



*Employing Literature Circles Strategy to Develop Iraqi EFL
Students' Critical Thinking*

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توظيف استراتيجية الحلقات الأدبية لتنمية التفكير الناقد لدى طلبة العراقيين دارسي
اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية

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المستخلص

يعد التفكير الناقد عملية ذهنية مرتبطة بالتفكير الذاتي المرتبط بالتصحيح الذاتي والتصحيح المنظم ذاتيا حيث تتضمن هذه العملية إجراءات ذات سمة معقدة مفترضه ذاتيا تستخدم لحل المشكلات بكفاءة وإملاء قيم التحكم. وفي هذا الصدد يمكن استعمال التفكير الناقد لغرض مساعدة المتعلمين من أجل فهم مشكلات اللغة بشكل أفضل وإيجاد الحلول الناجعة والفعالة لها. تعد تقنية الحلقات الأدبية واحدة من التقنيات الحديثة المستخدمة في تعليم اللغة الأجنبية حيث يمكن استخدام هذه التقنية من أجل تشجيع المتعلمين وتطوير مهاراتهم الإنتاجية. وعليه تهدف الورقة البحثية الحالية إلى تطبيق تقنية الحلقات الأدبية لغرض تطوير التفكير الناقد لدى طلبة الجامعة العراقيين دارسي اللغة الانكليزية لغة أجنبية في كل من مهارتي القراءة والكتابة. شملت عينة الدراسة الحالية على (٦٠) طالبا وطالبة في المرحلة الثالثة في قسم اللغة الانكليزية في جامعة الفراهيدي تم توزيعهم على مجموعتين تجريبية وضابطة. خلصت الاستنتاجات التي حصلت عليها الباحثة على أنه بالإمكان استخدام استراتيجيه الحلقات الأدبية من أجل تعزيز مهارات طلبة الجامعة في مهارتي القراءة والكتابة. من خلال بيئة ممتعة وتعاونية في مراكز التعلم، يتمكن الطلاب من الاستنتاج النقدي وتبرير وتقييم ما يقرؤونه ويكتبونه. كما يساعدهم التعلم التعاوني على حل المشكلات، وبناء الفرضيات، واتخاذ القرارات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحلقات الأدبية، التفكير الناقد، القراءة، الكتابة

Abstract

Critical thinking (CT) is a mental process associated with a self-involved, self-regulated, and self-remedial thinking which implies complicated self-presumed actions to proficiently resolve problems and dictates values of governance. In this sense, CT can be employed to help learners better understand language problems and find efficient solution to them. One updated technique of teaching language is through the utilization of literature circles (LCs). LCs can be employed to encourage learners' awareness and assist them develop productive skills. Thus, this paper intends to explore the application of LCs to develop Iraqi EFL students' critical thinking in both reading and writing skills. A sample of 60 3rd year students, of Al-Farahidi University, College of Education, Department of English, are selected and distributed into two groups: experimental (receiving teaching through LCs strategies) and control (receiving traditional teaching). The paper utilizes two instruments: test (pre-test and post-test) and sessions for teaching LCs. The paper infers that LCs strategy can be applicable in augmenting students' CT in both reading and writing. Through enjoyable and cooperative settings in LCs, students are able to critically deduce, rationalize and assess what they read and write. CT can help they solve problems, construct hypotheses and make decisions.

Key Words: literature circles, critical thinking, reading, writing

1. Introduction

It has been often noticed that Iraqi EFL students often endeavor to find effective ways, methods and strategies to better perform in English language. One strategy is 'literature circles'(LCs) which involves small groups of learners who enthusiastically engaged in language activities such as reading and talking about a part of literature. It forms a useful process to encourage reading and inspire reply through conversing and thinking (Brown, 2002; Bell, 2003; Day, 2003). In performing LCs, learners are engaged not only in reading and discussing the motivating reading texts but also raising questions in profundity, arguing and negotiating meaning. This will certainly help them improve their advanced instruction thinking skills (Ediger, 2002; Ketch, 2005). To encourage reading for interest in English integrating LCs into teaching classes not only assists learners read more but also improves their thinking capability. Such a method of learning is often preferable simply because learners can without restrictions share their ideas and views with each other (Ediger, 2002; Day, 2003).

