

# LITERATURE CIRCLES AND COMPREHENSION OF GRAPHIC AND NON-GRAPHIC NOVELS

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LITERATURE CIRCLES AND COMPREHENSION OF  
GRAPHIC AND NON-GRAPHIC NOVELS

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of literature circles in assisting English as a second language (ESL) students to develop comprehension of the story in a graphic novel compared to a non-graphic novel. It also aims to examine the effectiveness of using role sheets in literature circles and identify the comprehension strategies produced by the students that effectively develop their comprehension of the texts. The conceptual framework of this study was based on constructivism. Case study method was employed and data were gathered from direct observations and interviews regarding the students' participation in literature circles. The participants in this study were six form four students. The findings of this study showed that the students comprehended the graphic and non-graphic novels differently in literature circles and they implemented comprehension strategies to comprehend the texts. In addition, the data from the interviews highlighted the importance of role sheets in guiding the students in literature circles. The findings from direct observations and interviews also revealed that literature circles developed the students' interactions, motivation and responsibilities, encouraged sharing of personal responses and improved the students' comprehension of the stories in graphic and non-graphic novels. In conclusion, literature circles assist students to comprehend stories in graphic and non-graphic novels. This study provides insight to ESL teachers to implement literature circles in the classroom to help students in comprehending graphic and non-graphic novels.





## BULATAN SASTERA DAN PEMAHAMAN NOVEL GRAFIK DAN BUKAN GRAFIK

### ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menyelidik keberkesanan penerapan bulatan sastera dalam membantu pemahaman pelajar Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua (ESL) dengan menggunakan novel grafik berbanding novel bukan grafik. Kajian ini juga bertujuan menyelidik keberkesanan penggunaan lembaran peranan dalam bulatan sastera. Strategi pemahaman yang ditunjukkan oleh pelajar dalam proses memahami kedua-dua teks tersebut juga menjadi fokus kajian ini. Kerangka konseptual kajian ini adalah berdasarkan teori konstruktivisme. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kajian kes. Data dikumpul melalui pemerhatian dan temu bual untuk menyelidik penglibatan pelajar dalam bulatan sastera. Enam orang pelajar Tingkatan Empat dijadikan sampel kajian. Hasil dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa kefahaman pelajar terhadap novel grafik dan novel bukan grafik telah dipertingkatkan. Pelajar memahami kedua-dua teks tersebut dengan cara yang berbeza dalam bulatan sastera. Pelajar juga mempamerkan strategi pemahaman yang menunjukkan kefahaman mereka terhadap teks tersebut. Di samping itu, hasil kajian daripada temu bual menunjukkan keberkesanan penggunaan 'lembaran peranan' dalam membimbing pelajar sewaktu sesi bulatan sastera. Pemerhatian dan temu bual juga menunjukkan bahawa bulatan sastera meningkatkan pergaulan, motivasi dan tanggungjawab pelajar, menggalakkan perkongsian pendapat dan meningkatkan kefahaman pelajar terhadap kedua-dua teks tersebut. Kesimpulannya, hasil kajian menunjukkan bulatan sastera membantu pelajar dalam memahami novel grafik dan novel bukan grafik. Kajian ini memberi pendedahan kepada guru-guru Bahasa Inggeris agar mereka dapat menerapkan bulatan sastera dalam pembelajaran untuk membantu pelajar memahami novel grafik dan novel bukan grafik.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
ISBN	International Standard Book Number
L2	Second Language
PT3	Form Three Assessment
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

## APPENDIX LIST

- A Instruments
- B Role Sheets
- C Graphic and Non-Graphic Novels
- D Research Schedule
- E Cards
- F Enrichment Exercises
- G Letters
- H Inter-Rater Agreement
- I Students' Exercises



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION



#### 1.0 Introduction

Achieving text comprehension is one of the important objectives in ESL teaching and learning. The ability to comprehend texts helps readers to access various types of information. In ESL teaching and learning, it is also significant for students to acquire comprehension of different texts such as poems, short stories, novels and graphic novels during literature lessons in an interesting way of learning. However, not all English as a second language (ESL) students are able to achieve comprehension of the texts during literature lessons. The difficulties in teaching ESL students to achieve text comprehension should not be obstacles for teachers to implement new teaching strategies and utilise different texts during literature lessons to assist students in





comprehension. In this study, the researcher implemented literature circles to assist a group of ESL students to develop comprehension of the stories in graphic and non-graphic novels. Studies have proved that literature circles allow students to have freedom in expressing their opinions and students are able to control their learning at their own abilities.

