with a minor difference. Although there are several grouping techniques, due to time limitation, I did not deliberately apply them.

The Roles in literature circles in Grade 3:

Word Hunters:

They study and discover some words that are essential or useful to them, they are marked by Word Hunters and discover meanings of these words.

Golden Line Writers:

Their duties are to identify the plot's significant sections and write them down to summarize the text.

Question Makers:

Their task is to create big questions about the book and ask their groups members these questions in order to create a discussion.

Illustrators:

They are responsible for illustrating only one large picture that represents the whole concept of the story.

Week VI Lesson I

Aim: Encouraging the students to talk about their choices to form their groups.

Materials: Five boxes of books in different genres.

Strategy: Book discussion and think aloud statements.

Assessment: Teacher Observation.

Procedure: By picking up the ideas, they stated their opinions and formed four groups according to their selection of the concepts. The groups were made up of four and five learners. They began reading the books extensively and quietly in their boxes during the entire class.

Extensive reading is described by Furr (2004) as the successful combination of intensive text reading and fluency building that also called extensive reading. Since the learners had not earlier been involved in literature circles, I selected the books for all groups covering many different topics.

Daniels (2004) suggests a similar strategy by giving the teacher the responsibility to select books in which the activity was first introduced. I offered them several books which were both fiction and non-fiction with various copies and these books covered several "stages" of reading, including various fields of student interest. These books were thin, and the students could complete them in a maximum of 10 minutes. I also tried to deliberately select those books that I like reading.

In general, the students read each book within their groups by altering their partners and each student in the group reads different books and often takes 3 or 4 lessons totally, but since I had restricted time, I assigned two lessons for silent learning before beginning to conduct their tasks in literature circles. In turn, each student had to read all the books in the box, and they didn't have to respond to what they were reading, but they just had to read. While reading their books in silence, I monitored each group for a short time during the group exercise to have a meeting with them in case of any difficulties they might encounter due to their linguistic incompetence

Week VI Lesson II

Aim: Revising and disturbing the roles in literature circles.

Materials: Cardboards in different colours, books in different genres.

Strategy: Mini Lesson, Conferencing with groups.

Assessment: Teacher observation dairy.

Procedure: Although it was a structured literature circles, the group works don't rely on worksheets, but I had a conference with the group members to facilitate their initial discussions. First, all they decided which book they would choose to use for their collaborative work. The students were told that they initially had to reach an agreement on which book they would study on and then they started talking about how they could do the work-sharing with my guidance. After they had decided the roles of the circles groups, the students started scanning the book to recall the plot and the characters again.

Week VII Lesson I

Aim: Implementing the roles in literature circles and using target vocabulary.

Materials: Cardboards in different colours, books in different genres.

Strategy: Mini Lesson, Conferencing with groups

Assessment: Teacher observation diary

Procedure: The students were encouraged to use their imagination while performing their roles. I also reminded them they could not only use the book they agreed on but also other books with the same concept as long as all the group members agreed. I revised the roles and left a list of the high-frequency verbs and target vocabulary for each group. They divided the cardboard into four and started performing their jobs collaboratively. I tried to foster their collaboration by visiting each group and to give a guidance for the possible problems they might have. I wanted to make sure that the students knew that they were completely free to fulfil their jobs and that they could ask for my advice at any time. While they were working collaboratively at the same time, they were trying to construct the main idea of the text again and filling the blanks using their understanding. While I was visiting the groups, I noticed that

the illustrators were drawing pictures that mostly summarized the main idea or the book concept, while golden line writers were picking up the most significant lines conveying the story or the text message. Question makers were trying to form some questions about the story despite their lack of linguistic competence. Word hunters also were free to draw the meaning of the words or/and write a basic description of it. I provided them with a list of essential verbs and adjectives with their Turkish definitions and several monolingual picture dictionaries. I also told them to ask me any words that they were not familiar.

Week VII Lesson II

Aim: Implementing roles in literature circles.

Materials: Cardboards in different colours, books in different genres.

Strategy: Responding the Literature, Conferencing with groups.