In fact, the term 'literature circles' was introduced by Harvey Daniel (1994) to uncover the various features that can help students' struggles in language teaching and learning. LCs can be utilized in teaching classroom to motivate students to self-

reliantly do class- activities on the one hand and to encourage them to cooperatively solve the problem they save, on the other.

In applying LCs, cooperative learning is often encouraged when learners show tendency towards working together in small groups to achieve a common variety of learning objectives which help in raising their own learning. However, the successful accomplishment of applying LCs is based on a learner's actual participation and important demonstration on one another's knowledge and abilities.

Johnson and Johnson (2008, p. 29) expound that in “cooperative learning”, learners can have chances “to assess, evaluate, and acknowledge each other's understanding, which motivates them to learn. The more skills engaged when students interact, the higher their achievements will be”. In this sense, it is the interaction that motivates learners to gain better learning. In fact, it leads students and instructs them to effectively accomplish the task and establish the recently obtained knowledge in their present “mental schemas” which help them to later employ this knowledge in more intricate and progressive performance autonomously.

Because of their cooperative nature and their weight on the students' social mindfulness and CT skills, RC abilities and inference skills, studies on LCs have been provoked, reinforced

and given due attention in ESL and EFL classroom teaching. Although abundant research has been carried out on applying LCs to improve CT in reading and writing, no study, in the available literature, has been so far carried out to account for LCs as associated with CT in Iraqi context. To this end, the present paper intends to specify the efficiency of the application of the strategy of LCs in developing university learners' CT in both RC and writing skills. Here, it is necessary to provide a theoretical background concerning the concept of LCs, definitions and main characteristics, CT, reading and writing skills, reviewing some previous related studies. Yet, before embarking on the theoretical background, some research questions are required to elaborate on the aim of the present paper.

2. Research Questions

1. To what extent does the utilization of LCs strategy enhance Iraqi EFL students' CT in RC and writing skill?
2. Which performance in RC and writing skills is greater, of the experimental group or of the control group?
3. What are the most prominent strategies that Iraqi EFL students utilize to enhance their CT in both reading and writing?

3. Literature Circles

In English language teaching, LCs indicate group discussions where participants read parts of a books, whole book or units of books and take accountabilities regarding their allocated enclosing discussion roles for each session. The most important thing is that the discussion must be related to the speculative research which proposes that LCs offer a thought-provoking manner to inspire students' partaking in wide-ranging reading through an FL course (Daniels, 2002, p. 23). A more thorough definition is given by Daniels (1994), who clarifies that:

“literature circles are small, peer-led discussion groups whose members have chosen to read the same story, poem, article, or book. While they are reading, each group-assigned portion of the text (either in or outside class), members make notes to help them contribute to the upcoming discussion, and every one comes to the group with ideas to share. Each group follows a reading and meeting schedule, holding periodic discussion through the reading of the book. When they finish a book, the circle members may share highlights of their reading with the wider community. Then they trade members with another finishing group, select more readings, and move into a new cycle” (cited in Chase and Pheifer, 2002:13).

Most definitions of LCs in the literature available rotate around the idea that LCs are cooperative procedures which offer learners satisfactory opportunities to regulate and accomplish their own learning with no assistance from their teachers; learners work collaboratively to help one another in their education tasks.

3. Features of LCs

LCs consolidate various elements in literary direction. Daniels (2002, p.18) presents eleven traits of LCs.

1. Students select their own material. Daniels affirms that “the deepest spirit of LCs comes from independent reading”. Dissimilar to habitual classroom, participants have the chance in choosing the suitable subject to read and confer in a group (Johnson, 2001).
2. Small momentary groups are designed by learners. Size- group can be ranged from four to six. After giving enough time to organize the formed groups and figure out their problems, each group becomes ready to work.
3. Various groups read various reading materials.
4. Student groups gather on a consistent, expectable timetable to talk over reading.
5. Using written and illustrated comments are useful way to instruct participants’ reading and interaction. Moreover, supporting role-sheets are given to each participant of a “small

reading group to read a story and to prepare their thoughts, notes and what they are going to talk about in their group for a group discussion”. By this manner, learners are ready to learn that there are purposes behind reading any selected reading materials (Hill & King, 2003, p.67).

