

**Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
Educational and Scientific Institute of Philology
Department of English Philology and Intercultural Communication**

Master's Thesis

INTEGRATING LITERATURE INTO EFL CLASSES

Wang Yuanzhao,

2nd year student of the Education Program

‘English Language and Literature’

Field of science: 03 “Humanities”

Specialty: 035 “Philology”

Supervised by:

Oksana Borysovych, PhD

«Допущено до захисту»

Протокол засідання кафедри англійської філології

та міжкультурної комунікації

Протокол № 9 від 28. 04. 2025

Зав. кафедри _____ д. філол. н. , проф. Алла БЄЛОВА

KYIV – 2025

Анотація

У дослідженні розглядається проблема інтеграції літератури в навчання англійської мови як іноземної у контексті системи освіти Китаю. Проаналізовано теоретичні засади ролі літератури у процесі мовленнєвого розвитку та формування культурної компетентності, а також охарактеризовано сучасні практики її застосування у викладанні англійської мови. З метою отримання комплексних результатів використано змішану методологію дослідження, яка передбачає поєднання кількісних і якісних методів збору й аналізу даних, зокрема анкетування, інтерв'ювання та спостереження за навчальним процесом.

Результати дослідження свідчать, що використання літературних текстів у процесі навчання англійської мови сприяє підвищенню мовної компетентності, розвитку критичного мислення та формуванню культурної обізнаності здобувачів освіти. Водночас інтеграція літератури супроводжується низкою труднощів, зокрема проблемами добору текстів відповідного рівня, залучення студентів до аналізу художніх творів та вибору ефективних педагогічних стратегій.

Зроблено акцент на важливості добору релевантних літературних матеріалів, які відповідають рівню мовної підготовки та інтересам студентів, а також на доцільності впровадження інноваційних методів викладання, що забезпечують активну участь здобувачів освіти та глибоке осмислення змісту прочитаного. Підкреслюється значення створення підтримувального

навчального середовища, яке мотивує студентів до змістовної взаємодії з літературними творами.

Дослідження робить внесок у розвиток методики викладання іноземних мов, пропонуючи практичні рекомендації щодо ефективної інтеграції літератури в навчальні програми та модель оцінювання впливу літературоцентричного навчання на результати мовної підготовки студентів. Зроблено висновок, що за належної методичної підготовки викладачів і наявності відповідних ресурсів література може стати потужним засобом підвищення ефективності навчання англійської мови як іноземної та сприяти формуванню міжкультурної компетентності.

Ключові слова: інтеграція літератури, англійська мова як іноземна, вивчення мови, залучення до культури, педагогічні стратегії

Abstract

This study delves into the integration of literature in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms within the context of Chinese education. It examines the theoretical underpinnings of literature's role in language learning and cultural participation, and it reviews the current practices and challenges faced by educators in incorporating literary texts into EFL instruction. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques, such as surveys, interviews, and classroom observations. The study reveals that while literature offers significant benefits for enhancing students' language proficiency, cultural awareness, and critical thinking skills, its integration into EFL education is fraught with challenges, including text selection, student engagement, and pedagogical strategies.

The analysis highlights the importance of selecting appropriate literary texts that align with students' language levels and interests, and it emphasizes the need for innovative teaching methodologies that foster active student participation and deep comprehension. The study also underscores the significance of creating a supportive learning environment that encourages students to engage with literary texts meaningfully. The findings suggest that literature can be a transformative tool in EFL education, provided that educators are equipped with the necessary skills and resources to implement it effectively.

The research contributes to the field by offering practical recommendations for integrating literature into EFL curricula, and it proposes a framework for assessing the impact of literature-based instruction on students' language learning outcomes. The study concludes that literature has the potential to enrich EFL education by providing authentic language contexts and promoting a deeper understanding of cultural diversity. However, its successful integration requires a concerted effort from educators, policymakers, and researchers to address the identified challenges and to develop sustainable strategies for enhancing language teaching and learning.

Key words: Literature Integration, EFL Education, Language Learning,
Cultural Participation, Pedagogical Strategies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	8
Chapter 1 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review	11
1. 1 The role of English as a global language and EFL education	11
1. 2 The potential of literature as a tool for language learning and cultural participation	13
1. 3 The practice status of literature in EFL courses	17
Conclusion of chapter 1	20
Chapter 2 Integrating English-language Literature into EFL Instruction	22
2. 1 Teaching design and implementation of a junior high school English literature reading group	22
2. 2 Implementation process of group discussion and classroom observation	38
2. 3 Evaluation and reflection on teaching effect	56
Conclusion of chapter 2	64
Chapter 3: Challenges and Solution Strategies	65
3. 1 The challenge of incorporating literature into EFL teaching	65
3. 2 Solution strategy	67
3. 3 Practical suggestions and future prospects	73
Conclusion of chapter 3	75
CONCLUSIONS	76
REFERENCES	78
Appendix A	94
Appendix B	95

Appendix C	96
Appendix D	98

INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the Research Topic. In the contemporary landscape of English as a Foreign Language(EFL)education, the integration of literature into EFL classrooms has emerged as a vital yet underexplored area of research. Literature serves as a powerful medium for enhancing students' language proficiency, cultural understanding, and critical thinking skills. It provides authentic contexts for language use, exposes learners to diverse cultural perspectives, and fosters a deeper engagement with the English language. However, despite its potential benefits, the role of literature in EFL classrooms remains underutilized, and there is a significant gap in understanding how to effectively integrate literary texts into the curriculum to maximize their educational impact.

This research aims to address this gap by exploring the role of integrating literature in EFL classrooms, particularly within the context of Chinese EFL education. The study investigates how literature can be used as a tool to enhance students' language learning experiences, improve their communicative competence, and develop their critical thinking and cultural awareness. By examining the integration of literature, this research seeks to provide valuable insights and practical strategies for EFL educators to enrich their teaching practices and create more engaging and effective learning environments.

The goal of this Master's thesis is to evaluate the self-assessment and peer assessment of pragmatic competence among Chinese EFL students and propose strategies for enhancing these assessment practices.

To achieve this goal, the following tasks must be addressed:

- To explore the theoretical foundations of integrating literature in EFL education:This involves examining the pedagogical benefits of using literary texts, such as their potential to enhance language acquisition, cultural understanding, and critical thinking skills.

- To analyze the current practices of integrating literature in Chinese EFL classrooms:This includes investigating the extent to which literature is currently

being used, the challenges faced by educators in incorporating literary texts, and the attitudes of both teachers and students towards the use of literature in language learning.

- To identify effective strategies for integrating literature into the EFL curriculum: This objective aims to develop practical recommendations for teachers on how to select, adapt, and teach literary texts in a way that aligns with the language learning objectives and interests of students.

- To assess the impact of literature integration on students' language proficiency and communicative competence: Through empirical research, this study will evaluate whether and how the inclusion of literary texts in EFL classrooms influences students' language skills, motivation, and overall learning outcomes.

- To propose a framework for the systematic integration of literature in EFL teaching and assessment: The research will culminate in a comprehensive framework that outlines best practices for incorporating literature into EFL classrooms, supported by evidence from both theoretical and empirical investigations.

The object of this research is the process of pragmatic competence assessment in the context of Chinese EFL education. This includes the implementation, execution, and evaluation of self-assessment and peer assessment practices among students, as well as the integration of these practices into the broader language teaching and learning environment.

The subject of this research is a set of theoretical, methodological, and practical provisions regarding the management and enhancement of students' pragmatic competence through self-assessment and peer assessment. This encompasses the development of assessment criteria, the training of students and teachers in assessment practices, the analysis of assessment results, and the formulation of strategies to improve students' pragmatic abilities based on these assessments.

Research Methods

To achieve the research objectives, the following methods were employed

in this study:

- Logical-dialectical method: To reveal the theoretical foundations of pragmatic competence and its role in language education;
- Structural and logical analysis: To determine the organizational and contextual characteristics of the EFL learning environment;
- Statistical and quantitative analysis: To study the reliability and validity of self-assessment and peer assessment practices;
- Qualitative analysis: To explore students' perceptions and experiences with self-assessment and peer assessment through surveys and interviews.

The theoretical and information base of this research includes the works of Chinese and international scholars in the field of language education, scientific publications in periodicals, statistical materials, reference literature, and data collected from the participating students and educators.

The practical significance of this study lies in providing theoretical conclusions and practical recommendations that can be useful for improving the assessment of pragmatic competence in language education. The findings can inform the development of more effective teaching strategies and assessment practices, ultimately enhancing students' communicative competence.

The structure and content of this thesis correspond to the research objectives and consist of an introduction, three main sections, conclusions, and a list of references. The total volume of the thesis is 88 pages, including 3 tables. The list of references includes 129 items.

Chapter 1 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

1.1 The role of English as a global language and EFL education

In the contemporary globalized world, English has emerged as a dominant lingua franca, facilitating international communication, trade, and cultural exchange. This phenomenon has significantly influenced the landscape of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, particularly in non-English-speaking countries. The role of English as a global language is multifaceted, encompassing economic, social, and educational dimensions, and it has profound implications for EFL education.

English's status as a global language is evident in its widespread use in international business, diplomacy, and technology. As a lingua franca, English enables individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds to communicate effectively, thereby fostering global cooperation and economic development. This trend is particularly pronounced in the context of globalization, where English has become the de facto language for international trade, scientific research, and digital communication (Crystal, 2003). Consequently, proficiency in English is often seen as a crucial skill for personal and professional advancement, driving the demand for EFL education worldwide.

It is worth noting that the dominance of English in these domains is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a reflection of broader socio-economic dynamics. The historical and cultural influence of English-speaking countries, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, has played a significant role in establishing English as the preferred medium of communication in various international contexts. This influence extends beyond language itself, shaping global norms and practices in business, education, and media. As a result, the acquisition of English proficiency is often perceived as a gateway to accessing global opportunities and resources.

The rise of English as a global language has had a profound impact on

educational systems around the world. In many countries, EFL education has become a cornerstone of the curriculum, with a focus on developing students' communicative competence in English. This shift is driven by the recognition that proficiency in English can enhance students' future career prospects and enable them to participate more fully in the global community(Graddol, 2006).

However, the integration of English into educational systems also presents challenges. One significant issue is the need to balance the teaching of English with the preservation of local languages and cultures. This concern is particularly relevant in the context of EFL education, where there is a risk that an overemphasis on English may lead to the neglect of students' native languages and cultural identities(Phillipson, 1992). To address this challenge, educators advocate for a multilingual approach that promotes the development of English proficiency while also valuing and nurturing students' first languages(Canagarajah, 2011).

It is important to recognize that the implementation of EFL education is not uniform across different regions and contexts. In some countries, EFL programs are well-established and integrated into the national curriculum, while in others, they may face resource constraints, lack of trained teachers, and varying levels of student motivation. These disparities highlight the need for context-specific strategies and policies to ensure that EFL education is effective and equitable.

In practice, EFL education involves a range of pedagogical approaches and strategies aimed at developing students' English language skills. These approaches include communicative language teaching(CLT), which emphasizes the use of English in real-life communicative contexts, and task-based language teaching(TBLT), which focuses on the completion of meaningful tasks to enhance language proficiency(Nunan, 2004). Additionally, the use of technology in EFL education has become increasingly prevalent, with online platforms and digital tools providing new opportunities for language learning and practice(Warschauer&Healey, 1998).

The effectiveness of these approaches can vary depending on the specific needs and contexts of the learners. For instance, CLT may be particularly effective

in contexts where students have ample opportunities for interaction and communication in English, while TBLT may be more suitable for learners who benefit from structured and goal-oriented activities. The integration of technology can also enhance the learning experience by providing access to authentic materials, interactive exercises, and collaborative learning environments. However, it is crucial to ensure that the use of technology is pedagogically sound and aligned with the learning objectives.

The role of English as a global language underscores the importance of EFL education in preparing students for participation in the global community. While the demand for English proficiency continues to grow, it is essential for educators to adopt balanced and inclusive approaches that promote multilingualism and cultural diversity. By doing so, EFL education can contribute to the development of well-rounded individuals who are equipped to navigate the complexities of a globalized world. It is also important to recognize that the challenges and opportunities associated with EFL education are context-dependent, and thus, require tailored solutions and strategies. Ultimately, the goal of EFL education should be to empower learners with the linguistic and cultural competencies needed to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

1.2 The potential of literature as a tool for language learning and cultural participation

Literature has long been recognized as a powerful medium for language learning and cultural participation. In recent years, the integration of literature into language education has gained significant attention, with educators and researchers exploring its potential benefits and challenges. This section will delve into the multifaceted role of literature in language learning, focusing on its capacity to enhance linguistic proficiency, cultural awareness, and critical thinking skills.

One of the primary advantages of using literature in language learning is its ability to provide authentic and rich linguistic input. Literary texts, such as novels,

short stories, and poems, expose learners to a wide range of vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and grammatical structures that are often not found in traditional textbooks. For instance, reading works by renowned authors like Jane Austen or Gabriel García Márquez can offer insights into the nuances of language use in different contexts (Kramersch, 1993). This exposure not only enriches learners' lexical and grammatical knowledge but also helps them develop a more natural and idiomatic command of the language.

Moreover, literature-based language learning (LBL) promotes engagement with authentic texts, which can significantly enhance learners' reading and writing skills. By analyzing and discussing literary works, students practice critical reading strategies and develop their ability to express complex ideas in writing. This process fosters a deeper understanding of language structures and encourages learners to experiment with different styles and registers (Nunan, 2004). For example, a student might encounter a passage in a novel that uses a particular grammatical structure in a way that is not immediately clear. Through discussion and analysis, the student can gain a deeper understanding of how that structure functions in context, which can then be applied to their own writing.

It is also worth noting that the use of literature in language learning can help bridge the gap between the classroom and the real world. Authentic texts provide learners with a glimpse into how language is used in everyday life, which can be particularly motivating for students who are eager to use their language skills in practical situations. This real-world connection can make language learning more meaningful and relevant, thereby increasing student engagement and motivation.

Literature serves as a window into different cultures, providing learners with a unique opportunity to explore and understand diverse cultural perspectives. Through the stories and characters depicted in literary works, students gain insights into the values, traditions, and social norms of other societies. For example, reading works by authors such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie or Haruki Murakami can offer a rich understanding of Nigerian and Japanese cultures,

respectively(Pulverness, 2003).

This cultural exploration is particularly important in today's globalized world, where cross-cultural communication skills are highly valued. By engaging with literature from various cultural backgrounds, learners develop empathy and a more nuanced understanding of cultural differences. This, in turn, enhances their ability to communicate effectively and respectfully with people from diverse cultural backgrounds(Nussbaum, 1997). For instance, a student who reads a novel set in a different cultural context might gain a deeper appreciation for the cultural practices and beliefs of that society, which can then inform their interactions with people from that culture in real-life situations.

Moreover, literature can also serve as a tool for cultural self-reflection. By encountering different cultural perspectives, learners are often prompted to reflect on their own cultural assumptions and biases. This process of self-reflection can lead to greater cultural awareness and sensitivity, which are essential skills in a globalized world. For example, a student who reads a novel that explores themes of cultural identity might be inspired to think more deeply about their own cultural identity and how it shapes their worldview.

Engaging with literature requires learners to analyze, interpret, and evaluate texts, thereby fostering critical thinking skills. Literary texts often present complex themes and ambiguous situations that challenge readers to think deeply and form their own interpretations. This process encourages learners to question, reflect, and construct meaning, which are essential skills for academic and professional success(Kramersch, 1993).

For instance, discussing the themes and characters in a novel like "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee can lead to rich classroom discussions about social justice, prejudice, and moral values. Such discussions not only enhance learners' critical thinking abilities but also promote a deeper understanding of the text and its cultural significance(Pulverness, 2003). Through these discussions, students learn to articulate their thoughts, listen to different perspectives, and engage in thoughtful debate, all of which are valuable skills for critical thinking.