Assessment: Teacher observation diary (Appendix IX).

Procedure: As I was visiting groups I noticed that they were engaged in their group discussion while supporting each other. I noticed that they were less eager to use the list of verbs I prepared for their use, but were more willing to use the words that they knew. I helped the question makers because they were the ones who were struggling most to produce linguistically correct questions. So I encouraged them to form their questions without worried about their linguistic accuracy. Furthermore, I attempted to ask them some thick questions to help all the group members understand every detail of the story and connect it with their own life in the belief that this would help them to understand the concept they were studying. For instance:

What would you keep your street clean? (Environment)

Have you seen visited a zoo? (Animals)

What do you do usually with your parents when you visit your grandparents? (Family)

What made you amazed about the characters in the book? (Feelings)

Week VIII Lesson I

Aim: Implementing the roles in literature circles.

Materials: Cardboards in different colours, books in different genres.

Strategy: Responding the Literature, Conferencing with groups.

Assessment: Rubrics for literature circles (Appendix X).

Procedure: They continued making their posters, which were usually divided into four parts displaying the reflections of their literature roles. As soon as they finished their posters, they shared their product with the group members. Each group member tried to present what he/she did orally by using even the simplest linguistic form of language. I was the first one to listen to their presentation. My aim was to give feedback to enable them to revise their poster before finalising it. Varied reflections were accepted as long as they were related to the concept that they had chosen for the group work. While taking notes, I tried to monitor them whether they explored their understanding or not. Similarly, Furr (2004) recommends us to step back and enable students to take responsibility for leading discussions in the literature groups.

Week VIII Lesson II

Aim: Finalising literature circles discussions and presenting posters to the class.

Materials: Cardboards in different colours, books in different genres.

Strategy: Responding to literature, and presenting & sharing

Assessment: Teacher observation diary and student interviews, semi structured interview (Appendix XI).

Procedure: The students finished their work and all the groups presented their posters to each other. I used a signal for this process to manage the sharing time. They changed their partner groups when they heard my signals and matched with other groups. I gave each group three minutes to share their posters. After that, they accepted some questions from their classmates. Finally, I asked them to check how many new words they used in their posters. My aim was to help them to be aware of their vocabulary learning. In the reflection time, they tried to give feedback about the lesson and their feelings or thoughts. I interviewed some of the voluntary students to answer my questions. Some of

them wanted to write or draw their feelings or thoughts about literature circles. Their posters were displayed in the class at the end of the day

3.7 Data Analysis

The data of the study were analyzed by using descriptive analysis. Creswell (2013) states that descriptive analysis includes a description of the results with their meanings, standard deviations and range of scores.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The point of departure for this action research study was to investigate how and to what extent literature could be used as a tool in teaching English to young learners in EFL settings and to explore the student's attitudes towards reading in literature circles. Accordingly, this chapter aims to present the findings for my attempt to investigate the students ' attitudes towards reading circles and the benefits of using literature circles with young learners in an EFL setting and to define possible challenges while implementing them. It also attempts to explore the attitudes of a class of young learners towards authentic readers and book discussions. The findings presented this chapter are collected through self-assessments, the researchers' diary and semi-structured interviews.

4.2 Findings and Discussion

The analyses of the data coming from the observation diary revealed that the first encounter with reading aloud was crucial and exciting for the students. In the first week, I observed that their curiosity became dominant because they were about to explore something unknown. Since the first impression colored their feelings, they found themselves engaged with a mixture of excitement and curiosity. Judging from their reactions, the book choice for the read aloud was successful. The book discussions indicated that their speaking ability was not high, although their comprehension level was better. They weren't communicating with their teachers and each other in English. My persistence to communicate with them in English might cause a little bit reluctance to join in discussions at the beginning.