6. Generation discussion issues come from students. By supporting role sheets, students are able to use topics for discussion in their literature circle groups (Raman, 2004).

7. Group gatherings are accessible, normal conversation about reading materials, then individual remarks are pleasing. Learners could share their information about the chosen reading in group negotiations.

8. Roles of discussion are interchanged.

9. In LCs classroom, the teacher acts as an observer, facilitator and mediator. Besides, the teacher could share his/her opinions and ideas while she/he walks around classroom (Raman, 2004).

10. Assessment is raised by teacher- observation and student-assessment.

11. Through the participation of groups in classroom, feeling of playfulness is generated. In addition, a spirit of competition and fun is pervaded among them (Gilmore & Day, 2006).

It is clear from the above characteristics that the emphasis is on student- centered learning in literature circle class. The students

themselves take the role of performing the lecture, of course with the help of their teacher who takes the role of facilitating and monitoring their learning. As the groups complete their reading and discussion, the teacher may ask them to exhibit something which reflects their works and to check their comprehensions, e.g., writing composition concerning an appealing section and reading aloud (Zeger, 2006). In this respect, the researcher, via this paper, intends to call attention to the application of literature circle in Iraqi EFL classes to develop the students' CT in reading and writing.

Roles in LCs

In terms of the definitions of LCs given above, these circles can be simply described as small (often 5-6 students), momentary "discussion groups of students who have chosen to read the same work of literature" (Chiang, 2004, p. 78). These groups meet on a prearranged schedule to exchange notions and opinions regarding reading a text. Mostly teachers select a piece of work, chapter, a section in keeping with their benefits. With the purpose of simplifying the interpretation of a certain text, each participant of the group must have a certain role to play.

In this sense, Li (2005, pp. 126-7) suggests a five-role system which intends to assist learners to “think critically, discuss matters, share ideas and views with each other while reading and comprehending a reading material”. Fundamentally, learners in LCs must be decisively obliged to their allocated roles. Generally, the practice of LCs comprises an action which is intended by “a member to involve all the other group members and usually by the end the discussions are opened up and more interactions occur among the group members” (p. 126). [For more details on the five roles of LCs, see Li, 2005, p. 127] More affluently, Chiang (2004, pp. 87-88) postulates a six-role scheme in which each member is planned to play a role. These roles are illustrated in table 1.

Table 1: Participants' Roles in LCs

Questioner	Illustrator	Passage master	Connector	Summarizer	Word wizard
<p>A participant or a group discussion director is responsible for improving a group of questions to talk over . He/she leads the order of discussion, makes the discussion proceed by inspiring the members to reply to one another's thoughts.</p>	<p>His/her job is to infer and share beneficial topics in the reading texts. He/she aids members to concentrate on the evolving "characters, plot, and writing style of the author".</p>	<p>He/she is concerned with detecting interesting and essential parts the reading text.</p>	<p>His/her job is to make connections between the reading passage and the learners' world, their experiences and events in the society.</p>	<p>He gives a brief summary of the reading text to help the group better understand the reading passage.</p>	<p>or "vocabulary enricher", he/she attempts to specify the essential, puzzled and powerful words in the reading passage, emphasizing synonyms, collocation, parts of speech ... etc.</p>

It is important to note that in LCs, the duty of "questioner and connector" is to advance some questions to confer and relate situation of a reading material to everyday life events and actions. Thus, members in LCs must be provided with sufficient chances to "listen to peer discussing their own interpretation, to cooperatively take part in discussions with others, and reflectively draw their own personal and relevant connections" (Burns, 1998, pp. 124-8).

