Investigating the Effects of Literature Circles on Reading Motivation and Reading Comprehension in the EFL University Classroom

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Abstract

This classroom research aimed to investigate the impacts of the use of literature circles (LCs) on reading motivation and reading comprehension in an EFL classroom in Thailand. The participants were 16 university students who were required to submit discussion questions based on part of the external reading book *Feed* they were assigned to read each week, collaboratively work with their peers in small groups to answer selected questions about the novel, and share their thoughts with the whole class. The research tool used to collect data was a post-LCs questionnaire. The results revealed that the implementation of LCs gave participants a clear purpose for reading, motivating them to be disciplined and engaged readers, as they felt a strong sense of responsibility toward their learning community. Additionally, LCs turned reading into a social and dynamic activity in which students were able to share and revise their understanding of the book through collaborative dialogue.

Keywords: literature circles, English language teaching, reading comprehension, reading motivation, attitude towards reading

Introduction

One major challenge facing English language education in the EFL context is the limited availability of language input, which is crucial for acquisition of language (Krashen, 1988; Long, 1985). To cope with this, it is fairly common for EFL teachers in Thailand to assign learners to read English books outside class time (Chaimanee, 2004). With more exposure to the language through reading, students can substantially expand their lexical knowledge, develop their reading fluency, and achieve a higher level of language competence (Day & Bamford, 1998).

At the university where the current study was conducted, the external reading book component (usually a young adult English novel of 300-350 pages) has been included as part of fundamental English courses compulsory for first-year students, mainly to increase language exposure and improve students' reading fluency. However, further problems concerning the use of external reading were observed. Firstly, as the component was treated as an out-of-class activity in which students were to finish the book and somehow prepare for the test on their own, it occasionally led to students' misunderstanding the story and failure to see reasons

behind characters' behaviors and actions. Worse still, without immediate reading goals set, some students were not motivated to read and failed to finish the whole book before the test given in mid semester to check their comprehension of the story. The researcher was made aware of these problems from conversations with students in past years, particularly those who received a very low external reading test score or left many questions un-attempted.

Hoping to solve the aforementioned problems, the researcher read through several learning activities that could be implemented and encountered the concept of literature circles (LCs) – a learning activity in which students regularly participate in a student-led small group discussion to exchange their thoughts and pose questions on chapters of the book they have read (Daniels, 1994; Daniels, 2002). Embracing the social aspect of reading, where the process of meaning construction is done collectively through social interaction (Ivey, 2014), LCs have been investigated in several empirical studies and found to successfully maximize the learning process by motivating students to engage in in-depth reading and making sense of the text with peers, resulting in an increase in comprehension, confidence, and interest in reading (Chase & Pheifer, 2002; Daniels, 2002; Furr, 2004; Morales & Carroll, 2015; Widodo, 2015). In addition, integrating LCs into class tasks was considered appropriate for the classroom context of the researcher as the activity could encourage learners to use the target language to express ideas and opinions in discussions on social and cultural issues presented in the book, thus promoting language acquisition (Maher, 2015; Morales & Carroll, 2015) and preparing first-year students for future classes. Because of the success of LCs in several studies and how the activity could potentially help students achieve some learning outcomes of fundamental English courses, the researcher decided to integrate LCs into class tasks and further investigate their potential benefits in promoting the effectiveness of the use of external reading in the EFL context, focusing on the effects of LCs on reading motivation and reading comprehension.

Literature Review
Concepts of LCs

A literature circle is an active learning activity in which learners are divided into small groups and encouraged to share their thoughts and questions on parts of a book or a story they have read. Its core concept revolves around cooperative learning. Moving away from the traditional teacher-centered education to a more open and student-centered one, LCs promote democracy, shared responsibility, and active participation among learners (Chase & Pheifer, 2002), as students are in charge of their learning and responsible for reading a book and engaging in small group discussion. Moreover, LCs embrace another additional educational concept: Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which emphasizes learners' development made possible under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. Discussing and exchanging their opinions about the book in LCs, students can observe and learn from a more competent peer while also participating in the process of constructing and negotiating meaning, enabling them to successfully merge the knowledge gap and gain more confidence (Sportsman et al., 2011; Zaborowski, 2014).