### 1.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by four theories which were schema theory, reader response theory, constructivism and sociocultural theory. The following theoretical framework (Figure 1.1) is constructed based on the four theories. The details of each theory are explained in Chapter 2. The theories are related to literature circles which encourage students' active participation in group discussions, construction of knowledge and understanding of the text based on the interaction with group members and activation of background knowledge to achieve comprehension. In literature circles, collaborative learning and independent reading occur during discussions. When students participate in literature circles, the outcome of their discussions is text comprehension.



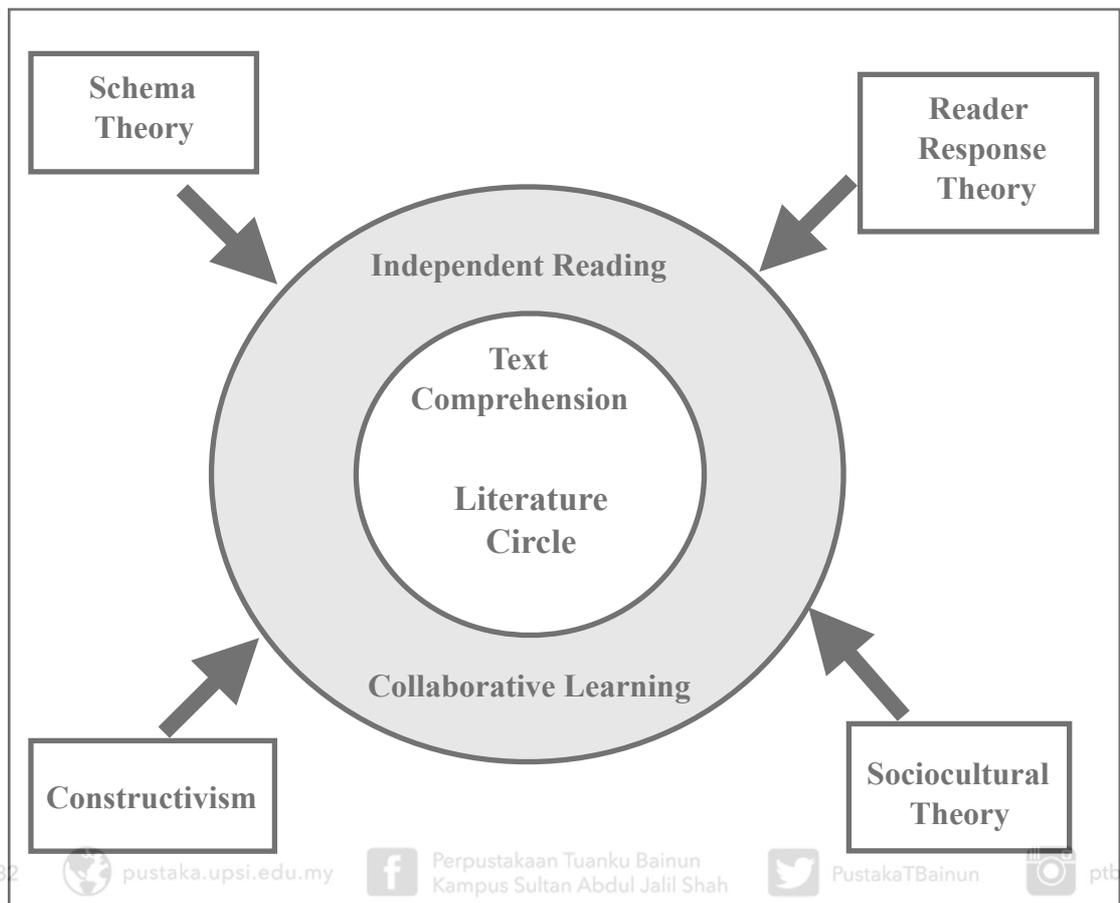


Figure 1.1. Theoretical Framework

Daniels (1994) states that literature circles represent authentic collaboration which displays the features of true collaboration, students initiated inquiry, choice, self-direction, mutual interdependence, face-to-face interaction and self-and-group discussion. In addition, Daniels (1994) mentions that kids need more time to read in school, be able to choose their own materials and talk with fellow readers. Independent reading time in the classroom needs to be well structured and teachers can help students to pick books at their fluency levels. However, the time to read books has been largely absent from most skill-and-worksheet-driven classrooms (Daniels, 1994). Therefore, literature circles have to be conducted in the classroom in orderly and manageable structure to ensure independent reading happens in school.