4. Critical Thinking

The notion of “critical thinking” has been extensively highlighted in the area of language teaching and it reinforces numerous educational interferences that have been interested in the progress of intellectual activities and syllabus. Teachers and scholars have been concerned with identifying the cognitive area of individuals and detecting the knowledgeable skills that a learner can achieve while thinking. For Paul and Elder (2019), CT is a self-engaged, self-controlled, and self-remedial thinking. It embraces a sequence of multifaceted self-assumed procedures to efficiently resolve difficulties and necessitates principles of superiority (Fisher, 2011). In this respect a critical thinker appends decision, rejects hopping to conclusions, evades thoughtless thinking, and refuses to settle down for an artificial stage of understanding (McPeck, 2016).

Relationally, Ennis (1996, p. 166) describes CT “as reasonable reflective thinking”. He links CT to specific skills “such as reflection, inferring, reasoning, evaluating and the like”, which can be independently learned and transported to many areas, without connecting them with any specific systems. Halpern (1999) studies all the preceding descriptions and offers a wider

definition that comprises all formerly recognized constituents of CT. He states that CT indicates

“the use of cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome. Critical thinking is purposeful, reasoned, and goal-directed. It is the kind of thinking involved in solving problems, formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions. Critical thinkers use these skills appropriately, without prompting, and usually with conscious intent, in a variety of settings. That is, they are predisposed to think critically. When we think critically, we are evaluating the outcomes of our thought processes—how good a decision is or how well a problem is solved” (p. 70).

For the CT strategies, Watson and Glaser (2012, p. 23) expound that they involve “five dimensions: inference, recognition of assumptions, deduction, interpretation, and evaluation of arguments”. Hence, CT is seen as a cognitive action that involves the employment of specific skills to get at creating accurate decisions. Thus, for a learner to be a critical thinker, it necessitates inspecting any opinion or procedure of knowledge relied on indication which backs this opinion or procedure of knowledge. In brief, CT refers “the ability to recognize problems and find unstated information based on which these problems can be solved”.

In brief, CT is often considered an important and vigorous issue in up-to-date education; therefore, teachers are mostly involved in teaching this notion to their pupils or students. The reason

behind considering it is that it can increase learners' thinking abilities and enable them to encounter the world of dispute and variation. Generally speaking, CT can be employed as "a method of open –ended learning and thinking into the classes" (Jawad, 2022, p. 50).

Literature Circles and Critical Thinking

The implementation of LCs involves cooperative learning which intends to improve learners' grasping and considering a reading text through organized, collaborative discussions. Each member in LCs group is allotted a particular role to simplify discussion and certify lively participation. Such roles enable learners to make contact with the reading texts with respect of activeness and cooperation of the involved members of LCs groups. One important point is that LCs provide both students many advantages; Students' participation in group discussions may develop their comprehension of the reading text (Daniels, 2002). In addition, students' analysis of the reading text in terms of various opinions may raise their CT abilities (McMahon & Raphael, 1997). Peterson and Eeds (2007) add that cooperation among members of the group advances communicative and collaborative proficiencies. Giving the students the chance to select the reading text and discuss it in a friendly atmosphere

enhances enthusiasm and participation in classes (Daniels, 2002). In brief, LCs can be implemented to increase students' CT.

CT is an essential ability in teaching process; it is important for students' knowledgeable development and their capability to direct the complications of the up-to-date life. In accordance with Facione (2011), CT takes in the capability of analyzing information, assesses facts, and creates logical opinions. The significance of CT in language teaching lies in the fact that it reinforces learners' academic accomplishment, individual advance, and community participation. CT significantly augments individual achievement as it reinforces intellectual individuality and the capability of enquiring expectations and preferences. Learners who grow solid CT abilities are better prepared to give knowledgeable decisions in their individual and practical life. They can basically assess the reliability of sources, detect reasonable fallacies, and distinguish between reality and viewpoint.

In an overwhelming sense, LCs learners' perception or thinking is continuously encouraged when they are raising questions and talking over a reading passage with one another. Numerous researchers (e.g. MacKnight, 2000; Patterson, 1993) expound that learners' engagement in class activities that precisely employ the CL skills is central for language learning and acquisition. Learners' CT can be raised in LCs when provided with chances

to exercise questioning and replying to questions, particularly thought-stimulating questions. Likewise, Daud and Husin (2004) state that integrating reading texts for teaching English is helpful in improving learners' CL skills provided that reading materials and CT are interconnected. They add that CT helps and provides readers with a better understanding of the problem situation and individuals (characters) involved in the literary texts.

