

ADULT REFUGEE LANGUAGE LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF LITERATURE
CIRCLES TO SUPPORT READING COMPREHENSION AND REDUCE FOREIGN
LANGUAGE ANXIETY

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Sekineh Nasiri

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by

Sekineh Nasiri

Dr. Lory Haas
Dissertation Chair

Dr. Nancy Votteler
Committee Member

Dr. Benita Brooks
Committee Member

Dr. Melinda Miller
Committee Member

Dr. Alma Contreras-Vanegas,
Committee Member

Approved:

Dr. Stacey L. Edmonson
Dean, College of Education

ABSTRACT

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Purpose

The number of adult refugee English language learners is growing in the United States. As a new resident and second language learner there are many obstacles they must face such as English language ability, academic achievement, and foreign language learning anxiety. Many adult refugees seek educational opportunities to learn how to communicate in English accurately and have better career opportunities. However, the instructional practices are similar to the traditional approaches they have already experienced with poor results in language learning. In this study, adult refugee English Learners participated in the Literature Circle approach, which is a student-centered learning process and provides opportunities for language learners to experience cooperative learning, independent reading, and improve their reading comprehension skills. In past years, there have been many different research studies on the impact of the Literature Circle approach on students. However, there is not enough information regarding the influence of Literature Circles on refugee English language learners and the influence on foreign language learning anxiety level.

This study was conducted through a qualitative method design to examine the perceptions of adult refugee English language learners toward Literature Circles while enrolled in an advanced reading comprehension course in the United States. The primary purpose of the study was to determine if participation in the Literature Circle discussions better supports reading comprehension versus traditional approaches to second language learning. Additionally, the second purpose of the study was to examine the influence of

Literature Circle discussions on refugee English language learner's foreign language learning anxiety level.

The participants of the study consisted of five adult refugee English language learners who were enrolled in an advanced reading comprehension course in a bilingual language institute in the United States. The methods of data collections were an individual pre-interview, post interview, and group interview. Additionally, the method of data analysis was constant comparison analysis.

Findings

The results of the study revealed adult refugee English language learners' perception toward the Literature Circle approach was positive and language learners strongly believed that the Literature Circle approach not only enhanced their reading comprehension skills, but also had a great influence on improving English language ability. Pursing this further, findings support the need for future research involving a larger population, different English language skills, and a mixed method research design in the field of the Literature Circle approach and refugee community.

KEY WORDS: English Learners, Adults, Refugees, Literature Circles, Reading Comprehension, Foreign Language Learning Anxiety

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I began to work as an English as a Second Language (ESL) Instructor in a refugee language institute in the Southeast Texas in 2014. I have never forgotten that day and my feelings. It was a hot summer day; the class was held in an apartment complex in an area of low-socioeconomic status. By the time I arrived, refugee English Learners (ELs) were waiting for me to open the door for them. A majority of them did not have a vehicle to commute so they had to walk approximately one hour to arrive to the class. The classroom was damp and humid, with limited accommodation for teaching. For me, as an employee in one of the largest community colleges in the town, these working conditions were deplorable; however, what inspired me to continue was my refugee students' motivation and desire for learning.

Later, I noticed my students who were so eager to learn also felt anxious about certain academic tasks. Therefore, I decided to search and seek to learn more about their classroom behaviors. I attempted to create a student-centered and stress –free environment, but my students were still experiencing blushing, silence, and avoidance of eye contact during conversations or group work. I asked myself: why did they experience anxiety while the classroom environment was non-threatening? Why was adjusting to the new learning context so difficult? To better understand the issue of anxiety, I read and researched in this area and I found myself interested in the field of Foreign Language (FL) anxiety.

Researchers (Aida, 1994; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) identified FL anxiety as one of the affective factors that could have a negative influence on FL learning. Early

studies in FL focused on speaking skills as the most anxiety provoking skills (Aida, 1994; Young, 1986). However, through time, researchers found that different language skills might cause different levels of anxiety; as a result, different forms of anxiety related to FL skills, such as FL reading anxiety or FL listening anxiety, were created (Cheng, Horwitz & Schallert, 1999; Horwitz, 1985; Saito, Horwitz, & Garza, 1999; Vogely, 1999).

To determine the learning needs of my students, I needed to learn more about who they were as language learners. I wanted to understand them as students, as well as the reason of their anxiety, its impact on their academic and social life, and the best way to cope and reduce it in classroom contexts. I began by researching the term refugee, as well as their population, needs, and desires.

Discussion of Research Studies on Refugee Language Learners and Their Needs

According to Wilkes (1994):

A refugee is someone who has fled across a national border from his or her country, or who is unable to return to it because of well-founded fear that he or she will be persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or for being a member of particular social group (p.7).

Refugees might “find themselves without a state, without a citizenship, without a nationality, and without a home” (Mosselson, 2006, p. 21). Currently more than 16 million people are refugees or, asylum-seekers, who are displaced and a limited number of them have resettled in a third country. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2017), 65.3 million people were forcibly displaced from their home countries in 2015. Refugees who resettled in the United

States were diverse in: (a) race, (b) religion, (c) country of origin, (d) socioeconomic status, (e) linguistics, and (f) educational background (Capps & Fix, 2015). After the resettlement process, refugee students had to adapt to the new culture, standards, school expectations, and more importantly, an academic language with which they were entirely unfamiliar (Kaprielian-Churchhill, 1996). More importantly, refugee students find learning an academic language, subject area content, and taking standardized tests challenging. In these circumstances, refugee students should have a welcoming, safe, and stress-free environment to grow emotionally, socially, and linguistically. Little research was available about refugee students' educational and emotional needs in the United States. Many teachers did not have a clear understanding about the literacy needs of this population, and they were not aware of the differences between refugees and other non-refugee immigrants.

My refugee ELs had major difficulties in reading comprehension. The knowledge of reading comprehension and reading skills are essential in academic education, as well as being a life-long learner. Also, research studies demonstrated that students with low reading proficiency would struggle with reading skills all of their life and may not be able to become proficient in reading skills (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

To provide opportunities for ELs to become competent readers, it is essential to first define what reading comprehension is. RAND Reading Study Group (RRSG) stated that reading comprehension was the process of constructing and extracting meaning through interaction and involvement with written language (Snow et al., 1998). The RRSG indicated that reading comprehension included three elements: (a) the reader, which referred to the ability, experience, and knowledge of the reader while reading a

text; (b) the text, which consisted of all different forms of writing materials; and (c) the activity, which consisted of purpose, process, and consequence of reading (Snow et al., 1998).

English language students need extra support to develop the necessary reading comprehension skills and strategies to be successful as readers of a second language (Collins & Smith, 1982; Palinscar & Brown, 1984). There are a variety of instructional tools and strategies to help students become engaged in reading, such as book clubs, Literature Circles (LCs), and peer discussion groups. In today's classrooms, LCs are often included as an instructional tool because the process encompasses unique approaches and specific characteristics to engage readers and provide support for deeper comprehension. The LC approach is a process in which a small group of students read the same assigned or selected texts, then discuss, analyze, and report what they have read. Additionally, each participant has a responsibility to contribute to the discussion based on a specific role they have chosen (Daniels, 1994). The classroom teachers play the role of facilitator and observe students while they interact with each other in small groups. The goal of this study was to investigate the impact of participation in LCs on the reading comprehension of refugee ELs and to determine the influence of LCs on FL reading anxiety of this population. This process was developed as a means to deepen reading comprehension through interactive discussions. The discussions also supported speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills as the students participated in all four literacy skills in the process.

Background of the Study

The current study proposal emerged from my personal experience as an ESL instructor in a Bilingual English Institute in southwest Texas, where I taught ESL and literacy to adult refugees and immigrants. My concerns lie in observing academic growth of refugee ELs who attended the English class for several semesters without the ability to read fluently and comprehend the texts. In addition, I became aware that my refugee ELs suffered from anxiety which made the learning process more challenging.

As a teacher and a researcher, I was curious about the reasons for high levels anxiety among refugee ELs and their struggles with reading instruction and comprehension. I continually asked myself questions: What were the causes of anxiety among refugee ELs? How could teachers help students cope with anxiety? What was the impact of anxiety on students' reading comprehension? Were there any particular instructional strategies that can be effective for reading comprehension and reducing anxiety level?

Statement of the Problem

A refugee is a person who is forced to leave his or her national country because of a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons based on race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. In past decades, classroom demographics have changed tremendously across the United States. By the end of 2014, as wars, conflict, and persecution worldwide continued to unfold, the number of people displaced from their country reached 59.5 million (U.S Department of Education, 2016). As a result, refugee language learners often feel more anxious, embarrassed, nervous, and

stressed while learning a second language, which leads to inconsistent and confusing results.

Schools in the United States have received increased numbers of students with limited and disputed schooling from countries in conflict such as Myanmar, Iraq, and Sudan. The lack of adequate literacy and reading comprehension in a second language is a serious barrier for students to accomplish other parts of the curriculum and rebuild their lives in a new society (Magro, 2008, Windle & Miller, 2012). Literacy plays a critical role in the academic performance and future careers of refugee students. To be successful in today's educational environment, refugee students must learn to think critically, logically, and reflectively about a text, to achieve high levels of reading competence (Shen, 2013). Although, there were a number of research studies on reading comprehension and the effectiveness of LC approach for language learners in foreign countries, such as Taiwan and Korea, a limited number of experimental studies were available regarding the reading comprehension of ELs and refugees in the United States. Moreover, only a small number of studies had examined the influence of applying LCs with adult refugee language learners (Tugwell, Pottie, Welch, Ueffing, Chambers, & Feightner, 2011). The scarce amount of scholarly literature available on reading comprehension and LC approach is problematic because effective reading comprehension is an essential task in the complex process of constructing meaning from text. To improve the comprehension of ELs, including refugee language learners, practitioners should stay abreast of contemporary scholarly literature and research to meet the needs of all students in classrooms. Offering discussion group opportunities allowed students to exchange ideas and explored new information to help them comprehend a variety of texts to

become lifelong readers (Eeds & Wells, 1989; Gambrell & Almasi, 1996). Providing feedback, support, and communicating with peers in small groups could help refugee language learners to feel less anxious and comprehend the text in a stress-free environment.

Refugee students' experienced different forms of stress and trauma throughout their lives that resulted in: (a) concentration difficulties, (b) depression, (c) fatigue, (d) memory loss, (e) embarrassment, and (f) discomfort to speak in English, all of which could lessen learning outcomes (Adkins, Birman, & Sample, 1999). Horwitz and Young (1991), two prominent experts in the field of FL anxiety, stated "We have truly been surprised at the number of students who experience anxiety and distress in their language classes" (p. 94). Although literacy researchers and practitioners understood that reading skills were important in foreign language teaching, research on FL reading anxiety, and reading comprehension of FL learners were scarce (Horwitz, 2008; Mohammadpur & Ghafournia, 2015).

Refugee ELs should acquire language skills effectively to become successful in social and academic contexts and educators of refugee ELs must understand that language anxiety cannot be ignored in the process of language learning. The deleterious effect of not recognizing problems ELs experience was particularly significant among educators, administrators, and policy makers who were not prepared to meet the needs of this diverse population of international students (U.S Department of Education, 2016). Facilitating the educational needs of these newcomers (i.e., English learners and refugee English learners) is not only crucial to their personal well-being, but also to their futures and the future of American society (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to engage refugee students in LCs, expanding their knowledge and experience with FL reading. Also, the purpose of study was to determine if participation in LCs decreases FL reading anxiety and better supports reading comprehension than traditional approaches to second language learning.

Engaging students in LCs was a popular approach in reading instruction because it promoted social interaction and created an opportunity for students to become confident and competent readers (Daniels, 1994). Much research on the effect of LCs on native English-speaking students has been conducted; however, research on the effect of LCs on refugee ELs in the United States was virtually nonexistent. In order to address this gap, the primary purpose of this study was to explore how LCs provided opportunities for adult refugee students to learn a second language and improve their reading comprehension. The present study focused on providing a vivid portrait of second language classrooms where refugee language learners were engaged in LC discussions. The second purpose of the study was to examine the effects of LCs on FL reading anxiety of refugee English Language Learners. Additionally, this study examined adult refugee language learners' perceptions about the impact of LCs on their FL reading anxiety.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study had several potential benefits because it provided an additional lens to understanding the impact of LCs on reading comprehension of adult refugee English Language Learners. This can provide helpful insights to faculty and administrators at the Pre K-12 and postsecondary levels to enhance their knowledge of

refugee ELs and to better prepare them for academic success. Through LCs, teachers can provide refugee ELs with opportunities to engage in classroom discussions and social interactions to help them gain content knowledge and master communicative skills.

For this study, I examined the perceptions of individual adult refugee ELs with regard to the impact of LCs on their FL reading anxiety and the issues caused by FL reading anxiety in classrooms. The influence of LCs on reducing FL reading anxiety may provide refugee ELs with reading strategies, writing strategies, and communication skills that will improve their academic learning. In addition, this study may provide Pre-K-12 teachers, as well as two- and four-year college instructors, and university faculties with significant information concerning the refugee ELs population. These insights will allow educators to clarify refugee language learners' behaviors, such as lack of participation and communication. Finally, this study may provide effective support for other groups of immigrants who may be experiencing reading comprehension deficits and FL reading anxiety.

Conceptual Framework

According to Creswell (2013), "philosophy means the use of abstract ideas and beliefs that inform our research" (p. 16). A philosophical assumption is the first step in developing research studies and relates to the overall process of research. Philosophical assumptions help investigators to formulate research questions, research problem, and to survey information to answer the research questions. Creswell (2003, 2013) stated that theory plays an important role in qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research. Creswell believes that qualitative researchers use theory in four specific ways: (a) as a

broad explanation for behaviors and attitudes, (b) as a theoretical lenses or perspective, (c) as an inductive approach to generate a theory, and (d) as a non-explicit framework.

Johnson and Christensen (2014) defined research paradigms as “a worldview or perspective about research held by a community of researchers that is based on a set of shared assumptions, concepts, values, and practices” (p. 30). A paradigm is a basic set of beliefs, values, methods, and world-views that guide the action (Creswell, 2013). The five major types of paradigms that were introduced by Maxwell (2013) and Creswell (2013) were positivism, post positivism, critical theory, constructivism, and pragmatism. While I was studying the different types of paradigm, I found that I could situate myself in most of them. However, I found more of a connection to social constructivism with an interpretive framework and critical theory paradigms. According to Creswell (2013), in social constructivism researchers attempt to understand the world in which they live and work. The goal of research relies on the participants’ ideas of situation. Social constructivists believe that reality is socially constructed, and knowledge is constructed between researchers and participants. Additionally, knowledge is not discovered, but rather socially constructed within specific historical contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Schwandt, 2007). Socially constructed knowledge is transactional and relative in its ontological nature, knowledge is not singular, but based on shared or collective interpretations of discourse, understanding, and practices (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016).

According to Creswell (2013), “Conceptual framework is important because it is primarily a conception or model of what is out there that you plan to study and what is going on with these things and why” (p. 39). Conceptual frameworks help set research goals, develop research questions, choose appropriate method, and identify possible

identity threats (Maxwell, 2013). In addition, Maxwell (2013) noted that a conceptual framework provides readers with a model to understand the relationship between concepts. Tavallaei and Talib (2010) believed a theoretical framework helps researchers to investigate different aspects of phenomena; however, it “alone cannot provide a comprehensive explanation of the issue being studied” (p. 573). As a result, to increase the accuracy of interpretation it is necessary for researchers to incorporate a conceptual framework.

Theoretical Framework

Socio-Cultural Theory. Socio-cultural learning theory, which was introduced by Vygotsky (1978), describes learning as a social process and the origination of human intelligence in society and culture. The major argument of socio-cultural theory is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Vygotsky (1978) identified four major aspects of learning: (a) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), (b) semiotic mediation, (c) Concept development, and (d) internalization (Young & Mohr, 2016).

Socio-cultural learning theory, which is rooted in Vygotsky’s (1978) ZPD, is the most quoted tenet of the theory. Vygotsky (1978) defined ZPD as “the difference between child’s developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 85).

The ZPD refers to tasks that learners can accomplish by themselves and tasks that learners are able to accomplish only with the help of a more knowledgeable individual. Also, other researchers discuss ZPD as the relationship between learners and caregivers,

or the distance between learners' actual developmental level and the level of potential development, but with guidance of experienced leaders (Mitchel, Myles, & Marsden, 2013). Vygotsky (1978) described ZPD as "functions which have not yet matured but are in the process of maturing... 'buds' or 'flowers' of development rather than fruit of development" (p. 86). He believed with modeling and scaffolding, the ZPD helps teachers to facilitate the learning process for learners. Teachers should be aware of students' potential and activate the ZPD to promote students learning by providing additional activities and scaffolding to extend learning (Jaramillo, 1996).

The second tenet in socio-cultural perspective is the semiotic meaning. According to Vygotsky (1978), learning is a mediated process. The learning process is socially mediated which means it depends on learner's interaction, discussion, and problem-solving processes with experts or peers (Mitchel, et al., 2013; Vygotsky 1978). Semiotic mediation refers to the process in which human beings apply sign and symbols to create meaning and internalize the world around them (Young & Mohr, 2016).

Vygotsky's (1978) third tenet is the concept development. Language can be a powerful tool to help students in developing their understanding of the concept and language which can be used as a learning tool. Vygotsky (1978) focused on the importance of learning through communication and interactions with others rather than just through independent work. Additionally, he believed that true learning takes place when learners interact with an experienced adult who can lead learners by scaffolding information to increase understanding.

The last component in socio-cultural theory is the internalization. Vygotsky believed that there are two ways to internalize concepts: interpsychological and

intrapsychological (Young & Mohr, 2016). Engaging in group discussion provides opportunity for individuals to connect new concept to their prior experiences and internalize the information related to text (Raphael & McMahon, 1994). Vygotsky (1978) claimed that culture and social experiences have a great influence on the way learners think and interpret the world. Socio-cultural theorists view language learning primarily as a social process where individual language learners actively construct their own knowledge through goals, environment, and choice.