On the other hand, Smith and MacGregor (1992) define collaborative learning as an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by the students, or the students and teachers together. Students are usually working in groups of two or more, mutually searching for understanding, solutions or meanings or creating a product. Prince (2004) mentions that collaborative learning is referred to any instructional method in which students work together in small groups towards a common goal. The core element of collaborative learning is the emphasis on students interactions rather than learning as a solitary activity.

Apart from that, Dooly (2008) states that collaborative learning requires working together towards a common goal and it involves the whole process of learning which may involve students teaching one another, students teaching the



teacher and the teacher teaching the students too. Students are responsible for their own and one another's learning and achieving the goal of learning implies that students have to help each other to understand and learn. The cooperative model of learning is different compared to collaborative learning as the teacher still controls most of what is going on in the class even if the students are working in groups (Dooly, 2008). In collaborative learning, the aims are to get students to take almost full responsibility for working together, building knowledge, changing and evolving together as well as improving together.

In this study, literature circles were conducted based on the principles of collaborative learning and students' independent reading of the given texts. When the students engaged in literature circles, the results of their interactions were text comprehension. The four related theories were used to guide the researcher to carry out literature circles based on the following factors such as learning occurred through interaction with group members, making responses to the text, connecting the text they read with their background knowledge and experiences and allowing learning to take place by sharing and listening to one another.

## 1.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (Figure 1.2) was constructed based on the theories, methods and expected outcomes of this study. This framework shows the specific





direction of the study. In Figure 1.2, it is shown that this study is related to the four important theories which are schema theory, reader response theory, constructivism and sociocultural theory. According to schema theory, students relate their prior knowledge to the reading text to achieve comprehension. In this study, the students used their background knowledge to understand the graphic and non-graphic novels used in literature circles.

When the students engaged in literature circles, they analysed the texts to achieve comprehension. This is related to the reader response theory as students comprehend the text by interacting and finding meaning in the text. On the other hand, constructivism and sociocultural theory both emphasise learning through social interaction and this is shown when the students discussed the graphic and non-graphic novels in literature circles. Role sheets were used to assist the students in comprehension and guide them in the discussions. The students also utilised different comprehension strategies to comprehend the graphic and non-graphic novels in literature circles.