Inspired by the popularity of traditional adult book clubs, Daniels (2002) and his colleagues decided to introduce experimental LCs to traditional classrooms in Chicago in order to increase student engagement in literature study. Daniels' LCs primarily involved students

forming small groups based on book choice and assigned different roles, such as Connector (making connections within the text and real-life experiences), Questioner (raising meaningful questions for discussion), and Literary Luminary (identifying interesting parts of the book worth sharing), so that learners only had to focus on one specific task while reading and discussing chapters. Moreover, learners found it less intimidating to share and examine ideas in a peer-led group of four to five, enabling more participation and cooperation among them. Students' higher achievement scores in reading and writing after the treatment convinced teachers that LCs played an important role in improving learner's academic skills.

Previous Studies

Several studies confirm that the implementation of LCs in a classroom not only deepens students' understanding of the book they choose to read but also increases their reading motivation (Coccia, 2015; Covert, 2009; Jacobs, 2015), which is defined by Conradi et al. (2014) as "the drive to read resulting from a comprehensive set of an individual's beliefs about, attitudes towards, and goals for reading" (p. 156). In addition to the fact that the activity gives learners a clear purpose of reading, students usually feel that they have a responsibility to their group members to "prepare for and contribute to the discussion" (Whittingham, 2014, p. 72).

Previous research on LCs revealed how the activity itself could be adapted in different educational contexts to maximize learning outcomes. Furr (2004) adapted the traditional model of LCs for his classes in a Japanese university. As EFL students at the university usually have relatively low English proficiency, Furr emphasized the need for teachers, not learners, to select reading materials of appropriate length and level. While maintaining the method of giving each student a specific role in a reading discussion, Furr found it important to manage the group dynamics by putting together students with different personalities to ensure the success of LCs. Furthermore, according to Furr, English instructors may need to give more guidance, such as providing more background information, for students' thorough understanding of materials and issues presented. Furr stated that the implementation of LCs turned his quiet reading classes into lively and cooperative ones in which the target language was used significantly more to discuss the stories and ask insightful questions among group members.

Morales and Carroll (2015) incorporated LCs in their English as a second language college classroom at the University of Puerto Rico and found success in stimulating relevant dialogs and developing students' language competency. The authors attributed the success in increasing students' participation to a few major key points. First, the book selected by the teacher had relatable contents and themes, revolving around social and cultural issues related to the students' real lives. As a result, the book lent itself to discussion, enabling learners to express themselves more and go beyond the book, using the lives of the characters as a springboard. Another feature of Morales and Carroll's adapted LCs was the fact that students were allowed to use their first language in combination with English to bridge the linguistic and cognitive gap in their small group discussions as well as reflective writings.

In the Thai context, Monyanont (2016, 2019) conducted two classroom-based research projects and found that participation in LCs led to an increase in reflective elements, particularly descriptive and analytical reflections, in Thai university students' reading responses to and discussion of short stories. She emphasized a few key elements that resulted

in the LCs being effective, which included students' preparation for discussion and freedom to choose discussion topics.

Despite the relatively consistent positive results LCs delivered in several classroom contexts elsewhere, it should be noted that little research has been conducted to explore the effects of LCs in Thai EFL classrooms, particularly on the combination of reading motivation and reading comprehension. Hence, this research was conducted to address this knowledge gap, aiming to:

(1) study how the implementation of LCs has an impact on EFL students' reading motivation and;

(2) investigate the effects of LCs on EFL students' reading comprehension.

Methods

Participants

This study employed convenience sampling. Participants were 16 first-year students from the Faculty of Arts at a large state university in Bangkok. All of them were enrolled in the same section of a fundamental English course taught by the researcher in the first semester of Academic Year 2017. The average percentage of their English admission scores (i.e., 9 subjects, GAT, and O-NET tests) was 75.89 ($SD = 10.18$, $N = 16$). Half of the participants reported that they were assigned to read at least one external reading book in high school English courses, while the rest indicated that the external reading book component was not included in the English courses they undertook during high school.