On the other hand, despite some ice breakers, it was not easy for them to accept me as a teacher with whom they had no previous learning experience. Besides, they did not have a circle time habit for reading time and reading to them by the

teacher. First of all, I had to make a classroom agreement to develop a productive learning environment because they seemed to have no rules in the classroom. I noticed that as soon as I shared with them some parts of my private life, such as my dog and my adventures, they lowered their barriers and became more attentive and willing to join.   Animal love was the fundamental concept that made them speak as much as they could. It also created a basis for the story used for reading. I noted some of their statements during the first two lessons and the following extracts show the atmosphere in the first two lessons:

- Student A: I have a dog, but I like cats and dogs
- Student B: I am a cat lover
- Student C: I live in Maltepe

In two lessons during the first week, I observed that the story and my reading style triggered a noticeable increase in their participation in the lesson. They somehow stuck to the rules of the classroom we created together, and for the next lessons, it was promising. I also noticed that not being corrected while talking encouraged them to try to express their views in English. According to my initial observation, it was clear that none of the students had experienced neither read aloud nor concept-learning literature circles. So, I postponed asking them to thick the questions, and I just encouraged them to express their opinions about the characters and the plot in the first week. At the end of the first week, I didn't finish the book to sustain their curiosity for the next reading aloud.

In the second week, I observed that most of the class had limited vocabulary knowledge and was inevitable to practice the keywords while reading the rest of the book. When I was crafting the lesson, I thought prediction time would be challenging for them, but actually, they were quite productive to predict the end of the book. The whole class understood all the story elements, which was a little bit surprising for me when I compared their performance with the previous week.   Although four students could not answer any personal questions to connect with the story, many of the students were able to answer my question in order to make a connection with the story. Furthermore, the majority of the class tried to offer solutions to the characters to solve the central conflict in the story. I noted that they had enough self-confidence to involve in book discussions despite their limited vocabulary knowledge. I gave them a heart map

to get familiar with their inner world and also to assess their writing skills (Appendix II). They found it a little bit hard to travel to their own heart and reflect it. They seemed that they had no habit of thinking deeper. I assume it was just a matter of not being used to it. There were a few students who couldn't comprehend the purpose of heart map, but their reflections were welcomed as well.

On the third week, I wanted them to be familiar with responding literature. It could also be a distinguished preparation for the literature circles as well, as they would learn to think deeply about what they read. The silent reading session went well, and they didn't ask for my guidance. I observed that they were all engaged in reading but explaining to them the strategies to respond to a book took time. Despite the whole class explanation, I had to visit each group to re-explain each strategy to make sure they all knew what they were doing. When they were asked to connect with the events in the book or illustrate their reactions to what happened in the book, a few students were able to do that. After explaining how to fill out the checklist, they tried to do that with my guidance; I noted that it was acceptable as it was the first time they experienced a self-assessment tool.

The revision of the target vocabulary did not work throughout the class on the fourth week. Although there were some pairs to follow the instructions successfully, most of the class could not do well either because of the lack of linguistic knowledge or unsuccessful time management. On the other hand, the brainstorming for target vocabulary was successful in producing a lot of vocabulary, but again I didn't get any questions about the meaning of the unknown words, but what caught my attention was that, despite their lack of vocabulary, they were good at trying to express their opinions. I noticed that they quickly got the idea of how we transformed words into concepts. According to what I noted in my diary, they could be helped by providing them with a few responsive strategies according to their understanding and linguistic level since they had no chance to practice using more strategies for some time. Several students wrote some other words from the book after letting them add more words from time to time, but not the whole class contributed to that activity. In the second lesson, their participation in forming the concepts was

very high, and they were sure which concepts they would work on. Their reflections of the Dog's Breath was quite promising in terms of both in-depth thinking skills and linguistic competence.

On the fifth week, they were much better to follow my instructions and fulfil their tasks. According to my observation, they failed to use most polite conversation starters except "I agree," and "I don't agree." But when I used them it was evident that they knew what I meant. Anchor Chart was useful in reminding them of our lessons process and vocabulary when they had trouble in finding the right words to complete their sentences for both oral and written tasks. When I introduced the aim of the literature circles, I observed that they seemed they were puzzled rather than excited. That's why I thought it was necessary to give them plentiful examples from Dog's Breath to make the process more manageable.