Socio-cultural Theory and Literature Circles. Literature Circles are grounded in socio-cultural theory as they provide opportunities for learners to improve language skills and develop cognition through group discussions, peer activities, students-centered learning, and teacher scaffolding (Young & Mohr, 2016). Literature circle is an approach that enhances interpersonal relationships by allowing students to discuss misconceptions, clarify thinking, participate in problem solving activities, and develop critical thinking skills. In Literature Circles, learners work in a cooperative and interactive environment while having autonomy, which is heavily supported by Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (Daniel, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky (1978), learning takes place through social interaction among three or four people with different levels of skills and knowledge, while helping the learner to move to the next stage of understanding and knowledge.

According to Vygotsky (1978), in order to understand how mental processes and learning develop, human beings must create a condition through pedagogy in which developmental processes could be observed. To help students understand the pedagogy, teachers or caregivers should be involved in direct intervention such as modeling and

providing examples (Compernelle & Williams, 2013). Vygotsky noted ZPD provides an opportunity for teachers to use tools to develop helpful designs and teaching techniques to optimize students' understanding.

According to Vygotsky (1978), the human mind is mediated, which means higher psychological tasks are needed to integrate auxiliary. Some scholars such as Compernelle and Williams (2013) and Kozulin (2003) divided the mediation into two categories, psychological tools and human mediation. Psychological tools are artifacts which develop culturally and could be used to help mental functioning such as sign systems, languages, cultural concepts, and schema. Additionally, the human mediation supports “an individual internalization of psychological tools” (Kozulin, 2003, p. 279). The example of human mediation could be L2 teachers' feedback, small ideas within the ZPD which supports learners in accomplishing tasks successfully. Teachers of L2 students can also design activities that help learners accomplish the objectives while working collaboratively in small groups.

Transactional Learning Theory. Transactional theory, which was introduced by Rosenblatt in 1968, focuses on readers and their experiences with literary work: how readers interact with texts to create meaning. Rosenblatt's (1982) view of reading is a “two-way process involving a reader and a text at the particular time and under particular circumstances” (p. 270). Also, Rosenblatt (1978) believed the reader is an active agent who interprets the meaning through his or her experiences. The meaning of text directly relates to the readers' background knowledge and purpose of reading. According to Rosenblatt (1978), when learners take an active role in meaning formation, their experiences with the text provide new opportunities for creating meaning. According to

Rosenblatt (1982), there are two different stances on reading aesthetic and efferent.

Rosenblatt (1982) defined aesthetic reading as:

Drawing on our reservoir of past experience with people and the worlds... we lend our sensations, our emotions, our sense of being alive, to the new experience which, we feel, corresponds to the text. We participate in a story. We identify with the character; we share their conflicts, and their findings (p. 270).

In contrast, efferent reading is defined as “an organized report on or articulation of, our response to work... and abstracting and categorizing of elements of the aesthetic experience, and an ordering and development of our concurrent reactions” (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 270). Spiegel (1998) claimed readers need both efferent and aesthetic reading because they are each essential for a successful reading process. However, aesthetic reading has greater importance when readers get to higher academic levels. Texts with higher difficulties and complexities require students to have prior experience and active background knowledge. In response to Rosenblatt’s ideas, Probst (1987) indicated that selecting an appropriate reading stance helped students to better organize their thinking and have a better comprehension of the text. Furthermore, he noted the type of stance that the readers select has a great impact on “the extent to which experience of a particular text will be literary” (Probst, 1987, p. 28). Through the transactional theory, readers attempt to make a relationship with the texts, bring their own prior knowledge, construct new reading experiences, and evaluate the text to comprehend the meanings (Probst, 1988).

Rosenblatt’s (1978, 1982) transactional theory provides strong support for Literature Circles. Transactional theory applies to LCs as students participate in small

discussion groups to share what they have read; the role of the students is to actively participate in the lessons and make them meaningful through a variety of unique responses (Shelton-Strong, 2012). Therefore, learners practice the transactional theory model in LCs by answering open-ended questions and engaging in natural discussions and role rotations, enabling learners to approach the text from various perspectives, both aesthetically and efferently. The format of LCs and structured role sheets provide tools for students to transact with texts, where students are in the center of language learning and active participants responsible for their own learning (Rosenblatt, 1978).

Collaborative Learning Approach. The basic idea of collaborative learning was developed in the 1950s and 1960s, based on the idea of English teachers who thought students should have an active role in their own learning. However, the root of collaborative learning for college teachers goes back to the 1970s, when students who were enrolled in colleges had serious difficulty in academic studies (Bruffee, 1984). To provide assistance for students, some colleges offered peer tutoring where teachers organized students to help each other academically and over time this became known as collaborative learning (Bruffee, 1984). According to Panitz (1996), collaborative learning, which is based on constructivist epistemology, is defined as:

A personal philosophy, not just a classroom technique. In all the situations where people come together in groups, it suggests a way of dealing with people which respects and highlights individual group members' abilities and contributions....

The underlying premise of collaborative learning is based upon consensus building through cooperation by group members, in contrast to competition in which individuals best other group members. (P.4)

Collaborative learning is a student-centered approach in which students work in small groups and help each other to become academically successful and accomplish the group task (Johnson, Johnson, & Stanne, 2000). Collaborative learning is highly beneficial for both native English speakers and language learners where students have the opportunity to participate in small groups, share their points of view, and engage in discussion in a stress-free environment (Suwantharathip, 2015). Several research studies on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) demonstrated that cooperation and interaction in small groups have great impact for English learners (Gass, 1997; Brown, 2001).

Reid, Forrestal, and Cook (1989) introduced five different phases for collaborative learning approach: (a) engagement, in which both teachers and students get engaged in collaborative activities; (b) exploration, in which students work collaboratively in small groups, get familiar with new ideas and concepts, and make predictions while teachers are the facilitators; (c) transformation, the process during which group members compare, explore, classify, synthesis, and discuss information; (d) presentation, which is a phase when students have the opportunity to present their group findings to the whole class; and (e) reflection, which is the last phase in the collaborative learning approach and provides opportunities for learners to reflect on their progress and reading comprehension, and suggest a variety of helpful ideas to the whole class.

Difficulty in reading comprehension of ELs is usually because of inappropriate strategies and a limited amount of time that students can collaborate and share thoughts. Lack of sufficient interaction between students and teachers and students and peers may result in low motivation. One way to help students overcome reading comprehension problems and develop an interest in reading is introducing them to a variety of reading

strategies and engaging techniques. Learning in a small group helps students feel they are responsible to complete their tasks, reflect on materials, and get familiar with a variety of points of view (Pantiz, 1997).

Through a quantitative study, Suwantharathip (2015) investigated the effectiveness of reading strategies based on a collaborative learning approach for ELs reading comprehension. The result of the quasi-experimental study through a survey and open-ended questionnaire revealed that being in a small group and participating in collaborative learning helped them to gain more confidence and feel less stressed. Also, reading strategies based on a collaborative learning approach helped students to practice, develop, and increase strategy use even after the intervention process. Through open-ended questions, students pointed out that choosing appropriate strategies helped them become effective readers and problem-solvers (Suwantharathip, 2015).

Constructivist Approach. The LC approach is one of the most prominent collaborative reading activities for reading instruction in ESL and EFL classrooms. Daniels (1994) defined LCs as small group, student-centered reading discussions where participants have specific roles and responsibilities to accomplish the task and share a variety of points of view with group members. Literature Circles provide opportunities for students to comprehend the reading materials while working collaboratively.

Literature Circles are greatly rooted in constructivism, which is a theory about how people learn. Constructivism, which is rooted in the works of John Piaget (1951, 1967, 1970), Glasersfeld (1981), and Sigel and Cocking (1977), states that human beings/learners construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. When learners confront some

new phenomena, they link that to their prior knowledge. They might reconcile based on their previous experience (schema), change what they previously believed, or even reject the new information as irrelevant. In any form, learners are constructing their own knowledge based on their schema and reflecting on it.

The constructivist approach provides an opportunity for learners to move away from rote-memorization of facts to metacognition and self-evaluation (Tracy& Morrow, 2012). Constructivist teachers attempt to consider learners' opinions and points of view, then build instruction to facilitate the learning process and adapt curriculum in a way that challenges students' beliefs and assumptions to enhance cognitive growth. In addition, in constructivist classrooms, students experience authentic assessments, so they can share with and demonstrate their work to other peers and receive nonjudgmental feedback from teachers (Tracy& Morrow, 2012).

It makes sense to look at LCs through a social constructivist lens because LCs provide opportunities for students to discuss and interpret the text through social interactions while they are building new knowledge. In LCs, learners experiment with new ideas and learn about real world problem solving by talking about what they are doing and reflecting on how their understanding is changing.

Literature Review Search Procedure

For the purpose of this research study, literature related to reading comprehension, LCs, FL anxiety, FL reading anxiety, and refugee ELs were examined. Keywords and phrases that were used to find relevant literature included LCs, FL reading, FL reading anxiety, LCs in college level, and adult refugee education. Searches for related literature conducted through the EBSCO Host database for academic journals

included scholarly peer reviewed articles. The journal articles used for the purpose of this study were *ERIC, Full Text (H.W. Wilson), JSTOR, Humanities Source, Education Source, Humanities Full Text (H.W. Wilson), and Academic Search Complete.*

A keyword search for LCs generated 43,162 results; however, by including the words “language learners,” the search was reduced to 2,430. When the key word “adult” was added to the keyword search, the result was reduced to 161. When “reading comprehension” was used for the keyword search for articles, 352,621 articles were generated; adding “literature circles” to this keyword search further reduced the number of articles to 4,021 and adding “refugee language learners” further reduced the results to 3.

A keyword search for “foreign language anxiety” yielded 4,775 results. When the word “refugee language learners” was added, the results were reduced to 4. By including the words “literature circles” the result decreased to 1. A keyword search was also conducted for “refugee language learners” which generated 661 articles. This search was reduced once “in the U.S.A.” was added to the search yielding 14. After adding “adult” to the search, the results decreased to 5. In addition to searching online databases, relevant references mentioned in studies with similar topics were also used. Information from various modes such as dissertations were used to gain information about the topic. Searching different articles through different keywords and databases depicted that a limited number of research has been conducted in relation to the inclusion of literature circles as an instructional tool to support adult refugees’ reading comprehension. Additionally, studies related to literature circles and their impact on FL reading anxiety is nonexistent, making this study a potentially significant contribution to current literature

in the field.

Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed in this study: (a) What are the main sources of foreign language reading anxiety among refugee English language learners?; (b) What are the perceptions of adult refugee English learners with regard to participation in literature circles as a means to decrease foreign language anxiety?; (c) What are the perceptions of adult refugee English learners with regard to the influence of participation in literature circles on foreign language reading comprehension?; (d) What are the perceptions of adult refugee English learners with regard to participation in Literature Circles versus traditional approaches to foreign language instruction?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are important to the current study. The definitions below are provided to the reader for clarity and consistency.

Anxiety. “The subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry that are experienced by an individual and the highlighted activity of the automatic nervous system that accompanies these feelings” (Spielberger, 1976, p. 5).

English learners (ELs). English learner is a term that identifies English language learners in K-12 settings as well as adult non-native English speakers who are in the process of learning English (Crawford, 2004). The acronym ELs will be used in place of the term English learners for the remainder of the discussion.

English as a second language (ESL). English as a second language refers to teaching English to speakers of other languages usually occurs in counties where English

is the official language (Crawford, 2004). The acronym ESL will be used in place of the term English as a Second Language for the remainder of the discussion.

First language (L1). First language refers to the individuals' mother tongue or native language, which is the primary language that individuals learn (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). The acronym L1 is used in place of the term first language for the purposes of this research study.

Second language (L2). Second language refers to any language other than the L1 that non-native English-speaking individuals learn (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). In the current study, L2 is primarily used to refer to English. The acronym L2 is used in place of the term second language for the purposes of the discussion.

Second language learning. Second language learning is the process of learning a second language which is a language used in the community (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). For instance, students from Myanmar come to the United States to study English. In this case, English is the L2 for this population.

Foreign language anxiety (FL anxiety). "A distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language training arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128). FL anxiety is used in place of the phrase foreign language anxiety for throughout this study.

Foreign language reading anxiety (FL reading anxiety). "The anxiety that learners experience in reading a foreign language. It is related to but distinguishable from foreign language anxiety" (Saito, Garza, & Horwitz, 1999). The acronym FL reading anxiety is used in place of the term foreign language reading anxiety for the purposes of the discussion.

Literature circles (LCs). Harvey Daniels (1994) defined Literature Circles as small, temporary discussion groups of students who are reading the same text in which each member of a group has a specific responsibility. Students' roles and responsibilities change at each meeting. When the group members finish the Literature Circles discussion, they may share their ideas with the whole class. The acronym LCs is applied in place of the term Literature Circles throughout this study.

State Anxiety. The apprehension that an individual experience during a particular event or act (Spielberger, 1983).

Situational Anxiety. Situational anxiety refers to a specific form of anxiety that occurs consistently over time as a response to a particular situation (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

Trait Anxiety. Trait anxiety refers to individuals' tendencies to become anxious in any situation (Spielberger, 1983). Trait anxiety is a permanent predisposition and viewed as an aspect of personality that a person feels anxious in wide range of situation in compare to other people (Dewaels, 2007; Zheng, 2008).

Delimitations of Study

Limitations of Study

A delimitation of this was the recruitment of adult refugee English learners enrolled in a Bilingual English Institute in Southeast Texas. Participants recruited using purposive sampling. Lastly, all data were collected using methods to conduct qualitative research with a group case study design.

Potential limitations to the proposed study include the following:

Generalization

This refers to the researchers' inability to generalize findings to a larger population, in different contexts through time. Also, generalization refers to how the researchers generalize qualitative findings to populations, instead of obtaining insights into phenomena (Benge, Onwuegbuzie, & Robbins, 2012).

Researcher Bias

Benge et al. (2012) stated that researchers' bias refers to external or internal credibility that occurs when the researchers' personal biases are unconsciously transmitted into the participants' responses or the interpretation of the data. Researcher bias is an issue when it "threatens external credibility of the findings because the particular type of bias of the researcher may be so unique as to make the interpretations of the data ungeneralizable" (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 238).

The steps to address researchers bias are encompassed: (a) a member checking to make sure the accuracy of participants responses (Janesick, 2004), (b) a reflective journal in which the researcher will address the possible biases throughout the study, and (c) debriefing interviews which help the researcher to explore and alleviate researcher bias (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2012; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012).

Reactivity

Reactivity refers to the Hawthorne Effect, which affects the trustworthiness of findings because the investigators' presence may have unintentionally affected the results of the investigation (Landsberger, 1958; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). In the current study, the researcher attempted to reduce the threat of reactivity by maintaining neutral facial expressions, body language, and voice. Another strategy to reduce the threat of

reactivity is to obtain consent forms from participants of the study and to assure them that their identities remain anonymous (Onwegbuzie & Leech, 2007). In addition, the researcher applied participants' interviews, researchers' debriefing interviews, and reflective journals to alleviate the researcher bias that might threaten the data collection and interpretation (Onwegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

Assumptions

The current study was conducted with the assumption that all participants will provide truthful responses in their interviews. Also, the researcher assumed that the participants would not withdraw from the study. Additionally, the researcher was aware that the results of the qualitative case study could not be generalized into a larger population, in a different context, and through time (Benge et al., 2012).

Organization of the Study

The current research study is organized in five chapters: (a) Introduction, (b) Literature Review, (c) Methodology, (d) Findings, and (e) Discussion of Findings. In Chapter I, I introduced the background of the study, purpose of the study, significance of the study, the statement of the problem, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, delimitations, limitations, and assumptions that will guide this investigation. In Chapter II, I presented a review of the literature related to the topic of my study, specifically the following elements: (a) a presentation of traditional approaches to teaching adult language learners; (b) a discussion of research studies on refugee language learners and their needs; (c) an exploration of second language learning anxiety; and (d) research on the benefits of literature circles for language learners. Chapter III is a presentation and discussion of the proposed methodology for this study. This includes discussion of

participants, procedures, and selection of the qualitative sampling framework and a group case study design, respectively. Presented in Chapter IV are the findings of study by analyzing the data obtained from, observations, pre, post, and group interviews. In Chapter V, the researcher organized the major findings and discussions according to each research questions. Following the discussion of findings, the limitations of the study both in research design and data analysis are discussed. Additionally, the researcher provided the pedagogical implication of findings and recommendation for future research studies related to the FL anxiety, LCs, and reading comprehension among refugees ELs.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Presented in this chapter is the review of relevant literature associated with the proposed investigation. This literature review is organized into four sections: (a) a presentation of traditional approaches to teaching adult language learners; (b) a discussion of research studies on refugee language learners and their needs; (c) an exploration of second language learning anxiety; and (d) research on the benefits of literature circles for language learners.

The population of adult immigrants, refugees, and naturalized citizens who are studying ESL and English literacy has been growing in the United States. Refugees have unique needs and expectations, which are different from other groups of immigrants such as international students enrolled in colleges or universities. Refugees also have different ranges of education from PhD holders to low levels of literacy, which greatly affect their new lives and education (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008). For instance, many refugees need basic adult education to find a job, to accomplish daily tasks, and to help their children with their school assignments. Unfortunately, both the literacy and academic achievement is low, and the dropout rate is high among this population (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008).

Researchers identified FL anxiety in classrooms hinders the language learning process, especially for the refugee population because of the trauma they may have experienced, their educational backgrounds, and their challenges in life (Horwitz, et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Garden, 1989). According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), “anxiety

poses several potential problems for the student of a foreign language because it can interfere with the acquisition, retention, and production of the new language” (p. 86).

Additionally, FL reading anxiety could have a negative impact on reading comprehension and cognitive processes of language learners (Sellers, 2000) and can be negatively correlated with language performance (Horwitz et al., 1999). Therefore, it is important to consider that language anxiety may hinder the refugees from paying close attention and decrease their cognitive processing capacity (Eysenck, 1992; Sarason, 1988).