Materials

Feed. Feed, a young-adult dystopian novel written by M.T. Anderson, presents a future world where people have microchips implanted in their brains, which constantly feed them with news, advertisements, and even government propaganda. Appropriate in terms of length (300 pages) and level of difficulty, the book was selected as the external reading book for first-year students enrolled in *English I* in the first semester of Academic Year 2017. Moreover, although it was published in 2002, the book is still highly relevant to the present world, serving as a cautionary tale about how excessive use of technology impacts people's literacy and cognitive abilities, as well as human relationships.

Post-LCs Questionnaire. After participating in the LCs activity for six weeks and taking the external reading test[1], the students were given a questionnaire with the purpose of investigating whether the reading activity had an effect on their motivation to read the book as well as their comprehension of the story, and for the students to provide feedback on the activity. The questionnaire was composed by the researcher and approved by an expert in educational research. It should also be noted that (1) students could choose to elaborate on their experience either in Thai or English to ensure that their answers accurately reflect their

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[1] All students enrolled in *English I* were required to complete the external reading test as part of the course assessment. However, it should be noted that the external reading test was not used as an instrument to obtain data in an attempt to answer the two research questions, as the format of the test, which was written by other teachers in the course, was not in line with the type of treatment implemented in this research.

experience, and (2) the participants were required to submit the questionnaire before test scores were announced to ensure that their reflection would not be influenced by their test performance (see Appendix A for complete post-LC questionnaire).

Procedure

To incorporate LCs into class time to successfully enrich EFL university students' reading and learning experiences, the researcher found it crucial to carefully design details of the activity that would suit the course and students. In this classroom research, some of Daniels' (2002) original key ingredients of LCs were incorporated. That is, small temporary reading groups were formed; discussion questions mainly came from students who met on a regular, predictable schedule for discussion; and the teacher serves as a facilitator, focusing on organizing LCs and observing meetings rather than lecturing (see Appendix B for Harvey Daniels' complete list of LCs key ingredients). However, similar to other research on LCs conducted elsewhere (e.g., Allan & Pearson, 2005; Furr, 2004; Graham-Marr & Pellowe, 2016; Morales & Carroll, 2015), certain elements proposed by Daniels were not included due to practical reasons (e.g., participants did not choose books they wanted to read, as every first-year student was assigned the same external reading book) or were modified to suit the context of EFL education at the tertiary level (e.g., no specific roles were assigned to each group member, as most university students are used to participating in peer-led discussion groups, and LCs without assignment of roles would be more "natural and spontaneous" (Daniels, 2002, p. 99), and to familiarize students with how the LCs would be conducted in this classroom research (e.g., discussions questions came from the teacher, not students, during the first two weeks).

The current classroom research on LCs was conducted in three phases: (1) introduction to LCs, (2) guided LCs, and (3) more independent LCs.

Phase 1: Introduction to LCs (Week 1)

In the first week of class, the participants were informed of the external reading book component, in which they were assigned to read *Feed* and would be given a test to measure their story comprehension as part of the midterm assessment. They were also notified that LCs would be held for the first 30 minutes on Tuesday for the next six weeks. After that, a reading schedule was set and the class agreed to finish reading chapters assigned (approximately 50 pages per week) before meeting in class on each Tuesday.