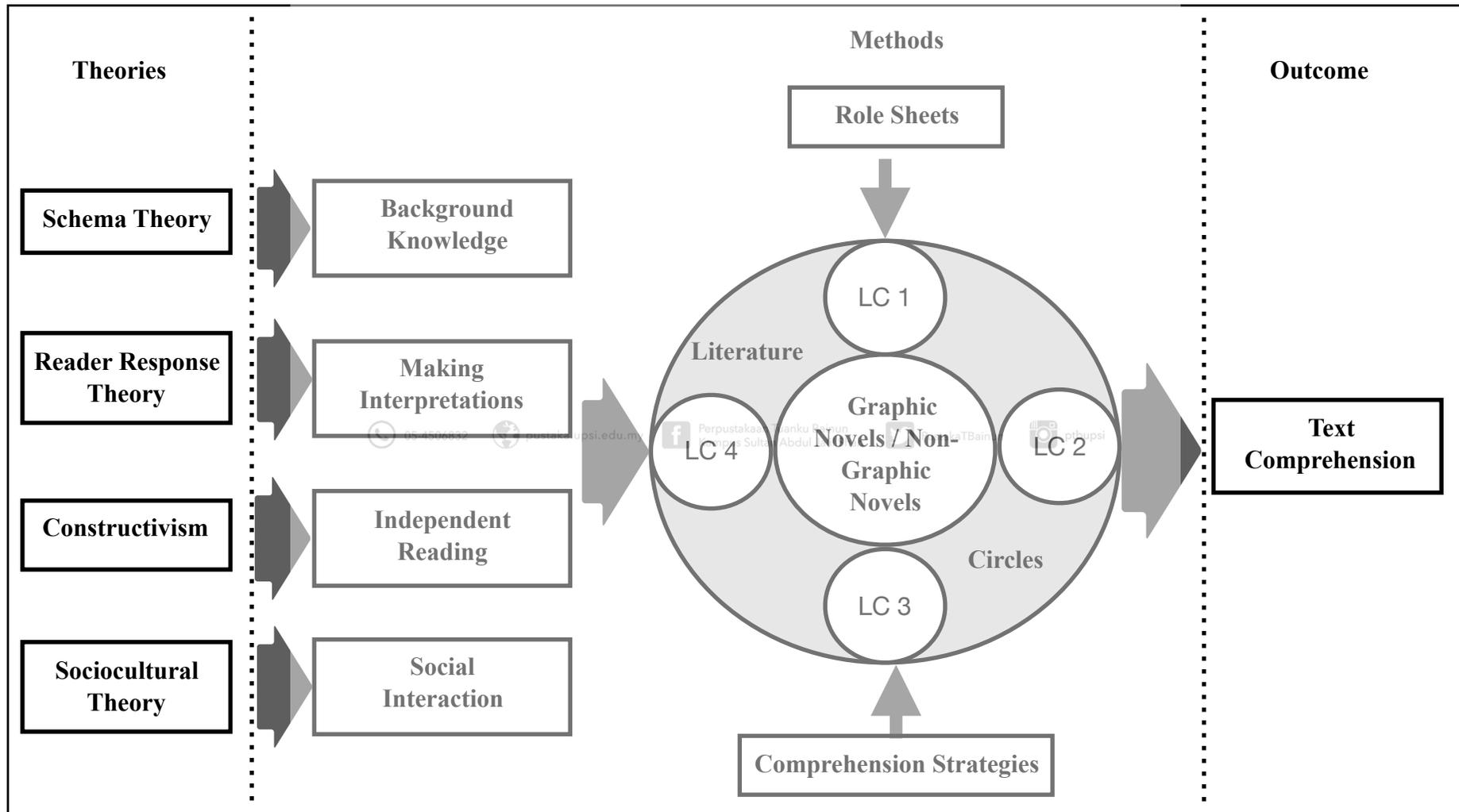


Figure 1.2. Conceptual Framework



### 1.3 Background of the Study

In the context of the present study, Gurnam Kaur and Chan (2010) mention that co-operative and collaborative learning are given little emphasis in the teaching of literature in Malaysian classroom. Studying literature in Malaysian classroom is also unpopular as teachers do not implement interesting teaching methods to teach literature (Kiran Kaur & Surita, 2014). Melor and Ashairi (2014) add that students lose focus in learning literature due to the teaching methods applied by teachers. Therefore, it is suggested that activities constructed from the literary text should promote intellectual development, independent thinking and interest towards learning literature (Agee, 1998). Chacko (2007) states that teachers should initiate opportunities for students to engage in literature to make them realise that studying literature improves their minds.

Thus, literature circles are introduced in this study to assist a group of ESL students to develop comprehension of the stories in graphic and non-graphic novels. According to Daniels (1994), the idea of implementing literature circles in the classroom was introduced in the 80s by a teacher named Becky Abraham Searle in Chicago. Becky aimed to form literature discussion groups which engaged students in deeper, independent and more self-sustaining discussions. Nowadays, literature circles are widely implemented in English language teaching and learning. Teachers introduce literature circles in primary school, middle school and tertiary education.





In Malaysia, literature circles are conducted in tertiary level in a Malaysian university. A study conducted by Nazri (2013) investigated the impact of implementing literature circles to develop soft skills among Malaysian university students revealed that the students experienced great impact in developing linguistic understanding and active learning strategies of second language learning. When students engage in literature circles, they are not only involving in reading activities but also engaging in communication (Widodo, 2016).

#### 1.4 Need for the Study

This study aims to improve the instructional strategy used by teachers in teaching literature in ESL classroom. Azhar (2012) states that the methods used by teachers in the literature classes are mostly teacher-centred. Teachers divide the teaching of literature into three stages which start with explanation by the teachers, discussions in group or whole class and conclude with some exercises (Siti Norliana , Roszainora, Citra Muthusamy, & Kamaruzaman, 2009). Literature lessons were carried out in that way to save time during the lesson and to complete the syllabus in time for examination. Gurnam Kaur (2003) states that students view the teaching strategies used by teachers during literature lessons as boring, dull, uninspiring and mainly involved written work which are suitable for students with higher level English language proficiency.