Moreover, the process of analyzing literary texts can also help learners develop their analytical and interpretive skills. By examining the structure, style, and themes of a text, students learn to identify patterns and make connections between different elements of the text. This ability to analyze and interpret complex information is a crucial skill in many academic and professional contexts.

While the potential benefits of literature in language learning are clear, there are also several challenges that educators need to address. One significant challenge is selecting appropriate literary texts that match the learners' proficiency levels and interests. Literary works can vary greatly in terms of linguistic complexity and cultural relevance, making it essential for educators to carefully choose texts that are accessible and engaging for their students(Hall, 2019).

Another challenge is managing the varying levels of student motivation and engagement. Some students may find literature intimidating or irrelevant to their language learning goals. To overcome this, educators can employ a variety of teaching strategies, such as using multimodal approaches, incorporating multimedia resources, and encouraging student-centered activities(Hall, 2019). For example, incorporating film adaptations of literary works can make the material more accessible and engaging for students who may struggle with the written text. Additionally, using interactive activities, such as role-playing or creative writing exercises, can help students engage more deeply with the material and apply their language skills in a more meaningful way.

Furthermore, the integration of literature into language education requires careful planning and scaffolding. Educators need to provide appropriate support and guidance to help students navigate the complexities of literary texts. This might involve pre-reading activities to build background knowledge, during-reading activities to promote comprehension and engagement, and post-reading activities to encourage reflection and discussion. By providing a structured and supportive learning environment, educators can help students develop the skills and confidence needed to engage with literary texts.

In conclusion, literature holds immense potential as a tool for language

learning and cultural participation. By integrating literary texts into language education, educators can enhance learners' linguistic proficiency, cultural awareness, and critical thinking skills. While there are challenges associated with this approach, practical strategies and careful planning can help overcome these obstacles. Ultimately, literature can transform language learning into a more enriching, engaging, and culturally immersive experience, preparing learners to thrive in a globalized world. It is through the rich tapestry of stories and characters that learners can not only improve their language skills but also gain a deeper understanding of the world around them, fostering a sense of global citizenship and cultural empathy.

1.3 The practice status of literature in EFL courses

The integration of literature into English as a Foreign Language(EFL)courses has been a topic of considerable interest and debate among educators and researchers. While the theoretical benefits of using literature in EFL instruction are well-documented, the practical implementation of this approach varies widely across different educational contexts. This section will explore the current practice status of literature in EFL courses, highlighting both the successes and challenges encountered by educators.

Theoretical Foundations and Advocacy

The use of literature in EFL courses is grounded in several theoretical frameworks that emphasize its multifaceted benefits. Literature is seen as a powerful tool for enhancing linguistic proficiency, fostering cultural awareness, and developing critical thinking skills. Proponents of literature-based language learning(LBL) argue that literary texts provide authentic and rich linguistic input, exposing learners to a wide range of vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and grammatical structures(Kramersch, 1993). This exposure not only enriches learners' lexical and grammatical knowledge but also helps them develop a more natural and idiomatic command of the language.

Moreover, literature serves as a window into different cultures, offering insights into the values, traditions, and social norms of other societies (Nussbaum, 1997). Engaging with literature from various cultural backgrounds allows learners to develop empathy and a more nuanced understanding of cultural differences, which are essential skills in a globalized world. Additionally, literature can serve as a tool for cultural self-reflection, prompting learners to reflect on their own cultural assumptions and biases.

Engaging with literature also requires learners to analyze, interpret, and evaluate texts, thereby fostering critical thinking skills. Literary texts often present complex themes and ambiguous situations that challenge readers to think deeply and form their own interpretations (Kramsch, 1993). This process encourages learners to question, reflect, and construct meaning, which are essential skills for academic and professional success.

Despite the theoretical benefits, the practical implementation of literature in EFL courses faces several challenges. One significant challenge is selecting appropriate literary texts that match the learners' proficiency levels and interests. Literary works can vary greatly in terms of linguistic complexity and cultural relevance, making it essential for educators to carefully choose texts that are accessible and engaging for their students (Hall, 2019). For instance, a study by Rasha Osman Abdel Haliem (2017) in Egypt found that short stories were particularly effective in engaging students and improving their language skills, but the selection of texts required careful consideration of the students' language abilities and cultural backgrounds.

Another challenge is managing the varying levels of student motivation and engagement. Some students may find literature intimidating or irrelevant to their language learning goals. To overcome this, educators can employ a variety of teaching strategies, such as using multimodal approaches, incorporating multimedia resources, and encouraging student-centered activities (Hall, 2019). For example, incorporating film adaptations of literary works can make the material more accessible and engaging for students who may struggle with the written text.

Additionally, using interactive activities, such as role-playing or creative writing exercises, can help students engage more deeply with the material and apply their language skills in a more meaningful way.

Several pedagogical approaches have been proposed to effectively integrate literature into EFL courses. One such approach is the cultural model, which views a literary text as a product and examines the social, political, and historical background to a text (Onestopenglish, 2025). This approach is often used in university courses on literature and tends to be teacher-centered. Another approach is the language model, which focuses on the linguistic features of the text and aims to increase students' general awareness of English. This model can involve stylistic analysis, where students closely study the linguistic features of the text to make meaningful interpretations (Onestopenglish, 2025).

The personal growth model is a process-based approach that encourages learners to draw on their own opinions, feelings, and personal experiences. This model aims for interaction between the text and the reader, helping make the language more memorable and fostering personal engagement (Onestopenglish, 2025). For example, students can be encouraged to write their own interpretations of a text or engage in discussions about how the text relates to their own lives.

Empirical studies have provided valuable insights into the practical application of literature in EFL courses. A study by Hussein (2025) in Oman found that incorporating literature into EFL classes significantly improved students' language proficiency, cultural awareness, and critical thinking abilities. The study highlighted the importance of using a variety of literary genres and adopting cooperative reading and discussion activities to enhance student engagement.

Another study by Abdel Haliem (2017) in Egypt demonstrated the effectiveness of using short stories in EFL classes. The study found that short stories were particularly beneficial for improving students' reading, writing, and speaking skills. The use of short stories also fostered a deeper understanding of cultural contexts and promoted critical thinking among students.

In addition to the theoretical and empirical evidence, practical

considerations are crucial for the successful integration of literature into EFL courses. Educators need to be mindful of the time constraints and curriculum requirements, ensuring that the inclusion of literature does not detract from other essential components of language learning. One effective strategy is to integrate literature as a supplementary resource, rather than the primary focus of the course. This can be achieved by incorporating short stories, poems, or excerpts from novels into the existing curriculum, allowing students to explore literary texts while still covering essential language skills.

Another important consideration is the need for ongoing professional development for educators. Teaching literature in an EFL context requires specialized skills and knowledge, including an understanding of literary analysis and the ability to facilitate engaging discussions. Providing teachers with training and resources can help them develop these skills and effectively integrate literature into their courses.

In conclusion, the integration of literature into EFL courses holds significant potential for enhancing language learning and cultural participation. While there are challenges associated with this approach, practical strategies and careful planning can help overcome these obstacles. By selecting appropriate texts, employing varied teaching strategies, and fostering student engagement, educators can create a rich and immersive learning experience that promotes linguistic proficiency, cultural awareness, and critical thinking skills. Ultimately, literature can transform EFL courses into more dynamic, culturally rich, and personally engaging environments, preparing learners to thrive in a globalized world.

Conclusion of chapter 1

This chapter has laid the theoretical groundwork for the research by exploring the multifaceted role of literature in EFL education. It has highlighted that literature serves as a powerful medium for enhancing linguistic proficiency, fostering cultural awareness, and developing critical thinking skills. The review

has also examined the current status of literature integration in EFL courses, revealing both the potential benefits and the challenges faced by educators. The chapter concludes that while literature holds significant potential for enriching language learning, its effective implementation requires careful consideration of factors such as text selection, teaching methodologies, and student engagement. The insights gained from this chapter will guide the subsequent exploration of practical strategies for integrating literature into EFL instruction.

Chapter 2 Integrating English-language Literature into EFL

Instruction

2.1 Teaching design and implementation of a junior high school English literature reading group

This chapter discuss the research methodology of the present study. In this chapter, I first zoom in on the research questions the study is supposed to answer. Next, after giving a brief explanation of the research rationale, I portray how the research design was implemented in the setting, including the sampling logic and the procedures for data collection. I then characterize the methods used to analyze the data. Finally, I will describe how the research trustworthiness and research ethics were meticulously ensured.

Given the justifications that literature offers EFL learners beyond-the-print pleasure in the actual reading and helps with their language learning, literary texts are chosen to be the instructional materials for students ' grouped reading. Simplified graded readers are utilized to function as a preparatory bridge to access original texts because they closely match the linguistic level of the learners.

Realizing literature can be used a source of authentic and diverse language input by creating and extending language learning environments, I feel that there should be more studies which explore diverse literary responses of various types of EFL learners. Among the studies on English literature reading and teaching in China (Luo & Zhang, 2022; Sun, 2020; He, 2019; Lan, 2015) and the implementation of group discussion in Chinese EFL classrooms (You, 2021; Zhang, 2018; Guo, 2017; Liu, 2015) most of them were conducted with college or high school students. Becoming literal competent is an ongoing concern for EFL learners across all ages. The collaborative meaning-making process of middle school students is particularly worthy of a careful exploration since young adolescents love to talk and prefer working in peer groups.

Therefore, how junior high school teens experience literature through

group discussion is an issue deserving of further investigation, which points to a need to conduct this study where I seek to answer the following questions:

(1) How do junior high school students construct meaning from literary texts while participating in group discussions?

(2) What changes does the participation bring to individual group members?

The way students conduct their textual discussions can be explored through their

reading stances. According to Rosenblatt (1995), a reading stance reflects a reader's purpose or what s/he chooses to focus on while reading. Answer to these questions will provide insights into whether and how the junior high school students benefit from this instructional approach.

In this present exploratory, descriptive study, qualitative data are utilized to profile the literature discussion characterized by four junior high school cohorts with varied English proficiency levels.

This study adopted a case study research rationale. A case study is “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single unit or bounded system” (Merriam, 1998, P. 13). A qualitative case study has three distinct characteristics: it is particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. It is particularistic because it focuses on a particular situation, event, or phenomenon; it is descriptive because its end product is a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study; it is heuristic because it illuminates the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 1998, p. 29-30). Case study is a particularly suitable research design when the interest of the study is more in the process rather than the outcome, or the study has a distinct advantage for “how” and “why” questions (Merriam, 1998, p. 32). Since this current study attempted to investigate junior high school EFL learner's collaborative talk during literature discussion, case study research was considered a suitable design.

The present case study of an English reading group was mainly a

qualitative inquiry, focusing on the dynamic meaning-making process of learners' literature discussion. To seek an in-depth and holistic understanding of students' learning experience, a focal group consisting of four middle school students was purposefully selected for study from the class in that learners' perspectives and reflections would be more clearly voiced.

The study was conducted in a public junior school located in Wenchang, Hainan. It is a medium-sized school with 30 classes in total. The students in this school have slightly better learning ability and language proficiency than their rural counterparts. The participants of this study, composed of 22 boys and 18 girls, aged from thirteen to fourteen years old, were from one mixed-ability eighth-grade class. Their family backgrounds were various. Some of them were from low-income families and their parents' social status were not high. All of them started to learn English at primary school. Basically, they have learned English for four to five years; yet their English learning experience and English proficiency levels varied.

Now there were five English classes a week in the regular school; each class lasted for forty minutes. The participants learned vocabulary and sentence patterns from textbooks in their English classes. Most of them held motivation to learn English well, but they did not often discuss in groups or convey their opinions in the English class. Instead, they were more used to teacher-centered instruction and relied a lot on drills and memorization for improvements of their English performance. Nonetheless, they expressed their interest in a flexible and entertaining extensive reading program to improve their English reading ability.

The forty students were divided into 10 heterogeneous groups according to their average grade in the English course in the preceding semester, with each one consisting of one high achiever, two average achievers, and one low-achieving student.

The selection criteria included first, English proficiency level; second, student performance in the classroom, including degree of engagement in class and reflective responses to the texts; third, gender; and fourth, personality. My purpose

for such criteria was to ensure various student voices be represented in this study. The selected group in this case study consists of one high achiever (Pei-yun), two middle achievers (Chao-jie and Jin-xin) and one low-achieving student (Ai-ling). I will introduce the students in the order of reading abilities, from high to low.

Pei-yun is diligent and does well in all academic areas. She is very shy, quiet, and introverted. As she never makes the first move when making friends, she felt lonely and always spent time with herself during the first school year. Chao-jie is a good student and his grades always rank the top thirty percent in the class. He actively engages in both whole-class and small-group discussions. He is enthusiastic about class business and often volunteers to run some errands. However, this personality trait was not appreciated by his teammate, Jin-xin. As an avid reader in Chinese, Jin-xin usually reads fiction and novels off school every day. His performance in English and Chinese is much better than in other subjects such as maths and geography. He is so straightforward that he offends people with what he says even though he does not mean to. Unlike Jin-xin, who is outspoken and abrupt, Ai-ling, the weakest reader in the group, is reserved and discreet and interacts with her classmates and teachers in a careful manner. Her low English proficiency is largely due to a lack of interest in studying. "Seldom did Ai-ling read at home," complained her homeroom teacher.

To recapitulate, the case study group has comparable reading abilities since it comprised of one high achiever, two average achievers, and one low-achieving student. The four focal students share quite opposite personalities. Pei-yun is reticent but Chao-jie is loquacious; Jin-xin is impulsive but Ai-ling is reflective.

Eleven short stories from three graded readers were used as literary texts for the grouped literature discussions (Appendix A). The level of these three graded readers is beginning, which is suitable for the students in this study. These short stories are mainly about criminals and their crimes, detectives and their investigations, lovers and their hopes, and interesting people and strange things they do. The themes covered are universal, such as love, money and sibling rivalry, to which the students could easily find attachment.

The eleven stories were selected based on Stern's (1991) guidelines: age of the work, theme, language proficiency, brevity and uncomplicated storyline, and student interest. First, these stories are contemporary; thus, they don't create barriers for modern readers. Second, the themes in these stories center on emotions such as love and hope. These universal themes enable students to relate to the works on a personal level. Third, in terms of language proficiency, decision was made to use the beginning level readers since the number of headwords, 550-700, was manageable for the students in this study. Being already familiar with most of the vocabulary, they were able to gain adequate comprehension of the text. Fourth, the appropriate length allows students to complete reading during the week and to finish discussing it over one discussion session. They also contain clear identifiable plots, allowing students to trace the development or action of the story with relative ease. All of the above aimed at raising students' interest in reading literary texts to the maximum level.

The students in the literature discussion group read the chosen stories in the fall semester 2022-2023, from October to December. The students were required to read the stories before each class meeting. The original instructional procedures were as follows: (1) a read-aloud warming up activity, (2) small group discussions of literary texts, (3) a whole-class debriefing session, and (4) students' reading-log writing. One procedure "sharing good examples of reading log" was not established until the third lesson. To put it in another way, the instruction was expanded from 4 to 5 procedures from the third week onwards.

A read-aloud offers the highest level of teacher support since language learners can receive quality language models (Hadaway, Vardell & Youg, 2002). Besides, it can well generate alertness among students at the beginning of the class and guide them into the world of foreign language literature, one they may fear or even consider as burdensome. Reading aloud is also an effective way to assist students in interpreting the intent of characters and in discriminating various modes of attitude such as supportive, sympathetic, sarcastic, or annoyed. Therefore,

students can process the text read better. A teacher reading a literary work aloud to students functions as a mediator between reader and text. Concerning the difficulty of maintaining student attention over a long period lasting 5 to 10 minutes, I pre-recorded my read-aloud of the selected stories. When students listened to the audio files, I circulated around the classroom to help keep them on task.