Phase 2: Guided LCs (Weeks 2 and 3)

In weeks 2 and 3, the students were randomly assigned into groups with 4-5 members, and each group was given approximately 20 minutes to collectively work on answering a set of questions generated by the researcher. The questions given required the participants to recall facts and details (e.g., *What is "feed" and what do people in the story use it for?; How do Titus and his friends react when they don't have the feed?*) as well as forming opinions and making judgements based on the novel (e.g., *Would you like to have your own feed? Why or why not?; How does Violet seem to differ from Titus and his friends?*) (see Appendix C for the complete list of questions). The researcher would mainly observe how each group member interacted with their classmates and contribute some questions only when a group was too quiet or

appeared to have a difficult time initiating a conversation. After that, the class returned together and the researcher selected a few questions from the list and allowed every group to share what they had discussed with the whole class so as to allow a further exchange of ideas and interpretations among groups. The researcher also asked follow-up questions that would allow learners to make text-to-text and text-to-life connections (e.g., *How is this incident similar to other incidents you have read?; What does this remind you of in the real world?).* Participants were encouraged to use English as much as possible in both small-group and whole-class discussions. In these two weeks, the participants were prepared for a more independent LC activity as they had learned, through demonstration and participation, what kinds of questions could be asked and achieved a sense of the depth of the discussion expected from them in the subsequent weeks.

Phase 3: More Independent LCs (Weeks 4-7)

For the remaining four weeks, LCs continued but with minimal teacher interference. After reading pages assigned, each student was required to submit two questions along with their answers in a Google Form created weekly by the researcher before Tuesday. The learners were strongly encouraged to pose questions that required specific examples to support their answers and evaluation of situations (e.g., *Would you be interested in joining the Coke campaign mentioned in the book? Why or why not?; Do you agree with Violet that "Because of Feed, we're raising a nation of idiots." Give specific examples to illustrate your point.)* as these types of questions encouraged students to make a logical decision based on available evidence, think beyond the text, and draw real-world connections from the story. In addition, these kinds of questions, unlike recall questions, would help facilitate collaborative conversations among learners and increase engagement. The researcher then selected four to seven questions that would encourage rich discussion about major incidents contributing to the main themes for the LC activity on Tuesday.

During the discussion sessions in this phase, the researcher acted as a moderator and allowed the class members to conduct their discussion and meaning negotiation with their peers. The main responsibilities of the teacher were randomly assigning the students to small groups and observing how each group member worked together to answer the given questions during small group discussion. Moreover, when learners were asked to exchange their views with the other groups, the teacher needed to ensure that each group was given approximately the same amount of time to share their opinions and raise further questions.

Table 1. Research timeline

Week 1	Weeks 2&3	Weeks 4-7	Week 8	Week 9
Phase 1 Introduction to LCs	Phase 2 Guided LCs	Phase 3 More Independent LCs	External Reading Test (every section)	Post-LCs Questionnaire

Results

This section is divided into two parts based on the two research questions that guided this classroom research: (1) results concerning reading motivation and (2) results concerning reading comprehension.

Results Concerning Reading Motivation

All 16 participants completed the post-LCs questionnaire after the external reading test and before the announcement of their test scores. Table 2 shows the overall results of the questionnaire. Note that in questions 3.3 onwards, in addition to answering the closed-end questions, participants were also allowed to add additional comments in spaces provided.

Table 2. Summary of students' responses to the post-LCs questionnaire

	Questions/Statements	Responses						
1	Did you finish *Feed* before the midterm test?	Yes 100 %				No 0%		
2	How many times out of six did you finish the chapters assigned weekly?	6 times 37.50 %	4-5 times 62.50 %	3 times 0 %		1-2 times 0 %	0 times 0 %	
3	*Choose the number from 1 to 5 that best describe your feelings and experience in LCs.*	Rating Scale					Mean	*SD*
		Very strongly disagree 1	Strongly disagree 2	Agree 3	Strongly agree 4	Very strongly agree 5		
3.1	Participating in LCs, I felt that I had to finish the chapters assigned each week.	0%	0%	0%	18.75 %	81.25%	4.81	0.40
3.2	Participating in LCs, I felt that I wanted to finish the chapters assigned each week.	0%	0%	37.50%	50.00%	12.50%	3.75	0.68
3.3	Participating in LCs enhanced my comprehension of the story.	0%	0%	0 %	56.25%	43.75%	4.44	0.51
3.4	Having a weekly small-group discussion helped me see new aspects of certain incidents and characters.	0%	0%	6.25 %	37.50%	56.25%	4.50	0.63
3.5	After having had a group discussion each week, I felt that I wanted to continue reading *Feed*.	0%	12.50%	43.75%	43.75%	0%	3.31	0.70
4	Did your way of reading *Feed* change in weeks 4-7?	Yes 93.75 %				No 6.25 %		
5	Do you want to have an LCs activity organized weekly next semester?	Yes 100 %				No 0 %		

