The Effect of Literature Circles on Developing EFL Creative Writing Skills for Secondary Stage Students

أثر دوائر الأدب فى تنمية مهارات الكتابة الإبداعية باللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلاب المرحلة الثانوية

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to investigate the effect of literature circles on developing EFL creative writing for secondary stage students. The study followed a pre - post experimental one group design. The participants were 40 first year secondary stage students. To achieve the aim of the study, the researchers designed a creative writing pre/ post test to measure the students' performance in creative writing. It was administered to the participants before and after the intervention. The mean scores of the pre / post administrations of the test were treated statistically. Findings of the study revealed that there was a statistically significant difference at 0.01 in the pre - and post - assessment of EFL creative writing skills, in favor of the post - assessment. In the light of the findings, the researchers recommend the use of literature circles for developing EFL creative writing.

Key words: literature circles, creative writing, Secondary stage.

Introduction

Writing is one of the most essential skills in learning English. As it is the main relationship with learning process. It is important for every student at each level. Students can develop and express their ideas, feelings and thoughts by writing. Almost every aspect of the students' life is carried out into writing forms.

Types of Writing

Writing can be arranged into two types: functional and creative. Functional writing refers to the type of writing intended to convey a specific, direct, and clear message to a particular audience (Praminatih, Kwary & Ardaniah, 2019). It includes areas

such as writing instructions, letterheads, notes, invitations, reports and advertisements. On the other hand, creative writing is a form of writing by which learners express their feelings, emotions, reactions, and ideas in a great literary style (Viana & Zyngier, 2019).

1. Creative writing

Creativity in language is concerned with novelty and originality. Creative writing is directly associated with creativity. It means one's putting his feelings and ideas about a particular topic on paper using imagination freely. Creative writing involves going beyond the ordinary without deviation from the normal values, creating ideas that are different from everyone else's ideas with the help of one's imagination, achieving originality and writing fluently while taking pleasure in the act of composing (Diab, 2019). Creativity as a skill is found in all daily activities whether cognitive, emotional, or social which is the base of human daily life and development of the individuals (Temizkan, 2011).

Developing students' creative writing skills serves as an aid to the acquisition of certain aspects of the language (particularly grammar and vocabulary) and addresses the development of communicative competence. This is because EFL learners should move beyond the beginner stage of acquisition through multiple motivated tasks (Smith, 2013). Furthermore, teaching creative writing means encouraging students to write by drawing upon their imagination and other creative processes – may support writing development in all its components (Barbot, Tan, Randi, Donato & Grigorenko, 2012).

According to Sheir and Alodwan (2010) all pupils have creative abilities and their creativity takes a wide variety of forms. Each individual has a wide range of ideas, perceive things in a personal

way and, at times, shows insight and inventiveness. Pupils may not be creative in one particular area but show some creativity in a range of contexts across the curriculum.

1.1. Creative Writing skills

As creative writing skills are numerous, researchers attempted to identify and classify them. Starko (2005) identified the aspects of creative main skills as follows:

- Fluency: it refers to the capability to produce a large number of ideas .The more ideas you have, the more likely it is that at least one of them will be a good one.

- Flexibility: it indicates the ability to change the opinion of someone. Flexibility includes an openness to check ideas or thoughts in unexpected or different ways.

- Originality: it refers to thinking of unusual ideas of unique ways and solutions to a problem and the way the ideas are put together.

- Elaboration: it indicates the ability to add more details and to enhance ideas. Elaboration includes producing rich and more interesting ideas.

- Figurative Language: words are tools of the writers. Those tools give form and shape to writing. So, teachers should attract their students 'attention by using words that add color and images to speech and writing. They should also be encouraged to use the words that tease the senses and feelings. These words are called figurative language.

Moreover, Walker (2013) suggested that when creative writing is used to respond to the texts as well as to expand beyond the text read, students should be able to: -

a) interpret and critique creative work in writing.

b) use skills of analysis and reasoning.

c) express ideas concisely and clearly.

d) revise and edit in literary work.

e) read and write critically

f) produce and value creative and original forms of thought and expression.