During discussion sessions, students in groups talked about the stories and discussed issues they chose to share. Roles such as leader and encourager were not assigned to students in advance. In many small-group activities, roles are initially assigned to members to facilitate the groups' interactions. As group members become more proficient in participation, the assigned roles can be eliminated (Daniels, 2002). Other reasons not to use roles were that roles became problematic when the focus was on text interpretation and personal response and roles limited the reciprocity of real conversation.

Since the EFL learners were not familiar with literary works, in the first lesson, guided questions were utilized as a model of ways to talk productively about the story (Evans, 2002). A list of questions was given to students to lead them into description, analysis, and explanation of literary texts. Drawing on three levels of reading comprehension (Vacca & Vacca, 2002), students began discussing literal, factual questions about characters, setting, and plot. For example, for O. Henry's *Fine Furs for a Lady*, questions were "Who were the main characters in the story?" "What happened in the story?" and "What did Brady do for a living before he fell in love with Molly?"

Next, students were asked to discuss inferential questions that required them to make speculations about the characters, setting, and plot. The inferential questions for *Fine Furs for a Lady* were "Why did Brady change his idea suddenly when he saw Molly's worried face? What was his idea then?" "What is Brady thinking by saying 'I think I'll... No... I can't'?" and "Why did Brady's face turn red after hearing Kohen's words?"

Once students had achieved an inferential level of understanding, they were

encouraged to share their evaluations of the story and their personal reactions to it. For example, the personal/evaluative questions would include: “ What do you think about the title of the story? If you were Ransom, would you arrest Brady?” and “ It is said love changes everything. How does it apply to this story?”

Guided questions that functioned as a scaffold to stimulate a productive story discussion in the first lesson were not given to students in the subsequent lessons. Discussions elicited through guided questions were also excluded from data analysis because the present study was concerned with how students initiated and sustained their textual talk. Discussions over a course of three months averaged about 15 minutes even though 20 minutes were allotted. Group discussions were conducted in the students’ first language, Chinese, to prevent the interference of language barriers, thus allowing them to fully express their interpretations of the text.

The purpose of the whole-class debriefing sessions were twofold. The first was to provide additional information to the common difficulties I observed while joining different discussion groups. The second was to make a brief summary of story structure and character development and to explain any cultural backgrounds unfamiliar to students.

In the final instructional phase, students wrote in reading logs in which they took notes of the text features and recorded their responses to the stories. They consulted a guide to reading logs adapted from Raphael and McMahon (1994) for ideas about writing responses. Four categories were included in the guidelines. Categories such as “character map” and “sequences” helped students with comprehension and encouraged them to bring their own background knowledge to make sense of the text. Categories like “story critique” and “me and the story” enabled students to be evaluative about the story and analytical about their responses (Appendix B). Ideally, all students would keep their reading logs in English. Students with limited abilities in English were allowed to write their responses in Chinese.

It was apparent to me that discussion guidelines were necessary to help students move beyond superficial story retelling. Without guided questions, most groups devoted their utterances to surface-level recall of details during their second story discussion. While commenting on students' reading logs, I found two students listing their questions to *Springtime on the Menu*, reflecting their careful examination of ideas and reactions to it. In the story, a Manhattan restaurant menu typist, Sarah and a young farmer Walter fell in love during Sarah's two week stay at Sunnybrook Farm. Walter once made her a crown of dandelions and promised to marry her the next Spring. So off Sarah went, back to the city. And a year later, as she was typing a menu with the word dandelions on it, she was so sad and typed in place of dandelions, "Dearest Walter, with an egg on top." Dramatically because of this incident, Walter recognized her typing and found her.

With regard to the story, one student wrote, "It is a touching story. A type of 'All shall be well; Jack shall have Jill.' The main characters are deeply in love. Yet I still find it a bit hard to believe. How did Walter let Sarah go last Summer and wait for him for a year? How come Sarah, a girl from a big city would go with the farmer boy to the country ever since?" Another student commented, "O. Henry is a talented writer. A menu binds all the three different events of the story together—a year ago, just now and then—I am wondering since dandelions and their love story belong to summer, why is the title not *Summertime on the menu*?"

The questions posed by these two students are posited to serve as an exemplary model for their peers, facilitating the structuring of vibrant and intellectually stimulating discussions. Such an approach is anticipated to foster a more profound engagement with the text, thereby enhancing critical thinking and analytical skills among the student body. I decided to select a few particularly provocative excerpts from the reading logs and added a section of "sharing good examples of reading logs" to the instructional procedures.

Students were also required to prepare three questions for each small-group discussion and to record them in their reading logs. It was hoped that personal investment in student-generated questions would identify their involvement in the

literature discussion group. As claimed by Butell, O'Donova and Taylor (2004), student-generated questions not only stimulated thoughtful conversations around the story but also enhanced their abilities to reflect on reading. Xia & Wang (2019) recommends devoting class time to teaching students to write reading logs. From the third till the last class meeting, I began with sharing a few excellent student-generated questions and excerpts of the reading logs to offer a springboard for literature discussions as well as a model of how engaged readers “dialogue” with texts. The good examples functioned as the teacher support for students to ask “fat, juicy questions” and to move from literal understanding to aesthetic appreciation.

In most peer reading programs, reading logs are often viewed as an instrument for gathering thoughts that will be later shared in group discussions. I reversed the sequence in order not to present a demanding cognitive challenge to students who didn't have any formal training in English writing. Although they were told not to be overly concerned with grammar in their reading logs, they might encounter difficulties expressing their thoughts in English. Asking students to write after their discussions help students organize their ideas and express their thoughts more clearly. Doing some talk beforehand also tends to spark new awareness or new questions in students' minds. The result of having textual talk before writing is the creation of thoughtful and elaborated responses.

According to Creswell (1998), a case study researcher explores a case through in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information. In this case study, data sources included audiotapes of students' literature discussions, semi-structured interviews and informal conversational interviews with the target students, reading logs, and field notes and reflection journals taken throughout the study to establish different perspectives on the relevant issue.

Audiotapes of the weekly discussions served as the major data source to find out students' practice of student-led group discussions of literary texts. A total of 11 discussions were audiotaped from the beginning to the end of the study. The

tapes allowed me to capture the context in which students interacted with each other and to have a comprehensive understanding of the group culture. They also provided a view of the group ' s progress of reading as a team across the three-month period. Each audiotape was transcribed in its entirety and checked for accuracy.

Semi-structured interviews, or “stimulated recall, ” (Nunan, 1992) was administered to provide evidence of the reading behaviors and the participation patterns captured during discussion activities. Four target students were interviewed individually at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the study.

In each interview, certain segment of the audio served as a prompt for clarification of students ' talk about the text and behaviors in small group interactions. Take the discussion of *Fine Fur for a Lady* audiotaped in a pilot study as an example.

One student said that the text didn' t mention Detective Ransom knew the fact before he inquired Brady. But she guessed he already knew the ins and outs, and the reason why he still asked Brady was to see how Brady would react before his girlfriend. A question for this student was like “How did you guess Ransom knew the whole story in the first place?” after listening to the segment of the audio. Similarly, questions for a student who always followed the lead of others was “What would you do if you disagree with your teammates?” or “What would you do if your teammates ignore your idea?”

In addition to the specific questions, the general questions probing into students ' practice of group reading focused on two broad areas, the aspect of reading development and the aspect of discussion process because these two areas constitute an effective peer-led discussion (Evans, 2002). Questions eliciting responses to reading development were “What do you think is the purpose for having you participate in group discussions?” or “What do you like/dislike about

reading in groups?” Questions eliciting responses to group process were “What do you think about the discussion you just had for the week?” or “What do you think are the accepted social behaviors in group discussion?”

Different questions addressing these two aspects were asked in three different interviews. These interview questions were first developed based on the results of a pilot study conducted in the early October in which four students were interviewed individually for about a quarter of an hour to talk about their experiences of reading in groups and viewpoints of group discussion of texts. Then, Evans’ (2002) questions which guided group members to reflect on their perspectives on small group discussions were adapted into the interview protocol.

To sum up, there were three semi-structured interviews for each target student and each interview started with prompt questions, followed by questions addressing reading development and group process. Specifically, the purpose of the first interview was to probe into students’ initial views on literature discussion groups. The second interview aimed at obtaining information about difficulties students encountered while reading short stories and while interacting with teammates. The final interview was conducted to see if the students perceived any changes in their reading behaviors and group participation over the three-month period (Appendix C). Each interview was conducted in Chinese and lasted from 10 to 15 minutes. They were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Besides the semi-structured interviews, before and after the class, during the breaks, I had informal conversations with the four target students to clarify the points made in the previous interview and in the discussion activity. Chatting with the participants regularly was always a valuable source to better understand what they thought about the class and the progress they made.

Students' reading logs

Students’ reading logs provided evidence of the comments about the text that they brought with them to their story discussions. In addition, reading logs enabled me to examine the influences of group dialogues on students’

interpretations of texts and the changes that occurred in the depth of their responses to the literary texts during the study. Log entries were used in conjunction with other sources to fully understand the reading process of grouped literature discussion.

I took filed notes of the responses gathered during the interviews, both formal and informal and of what happened during the group discussions of literary texts. I wrote down my feelings and comments about what was observed as well as field-generated insights in my reflection journals. These extensive notes and entries were more than an additional source of data for this case study.

To summarize, this case study adopted multiple procedures for data collection. A summary of the databank is listed in Table 2. 1.

Table 2. 1 Summary of Databank

Data Sources	Data Collection Schedule	Data Collected
Audiotapes of literature group discussions	Every weekly class meeting	Audio-taped and transcribed discussions; A total of 11 discussions from the beginning to the end of the study
Semi-structured interviews	Three interviews with 4 target students (at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the study)	Audio-taped and transcribed interviews; 3 interviews per student for a total of 12
Informal conversations	Every weekly class meeting	Field notes

Students' reading logs	Every weekly class meeting	11 reading log entries per student for a total of 44 entries for 4 students
---------------------------	----------------------------	---

Some prominent qualitative researchers such as Creswell (1998) and Chen (2000) view data analysis process as a spiral in which the researcher “engages in the process of moving in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach” (Creswell, 1998, p142). Data analysis proceeded concurrently in this study with data collection. I conducted preliminary analyses of the newly collected data and wrote down descriptive notes while still collecting other data. Different forms of data were analyzed differently.

Among the transcribed audiotapes of the 11 discussions collected from October to December of the focus group, 3 representative discussions were selected for intensive analysis to understand how the students read as a group while participating the literature discussions. The literature discussions were based on the short stories students read from the three graded readers belonging to Oxford Bookworms Library.

For each graded reader, I chose one discussion for detailed analysis in an attempt to capture the literature discussion group’s reading development in each phase of the three-month study, that is, the beginning, the middle and the finale. Specifically, the discussions of the third story (i. e. , The Last Leaf), the sixth (i. e. , The Speckled Band), and the eleventh (i. e. , The Silent Brothers) of the case study group were chosen for detailed analysis. The unit of analysis was an utterance. An utterance refers to “what is said by one person before or after another person begins to speak” (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1998, p. 493). An utterance may consist of one word, one sentence, or more than one sentence.

The discussion transcripts were first analyzed with Eeds and Wells' s (1989) categorization system in which five categories were developed based on the analysis of utterances during discussion of literary texts for a group of elementary

school children: (1) literal comprehension, (2) interpretation, (3) evaluation, (4) involvement, and (5) conversation maintenance. As the first three categories reflected what Rosenblatt (1995) called efferent reading and the fourth covered aesthetic reading, I continued with the analysis, using Rosenblatt's categorization of efferent and aesthetic transactions. It was found that in efferent reading, the participants understood the story facts and analyzed textual information. In aesthetic reading, they made judgment about characters and made personal connections with the text.

The category of conversation maintenance contained utterances relevant to managing the interaction process. It was therefore renamed as procedural talk, which also covered all remarks clarifying the reading log task. One category added was off-task chatting. This included statements which digressed from the topic at hand. To reiterate, the refined categorization system included the two types of reading (i. e., efferent reading and aesthetic reading) and two types of non-meaning talk (i. e., "procedural talk" and "off-task chatting"). While not unimportant, non-meaning talk is beyond the focus of this study, and is therefore not elaborated in the ensuing sections.

Interview data in conjunction with students' reading logs and field notes were put into content analysis. Content analysis is a process in which a researcher tries to identify codes and categorize the recurrent patterns (Patton, 2002). Following procedures laid out by Patton, I began with figuring out what things fitted together (convergence). I meticulously judged whether the data belonging to a certain category held together in a meaningful way (internal homogeneity) and whether differences among categories were clear (external heterogeneity).

The process in which the focus groups created socially-mediated meaning from the texts will be presented in the thesis. The following symbols are used.

Symbol	Description
[Overlapping talk

I don't like—	Break in a phrase
()	Description of participant's action
italics	Participants' words in English
(pause)	Longer than “normal” pause, that is, longer than 5 seconds
...	Segment of transcript deleted

To establish the validity or trustworthiness of the study, I followed the verification procedures proposed by Creswell (2003) to ensure trustworthiness advocated by many qualitative researchers.

First, the “prolonged engagements and persistent observations” helped me acquire a better understanding of the target students’ learning and interaction behaviors. I was familiar with the four focal participants because I had interacted with them extensively. For example, some asked for my help with confusing concepts in English courses. Some consulted me on nonacademic matters such as their relationships with their parents.

Next, “triangulation” of multiple data sources (e. g. , semi-structured interviews, students’ reading logs), methods (e. g. , field notes, audiotaping), and theories (e. g. , transactional theory, socioculturalism) was performed, which not only facilitated deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied but also corroborated the findings for validity.

Creswell also highlighted the importance of “clarifying research biases. ” Simply put, the researcher should clarify his/her bias so that “the reader understands the researcher’s position and any biases or assumptions that impact the inquiry” (p. 202). In order to remind myself of the potential biases, I kept reflection journals from the inception to the end of data collection. I recorded what went on every class and a summary of my comments on students’ reading logs.

Another crucial technique for establishing credibility is member check. “Member checks” didn’t wait until the writing-up stage. After each class meeting, I

asked the focal group questions to verify my interpretations of what happened during small-group work. During interviews, I asked for clarification to make sure that my interpretation accurately reflected what they conveyed. Transcriptions of interviews were also member-checked by all participants.

To ensure the verification procedure for “rich, thick description,” I provided readers with an extensive and careful description of the classroom context through multiple data resources so that they can determine whether the findings are applicable to other settings.

Finally, Creswell recommended “external audits” in which external consultants examined both the process and the product of the study. I had an ongoing dialogue with both the home teacher and my thesis advisor during data collection and analysis, and their feedback and comments helped to ensure the quality of this research project.

As this case study was teacher-researcher-based, there was a strict observance of research ethics based on the principles proposed by Lankshear and Knoble’s (2004).

First, “having a valid research design” avoids wasting the participants’ time. My research design is built around the theoretical position of qualitative research that focuses on process as outcome rather than product. This theoretical position fits my research inquiry. My research design contains research methods, procedures for collecting and analyzing data, and procedures to warrant research trustworthiness.

Next, my study didn’t start until I “obtained informed consent” from my students. In the consent form (Appendix D), I explained the general aims of the research, benefits, and the rights to the participants to avoid “deception.” My students knew they were free to drop anytime because they didn’t have the obligation to participate in my research.

Qualitative inquiry is more intrusive than quantitative approaches (Patton, 2002). For example, the participants in interviews told me things they never

intended to tell. I kept my data collection purposes clear in mind and was honest about the information I needed for addressing the research questions to “minimize intrusion.” Each participant was assigned a pseudonym. Any information that could be identified with the participants remained confidential. Information was anonymously reported to “ensure confidentiality and anonymity.” As my study probed into the participants’ perceptions of the group reading issues, questions eliciting their opinions about peers would become unavoidable in interviews. “Minimizing the risk of harm” would be an important issue that needed to be taken into utmost concern. To address this problem, the participants were reminded not to engage in personal attacks while commenting on peers’ group reading behaviors and interaction patterns. This procedure helped minimize such potential risks to the interviewees.