For them, the following week was uncomplicated. The students were delighted to choose the boxes of the box. They were excited because they were given a lot of choices to do extensive reading for the first time. The next step had to be the revision of the concepts, and the groups had to be formed to read about the concept they had selected. Most of the class was excited to read the books, but some of the students skimmed a book and got another. I did not interfere with any groups, and I let them enjoy reading. In the last lesson of the week, the students were given checklists to assesses their attitudes toward books and reading.

Nearly half of the class consciously selected their roles in the seventh week, but the rest of the students seemed to be confused about what to choose. Most of them found the task illustrator was appealing and easy, so they were eager to be a volunteer to perform it. It took time to convince them that the other roles are exceptional and workable. The hesitant ones certainly chose their tasks after my constant guidance and the support of the other group members. I firmly believe that allowing them to choose their roles with their own will enables them to take responsibility for their learning and thus develop their autonomy and learning motivation. While discussing which book to work on, I noted that one or two students incidentally became group leaders and the other group members accepted their leadership. I didn't involve in their decision process to allow

them to listen to the others politely and respect their opinions. I thought it was a life skill to acquire; they had to find a way to find a common ground. After deciding how to share the poster, they started working on it, and I noticed that they would have performed much better if they had a better command of English. I think their intellectual capacity was quite sufficient to fulfil their tasks, although it was entirely new and a little challenging for them. I was pleased to see that they realized that I was no longer an instructor, but I was facilitating the acquisition of English.

Their adventure continued in literature circles in the last week of my research. Even though they had difficulty in leaving a task unfinished but keeping it for the next lesson, the students continued their group performance. I visited each group to assist poor performers in their duties. The ones who asked for my advice were responsible for making the questions because this task usually requires a lot of linguistic ability. I thought it was essential to convince them that we focus on efforts and progress not on accurate grammar-based results. Since we had limited time, I asked them to visit each group and allowed them to present their posters to their classmates, by doing so I let them listen to each other and learn from each other. I would also like to point out that my research didn't pursue the original design of literature classes for EFL students, but instead I modified it to adjust it to the class I worked with. It means that I tried to craft each lesson according to the students' current knowledge and needs. When Daniels (1994) first began introducing literature classes with a team of teachers, he argued that the need to assign a new role to each student is crucial to enable them to experience the text from different angles. That's why I often let them perform a different task for the next meetings in the literature circles, but I couldn't apply it in my research because of the time constraints. In summary, although it may still take committed educators and researchers to make a good deal of attempt to finalize the most relevant literature circles in the EFL environment in Turkey, the implementation of literature circles with young learners in an EFL classroom still allows students not only to create student-centered reading groups but also to practice several communication skills.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions of my action research study. It includes the summary of the study, suggestions for further investigations and the limitations of the study.

5.2 Summary of the Study

The objective of this study was to achieve two goals. The first aim was to examine the advantages of literature circles to teach English to young learners in EFL settings. The second one was to investigate possible challenges for teachers in the implementation of these circles in reading lessons. The study was performed at Yönder Primary School in Istanbul with 18 students. The data collection instruments included observation diary, checklists and rubrics (Appendix IV) and semi-structured interviews (Appendices V and VI).

5.3 Conclusion

Extensive reading is an essential part of concept-based literature circles. Short (1999) says, extensive reading allows the students to become proficient readers, and I also believe it provides them with a meaningful way to practice English using communications skills. Literature circles are learner-centered strategies in which students take responsibility for their learning process and develop their language skills through book discussions. As Furr (2004) argues, students have the opportunity to practice their language skills in the foreign language through books in different genres.

Therefore, this study was based on the belief that the students become successful readers by internalizing summarizing, questioning, predicting, clarifying. In the same light, the students are taught using different strategies to help them acquire these primary skills through certain concepts extracted from

books in reading lessons. Daniels (2002) states that teachers can ask children to engage the text at higher levels of thinking depending on their age: drawing inferences, making judgments, and supporting conclusions about what they are reading.