It is worth mentioning that the following five creative writing skills are adopted in the current study:

1. Fluency (the ability to write, generate ideas that are related to the topic)

2. Flexibility (the ability to produce variety of ideas to support the main idea of the topic)

3. Originality(the ability to come up with new ideas that are unique and unrepeated)

4. Elaboration (the ability to add more details and to enhance ideas)

5. Accuracy (the ability to use grammar and punctuation marks correctly and to use appropriate and precise word choice.

1.2. Importance of Teaching Creative Writing

Freiman (2015)& Zhao (2014) summarized some benefits of creative writing as follows:

1. Developing the students' ability to use words in a powerful and pleasurable way.

2. Helping students discover their creative abilities, increase their awareness, flourish their spirits and emotions.

3. Active involvement, as it provides the perfect opportunity to put out knowledge and feelings to somebody.

4. Self - instruction. Creative writing is one place where learners

have the opportunity to express and communicate their thoughts and ideas.

1.3. Characteristics of Creative Writing

According to Baig (2011), the main characteristics of creative writing are:

1. Clarity: It means the writer does not confuse the readers. He should write clear ideas as some writers think that they become clever when leaving the reader in the dark.

2. Form: It has a beginning, a middle and an end. The beginning draws the readers in and the end is satisfying and concludes the essay. This holds true for fiction and personal essay.

3. Emotion: It is emotionally charged. The reader cares about what happened. He either cries, laughs, is scared or feels something else strange.

4. Meaning and connection: It is about people and situations that the readers can connect to; either a story the readers enter into with the writer for entertainment or a subject or emotion to be dealt with or want to learn about.

5. Language: The writer cares deeply about words and their power, no overblown adjectives or adverbs. The writer loves the language, hones and rewrites every sentence.

To ensure the existence of most of the above characteristics of creative writing certain principles should be followed in teaching it.

1.4. The Main Principles of Teaching Creative Writing

Spiro (2009) stated some principles of teaching creative writing as follows:

1. The focus should be on ideas and meaning: Ideas can be expressed directly or indirectly through the use of imagery.

2. Students learn language through experience with the language itself as they should follow the rules of grammar, usage, and punctuation. Students should use language inventively but they do not have a license to ignore the basic rules of good language.

3. Discussion about the structure of writing genres and use of language should be on how meaning is constructed rather than the rules.

4. Activities should be planned around students' interests as they select the topics.

5. Creative writing is seen as a product of imagination and a way of knowing about the world and humanity.

6. Writers will evaluate and rewrite what is written.

7. Creative writing is not descriptive or originative. It involves ideas, themes, queries and arguments.

8. Reading is essential to students' development, as expert writers must first become expert readers.

It is noteworthy that the previous literature assigned various advantages of collaborative learning in EFL classes. Collaboration among students is an interesting alternative in terms of creating helpful and active learning environments (Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014). Through the process of collaborative writing, students are able to distinguish the value of cooperation and learn to be responsive of their contributions to teamwork accomplishment. Literature circles is an effective strategy based on the principles of collaborative learning, independent reading and group discussion.

Literature circles

Having been firstly introduced by Daniels(2002), literature circles strategy is generally a reading group in which every single member has a different responsibility through role sheets within

controlled - freedom discussions (Furr, 2004; Moreira, 2010). According to Daniels, literature circles are small, student - led discussion groups in which members read the same book. The group members rotate through various 'roles' that guide the reading and the discussion. All group members are charged with preparing for and contributing to the discussion. Within the groups, each student functions as the expert in their assigned task (Miller, Straits, Kucan, Thrathen, & Dass, 2007).

The core of successful literature circles is collaboration (Klage, Pate, & Conforti, 2007). This collaboration allows students to gain knowledge while allowing the teacher to reinforce students' knowledge. Wilfong's (2009) research found that students using literature circles reported great excitement about discussing questions and listening to the opinions of others. This type of collaborative effort has been shown to increase motivation, enhance social skills, and increase communicative ability in students. Tompkins (2010) added that the use of literature circles helps student to orally and graphically represent their thinking.