Although only 62.50% of the participants completed the weekly-assigned chapters for all the six LCs sessions, all the participants (100%) finished the entire book before the midterm exam. According to the responses collected, the implementation of the LCs activity seemed to be a largely successful extrinsic motivator to encourage the students to read assigned chapters each week, as reflected in their answers to the statements 3.1 (*Participating in LCs, I felt that*

I had to finish the chapters assigned each week.) and 3.2 (*Participating in LCs, I felt that I wanted to finish the chapters assigned each week.*), both of which the majority of participants expressed strong agreement with. It was also revealed that participants felt more obliged, rather than wanted, to complete the weekly reading assignment as the average score of statement 3.1 is higher than that of 3.2.

When asked if the LCs activity motivated them to continue reading the book (statement 3.5), their answers were mixed. While the majority (87.50%) were on the agree side of the scale, the remainder (12.50%) did not think so. According to their detailed responses to item 3.5, many students felt motivated to continue with reading because they wanted to see how the story unfolds and whether their predictions and preliminary analysis of characters and incidents they made with their peers were accurate (e.g., *I wanted to find out what would happen next and see whether what I got from those chapters would match what my friends got. Also, I was curious to find out whether the remaining chapters would provide answers to questions my group had.; I wanted to continue reading the following chapters, focusing on the points my classmates had raised. For example, I paid more attention to how characters like Violet and Smell Factor are different when it comes to the language they use.*). Some also wrote that they even revisited the earlier chapters to confirm certain aspects of a character raised in their groups, but they had missed when reading on their own (e.g., *I didn't think characters having 'lesion' on their skin was significant to the story. But after a group discussion, I went back to re-read those scenes.*). On the other hand, a few students commented that they did not feel so motivated to read the book further despite having had a discussion session, since the story was, to them, rather boring or the vocabulary used in the novel was too difficult for them. They continued reading simply because they did not want to feel left out of the group, not knowing what their friends were talking about, and not being able to participate in the discussion. (e.g., *I found the story rather predictable and not very exciting, but I kept reading the book because I was afraid I wouldn't have anything to discuss with friends and would miss important points.*).

Results concerning reading comprehension

When asked whether the LCs activity helped them understand the story better in the questionnaire, all the participants were on the agree side, with the majority (56.25%) strongly agreeing with both the statements 3.3 (*Participating in LCs enhanced my comprehension of the story.*) and 3.4 (*Having a weekly small-group discussion helped me see new aspects of certain incidents and characters.*). According to their detailed responses, the students gave positive reflections on the discussion activity, stating that it allowed them to improve their comprehension of the story, draw connections between major incidents, and become aware of small details contributing to the themes of the novel. Notable benefits of the activity, based on their comments, can be divided into three aspects.

First of all, the LCs activity helped students become aware of invented vocabulary used by the characters. According to the data collected, several students wrote that it was from having discussion session with peers that they determined the meaning of made-up terminology used by the author to reflect how language has dramatically changed in the fictional world of *Feed,* such as "meg" (= very, extremely), "brag" (= awesome, cool), and "unit" (= dude), (e.g., *There were words I didn't know their meanings and needed to guess what they meant from the context. Sometimes my guesses were different from my friends'. Listening to my friends'*

different opinions allowed me to understand what each word really means.). Knowing the meaning of those futuristic words, which appear throughout the novel, helped students better understand conversation and relationships between characters in the novel.