Based on the argument above, the students were expected to demonstrate their deep-thinking skills by using these communicating skills during the research. The study showed that literature circles have the potential to create a positive and productive learning environment where the high number of students were motivated and involved in reading lessons. This is extremely important for language acquisition. During my research, I observed that having meaningful and real conversations help students to become more confident and attentive in speaking activities. The concepts that were used during the study provided a solid basis for our discussions. In addition, involvement in group work encouraged the students to start thinking deeply to reflect on their feelings and opinions despite their poor language skills. Another significant point is that they began to get used to the concept of collaborative work and teaching. It was pleasing to see them helping each other and understand and reflect on the book that they had chosen. Their love of reading and the ability to think about the book in many aspects increased. As the reading groups and the roles were performed based on their choices, they enjoyed reading and expressed their opinions about what they were reading. I believe that this feeling made them make choices about their learning. It was noticeable that the students were delighted to see that their views were valued by both the teacher and their classmates. My last remark is that literature circles are also meaningful and enjoyable opportunities for struggling and unwilling learners as I observed their attempt to contribute to group work. From both the twenty-year teaching experience and my research, I observed that students acquire the language if they are exposed to a real conversation based on their own real-life experiences. In other words, they need something solid to connect with their own lives to rationalize what they are learning. That was the reason why I started implementing literature circles by the help of concepts after reading and discussing the book called Dog's Breath (Pilkey, 2004). By doing so, I gave them an example of book discussion through concepts and in this way, I tried to

avoid the drawback of presenting them with something new in a short time. The findings suggested that both their approach towards reading and the tasks they achieved in organizations were beginning to improve.

The collected data also demonstrated the appropriate support in improving their linguistic competence. Since I needed evidence to craft lessons for my research, I conducted my observation diary throughout the study as well as reading rubrics, checklists after each group work and finally I had a semi-structured interview with them last week. The results showed me how to settle for the next lesson with their weak or sharp points and also draw conclusions from the study. Since the idea of self-assessment was new to them, they were not meant to do it at first, but once they got used to it, the majority of the students could sincerely asses themselves. Not all of them, but some students were volunteering to answer my questions at the end of the study when I conducted a semi-structured interview. The boys didn't want to do that due to the possible lack of self-confidence. Next, they were very supportive of each other as they practiced in their groups was satisfying. They were thoughtful during the study and showed tolerance to the members of the group. The last point I would like to point out is that they did not interestingly often refer to the vocabulary list I gave them, but they tried to use what they knew. I assumed that the strategy was entirely new to them, so they ignored the list. I discovered that, in relation to enhanced motivation, students worked together to understand the text. Instead of reading a book and answering a number of questions, the students followed their group roles to expand their vocabulary, create questions, and establish connections as much as they could. Finally, I observed that the students started to relate their personal experiences to the characters and the events in their book once they established a trusting connection. Some links were deeper than others; however, it was obvious that the students knew they could speak about anything freely.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

I have been researching and implementing literature circles for almost five years. While doing my study, I was lucky enough to have a journey of self-discovery involving a challenging but enriching knowledge of undertaking

qualitative research. It was an excellent opportunity for me to combine my 20-year experience with what I learned during my research. The findings of this study indicated that reading based strategies are worth to include language curriculum and literature circles should be viewed as an appropriate strategy by both language teachers and administrators. English language teachers who are doing researches about any reading programs like literature circles should also work on to improve a balanced reading and writing program. All the strategies like literature circles which prioritize reading and speaking can be developed to address all skills with balanced reading writing speaking program for young learners.