Many researchers (e.g. Wood & Anderson, 2001; Gelder, 2005) remark that learners in LCs create their questions when reading and this would shape and direct their manner of thinking. In most cases of LCs, learners' CT abilities can be progressed as long as they are specified sufficient chances for raising questions and practicing language. Due to its cooperative nature, LCs seem to be effectual in EFL learning and in developing learners' CT. Relationally, Gokhale's (1995) study reveals the learners shared in cooperative learning outdid those who learned independently in the CT exam. Numerous L2/FL teachers have incorporated CT into their class teaching so as to endorse their students' knowledgeable development and arise their academic accomplishment.

5. Reading

Reading is often described as the main basis of a learner's academic and common stance. Nevertheless, this vigorous ability is what most learners lack consideration and attention. It is an

action accomplished to improve an understanding of a topic or issue. It is an indispensable skill that people are required to practice so as to be effective in life. It is both a receptive and dynamic practice in which a learner is looking for associations of notions and views in the reading text.

Relationally, RC can be described as the skill to understand a text, to examine the data and to understand properly what the writer is asserting. No one procedure can be employed to identify RC “by itself, but together they provide a fairly accurate account of the processes required for fluent reading” (Grabe and Stoller, 2002, p.17). Elaborately, RC is described as

“a thinking process by which a reader selects facts, information, or ideas from printed materials; determines the meanings the author intended to transmit; decide how they relate to previous knowledge; and judge their appropriateness and worth for meeting the learner’s own objectives” (Veeravagu, et al., 2010, p. 206).

Perhaps the most comprehensive and instructionally valuable definition is offered by Harris & Hodges which emphasizes on the understanding of distinct words. Thus, RC is considered as:

“the construction of the meaning of a written or spoken communication through a reciprocal, holistic interchange of ideas between the interpreter and the message... The presumption here is that meaning resides in the intentional problem-solving, thinking processes of the interpreter ... that the content of the meaning is influenced by that person’s prior knowledge and experience” (1995, p. 39).

According to the above definition, RC must not only be seen the recollection or bringing up of information found in a text; it also infers that an individual takes something to RC. It is not only the message in a reading text, but also the information that one previously has also provocations of the building of a sense. Additionally, “problem-solving” and “thinking processes” entail that one is enthusiastically engaged in endeavoring to build meaning. To sum up, RC, in all teaching programmes and courses, is considered as one of the indispensable objectives due to its significance in developing FL students in their future careers (Sarhan & Taha, 2017, p. 109).

6. Writing

One important skill of EFL learning is writing. It is essential to be investigated since it is regarded as the productive ability, having the practice of consuming symbols (“alphabet, punctuation, and spaces”) to transfer ideas to be meaningful sentences in a “paragraph”. Put differently, writing is a kind of message conveyance which is employed by authors “to express and share their ideas, feelings, and thoughts” (Sari and Sabri, 2017, p.4). According to Linse (2005, p. 98), writing is often presented as a mixture of “process and product”. It is a process which indicates the action of collecting “ideas and working that is presented in a manner which is polished and comprehensible to a reader”. Additionally, Musa (2018, p.4) expounds that

“writing has always been seen as an important skill in English language acquisition”, simply because it underpins grammatical constructions and vocabulary that teachers endeavor to teach their learners.

In addition, Taylor (2009, p. 4) clarifies that “most people define writing as extremely difficult task if they are trying to grapple in their language with new ideas and new ways”; therefore, it becomes an excruciating practice for them. In this sense, writing is a diverse activity which involves “how to write correctly in the term of spelling, diction of vocabulary selection, and grammar, then a purpose”. For the product sense, writing can be explained as “the productive part of text, or the creation of text”. In fact, writing is concerned with “communication with someone who is in another place or in another time”. Writers communicate their readers via their writing above long eras of time and via massive spaces.