In addition to the vocabulary aspect, the activity helped students become aware of the writing pattern used by the author. The world of *Feed* is a world of highly advanced communication where people communicate verbally and telepathically, and they constantly receive news feeds and advertisements from *Feed* installed in their brains. To distinguish telepathic communication from the spoken one, the author italicizes telepathic speech, while putting regular speech between traditional quotation marks. Moreover, he includes a series of advertisements and flash news, which pour into the feed-wired brains, at the end of several chapters, in an attempt to highlight what it is like to have massive information constantly flooding into the mind and emphasize how oblivious people in the future are to the degrading world around them. In this aspect, a few students indicated that small-group discussions helped them realize the function of a certain stylistic forms of the text and patterns of narration used early on (e.g., *Before having a group discussion, I didn't know [what is put at the end of some chapters] is ads; At first, I had no idea what italicized texts stand for.*).

Lastly, the students felt that the reading activity helped improve their understanding of the novel, enabling them to revisit once-thought of as minor details and make connections between incidents that communicate the themes. In this regard, many students stated that the LCs activity was very helpful in pointing out important details that contribute to the central themes they missed from reading the book on their own. For instance, some students indicated that group discussion helped them see and understand the horrifying effects of the implantation of microchips in the brains, notably the overly simple language used by the characters (e.g., *Having a group discussion helped me realize a serious impact of* Feed *on people's literacy. I learned that, with* Feed *supplying most input, people use their brain less and the language they use in daily life is no different from that used by people who receive little education.*) and people's obsession with obtaining merchandise (e.g., *My friend pointed out to me that the scene where Titus keeps ordering pants till he runs out of credits to cheer himself up is similar to another scene where his parents comfort him by buying him an upcar after the hacking incident. This helped me see the connection of the two incidents in which characters resort to purchasing items to console themselves, which builds up on the main theme of materialism.*).

Discussion

According to the results, the implementation of LCs had some notable effects on students' reading motivation as well as their comprehension of the story. Firstly, the LCs activity served as a powerful reading motivator for students as it resulted in reading being more purposeful and meaningful, as noted by Anderson (2014). To illustrate, the participants felt committed to finishing the assigned chapters and finding some interesting aspects of the plot, characters or themes so that they could later fulfil the task of conceiving discussion questions to be submitted before each meeting. Each participant was also motivated to read more attentively as they felt it was their responsibility to know and understand the story as much as possible so that they would be able to meaningfully contribute to the group or, at least, would not feel too lost when with their peers. Moreover, after each weekly discussion, many students

were left with suspense and anticipation about the upcoming chapters or confusion caused by discrepancy in terms of comprehension between themselves and their group members, and thus were motivated to continue reading to find out how each character solved their problem(s) or even revisited previous chapters to find what they may have missed. In short, with the implementation of LCs, in which students understood that their preparation for and contribution to discussion were expected and appreciated (Whittingham, 2014), learners found themselves constantly motivated to read actively and carefully until the last chapter, resulting in every participant finishing the book before the test.

The LCs activity was well-received by students not only for being a reading motivator, but also for helping them make sense of the text and develop better understanding of the novel. The LCs activity implementation transformed reading a novel into a more social and dynamic activity, in which meaning construction was collaboratively done through dialogic engagement (Daniels, 1994) and learners took initiative and ownership of their learning (Olsen & Kagan, 1992; Panitz, 1996). The weekly discussion sessions served as an opportunity for learners to share and compare their preliminary understanding of the story, characters, and themes with peers, which could lead to confirmation of what they already understood, re-examination of incomplete analyses of the characters and major incidents, and possibly more questions raised. In other words, participating in the LCs activity allowed students to receive peer feedback on their reading comprehension and interpretation, become aware of discrepancies of understanding, and challenge their own interpretation of the story in order to merge such gaps. Furthermore, it was through participating in social interaction where students were able to observe and learn from group members who demonstrated higher levels of thinking that made it possible for them to reach another level of understanding (Vygotsky, 1978). Not only did many students become more aware of made-up words and the pattern of narration after listening to their friends' text analyses, they were able to piece together significant incidents that contribute to the main themes of the book, thanks to the cooperative and interactive aspect of the activity.