Literature Circles maybe one of the most popular approaches to support reading comprehension and reading instruction. The LCs approach is a small discussion group which includes students reading, discussing, and sharing what they read based on the specific roles they are assigned. The purposes of this approach are to encourage students to read a book or text, participate in rich discussions, enhance comprehension, and become lifelong readers (Daniels, 1994). Additionally, LCs provide opportunities for students to engage in conversation and generate ideas about their reading to help them to move away from traditional forms of reading and discussion (Thomas, 2013).

Adams (2005) stated that creating interaction and conversation between language learners and native speakers facilitates the language learning process. Learning in groups provides opportunities for language learners to engage socially, monitor their learning process, and become familiar and comfortable with different groups of learners (Petrich, 2015). Also, through LCs and having conversations with peers, adult refugee language learners may receive more support for their academic, social, and emotional needs. Through higher levels of reading comprehension and having discussion opportunities,

refugee language learners become informed citizens who are able to support themselves in future communities (Johnson, 2013).

Second Language Acquisition Hypothesis

Stephen Krashen, who is an expert in the field of linguistics and specializes in the field of second language acquisition and development, introduced the second language acquisition hypothesis which was influential in all areas of second language acquisition and research since the 1980s. Krashen introduced five main hypotheses of second language acquisition: (a) acquisition-learning hypothesis, (b) monitor hypothesis, (c) natural order hypothesis, (d) input hypothesis, and (e) affective filter hypothesis.

The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis. Krashen (2003) believed that the two different forms of L2 are acquisition and learning. Acquisition is a subconscious process of interactions. On the contrary, learning is the product of conscious processes. According to the acquisition- learning hypothesis, natural communication and authentic learning help ELs to be exposed to a natural learning process.

The Monitor Hypothesis. Monitor hypothesis (Krashen, 1982) is the relationship between acquisition and learning hypothesis and their influence on each other. Krashen (1982) claimed that monitoring can make some contribution to the accuracy of an utterance, but its use should be limited. Too much monitoring can cause barriers because learners must slow down and focus on accuracy rather than fluency. Teachers should encourage students to develop a balance between accuracy and fluency. Having balance depends on variables, such as contexts, personal goals, and the level of language.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis. Krashen (1982) stated anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence have a great impact on acquiring the target language for input and

processing. The “affective filter” can be viewed as a barrier that hinders the learning process and makes language more challenging to acquire (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Krashen indicated that language learners with high motivation, good self-image, and a low level of anxiety (low affective filter) can learn the second language better than students with low self-esteem, motivation, and anxiety (high affective filter). During the learning process, anxiety can raise the affective filter and impede comprehensible input to be used for language acquisition (Krashen, 1981 & Krashen, 1982). Additionally, Krashen (1985) indicated that even if language learners have underlying competence, a high output filter and output anxiety prevent language learners from answering orally and communicating well.

Natural Order Hypothesis. Krashen (1987) believed that language learners acquiring different parts of language are predictable. Grammatical structure can be acquired early in the language learning process when compared to the other parts of language that are learned later in the language learning process. Through the natural order hypothesis, teachers should be aware some elements in the language learning process correlate well, while other elements need more time and scaffolding. Krashen (1987) recommended language teachers should begin teaching from less complex to more difficult.

The Comprehensible Input Hypothesis. Krashen (1987), with regard to the comprehensible input hypothesis, stated language learners can learn a new language when the input is understandable and meaningful. The comprehensible input hypothesis emphasizes the importance of using the target language in classrooms by providing plenty of opportunities to manipulate developmentally appropriate language to make the

understanding process easier. Krashen (1985) believed that in the process of language learning, comprehensible input is the main criteria that learners need. In addition, he mentioned that input modifications make input comprehensible to help learners.

Literature Review

Traditional Approaches to Teaching Adult Language Learners

The teaching of English began during the Medieval Period surrounding the years of invasion in Europe. Since then, a variety of methods, methodologies, and approaches have been applied to teach the language effectively. Since those days, language experts have been conducting research to determine the most effective method that leads to maximum success. For many years, reading and literature have focused on grammar and interpretation of literary texts. Students were required to memorize, repeat, and write grammatically correct sentences without any clear understanding of meaning. Teachers used to read aloud a text, translate it into the native language, and ask students to answer several information-based questions. In these situations, students would usually lose interest in literature and their eagerness to learn it (Durrani, 2016).

Grammar translation method. The traditional methods of learning English focused on grammar rules and vocabulary and did not pay much attention to the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Traditional methods such as the grammar translation method, assumed students were aiming for mastery of the target language, and students were willing to study for years before expecting to use the language in real life. In the grammar translation method, teachers are just guides because grammar translation deals with the memorization of rules, as well as manipulation of the morphology and syntax of the foreign language. Students are expected to memorize

endless lists of grammar rules and vocabulary, and then produce almost perfect translations (Crawford, 2004). Additionally, the main focus on grammar translation method is on translation, knowledge of grammar, and reading fluency (Durrani, 2016). The majority of the books based on the grammar translation method were based on introducing vocabulary words and basic grammar rules to help students to translate the text (Richard & Rogers, 2014).

Advocates of the grammar translation, method, such as Alan Duff (1996), claimed translation is a natural and essential process in language learning. Additionally, Duff (1996) believed the influence of translation helps ELs to learn how one language influences the other language.

Communicative language teaching. The conceptual idea of communicative language teaching was introduced by linguists Michael Halliday in the 1970s and early 1980s in response to the lack of success with traditional language teaching methods and partly due to the increase in demand for language learning. While classrooms in the 1950s were dominated by traditional methods of rote learning of grammar rules, the communicative language teaching approach, based on the principle of learning a language by applying it, made an entry into language classrooms (Walia, 2012). In order to use the language effectively, learners need to develop communicative competence which is the ability to use the language they are learning appropriately, in a given social encounter. According to Hymes (1972), competence should be viewed as “the overall underlying knowledge and ability for language which is the speaker-listener process” (p. 13). With regard to communicative competence, learners need to know both the knowledge of language and be able to apply the language in authentic contexts (Durrani,

2016). The emergence of the communicative language teaching approach has led to many innovations in the field. Since the primary aim of the approach is to prepare learners for meaningful communication, errors are tolerated. Communicative language teaching is a learner-centered approach to language learning (Walia, 2012). This, however, does not mean that the teacher plays no role in this approach. To the contrary, a highly competent teacher is a major requirement for the successful application of the approach. Therefore, teachers' and learners' motivation and positive attitudes are crucial for effective teaching and learning.

In a quantitative research study, Durrani (2016) investigated the attitudes of 150 undergraduate female language learners toward the grammar translation method and communicative language teaching approach at a university in Pakistan. The results of the study demonstrated the majority of participants (76%) had a positive attitude toward the grammar translation method and they believed grammatical explanations helped them to learn the target language. The results of the current study are in line with the study of Shamim (1996) which investigated the postgraduate linguistics students' perception toward the grammar translation method and communicative language teaching. Shamim (1996) found participants had positive attitudes toward traditional approaches such as the grammar translation method.

Audio-lingual method. The audio-lingual method (ALM) was developed through a U.S. Army program to meet the needs of soldiers during World War II. The ALM was invented by structural grammar linguistics in the 1950s. The main concepts of structural grammar emphasize language as a structural system including phonology, morphology

and syntax. These concepts lead to emphasis on teaching dialogue, pronunciation, vocabulary, and language sentences (Brown, 2008).

The ALM was influenced by the behaviorist view of B.F. Skinner, which is based on: (a) habit formation, (b) drilling, (c) repetition, and (d) memorization while students practice the grammatical structure they learned previously in the target language instruction (Brown, 2007). Behaviorism focuses on stimulus and response with rewards and punishment, and successful responses are reinforced by teachers to urge language learners to use repetition as a learning strategy. However, the ALM was not effective because the majority of language learners could not transfer the dialogue practiced in classrooms to their real-life experiences. The following list includes some ALM characteristics (Prator & Cele-Murcia, 1979):

1. Teachers present materials in dialogue.
2. Teachers teach grammatical points inductively, with little explanation.
3. Teachers and students apply target language.
4. Students are encouraged to produce error-free sentences.
5. Correct pronunciation is important.
6. Audio-lingual method is heavily based on memorization and drilling of a set of phrases.

Total physical response. Total physical response (TPR) was introduced by James Asher in 1979 as a method which combines information and language skills through the use of the kinesthetic sensory system. In this method, language learners are taught listening language skills before they begin to develop oral language fluency. Asher (1977) attempted to develop a stress-free language learning method because he believed language classes

were stressful and the majority of language learners suffered from anxiety. In the TPR method, language learners are never forced to speak in the target language until they feel comfortable to produce the utterance in the target language. Using the TPR method, teachers order the commands and act as role models while students attempt to perform the action both in groups and individually. According to Asher (1977), in the TPR method “The instructor is the director of stage play in which the students are the actors” (p. 43).

Natural approach. Stephen Krashen’s (1982) theories of second language acquisition have great importance and have been debated through the years. Krashen and Terrel (1983) developed the natural approach in late the 1970s and early 1980s. Krashen (1982) asserted that similarities are present between first and second language learning processes and adult language learners can learn the languages as children do; language learners should feel free to produce the target language whenever they feel comfortable. According to Krashen (1982), language learners can apply their L1 occasionally, without error correction, because this strategy helps comprehension of the target language.

The goal of the natural approach is to provide opportunities for language learners to learn communicative skills, such as watching a television program, listening to the news, and shopping. The primary factor in the natural approach is providing and exposing language learners to a great amount of comprehensible input (Brown, 2007; Krashen, 1982).

Task based language teaching. The field of second language teaching and language acquisition has changed dramatically since its inception. New methods in language teaching and learning attempt to promote communicative competence among language learners (Zuniga, 2016). Task based language teaching (TBLT) provides

opportunities for language learners to experience and practice reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills by participating in meaningful classroom activities in the target language (Ellis, 2016; Zuniga, 2016). To support these ideas, Nunan (2002) also indicated, in TBLT, language learners should complete a task while applying speaking, reading, listening, and writing skills. Additionally, Nunan (2005) stated TBLT provides opportunities for language learners to produce, manipulate, and become engaged in conversation, which helps learners develop the four language skills simultaneously. Task based language teaching is a learner-centered approach that may facilitate the language learning process while increasing language proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills (Li, 1998).

According to Freeman (1996), “tasks are always activities where the target language is taught for a communicative purpose in order to achieve an outcome” (p.23). The goal of TBLT is to provide opportunities for language learners to engage in communication and practice authentic language (Ellis, 2016; Kurniasih, 2011). To achieve this goal, teachers are responsible for preparing assignments and activities to meet their language needs. Ellis (2003) indicated that a task is an “instructional activity” to accomplish four different criteria: (a) focus on meaning; (b) to fill in the gaps; (c) applies learners’ linguistic resources; and (d) communicative outcomes. In addition, Ellis (2009) believed that TBLT is different from regular teaching activities because teachers are responsible for developing a problem task that motivates language learners while they attempt to infer meaning, apply their own linguistic resources to accomplish the task, and practice authentic communication.

Zuniga (2016) conducted a qualitative research study to investigate the impact of TBLT on six ELs who were from Colombia and studying Basic English at a university in Colombia. The findings of the study, through interview and observation, indicated that TBLT could facilitate the integration of four language skills and promote language learners' communicative competencies and interaction in the classroom. Moreover, Liu and Xiong (2016) investigated EFL college teachers' ideas regarding the application of TBLT in classroom context in China. The findings of their mixed methods study indicated, although teachers had limited knowledge about TBLT and its principles, they had positive views toward its application and usage. Also, the result of the study highlighted the need for professional development for pre-service and in-service Chinese language teachers to promote their professional skills.

Classroom interactional competence. Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC) is defined as “teachers’ and learners’ ability to use interaction as a tool for mediating and assisting learning” (Walsh, 2011, p. 158). Classroom Interactional Competence focuses on the ways in which teachers’ and learners’ interactional decisions and subsequent actions enhance teaching and learning opportunities. Additionally, CIC considers interaction as the center of teaching and learning to enhance learning opportunities (Walsh, 2011). Based on CIC, speakers of second languages must be able to do far more than producing sentences with correct grammar; they should listen, show comprehension, clarify meanings, and repair breakdowns during conversations. Accomplishing these tasks require extreme mental and interactional ability and cannot be achieved by taking part in pair-work tasks or group discussions (Walsh, 2011).

Discussion of Research Studies on Refugee Language Learners and Their Needs

Refugees and Education

A common misconception that all refugees are “poor, uneducated, and ignorant” exists (McSpadden, 1998, p.157). However, the truth is, refugee families come from a variety of backgrounds, different social and economic statuses, and educational levels. Some of the refugees are highly educated, while other refugees are not literate in their first language. According to Durrani (2016), “many of them have previous formal and informal education in another language. Many speak, read, and write two or more languages at home” (p. 4). Despite the stereotype, researchers reported that, refugees gained higher levels of education in comparison to other groups of immigrants. From 2009 to 2011, approximately 76% of adult refugees in the United States accomplished high school education, and 28% of adult refugees attained a 4-year college degree (Capps & Fix, 2015; Perry & Mallozzi, 2017). Additionally, Crea (2016) conducted a mixed method study to examine the perspectives of 122 refugee students who were involved in higher education program in two refugee camps and one urban setting. The methods of data collection were survey and semi-interview questions. The findings of the study suggested that refugee students believed that higher education provided them with opportunities to learn and experience new skills. However, the result of the study reported that refugee students were highly uncertain about their future and challenges of pursuing higher education (Crea, 2016).

Typically, both adult and young refugees face different obstacles in meeting their educational goals in public schools and universities. Unfortunately, refugee students have lower levels of English language proficiency, which makes the schooling process more

challenging (Capps & Fix, 2015; Perry & Mallozzi, 2017). Refugees usually live in protected areas, such as refugee camps or urban areas that do not have access to appropriate education and have limited access to higher education (Crea & McFarlan, 2015). Having an appropriate education would play a significant role in providing opportunities for language learners to find gainful employment, cope with their daily lives, and be informed citizens (Crea & McFarlan, 2015).

Research on Refugee Language Learners

Crea and McFarland (2015) conducted a four-year qualitative pilot study to investigate the progress of refugee students in higher education, as well as students' beliefs about the benefits of higher education. The participants of the study were 122 current and former students from Kakuma, Kenya, and Dzaleka camps who participated in the Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins, which was a program to provide higher education to refugees. From the answers to semi-structured interview questions, results indicated that enrolling in a higher education institution helped refugee students learn different skills, have better worldviews, and feel empowered.

Perry and Mallozzi (2017) presented a discourse analysis of narratives from two adult refugee language learners from Congo. The data of the study came from a larger qualitative case study about adult refugees' educational opportunities in Kentucky (Perry, 2009). The method of data collection was a qualitative questionnaire, which focused on the refugees' cultural mindset, perspectives, and personal worldviews of accessing higher education. The result of the study revealed both participants shared the same cultural mindset and valued higher education; however, their personal worldview and perspectives about accessing higher education were different. Furthermore, the findings

of the study suggested educators and stakeholders understand refugee students' perspectives and worldviews to help them move toward self-efficacy and higher education (Perry & Mallozzi, 2017).

Similarly, Mendenhall, Bartlett, and Ghaffar-Kucher (2017) conducted a qualitative research study to investigate the academic needs of refugee students, explore challenges they encounter, and determine how schools can meet language learners' needs. The participants in this study were secondary level refugee students who were studying in Brooklyn International High School in Brooklyn, New York. The findings of the study, ascertained through interviews and visual methodology (photo-cued focus group discussion), highlighted several factors including: (a) linguistic support from teachers, (b) learner-centered pedagogical approaches, (c) flexible and responsive curricular approaches, and (d) assessment strategies that contribute to refugee students' academic growth. Moreover, Mendenhall et al. (2017) addressed the insufficient attention and services that refugee language learners receive to meet their emotional, social, and linguistic needs.

Refugee students settle in a new country with varying amounts of academic education. Many of them received limited or no academic education in their home country. The lack of academic education has negative impacts on students' academic achievement and career goals. Lee (2016) conducted a study which focused on implementing Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) for low literate Canadian refugee students from Syria who graduated from high school with limited reading proficiency. The CSR program was offered in a college for refugee ELs from 17 to 25 years of age. According to Lee (2016), CSR is "an approach to reading comprehension strategy

instruction combined with cooperative learning: teachers provide students with meta-cognitive knowledge of reading strategies through explicit instruction” (p. 100). The findings of the study demonstrated that students learned and applied a variety of reading strategies which helped them in the reading comprehension process. According to Lee (2016), at the beginning of program refugee language learners indicated CSR was challenging because of their limited reading knowledge. However, in subsequent months, refugee language learners engaged collaboratively in reading novels while applying strategies learned during the Collaborative Strategic Reading.

In a similar study, Benseman (2012) investigated the needs of adult refugee language learners who had low literacy skills, as well as effective instructional strategies that helped them to progress academically. The participants of this qualitative study were 36 adult refugee language learners with an average age of 44 years, two program coordinators, five teachers, and six bilingual tutors in a community-based program in New Zealand. The findings of the study, garnered through interviews, indicated it is essential for refugee language learners to learn basic literacy skills, enhance self-confidence, and transfer and practice all of these learned skills in their daily lives. Language learners with low literacy skills in their first language have complex needs, including: (a) learning motor skills, (b) learning a new alphabet, (c) understanding new word orders, and (d) differentiating sounds. Additionally, Benseman (2012) suggested providing bilingual tutors to help refugee language learners in facilitating communication, interpreting and explaining unknown concepts, and working with individual learners.

Similarly, Kaur (2016) conducted a qualitative study on adult Syrian refugee language learner in New Zealand. The purpose of the study was to analyze and describe the literacy practices of refugee newcomers at home. Kaur (2016) attempted to determine how adult refugee language learners apply different strategies to understand and learn the new language and culture and overcome barriers. The participant of the study was a woman from Syria who had fled from her home country with her family to Egypt and then New Zealand. The method of data collection was semi-structure interviews, observations, and artifacts. The result of the study indicated the change in language and literacy practices due to forced migration caused more stress and unwillingness to learn. Furthermore, Kaur (2016) described how refugee language learners' feelings, beliefs, previous experiences, and the migration process influence their language learning process. The findings were consistent with the study of Benseman (2012) which shed light on the understanding of refugee language learners' issues and needs after migrating to a new country.