1.5. Features of Literature Circles

Daniels (2002:18) describes the main features of the literature circles that he developed under 11 items as follows:

- Students choose their own reading materials.
- Small temporary groups are created based on book selections.
- Different groups read different books.
- Groups decide on a regular, predictable plan to discuss what they read.
- Children use written or marked notes that will guide them in their readings and discussions.

- Discussion topics are chosen by students.
- Group meetings aim to be an open and natural conversation about books, so that personal connections, digressions and open - ended questions can find a place in it.
- Teacher serves as a facilitator (moderator), not a group member or an instructor.
- Evaluation takes place in the form of teacher observation and student's self - evaluation.
- The spirit of cheerfulness and fun spreads among children.
- Once the books are finished, the readers share them with their classmates, and then new groups are formed around the new reading selections.

In light with the above principles, literature circles, is a reading strategy where students read their self - selected text from multiple texts, by which they can be more engaged in reading, and be more motivated; share their personal responses in small group discussion; and then share the responses with the whole class while teacher serves as a facilitator.

1.6. Benefits of Literature Circles

There are many benefits of using Literature Circles. Elhess and Egbert (2015) stated that recent evidence demonstrates that literature circles positively impact student learning processes and language development including:

- Improving comprehension skills
- Increasing student participation in a safe environment
- Enhancing responsibility and motivation
- Expanding collaborative discussion
- Developing oral proficiency

- Increasing scaffolding opportunities
- Reinforcing writing skills

1.7. Procedures of Literature Circles

Farris, Nelson & L'Allier (2007) stated the steps of literature circles as follows:

First, teachers should select a few pieces of literature that are at their students' reading level. The text should not have any cultural bias and should be interesting to the students.

Next, the teacher should create groups based on the students' book choices. Students explore the text either aloud together, shared in buddy groups, or independently. Once finished with the reading, they will work together in small groups in order to discuss it. The teacher should assign different roles to each student to have during the discussion. Teachers should present these roles to the students before they read, in order to give students a purpose for their reading.

1.8. Roles of Literature Circles in Language Classroom

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2.4.1. Students' Role in Literature Circles

According to Cave (2018:48) there are different roles of students in literature circles as follows:

- Discussion Director: The role of the Discussion Director is to provide 8 - 10 questions pertaining to the chapter.

• Summarizer: The role of the Summarizer is to provide a concise summary that includes all the main points of the text in a creative format; everything must be in chronological order.

• Word Wizard: The role of the Word Wizard is to provide ten terms or phrases relevant to the text.

• Connector: The role of the Connector is to provide a strong detailed connection to self and real world, provides a video or article that is connected to the text, and engages other group members in making similar connections to text/video/self and provides guiding questions for the video or article.

• Literary Luminary: The role of the Literary Luminary is to provide some quotes from the text. The quotes are especially significant, descriptive, and/or controversial.

2.4.2. Teacher's Role in Literature Circles

According to Varita (2017) the teacher's role is to monitor group discussions and help students collectively understand the text. Particularly, the teacher should focus on problems based around language, idioms, and cultural concepts that are difficult to understand.

The second role looked at the teacher as a participant. This involves teachers interacting as readers by sharing personal connections, opinions, and questions that stemmed from their personal understanding of the book.

2. Context of the Problem:

Out of the researchers' experience, they felt that 1st year secondary stage students encounter difficulties in EFL creative writing skills. They cannot write a good paragraph that contains indicators of creative writing skills (fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration

and accuracy). Despite the importance of creative writing skills, they are not given proper attention in TEFL at the secondary stage. Teaching English is really done in schools as students do their best to get good marks. Students practice, writing individually not in groups where they can share ideas and peer correct each other. In addition, first year secondary stage students lack EFL creative writing skills, so the researchers propose a literature circles program for enhancing their students' creative writing skills.

To document the problem of the study, a pilot study was conducted:

First: interviewing seven teachers who taught English to the first year, secondary school students and posing the following questions:

1. Are creative writing skills important for first - year secondary stage students? Why or Why not?

2. Do first year secondary stage students lack creative writing skills?

3. What are the methods/techniques that teachers use to teach creative writing skills for secondary stage students?

4. How can creative writing skills be developed for first year sec-ondary stage students?

Most of teachers emphasized that first - year secondary stage students lack creative writing skills, in spite of their importance for students in different educational stages in general and for secondary stage students in particular. Most of the teachers use the regular instruction in teaching writing skills, and so do not develop students' creative writing skills. They do not care about developing these skills, as they are usually obliged to finish the long and difficult syllabus they have to teach before the end of the semester.