All in all, the results of the LCs implementation in the current classroom research largely corresponds with those of previous studies (Furr, 2004; Monyanont, 2016, 2019; Morales & Carroll, 2015), confirming the benefits of this cooperative reading activity when used in English education at the tertiary level.

The design of the current classroom research is subject to one major limitation: the data obtained to assess the effects of LCs was limited to the participants' responses collected from the post-LCs questionnaire only. Although the responses revealed the positive effects of LCs concerning reading motivation and reading comprehension as perceived by the participants, the post-LCs questionnaire could not be used to determine the extent to which the reading activity increased students' reading motivation and the extent to which it improved their reading comprehension. In order to concretely measure the effectiveness of LCs, collection of data before and after the treatment is necessary. For example, a comprehension test should be included before and after each discussion session, or an interview with participants should be conducted before the first week of LCs and after the final week of LCs. Another possibility is to include a control group who would read the same book with no LCs implemented, so that the data comparison between the experimental group and the control group data would be made possible.

Conclusion

The implementation of LCs successfully optimized the external reading book assignment in a fundamental English course and provided several benefits to EFL university students. Firstly, the activity provided students a clear purpose of reading, motivating them to be more disciplined and engaged readers as they felt a strong sense of responsibility toward their learning community. Moreover, LCs turned reading into a social and dynamic activity in which students had an opportunity to share and revise their understanding of the characters, plot, and main themes in a collaborative dialogue of opinions with their peers. In addition, according to several participant's responses, it increased comprehension after each discussion session, further motivating them to continue reading the book.

For future research, a larger number of participants should be recruited to thoroughly investigate and confirm the effects of LCs. In addition, tools used to assess the effects of LCs on reading comprehension should include both a pre-test and a post-test, while a questionnaire or an interview completed by both an experimental group and a control group before and after LCs sessions held would also be extremely valuable to better determine how the reading activity impacts reading motivation. Finally, it would be very interesting to see whether the benefits of LCs would extend to the reading of non-fiction materials such as journalistic opinion pieces, at the university level, since this kind of text also proves to be very challenging for university students who take English reading courses.

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Appendix A: Post-LC Questionnaire

1. Did you finish *Feed* before the midterm test?   ___ Yes   ___ No

2. How many times out of six did you finish the chapters assigned weekly?
   ___ 6 times   ___ 4-5 times   ___ 3 times   ___ 1-2 times ___ 0 times

3. Read the following statements and circle the number that best describes your feelings and experience regarding your participation in literature circles. You may give specific examples to illustrate your experience. (1 = disagree very strongly / 2 = disagree strongly / 3 = agree / 4 = agree strongly / 5 = agree very strongly)

	Statement	Rating Scale				
3.1	Participating in the literature circles activity, I felt that I had to finish the chapters assigned each week.	1	2	3	4	5
3.2	Participating in the literature circles activity, I felt that I wanted to finish the chapters assigned each week.	1	2	3	4	5
3.3	Participating in a weekly small-group discussion enhanced my comprehension of the story. Examples (if any): _____ _____	1	2	3	4	5
3.4	Having a weekly small-group discussion helped me see new aspects of certain incidents and characters. Examples (if any): _____ _____	1	2	3	4	5
3.5	After having had a group discussion each week, I felt that I wanted to continue reading *Feed*. Examples (if any): _____ _____	1	2	3	4	5

4. Did your way of reading *Feed* change when you had to submit questions and answers, compared with when the teacher came up with questions for you in the first two weeks (e.g. in terms of reading speed and information processing)?
   ___ Yes. Please elaborate: _____
   ___ No.
5. Next semester you will be assigned another external reading book. Do you want to have a 20-minute literature circles activity organized weekly?
   ___ Yes. Please elaborate: _____
   ___ No. Please elaborate: _____
6. Do you have any suggestions on how the activity should be carried out so that it will benefit learners even more (e.g. reading schedule, activity duration, grouping, Q&A submission)?
   _____