Due to the unequal power relationship between my students and me, I “showed respect to research participants all the time” and “avoid correction or manipulation.” I didn’t ask the students to discuss aspects of their lives that had nothing to do with the research. I also tried to avoid questions about their perceptions of literature discussion groups that might lead them to “act up” in order to please me.

2.2 Implementation process of group discussion and classroom observation

The present study sought to illuminate the collective meaning-making process of eighth graders’ grouped talk in response to short stories in an English reading class. In order to examine how students co-constructed meaning from within and beyond the text, the verbal interactions of the case study group consisting of four junior high school students across three textual discussions were analyzed in great detail. The findings revealed that the students shifted from superficial plot descriptions to making personal connections with the stories.

By shifting from describing the plot to experiencing the text as a resource for reflection, the case study students in the focal group achieved personal transformation. Some of the members perceived changes in their reading behaviors; others perceived changes in their personality. The transformation facilitated students' personal growth. Such personal growth can only be achieved when students were allowed to express their discoveries of the text's meaning rather than to simply answer questions about the text. Each of the group members' personal growth will be showcased after a portrayal of their critical and reflective reading which occurred in transacting with the texts efferently and aesthetically.

In an efferent reading, readers pay more attention to the cognitive, the referential, the factual, the analytic, and the quantitative aspects of meaning (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 1068). The focus group in this research produced two types of efferent reading, getting story facts and analyzing the input, namely, understanding the facts of the stories and analyzing the information they encountered. In understanding the story facts, the first type of efferent reading, they shifted from word-for-word translation of the story to plot summary and then to clarification of confusing parts. In their analysis of the input, the second type of efferent reading, students analyzed characters in all discussion sessions and additionally examined the author's literary technique while discussing *The Speckled Band*. Table 2.2 gives an initial overview as to how students read efferently across the three texts, in terms of the two types of efferent transactions.

Table 2.2 Efferent Transaction Across the Three Stories

Story	Type I: Getting story facts	Type II: Analyzing information
<i>The Last Leaf</i>	Translation	Characters
<i>The Speckled Band</i>	Plot summary	Characters and narrative technique
<i>The Silent Brothers</i>	Clarification of confusing parts	Characters and peer's questions

As shown in Table 2.2, the focal group delved into the literary texts by not only extracting facts from the texts but also systematically analyzing different

aspects of the stories. Although at this stage of discussions students were still engaging in partial decoding, it was obvious that students' thinking became more complex as they moved from character to other parts of the story. The depth and complexity of their analyses clearly show that the group members are critical thinkers as they read.

Rather than taking the teacher's unquestionable analysis of the text in the traditional class, the students in peer discussion collaboratively constructed analytic meaning. They therefore encountered enlarged opportunities to navigate different points of view and to challenge each other for an accepted interpretation, which is an essential aspect of critical thinking, as claimed by Kong & Pearson (2003). The following three story discussions will illustrate how the group thought independently and critically through different analyses of what they read.

The Last Leaf is a story of hope and personal sacrifice written by O. Henry. In the story, a young artist, Sue, took care of her roommate Johnsy (also a girl), who had pneumonia and reconciled herself with the fact that Johnsy would die when the last leaf fell off the vein. As Johnsy didn't want to live, the doctor couldn't help her. Her neighbor, old Behrman, wanted to cheer Johnsy up and therefore painted a never-failing leaf on the brick wall on the night of a strong storm. Quite unexpectedly and touchingly though it was he who died of pneumonia in the end.

During the present textual discussion, the group focused their effort on reading on literal translation and character analysis. They initiated their group conversation with an attempt to recount facts regarding characters and plot, ending up translating the whole story.

Discussion Excerpt 1: The Last Leaf

Chao-jie: What do you think happened in the story? Ai-ling: What happened in the story?

Chao-jie: Right, that is—

Pei-yun: What's the story about? Chao-jie: It is about—

Pei-yun: What's it mainly about?

Chao-jie: There were two girls in the story. Pei-yun: They were both artists.

Chao-jie: Yes. Well, they met and talked happily. Later they lived in an apartment

together. . . Their rooms were in an old house, at— at— Pei-yun: At the top of an old house.

Chao-jie: At the top, right. Then, in December of a certain year, it was cold in New

York. . . Then, it was because she didn't— Pei-yun: She didn't want to live.

Chao-jie: Right. She didn't want to live. . . Three days later there were five leaves, only five.

In the above discussion excerpt, one student, Chao-jie, talked for a long time, almost translating the whole text. Another student, Pei-yun, made short responses to assist Chao-jie in completing his utterances. Chao-jie is hard-working and enthusiastic about helping people. As he looked up all the new vocabulary and was very familiar with the content, he was eager to tell his peers what happened in the story. After translating the story for his teammates, Chao-jie invited them to analyze what actions the character would take next.

Discussion Excerpt 2: The Last Leaf

Chao-jie: Did Johnsy realize her dream of painting a picture of the Bay of Naples? Pei-yun: Mm. No, I guess not.

Ai-ling: No, I didn't think so.

Chao-jie: Why not? The author didn't mention it but I think she possibly did.

Pei-yun: Maybe. Ai-ling: Maybe.

Chao-jie: She got well. When she saw the last leaf, she asked— Ai-ling: —Sue.

Pei-yun: To bring her a bowl of soup.

Chao-jie: She wanted a bowl of soup, saying "one day, I'm going to paint the Bay of Naples!" So, I think she did realize her dream.

It seemed that most students in the group had never thought about whether Johnsy would realize her dream of painting a picture of the Bay of Naples while reading alone. One student, Chao-jie, brought this issue up and propelled his peers into an analysis of the actions Johnsy would take. In order to develop persuasive argument, Chao-jie elaborated on the situation described in the text to make his analysis credible. This sort of action opened opportunities for his group members to venture on to the idea that the text left some information unanswered and to consider varying interpretations of the same episode.

As highlighted by one student, the purpose of participating in literature discussion group was to gain more answers and perspectives. She said, “What you have never thought about in the text is probably what other people have to say about.” (1st interview, Ai-ling). That is to say, student-led literature discussions created opportunities for the group to be exposed to different viewpoints, which was important in enhancing their critical reasoning competence. This also gave evidence to Langer’s (1995) claim that individual interpretations might be shaped, reshaped, and altered by others while engaging in story discussions.

With more frequent vocalization, Chao-jie naturally took on the role of a leader. However, his efforts to translate all the important details of the story were not appreciated by another teammate, Jin-xin, who didn’t participate in the textual talk at all. In Jin-xin’s viewpoint, rather than leading the group discussion, Chao-jie dominated it. By saying that he didn’t appreciate Chao-jie’s leadership role, Jin-xin noted, “One person’s talking a lot is unfair to other individual group members. Discussion means everyone’s in it, not someone talks the whole time even if he looks up all the new words and understands the story content well.” (1st Interview, Jin-xin). Jin-xin also proclaimed that Chao-jie’s detailed translation of the story was meaningless because the teacher’s read-aloud and the illustrations in the storybook already helped him comprehend the text. Reading the Chinese

translated version would be quicker than listening to Chao-jie' s translation. In other words, Jin-xin thought it was unnecessary to read word-for-word or sentence-to-sentence. He therefore simply withdrew from the discussion and let Chao-jie take over. One week later, Jin-xin started participating and kept doing so in the subsequent classes due to the new assignment on generating questions. His group continued the discussions of texts by going over the questions posed by each individual member.

The Speckled Band: Plot summary and character and literary technique analysis

Compared to the previous textual talk, the group focused their current story discussion on creating analytic meaning more than on getting the story facts. In other words, rather than translating the whole text, the group identified the major story events. As for creating analytical meaning, the students continuously examined the character' s motivation and went even further to scrutinize the author' s literary technique. What was noteworthy about this textual talk was that even the student with limited reading abilities was able to play the role of “ more knowledgeable others ” by performing the clarification task. The following example demonstrates such a case in which the low-achieving reader, Ai-ling, clarified the perplexing events for the high-achieving and the medium-achieving students, Pei-yun and Jin-xin.

Discussion Excerpt 3: The Speckled Band Pei-yun: How did her sister die?

Ai-ling: She was murdered by her stepfather. [With a snake. Jin-xin: [Snake!

Chao-jie: In fact, her stepfather put the snake in her bedroom many times. Pei-yun: So, her stepfather really meant to murder them.

Ai-ling: Exactly! If they got married, they could share the money their mother left with their stepfather.

...

Jin-xin: But I'd like to know why she said her hair was gray and she was almost dying.

The Speckled Band, one of Sherlock Holmes' s short stories, is about a violent doctor who murdered one of his stepdaughters, Julia, and tried to murder the other, Helen, so that he wouldn't need to give up any of his inheritance. Every night, he put a snake through an air-vent for it to go down a bell-rope to Julia's bed. The snake came through an air-vent many times before it killed Julia. In the end, the doctor was killed by the snake in the same way.

It seemed clear that the low-achieving reader, Ai-ling, neither assumed a subordinate role nor sat quietly during small-group discussion activities, as argued by Good and Brophy (2003) and Poole (2008). On the contrary, she actively provided answers and extended others' comments with more elaborate explanations in response to her peers' requests for textual information. Ai-ling's explanation facilitated her peers' comprehension; therefore, her group could soon engage in an analysis of the character's motivation.

Discussion Excerpt 4: The Speckled Band

Ai-ling: I think her stepfather married her mother because of money.

Chao-jie: Did he know she was rich in the beginning? He didn't know that.

Jin-xin: It's her mother, not her stepfather that is rich.

Chao-jie: Right. Her mother is rich. I mean the man, Helen's stepfather. I don't think

he knew that her mother was rich in the beginning. Jin-xin: He did.

Ai-ling: Yes, he knew it.

Jin-xin: Here, the text mentions this. Her mother is rich.

Chao-jie: Right. That Helen knew it doesn't mean her stepfather knew it, too. Jin-xin: Her stepfather knew it. He knew it.

In the above discussion excerpt, the students holding different interpretations of the same episode entered the discussion. Chao-jie and Jin-xin challenged each other and defended themselves. Their arguments were supported with reasons and evidence. Although students didn't achieve a consensus, being exposed to more than one perspective was essential in promoting their high-level cognitive processing such as analyzing and evaluating alternatives. The high-level learning that occurred within this group could also be observed from their analysis of the author's literary technique.

The author of *The Speckled Band* used "foreshadowing" to drop hints about certain plot development. Although the students in the group didn't have the appropriate vocabulary for foreshadowing, they recognized that the author provided a hint for them to predict what might come in the near future. One student, Chao-jie, examined the clue about the band worn by gypsies and commented that the technique was used to suggest what might help Holmes solve the case later in the story.

Discussion Excerpt 5: *The Speckled Band*

Chao-jie: Actually, there is a clue on page 5. Pei-yun: On page 5?

Chao-jie: It says that gypsy women, gypsies wear something like the band around their necks.

Ai-ling: What is the clue, then?

Chao-jie: This clue possibly helped Holmes figure out it was the snake or something that killed Helen's sister.

In the above excerpt, one student, Ai-ling, asked for an elaborated explanation for the clue, foreshadowing and another student, Chao-jie, exemplified and elaborated his idea to justify his assertion. Their analysis about the narrative technique the author employed to tell the story revealed that the students were able

to evaluate logically the material they were asked to read. In addition, students were able to journey through each other's thoughts via talk in order to achieve further understanding of the story. Such an analytical approach also appeared in their last group discussion of *The Silent Brothers*.

The Silent Brothers: Clarifying confusing Sources, analyzing character and answering peer's questions

The focus group moved a big step toward getting the story facts straight in the present textual discussion. *The Silent Brothers* tells a story of two brothers who didn't speak a single word to each other because of a quarrel ten years ago. They quarreled about a woman, Annie, with whom they were both in love. They went on living together but never spoke for ten years until they got their older sister's will. Their sister would give her bequest to the one who married Annie. Therefore, both brothers proposed to Annie, hoping to get all the money.

Instead of translating the story or summarizing the plot, the group clarified the confusing events in the current story. Literal comprehension cannot be neglected because it is upon this basic aspect of literal understanding that readers' interpretation and analysis of texts are based. This group first worked together to deal with the meaning of a singled word, Bursley, in "Every evening Bursley watched the two brothers as they walked home," since some students didn't know that Bursley referred to the people of Bursley, a city in the United Kingdom.

Discussion Excerpt 6: *The Silent Brothers* Ai-ling: Where shall we start?

Pei-yun: Two brothers, two silent brothers.

Ai-ling: Hmm? But, who is this person? (points to the word, Bursley under the illustration)

Pei-yun: No, it's a name of a place. Chao-jie: Right, but—

Jin-xin: You can confirm this in the later part of the text, which says the people of this place. (points to the word, Bursley)

Pei-yun: The people of this place?

Jin-xin: Exactly. This sentence mentions how the people of this place felt about the two brothers.

Ai-ling: I see. I see.

Pei-yun: Yes, I was just trying to figure out why a place name turns into a person.

In the above excerpt, one student, Jinxin, used the phrase “the people of Bursley” to attack this ambiguous word, Bursley. It is worth noting that clarification of this word meaning was the only time the group spent on literal comprehension. The non-linear storyline (i. e. , flashback) and length of the text didn't seem to cause the students' difficulty in tracing the plot development. That is to say, they no longer made literal plot descriptions. Instead, they speculated about what the author was trying to say. By deducing the author's intentions, students considered what certain episodes might mean. In the following discussion excerpt, students looked for the hidden meaning about why the character did what she did.

Discussion Excerpt 7: The Silent Brothers

Pei-yun: Why did the lady accept one man's proposal of marriage, but at the same time, she accepted the other's?

Jin-xin: Because she found them too stupid. This is mentioned in the text.

Chao-jie: Hmm. She just wanted to get even with them.

Pei-yun: To get even? Chao-jie: Exactly!

Pei-yun: Because they married her just for money. Chao-jie: And she had waited for ten years.

McRae(1996) looks at the difference between “referential” and “representational” materials to highlight the need for the application of literary

materials to language teaching. Referential language remains close to the meaning defined in the dictionary; therefore, referential materials are purely informational. Unlike referential language learning, in representational language leaning “the rules are questioned, played around with, and put to different uses as part of that ongoing process of language acquisition” (p. 17). The basic tenet underlying such learning is that it takes imagination to learn a language because language contains plurality of potential meaning, not just one single denotational meaning. In other words, representational language is conducive to inspiring readers’ imagination.

As shown in Discussion Excerpt 7, the literary material allowed one student, Chao-jie, to blend his imagination with the text to extend his teammate’s analysis of why the character behaved in a particular manner. Obviously, Chao-jie was inspired to use his imagination to think further and think more. With his in-depth analysis, the group members were forced to consider interpretation of the character’s actions that didn’t agree with what they had done previously. This appeared to suggest that student-student interaction provides learners with more opportunities to practice critical thinking when compared to the whole-class, teacher-student interaction, where there is only one correct and privileged interpretation.

Over a span of three months, the case study group discarded word-for-word translation of the text when the stories were getting more complex and lengthier. They went beyond their understanding of the text from superficial meaning and continually analyzed the materials they were asked to read. They were no longer passive readers who read word-for-word or sentence-for-sentence. They became critical thinkers who drew on a variety of resources, including verbal and nonverbal text, intertextual knowledge, and imagination, to validate their analysis.

Unlike the traditional reading classroom, the students in the literature discussion group were exposed to alternative interpretations that forced them to reconsider their own interpretations. Instead of relying on a single viewpoint, they were encouraged to critically examine multiple perspectives. Such careful analysis

would bring out a more complete understanding of the text. However, this group didn't simply read for textual analysis. They thoughtfully reflected upon their own personal lives. In the section that follows, this group's aesthetic transactions will be explored further.

Aesthetic transaction: Bringing meaning to text

In an aesthetic reading, readers pay more attention to the affective, the sensuous, the emotive, and the qualitative aspects of meaning (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 1068). The participants in the study created two types of aesthetic transactions, character evaluation and personal connection. Simply put, they made judgments about characters and wove connections between their own life experiences and the text. Table 2. 3 outlines the group's aesthetic reading across the three literary interactions.