7. Methodology

This section includes three phases: procedures utilized for analysing data and results, the nominated sample of 3rd Iraqi EFL students and a test (pre- and post-test) and observation as the central instruments for data gathering.

i- Method: The method utilized in this paper consists of two practices: ‘quantitative and qualitative’ manners to describe and inspect the students’ responses to the test and their behavior in

the sessions offered to the experimental group. The data assortment is drawn from the two main instruments: test and observation. The investigation of the data is based on exploring the correlation between LCs and students' CT in reading and writing skills.

ii- Sample: The sample of the current paper includes 60 third year students at Al-Farahidi University, College of Education, Department of English. Two groups of investigation are involved: Experimental group, comprises 30 students, will receive teaching according to the procedures of LCs, whereas Control group, comprises 30, will receive teaching in terms of tradition (conventional) method. The researcher selects 3rd year students believing that they can successfully implement the procedures of LCs. Further, they are able to answer questions related to reading and writing activities as they have come across courses intended for RC and writing paragraph in the first- and second-year stages as well as writing essays in the third stage.

iii. Instruments: The primary instruments employed in this investigation are a test and observation. The test consists of pre- and post-tests. The pretest is designed to reveal equalization between the two groups, experimental and control. The post-test is designed to unveil the discrepancy in the CT between the experimental who receive teaching through LCs and control who

follow the traditional method. The second instrument is concerned with observation (i.e. observing experimental group while performing learning through LCs in the assigned sessions).

To avoid any oblique consequence on the pre-test and post-test and to confirm the homogeneousness of the testees, some issues and variables are considered so as to obtain actual consequences. These variables involve students' age, (the students are somehow of the same age; they all are of morning classes); parents' standard of educational background.

8. Data & Result Analysis

This section is comprised of three phases: pre-test is designated for ensuring the equalization between the two groups, experimental and control; sessions are preprogrammed to teach experimental group via literature circles techniques; and post-test is planned to reveal the discrepancy between the students' replies to pre-test and post-test.

8.1 Pretest

This test consists of a reading passage "Cows that milk themselves" followed by two parts: RC, the three first questions are devoted to examining students' RC; the second is dedicated to writing skill which involves instructions given to the students to write a composition. The first question of RC involves Wh-

questions, the second concerns matching information from list A with its completion in list B, whereas question three is about synonymy. Each skill, reading or writing, is scored out of 50; the whole score is 100. Both groups (experimental and control) are administered to this pre-test. The experimental group records a percentage of 54.67% while the control group scores 55.19%. For RC, the experimental group scores 30.17% while the control group scores 31.02%. For writing, the experimental group records 24.50% whereas the control group registers 24.17%. This means that these two groups score roughly the same degrees; i.e. there is a sort of equalization between these two groups as far as reading and writing skills are concerned. However, the pretest was administered to the students at the start of the second term of the academic year 2024-2025, particularly on January 20, 2025. Table 1 provides both experimental and control groups' scores of the pre-test.

Table 1: Students' Scores of Pre-test

Pre-test	Skill	Experimental	Control
	RC	30.17%	31.02%
	Writing	24.50%	24.17%
Total		54.67%	55.19%

8.2 Sessions

These sessions were implemented via 11 weeks (beginning with January 22, 2025 ending with March 26, 2025), three hours a week, planned to help students to learn through the application of LCs techniques. The first session (held on January 21, 2025) is devoted to the introduction of LCs method to the students to enable them to attain their duty through the upcoming sessions. The researcher calssified the thirty students into five groups assigning each member in the group a role and explaining the job of each member in the group. That is, six roles (mentioned above in Table 1) were assigned to the group members. The researcher arranged the students into the six groups and trained them how each member in the group behaves and performs his/her role. The remaining ten sessions were dedicated to the actual performance of teaching via LCs techniques.