In this study, literature circles were implemented to assist students to comprehend both graphic and non-graphic novels. This instructional strategy allows students to work collaboratively as they are given freedom to express their understanding and share their responses of the reading texts with the group members. Besides, graphic novels were included in this study as studies have proved that graphic novel is a powerful text for critical literacy (Thomas, 2011) and it is also a suitable teaching material that intrinsically motivates students in reading (Sanchez, 2010).

### 1.5 Statement of the Problem

Implementing effective teaching strategies to teach literature in the classroom assists students in comprehension. According to Melor and Ashairi (2014), most teachers lack ideas in teaching literature in the classroom. English language teachers who are not trained to teach literature encountered difficulties in applying the best approach to teach literature in the classroom. In a study conducted by Marzilah and Sharifah Nadia (2010) in a secondary school located in Skudai, Johor Bahru, the findings revealed that teachers did not know the best method to teach literature for students to gain the language and appreciation of literature itself. Siti Norliana et.al (2009) add that teachers spent most of the time discussing plot, characters, themes, setting and moral values of the texts in the classroom and these teaching strategies used were boring for students.

Apart from that, students who often encounter problems in reading and understanding the assigned literary texts in literature component feel demotivated to read literary texts due to lack of language proficiency and inadequate supply of teaching materials (Melor, Hadi, & Dexter Sigan John, 2013). To solve these learning problems, visual aids such as graphics, illustrations, pictures, audio and video can serve as helpful tools in facilitating students' understanding of literary concepts that occur or are used in the texts (Melor et al., 2013).

Besides, Morrison, Bryan, and Chilcoat (2002) state that some teachers are reluctant to use film, comic strips, contemporary music and other popular media in the classroom. Teachers fear that such a non-traditional approach denies students' time which they could gain additional exposure using authentic reading materials. Media messages dominate our lives and we are surrounded by media such as books, magazines, film, television, computer games, and the Internet (Morrison et al., 2002). Thus, teachers should help students to become critical users of a variety of media sources. During the literature lesson, materials such as films and graphic novels can be utilised to gain students' interest in studying literature. In this study, the researcher used graphic novels in literature circles to support the students' comprehension.

For these reasons, literature circles are suggested to assist a group of ESL students to comprehend graphic and non-graphic novels. This instructional strategy will not only help in achieving the objectives of teaching literature in the classroom but also cater the need of the majority of the Malaysian students who have limited

English language proficiency. Using graphic novels provide authentic communication between students and literary texts. Graphic novels also allow students to have full concentration on the texts which leads to their understanding of the story (Melor et al., 2013).

## 1.6 Objectives of the Study

Fundamentally, the objective of this study was to find out the effectiveness of literature circles in developing the ESL students' comprehension of the story in a graphic novel compared to a non-graphic novel. The study also led the researcher into discovering the effectiveness of role sheets in literature circles and the comprehension strategies produced by the students during the discussions that effectively improve their comprehension of the texts. The aim is also to seek information about the students' views regarding the effectiveness of using literature circles in comprehending the story *The Kite Runner* in graphic and non-graphic novels.

## 1.7 Research Questions

Based on the objectives of this study, the following research questions will be addressed.



- a) How effective are literature circles in developing the students' comprehension of the story in a graphic novel compared to a non-graphic novel?
- b) How effective are the use of role sheets during literature circles in developing the students' comprehension of the stories in graphic and non-graphic novels?
- c) What are the comprehension strategies produced by the students during literature circles that effectively develop their comprehension of the stories in graphic and non-graphic novels?
- d) What are the students' views on the effectiveness of literature circles in developing their comprehension of the stories in graphic and non-graphic novels?



This study is significant in three ways. First of all, this study is important for English language teachers as it brings some new information and ideas pertaining to the use of literature circles in teaching literature. This study helps teachers to be aware of the importance of conducting literature circles in the classroom to assist students in comprehension. The findings obtained from this study may suggest certain procedures for teachers to consider when implementing literature circles during literature lessons.