Appendix B: Harvey Daniels' list of LC Key Ingredients (Daniels, 2002, p. 18)

Eleven Key Ingredients

1. Students *choose* own reading materials.
2. Small *temporary groups* are formed, based on book choice.
3. Different groups read *different books*.
4. Groups meet on a *regular, predictable schedule* to discuss reading.
5. Kids use written or drawn *notes* to guide reading and discussion.
6. Discussion *topics come from the students*.
7. Group meetings aim to be *open, natural conversations about books*; personal connections, digressions, and open-ended questions are welcome.
8. Teacher serves as a *facilitato*r, not a group member or instructor.
9. Evaluation is by *teacher observation and student self-evaluation*.
10. A spirit of *playfulness and fun* pervades the room.
11. When books are finished, *readers share with their classmates*, and then *new groups form* around new reading choices.

Appendix C: Discussion Questions

Questions for Week 2 (pp. 1-40)
1. What is the "feed"? What do people in the story use it for?
2. Would you like to have your own feed? Why or why not?
3. What do you think "lesions" are?
4. Who is Violet? How does this character seem to differ from Titus and his friends?
5. You might find reading the book slightly difficult at first since the characters use plenty of **futuristic slangs** invented by the author. Give examples of those words and their definitions.

Questions for Week 3 (pp. 41-104)
1. According to Titus, the Feed is the good or the bad?
2. How do Titus and his friends react when they don't have the feed?
3. What do you know about people's literacy in the story? What do you think is the reason behind this?
4. Why are the words "school" and "cloud" written with the superscript TM (™)?
5. What do you learn more about lesions in this week's chapters?
6. According to the chapter "nudging", what do you think happens when Titus is sleeping?
7. What is Violet's "brand-new project"? What does she hope to accomplish?

Questions for Week 4 (pp. 105-157)
1. Do you agree with Titus that it is better to have schools run by the corporations instead of by the government? Explain.
2. Do you agree with Violet that "*Because of the Feed, we're raising a nation of idiots. Ignorant, self-centered idiots.*" Give specific examples from the novel to illustrate your point.
3. How do people reproduce in the future?
4. If you lived in the age of Feed, would you agree with Violet's opinion that we should keep the real forests rather than building an air factory?
5. How do Titus's dad and Violet's dad differ?
6. Who is Nina? What does she try to talk Violet into?

Questions for Week 5 (pp. 158-203)
1. Would you be interested in joining the Coke campaign like the characters in the book? Why or why not?
2. What causes Violet's feed to malfunction? How does it affect her daily life?
3. As the story goes, what kind of impression do you get from the relationship between the gang? Give specific examples to illustrate your answer.
4. *"Look at us! You don't have the feed! You are feed! ... You're being eaten! You're raised for food! Look at what you've made yourselves!" She pointed at Quendy, and went, "She's a monster! Covered with cuts! ..."*

5. Violet screams out these words before losing consciousness. Do you agree with what she says?

Questions for Week 6 (pp. 205-263)

1. What is the reason FeedTech turns down Violet's petition for free repairs? How does it reflect the future world?
2. After Titus has learned of Violet's condition, he seems to put some distance between her and himself. Give <u>specific examples</u> of what he does. And what do you think motivates him to do so?
3. Who is Smell Factor? Why do you think the author puts him in the book?
4. Identify the speaker of each quote and explain what each means.
   a. *Everything I think of when I think of really living, living to the full — all my ideas are just the opening credits of sitcoms … My god. What am I, without the feed?* (p. 217)
   b. *They're really close to winning. I'm trying to resist, but they're close to winning.* (p. 262)

Questions for Week 7 (pp. 264-300)

1. If you were Violet's dad, would you get Feed installed for her like he did?
2. In your opinion, who should be responsible for Violet's critical condition?
3. What happens in the last chapter? How does it make you feel? Why do you think the writer chose to end the novel this way?
4. The last thing you get to hear (or read) from Feed is "Everything must go!" (p. 299) What does it mean?