During the sessions, the researcher (acting the role of a teacher) took the role of advisor, facilitator and mentor who guides the members of the groups. Through observing sessions, the researcher noticed that students were enthusiastic and motivating to participate in class activities. LCs helped them cooperate with one another in grasping the reading texts. In each session, members succeeded in performing LCs. At the finish of the

session, the researcher designed some questions for assessing the students' comprehension and asked them to write compositions or stories related to the passages given. The next session began with a review of the previous session which involved students' answers to the questions raised by the researcher and reading the compositions before the group in order to enhance their CT. Members are allowed and encouraged to raise questions and discuss issues related to reading passage and writing compositions. From one session to another, based on learner-directed learning, students gradually could develop their strategies of grasping and understanding the reading passages. Students were able to connect events in the reading passages to the real world through the use of language, develop interaction and build a learning society.

8.3 Post-test

Akin to the pre-test, the post-test is also comprised of a reading passage "Mark Twain", having two parts. The first three questions are concerned RC, while the second part is about writing (i.e. question four gives instructions to the students to write a composition). RC is scored out of 50 and writing is scored out of 50 too; the total score of the test is 100. The two groups (experimental and control) are directed to this post-test. The experimental group scores a

rate of 84.08% whereas the control group registers 61.97%. For RC part, the experimental group scores 43.76%; the control group registers 35.18%. For writing, the experimental group scores 40.32% while the control group registers 26.79%. Unlike the scores in the pre-test, the two groups score differently. Significantly, the experimental group outpaced the control group in both activities, reading and writing as they gained higher scores. However, the post-test was administered to the students on April 7, 2025. Table 2 illustrates both groups' scores to the post-test.

Table 2: Students' Scores of Post-test

Post-test	Skill	Experimental	Control
	RC	43.76%	35.18%
	Writing	40.32%	26.79%
Total		84.08%	61.97%

9. Conclusion

The qualitative and the quantitative analysis of the answers of the experimental and control groups to the pre-test and post-test reveals that there was a discrepancy between the two groups in favor of the experimental group who had been taught via the techniques of LCs. The experimental group outclassed the control group in questions related to

reading and writing skills. In other words, LCs sessions enhanced their critical thinking; they had the ability to reflect, deduce, reason and assess what they read and write in their class activities. They got engaged in language activities to solve problems, formulate inferences, estimate prospects, and make decisions. CT increased their thinking abilities and helped them to relate the world of reading and writing to the outside world of argument and variation. In addition, via LCs techniques, students' partaking in group discussions may improve their understanding of the reading and writing texts. Cooperation among members of the group may also develop their communicative and collaborative proficiencies. The students' freedom of selecting a reading passage and discussing it in a friendly atmosphere boosted their enthusiasm and participation in class activities. The students' assessment of the reading and written texts in accordance with different views and opinions could increase their CT abilities. In sum, LCs methods encouraged students to think critically, confer topics, share opinions and concepts with one another; in return, they could better implement RC and writing activities.

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Appendix 1: Pre-test

COWS THAT MILK THEMSELVES

Part 1: RC

Australian agricultural authorities have announced they are to trial a new milking system they believe could revolutionise life for the average dairy farmer. Relying on computer technology, the system allows cows to milk themselves without any human input.

The first automatic systems for milking cows emerged in Europe in the 1990s. The system has taken off in countries such as the Netherlands and Britain and two automated milking machines will be put through their paces in Australia next year.

Most systems rely on cattle walking into specially designed milking booths on their way between feedlots. A microchip implant in each beast identifies it to a computer system. Farmers can later find out which cow is producing the most milk and which animal has been milked.

Once in the milking booth, a robotic arm is used to wash and sterilise the cow's udder before milking begins. While milking is under way, classical music plays to soothe the cows. If they want a rub-down they can nudge a switch above their food with their noses to activate a series of brushes and rollers. A fan can be used to blow away flies and if a cow develops a problem during milking, its owner can be notified by a text message.

There are about 9000 dairy farms in Australia that produce about 10 billion litres of milk per year. European cattle are kept in feedlots and food is used to encourage them into the machines. In Australia, however, cattle are more likely to graze in open pastures, providing fewer opportunities to funnel them into the milking machines. A spokesman for the scheme, Sean Kenny, said that the trials would try to find ways to make the machines suitable for Australian dairy farms, which tend to be larger than their European counterparts.