English language teachers should also take initiative of using literary texts in the teaching of English language in ESL classrooms. Exposing students to different literary texts such as stories, graphic novels and poems help to expand students'





English language vocabulary and improve their interest in learning English language. When literary texts are used in literature circles, this encourages students to develop their thinking skills as they have the opportunities to share their views and interpretations of the texts.

Apart from that, this study is also significant to researchers who are interested in finding out more about literature circles. Engaging students in group discussion practises collaborative learning and promotes independent reading among ESL students. Ideas and improvements in literature circles can be discovered so that this instructional strategy in teaching literature can be carried out more effectively in the classroom.



Lastly, this study brings valuable insights for students especially ESL students. Implementing literature circles in the classroom during literature lessons is one of the methods to assist students in comprehension. This instructional strategy allows students to share their opinions and listen to different responses from the group members during the discussions. Students are also able to guide their group members to comprehend the reading texts as they play different roles during literature circles.





## 1.9 Definition of Terms

### 1.9.1 Literature Circles

Daniels (1994) defines literature circles as small and temporary discussion groups which have been chosen to read the same story, poem, article, or book. In literature circles, the group members determine the portion of the text to be read either inside or outside of the class, prepare to take specific responsibilities for the upcoming discussion and come to the group discussion with the notes needed to help them perform the tasks given. The group members have regular meetings to discuss about their reading texts and their roles are rotated in each session. They also need to finish reading the books, plan a way to share the highlights of their reading with the wider community, trade members with other finishing groups, select more reading texts and move into a new cycle after they have completed a literature circle (Daniels, 1994).

On the other hand, Widodo (2016) defines literature circle as an instructional scaffolding that provides social space for students to involve in active reading as they can talk about the text, share what they have learned from the text, discuss questions and interpretations in the reading circle. Wilfong (2009) states that literature circles are group discussions in which children meet regularly to talk about books and the roles are rotated among the group members.

Long and Dove (2003) point out that literature-circle discussions are authentic and the discussions are led by students who are interested to know about their group





members' opinions of the text and they would demonstrate interest in discussing ideas with one another. In literature circles, students interpret the point of view, question one another, encourage active brainstorming and discuss solution to the related issues during the group discussions. Mohamed Elhess and Egbert (2015) highlight the literature circle as an instructional approach that creates positive and interactive environment for students to encourage motivation and provides opportunities for reading development. Involving in literature circles also exposes students to various responses and perspectives and this improves students' language and literacy skills, develops higher-order thinking skills which help students to become independent readers.



In this study, literature circles are defined as meetings for a group of students to discuss about the reading texts that they have read independently. During literature circles, the students were guided by role sheets and they were encouraged to ask open-ended questions about the story to get responses from the group members. The graphic and non-graphic novels of the story *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini were selected to be the reading texts in this study.

In literature circles, each group member was given a conversation starter card 1 and the group discussion leader received guidelines card 2 and 3. The conversation starter card assists the students to start their conversation in literature circles politely. Guidelines card 2 and 3 help the group discussion leader to construct questions to ask the group members and to get their responses. After the students discussed both texts



in literature circles, enrichment exercises and activities were given to the students to improve their understanding of the story. The students were also asked to evaluate their performance in literature circles by completing the self-evaluation forms and the group discussion leaders completed the group assessment forms.

### 1.9.2 Role Sheets

According to Daniels (1994), role sheets are temporary devices which provide a different thinking task for each group member in literature circles. Daniels (2002) explains that role sheets are useful devices to help providing some support for students who have just started to involve in literature circles. Role sheets are designed to support collaborative learning and give students clear definitions of their discussions in literature circles. Daniels (2002) further adds that role sheets have the purposes of assisting students in comprehension and engaging them in better discussions. Batchelor (2012) highlights the importance of role sheets. Batchelor points out that role sheets keep the discussion on track and provide opportunities for students to explore the reading texts in different perspectives.

In this study, role sheets were initial scaffolding for the ESL students to start their conversation in literature circles. The students started literature circles by performing the duties given on the role sheets. The roles were rotated among the group members in each literature circle and they were given six different roles to be



played during the discussions. The roles were group discussion leader, summariser, travel tracer, passage master, vocabulary enricher and connector. The roles were assigned to the students prior to their meetings as to enable the students to prepare for their duties before they gathered for literature circles. After the students had completed their duties on the role sheets, they continued their discussions by asking open-ended questions and they were encouraged to give their personal responses and express their feelings based on their understanding of the story.