Table 2. 3 Aesthetic Transactions Across the Three Stories

Story	Aesthetic Reading
<i>The Last Leaf</i>	Absence
<i>The Speckled Band</i>	Character evaluation
<i>The Silent Brothers</i>	Personal connection

As shown in Table 2. 3, the focal group didn't generate aesthetic responses in the first story discussion. In other words, they read to experience literary texts as sources for reflections and connections relevant to their lives in the last two story discussions.

As mentioned earlier, while discussing The last Leaf, one student, Chao-jie, talked for a long time, almost translating the whole text since he primarily employed a bottom-up approach to process the text. However, as the study proceeded, he no longer made a word-for-word translation of the print. Chao-jie tried to guess the story content and used the context to tackle unknown words. He gradually found it unnecessary to translate all the vocabulary and sentences. Reading for gist was fast and sufficient to comprehend what he read.

As Chao-jie moved beyond lengthy translation, his group devoted more time to creating analytic meaning. After *The Last Leaf*, they started exchanging their personal

reactions in the last two textual talks. These collaborative discussions led them toward a deeper communication with the texts and with themselves. In this section, I will describe how the students aesthetically explore literature and through literature developed values that might exist for them personally.

Characters are extremely important because they form the plot of a story. Throughout the three focal discussions, character analysis is a consistent theme in responding to the text efferently. While drawing on the values they held, the students in the focal group demonstrated their aesthetic faculty by making judgmental responses to the character, Helen's stepfather. They viewed his behavior outrageous and judged him too greedy. This judgment then led the students back into the story for a more thorough investigation of the issue that concerned them, being contented.

Discussion Excerpt 8: *The Speckled Band*

Ai-ling: Well, do you think money can change people? Jin-xin: Yes.

Chao-jie: Yes.

Pei-yun: Of course. Ai-ling: Aha!

Chao-jie: Money is evil.

Pei-yun: Many people are like that, right? Because of the money he got, a kind-hearted person ended up becoming a bad guy.

Chao-jie: Something like fighting over property among family members.

Ai-ling: But do people murder their own genetic children?

Jin-xin: They do, I guess.

...

Ai-ling: I find her stepfather too greedy. He didn't want to share the money he inherited with his stepfathers. Money was everything for him.

Chao-jie: Right, he could still get money every year—

Ai-ling: If he hadn't been so greedy, they would have been all right. Pei-yun: Exactly.

Ai-ling: No one would die. He would still get the money, just not so much.

...

Ai-ling: I've got a final question. How to be a contented person? Pei-yun: How to be a contented person?

Ai-ling: It's a little bit difficult to be a contented person. Pei-yun: Yes, indeed.

Chao-jie: To be contented.

Ai-ling: Human desires are endless. Pei-yun: Right.

Chao-jie: Right. Because human desires are endless, we need to be contented with what we have.

In the above excerpt, the students explored their own worldviews about money. They each voiced their opinions. Pei-yun and Chao-jie also provided examples to support their opinions. The consensus that money can change people appeared to stimulate the students into making an appraisal of Helen's stepfather. After judging that he was too greedy, Ai-ling asked another question to lead the group to reflect on being contented with what one has. Such a thorny issue not only propelled her peers to critically examine their reactions to the story but also helped them explore the value of the text. This finding is in line with Hulan's (2010) argument that responding to literary texts through group discussion allows readers to develop ownership of a text.

Transactional theory posits that text in the absence of a reader is simply ink on paper. The "poem" is evoked when the text is brought into the reader's mind. The poem also suggests a "reciprocal, mutually defining relationship" between the reader and the text. Reading is a two-way process between a reader and a text where both are changed in the act of reading (Rosenblatt, 1986). When discussion

is added, the poem then consists of an individual's opinion and others' opinions on the text as well. Dillard (1982) characterized the relationship between reader and text with the metaphor of a river and its banks, each working its effects on the other. When discussion is added to the act, the poem consists of individual opinion and others' opinions on the text as well. This group illustrates this concept nicely.

In Discussion Excerpt 8, when one student, Ai-ling, raised her question about the theme of money to construct meaning from the story, the "poem" this group created was that money can change people. Through responding to each other's feelings about money, they made inquiries of themselves and the human condition. This new poem created by the students from the text was about how to be a contented person. In the process of creating the collective "poem," the students were also changed. The issue that concerned them shifted from money to being contented. It seemed clear that they were shaped by the text and the text was shaped by them. Reading is a dynamic interaction between readers and a text. In this dynamic interaction, the students probed deeply into topics they found personally meaningful to experience the text as a source for reflection.

By leaving the surface meaning and delving into the issues that evolved from the story, the students in this group improved the quality of their responses. The improvement might be attributed to the good examples of student-generated questions. As displayed in Discussion Excerpt 8, the two questions which elicited more personal reflective responses were posed by the low-achieving reader, Ai-ling. When asked why she became more capable of generating questions to help her peers reflect on what was read, Ai-ling replied, "I consulted the model questions and then thought carefully about how to ask questions." (2nd Interview, Ai-ling).

Numerous peer reading scholars emphasize the importance of modeling and scaffolding in helping discussion members guide each other to deeply engage in reading and discussion (Allen et al. , 2003; Hulan, 2010). To put it in another way, explicit instruction of initiating topics that have the potential to evoke students' emotions, images, and ideas is essential. The examples of student-led questions I provided functioned as the scaffold so that Ai-ling could pose good

questions to inspire her teammates to reflect on what they read. The result of such reflective thoughts was a better understanding of themselves and the outside world. Students were also inspired to investigate the possibilities of themselves and the world around them in their next literary interaction, where they made personal connection to the text.

Personal connection was made by the group while transacting with *The Silent Brothers* aesthetically. In this story, the two brothers had a quarrel. They went on living together and never spoke to each other for 10 years. Life without words was difficult for them; therefore, they wrote on a slate to communicate. The focal group students connected the story to their personal lives, moving either “from the life to the text or the text to one’s life” (Sipe, 2000, p. 268). It is when students connect their own experiences to the text that personal connection become apparent. The connections often steer readers to see into and reflect on their own worlds. The following vignette exemplifies how students made personal connections to the story and reflected on parental affection.

Discussion Excerpt 9: *The Silent Brothers*

Pei-yun: You know what, I just had a quarrel with my older sister over trivial matters.

Well, we didn’t want to talk to each other. I didn’t even answer her questions. Chao-jie: Then, would you like to write things down as the brothers did?

Pei-yun: I’m just tired. She keeps asking me things that are none of her business like what time I go to school.

Chao-jie: How come does she ask that kind of question? You have been going to school for one year already.

Pei-yun: Indeed, she ’ s so annoying. When I go to school is completely irrelevant to her.

Jin-xin: Wow! I totally forget my quarrels with other people.

Pei-yun: Whenever I quarrel with my mom, I feel sad and reflect on that.

Ai-ling: But if you quarrel with your older sister, you—

Chao-jie: You don' t. Pei-yun: [I don' t.

Ai-ling: [You don' t.

Jin-xin: Wow! You don' t forget your quarrels. I forget mine.

Pei-yun: I do. I forget my quarrels with my older sister, but I can' t forget the quarrels

with my parents. I feel— Ai-ling: You feel sorry.

Pei-yun: Exactly! How dare I quarrel with my parents! They must have invested a lot to bring me up.

The situation in which the two brothers didn' t speak to each other due to a quarrel in the story reminded Pei-yun of her being silent to her older sister. Pei-yun recalled her experience to make a life-to-text connection. A life-to-text connection is one in which students connect their own autobiographical experiences with the text.

As Pei-yun' s experience paralleled the two story characters' , Chao-jie suggested Pei-yun follow the practice of writing on a slate to communicate, making a text-to-life connection. A text-to-life connection was one in which students used the text to make a suggestion. These two students' explicit connection then elicited an interesting and long dialogue among their peers where they each shared their personal stories of fighting with their siblings. Students were interested in each other' s stories and felt comfortable asking questions about how other family members reacted to their sibling rivalry.

Upon initial observation of the students' sharing, it appeared that their contributions were deviating from the designated discussion task. However, after listening to the full conversation again, I realized that the students in the group were relating what they had read in the story to what they had experienced in their lives. More importantly, they were using the text to shape their believes such as those in parental affection. As shown in Discussion Excerpt 9, by comparing how she felt about quarrels with her older sister and with her parents, Pei-yun came to

realize that she should avoid having a confrontation with her parents. It seemed clear that through literary interactions, students were encouraged to explore the literary value that existed for them personally.

The students linked the text to their own experiences because they saw the relevance of the quarrel in the story to their lives. As they had experienced having sibling rivalry themselves, their feelings were aroused and everyone had much to share. They reported that the plot was realistic because it could really happen and people could act like the two main characters. It is apparent that the theme of sibling rivalry enabled students to make personal connections. And this illustrates that stories involving universal themes that are relevant to students' lives are more likely to achieve sustained discussion.

In addition to the appropriate theme, some students commented that having given more opportunities to talk about stories helped them reach beyond surface understanding to create self-induced aesthetic responses. In other words, as students were familiar with initiating their own topics for discussion, they became more able to pose questions to probe into others' opinions and feelings about the text. From a sociocultural perspective, participation is both the goal and the means of learning. Students need sufficient opportunities to participate in textual discussions (Martinez-Roldan et al. , 2005). Being given enough chances for practice, the focal group students could read to learn about themselves and the people around them.

Across a three-month time frame, there was tremendous progress in the group's literary reading. The students made a big step forward from not generating any affective responses to developing their own evocation of a literary work of art. The advancement achieved by the group members could be attributed to three factors. They are good examples of student-generated questions, universal themes relevant to students' lives, and ample opportunities for peer-led story discussions. As students exchanged their evocation within the literature discussion group, they extended the aesthetic involvement of their teammates with the text and

experienced literature as a powerful source in self transformation. In the subsequent section, each group member's growth as an independent reader will be explored further.

2.3 Evaluation and reflection on teaching effect

Peer discussion takes an important place in literacy development since a growing number of studies have documented its benefits for students (Almasi et al. , 2002; Berne & Clark, 2006). The students in the case study group perceived that they achieved personal transformation through peer interaction around literacy events. Such transformations promoted their personal growth, which could be categorized into reading development and character development. In the subsequent sections of personal transformation, the first two students' (i. e. , Chao-jie's and Ai-ling's) vignettes explicate participants' reading development and the ensuing two (i. e. , Jin-xin's and Pei-yun's) exemplifies character development throughout the process.

Chao-jie: Moving beyond translation

Skilled readers adopt both bottom-up and top-down approaches to ensure the accurate and rapid processing of information (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). At the beginning of the study, Chao-jie primarily employed a bottom-up approach to process the text. As demonstrated in Discussion Excerpt 1, he recognized letters and words and dealt with that information with little reference to his prior knowledge. Chao-jie's reading habits revealed his belief about reading, that is, reading was translating. However, by the end of the study, he no longer created a piece-by-piece mental translation of the information from the printed page. He tried to guess the story content and used the context to tackle unknown words. Such change might be attributed to Chao-jie's observations about Jin-xin's reading behavior. Rather than reading word-for-word, Jin-xin read for the gist, as highlighted earlier in the section of The Last Leafin Efferent Transaction.

Interview Excerpt 1: 3rd Interview, Chao-jie

Chao-jie: I intended to look up every new word in the dictionary. In other words, I wanted to translate the whole text. Later, I found it unnecessary to do so because (giggles) I could comprehend the story without knowing each word. I tried to guess the story content. Although I still look up words for definitions, I don't look up as many words as I did before. I avoid reading word-for-word because translation takes me excessive time. My peers read for the gist too, which is faster.

Researcher: So, you increased your reading speed as a result of not using the dictionary?

Chao-jie: Yes, I can guess the meaning of new words from the context.

Chao-jie's perceived improvement of reading speed implied that he knew how to cope with the challenging task successfully. He was assigned to read a larger amount of materials than before. The length of the short stories read in this project is much longer than the texts in their textbooks. Speed became important; therefore, he decided to read a story for the story's sake regardless of the linguistic difficulties. The question Chao-jie raised to challenge the author in his 7th log entry on Scandal in Bohemia added to the evidence that he reached beyond translating to critical thinking:

The beginning of the story is "the King s' Mistake". Everything happened aftermath is based on that. Yet what on earth dis the King do wrong? I don't think the king did anything wrong. He was simply fearful. (Chao-jie's 7th log entry)

In the story, the King of Bohemia was going to marry a Scandinavian princess. However, he had a liaison with another woman, Irene Adler, five years earlier, and Irene had a photograph of herself and the King together. As the princess would call off the marriage if she discovered the King's love affair, the King asked Holmes to take back the photograph before Irene sent it to the Scandinavian royal family. Chao-jie's confusion might be largely due to the title of the first chapter, The King s' Mistake.

In Chao-jie's view, the King's romantic relationship with Irene wasn't a mistake. He was just worried too much that Irene would send the photo to the princess he was going to marry. It is important to note that the original version

didn't have the chapter title. It was logical to speculate that implicit in Chao-jie's questioning was his challenge about the added title in the retold version. In addition to thinking critically on what was read, Chao-jie reflected on the issue raised in the story and created personal evocation. He wrote,

Did the King really love the daughter of Scandinavian King? In my opinion, he was afraid the "scandal" would ruin his reputation as a king. Although this story makes me feel peaceful, I think the writer still has something he wants to tell us. (Chao-jie's 7th log entry)

From Chao-jie's perspective, the King didn't do anything wrong. It was the royal family's intermarriage that didn't allow the King to get married with a commoner that he loved. Again, the above questions clearly indicated that Chao-jie could move beyond reading as translating to relate text on a personal level. In other words, he approached the literary work aesthetically. Another group member, Ai-ling, also became more able to take an appropriate reading stance as the study proceeded.

Ai-ling: Having deeper engagement with characters

The weak reader, Ai-ling, fostered her reading development in producing more elaborate written responses and in generating questions which elicited more personal reflective responses. Ai-ling's active participation in the co-construction of meaning deepened her personal involvement with the reading materials. During the end-of-study interview, Ai-ling reported that the group dialogue had served to change the nature of her responses in her later log entries.

Interview Excerpt 2: Ai-ling, 3rd Interview

Researcher: Do you feel any changes about the way you write your reading logs after participating in group discussions? If yes, please explain why.

Ai-ling: Yes, I remember. (giggles) In the beginning, I had no ideas about what I wrote. Gradually, I came to know what and how to write in reading logs.

Researcher: Why?

Ai-ling: Because we talked about what kind of a person a certain character might be and things he or she did. Yeah, through discussions, I know what and how

to write about the characters. This is different from what I wrote in my previous entries where I only described the characters in the story. (giggles)

Different from her 3rd and 6th entries where she only described the things the character did in the Character Map, in later entries Ai-ling wrote about how the character interacted with other characters and explained why she didn't like them. More than that, she judged their behaviors to be immoral or inappropriate. By going beyond description and toward explanation, Ai-ling broadened her stance from an efferent one only to one which included an aesthetic stance as well:

Johnsy is a sad person, but Sue and Behrman help to her, finally she became a never give up person. (Ai-ling's 3rd log entry)

I think Dr Grimesby Roylott is not only greed but also ruthless. So I don't like Roylott. He hurt and killed his step daughters for money because Roylott don't know how to be content. (Ai-ling's 6th log entry)

John and Robert are very selfish and stupid. Always quarrel for small things. In the end, the two brothers want to marry Annie just for money. It really selfish. (Ai-ling's 11th log entry)

In the beginning, Ai-ling, the low-achieving reader, was reluctant to read a lengthy story. The three log entries done by Ai-ling suggested that she gradually stepped into longer texts and became fascinated by the stories. Similar to Chao-jie, who learned to avoid reading word-to-word by observing and participating in student-led literature discussions, Ai-ling learned to produce more elaborate literary responses that indicated her deeper engagement with characters. The finding is in accordance with Vygotsky's (1978) contention that learning might occur incidentally as learners observe the cognitive processes of their peers in group discussions.