Second: The problem of the study was further supported by reviewing previous related studies. Recent related studies such as

Kaoud, Sheir& EL Hilaly (2016); El - Mahdy (2018); Elshaer (2018); Hassan, Edris & Amer (2018) and Mohamed (2018) assured the weakness of EFL students in creative writing and recommended finding new methods and techniques to develop these skills. Concerning the Egyptian context, most teachers do not provide students with opportunities to practice EFL creative writing skills in the communicative context. Previous researchers showed that EFL students face some writing problems. Those problems might hinder their ability to express themselves freely, in a creative way. Most of them are not interested in the topic that the teacher asks them to write about. Also, they cannot link sentences into a coherent paragraph, nor can they express their thought in a logical and organized way.

Third: Administering a creative writing test to the students in order to confirm the information derived from the EFL teachers' interview and the review of the related previous studies, the researcher designed and administered a creative writing test to first year secondary stage students. Students' answers supported the researchers' feeling and remarks about the problem. It was clearly disclosed that those students are weak in EFL creative writing skills and are in a dire need of developing their EFL creative writing skills.

It is therefore necessary that different approaches to teaching and learning a language should be adopted, with regard to possessing 'strong centered components' like cooperative and collaborative learning for the learners. This strong student - centered component is evident in 'literature circles' of the EFL system, where small groups stay together to learn the English language. In this kind of learning environment, the activities include reading the same piece of literature and trying to accomplish their different

learning tasks through preparing questions, reporting challenging vocabulary, making efforts to understand cultural items, and relating the language - words and literature - story to contemporary society. Having such literature circles helps to improve students' potentials by increasing their foreign language competence.

Therefore, using the literature circles in improving EFL students' creative writing skills is recommended by many studies such as the study of Schwebs (2019);Sutrisno, Rukmini, Bharati & Fitriati (2018) and, Ezenandu,(2012) .So, the present researchers thought of using Literature circles to develop EFL creative writing skills of the secondary stage students.

3. Statement of the Problem:

In spite of the importance of EFL creative writing skills, first year secondary stage students lack these skills. Thus, there is a need for an effective strategy for developing EFL creative writing skills among first year secondary stage students. So, the current study tried to enhance the required EFL creative writing skills in first year secondary stage via the use of the literature circles.

4. Questions of the study:

To tackle this problem, the study attempted to answer the following main question:

What is the effect of literature circles on developing first year secondary stage students' required EFL creative writing skills?

Three questions were derived from the main question:

1. What are the required EFL creative writing skills for first year secondary stage students?

2. What are the features of the suggested literature circles - based program to develop these skills?

3. What is the effect of literature circles on developing first year secondary stage students' each of EFL creative writing skills?

5. Aim of the Study:

The present study aimed at developing first year secondary stage students' required EFL creative writing skills using literature circles.

6. Hypotheses of the study:

In the light of the review of literature and related studies, the following two hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is a statistically significant difference at ($\alpha \leq 0.01$) between the mean scores of the participants in the pre - and post - test on the overall required EFL creative writing skills, in favor of the post test.

2. There is a statistically significant difference at ($\alpha \leq 0.01$) between the mean scores of the participants in the pre - and post - test on each creative writing skill, in favor of the post - test.

7. Delimitations of the study:

This study was confined to:

1. Developing only the required creative writing skills for first year secondary stage students (i.e. fluency, flexibility, elaboration, originality and accuracy).

2. A group of 40 first year secondary stage students. Therefore, the results of the present study can be generalized only within the sample of the present study.

3. The first semester of the academic year(2019 - 2020)

8. Variables of the Study:

1. The independent variable: literature circles.

2. The dependent variable: developing the required EFL creative writing skills.

9. Significance of the Study:

The present study is expected to help in the following areas:

1. Helping the Ministry of Education to develop the outcomes of the EFL teaching/ learning process in Egypt.

2. Helping teachers use literature circles strategy for developing students' required EFL creative writing skills in the secondary stage.