### 1.9.3 Text Comprehension



According to Morrow (2001), reading comprehension is an active process that requires the reader or listener to interpret and construct meaning about what he or she reads or listens about the topic and makes connections between the old and new information. Mantione and Smead (2004) claim that reading comprehension is an interactive thinking process while reading that enables readers to understand what they read. Grabe and Stroller (2014) define reading comprehension for fluent readers as a process that requires very fast and automatic processing of words, strong skills in constructing meaning for the main ideas, efficient coordination of many processes under limited time.

In addition, Roe, Smith, and Burns (2005) state that reading comprehension is an individual's ability to construct meaning when he or she is reading the text and this





involves the abilities to understand, explain, interpret, apply and having perspective and self-knowledge on the reading text. Comprehension also requires the reader to understand the message that the author is trying to convey and the reader creates meaning from the reading text. Roe et al. (2005) further explain that comprehension is an evolving process that often begins before the book is opened, changes as the material is read and continues to change even after the book is completed.

According to Pardo (2004), each reader is vary in terms of world knowledge, skills and other individual characteristics. Each reader evaluates a text in different ways depending on the individual's cognitive development, skills and purposes. Pardo (2004) states that reading comprehension is also affected by the reader's culture, purpose of reading and reader's motivation. Motivated readers apply more comprehension strategies and they work harder to achieve comprehension and create meaning. On the other hand, less motivated readers do not work harder as motivated readers and the meaning that they create is less powerful than those motivated readers (Pardo, 2004). In this study, the students' text comprehension was achieved in literature circles as they were given opportunities to contribute their personal responses, listen to the group members' opinions and discuss any topics or questions related to the story.



#### 1.9.4 Comprehension Strategies

Reading comprehension requires coordination of several comprehension strategies applied by the reader to construct understanding of a text (Brown & Dewitz, 2014). A strategic reader makes predictions, asks questions about the text, forms mental images, concludes the relationship between two ideas, differentiates between facts and details, summarises and connects personal experiences to similar events in the story (Brown & Dewitz, 2014). According to Grabe and Stoller (2014), there are two important terms to describe the activity of reading. The terms are skills and strategies. Skills are linguistic processing abilities that occur automatically when they are used while reading and these skills can be acquired gradually. Strategies refer to a set of abilities which are controlled by the reader consciously. McLaughlin (2012) states that a good reader is able to select suitable comprehension strategies and he or she applies variety fix-up strategies such as rereading, using contextual clues, changing the reading pace and cueing to solve the difficulties faced in comprehension. Thus, it is fundamental for students to learn and apply several appropriate reading comprehension strategies to accomplish comprehension.

It is essential to help students to become independent readers by teaching them comprehension strategies to use so that they can read and comprehend various texts (Clark & Graves, 2004). In the classroom, teachers can employ various techniques to improve students' comprehension as reading comprehension doesn't happen spontaneously and teachers need to put in efforts to help students to comprehend what



they are reading (Mahdavi & Tensfeldt, 2013). To enhance students' comprehension, Roe et al. (2005) suggest several ways for teachers to apply these strategies in the classroom. Teachers can incorporate pre-reading, during-reading and post-reading strategies to assist students in comprehension (Roe et al., 2005). In pre-reading, activities are often intended to activate students' problem-solving behaviour and their motivation to examine the material. Pre-reading activities include anticipation guides, semantic mapping, writing before reading and creative drama. In during-reading, thinking aloud, questioning and using cloze procedure strategies can be implemented. In post-reading, strategies such as questioning, using visual presentation and retelling can be applied to enhance comprehension (Roe et al., 2005).



To help students to learn comprehension strategies, teachers should tell students what strategy that they are going to learn and how this strategy will help them in their reading. Teachers should describe the strategy, model it, provide teacher-guided practice and offer cooperative and independent practice opportunities for students to achieve comprehension (Roe et al., 2005). In this study, the students were encouraged to use different comprehension strategies when they discussed the graphic and non-graphic novels in literature circles. They were informed that utilising comprehension strategies assisted them in comprehending both reading texts. The researcher also demonstrated to the students how comprehension strategies such as questioning and predicting were implemented in literature circles.