In a qualitative action research study, Gilhooly and Lee (2017) analyzed and identified challenges of the Karen Organization, youth in-and-out of school in the United States. The goal of the study was to bring awareness about the needs of refugee newcomers in the community, school, and society. The participants of the action research study included two investigators and three adult Karen brothers. Karen Organization communities are primarily unknown in the United States, although, they are largely settled in New York, Texas, Nebraska, and Minnesota (Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing Center, 2018). The Karen Organization is associated with the hill tribes of Thailand and Burma. Gilhooly and Lee (2017) identified five challenges that the Karen

organization refugee language learners encountered in and out of school, including: (a) English language divide, (b) parental involvement, (c) bullying, (d) gangs, and (e) gender equality issues. Gillhooly and Lee (2017) suggested that learning the English language has a strong influence on refugees' academic achievement, social life, and the challenges of living in a new country. Additionally, Gillhooly and Lee (2017) revealed that bullying refugee students in-and-out of school has a negative influence on their educational and social life. Traditionally, Karen Organization women had active roles in society, and they were provided the same education as males (Zan, 2008). However, the result of this study revealed that the Karen Organization women have a high dropout rate in the United States (Gillhooly & Lee, 2017).

Canada has long been receiving refugee language learners with limited or no educational backgrounds and who may be experiencing loss, trauma, and psychological issues. To meet the needs of this refugee population, an ESL teacher and a psychologist, created the LEAD program to help refugee language learners to become successful in Canadian schools (Miles & Bailey-Mckenna, 2016). The LEAD program includes three approaches: (a) English language development, (b) trauma-informed practice, (c) and cultural responsiveness (Miles & Bailey-McKenna, 2016). Miles and Bailey-Mckenna (2016) conducted a case study and applied the LEAD program to address the academic needs of refugee students. The LEAD program provides opportunities for language learners to learn a new language in a "trauma-sensitive environment" where they can move toward the advanced English language level while building knowledge in the content areas at the same time (Miles & Bailey-McKenna, 2016, p. 112). The participant of this study was a 15-year-old girl who migrated from Mexico and had limited literacy

proficiency in her first language and the English language. After participating in the LEAD program for 20 months, the participant of the study progressed academically, gained English language proficiency, demonstrated improvement in content areas, and more importantly, made connections to the Canadian culture.

Many refugee students suffer from mental health issues such as anxiety, stress, grief, and depression (Gadeberg & Norredam, 2016). According to Petron and Ates (2016), some teachers may assume having students write about their previous experiences might help both emotionally and academically. However, this strategy might do more harm than good because remembering some of their life experiences may be too painful. It is critical to provide students with different topics and give them the opportunity to self-select topics with which they feel comfortable and allow them to explore or not explore their past experiences. Furthermore, it is important to help students become familiar with different forms of being and knowing through incorporating a variety of literature in classrooms (Petron & Ates, 2016). Selecting different books from around the world that introduce honor and value in different cultures and lifestyles helps refugees to think critically and understand other refugees' experiences. Thomas (2013) stated, "If today's children grow up with literature that is multicultural, diverse, and decolonized, we can begin the work of healing our nation and world through humanizing stories" (p. 115).

School and educational environments have critical roles on prevention and intervention of helpful strategies, creating positive adjustment for refugee and asylum seeker students. Moreover, schools have critical roles in developing meaningful connections between refugees, peers, and teachers and training teachers to implement

educational and emotional interventions as needed. Thommesson, Amalie, and Todd (2018) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the needs of refugee and asylum seekers and attempt to find out how professionals can support this population. The participants of this study were seven adult refugees from Iraq and Somalia who arrived in England and Denmark when they were children. All of the participants were working or studying at a university level and they had desire to share their personal experiences to a researcher. The findings of study through semi-structured interviews revealed the importance of knowing language in the new country and communication difficulties that they experienced because of language barriers. Additionally, the results of the study highlighted the importance of acculturation and transition to the new norms, costumes, and values. The participants of the study emphasized the critical role of social and educational support, the guidance of teachers, and peer supports (Thommessen, Amalie, & Todd, 2018).

Foreign Language Anxiety

Definition of Foreign Language Anxiety

Learning a second language is a complex process that involves many different variables (Horwitz, 1985, 1986, 2001; Horwitz, et al. 1986; Horwitz & Young, 1991; Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 1999). Anxiety is one of the important variables which impacts second language learning (Horwitz & Young, 1991; Saito, et al. 1999). Language anxiety is one form of several anxieties which has been identified by psychologists as debilitating. Many teachers and parents are familiar with test anxiety and public speaking anxiety; however, most educators and parents are not familiar with foreign language anxiety (Horwitz & Young, 1991). Horwitz, et al., (1986) first provided conceptual

foundations to understand foreign language anxiety by outlining language anxiety in three components. The first component is communication apprehension, which is “a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people” (p. 127). The second is test anxiety, which is defined as a type of performance anxiety generated from a fear of failure towards academic evaluation. The last component is fear of negative evaluation, which is considered as a someone’s avoidance of evaluative situations, apprehension and expectation of negative evaluations from others (Horwitz et al., 1986).

According to Horwitz et al. (1986) foreign language anxiety is not a general form of classroom anxiety and should be considered as “situation-specific anxiety” (p. 128) because of the self-concept, self-expression, and different forms of learning which foreign language learners experience. Foreign Language anxiety has become one of the major factors in second and foreign language learning, although it is considered a controversial topic because of the significant differences in ideas and opinions educators and researchers have about the topic. The experience of anxiety in the English language learning classroom is a fundamental issue for learners. Educators must attempt to address this anxiety in order to help language learners and refugee students develop feelings of safety and encouragement in language learning experiences (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Many researchers have argued that language learning anxiety can have negative effects on a student’s language learning experience (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Lien 2011; Lie, 2006). On the contrary, other researchers believed FL anxiety helps students to work harder and trigger their achievement (Chastain, 1975; Kleinmann, 1977). Researchers explained FL anxiety can provide both positive and

negative influences on students' achievement (Guvendir, 2014). Scovel (1978) believed the conflicting results in FL anxiety revealed in literature is the product of different anxiety measures being used by researchers. Scovel (1978) indicated, before conducting research related to language anxiety, researchers need to identify the type of anxiety they are measuring. Further, Horwitz (2001) agreed that "Scovel's suggestions have proven to be good ones, and since that time researchers have been careful to specify the type of anxiety they are measuring" (p. 114).

In their seminal study, Clement, Gardner, and Smythe (1980) defined foreign language anxiety as a complex construct that deals with learners' psychology in terms of their feelings, self-esteem, and self-confidence. Horwitz, et al. (1986) defined anxiety in the foreign language acquisition process as a "phenomenon related to but distinguishable from other specific anxieties" (p. 129). They also noted that it is "a distinct complex construct of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 128). Research has revealed, having higher levels of language proficiency and teacher support can help language learners to experience a lower level of anxiety and a higher level of motivation and eagerness (Abdulwahed, 2015).

According to Horwitz (1986), research regarding anxiety and language learning has revealed different and confusing results. Horwitz (1986) concluded the concept of anxiety in language learning processes needs to be better understood. In their study of English-speaking children in an immersion program to learn French, Swain and Burnaby (1976) found there was a negative correlation between anxiety and language proficiency in French. However, Horwitz et al. (1986), could not find any other significant positive or

negative correlation with any forms of proficiency. Chen and Chang (2004) noted, neither academic learning history nor test characteristics were predictive variables of FL anxiety, which can be interpreted to mean FL anxiety is a unique form of situation anxiety

Types of Anxiety

Anxiety is classified into several parts. In educational research, anxiety is divided into trait or state (Spielberger, 1983). Spielberger (1983) defined state anxiety as an immediate, transitory emotional experience with instate cognitive effects, while trait anxiety is a stable condition when individuals feel anxious in almost all situations. According to Woodrow (2006), “trait anxiety is a relatively stable personality trait” (p. 309). A person who experiences trait anxiety is likely to feel anxious in a variety of situations. On the other hand, state anxiety is a temporary condition experienced at a particular moment” (p. 310). Further, Woodrow (2006) defined the third type of anxiety as a situational anxiety, which reflects a trait that occurs in specific situations. An example of situational anxiety could be feelings of anxiety language learners experience while presenting a lecture in front of a whole class.

Moreover, MacIntyre and Gardner (1986) defined trait anxiety as a tendency to be anxious or nervous without any particular reason or circumstances. However, situational anxiety is feeling nervous or anxious in a particular situation or condition, such as fear of public speaking. Additionally, Horwitz et al. (1986) identified fear of negative evaluation where people worry about the thoughts and judgments of other individuals. Language learners may experience other forms of anxiety such as: (a) test anxiety, which is defined as fear of poor test performance (Horwitz, et al., 1986); (b) subject anxiety, which is related to a particular task associated with listening, speaking, reading, or writing

(Matsuda & Gobel, 2004); and (c) affective anxiety, which is defined as an undesirable relationship between learners and teachers or learners themselves (Spielmann & Radnofsky, 2001). Prior studies indicated that FL anxiety plays a crucial role in students' achievements. Most of the studies demonstrated a negative correlation between FL anxiety and language performance (Aida, 1994; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Saito & Samimy, 1996).

Cause of Foreign Language Anxiety

Foreign Language anxiety is one of the important factors that can impede achievements. Foreign Language face many different interpersonal challenges to learn a new language; one of the obstacles can be FL learning anxiety. English Learners often believe they have lower achievement levels in language classes in comparison to other classes. They feel their mind is blocked and they cannot learn or hear properly. Foreign Language learning courses might be more demanding in comparison to other courses because students are required to comprehend the language and content at the same time. Price (1991) conducted a qualitative case study to examine the causes of anxiety among ten ELs at the University of Texas. The method of data collection included a semi-structured interview to obtain detailed description of participants' experiences. The result of the study indicated that classroom instructors had a significant role on the participant's anxiety. The participants of study reported that teachers who repeatedly criticized student's accent and mistakes made the classroom atmosphere stressful. Conversely, teachers who believed that making a mistake is part of learning process and focused on classroom communication rather than accuracy, let students relax so learning could take place. Additionally, the findings of the study revealed that there is a relationship between

ELs personality and FL learning anxiety. Some of the participants assumed that their language skills were weaker than other peers, and they did not have special talent to learn the language. Price (1991) indicated that perfectionism and fear of public speaking are two causes that make students more anxious in the process of language learning.

Foreign Language learning anxiety has different causes and the types. Students' personality, country of origin, level of language ability, and more importantly culture have great impact on types and amount of anxiety that ELs might experience. Sadigi and Dastpak (2017) conducted a quantitative study, to experiment the causes of FL learning anxiety of 154 Iranian EFL students. The method of data collection was a questionnaire. The findings of the study illustrated that lack of vocabulary knowledge, fear of making mistakes, and fear of negative evaluation are the main causes of anxiety among Iranian EFL participants. There is no doubt that having good communication skills need sufficient vocabulary knowledge. Participants of the study reported that lack of vocabulary knowledge to express thoughts and emotions hindered communication and cause embarrassment. Moreover, lack of sufficient opportunities to practice the language authentically in foreign countries, can be one of main factors of FL learning anxiety (Gan, 2012 & Sadigi & Dastpak, 2017).

Foreign Language Reading Anxiety

It is important to distinguish between FL anxiety and FL reading anxiety. Foreign Language anxiety is a part of general language learning anxiety which is mainly related to speaking and listening and it can be detected by teachers when language learners have difficulty with communication in the target language (Horwitz et al., 1986; Saito, et al., 1999). On the contrary, FL reading anxiety is mainly related to a specific language skill.

According to Saito, et al. (1999), “FL reading anxiety is a phenomenon related to, but distinct from, general FL anxiety” (p. 211). With regard to speaking skills, two or more speakers attempt to reflect on each other’s speech and convey meaning; however, with reading skills, the reader does not have the opportunity to convey meaning through interaction. Through the reading process, the reader who is “interacting with an uncooperative or incompetent conversational pattern is going to have difficulty even if he or she is a really competent and sensitive conversational participant” (Saito et al., 1999, p. 202).

In a quantitative study, Saito et al. (1999) investigated language learners’ reading anxiety in relation to three different target languages which use the different writing systems, namely “cognate language” (French), “semi cognate language” (Russian), and “non-cognate language” (Japanese). The result of the post hoc comparisons of means for the reading anxiety test indicated the level of reading anxiety is related to the specific target language. The results of the study demonstrated that language learners who learn Japanese experienced the most anxiety ($M=56.01$), followed by the learners of French ($M= 53.14$), and Russian learners experienced the lowest level of reading anxiety ($M= 46.64$). The reason Japanese learners experienced the highest level of reading anxiety in comparison to French and Russian language learners might be due to unfamiliar scripts, writing systems, and unfamiliar cultural materials. When language learners are not familiar with the target language sound-symbol correspondence, they will experience more reading anxiety. It is necessary for readers to become familiar with the forms, decode them into sounds, build sound from correspondences, and then process the meaning of the text (Saito et al., 1999; Zhou, 2017). In the case of unfamiliar script,

sometimes readers know the individual vocabulary words' meaning, but they cannot comprehend the text because of unfamiliarity with cultural aspect of language (Saito et al., 1999).

In a mixed method study, Zhao, Guo, and Dynia (2013), investigated several factors related to FL reading anxiety such as the relationship between FL reading anxiety and general FL anxiety, as well as FL reading anxiety and FL reading performance at different levels of reading. Additionally, they explored the impact of other variables, such as gender and experience with China among English-speaking university students learning Chinese in the United States. The participants in this study were 114 students from elementary level I Chinese classes, Elementary level II Chinese classes, and Intermediate level Chinese classes at a large public university.

A FL anxiety scale indicated the level of FL reading anxiety students experience was correlated to the general FL anxiety and it was influenced by language learners' course level and their experience in China. Additionally, through a questionnaire and email interview, the authors identified unfamiliar script, unfamiliar topics, and worry about comprehension as major sources of anxiety among learners of Chinese. Zhao et al. (2013) believed, in general, FL reading anxiety increased as course levels increased from Elementary to Intermediate. However, the extent that language learners experience FL reading anxiety was higher in Elementary level I and Intermediate in comparison to the Elementary level II. The results of this study partially supported Zhou's (2017) findings.

Similarly, Zhou (2017) examined the FL reading anxiety level of English-speaking students who were learners of Chinese. The participants were 76 university students in four different academic levels. Data from the FL reading anxiety scale

indicated that 100-level (Beginner) and 400-level (Advanced) Chinese learners experienced the highest level of anxiety while the FL reading anxiety level decreases in 200 and 300 levels (Intermediate). The possible reasons might be the different writing systems between Chinese and English, phonological and semantic processing, and difficulty in the word decoding process of the new language (Zhou, 2017).

In the area of FL reading anxiety and FL reading achievement or reading performance, Mohammadpur and Ghafournia (2015) conducted a quantitative study to determine the effect of FL anxiety on reading comprehension achievement of Iranian EFL learners who were studying general English in different academic fields at a university. The method of data collection was a reading proficiency test of TOFEL and FL reading anxiety scale. The findings of their study revealed there was a negative correlation between language learners' reading level and reading anxiety. In other words, when language learners' reading performance increased, their FL reading anxiety will decrease. The result of this study was in accordance with the previous study by Zhao et al. (2013).

Similar to Horwitz et al. (1986), Mohammadpur and Ghafournia (2015) suggested, educators must be aware of reading anxiety as a phenomenon that can reduce reading performance and attempt to provide language learners with a variety of reading resources, such as culturally familiar materials to provide them an opportunity to develop self-confidence.

Using qualitative measures (interviews), Guvendir (2014) identified 12 factors that lead to FL reading anxiety. He used a think aloud protocol to monitor 50 Turkish college English language learners' inner thoughts who were at an advanced level. The

findings of the study indicated some of the main sources of FL reading anxiety were metaphoric title, unknown vocabulary words, reading aloud, a limited amount of reading time, the teacher's question, and topic unfamiliarity. Moreover, this study revealed that the think aloud protocol can be applied as a tool to help teachers monitor the factors that exacerbate the reading anxiety of FL learners. Similarly, Altukaya & Ates (2018) conducted a qualitative study to examine the sources of EL reading anxiety. The participants of the study were six Turkish instructors and eight students learning Turkish as a foreign Language. The method of data collection was a semi-structured interview. The result of the study represented student's English language level, reading texts, unfamiliar vocabulary words, unknown subjects, cultural differences, and fear of making mistakes as main causes of FL reading anxiety. The researchers suggested, in order to help language learners reduce FL reading anxiety and improve reading performance, it is necessary to detect factors that cause FL reading anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986; Saito et al., 1999; Sellers, 2000).

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

Research on speaking skills and oral language fluency started in the mid-1960s. McCroskey (1978) defined FL speaking anxiety "as individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated oral communication with another person or persons" (p. 192). According to MacIntyre & Gardner (1991), an anxious learner is "an individual who perceives the L2 as an uncomfortable experience, who withdraws from voluntary participation, who feel social pressure not to make mistakes and who is less willing to try uncertain or novel linguistic forms" (p. 112). Brumfit (1984) indicated that language fluency should be considered as "natural language use whether or not results in native-

speaker-like language comprehension or production” (p. 56). Foreign language learners who experience L2 speaking anxiety are usually afraid of making mistakes, feel incompetent compared to their peers, and do not have a tendency to take a risk in the classroom, especially when they are in beginning levels (Horwitz et al., 1986).