3. Paving the way for other researchers to conduct further studies on developing students' creative writing skills using literature circles strategy in the other educational stages.

10. Definition of Terms

Creative writing

Also, Akkaya (2014) defines creative writing as a process that is utterly based on subjective statements which prevail through one's creative thinking and imagination.Furthermore, Laing (2014) defines creative writing as an activity that requires one to be "delighted" within the language as the writer seeks ways to find the most precise word, description, or feeling for a certain image which he or she wishes to create.

According to Mason (2015) creative writing is an open and imaginative writing in which the authors freely express their unique thought and feelings.

Moreover, Kaoud, Sheir & El,Hilaly (2016) defined creative writing as" the productive process through which the ESL/EFL secondary students express, their own feelings, emotions and thoughts to others in an interesting literary language characterized by original ideas and expressions that entertain the reader and achieve interaction with the writer.

Furthermore Iyengar & Smith(2016) "Creative writing is the process of crafting text that is not specialized, editorial, theoretical, or procedural forms of writing; it is the craftsmanship of storytelling. It also employs characters, figures of speech, or even poetic form" (p. 103).

Creative writing is operationally defined in the present study as the process which helps first year secondary stage students express their thoughts effectively, efficiently & originally. The required creative skills that were taught to t1st year secondary stage students .They include: fluency, flexibility, elaboration, originality & accuracy.

Literature circles

There are many concepts of Literature Circles, but every concept has one basic point in common: each student is responsible for most of their own learning. All definitions also focus on students working co - operatively in order to help each other in their learning achievements.

Gall (2010) defines literature circles as a small group of students reading the same work of literature and working with peers while performing discussions. Maraccini (2010) defines literature circles as "Just one strategy that incorporates the use of student dialogue and conversation to improve comprehension and reading skills" (p. 25 - 26).

Batchelor (2012), a teacher who implemented literature circles in her middle school classroom, defined literature circles as "small, peer - led groups of students engaging in conversations around the same text" (p. 27)

Furthermore, Karatay (2015) defined a literature circle as a reading group consisting of 4 or 5 people in which students who have different academic success levels and reading abilities voluntarily

come together to read literary texts such as a novel or a story or expository texts such as essays, articles, or textbooks. They like and to share their reading experiences with each other.

Literature circles can be defined operationally as discussion groups where the readers gather for reading discussions not only for the pleasure of reading but to develop creative writing abilities among first year secondary stage students.

11.   Method of the study

This part of the study sheds the light on the study method followed in investigating the effect of using literature circles on developing EFL creative writing skills among first year secondary stage students. This method deals with the following three points:

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1) Participants of the study:

The participants of the present study consisted of 40 first year secondary stage students, from Om El Mo'mneen private school during the first semester of the academic year 2019 - 2020.

2) Design of the study:

The present study is quasi - experimental. One study group pre - post test design was used to investigate the effect of using literature circles on developing the required EFL creative writing skills for first year secondary stage students.

3) Instruments and materials:

This study aimed at using literature circles for developing required EFL creative writing skills for first year secondary stage

students. The following instruments and material were developed by researchers to fulfill the purpose of the study:

- A creative writing checklist which was designed as a pre - requisite for instrument of the study i.e. the creative writing skills test.
- A pre - post creative writing skills test.
- The suggested program based on literature circles.

Before developing the pre - post test, the following checklist was designed to decide the required creative writing skills for first year secondary stage students.

a. **The Creative Writing Skills Checklist:**

The checklist aimed at identifying the required EFL creative writing skills for first year secondary stage students. Validity of this checklist was used to determine the required English creative writing skills for first secondary year students. It includes 18 skills. The checklist was submitted to a panel of jury members who indicated that the checklist was valid.