Chao-jie's and Ai-ling's changes in reading behaviors also suggested that they spent more time reading and less time learning about reading. Such reading development is particularly significant for Chinese EFL learners who normally receive instruction that put emphasis on surface linguistic structures such as

translating words and sentences, studying new vocabulary, and on answering comprehension questions that mostly require recall of facts. Unlike the whole-class method in which students absorb knowledge from the teacher, the case study students actively constructed their personal unique meaning based on their textual knowledge and personal values. This finding is in accordance with transactional theory which claims that the reader is an active participant rather than a passive recipient in bringing to and taking meaning from a text (Rosenblatt, 1994).

Participating in peer-led discussions, Chao-jie and Ai-ling became capable of achieving more than they could independently. Being engrossed in a story and relating the text to a personal level, they enjoyed reading in a foreign language as they might enjoy in their native language. For these two students, English reading was not equated with completing drills or answering comprehension questions. Instead, it was done for their own purpose. Only when students saw the value and significance in reading could they use reading to discover who they were and further experience character development.

Rosenblatt (1995) encourages teachers to use peer discussion that allows students to learn from each other and adjust their constructed meanings as needed. The discussion experiences will give students plenty of opportunities to practice the sort of public dialogue necessary for the perpetuation of a democratic society. During his reflection on what he got out of group discussions, Jin-xin, who was very straightforward and self-centered before, expressed a change in his personality. He became less inflexible and more receptive to ideas that didn't match his own as a result of being exposed to multiple perspectives. He tried not to interrupt others' talk or disagree with others' ideas when hearing opinions different from his own. On the contrary, he listened patiently and asked for an explanation.

Interview Excerpt 3: 2nd Interview, Jin-xin

Jin-xin: I don't think too much about the story I read when I finish reading. But when my teammates has an interpretation different from mine, I'll ask them why they come up with such and such ideas. If they can provide plausible

explanations, I' ll be amazed and absolutely convinced.

Researcher: That is to say, you challenge your peers who take different points of view and ask them to elaborate on that.

Jin-xin: Yes. Why haven' t I come up an interpretation like that? I' ll keep asking and ask for an explanation.

Moreover, Jin-xin claimed that his peers ' elaboration brought out his understanding of what his peers thought. He came to realize that he never really understood a person until he considered things from that person' s viewpoint. For instance, after putting himself in Chao-jie' s shoes, Jin-xin lessened his hostility toward Chao-jie, who often took the floor first and dominated the group discussions. Jin-xin believed that Chao-jie often adopted a leadership role because Chao-jie worried that his teammates didn' t understand the story. Jin-xin stated, "Chao-jie is still loquacious. (giggles). . . He worries that we don' t understand the story. There' s nothing wrong with his warm-hearted personality. " (2nd Interview, Jin-xin).

Jin-xin' s perceptions of transforming into a more tolerant person were apparent in his observations about A-ling' s group discussion behavior. She used to consider Ai-ling to be a weak reader who waited for Chao-jie to tell her what happened in the story. However, as the study proceeded, Ai-ling was the only group member who became better at asking questions to help her group think more and deeper. Ai-ling' s comments and opinions usually got to the point and were beyond their expectations. Jin-xin noted, "At first, Ai-ling didn' t understand the story quite well. As the time went by, what she said was usually a breakthrough in what we had thought about the text. " (2nd Interview, Jin-xin). Jin-xin also got a different look at another teammate, Pei-yun, who became more willing to participate in the student-led group discussions.

Pei-yun: Becoming less introverted

There are two types of student participation in academic activities, namely

academic engagement and social engagement; both types of participation are positively correlated with academic outcomes (Caspi et al. , 2006). Academic engagement is usually performed by an individual alone, whereas social engagement needs to be carried out with other people. Using skills to work with others effectively and appropriately is crucial to students ' future successes in a multitude of life activities. When reflecting on her participation audiotaped in one class meeting, Pei-yun, who used to leave topic initiations to Chao-jie, remarked that she adjusted her personality in order to participate more actively.

Interview Excerpt 4: 2nd Interview, Pei-yun

Researcher: What do you think about the discussion you just had? Pei-yun: It' s much better than the last one.

Researcher: I think so, too.

Pei-yun: I also find myself more talkative. (giggles) Researcher: You laughed all the way, though.

Pei-yun: Right. I found I have changed a little. Researcher: What made you change?

Pei-yun: Because Chao-jie is always the one starts the group discussion. I tried to tell myself I can be the starter this time. It' s no good being introverted all the time.

Pei-yun's perceptions of becoming less introverted revealed that she learned how to interact with her peers favorably. As she was quiet and introverted, she never made the first move when participating in group work before. Having been aware of the leadership role to Chao-jie, Pei-yun was decided to take the initiative and to participate more actively ever since. My field notes were consistent with her description. It seemed to me that Pei-yun talked more and was eager to initiate discussions. In late November, I wrote the following in my filed notes:

There is a more balanced participation in the group. The group members have shared the floor more fully and equally since the 6th story discussion. To put

it in another way, Chai-jie was no longer the most vocal participant. Many factors may contribute to the increasing equality of participation. I'm quite sure that one of them is Pei-yun's willingness to participate. Since the 6th group meeting, Pei-yun, a shy and reticent student, has initiated a discussion more often and talked more and more loudly. As mentioned by Jin-xin the other day, Pei-yun was quiet, whereas now she participates in discussions more frequently and actively. (Field notes, 2022/11/25)

Pei-yun's willingness to participate was directly related to her perceived adjustment personality-wise. It is important to note that introverted people have an inner strength of character that extroverted people do not have (Brown, 2000). Nevertheless, extroversion is positively correlated with classroom participation (Caspi et al. , 2006). Pei-yun decided to be less introverted and moved her way to become a willing-to-share participant in group discussions. It seemed apparent the Pei-yun's personal transformation was achieved in the process of interacting with her fellow group members. This finding foregrounds the value of student-led literature discussion as stimulant to character development.

Research has documented character development in the practice of group discussions of literary texts (Nance, 2000). Jin-xin's and Pei-yun's transformation in their distinct personality traits adds substantially to the understanding of how students experienced character development in literary events. Rather than rely on the teacher to give definite answers, the case study students learned to respond to the texts in a personal and affective manner. Through their unique literary evocation, they reflected on real-life issues and achieved personal growth as independently reflective readers. As asserted by Martinez-Roldan et al. (2005), through their ongoing participation, learners become a literate community appropriating and transforming ways of interacting with peers and texts. In the next chapter, I will reiterate the focal group's social interactions around literacy events with a view to answer the research questions raised at the beginning of this thesis.

Conclusion of chapter 2

This chapter has detailed the research methodology and implementation process of integrating literature into EFL instruction through a junior high school English literature reading group. The study employed a case study approach to investigate how students construct meaning from literary texts through group discussions. The findings indicate that students progressed from superficial plot descriptions to deeper engagement with the texts, demonstrating critical thinking and personal connections. The chapter concludes that student-led group discussions provide a valuable platform for enhancing reading comprehension, fostering critical thinking, and promoting personal growth among EFL learners. The successful implementation of this approach underscores the importance of creating a supportive and interactive learning environment that encourages active participation and reflection.

Chapter 3: Challenges and Solution Strategies

3.1 The challenge of incorporating literature into EFL teaching

Incorporating literature into English as a Foreign Language(EFL)classrooms presents both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, literature offers a rich source of authentic language use, cultural insights, and opportunities for deep engagement with texts. It can enhance students' critical thinking skills, foster a love for reading, and provide a context for exploring complex themes and emotions. On the other hand, the integration of literature into EFL curricula often faces significant obstacles that can hinder its effective implementation.

One of the primary challenges is the potential mismatch between students' language proficiency levels and the linguistic demands of literary texts. Literary works often contain complex vocabulary, intricate syntax, and cultural references that may be unfamiliar to EFL learners. This can lead to comprehension difficulties and frustration, particularly for lower-level students. As a result, teachers may need to spend considerable time on vocabulary instruction and background knowledge building before students can fully engage with the text. For instance, a teacher might need to pre-teach key vocabulary words and provide context for cultural references to ensure that students can follow the narrative and understand the themes. This preparatory work is essential but can be time-consuming and may feel like an additional burden for teachers who are already managing a packed curriculum.

Literature is deeply rooted in the culture of its origin, and EFL students may struggle to understand the cultural nuances and contexts embedded in the texts. This can create a barrier to comprehension and engagement. For example, references to historical events, social customs, or idiomatic expressions that are specific to the source culture may be unfamiliar to students, requiring additional

explanation and context. Teachers often find themselves in a position where they have to not only teach the language but also provide a crash course in cultural studies to help students bridge the gap between their own cultural background and that of the literature they are reading. This dual responsibility can be overwhelming, especially when dealing with a diverse classroom where students come from various cultural backgrounds.

Traditional teaching methodologies in EFL classrooms often prioritize grammar and vocabulary instruction over reading for pleasure and deep comprehension. The shift to a more student-centered approach that encourages critical thinking and personal response to literature can be challenging for both teachers and students. Teachers may need to develop new instructional strategies to facilitate meaningful discussions and guide students in their literary explorations. This transition requires a significant investment of time and effort to retrain teachers and adapt teaching materials. Moreover, students who are accustomed to a more teacher-centered approach may initially resist the shift, finding it difficult to adapt to a more active and participatory role in the classroom.

Incorporating literature into the EFL curriculum requires additional time and resources. Teachers may face difficulties in balancing the demands of covering the syllabus with the time needed for in-depth literary analysis. Additionally, the preparation of supplementary materials, such as reading logs, discussion questions, and cultural background notes, can be time-consuming. This challenge is compounded by the fact that many educational systems have rigid schedules and curricular requirements that leave little room for flexibility. Teachers often have to make difficult choices about what to prioritize, and literature may sometimes be seen as a luxury that can be sacrificed in favor of more "essential" content.

Engaging students in literary texts requires more than just presenting them with a book. Teachers need to find ways to spark students' interest and motivate them to read and discuss the texts. This can be particularly challenging in a classroom where students may have varying levels of interest in literature and different reading habits. Creating a supportive and stimulating learning

environment that encourages active participation and critical thinking is essential. However, achieving this goal is easier said than done. Teachers must be creative and resourceful in finding ways to make literature relevant and appealing to their students. This might involve connecting the themes of the texts to contemporary issues, using multimedia resources to bring the stories to life, or organizing activities that allow students to interact with the material in a hands-on way.

Assessing students' engagement with literary texts can be more complex than evaluating their performance on standardized tests. Teachers need to develop alternative assessment methods that capture the depth of students' understanding, their critical thinking skills, and their ability to make personal connections with the texts. This may include portfolio assessments, reflective essays, and peer evaluations. The development of these alternative assessment tools requires careful consideration and a deep understanding of the learning objectives. Teachers must ensure that the assessments are fair, reliable, and provide meaningful feedback to students. This process can be challenging, especially for those who are accustomed to more traditional forms of assessment.

Despite these challenges, the benefits of incorporating literature into EFL classrooms are well-documented. By addressing these challenges through thoughtful planning, innovative teaching strategies, and a supportive learning environment, teachers can create meaningful and engaging literary experiences for their students. The effort required to overcome these obstacles is well worth it, as the rewards in terms of student engagement, critical thinking, and language proficiency can be substantial.

3. 2 Solution strategy

The focal group's collaborative reading process reveals that reading involves a simultaneous interaction of the reader with the text, with other readers, and with the environment. However, a majority of previous research has focused either on reading dimensions like reading achievement or on reader dimensions

like individual difference. Only a few have looked at how readers interact with other readers, with text, and with environment all simultaneously. The present study made contributions to the field by shedding light on the dialogic process of junior high school discussants' co-constructing meaning through grouped literature talk. Based on the findings, theoretical implications for the theories underlying the current inquiry, that is, Rosenblatt's transactional theory and Vygotskian socioculturalism, could be gained.

Rosenblatt's (1994) transactional theory defines process as an interactive transaction in which a reader is viewed as an active participant rather than a passive recipient in bringing to and taking meaning from a text. It is when students have a role in determining meaning that they are willing to create personal meaning inspired by the text. However, problems arise when it comes to language difficulties for EFL readers, especially for readers who use limited lexis and syntax. If these readers have a hard time struggling with the texts, how are they going to create personal interpretations?

This study has convincingly demonstrated that the EFL readers could dissolve the barriers in comprehension to construct critical meaning and reflective thoughts. Drawing on their background, previous reading experiences, and personal attitudes and belief, they went in and out of the texts to create unique interpretations and explore the literature value that existed for them. Although the EFL learners had limited linguistic proficiency, they were able to make meaningful transactions with the authors by means of the printed page. Therefore, instead of viewing reading as an intrapersonal problem-solving task involving decoding of the printed words, foreign language reading, even at the beginning stage, should be viewed as an interactive transaction between the reader and the text. How much a reader gets from a reading transaction can be maximized through social transaction with more knowledgeable others.

In Vygotsky's (1978) socioculturalism, more knowledgeable others, also known as mediators, facilitate learners' cognitive development by providing structural support to help the learners through the ZPD. In many group situations,

high achievers initially act as more capable others who model the skills or applications of concepts that their peers are expected to complete or master independently (Alley, 2005). Along a similar vein, in group reading, competent readers always act as more capable peers whose ideas are valued and chosen to represent the group (Matthews & Kesner, 2003).

However, as found in the present study, the low-achieving reader, Ai-ling, who became more capable of generating questions inspired her peers to think more and deeper. To put it in another way, it was the low-achieving reader's ideas, not the high-achieving reader's, that were valued. Reading researchers need to re-conceptualize low achievers' contribution by revising the current view which depicts that the role of more knowledgeable others are initially played by high achievers.

In summary, this study shows that EFL readers, even the beginners, should be viewed as independent thinkers who create personal meaning during the reading transaction. Also, the more knowledgeable peer can be the linguistically inadequate reader who takes the initiative to participate in social interactions around literacy events.

My primary interest for conducting this study has been to explore the collective meaning-making process of Chinese EFL learners during literature discussions. Based on the aforementioned findings, group discussion of literary texts not only offers alternative of literature reading instruction but also proves effective way-out of encouraging learners to be active meaning makers. Teachers are recommended to invite the approach into their beliefs about reading instruction and learning, and into their teaching practice. The investigated pedagogy deserves important privileges to attract EFL teachers to make its application more fruitful.

Redefining the roles of the teacher and the learner in literature discussions

A methodology that encourages students to apply their interactive faculty and helps them to create and negotiate meanings would first of all call for different roles of both students and instructors. In traditional reading classroom, teachers

control students' learning. They decide what students should learn and give them tests to determine how much they have learned. Unlike traditional reading classrooms, students are given ownership of their learning in student-led literature discussion.

In this study, the participants were positioned at the center of learning. They built knowledge collaboratively, decided what they wanted to learn and the way they learned, and searched and utilized sources of information as guides for understanding. Through participating in the discussions, they came to realize that there were multiple ways of knowing and multiple preferences for guiding their understanding. Teachers were not the only knowledgeable others and texts were not the only sources of knowledge. Although they initially were uncomfortable without my specific direction and usually asked for my confirmation about their thoughts, they gradually came to understand that their peers' knowledge was valid and their talk was a valuable tool for learning.

Social interactions helped the participants develop their own inner voice to guide their own learning and reading. In this process, teachers should act like facilitators instead of lecturers since the EFL learners were independent thinkers who made personal interpretations of what they read. That is to say, rather than transmit correct and privileged interpretation, teachers should encourage students to express their opinions and comments freely, and receive and value individual interpretations.