It has been observed that, although language learners spend several years in colleges and schools and make personal efforts, they fail to acquire the desired oral language fluency (Buriro & Abdul Aziz, 2015). The reason might be the anxiety factors that FL learners experience in oral language learning processes such as feelings, beliefs, personality, traits, motivation, socio-cultural, and psycholinguistic (Buriro & Abdul Aziz, 2015). Some researchers indicated that speaking skills produce the most anxiety in FL learning and the reason is not because of poor oral language ability, but mainly due to fear of speaking in public (Arnold, 2011; McIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

In a qualitative case study of research with Pakistani learners of English, Buriro and Abdul Aziz (2015) identified learners’ L1 accent, lack of enough exposure and practice in L2, social insistence rather than fluency, and low self-confidence as factors responsible for learners’ anxiety in speaking English as a FL. The aforementioned factors have been emphasized by other studies, as well. For instance, through a quantitative research study, Al-Otaibi (2014) explored the factors that make Saudi college students who study FL anxious. Results showed the anxiety-provoking factors could be the fear of being inferior to peers, speaking in front of the group, grade anxiety, difficulty in learning rules, students’ negative self-confidence, and being humiliated because of their accent. Confirmed by Neer, Hudson, & Warren (1982), being put on the spot and speaking in front of the class are threatening experiences. For some language learners, being put on

the spot might trigger speech anxiety, so it is better to provide FL learners with the opportunity to speak in small groups first and then move to the whole class. Similarly, Koch and Terrel (1991) claimed that speaking in front of the group can trigger anxiety and identified some of the classroom activities that produce anxiety, such as giving a lecture, role play, and defining new vocabulary words.

Language learners pay specific attention to speaking skills and oral narration, which triggers their anxiety. Anxiety can be a true obstacle for language learners' communicative ability. In a mixed method study, Sanaei, Zafarghandi, and Khalili-Sabet (2015) investigated the effect of FL classroom anxiety on oral language fluency among adult Iranian EFL learners. The methods of data collections were through a FL classroom anxiety scale questionnaire translated into Persian, speaking proficiency guidelines from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, picture stories for narrative tasks, and a qualitative questionnaire. The quantitative part of the study demonstrated that there was a negative correlation between classroom anxiety and speech fluency. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient between FL classroom anxiety scale and Oral Narrative Fluency test revealed participants with lower anxiety levels experience better speech fluency. Furthermore, the qualitative findings of the study revealed participants with more speech fluency could produce grammatically accurate sentences.

Scholars believed affective factors such as efficacy, empathy, and introversion have greatly impacted the foreign language learning process (Horwitz et al., 1986; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993). There are many studies related to FL anxiety and speaking skills. Through a quantitative study, Karatas, Bademcioglu, and Erigon (2016) investigated the impacts of gender, language level, English preparatory training, and the

kind of high school that learners graduated from at a university in Turkey. The empirical findings through *t*-tests and one-way ANOVA indicated the female university students were more anxious than males but scored higher on tests. Also, no relationship was determined between FL speaking anxiety and students' grade levels. On the contrary, Dalkilic (2001) and Liu (2006) found there was a negative relationship between students' grade levels and FL speaking anxiety. An increase in students' grade level indicated their FL speaking anxiety was reduced. There was not any statistically significant difference revealed in FL speaking ability based on the high school that language learners attended or English preparatory training.

In their mixed method study, Ozturk and Gurbuz (2014) investigated the grade level, major causes, and the factors that lead to FL speaking anxiety among pre-intermediate English learners at a Turkish university. The quantitative results showed that participants became anxious in lower grade levels; however, the qualitative results, based on interview questions, demonstrated that L2 learners believed speaking skills to be one of the factors that trigger anxiety. Additionally, pronunciation, immediate questions, fear of making a mistake, and evaluation were identified as major causes of FL speaking anxiety. The results of a recent study are in line with Horwitz et al. (1999) and Price (1991) who studied L2 speaking anxiety and found that speaking anxiety is one of the most intimidating FL skills in the language learning process.

Rafada and Madini (2017) undertook a qualitative research study to explore some effective strategies to reduce FL speaking anxiety among college students in Saudi Arabia. The results of the interview demonstrated the majority of participants believed that improving language by enhancing target vocabulary words, watching movies,

traveling abroad, following educational websites, enhancing reading skills, or group reading for pleasure could help them to reduce FL speaking anxiety.

Moreover, teachers have a great role in reducing language learner speaking anxiety. Ansari (2015) claimed that the first step to reduce language learners' anxiety is teachers' behavior in class. It is essential to raise teachers' awareness to avoid a hostile manner in the classroom that creates stressful situations among students. Also, appropriate activities and classroom routines are helpful in reducing speaking anxiety (Alrabai, 2014). English as a Foreign Language and ESL learners do not usually have enough opportunities to practice the target language. Rafada and Madini (2017) suggested teachers to create English clubs where students practice their speaking skills in authentic situations by being exposed to English culture.

In terms of application of strategy, Chou (2018) conducted a quantitative study to examine Taiwanese university students' anxiety, strategy use, and difficulties when speaking English in full and partial English Medium Instruction contexts. Partial English medium instruction refers to the situation where code switching and translation to the first language is allowed. However, full English medium instruction refers to the English as the only medium of communication. The participants of the study were 638 second-year undergraduate ELs from four universities in Taiwan. The method of data collection was a large-scale questionnaire which was collected after 18 weeks. The findings of quantitative study revealed that ELs who received full English medium instruction experienced less speech anxiety, develop self-confidence, and positive feelings toward learning English language. In addition, participants in full medium instruction applied more paraphrasing and rehearsal strategies as well as having more opportunities to

practice the target language and being exposed to listening and speaking inputs.

However, in both full and partial English medium instruction contexts, ELs reported that grammar, content knowledge, and pronunciation were difficult parts of speaking skills.

Foreign Language Listening Anxiety

Some people are concerned about how others perceive and evaluate them, so they pay more attention to their performance, social interaction, and impression. These characteristics can be found frequently in ELs who are experiencing talking and communicating in a new language. In a large-scale, quantitative research study of 1177 Chinese university students who were taking an English course, Kimura (2017) investigated the level of L2 listening anxiety and concluded that L2 listening anxiety has a negative correlation with listening performance and it should be distinguished from the general form of anxiety. Kimura (2017) believed second language listening is socially constructed and has two related sources: task-focused apprehension, which is related to being worried about L2 listening performance; and self-focused apprehension, which is related to social concern. Moreover, L2 learners with low listening proficiency experienced higher levels of self-focused apprehension and task-focused apprehension.

Foreign Language listening is one of the most challenging skills for ELs (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994); however, studies related to this type of anxiety remain limited. According to Young (1992), the FL listening anxiety task is “highly anxiety provoking if the discourse is incomprehensible” (p. 102). Moreover, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) defined FL listening anxiety as “apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of second language with which the individual is not fully proficient” (p. 5). Vogely (1998) investigated the main sources of FL listening anxiety in

classrooms and claimed the types of listening input, listening process, the instruction used by teachers, and classroom activities and tests as main sources of listening anxiety. In a similar study, Wang (2010) reported the difficulty in FL listening skills might be the result of insufficient practice by learners, lack of effective listening strategies, lack of vocabulary words in a target language, and a variety of affective factors such as anxiety.

Similar to speaking anxiety, many studies revealed FL listening anxiety is related to the FL strategy use that language learners apply (Lu & Liu, 2013; Nakatani, 2006; Liu & Zhang, 2013). Through a quantitative research study, Liu (2016) examined the interrelations between FL listening anxiety and FL strategy use and their impact on test performance of 1160 low and high proficient Chinese ELs at a university level. The result of the study indicated that there is a significant correlation between FL listening anxiety and FL listening strategy used in both low and high proficient groups. Chinese language learners with a lower level of FL listening anxiety tend to apply more effective strategies to accomplish listening tasks. On the other hand, language learners with a higher level of listening anxiety apply less FL listening strategies to complete a listening task. The findings of this study are in line with the study, which was completed by Lu and Liu (2013) on general FL anxiety and strategy use by language learners.

In terms of the relations between strategy use and FL listening anxiety, the results of the study demonstrated that less proficient language learners tend to be more anxious, less confident, and apply less active listening strategies in comparison to highly proficient language learners. Moreover, FL listening anxiety and FL strategy use are highly correlated and influential in FL and second language acquisition (Liu, 2016).

Listening skills are important factors that contribute to comprehension and FL listening anxiety can hinder speech production because speakers are not able to comprehend the input to produce utterance (Vogely, 1998). In a quantitative research study, Vogely (1998) investigated the sources of FL listening comprehension anxiety and suggested solutions to reduce anxiety among foreign language learners. The participants of the study were 140 university students who enrolled in a Spanish foreign language course. The results of the descriptive study demonstrated there are four major categories of FL listening comprehension anxiety: (a) characteristics of input; (b) process-related aspects of listening comprehension; (c) instructional factors; and (d) personal attributes of the teacher and learner. The findings of this study suggested that, to reduce FL listening anxiety, teachers should introduce a variety of FL listening comprehension strategies, apply visual materials, use slower speech, and have knowledge about the nature of the L2 listening comprehension process (Vogely, 1998). Similarly, Abd Aziz (2017) conducted a qualitative case study to explore the causes of listening comprehension anxiety among ELs at a university in Saudi Arabia. The method of data collection was semi-structured interview with two participants. The findings of the study revealed that participants of the study had high level of anxiety and some of the major causes of anxiety were the nature of listening comprehension, classroom atmosphere, and low English proficiency of English Learners.

Foreign Language Writing Anxiety

While working on FL anxiety, the focus is usually on the oral mode of anxiety, and there is less attention on writing anxiety. After focusing on L1 writing anxiety for decades, researchers, such as Horwitz and Young (1991) turned their focus to L2 writing

anxiety. Daly and Miller (1975) developed a writing apprehension test, which was prepared to assess L1 writing anxiety. Later, the modified version of L1 writing anxiety was used to measure L2 writing anxiety (Gungle & Talor, 1989).

The empirical study by Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert (1999) investigated the relationships between L2 classroom anxiety and L2 writing anxiety in a university in Taiwan. Additionally, the researchers examined associations with L2 speaking and writing anxiety. The findings of study indicated L2 classroom anxiety is a general form of anxiety that students experienced, whereas L2 writing anxiety is a more specific form of anxiety which is related to language specific anxiety. Moreover, anxiety is negatively correlated with L2 writing and classroom achievement. On the one hand, L2 classroom anxiety and L2 writing anxiety might be independent constructs which have their own definition and characteristics. On the other hand, they share some similarities such as “negative affect toward certain aspects of communication, avoidance of certain kinds of social changes, and fear of being evaluated” (Chang, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999, p.421).

In a large-scale mixed method research study that was carried out with 1174 first year Chinese university language learners, Liu and Ni (2015) investigated the pattern, effect, and causes of L2 writing anxiety. The findings of the study, garnered through a FL writing anxiety scale, a semi-structured interview, and the background questionnaire revealed FL writing anxiety scale has three components, including; having low self-confidence in L2 writing, fear of L2 writing evaluation, and dislike of L2 writing. Students indicated different levels of anxiety based on their gender and level of proficiency. Further, there was a negative correlation noted between FL writing anxiety

and L2 writing performance based on the lack of adequate practice in L2 writing, lack of vocabulary words, high expectations, and overall difficulty in English writing.

Similarly, Abdel Latif (2015) conducted a mixed method study to address the main sources of FL writing apprehension. The participants included 57 male senior English majors at an Egyptian university whose native language was Arabic. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, linguistic tests, and writing tasks. Findings revealed the major source of L2 writing anxiety as linguistic knowledge level, perceived language competence, writing performance level, perceived writing competence, instructional practices, and fear of criticism (Abdel Latif, 2015). Additionally, language learners with low language and writing ability, low self-perception, and low achievement experience more writing apprehension while having shorter and low-quality writing performance (Hayes, 1981; Cheng et al., 1999; Lee, 2005; Abdel Latif, 2015).

In his quantitative study, Salmani-Nodoshan (2015) investigated the relationship between FL anxiety, FL writing ability, and writing performance of 137 Iranian college students who were studying English as a foreign language. The findings of this study demonstrated each type of anxiety had a different impact on students' learning processes. For example, state anxiety, which is defined as a temporary condition experienced at a particular moment, was determined to be debilitating, whereas situational anxiety, which reflects trait anxieties that reappear in specific situations (Spielberger, Anton, & Bedel, 1976) could be facilitative. The researcher claimed the participants of the study who were shy and sensitive used state anxiety to defend themselves through negative evaluation which had a deliberative impact on their writing performance (Salmani-Nodoshan, 2015). The results of the current study are in line with the claim made by Aida (1994) who

mentioned state anxiety can be applied as a self-defense while students feel passive and unwilling to participate in classrooms. In their quantitative study, Yan and Wang (2014) examined the impact of L2 writing anxiety in Chinese to English translation of 50 university students in Hong Kong. The results of the study revealed there was a correlation between FL writing anxiety, translation quality, and students' language ability.

Min and Rahmat (2014) conducted a quantitative study to investigate the second language writing anxiety level of students in relation to their gender, race, and Malayan University English Test results. The participants in the study were 93 undergraduate engineering students at a university in Malaysia. The findings of the study revealed that somatic anxiety was significantly higher among engineering students in comparison to avoidance behavior and cognitive anxiety. The results of this study are in contrast with the past findings by Cheng (2004) and Zhang (2011), where participants experienced higher levels of cognitive anxiety. The contrast in findings suggests a difference in the type of writing anxiety technical and English major students experience may be present (Min & Rahmat, 2014). Additionally, the results of the study indicated male participants experienced higher levels of anxiety compared to their female counterparts.

Cheng, et al. (1999) conducted an empirical study to explore the FL Class Anxiety Scale and the Second Language Writing Anxiety Test and their relationships. Participants in this study were 433 Taiwanese university students who were enrolled in English speaking and English writing classes simultaneously. The instruments used for data collection were the modified FL class anxiety scale, the L2 writing anxiety test, and a background questionnaire. The findings of the study revealed second language

classroom anxiety is a general form of anxiety which primarily focuses on speaking anxiety, while second language writing anxiety is considered to be a “language-skill-specific anxiety” (Cheng, et al., 1999, p. 435). However, self-confidence is one of the major factors that influence both FL classroom anxiety and FL writing anxiety.

On the contrary, Gosiewsko and Turek (2018) conducted a quantitative research to investigate the interdependence between adolescent and adult students’ anxiety and their FL speaking achievements. The participants of the study were 15 adult ELs from 30 to 40 years old and 15 adolescents at the age of 17. The method of data collection was anxiety questionnaire which was completed by students and evaluation sheets to complete by teachers based on participants’ performance. The findings of the study indicated that there was no impact on anxiety and students FL speaking achievement. Result of the study revealed that there is no correlation between ELs’ anxiety and their achievement. This situation appears to be inconsistent with the findings in previous research in literature (Hill & Wingfield, 1984; Luo, 2013, Petridou & Williams, 2007; Zhao & Whitchurch, 2011).

Literature Circles

“Every day tens of thousands of American adults gather voluntarily in book discussion groups meeting in church, basements, bookstores, community centers, retirement homes, and private house, and private house to talk about their reading.” (Daniels, 1994, p. 8)

For many years, scholars of reading instruction have investigated the most effective methods to help students acquire language and enhance their reading comprehension of a variety of texts. Leal (1992) argued that peer collaboration was a

powerful tool to help students develop meaning and negotiate understanding that could not be found in independent reading. Leal also identified three benefits of peer-group discussion: (a) a catalyst for learning, (b) a platform for peer collaboration and (c), and opportunity for exploratory talk with a real audience. When students express their ideas and prior knowledge through a conversation with their peers, they will stimulate other classmates' ideas unconsciously and develop meaning collaboratively (Leal, 1993; Peterson & Eeds, 1990). Vygotsky (1978) also indicated that "problem solving in collaboration with more capable peers" provides opportunity for learners to enrich their learning (p. 114). Student peer groups can be considered an environment where students construct meaning in public through a social process and later individually internalize the process while building their own knowledge from different perspectives (Goatley, Broke, & Rapheal, 1995).

According to Willis (1996), in order for language to be learned and acquisition to take place there should be some criteria such as: (a) exposure to comprehensible input, (b) applying the language to understand and accomplish tasks, and (c) motivation to listen, read, speak, and write actively. Daniels (1994) believed that students should have an opportunity to "talk, express, react, and behave like normal real world" in classrooms (p. 9). When students actively engage in conversations, share their personal opinions, and reflect on passages and reading materials, they demonstrate how well they comprehend the texts. Literature Circles provide opportunities for all students, including language learners, to experience learning all language skills through comprehensible input while communicating their ideas and receiving teacher and peer feedback.

The LC is a cooperative reading method which encompasses collaborative learning, independent reading, transactional theory, and student-centered learning, which are the most important concepts in today's education (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Through the process of applying LCs, teachers introduce several books and students are given the opportunity to choose a book based on their interests and levels of comprehension. In accordance with the book they select, groups of two to six will be formed (Avci & Yuksel, 2011; Daniels, 2000). In the first meeting, students gather to discuss a piece of literature based on their roles and project type. Common roles provide tools for students to help them comprehend at deeper levels and participate in student-directed interesting discussions. The five common roles introduced by Daniels (1994) are presented in the table below.

Table 1.

The Five Common Roles

Common Roles	Job Description
Discussion Leader	An individual who is responsible to develop a list of questions to help group members to talk about the important ideas in the reading and share their thoughts and feelings.
Connector	Someone who finds connection between the book and the real world.
Summarizer	A person who is responsible to give a brief summary of key points, main highlights, and general idea of reading.
Vocabulary Enricher	A person who focuses on providing a definition of single vocabulary word or a short phrase by reading the text closely. Vocabulary Enricher points to these

vocabulary words during meetings and helps members to find and discuss these words.

Literary Luminary

An individual whose role is to find the special sections of the text and read them aloud to the group to help them to remember some interesting, powerful, and important parts of the texts

After finishing the book, groups share their reading with other classmates and then move to a new cycle, of reading and discussion (Daniel, 1994). In each new cycle, the roles may vary. Participants practice different roles and prepare themselves for discussion, so they become familiar with different reasons for reading and read the texts from different perspectives based on the assigned roles (Daniels, 1994; Shelton-Strong, 2012).

Assigning roles to students helps them to begin initial discussion sessions, shows them different ways to participate in discussions, and makes the discussion more worthwhile (Peterson & Belizaire, 2006). Also, Peterson and Belizaire (2006) indicated that group size, social confidence, participants' reading level, and the type of selected books impact students' satisfaction and learning success. However, over-dependence on the assigned role might make the discussion too mechanical and get in the way of thoughtful conversation among the group members. When students reach the point that they can apply and manage literature discussion independently, they may be allowed "to drop the formal discussion role" and scaffolding should be eliminated (Daniels, 2002, p. 13).