Content of the checklist:

Having reviewed the related literature on developing students' creative writing skills, the researchers designed a creative writing skills' checklist and submitted it to specialized jury members in the English Language Teaching (ELT) so as to determine the degree of importance of each skill on the checklist. The list consisted of 18 skills classified under five categories: fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration and accuracy. The jury members stated that the skills in the checklist would be generally adequate and appropriate to its purpose, after deleting eight skills which had been considered above the first - year secondary stage students' level. So, the checklist became valid, after it had been modified according to the jury members' suggestions to contain (10) skills only. Thus, the first sub

- question of the study about the required EFL creative writing skills for the first year secondary school students was answered.

The EFL creative writing skills test

The EFL creative writing skills test was developed by the researchers. The test has five parts; each part was developed to measure one of the intended skills (fluency, flexibility, elaboration, originality and accuracy). The first part focused on assessing the fluency skills where the students were required to generate as many related ideas as possible, then choose two of these ideas and write a paragraph. The second part focused on assessing flexibility in which students were required to restate a paragraph on their own. The third part assessed students' originality of ideas in which students were required to solve a specific problem with a unique solution. The fourth part focused on assessing elaboration, where students were required to write details instructions. Then the final part of the test focused on the accuracy indicators, where students were required to read a paragraph that contains some errors in (spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation), identify these errors and correct them.

a) **Piloting and scoring the EFL Creative Writing Skills Test:**

The EFL creative writing skills test was administered to a pilot sample of 30 first year secondary stage students other than those of the study participants to investigate:

(1) clarity of instructions; (2) suitability of the language level to the participants; (3) comprehensibility of test items (4) allocating the time required for responding to the test different sections. No problems were reported with clarity and comprehensibility. Regarding time allocation of the creative writing test, it was estimated by calculating the time taken by all the students (30) used

for piloting the test. divided by the number of the same students. So, test time =1950/30 = 65 minutes. Thus, the time allotted for the test was (65) minutes.

b) **Validity of the EFL Creative Writing Skills Test:**

To estimate the face validity. the EFL creative writing skills test was submitted to 5 jury members in TEFL. They were asked to express their opinions regarding the clarity. the difficulty level and length of the test. and how far each item measures the skill intended to measure. The jury members reported the appropriateness of the test items to the skills to be measured. Suitability of the test to students' academic level was reported. Clarity of the test instructions and questions and representation of the targeted skills were also reported.

c) **Reliability of The EFL creative writing Skills Test:**

For estimating the reliability of the EFL creative writing skills test. the researcher used the test - retest method. The test was administered to the piloting group of first year secondary stage students. (n=30). The test was administered again to the same group after two weeks. Pearson correlation coefficient between the two administrations was .95 which is statistically significant at 0.01 so, the test was reliable.

The suggested literature circles - based program:

The literature circles - based program was developed to enhance EFL creative writing for first year secondary stage students and provide them with some theoretical knowledge about EFL creative writing skills (fluency. flexibility. elaboration. originality and accuracy).

1) **Aim and Objectives of the program:**

The literature circles - based program was developed to enhance the required EFL creative writing skills for first year

secondary stage students. The researchers used various activities and tasks through the sessions to enable the participants accomplish the program objectives.

So, by the end of the program, students were expected to be able to:

1- Understand the importance of literature circles in general and in developing 1st year secondary stage students in particular.

2- Acquire the required ten EFL creative writing skills for 1st year secondary stage students.

3- Develop the main five creative writing skills categories (i.e. fluency, flexibility, elaboration, originality and accuracy).

2) **Content of the Program:**

The program included some EFL creative writing skills activities and tasks that are suitable for secondary stage students, and adopted from various sources such as: Schwebs (2019); Sutrisno, Rukmini, Bharati & Fitriati (2018) and Ezenandu,(2012).

3) **Description and framework of the program:**

The program consisted of 16 sessions. The first two were orientation sessions about literature circles used in the program, EFL creative writing skills and the importance of these skills to the participants of the study. The rest of the sessions were instructional ones through which the main five EFL creative writing skills categories were practiced (fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration and accuracy). Moreover, there were five sessions for revision. Each one of the revision sessions was practiced and presented after the total practice of its skill, as a kind of formative assessment for the program.

4) **Implementation of the Program:**

The study was conducted on 40 first year secondary stage students, in Om El Mo'mneen private school, Giza Governorate,

during the first term of the academic year 2019–2020.