Q1/ Answer the following questions:

1. What have Australian authorities announced?
2. How can farmers find out which cow is producing the most milk?
3. When did the first automatic systems for milking cows emerge in Europe?
4. Why does classical music play while milking is under way?
5. What is Kenny's suggestion for Australian dairy farms in future?

Q2/ Match list A with List B

- | list A | List B |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1. New milking dependent on happened. | a. inform a problem has |
| 2. The process of new milking is no need for | b. a robotic arm. |
| 3. A microchip implant can identify cow to | c. computer technology. |
| 4. A text message is used to | d. human input. |

5. The cow's udder can be washed by _____ e. a computer system.

Q3 Find the synonyms of the following words: -

1. Cow
2. Depend on.....
3. Make a huge difference
4. First appear.....
5. recognize.....

Part 2: Writing

Write a composition on either A or B:

**a/ An interesting place you have visited
college**

b/ The first day at your

**Appendix 2 : Post-test
Mark Twain**

Published in 1869, Mark Twain's book *The Innocents Abroad* tells of his trip through Europe and the Mideast in 1867. In this passage, Twain has arrived in Gibraltar, gateway to the Mediterranean Sea. He is taking a tour of Rock of Gibraltar and has already heard the story of the Queen's Chair which he says is "a legend that had nothing very astonishing about it, even in the first place."

The gallery guns command the peninsula and the harbors of both oceans, but they might as well not be there, I should think, for an army could hardly climb the perpendicular wall of the rock anyhow. Those lofty portholes afford superb views of the sea, though. At one place, where a jutting crag was hollowed out into a great chamber whose furniture was huge cannon and whose windows were portholes, a glimpse was caught of a hill not far away, and a soldier said:

"That high hill yonder is called the Queen's Chair; it is because a queen of Spain placed her chair there once when the French and Spanish troops were besieging Gibraltar, and said she would never move from the spot till the English flag was lowered from the fortresses. If the English hadn't been gallanting enough to lower the flag for a few hours one day, she'd have had to break her oath or die up there."

On the topmost pinnacle of Gibraltar we halted a good while, and no doubt the mules were tired. They had a right to be. The military road was good, but rather steep, and there was a good deal of it. The view from the narrow ledge was magnificent; from it vessels seeming like the tiniest little toy boats were turned into noble ships by the telescopes, and other vessels that were fifty miles away and even sixty, they said, and invisible to the naked eye, could be clearly distinguished through those same telescopes. Below, on one side, we looked down upon an endless mass of batteries and on the other straight down to the sea.

While I was resting ever so comfortably on a rampart, and cooling my baking head in the delicious breeze, an officious guide belonging to another party came up and said:

"Senor, that high hill yonder is called the Queen's Chair-"

"Sir, I am a helpless orphan in a foreign land. Have pity on me. Don't-now don't inflict that most infERNAL old legend on me anymore today!"

There-I had used strong language after promising I would never do so again; but the provocation was more than human nature could bear. If you had been bored so, when you had the noble panorama of Spain and Africa and the blue Mediterranean spread abroad at your feet, and wanted to gaze and enjoy and surfeit yourself in its beauty in silence, you might have even burst into stronger language than I did.

Q1/ Answer the following questions:

1. What was Mark Twain about?
2. How did he describe the story of the Queen's Chair?
3. Where did the queen of Spain place her chair?
4. How did he describe the military road?
5. What happened when Mark Twain was resting on a rampart?

Q2 / Match list A with List B

list A

1. Gibraltar is
2. Mark Twain's book is named
3. The view from the narrow ledge was
4. Mark Twain was
Mediterranean Sea
5. The high hill yonder is known as

List B

- a. the Queen's Chair
- b. Wonderful
- c. geographic explorer
d. a gateway to the
- e. The Innocent Abroad

Q3 Find the synonyms of the following words

6. trip
7. arrived.....
8. break an oath
9. halted.....
10. helpless.....

Part 2: Writing

Write a composition on either A or B:

**a/ Development of Technology in English Language
Marshes**

b/ A journey to Iraqi