Features of Literature Circles

Literature Circles are different from other types of literature discussions because they are systematic and follow specific guidelines. Daniels (2002) introduced the characteristics of LCs, including the following 11 key elements, which provide opportunities for students to become successful:

1. Students choose their own materials.
2. Small temporary groups are formed based on book choice.
3. Different groups read different books.
4. Groups meet on a regular, predictable schedule, to discuss their reading.
5. Kids use written or drawn notes to guide both their reading and discussion.
6. Discussion topics come from students.
7. Group meetings aim to be open, natural conversation about books so personal connections and open-ended questions are welcomed.
8. The teacher serves as a facilitator, not a group member or instructor.
9. Evaluation is by teacher observation and student self-evaluation.
10. There is a spirit of playfulness.
11. “When books are finished, readers share with their classmates, and new groups formed around new reading choices” (2002, p. 18).

Despite traditional forms of students’ discussions, where teachers were in the center of discussions, LCs provide more opportunities for students to construct their own learning while communicating and sharing ideas (Sands & Doll, 1996). Actively engaging in selecting books, making meaning, and sharing ideas while participating in dialogue help students to practice self-determination, self-esteem, and social skills.

Widodo (2016) undertook an empirical research study on LCs in a vocational secondary English reading program. The result of the ethnographic study indicated that LCs were helpful in building motivation, engaging students in collaborative learning, and creating learning community where students are responsible for their own learning process. Additionally, working with peers, moving away from traditional teacher-centered instruction, and having social network will help develop enjoyment and a desire for reading as a lifelong habit rather than mere school assignments (Moecharm & Kartika Sari A., 2014). As Widodo (2016) claimed, reading comprehension is not limited to decoding and understanding vocabulary and grammar; however, reading is a type of activity which is socially situated as readers get involved in texts through meaningful dialogue.

Literature Circles and English Language Learners

To make LCs more beneficial for English language learners (ELs) and implement LCs in a successful way, minor, but important modifications are needed for some of these key elements of Literature Circles (Furr, 2004; Shelton-Strong, 2012). Considering the realities about ELs and English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners, it is important to change some of the LCs features. For instance, it is essential to apply the role and responsibilities for an extended amount of time and let all groups discuss the same book for the initial introduction to the process (Furr, 2004; Shelton-Strong, 2012). More importantly, instead of grouping students based on book choice during the introductory phase, it may be a better idea to form the groups based on an instructor's selection (Furr, 2004).

The role sheet and discussion circles provide the scaffolding and support that all ELs need to accomplish their tasks (Shelton-Strong, 2012). Although roles are fairly simple and straightforward strategies, they provide opportunities for language learners to be engaged in literature discussions and textual analysis meaningfully. Having meaningful discussions and peer-friendly scaffolding, participants create an atmosphere which is called “zone of proximal development” by Vygotsky (Furr, 2004).

Moreover, having small group discussions through LCs has several benefits for students and language learners. ELs usually feel pressure when talking in large groups or they are not confident enough and feel ashamed. Being in small, intimate groups gives language learners the safety to take a risk and express their opinion, while building their confidence and gaining more academic knowledge through time (Helgeson, 2017).

Benefits of Literature Circles

Previously elementary teachers employed “book clubs” as an activity to enhance literacy skills; however, LCs have proven to be a more effective tool for enhancing reading comprehension and language skills. Owens (1995) introduced nine essential rationales that demonstrate the importance of applying LCs for literacy instruction:

1. To promote love for literature and positive attitude toward reading.
2. To reflect a constructivist, child centered model of literacy.
3. To encourage extensive reading.
4. To invite natural discussions that lead to student’s inquiry and critical thinking.
5. To support diverse response to texts.
6. To foster interaction and collaboration.
7. To provide choice and encourage responsibility.

8. To expose children to literature from multiple perspectives.
9. “To expose children to literature and self-evaluation” (1995. p. 3).

Literature Circles are beneficial for both main stream and language learners. First, recent research in the field of reading comprehension noted that the LC approach provide opportunities for students to increase social skills and literacy strategies (Morales & Carrol, 2015). Literature Circle approach has many benefits for ELs to acquire the language while practicing speaking, reading comprehension, listening, and writing skills. Also, engaging in communicative exercises in the classroom provide participants opportunities to practice speaking skills and learn the grammatical and conversational tools and elements.

The second way LCs are beneficial is through their promotion of cultural awareness, exchanging experiences, and knowing values through literacy discussions and authentic dialog. Having small peer discussion groups may help students to share different points of view, as well as discuss stories and values of students from different countries and social backgrounds. A recent qualitative study in an adult EFL classroom indicated teachers can provide opportunities for EFL students to familiarize themselves with different cultures, literature, and values through applying LCs and appropriate texts as artifacts (Moecharam & Kartika Sari A., 2014). Additionally, reading, classroom discussion, and journal writings could bring cultural awareness to students and help them to recognize their biases and reduce their defensiveness. Literature Circles are an approach that introduces the cultural component by applying the literature from different languages. In a qualitative study, Graham-Marr (2015) indicated that reading fiction as a

source of classroom material provides opportunity for students to encounter, practice, and acquire a vocabulary set related to the culture and life style of other nations.

The third benefit of LC is collaborative learning. Meaningful discussion and collaboration provide students opportunities to be active participants in a learning process rather than passive recipients of knowledge (Bin Latif Azim, 2013). Working collaboratively with peers can create a sense of trust where students nourish critical thinking, language skills, and communication skills. As Almasi (1995) indicated, collaborative learning provides spaces for learners to become engaged with peers and have critical discussions about themes in the texts. Engagement is one of the elements that students can learn and practice through participating in Literature Circles. Creating connections and cooperation between peers, teachers, and mentors will help students to progress academically.

Literature Circles can be adjusted in several ways to include differentiation and help students at different levels and with varying abilities. Helgeson (2017) suggested one approach of differentiation is assigning roles based on students “interest and ability” (p. 43). It could be a good idea to allow students to have the opportunity to make a choice as to the type of assignment they want to complete or make a selection based on the skills they need to practice. Also, flexibility in role assignments provides students with the opportunity to have differentiated experiences while practicing a variety of roles and enhancing literacy skills.

Literature Circles in Primary Levels

Literature Circles provide opportunities for students to work on the topic of interest in a small group, while practicing collaborative problem-solving strategies. In a

qualitative study, Peterson (2016) explored the characteristics of small group peer discussions in 3rd-and-4th grade classrooms. The findings of the study suggested that participating in small peer groups has several advantages, such as reducing tension among students, developing critical thinking skills, and considering different perspectives. However, in order to have productive peer group discussions, teachers should develop and introduce effective interactional tools and provide interesting and appropriate topics (Peterson, 2016).

Through a mixed method study, Almasi (1995) investigated the nature of 97 fourth grade students' socio-cognitive conflict in six peer-led and six teacher-led discussions of narrative texts. The results of the study revealed three types of socio-cognitive conflicts emerged: (a) conflict within self, (b) conflict with others, and (c) conflict text. Also, analyzing discourse in peer-led groups revealed students expressed their ideas, feelings, and experiences openly in comparison to students in teacher-led groups. The author of the study claimed that a decentralized participation structure produced discussion that was richer and more complex compared to discussions that were centralized. Additionally, decentralized small group discussions may help children to develop cooperative affiliation in which they attempt to apply the language to comprehend the text, reach a common goal, and increase motivation and engaging in participation (Almasi, 1995; Rapheal & McMahon, 1994).

In a qualitative research study, Moses and Kelly (2018) examined the influence of literacy block intervention on 28 first grade students in southwest United States. The goal of was cultivating reading interest among students. The method of data collection teaches reflections, students' artifacts, videos, and transcriptions from meetings with the teacher

regarding data collections. The result of the study demonstrated that literacy book provided opportunity for students to develop reading habit, positive view about reading, reading preference over other activates, as well as resisting the end of reading time.

A recent study indicated that adult students' desire for reading has decreased (Willingham, 2015). Teachers would like their students to read and discuss books enthusiastically and engage in discussions as adult participants. One of the criteria which helps students to have natural flow of conversation and quality discussion is the element of choice to get students engaged (Burns, 1998; Smith & Gail, 2016). In an empirical study, Smith and Gail (2016) investigated how middle-school students' authority in selecting books in LCs might impact their engagement and motivation. The findings of this qualitative study indicated that providing either limited or unlimited choice in selecting books helped students to read more and get engaged more deeply during group discussions in LCs and freely discussed their opinions in groups. However, the results of the study demonstrated that providing limited choice during LCs did not result in an increase in motivation and engagement for all students. After the interviewing process, the researchers found that it was challenging for students to choose the appropriate book to read and students could not provide a logical reason for selecting or rejecting any specific book, which could result in lack of motivation and desire to read (Smith & Gail, 2016).

Elhess & Egbert (2015) identified several factors that demonstrated the positive impact of LCs on students' learning process and language development: (a) improved comprehension skills; (b) increased student's participation in a safe environment; (c) enhanced responsibility and motivation; (d) expanded collaborative discussion; (e)

developed oral proficiency; (f) increased scaffolding opportunities; and (g) reinforced writing skills. Elhess & Egbert (2015) believed, through LCs, students practice and learn different strategies that help them to comprehend different types of texts better. Literature Circles create an environment where students feel comfortable to express their thoughts and feelings while engaging in collaborative discussion, which is an essential element for ELs (Egbert, 2007; Ketch, 2005). Providing a variety of opportunities for ELs to practice authentic and real-life communication is a critical factor for the process of language learning (Krashen, 1981). Literature Circles provide opportunities for ELs to practice social interaction, communication, and have meaningful discussions with peers, which ultimately leads to oral proficiency (Nagy & Townsend, 2012; Echevarria, Voget, & Short, 2008; Souvenir, 1997). Attending literary groups and having small group discussions provide opportunities for students to ask more questions, think about their learning process, actively apply the information and knowledge, and discuss what they are reading and learning (Daniels, 2015).

Barone & Barone (2016) indicated that applying the LC approach is beneficial in informational texts in several ways. Through a practitioner study, they demonstrated that LCs provide opportunities for students to collaboratively talk about their findings. Also, role sheets help students to get engaged with the texts and refer back to the texts for clarification during listening and speaking. In addition, through reading informational texts, students develop academic vocabulary words by reading the books and new words that are introduced by word wizard.

Literature Circles and College Students

There is much research in the field of education that indicates that developmental literacy is one of the great concerns in higher education (Carolan, 2015; Morrales & Carrol, 2015). Many students go to college, but they do not have the required academic background; some have been out of school for several years, and many of them do not have the required motivation to go through the process (Carolan, 2015). Researchers have studied different pedagogical approaches such as assessment, fluency, vocabulary development, and digital media (Carolan, 2015). However, one of the approaches that has been noted as successful in primary and secondary school settings is LC approach. Of consideration, there is little research with regard to LCs at the college or university level, as well as with adult learners.

In his qualitative study, Carolan (2015) investigated the value of LC approach for college students and its impact on participants' motivation, enjoyment, and academic competence. The empirical findings showed evidence toward higher levels of thinking and interest toward reading materials both in and outside of school settings. Additionally, the researcher indicated that LCs can create an atmosphere where students grow motivated and eager, which lead to academic success. According to Wigfield (1997), reading motivation has a direct correlation with students' learning environment and students' positive or negative experiences through education. Literature Circle discussions have the capacity to build a community of trust and engagement with students socially interacting, which results in enthusiasm and motivation. Through LCs, college students learn to relate different points of view in discussion and learn how to become better citizens (Johnson, 2013).

Morales & Carroll (2015) investigated the influence of LCs on college students' participation at the University of Puerto Rico. The findings of the qualitative case study revealed that applying students' first language through peer discussions may be helpful in comprehending the texts better and can be considered a cognitive tool to encourage language acquisition. The author of the study indicated that using Spanish as students' first language helped them to clarify meaning and ask more questions, as well as engage in inquiries to finally get involved in discussion in the target language. Similarly, Moll and Diaz (1987) suggested that teachers should apply students' first language in order to build students' reading comprehension and create better classroom management.

Moreover, the findings of the study by Morales and Carroll (2015) suggested choosing texts that promote students' background knowledge and topics of common interest may help students to enhance communication and quality of discussions. Building on students' background knowledge in their first language could definitely facilitate comprehension of the texts.

In a mixed methods research study, Randall & DeCastro-Ambrosetti (2009) examined the impact of LCs on participation of 31 undergraduate students using trade books in classrooms. To collect the data, the researchers developed a survey of 10 items and four open-ended interview questions. The result of this empirical study indicated LCs provided opportunities for students to build on prior knowledge and experiences, as well as collaborate with peers, which increased students' content reading comprehension and conceptual understanding. Additionally, the participants' positive perceptions about applying LCs in their learning supported the use of constructivist approach in higher

education. The LCs format and elements facilitate the development of constructivist classrooms (Randall & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2009).

There are numerous studies related to applying LCs in elementary grade levels; however, there are very limited studies related to LCs at the college level or intensive English programs for adult learners in the United States. In traditional reading college classes, the teachers usually focused on “skills and drills with isolated text-book passages” (Dillon, 2007, p. 42). Students are not motivated to read enthusiastically, or they read their assigned textbook. Paulson (2006) suggested some of the factors that may help students to be successful in college and become life-long readers are a self-selected book for enjoyment, the idea of empowerment, and choice making (O’Brian, 2004; Paulson, 2006). The LC approach can fulfill both college and K-12 students’ desires and needs while changing the classroom atmosphere. In his practitioner study, Dillon (2007) demonstrated that LCs, with some moderate changes in roles and procedures, can be beneficial for a developmental reading class in college. Applying LCs may motivate college students to read more and practice all aspects of literacy, such as writing, reading, speaking, and listening skills.

The goal of the temporary role sheets is to help students learn how successful readers think, connect, visualize, and infer during the process of book reading, as well as help them to capture their responses and be prepared during discussion time (Daniels, 2006). Daniels indicated LCs remained durable and powerful among other different approaches because of the elements of engagement, choice, responsibility, and research. Daniel (2006) indicated that mindful teachers help students to pick a book and practice success rather than experience frustration. Furthermore, through responsibility, LCs

provide opportunities for young readers to feel responsible like adults to choose a book themselves, choose members to work with, schedule a meeting time, jot notes as they want, and experience the reading process as adults do. Lastly, research on review of LCs indicated that engaging in well-structured LCs helped students with their comprehension and reading attitudes, and encouraged them to become lifelong reader (Daniels, 2006). LCs can be especially beneficial for ELs as they provide opportunities for students to have more attention, work cooperatively, and feel less stressed and discomfort in comparison to whole class discussion.

In a qualitative study, Petrich (2015) examined the influence of book clubs on students' higher levels of collaborative learning. The investigator attempted to find out how book clubs may develop safety and accountability. The population of the study was fifth graders in an elementary school in the mid-west United States. The methods of data collection were observation, monthly conversation between students and the teacher, and students' feedback after each book club cycle. The findings of the study indicated student's engagement in book clubs provided opportunities for students to: (a) increase their understanding; (b) build safe and secure relationships among students; (c) provide authentic and efferent responses; (d) and build community accountability.

Prather's (2001) posited that reading in a community is a form of art. Petrich's (2015) findings support Prather's (2001) assertion that, through working in a group, connections, and building community, students can learn with and from each other while they share enthusiasm, joy, and even struggle (Petrich, 2015; Johnson, 2013). Building emotional connections between students, teachers, and mentors create an environment where students can grow in academic learning and higher order thinking (Dresser, 2013).

Book clubs and LCs build strong relationship among students where they feel valued, connected emotionally, and supported in social and academic struggles, as well as successes.

Through a qualitative study, Young and Mohr (2016) investigated students' behavior in peer-led literature circles and examined students discourse that enhance literacy discussions. The participants of the study were 17 fourth grade students. The findings of study indicated during peer-led discussion participants could apply facilitative functions, such as elaborative feedback, topic management, confessionals, and accountability. In an action research study, Karatay (2017) examined the influence of LC on 92 prospective Turkish teachers in Turkish University for period of 12 weeks for one-hour class. The goal of the study was to increase students' text analysis, reading interest, and desire. The findings of study through T-test and open-ended questions at the end of 12-week implementation process indicated that LC approach was effective in developing independent reading skills, ELs self-confidence, critical thinking, and reading desire. Also, implementation of LC had great impact on ELs oral communication. Similarly, Aytan (2018) conducted a qualitative case study to examine the effectiveness of LC approach. The participants of the study were 46 prospective Turkish English teachers who participated in LC discussions for period of six weeks. The findings of the study through unstructured interview forms represented LC as effective approach in terms of developing self-confidence and interest, revealing hidden talents, developing vocabulary levels, as well as oral communication skills. Maher (2018) indicated that communicative nature of LC approach provide opportunity for ELs to experience collaborative learning as well as receiving L2 input and amplify L2 output.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the traditional approaches to teaching adult ELs and briefly examined current research studies on refugee ELs and their needs in the process of English language learning. Additionally, I examined research studies on FL anxiety, including its components, measurements, effects, relationships with other factors, and its influence on ELs in complex ways, which cause students to experience nervousness, apprehension, and discomfort. Lastly, I introduced LC approach and its components, applications, influence on ELs reading comprehension, as well as current research studies on the benefits of LCs on language learners. Chapter III, includes discussion of methodology, participants, settings, procedures, method of data collection, and data analysis.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

To examine the impact of LCs on reading comprehension and the influence of the approach in reducing FL reading anxiety of adult refugee ELs, a multiple case study design was used to address the research questions in this study. Merriam (2009) stated “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5). The primary purpose of this research was to determine sources of FL anxiety among adult refugee ELs. The secondary purpose of this study was to explore participant perceptions of the influence LCs had on foreign language reading comprehension. The third purpose of this research study was to explore the perceptions of adult refugee language learners with regard to participation in LCs as a means to decrease FL anxiety. The final purpose of this investigation was to examine the perceptions of participants with regard to participation in LCs versus traditional approaches to foreign instruction.