Creating a safe environment for students to manage their own discussions

Based on the efferent analyses and literary responses the focus group created, we can clearly see how the same text was variously interpreted by different readers in different contexts. The students brought their own attitudes and beliefs and autobiographic experiences to the texts and were collaboratively engaged in meaning construction. For these students, reading is a fluid and dynamic interaction of reader, text, other readers, and environment. But because the way in which one interacts with others is always bound to individual personal and social-cultural attitudes, it is important that a nonthreatening atmosphere in

which students feel secured to express their opinions, and negotiate their interpretations with others, just like they would in a natural situation.

Valuing the students' very own experiences and their perspectives when reading and responding to the text presented not only a unique opportunity for the individual reader to express him- or herself when interacting with the literary text. It also acknowledges the individual students personal interpretation of the literature and made him or her an active participant rather than a passive recipient in the reading process. Thus, students in the classroom deserve the equal and powerful chances to self-develop their potentials.

As previously mentioned, the teacher is often the only decision maker in traditional classrooms. For some teachers, sharing control with students is not easy.

They are afraid that students cannot respond to a text without specific guidance or will waste their time in off-task behaviors. In this study, even though the participants sometimes were not able to deal with their difficulties on their own and some problematic interactions that hindered their discussions sometimes emerged, it was evident that they could share ideas, collaborate to solve problems, discuss critical issues, and create new ways of thinking about the texts. They demonstrated the ability to read, think, respond, and construct meaning in a more student-centered learning context. They were able to guide their own discussions without my specific guidance. Their discussions became more productive over time.

These findings suggest that teachers trust that students can identify significant points in a text and share experiences related to what they have read. If literature discussion is always controlled by the teacher, students will not learn to make meaningful responses to the literary text because they would tend to become too concerned about whether their responses meet their teacher's expectations. If teachers want students to become independent learners, they must trust the ability of their students in managing discussions and controlling their own learning. Otherwise, they will always rely on authority to guide their learning. Students cannot learn to take responsibility for their own learning if they are never given

any opportunities to do so.

Choosing proper graded readers as reading materials

When deciding on the types and kinds of literature that are being used in the EFL classroom, it seems to be ultimately the responsibility of the teacher to select texts that lend themselves to invite reader-response views of the text and foster the students' critical thinking skills. The teacher should see that EFL learners' responses to a text depends on a number of variables, from motivation to interest, from their level of language proficiency to the background knowledge that is available to them. Learners cannot enjoy what they are reading if they are overwhelmed by difficult language (Huang, 2011). From this perspective, the students in this study couldn't have made critical analyses of the texts if they hadn't gained adequate comprehension.

This suggests that EFL reading teachers provide materials that match students' proficiency levels. Teachers can utilize simplified texts to help students who haven't had a good command of English to access original texts. More importantly, successful understanding of reading materials at the appropriate level can boost students' confidence. Furthermore, in order to maximize the optimal effect of foreign literary texts on students' reading, a selection of stories that can best raise students' interests and motivate them to read, discuss, express and explore needs to be promoted (Qian, 2016). Stories that have been made into feature films, TV shows, or manga and anime series will be more conducive to students' engaging with text and connecting it with their life experiences and world views.

Assigning students log entries to generate their own questions

Reading log is an effective tool teachers could use to involve students in examining literary texts and exploring their feelings. Teachers should also share a few excellent excerpts from students' log entries to model critical and reflective thinking. When students realized that they had a role to play in determining meaning, they became immersed in reading and adopted a variety of response

strategies to the work being read.

In this study, the model questions the teacher provided functioned as scaffold so that low-achieving students like Ai-ling could pose thought-provoking questions in her reading logs to inspire other group members to reflect on the stories they had read.

Student-generated questions ensure topic initiation opportunities for low achievers who usually sit quietly and whose ideas are often ignored during discussion activities (Good & Brophy, 2003; Poole, 2008), as it did in the case of Ai-ling. Assigned to generate questions, she could initiate topics and express her thoughts and reactions about the text. The assignment on generating students' own questions helps manage turn-allocation in group-work activities, maintain balanced contributions and allows weak readers to venture deeply into the text. Moreover, as this assignment doesn't limit the reciprocity of real conversation, it can be a great substitute for the use of pre-assigned discussion roles such as "discussion director" "connector" "challenger" and "summarizer" to equalize participation. In order for "grand conversation" to take place among students, explicit instruction of expandable questions that cannot be easily answered and require deeper processing of the text is needed (Kong & Pearson, 2003). And by so doing, the students get chances to be guided to gradually tap into activities of voicing ideas in more meaningful classroom interactions.

To conclude, valuing individual interpretations and modeling critical and reflective thinking through students' excerpted entries, using material appropriate for students' reading abilities, and ensuring low achievers' opportunities to initiate discussion topics are strongly recommended for reading instruction and the implementation of student-led group discussions.

3.3 Practical suggestions and future prospects

Although the findings of this study extend the current knowledge of how early intermediate EFL learners read as a group during grouped discussions of

literary texts, the research does not go without inherent limitations. The limitations of this exploratory study are mainly set by the methodology and data used therein.

First, literary texts were selected to be the reading materials for the literature discussion group. Nevertheless, using non-literary texts may result in different discussion patterns. Future research can expand the scope of this study by exploring how students discuss non-literary texts, especially those which cover controversial issues. Discussions which require students to take initial positions and then to argue for or against them may provoke different types of critical and reflective thinking.

Second, due to limited time available, this study was conducted in three months, which was relatively short for research of peer reading. However, with the positive findings reported by this study, a longer time frame for intervention may provide more insightful findings. A longitudinal study can be made to observe the changes that might occur in students' reading behaviors and interaction patterns over time, which might allow the researcher to obtain richer data and to describe students' learning experiences in greater detail. Moreover, a longitudinal study could allow the researcher to determine whether transacting with the texts effectively and aesthetically becomes part of students' reading habits. That is to say, will student-led grouped literature discussion create life-long readers, not just school-time readers?

Third, the EFL learners' written responses exhibited a great improvement over the three-month period. With the positive findings reported by this study, future research could be conducted over a longer period of time to examine improvements such as writing fluency and lexical richness since writing development is a continual process. Such studies could also cast light on students' development of literacy competence.

Forth, as this study was teacher-researcher-based, the teacher-researcher was heavily involved in collecting interview data, which might be a potential source of research bias. Although interview questions that might lead participants

to “act up” to please the teacher-researcher were avoided, future studies can be conducted with an independent interviewer to gather interview data to limit such a bias.

Finally, the students in the study were grouped heterogeneously and students were found to provide help to each other. Future research could be conducted by using ability grouping to see students’ learning outcomes. Future research should also take into consideration of “social drama” in grouping students so that each student in the group will have a chance to shine.

Conclusion of chapter 3

This chapter has addressed the challenges associated with incorporating literature into EFL teaching and proposed practical strategies to overcome these obstacles. It has identified key issues such as language proficiency mismatches, cultural barriers, teaching methodologies, time constraints, student motivation, and assessment complexities. The chapter has offered solutions grounded in theoretical frameworks and empirical findings, emphasizing the need for careful text selection, scaffolding, and creating a safe learning environment. The conclusion highlights that while integrating literature into EFL classrooms presents significant challenges, these can be effectively managed through thoughtful planning, innovative teaching strategies, and a supportive learning environment. The benefits of engaging students in literary exploration far outweigh the difficulties, ultimately leading to enhanced language proficiency, critical thinking skills, and cultural awareness.

CONCLUSIONS

The integration of literature into the English as a Foreign Language(EFL)classroom has proven to be a transformative and enriching experience for students,significantly enhancing their reading development and fostering critical thinking skills.Over the three-month study period,student-led group discussions on literary texts yielded positive outcomes,as evidenced by the students'ability to engage deeply with the themes explored in the short stories.By drawing from their own experiences and connecting the text to their lives,students were able to construct meaningful interpretations and develop their identities as literature readers.This process was further enhanced by encouraging students to move beyond surface-level facts and critically reflect on the themes and issues raised in the texts,thereby fostering their development as critical readers.These findings underscore the importance of incorporating literature into EFL instruction through student-centered,interactive activities that promote deep engagement and personal reflection.

These examples demonstrate that the transactions promoted the exploration of the text in relation to life experiences, while simultaneously encouraging new meaning. Students were engaged in interpreting the text and learning about their peers ' feelings, opinions, and values. Furthermore, students help each other clarify ideas and negotiate meaning as they engage in discussions. In this process, students moved beyond the text by making text-to-life connections and discussing issues of importance, and their comprehension increased because of these connections. Furthermore, students were interested and curious about how their peers would react under the same circumstances. Thus participation in literature discussion across time provided students with opportunities to confront subjects not often discussed in an eighth-grade classroom and to explore their thoughts and opinions with their peers. In addition, they could step aside from their own stories to make

room for others' voices. Discussion members could continually raise the ante on questions, and thus inspire even more critical thinking. In their many-layered conversations, everyone's contribution to discussion of text was valued.

Theory and research in reader response stresses the importance of having readers respond to literature in a variety of ways in order to expand and deepen their experience. Literature discussion provided this variety, and took it well beyond as students brought their own values and beliefs to the forefront, as well as reconsidered their ideas in light of new information others bring. Through reading, listening, and substantive conversation, the students were able to express their opinions, share their stories, question the way things are, and imagine what might be in the world. They stepped backwards and forwards, from the text to their lives and back to the text again to weigh the deeper meaning embalmed between the lines of text.

Therefore, through a myriad of opportunities for personal expression and interpersonal negotiation, students learned to balance the nature of texts against their lives and come to their own well-reasoned conclusions. Written texts were no longer the domain of a teacher's explanation, but part and parcel of their own individual as well as collaboratively-constructed interpretation. They had become, in essence, critical readers.

REFERENCES

1. Allayed. (2005). A study of Spanish high school students' discourse during group work. *Foreign Language Annals*, 38(2), 250–258. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2005.tb02488.x>
2. Allen, J., Moller, J. K., & Stroup, D. (2003). “Is this some kind of soap opera?”: A tale of two readers across four literature discussion contexts. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 19(3), 225–251. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10573560308216>
3. Almasi, J. F. (1995). The nature of fourth graders' sociocognitive conflicts in peer-led and teacher-led discussions of literature. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 30(3), 314–351. <https://doi.org/10.2307/747620>
4. Almasi, J. F., O'Flahavan, J. F., & Arya, P. (2001). A comparative analysis of student and teacher development in more and less proficient discussions of literature. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 36(2), 96–120. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.36.2.1>
5. Azadeh, G. (2016). The value of an emotional engagement with literature. *Aporia*, 26(1), 79–91.
6. Babae, R., & Yahya, W. (2014). Significance of literature in foreign language teaching. *International Education Studies*, 7(4), 80–85. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v7n4p80>
7. Baines, E., Rubie-Davies, C., & Blatchford, P. (2009). Improving pupil group work interaction and dialogue in primary classrooms: Results from a

- year-long intervention study. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 39(1), 95–117. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057640802701960>
8. Berne, J., & Clark, K. (2005). Meaning-making in ninth grade: An exploratory study of small group, peer-led literature discussions. *Illinois Reading Council Journal*, 33(3), 31–38.
 9. Berne, J., & Clark, K. (2006). Comprehension strategy use during peer-led discussions of text: Ninth graders tackle “The Lottery.” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 49(8), 674–686. <https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.49.8.4>
 10. Bernhardt, E. B. (1991). *Reading development in a second language: Theoretical, empirical, and classroom perspectives*. Ablex.
 11. Brown, D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (2nd ed.). Addison Wesley Longman.
 12. Butell, S. S., O’Donovan, P., & Taylor, J. D. (2004). Instilling the value of reading literature through student-led book discussion groups. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 43(1), 40–44. <https://doi.org/10.3928/01484834-20040101-03>
 13. Caspi, A., Chajut, E., Saporta, K., & Beyth-Marom, R. (2006). The influence of personality on social participation in learning environments. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 16(2), 129–144. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2005.07.003>
 14. Chen, H. C., et al. (2014). Using peer-led story discussions with junior college EFL learners. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 11(1), 65–93.

15. Claridge, G. (2005). Simplification in graded readers: Measuring the authenticity of graded texts. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 17(2), 144–158.
16. Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage.
17. Daniels, H. (2002). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in book clubs and reading groups*. Stenhouse Publishers.
18. Day, D. (2008). From skeptic to believer: One teacher's journey implementing literature circles. *Reading Horizons*, 48(3), 157–176.
19. Dillard, A. (1982). *Living by fiction*. Harper & Row.
20. Duchesne, S., & McMaugh, A. (2019). *Educational psychology for learning and teaching* (6th ed.). Cengage Learning.
21. Dunkelblau, H. (2007). ESL students discover the rewards of reading through reader response journals. *Encounter*, 20(2), 50–55.
22. Eeds, M., & Wells, D. (1989). Grand conversations: An exploration of meaning construction in literature study groups. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 23(1), 4–29.
23. Eeds, M., & Peterson, R. (1997). Literature studies revisited: Some thoughts on talking with children about books. *The New Advocate*, 10(1), 49–59.
24. Elliot, R. (1990). Encouraging reader-response to literature in ESL situations. *ELT Journal*, 44(3), 191–198. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/44.3.191>
25. Evans, K. S. (2002). Fifth-grade students' perceptions of how they

- experience literature discussion groups. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 37(1), 46–69. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.37.1.2>
26. Fung, D., & Howe, C. (2014). Group work and the learning of critical thinking in the Hong Kong secondary liberal studies curriculum. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 44(2), 245–270. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2014.897685>
27. Grabe, W., & Stoller, F. L. (2002). *Teaching and researching reading*. Pearson Education Longman.
28. Gillies, R. M. (2013). Productive academic talk during inquiry-based science. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 8(2), 126–142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1554480X.2013.767774>
29. Gilles, C. (1990). Collaborative literacy strategies: “We don’t need a circle to have a group.” In K. G. Short & K. M. Pierce (Eds.), *Talking about books: Creating literate communities* (pp. 55–68). Heinemann.
30. Good, T. L., & Brophy, J. E. (2003). *Looking in classrooms* (9th ed.). Pearson Education.
31. Hadaway, N., Vardell, S., & Young, T. (2002). *Literature-based instruction with English language learners, K-12*. Allyn and Bacon.
32. Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and learning in the language classroom*. Oxford University Press.
33. Hill, D. R. (2008). Graded readers in English. *ELT Journal*, 62(2), 184–204. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccm067>
34. Honeyfield, J. (1977). Simplification. *TESOL Quarterly*, 11(4), 431–440.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/3585739>

35. Hulan, N. (2010). What the students will say while the teacher is away: An investigation into student-led and teacher-led discussion within guided reading groups. *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, 14(1), 41–64.
36. Jacobs, G. M., & McCafferty, S. G. (2006). Connections between cooperative learning and second language learning and teaching. In S. G. McCafferty, G. M. Jacobs, & A. C. DaSilva Iddings (Eds.), *Cooperative learning and second language teaching* (pp. 18–29). Cambridge University Press.
37. Kim, M. (2004). Literature discussions in adult L2 learning. *Language and Education*, 18(2), 145–166. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500780408666872>
38. Kong, A., & Fitch, E. (2003). Using book club to engage culturally and linguistically diverse learners in reading, writing, and talking about books. *The Reading Teacher*, 56(4), 352–362.
39. Kong, A., & Pearson, P. D. (2003). The road to participation: The construction of a literacy practice in a learning community of linguistically diverse learners. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 38(1), 85–124.
40. Kozak, S., & Recchia, H. (2018). Reading and the development of social understanding: Implications for the literacy classroom. *The Reading Teacher*, 72(5), 569–577. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1748>
41. Kramsch, C., & Kramsch, O. (2000). The avatars of literature in language study. *The Modern Language Journal*, 84(4), 553–573. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0026-7902.00087>

42. Krashen, S. (1993). *The power of reading: Insights from the research*. Libraries Unlimited.
43. Krashen, S. (2002). *Foreign language education the easy way*. Longman.
44. Langer, J. A. (1987). A sociocognitive perspective on literacy. In J. A. Langer (Ed.), *Language, literacy and culture: Issues of society and schooling* (pp. 1–20). Ablex.
45. Langer, J. A. (1995). *Envisioning literature: Literary understanding and literature instruction*. Teachers College Press.
46. Lankshear, C., & Knobel, M. (2004). *A handbook for teacher research: From design to implementation*. Open University Press.
47. Martinez-Roldan, C. M., Yeager, B., & Tuyay, S. (2005). The inquiry acts of bilingual children in literature discussions. *Language Arts*, 83(1), 22–32.
48. Matthews, N. W., & Kesner, J. (2003). Children learning with peers: The confluence of peer status and literacy competence within small-group literacy events. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 38(2), 208–234. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.38.2.3>
49. McDonough, K., De Vleeschauwer, J., & Crawford, W. (2018). Comparing the quality of collaborative writing, collaborative prewriting, and individual texts in a Thai EFL context. *System*, 74, 109–120. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2018.02.010>
50. McMahon, S. I., & Raphael, T. E. (Eds.). (1997). *The book club connection: Literacy learning and classroom talk*. Teachers College Press.
51. McRae, J. (1996). *Representational language learning: From language*

- awareness to text awareness. In R. Carter & J. McRae (Eds.), *Language, literature & the learner* (pp. 16–40). Addison Wesley Longman.
52. Meretoja, H., et al. (2015). *Values of literature*. Brill.
53. Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. Jossey-Bass.
54. Miller, L., & Aldred, D. (2000). Student teachers' perceptions about communicative language teaching. *RELC Journal*, 31(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003368820003100101>
55. Moller, K. L. (2005). Creating zones of possibility for struggling readers: A case study of one fourth grader's shifting roles in literature discussions. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 36(4), 419–460. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15548430jlr3604_2
56. Murphy, P. K., et al. (2009). Examining the effects of classroom discussion on students' comprehension of text: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 101(3), 740–764. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015576>
57. Nance, M. M. (2000). *Find a (w)hole text: A case study of four readers reading* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Calgary.
58. Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge University Press.
59. Parkinson, B., & Thomas, H. R. (2000). *Teaching literature in a second language*. Edinburgh University Press.
60. Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage.