12. Findings of the study:

To measure the effect of literature circles program, the participants were pre - post - tested on the required EFL creative writing skills. For comparing the initial and the final mean scores of the participants in overall EFL creative writing skills and on each creative writing skill as well to find whether there was a statistically significant difference between them in the pre - post test, the researchers used the one sample t - test, as it is the suitable design of the study treatment. The findings of the study are given below to verify the hypotheses of the study as follows:

The first hypothesis:

The first hypothesis states that "There is a statistically significant difference at ($\alpha \leq 0.01$) between the mean scores of the participants in the pre - and post - test on the overall required EFL creative writing skills, in favor of the post test."

For testing this hypothesis, the one sample t - test was used to compare the mean scores of the participants in the overall required EFL creative writing skills on the pre - and the post administrations of EFL creative writing test. Table (1) presents the mean scores, standard deviation and level of the significance in the pre - and post - assessments of the overall EFL creative writing skills.

Table (1): t - test differences between the participants' mean scores in the pre - and post - assessment of the overall EFL creative writing skills.

skill	Assessment	Std. Deviation	Mean	t- value	df	Sig.
overall EFL creative writing skills	Pre-	6.33	16.25	14.5	39	Sig. at 0.01
	Post-	6.51	22.85			

This table shows that the mean scores are 16.25 for the pre - test and 22.85 for the post - test. So, as shown in table (1) and figure (1) the first hypothesis was accepted. Where t=14.5, p<0.01 which is statistically significant at 0.01.

Figure (1): the differences between mean scores of the participants in the pre - and post - assessment of the overall EFL creative writing skills, in favor of the post - assessment.

The second hypothesis:

The second hypothesis states that "There is a statistically significant difference at (α ≤ 0.01) between the mean scores of the participants in the pre - and post - test on each creative writing skill, in favor of the post - test".

For testing this hypothesis, the one sample t - test was used to compare the mean scores of the participants on each creative writing skill on the pre - and the post administrations of the EFL creative writing test. Table (2) presents the mean scores, standard deviation and level of the significance in the pre - and post - assessments of the EFL writing skills.

Table (2): t - test differences between the participants' mean scores in the pre - and post - assessments on each EFL creative writing skill.

skills	Assessment	N	Std. Deviation	Mean	t- value	df	Sig.
Fluency	Pre	40	1.96	4.05	10.014	39	Sig. at 0.01
	Post	40	1.73	5.9			
Flexibility	Pre	40	1.27	2.42	3.372	39	Sig. at 0.01
	post	40	1.46	3.27			
Originality	Pre	40	1.48	2.6	6.2	39	Sig. at 0.01
	Post	40	1.69	3.5			

Elabo-ration	Pre	40	1.33	3.63	8.40	39	Sig. at 0.01
	Post	40	1.48	4.95			
Accu-racy	Pre	40	1.16	3.92	6.45	39	Sig. at 0.01
	Post	40	1.67	5.33			

The above table (2) indicates that:

1- The mean scores in the fluency skill are 4.05 for the pre assessment and 5.9 for the post - assessment. Where t= 10.014, p<0.01 which is statistically significant at 0.01.

2- The mean scores in the flexibility skill are 2.42 for the pre assessment and 3.27 for the post - assessment. Where t= 3.372, p<0.01 which is statistically significant at 0.01.

3- The mean scores in the originality skill are 2.6 for the pre assessment and 3.5 for the post - assessment. Where t= 6.2, p<0.01 which is statistically significant at 0.01.

4- The mean scores in the elaboration skill are 3.63 for the pre assessment and 4.95 for the post - assessment. Where t= 8.40, p<0.01 which is statistically significant at 0.01.

5-   The mean scores in the accuracy skill are 3.92 for the pre assessment and 5.33 for the post - assessment. Where t= 6.45, p<0.01 which is statistically significant at 0.01.

Figure (2): The differences between the mean scores of the participants in the pre - and post - assessment on each creative writing skill, in favor of the post - assessment.

As shown in table (2) and figure (2) the second hypothesis was accepted.