### 1.9.5 Graphic Novel

The shortest definition of a graphic novel as ‘book-length comic book’ was stated by Spear, Benjamin, and Copeland (2005). This book-length narrative is using a combination of words and sequential art and is often presented in comic book style. On the other hand, Smetana, Odelson, Burns, and Grisham (2009) define graphic novels as comics with lengthy and complex story lines similar to those of novels and they are often aimed at mature students. Pantaleo (2012) states that the term ‘graphic novel’ refers to a format, not a genre. Thompson (2008) explains a graphic novel as just one format within the larger medium of graphic that integrates pictures and words and arranges them cumulatively to tell a story or convey information.



Apart from that, Weiner (2006) states that a graphic novel is a story told in comic book format with a beginning, middle and end. De Vos (2005) defines graphic novels as bound books, fiction and non-fiction which are created in the comic book format and are issued an ISBN. Kress (2003) mentions that graphic novels and picture books are multimodal texts because the visual mode of image and the mode of writing are combined in many different ways and both modes are necessary for the expression and construction of meaning.

Furthermore, Evans (2013) defines graphic novels as similar to comics and strip cartoons in form. A graphic novel is a type of comic which is slightly longer than the typical comic and is produced in book form with some kind of thematic unity and





is a truly multimodal form of communication. Lee (2014) gives another definition of a graphic novel and it is referred to a stand-alone, novel-length story in sequential art form. A graphic novel is used for anthologies of comic work and even non-fiction comics presented in this manner. Lee (2014) explains that the term graphic novel was first came about in the 1960s but it only became widely used in the late 1980s following the success of works like Art Spiegelman's *Maus*.

In this study, the definitions given by Spear et al. (2005) and Evans (2013) best describes the graphic novels used in literature circles. A graphic novel combines pictures and words to tell the reader a story. A graphic novel is lengthy than a typical comic book but the words and art presented are based on the comic book style.

Besides, there is no continual version for a graphic novel compared to the comic books. The combination of attractive images and precise words in graphic novels help students to comprehend the text easily and graphic novels attract students' attention to reading.

### 1.9.6 Non-Graphic Novel

In this study, a novel is defined as a piece of prose fiction of a reasonable length. It has the purpose of telling a story or entertaining the readers through its fictional characters. It is an imaginary story as it narrates the stories based on the characters and events created in the story. According to Irmaya, Ujang, and Muhammad Sukirian





(2015), a literary text refers to a text from literature work which includes short story, play, poetry and other reading materials. Tsai (2012) states that literary texts such as novels and plays serve as a window to the target culture. The world created in a novel not only reflects the author's own culture but it also presents a complete cultural setting in which characters interact and actions take place. Tsai further explains that by reading a novel, readers obtain virtual access to the culture and discover the ways the characters view the world. Therefore, readers who read literary texts are not only learning, but they are also exposed to the historical, social, political and economical facts of the novels.



Previous studies (Martinez-Roldan & Lopez-Robertson, 2000; Shelton-Strong, 2012) prove that literature circles provide opportunities for students to talk about books regardless of their reading levels or language proficiency. Although, implementing literature circles are well known in English language teaching and learning context, the implementation of this instructional strategy in English as a second language (ESL) secondary school classroom remains under-explored. To fill this gap, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of literature circles to develop ESL students' comprehension of the story in a graphic novel compared to a non-graphic novel. The use of role sheets during literature circles were examined and the students' comprehension strategies to comprehend both texts were identified to show the





effectiveness of literature circles in developing the students' comprehension. The students' views on literature circles were also discussed in this study.

### 1.11 Summary

Reading comprehension is an important skill that assists students in understanding any reading texts. By implementing an appropriate instructional strategy during the literature lesson, students' comprehension is enhanced and learning literature becomes fun and interesting in the classroom. Besides, the problems faced by teachers in teaching literature which generally caused by ineffective teaching methods and limited reading materials used during literature lessons were the factors that caused the decline in studying literature among ESL students. To solve the problems faced by teachers and students in teaching and learning literature, literature circles were introduced in this study to assist the ESL students to comprehend the stories in graphic and non-graphic novels. Graphic novels were utilised in this study to facilitate the students' comprehension and motivate them in reading.