In this study, I examined students’ engagement in the LC process and how participation in LCs may contribute to an increase in reading comprehension and decrease the level of FL anxiety. Within this study, the researcher was particularly interested in how refugee ELs applied LCs in classrooms and the influence it had on their learning process. The researcher wanted to determine how adult refugee ELs interpreted their experiences toward the LC approach as well as the influence of the process on the entire group. Berg (2009) emphasized the importance of individual experiences and its

interpretation in qualitative research study. According to Berg (2009), “Quality refers to what, how, when, and where of a thing-its essence and ambience. Qualitative research, thus, refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things” (p. 3).

Applying a case study research methodology allowed an opportunity to determine the influence of LCs on learning for adult refugee students in a reading classroom. The researcher spent extended time observing the interactions of the students as they became engaged in group discussions. In addition, the researcher observed how ELs thoughts and conversations evolved when applying LC processes and engaging in topics of conversation. Including interviews and observations provided the researcher with information on how adult refugee ELs made sense of LC discussions, their impact on ELs’ learning process, and their FL reading and speaking anxiety level.

Research Questions

The following research questions addressed in this study: (a) What are the main sources of Foreign language reading anxiety among refugee English learners?; (b) What are the perceptions of adult refugee English learners with regard to the influence of participation in literature circles on foreign language reading comprehension?; (c) What are the perceptions of adult refugee English learners with regard to participation in literature circles as a means to decrease FL anxiety?; and, (d) What are the perceptions of adult refugee English learners with regard to participation in literature circles versus traditional approaches to foreign language instruction?

Study Design

To examine the influence of LCs on reading comprehension and its influence on reducing FL anxiety on adult refugee ELs, a qualitative method design was selected to best address the research questions. Well-constructed qualitative design provided opportunities for researchers to reach a comprehensive understanding of phenomena that occurred within a specific setting or socio-cultural context (Onwuegbuzie & Mallette, 2011). Additionally, applying a qualitative research design could lead to a deeper understanding of participants, contexts, and situations.

Participants

Participants included adult refugee ELs who were enrolled in an advanced course to improve their English proficiency level in a Bilingual Educational Institute (BEI) located in Southeast Texas. Additionally, the classroom teacher who provided instruction to the students enrolled in this course was an observer to learn the LC process to implement in future courses if deemed an appropriate instructional approach for the students. The teacher was an ESL certified teacher with a Bachelor's degree in Education and had been working with adult language learners for at least three years.

The researcher was a doctoral student in language and literacy. She spent her educational career in public community colleges both in and outside of the United States. Also, she had more than four years of experience teaching English to adult refugee language learners. The researcher attended the classroom as a guest teacher three times a week for about 40 minutes to teach and implement LCs. In addition, before starting the sessions, the researcher set up three meetings with the classroom teacher to introduce LCs and explain how LCs would be applied in classrooms.

Sample Selection

Adult refugee ELs were selected via *purposeful sampling* (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Purposive sampling was undertaken to uncover “useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest...aimed at insight about the phenomenon” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 378). Adult refugee ELs was recruited via *purposeful sampling* “based on membership in a subgroup or unit that has specific characteristics” (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007a, p. 112). To recruit the participants, the program director invited all the students who enrolled in the advanced reading class and had successfully completed the high Intermediate reading course to participate in this study. Additionally, all the students who enrolled in the intensive English program had to take a language placement test to determine the most appropriate level for them. The placement test used in this program was called Best Plus 2.0. which was designed to assess the English language proficiency of adult ELs in the United States. BEST Plus 2.0 is a combined test of listening and speaking skills.

Students were asked to complete a brief questionnaire, which included demographic data, years of English language instruction, and years in the United States. The participants were selected based on the information they provided to the researcher on questionnaire and during interviews. Although the participants were assessed to be at the advanced English proficiency level, they exhibited different levels of English language proficiency. The researcher and school director assured the participants that any findings from the study would be kept confidential and used for research purposes only and their responses to interview questions or participation in LCs would not affect their grades in any way. Additionally, the researcher provided the consent form that clearly

explained the goals and procedures of this study for participants to read and sign before participating in the study. Also, the researcher read the consent form and explained it in simple English for those students who had a lower level of reading comprehension and had difficulties in clarification.

Setting

The questionnaire, interviews, and observations were conducted at an accredited private language school in southeast Texas, which provided language and multicultural education services, ranging from an intensive English program to FL programs. The immigrants and refugees from many countries enrolled in this school to learn the English language, become familiar with the new culture, and learn the tools and skills for connecting and working in the new environment. The Refugee Program was an educational program that was free of charge and was designed to meet the instructional and employment needs of eligible adult refugees from countries around the world. The refugee language program was administered through Adult Education Centers. Eligible adult refugee students received scholarships to study general English and enrolled in vocational courses and computer services. The English school was located in a suburban community which was about 15 miles from the nearest metropolitan area. The particular language school that was the focus of this study is relatively diverse. This school had an enrollment of over 1800 male and female refugees and immigrants who were Asian, Hispanic, Middle Eastern, and African. Over 75 adult refugees are enrolled in advanced English classes and approximately 35 adults are enrolled in advanced reading classes each semester. The English classes for adult refugee students met every weekday for two

hours, with students studying different language skills, such as reading, speaking, writing, and listening to improve their English proficiency level.

Research Study Procedures

The reading class was conducted Monday through Friday for two hours per day. The LC approach was applied three days per week for eight consecutive weeks for approximately 40-minute sessions. The researcher attended the classroom as a guest teacher to facilitate LCs with adult refugee students. Refugee ELs became familiar with LCs, common roles, and books through the first week of introduction. Because refugee students required help to comprehend the books they read, the researcher attempted to introduce reading strategies in a 10-minute mini-lesson each session. Refugee ELs were assigned to read a specific number of pages or chapters every session and were asked to write down some thoughts about the reading, burning questions, interesting quotes, and unknown vocabulary words before each literature discussion. Additionally, they completed the role sheets and became prepared to discuss the text based on the role they were assigned for the discussion each day.

When students participated in the LCs, they were randomly assigned to groups of three or four. Also, students were given a role to assume and complete a reading at home prior to the LC discussions. After reading the story independently and completing the role sheet, students discussed the story within their small groups, each focusing on their role or task. Students were encouraged by the researcher to add to the discussion, whenever possible, not just when sharing their notes on the role sheet. Also, the teacher was an observer to learn about the LC approach to practice this approach in subsequent classrooms. Students rotated and changed to a new role each week, with a new text.

During the observation, the researcher carefully monitored the students and attempted to provide helpful feedback when necessary.

First week of Literature Circles. At the first meeting, refugee participants introduced themselves and learned about each other's nationality, age, occupation, and interests. The researcher introduced LCs, common roles, and procedures. Also, the researcher introduced the selected books, explained the LC approach, and talked about the purpose of the research. The researcher prepared several books for the participants to select from and they chose books based on interest and reading levels. The books were at a 4th-5th grade reading level to help build English proficiency. The researcher purchased the books for the students to use and presented a book talk about each to allow ELs to think about and select a book of interest.

Additionally, the researcher explained that the LC approach comprised of a small group of students who were responsible to choose a book, read the book, take notes as they read, and meet on a regular basis to discuss what they read. After explaining the purposes and procedures of the research study, the researcher distributed the consent form, read it aloud, and asked students to sign it if they agreed to participate in the study. Also, participants were informed that pseudonyms would be used to maintain each participant's anonymity.

Those students who signed the consent forms and agreed to participate in the program completed a short questionnaire, which was prepared by the researcher. In addition, during the first week of study, the researcher invited the participants to participate in pre-interview that took place in a classroom in the language institute. The researcher prepared the pre-interview questions to gain knowledge about participants'

previous educational experiences and their anxiety level in language classrooms (Refer to Appendix B). Additional questions were asked based on the participants' responses during the interview. In addition, if students did not want to participate in the study they were not asked for any further information and the researcher did not record observations about their participation; however, as part of the classroom instruction they were asked to participate in the LCs process.

Second week of Literature Circles. To provide the opportunity for refugee ELs to practice and become familiar with the process of LCs, the researcher asked all participants to select a book to read at home, participate in group discussions, and share their ideas during the second week of meetings. On the meeting days, after 10 minutes of warm up activities and mini-lessons designed to help students comprehend the text better, the researcher modeled the LC process and the book discussions. Through mini-lessons the researcher had the opportunity to convey teaching tips or strategies based on the topic and related reading. Having knowledge of reading strategies allowed ELs to gain relevant skills on a regular basis to comprehend texts easier.

Subsequent meeting procedures (Weeks three to seven). After the introductory meetings, a consistent book discussion format was initiated. Each LC discussion began with a mini-lesson to help students learn different strategies to understand the texts better. The participants retold the story based on their common roles within the LC discussions, shared their ideas about the story, and expressed their thoughts and personal connections to the text. The researcher had the role of facilitator to monitor student collaboration and communication and the classroom teacher was an observer to learn about the LC process to apply this approach in the following semesters. If a member of the group or the entire

group became confused with the LCs procedures, the researcher reminded participants to utilize their role sheet or helped them find new clues or create new questions. At the conclusion of each session, the researcher confirmed the next reading assignment and assigned a role to each participant.

Week eight. The researcher invited participants to participate in post-interviews that occurred in one of the classrooms in the language institute. The researcher prepared the post-interview questions based on questions that emerged through observations of the LCs process among participants. After conducting post-interviews individually, a group interview was held with the researcher to prompt participants to share their perceptions regarding LC discussions and their influence on reading comprehension and level of FL anxiety. Questions posed during the group interview were semi-structured, open-ended questions based on the research questions, and comparing data obtained from role sheets, initial individual interviews, and post individual interviews (Connelly, 2013; Janesick, 2004). Follow-up questions provided opportunities for the researcher to clarify and unravel individual participant responses in individual interviews and provided opportunities for contributions, connections, and dialogue among participants in this study (Dickerson, et al., 2014; Janesick, 2000; Roulstone, 2010).

Other communication. After each session, the researcher conducted a 5-minute meeting with participants who needed support and guidance. Additionally, the researcher contacted participants via text messages to send meeting reminders.

Materials

The researcher selected different fiction, non-fiction, and short stories before the semester began. The researcher attempted to choose books that were culturally diverse,

interesting, and helpful in the process of migration and cultural acceptance. Also, the researcher considered participants' reading level, word fluency, sentence length, and language proficiency when selecting appropriate reading materials. The table below presents the name, author, and summary of the books.

Table 2.

The Title, Author, Summary of the Books

Title	Author	Summary
<i>Alfredito Flies Home</i>	Jorge Argueta & Luis Garay	This story is about Alfredito and his family who were getting ready to return to their old home in El Salvador for Christmas.
<i>Everyday Heroes</i>	Beth Johnson (1996)	The book includes 20 short stories of young men and women from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.
<i>Henry's Freedom Box</i>	Ellen Levine	The book shares the story of Henry Brown who escaped from slavery to the North.
<i>Escape North!</i>	Monica Kulling	This book is about the story of Harriet Tubman who was an antislavery activist.
<i>I am Rosa Parks</i>	Jim Haskins	This book tells about the life of Rosa Parks and the Civil Rights Movement.
<i>Who is Malala Yousafzai?</i>	Dinah Brown	Malala Yousafzai is a girl from Pakistan who liked to learn, but in her home country girls were not allowed to attend school.
<i>Ruby Bridges goes to School</i>	Ruby Bridges	This book is about the story of Ruby Bridges who was the first African American child who attended an all-white school.

During the introduction week, the researcher prepared a written short description of the books and asked participants to look at the books, cover pages, titles, and illustrations, read the short description, and then rank their preference. The length of the books ranged from 40 to 100 pages and participants had to read and finish each assigned book in about two weeks. Based on the students' attendance, participants of the study usually divided in three groups and each group included four members. The researcher assigned one book for each group and there were connections between the themes of the books. In addition, refugee ELs were interested in reading cultural and historical books because they provided students with opportunities to become familiar with culture and history of the United States. For instance, the story of *Henry's Freedom Box* was so fascinating and engaging for the majority of participants and helped them to make a connection between a refugee from their home country who migrated to the United States in a similar way.

Data Collection

To conduct a rigorous examination of phenomena and have a successful data analysis, researchers should apply multiple types of data sources and data analysis technique (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). In my investigation, the data sources that I used to collect data included; a questionnaire, two individual interviews (pre and post), group interviews, and observations.

Interviews. According to Patton (2002), in qualitative studies, interviews provide researchers with opportunities to realize what is “in and on someone else's’ mind” (p.341). Alvesson (2011) defined an interview as “an interplay between two people, each with their own gender, age, professional background, personal appearance,

and ethnicity, puts a heavy imprint on the accounts produced” (p.80). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) defined seven steps in the interview process: (a) thematizing the inquiry, (b) designing the study, (c) interviewing, (d) transcribing, (e) analyzing the data, (f) verifying the validity and reliability, and (h) reporting the study. Rubin and Rubin’s (2012) seven steps on interviewing, which is called responsive interviewing model, is similar in scope to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). However, in their model researchers are flexible to change questions, the locations, and the situations of the study.

In qualitative research, the interview questions can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured (Gerber, Abrams, Curwood, & Magnifico, 2017). Preparing interview questions is one of the critical stages in data collection process. Charmez (2003) believed that framing interview questions needs specific skills and practice. Additionally, he noted that the researcher should ask types of questions that “both explore the interview’s topic and fit the participant’s experience” (p. 315).

Before the interviews began, the researcher planned the interview questions. According to Maxwell (2013), there is an important distinction between research questions and interview questions. Maxwell (2013) stated that “Your research questions formulate what you want to understand; your interview questions are what you ask people to gain that understanding” (p.101). The researcher explained the purpose of the interview and the amount of time to complete the interview process (Creswell, 2013). During the interview procedure, the researcher attempted to be specific to the prepared questions, be respectful toward interviewees, and listen carefully to their responses. Also, the researcher prepared two audio recording machines to record the entire interview of each participant. The interview took place in one of the quiet classrooms in the language

school where the participants felt comfortable and self-assured to speak freely about their personal experiences and perceptions. The researcher explained about the purpose of the interview and the amount of time to complete the interview process (Creswell, 2013).

In this research study, the researcher planned to conduct two sets of individual interviews with each of the participants and one group interview at the end. The first set of interviews took place in the first week of semester and the second set of individual interviews was in the last week of semester. Both sets of individual interviews were audio taped and lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The first set of interviews helped the researcher gain insight about refugee ELs experiences in reading classrooms, their ideas about learning reading skills in traditional ways, strategies they learned to comprehend texts better, and in what ways they might like to change instruction in their classrooms. The second set of individual interviews were designed to gain more information about refugee ELs experiences in LC discussions, how LCs may have helped them with reading comprehension and their perceptions in comparing learning through LCs verses traditional approaches to teaching reading skills. Also, interview questions included questions related to their anxiety level pre and post LC discussions. An example of the interview protocol that was used during the baseline interview is included in Appendix B.

Additionally, the researcher administered the group interview after completing two sets of individual interviews to allow participants to expand and build on responses of others or share differing views. Data from two sets of individual interviews were analyzed and compared in order to develop open-ended descriptive questions to apply in the group interview (Janesick, 2004). Based on participants' responses to interview questions, the researcher asked follow-up questions (Janesick, 2000). After listening to

the audio recordings, at least two times, the researcher transcribed the interviews. The researcher asked the participants to read the transcriptions, change, clarify, and add to or extend their responses to get them engaged in the process of member checking for accuracy and representativeness of respondent remarks (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Manning, 1997).

Questionnaire. In qualitative research, the main purpose of the study is to gather information about a population (Gerber, et al., 2017). According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), “In deciding to survey a group of people, researchers make one critical assumption—that a characteristic or belief can be described or measured accurately through self-reporting. In using questionnaires, researchers rely totally on the honesty and accuracy of participants’ responses” (p. 125).

In my investigation, participants were asked to complete a brief questionnaire to collect data on the student’s demographic information (i.e. years of English instruction, age, gender, ethnicity, years in the United States, English language courses completed). The researcher developed the questionnaire and distributed it in the first week of semester, so participants could respond directly on the questionnaire and return it to the researcher (refer to Appendix A). The questionnaire provided opportunities for the researcher to determine more specific areas for further exploration in individual interviews and in a group interview (Connelly, 2013; Janesick, 2004; Roulstone, 2010).

Observation. In qualitative research, observation can provide critical insight into the learning process (Gerber, et al., 2017). According to Angrosino (2007), “observational researchers traditionally have attempted to see events through the eyes of people being studied. They have been attentive to seemingly mundane details and to take

nothing in the field setting for granted” (p.732). Additionally, observation can be applied as a tool to triangulate data.

Data Analysis

According to Merriam (2009), in qualitative research, data analysis process is “process of making sense out of the data. And making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read-it I the process of making meaning” (pp. 175-176). Additionally, Merriam (2009) considered data analysis as a most important part of qualitative research. She noted that “Without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of materials that needs to be processed data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating” (Merriam, 2009, p. 171). Data analysis process in qualitative research includes several steps: (a) preparing and organizing the data, (b) reducing the data into themes through the process of coding, and (c) representing the data in figures and discussion (Creswell, 2013).

Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) believe that qualitative researchers should increase trustworthiness for their interpretations not only through the use of multiple data collection tools and data sources, but also through the use of two or more data analysis techniques. In this current study, the researcher incorporated constant comparison and values coding techniques to increase triangulation.

Constant comparison. Strauss and Corbin (1994) explained that constant comparison method is dependent on both making comparison and asking questions as the coding process ensures. Glaser and Strauss (1967) explained that constant comparison

could be classified into four steps: (a) comparison and categorizing the elements, (b) integration of categories, (c) delimitation of a theory, and (d) development of a theory.

According to Boeije (2002), comparison provides opportunities for qualitative researchers to be able to “do what is necessary to develop theory more or less inductively, namely categorizing, coding, delineating categories and connecting them” (p. 303). Miles and Huberman (1994) defined coding as “This part of analysis involves how you differentiate and combine the data you have retrieved and the reflections you make about this information” (p. 56).