As in most social studies, there are always some areas to be improved, so we need more research in the field of education. Investigations in teaching English need to be acquainted with the recent methods to achieve relevant results in the learning language in EFL environments. Especially differentiated reading strategies that link life experiences should be concentrated on in further research. Furthermore, if we have more school administrations that allow any research to explore new approaches in their schools to enhance language learning, more teacher researches will be encouraged. Any educators who are willing to conduct a study in teaching language in Turkey should refer as many as books and articles are written in this field because I firmly believe that each point of view has a positive and fruitful contribution to the study.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

This study attempted to explore the benefits of literature circles with young learners in EFL settings in eight weeks. Despite my attempts to make the tasks suitable, challenging and exciting for the students, to a certain extent, they are subject to limitations. Establishing a teaching atmosphere that I would perform my study might take longer, so as I noted doing my studies in a school I was acquainted with, it would be more useful. Exploring their background understanding and teaching practices also took a considerable time. The students were not familiar with group learning and read aloud meetings, and it took a lot of effort to build up a teaching atmosphere where I could conduct my research. I firmly believe that these are the significant points that we need to

consider, so it is advisable to get to understand the students as much as possible before beginning the study. Another problem that I experienced was a small number of books at the school and limited library resources, so I offered the school more than fifty books by bringing them to classrooms in three days. Furthermore, the classroom environment was hard to conduct reading experiments, and group work activities. Finally, the school atmosphere should be suitable for classroom study purposes to run it smoothly.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1 Heart Map
APPENDIX 2 Dog Breath (Pilkey, 2004).
APPENDIX 3 Visualization
APPENDIX 4 Conversation starters for book discussions
APPENDIX 5 Reading Rubrics
APPENDIX 6 Reflection papers
APPENDIX 7 My reading journal
APPENDIX 8 Anchor Chart for LC
APPENDIX 9 Teacher's questions for Observation dairy
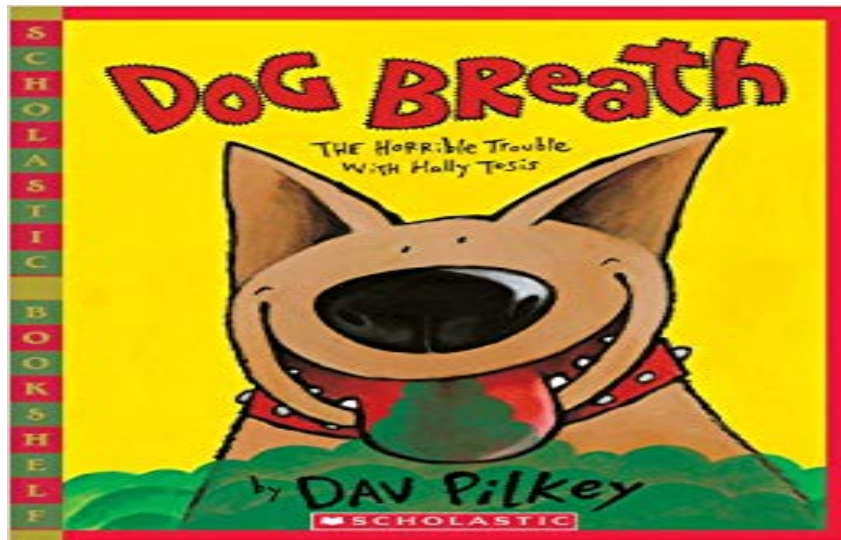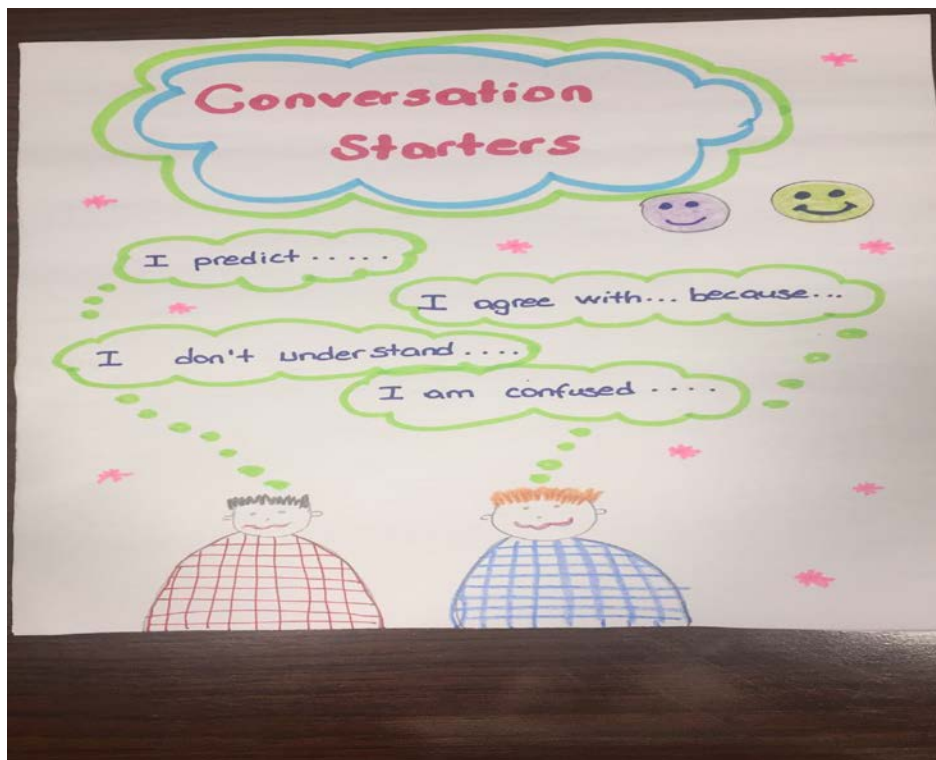**APPENDIX 10** Questions for Literature Circles
APPENDIX 11 Semi structured interview questions
APPENDIX 12: Ethic Approval Form