13. Discussion and Interpretation of the Study Findings:

Displaying the results of the study, the researchers presented an account of the development of the study group students' creative

writing skills due to the use of the literature circles strategy. This is shown in the difference between the pre and post administrations of the creative writing skills test mean scores of the study group students. The difference between the students' mean scores in the pre and post administrations of the test was statistically significant which might be due to the following factors:

- The use of literature circles provided an opportunity for cooperative learning, it upgraded and refined students' use of language and involved them in collaborative reconstruction of written texts. They became more engaged in showing their competence to the members of the team and were responsible for the achievement of the group.

- The collaborative nature of role work allowed the students to scaffold what they did not know, into what they collectively learnt with their peers. Additionally, because students were studying the written form of English in their respective literature and creative writing circles, this gave students an opportunity to interact with the text, examine it, discuss it, work out the meaning, and discuss the words, in a meaningful and purposeful way.

- Using the literature circles allowed the students to integrate the four skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing). Moreover, students'' speaking time was significantly longer in that student - centered classroom than in a traditional teacher - centered classroom.

- Furthermore, the use of self - assessment and peer assessment helped the students greatly to confront their own strengths and weaknesses in their English language use.

- In a small group discussion, students learnt to share opinions and contribute by performing the roles that they were respon-

sible for.

- Students had an active learning role as they started to read independently by preparing a reading log. This process promoted their ownership of learning where students freely chose arguments to note for the coming discussion. Previous research also confirmed this result as Monyanont (2016) and Lubis (2018).

- Furthermore, when allowed to select what they should be noted, students applied their metacognition (monitoring own learning).

- While the group discussion was processing, students felt more relaxed to talk with group members for they were free from a figure of authority. This enabled them to learn better with minimized anxiety.

- Furthermore, the principles of co - operative learning, where students shared ideas and encouraged each other on learning, promoted authentic learning and conversation.

- Finally, the components of students' preparation and group discussion led to meaningful learning. Students then understood the story better and were able to write more reflectively.

- Unlike Maher (2018) who stressed that because creative writing has fewer strict requirements than academic writing, it is advisable to avoid a focus on spelling and grammar, unless they are instrumental in comprehending their written text, the present study gave special attention to the accuracy skills as the main skills that allow students to produce comprehensive writings.

- Finally, the study results are consistent with the results of some previous studies such as Kaoud, et al. (2016); El - Mahdy (2018); Elshaer (2018); Mohamed (2018); Hassan, Edris & Amer (2018) who stress on the importance of creative writing and the good results of using new methods and technique in general to teach

EFL writing. Also, the results of the present study support the results of some previous studies, concerning the improvement of students' writing due to the use of literature circles in particular, such as Monyanont (2016); Roberts, Blanch & Gurjar, (2017), Lubis (2018) & Maher (2018).

The study findings can be beneficial for other researchers in the future research as well, especially those who deal with obstacles pertaining to EFL creative writing or eagerness to use the literature circles for developing the performance of the students in EFL.

14.   Conclusions:

The results of the study asserted that the participants' creative writing skills were developed through the implementation of the suggested program based on literature circles. The implications from the findings of this study support that literature circles is a useful strategy that make active learning environment possible.

While literature circles is certainly not the only collaborative strategy available to students, it affords unique learning opportunities that, when done effectively, can vastly improve students' writing. The findings of the current study provide interesting conclusions and recommendations for classroom teachers and researchers who are interested in the integration of literature circles in writing instruction.

15.   Recommendations of the study:

The results of the current study offer a number of recommendations for classroom teachers and researchers who are eager to improve their writing instruction, as follows:

– English language teachers should be trained on using different types of collaborative strategies in EFL writing skills.

– EFL student teachers should practice collaborative learning strategies.

– Curriculum designers must take into their account the importance of embedding collaborative learning strategies in the syllables of different stages.

16. Suggestions for further Research:

Within the limitations of the present study as well as the findings being achieved, the following areas are suggested for further research:

1- Using literature circles to develop students' linguistic competence.

2- Using literature circles to develop oral communication skills for EFL students.

3- Developing other language skills among EFL student teachers such as listening and speaking through literature circles.

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