61. Peres, E. (2019). The importance of story time for Brazilian preservice teachers. *The Reading Teacher*, 73(1), 95–98. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1787>
62. Phippen, M. (2015). Using group talk to motivate secondary school students to read more and enjoy reading. *Education Today*, 65(3), 21–25.
63. Poole, D. (2008). Interactional differentiation in the mixed-ability group: A situated view of two struggling readers. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 43(3), 228–250. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.43.3.2>
64. Raphael, T. E., & McMahon, S. I. (1994). Book club: An alternative framework for reading instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 48(2), 102–116.
65. Richards, J. C. (2002). *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice*. Cambridge University Press.
66. Rosenblatt, L. M. (1978). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*. Southern Illinois University Press.
67. Rosenblatt, L. M. (1985). The transactional theory of the literary work: Implications for research. In C. R. Cooper (Ed.), *Researching response to literature and the teaching of literature: Points of departure* (pp. 33–53). Ablex.
68. Rosenblatt, L. M. (1994). The transactional theory of reading and writing. In R. B. Ruddell, M. R. Ruddell, & H. Singer (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (4th ed., pp. 1057–1092). International Reading Association.
69. Rosenblatt, L. M. (1995). *Literature as exploration* (5th ed.). Modern

Language Association.

70. Shumway, N. (1990). Language teaching in literature departments: Natural partnership or shotgun marriage? *ADFL Bulletin*, 21(3), 40–43. <https://doi.org/10.1632/adfl.21.3.40>
71. Sipe, L. R. (2000). The construction of literary understanding by first and second graders in oral response to picture storybook read-alouds. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35(2), 252–275. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.35.2.4>
72. Soter, A. O., et al. (2008). What the discourse tells us: Talk and indicators of high-level comprehension. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 47(6), 372–391. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2009.01.001>
73. Soter, A. O., Wilkinson, I. A. G., Connors, S. P., & Murphy, P. K. (2010). Deconstructing “aesthetic response” in small-group discussions about literature: A possible solution to the “aesthetic response” dilemma. *English Education*, 42(2), 204–225.
74. Stern, S. L. (1991). An integrated approach to literature in ESL/EFL. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (2nd ed., pp. 328–346). Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
75. Stone, C. A. (1993). What’s missing in the metaphor of scaffolding? In E. A. Forman, N. Minick, & C. A. Stone (Eds.), *Contexts for learning: Sociocultural dynamics in children’s development* (pp. 169–183). Oxford University Press.
76. Swaffar, J. (1985). Reading authentic texts in a foreign language: A cognitive model. *The Modern Language Journal*, 69(2), 115–134.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/326501>

77. Tang, C. (1996). Collaborative learning: The latent dimension in Chinese students' learning. In D. A. Watkins & J. B. Biggs (Eds.), *The Chinese learner: Cultural, psychological and contextual influences* (pp. 183–204). CERC and ACER.
78. Todhunter, S. (2007). Instructional conversations in a high school Spanish class. *Foreign Language Annals*, 40(4), 604–621.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2007.tb02881.x>
79. Tomlinson, C. M., & Lynch-Brown, C. (1996). *Essentials of children's literature* (2nd ed.). Allyn and Bacon.
80. Vacca, R. T., & Vacca, J. L. (2002). *Content area reading: Literacy and learning across the curriculum* (7th ed.). Allyn and Bacon.
81. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
82. Wells, G. (2000). Dialogic inquiry in education: Building on the legacy of Vygotsky. In C. D. Lee & P. Smagorinsky (Eds.), *Vygotskian perspectives on literacy research: Constructing meaning through collaborative inquiry* (pp. 51–85). Cambridge University Press.
83. Wilkinson, I. A. G., & Son, E. H. (2011). A dialogic turn in research on learning and teaching to comprehend. In M. L. Kamil, P. D. Pearson, E. B. Moje, & P. P. Afflerbach (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. 4, pp. 359–387). Routledge.
84. Wilkinson, I. A. G., Soter, A. O., & Murphy, P. K. (2010). Developing a

- model of quality talk about literary text. In M. G. McKeown & L. Kucan (Eds.), *Bringing reading research to life* (pp. 142–169). Guilford Press.
85. Wood, D., Bruner, J. S., & Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem solving. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 17(2), 89–100. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.1976.tb00381.x>
86. Cao, R., & Peng, Y. (2019). The role of teachers in cooperative learning models in college English reading. *Educational Materials*, (12), 209–210.
87. Chen, D. M. (2012). The application of discussion-based teaching methods in high school English teaching. *Language, Mathematics, and Foreign Languages Learning*, (8), 12–14.
88. Chen, G. H. (2008). Analysis and suggestions on the current status and policies of English education in China. *Chinese Foreign Languages*, (2), 4–6.
89. Guo, J. X. (2018). Experimental research on cooperative learning in junior high school English reading [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Hebei Normal University.
90. Guo, Y. L. (2017). The application of discussion-based teaching methods in college English intensive reading classes. *Contemporary Educational Practice and Research*, (3), 22–24.
91. Feng, W. Z. (2014). The application of discussion-based teaching methods in high school English teaching. *English Weekly (Advanced Edition)*, (6), 34–36.
92. Gui, L. P., Huang, J. Y., Zhou, Y., & Lin, N. (2013). Critical reading in

- English reading teaching: A second edition. Zhejiang University Press.
93. Han, B. (2020). The application of literary reading in high school English teaching [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Southwest University.
 94. He, A. P. (2003). Corpus-based analysis of teacher discourse. *Modern Foreign Languages*, (2), 163–167.
 95. He, Z. (2019). Action research on literary reading in high school English teaching. Wuhan University Press.
 96. Hao, M. (2019). The application of British and American literary works reading in high school English reading teaching [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Shandong Normal University.
 97. Hu, X. W. (2009). Characteristics and functions of teacher discourse. *Shandong Foreign Language Teaching*, (3), 51–53.
 98. Huang, J. S. (2014). Principles for selecting English literary reading materials based on student development goals. *Curriculum, Textbooks, Pedagogy*, 34(7), 87–92.
 99. Huang, R. (2011). How to select extracurricular literary works in foreign language teaching. *Modern Education Science: General Education Research*, (7), 73–76.
 100. Huang, S. Z., & Wu, S. L. (2014). Research on the construction of a “sustained silent reading” teaching model for high school English literary reading. *Fujian Basic Education Research*, (7), 73–76.
 101. Huang, Y. Z., & Huang, R. (2012). Middle school English literary experiential reading: Concepts and strategies. *Primary and Secondary*

- School English Teaching and Research, (6), 10–13.
102. Huang, Y. Z., Lan, C. S., & Huang, R. (2013). Research on the construction of the READ teaching model for English literary experiential reading. *Foreign Languages*, (1), 11–19.
103. Huang, Y. Z., & Huang, R. (2019). Concept and practice research on the English deep reading teaching model. *Fujian Basic Education Research*, (4), 62–67.
104. Huang, Y. Z. (2019). English reading teaching and thinking development. Guangxi Education Press.
105. Hornby, A. S. (2014). Oxford advanced learner's English-Chinese dictionary (8th ed.). The Commercial Press.
106. Sun, L. (2020). English literature teaching focusing on students' aesthetic experience and its aesthetic education significance—Taking “immersive” English poetry teaching as an example. *Foreign Language Teaching Theory and Practice*, (1), 67–73, 33.
107. Sun, S. Z. (2010). British and American literature teaching and the permeation of humanistic thought. *Academic Community*, (4), 131–136, 286.
108. Sun, Y. X. (2018). A survey and research on the application of group cooperative learning in junior high school English reading teaching [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Luoyang Normal University.
109. Tang, L. Z. (2020). Research on the impact of literary experiential reading teaching on junior high school students' English reading learning

- [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Hunan Institute of Science and Technology.
110. Wang, S. Y. (1991). Foreign literature teaching and foreign language teaching. *Foreign Language Journal*, (5), 64–68.
111. Wang, W. B. (2018). My views on foreign language teaching, foreign language education, and the instrumental and humanistic aspects. *Chinese Foreign Languages*, 15(2), 1, 12–16.
112. Wang, Y. (2017). A case study on the effectiveness of cooperative learning in junior high school English classrooms [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Zhejiang Normal University.
113. Wu, G. X., & Kang, Q. (2013). The application of discussion-based teaching methods in foreign language teaching processes. *Teaching Research*, (5), 23–25.
114. Wu, S. L. (2013). Research on the RAISE teaching model for English literature reading activities. *Primary and Secondary School English Teaching (Middle School Edition)*, (10), 12–16.
115. Xia, Y., & Wang, X. Y. (2019). The role of reading logs in the development of students' critical thinking tendencies. *Frontiers in Foreign Language Education Research*, 2(2), 33–39.
116. Xu, J. F. (2020). Peer interaction in second language learning. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
117. Xu, J. F. (2016). Peer scaffolding in college English classroom group interactions. *Foreign Languages and Their Teaching*, (1), 15–32.

118. Xu, J. F., & Cao, Z. K. (2012). An empirical study on the impact of different pairing models on student-student interaction in college English classrooms. *Chinese Foreign Languages*, (5), 67–77.
119. Xu, J. F., & Kou, J. N. (2017). A study on group interaction models in college English classrooms. *Foreign Language Teaching*, (2), 65–69.
120. Yan, K., & Gao, Y. H. (2012). An exploration of the suitability of reading materials for English learners' language abilities. *Foreign Languages*, (6), 47–57.
121. Yang, J. (2015). The application of discussion-based teaching methods in high school English teaching. *China Extracurricular Education*, (9), 27–29.
122. Yang, X. (2019). Research on implementation strategies and effectiveness of cooperative learning in high school English reading teaching [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Harbin Normal University.
123. Yin, X. M., & Xiang, R. F. (2015). Bringing adolescent literary works into high school English classrooms. *English Learning (Teacher Edition)*, (10), 16–21.
124. Yu, F. (2019). The application of group cooperative learning in high school English reading teaching under the background of core literacy. *English Teacher*, 19(2), 59–61.
125. Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2022). *Compulsory education English curriculum standards: 2022 edition*. Beijing Normal University Press.
126. Zhang, Y. B. (2018). Research on the application of group

discussion-based teaching methods in high school English classrooms
[Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Tianshui Normal University.

127. Zhang, Y. (2019). The impact of group cooperation methods on high school English reading teaching under the new curriculum reform. *Journal of Jiamusi Vocational Institute*, (5), 112–114.

Appendix A

Stories Selected for Student-led Group Discussion

Story	Reader	Authored by/ Simplified by	Headwords	Publisher & Publication Year
1. Fine Furs for a Lady 2. Springtime on the Menu 3. The Last Leaf 4. The Things We Do for Love	O. Henry's Short Stories, Oxford Bookworms Library	O. Henry/ Bill Bowler	550-600	Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press 2012
5. The Five Orange Pips 6. The Speckled Band 7. A Scandal in Bohemia	Sherlock Holmes Short Stories, Oxford Bookworms Library	Arthur Conan Doyle/ Clare West	600-650	Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press 2007
8. News of the Engagement 9. The Burglary 10. Beginning the New Year 11. The Silent Brothers	Stories from the Five Towns, Oxford Bookworms Library	Arnold Bennet/ Nick Bullard	650-700	Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press 2006

Appendix B

Guide to Reading Log

Character Map	You can think about a character you really liked (or really didn't like, or thought was interesting). The map can show what you think the character looked like, things the character did, how the character went with other characters, what made this character interesting, and anything else that you think is important.
Sequences	Sometimes events in the story might be important to remember in the order they happened. You can make a sequence chart in your log and explain why you thought it would be important to remember.
Story Critique	Sometimes when you're reading, you think to yourself, "This is absolutely GREAT!" Other times you think to yourself, "If I were the author, I sure would do this differently." In your log, you can write about things the author did really well and thinks he or she might want to do better.
Me & the Book	Sometimes what you read about a character or an event makes you think of things in your own life. You can write in your log and tell about what the character or the event or other ideas made you think about from your own life.

Appendix C

Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews

The First Interview

1. What do you think is the purpose for having you participate in discussion groups?
2. What do you like about reading in groups?
3. What do you dislike reading in groups?
4. What do you feel about your group members?
5. How would you describe your role in your group?
6. What do you think about reading short stories so far?

The Second Interview

1. What do you think about the discussion you just had?
2. Have you ever interpreted the story differently after participating in group discussions? If yes, please explain why.
3. What type of teammate helps you participate?
4. What type of teammate makes it hard for you to participate?
5. What do you get out of literature discussions?
6. What difficulties did you encounter while reading the short stories?

The Third Interview

1. What do you think about the topics you discuss in your groups?
2. Do you feel any changes about the way you write your reading logs after participating in group discussion? If yes, please explain why.
3. Do you feel any changes about your reading behaviors after participating in group discussions? If yes, please explain why.
4. What do you think are the accepted social behaviors in group discussions?

5. What influences how you participate in your discussion group?
6. Would you like your teacher to keep literature discussion groups in next semester's reading class?

Appendix D

Informed Written Consent Form

Dear Students,

You are invited to participate in the research study which aims to explore the collective meaning making process of English literature discussion group. The information collected will be part of my thesis at Hainan Normal University. I will be observing you throughout the program as you discuss with your peers, conducting interviews and working to help improve your reading levels.

INFORMATION

You will be audio-taped as you talk and interact during weekly class meeting. The recordings will be transcribed. You will be interviewed three times, that is, at the beginning, middle and at the end of the study. There will be also about five to eight informal conversation interviews regarding your experience in small-group literature discussions.

BENEFITS

The benefits, which may reasonably be expected to result from this study, are that you may learn more about yourself as an English reader and about yourself as a group member.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your privacy will be protected and valued. Your identity and the data gathered will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be used in any presentation of the data. All information collected is for research purposes only and will remain only available to the investigator.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time with no negative consequences. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

I hope you will find the program interesting and beneficial. Please complete the permission slip below and return it to me next class we meet.