APPENDIX 1   Heart Map

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APPENDIX 3   Visualization

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APPENDIX 8   Anchor Chart for LC

APPENDIX 9   Teacher's questions for Observation dairy

1. Do students participate in group work?

2. Do students make predictions about the book or characters etc ?

3. Do students attempt to understand unknown words?

4. Do students make questions?

5. Do they work in collaboration?

6. Do they listen to each other?

APPENDIX 10   Questions for Literature Circles

APPENDIX 11   Semi structured interview questions

1. What is the most interesting thing you have learned while reading?

2. Can you make a connection between any books you have read and your life?

3. How did you feel while working in your group?

4. Do you think your group worked all together?

5. Do you think your task was hard or easy? What do you think?

APPENDIX 12: Ethic Approval Form

T.C.
İSTANBUL AYDIN ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü

Sayı : 88083623-044
Konu : Dilek KÖKLER'in Etik Onayı Hk.

Sayın Dilek KÖKLER

Tez çalışmanızda kullanmak üzere yapmayı talep ettiğiniz anketiniz İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Etik Komisyonu'nun 11.03.2019 tarihli ve 2019/04 sayılı kararıyla uygun bulunmuştur.
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Prof. Dr. Ragıp Kutay KARACA
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Adres:Beşyol Mah. İnönü Cad. No:38 Sefaköy , 34295 Küçükçekmece / İSTANBUL
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RESUME

Name Surname: Dilek Kökler

Place/Date of Birth: Istanbul, November 11, 1964

E-mail:dkokler@gmail.com

Education:

1991-1995 İstanbul University-English Language and Teaching Department

2017-2019 İstanbul Aydın University-Master of Arts, English Language and
Literature Department

Work Experience:

2018-2019 Coordinator and Teacher Traning of Mektebim Schools
2017-2018 Writer for DEPP Project:
2017 _2018   Part Time Teacher Trainer for Dünya Education
2016 -Guest Trainer at Bosporus University Summer School for 4 weeks
2010-2016 Mürüvvet Evyap Okullari
2009-2010   BJK College
2008-2009   Bilfen Bahçeşehir Schools
2003- 2008:   ZMEV Kemer Schools
1997- 2002:   Private Taş Primary School
1996- 1997:   Private Boğaziçi College
1995- 1996:   Private Akasya College

Languages:

-Turkish: Native Language

-English: Advanced

Skills:

-Known for enthusiasm, persistence
- Follow through and fostering collaborative relationships to resolve concerns and
  conflicts and ensure success.
- Computer skills (Microsoft Office) and others