In constant comparison analysis, the researcher conducts three different coding procedures: (a) open coding, (b) axial coding, and (c) selective coding. Through open coding, the researcher divides and labels all pieces of information and data. As Creswell (2013) stated, open coding serves the primary function of helping qualitative investigators develop categories. After the process of open coding, the qualitative researcher categorized the initially coded data into smaller meaningful subsections which is called the process of axial coding (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). The final process in constant comparison coding procedure is called selective coding, which requires the researcher to “develop a theory out of data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the current study, the researcher applied constant comparison to identify emergent themes from the two sets of individual interviews and a group interview that were collected.

Values coding. According to Saldana (2016), value coding is “the application of codes to qualitative data that reflect a participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspective or worldview. Though each construct has a different meaning, values coding, as a term subsume all three” (p.131). Value coding is considered

as a suitable method in studies that explore participants' cultural values, belief system, their interaction and experiences in case studies, critical ethnography, sociology, and longitudinal qualitative studies (Saldana, 2016). Additionally, participants may not directly state their beliefs, values, and mindset. Qualitative researchers require inferring the participants' value system by observing them in natural social setting or directly ask questions about their values.

In this research study, data from the questionnaire and two sets of individual interviews were merged, analyzed, to develop group interview questions (Janesick, 2004). The data from the questionnaire, two sets of individual interviews, and group interview questions were transcribed using standardized transcription marks and member checked for accuracy and representativeness (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Manning, 1997). The researcher asked participants to review the transcribed interview in a face-to-face meeting and return the transcription with clarification of meanings and added information.

After the process of transcribing and member checking, the researcher analyzed each individual interview and group interview data. First, the researcher analyzed the data using constant comparison approach supported by three stages of coding (Glaser, 1965; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). To analyze the data, the researcher read the transcription several times to determine particular vocabulary words based on frequency of use and to assign open codes to chunks of meaningful data (Miles et al., 2014). The researcher selected the codes based on word frequency or contextualized meaning (Miles, et al., 2014). Following coding of transcribed interview data, the researcher applied content analysis to identify important emergent ideas or themes from codes assigned to

data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

Establishing Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility, or internal validity, is concerned with how well the findings of the study and the reality of the situation match, and whether the results of the study are accurate. Threats to the credibility of qualitative research are an issue of continuous debate among researchers. Several ways have been identified through which a researcher can ensure credibility throughout the qualitative research study: (a) triangulation, (b) member check, (c) peer debriefing, (d) providing rich description, and (e) clarifying research bias.

Triangulation. According to Maxwell (2013), triangulation involves “Using different methods as a check on one another, seeing if methods with different strengths and limitations all support a single conclusion” (p.102). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) noted that there are four different types of triangulation: (a) data triangulation, which refers to the use of multiple sources; (b) investigator triangulation, which refers to applying several investigators; (c) theory triangulation, which refers to the use of multiple theories to interpret the findings of an investigation; and (d) methodological triangulation, which refers to the use of multiple methods. Triangulation reduces the bias that might emerge because of using a single method and leads to trustworthiness of findings. The purpose of triangulation is to collaborate evidence (Gerber, Abrams, Curwood, & Magnifico, 2017).

Member checking. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checking is the most important technique in establishing credibility. Member checking is defined as

asking participants to read the transcription and making sure the words in the transcription match with what they intend to say.

Peer debriefing. The process of peer debriefing refers to the investigation of data by a peer who is outside of context but has a general understanding of a nature of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider the role of peer debriefer as devil's advocate because he or she asks tough questions regarding researcher procedure, findings, and interpretation of data. Peer debriefing encourages researchers to have reflexive analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking and peer debriefing provide opportunities for qualitative researchers to pay more attention to alternative interpretations (Gerber, et al., 2017).

Providing rich description. Thick description is a way of writing that includes not only describing and observation of participants but also the context, in which that behavior occurs, emotion, detail, and social relationships. In his seminal study, Becker (1970) stated that it is essential for researcher to collect and provide rich and thick data throughout the process of research. Becker (1970) also stated that providing rich description reduces the threat of confirmation bias. Additionally, rich description is described as a way of achieving transferability of the findings to similar people, events, and context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Clarifying research bias. Different researchers will approach a study situation from different positions or perspectives. This might lead to the development of different, although equally valid, understandings of a particular situation under study. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), there are two types of research bias: (a) research bias A, which refers to the affects that a researcher may have on his or her participant and (b)

research bias B, which refers to the affect that a participant may have on the researcher. The first threat might take place if participants feel that the researcher exceeds the social relationships. To reduce research bias A, Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested the use of persisted observation, prolonged engagement and, as well as the use of neutral sites to collect the data.

The threat B might occur when the researcher emphasizes his or her participants to the point where they might go negative. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007a) stated that the threat B could be reduced by:

Avoiding elite bias by selecting a heterogeneous sample, avoiding going negative by spending time away from the site, including non-typical participants, maintaining a conceptual framework, utilizing informants to provide background and historical information, triangulating data, examining potential informant bias, showing field notes to a colleague, and continually keeping research questions firmly in mind. (p. 242)

In order to ensure credibility in this research study, the researcher prepared several additional questions related to the same idea before the interview process. Also, the interview was conducted in a nonbiased location where the participants feel comfortable. Throughout the entire research process, the researcher attempted to present all the findings of the research and participant comments in detail by including quotes. In an effort to enhance the trustworthiness, the researcher triangulated the data by comparing and contrasting the data collected through observations and interviews. The researcher provided the clarification of any possible researcher's bias by listening to recordings, transcribing the interviews, coding for themes, asking another individual code

or verifying themes, making notes each session of observations to include all biases or beliefs, and reviewing the notes.

Transferability

Transferability, or external validity, is concerned with ensuring how research findings can be generalized and applied to other situations or settings. According to Merriam (2009), “probably the most common understanding of generalizability in qualitative research is to think in terms of the reader or user of the study” (p. 226). The two common strategies to enhance the transferability in qualitative research are thick description and purposeful sampling.

Thick description. According to Merriam (2009):

when rich, thick description is used as a strategy to enable transferability, it refers to a description of the setting and participants of a study, as well as a detailed description of the findings with adequate evidence presented in the form of quotes from participant interviews, field notes, and documents”. (p. 227)

Throughout the entire study, the researcher established the transferability by including detailed descriptions of participants’, feelings and ideas, findings with adequate evidence presented in the form of quotes from the participants.

Purposive sampling. Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information related to the phenomenon of interest. Qualitative researchers attempt to increase the range of information that can be obtained from the contexts by purposefully selecting participants and contexts. Merriam (2009) stated that “Purposefully seeking variation or diversity in sample selection to allow for

greater range of application of the findings by document of the research enhances transferability” (p. 229).

Ethical Considerations

One of the essential elements in conducting a research study is ethics. Ethical considerations can be threaded in each stage of investigation including the pre-study stage, beginning stage, data collection stage, data analysis stage, and data reporting stage (Creswell, 2014). In this research study, to practice ethical considerations the researcher considered the following steps. In pre-study stage, the researcher obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and obtained permission from the language school coordinator and principal in order to conduct the study. The beginning stage included explaining the purpose of the study and clarifying that the study can be beneficial for the participants and their participation in LCs and group discussion performance does not have any impact on their final grades. In data collection stage, the researcher gained participants’ permission and asked students to member check the transcribed data of their interview for the purpose of accuracy and representativeness. Data collection included applying pseudonyms to maintain anonymity and to protect the collected data. In data reporting phase, the researcher avoided any plagiarism, shared the data adequately, and provided proof of ethical compliance upon request (Creswell, 2014).

Summary

In Chapter III, I discussed the methodology and how I implemented my study to determine the impact of LCs on adult refugee ELs’ reading comprehension and the effect of applying LCs on the population’s FL reading anxiety. Specifically, in this chapter, the design and methodology of this qualitative study are presented, including the information

about the context, as well as the setting and participants. Further, this chapter included a description of the data collection and analysis processes, as well as issues related to validity and reliability. The chapter was organized in the following areas: (a) research design, (b) research locations, (c) participants, (d) data collection, (e) data analysis, (f) credibility and trustworthiness, and (g) ethical consideration.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

In this study, the researcher investigated the implementation of LCs in an advanced reading classroom based on observation, pre-interview, post-interview, and group-interview with adult refugee English Learners. The primary purpose of this study was to determine if participation in LCs decrease FL reading anxiety and better supports reading comprehension more than traditional approaches to second language learning. This chapter presented the results of data analysis to answer the research questions that address the following questions: (a) The main sources of FL reading anxiety among refugee English language learners; (b) The perceptions of adult refugee ELs with regard to participation in literature circles as a means to decrease FL anxiety ; (c) The perceptions of adult refugee ELs with regard to the influence of participation in literature circles on foreign language reading comprehension ; (d) The perceptions of adult refugee ELs with regard to participation in LCs versus traditional approaches of foreign language instruction.

The procedures of qualitative data analysis and collection included three steps. First, before participating in LC, the researcher explored participants' ideas about traditional English language learning and the anxiety that they experienced in the language learning process. Second, after participating in LC, the researcher conducted individual post-interviews. Third, the researcher conducted a group interview to investigate participants' thoughts and feelings toward LCs and its impact on foreign language learning anxiety. Each individual interview was conducted in English and lasted

at least 30 minutes. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed by the researcher. Then, all the transcriptions were coded and analyzed. To protect students' privacy, pseudonyms were assigned to each interviewee in place of their real names.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The chapter begins with a description of implementation of LCs in an advanced reading classroom, as well as a description of students' demographics and their experience in the process of language learning. Sections two, three, and four present findings of pre, post, and group interviews.

Section One: Description of Implementation of LCs and Participants' Background Information

In order to prepare students for the LCs process, the researcher explained procedure of LC, discussing the meeting expectations, as well as introducing reading strategies. The researcher began teaching by modeling the process of LCs and using the role sheets. To provide an opportunity for refugee ELs to become familiar with the process of LC, role sheets, and group discussions' the researcher asked all groups to work on a similar story book which was called "*Alfereditio Flies Home*" and lasted about two weeks. Students were responsible to read the book before meeting and use the assigned role sheet as a guide for their group discussion. In addition, the researcher asked students to complete a task sheet that included a portion of all roles. The purpose of the task sheet was to allow ELs to focus on all of the roles instead of their assigned role to comprehend the texts deeper.

During the rest of the LC discussions, ELs selected from a range of books based on their interests. Students met three times a week to discuss the part of the storybooks that they read before the meetings and completed the assigned role sheets and task sheets

that were expected to be completed by the meeting time. Additionally, the researcher began each LC discussion by providing a short mini-lesson and a warm-up activity. Through the mini-lessons, students had the opportunity to get familiar with different reading strategies and skills that help them to comprehend texts better. Also, warm-up activities included a variety of games or group questions that help ELs to practice and review the content before starting the main discussion.

Description of Participants Demographic Information

The demographic information provided general information about interviewees' background information regarding gender, age, education completed, number of years in the U.S., and their language learning experience. The five interviewees consisted of two female students (Lili and Tute) and three male students (Ahmed, Hamed, and Chris).

Lili. Lili was 27 years old and from Cuba. She was a bachelor's degree student in Cuba, but she could not complete her education because she decided to move to the U.S. as a political refugee. She was a cheerful, energetic, and self-confident student; other ELs valued her thoughts and opinions during LC discussions. She was often seen to be a discussion leader, sharing her thoughts with group members with several evidences from the text. Lili's favorite part of the LC was being able to read and discuss quotes from different perspective.

Tara. Tara was a 23-year-old who moved to Houston from Azerbaijan for about two years. Advanced reading course was her first class in the U.S., however, she had a bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching. Tute was a quiet girl who enjoyed participating in LCs a lot. Her favorite part of the process was discussion about different characters in the stories and their lives. She stated that she loved discussion so much that

she used to practice not only at home, but also while driving the car to school before class.

Chris. Chris was a 31-years-old and from Venezuela. He was pursuing his doctoral degree in Philosophy before he escaped to the U.S. as a political refugee. He was living in Houston for about a year. He was considered an introverted person who preferred to work alone. However, throughout the LCs process, he entirely changed his mind. He enjoyed coming up with ways to describe the events that were happening in texts. Chris stated that reading stories about other refugees' and immigrants' success gave him hope to follow his dreams and goals.

Ahmed. Ahmed was a 61-years-old from Iraq. He moved to the States about three years ago. He was an engineer in his home country but could not find a job in the U.S. because of lack of a lack of proper English language. He was an extremely dedicated student who took his responsibility seriously and expected the other members do the same. Ahmed took many notes as he interacted with the text. He shared his notes with other students and helped them before and after the discussion time. Additionally, he valued the opportunity that the LCs provided for classroom discussion, sharing their thoughts and opinions about the books.

Hamed. Hamed was an Iraqi refugee EL who was 42 years old. He was living in different countries as an asylum seeker before settling down in the U.S. He had high school diploma and attended a flying school in Iraq. His favorite part of the LCs was being able to discuss the stories with other members of the group. He was interested in books which were about real life, history, and culture.

Table 3.

Frequency and Distribution of Participants' Background Information

Name	Gender	Age	Nationality	Education	Number of Years in the U.S.A
Lili	Female	27	Cuban	B.A. (Not Completed)	1 Year
Tara	Female	23	Azerbaijani	B.A	2 Years
Chris	Male	31	Venezuelan	PhD.(Not Completed)	1 Year
Ahmed	Male	61	Iraqi	B.A.	3 Years
Hamed	Male	42	Iraqi	High School	2 Years

Section Two: Qualitative Data Analysis of Pre-Interview Process

The pre-interview consisted of questions to allow for examination of participants' thoughts and ideas toward traditional methods of English language learning and its impacts on ELs' anxiety. After transcribing, analyzing, and coding the responses of five participants' pre-interviews, four major themes emerged that helped to examine students' attitudes toward traditional instruction of language teaching.

The researcher categorized the overall interviewees' transcriptions into four main themes: 1) traditional English language learning instruction, 2) anxiety factors, 3) reading habits and 4) and cognitive needs. Next, the researcher further analyzed interviewees' responses and developed 12 sub-themes under the four main themes (see Figure 2). Then, in order to insure accuracy of coding the students' responses, each transcript was categorized through the use of semantic coding to determine whether the wording and term used related to the main theme or not. For example, the researcher found several key codes such as "nervousness", "feeling shy", "become angry", and "lack of confidence" before coding the interviewee's response into the main theme of anxiety factor.

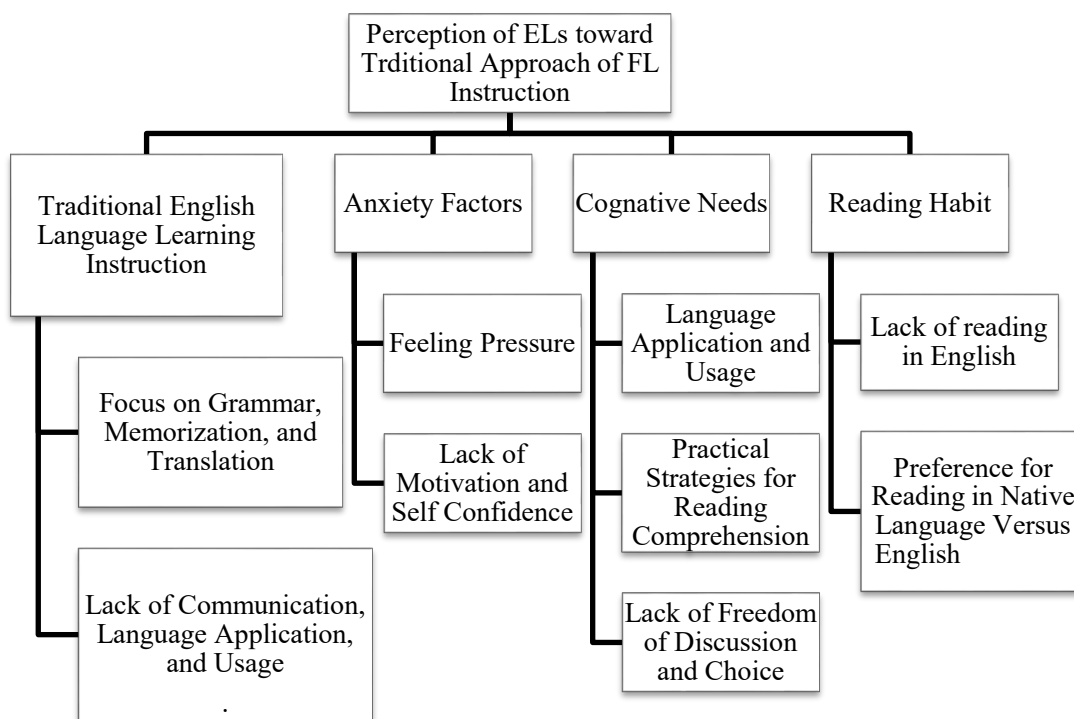


Figure 1. Categories of Students' Perception toward Traditional Approach of FL Instruction.

Theme 1: Traditional Approach of Foreign Language Instruction

The traditional form of foreign language instruction is characterized as having four sub- themes: 1) focus on grammar, memorization, and translation, 2) lack of communication, language application, and usage, 3) lack of affective strategies.

Focus on grammar, memorization, and translation. When participants were asked about their thoughts and opinions regarding their experience in English language learning classes, almost all the students stated that the main focus of language learning was on learning grammar, memorization, and translation of texts in their home countries. The traditional form of English language teaching was mainly about whole class repetition, individual recitation, and memorizing vocabulary words without applying them in a context. For instance, Hamed, one of the Arab students who had negative ideas

about traditional methods of language teaching, stated that his reading class was all about recitation. Students had to sit in silence, while the teacher read the passage. Then, students recited some parts of texts, one after the other, until each one had been called upon. Hamed shared his feelings about English classes in Iraq with the researcher:

Researcher: Could you tell me about your language learning experience in Iraq?

Hamed: It was the basic English and grammar most of the time. I studied English for many years at school in Iraq. It was grammar and reading. We used to read one by one; yes just reading and translation. We did not speak or communicate... I did not learn the language at that time. Teachers usually read aloud the passage and then we repeat after a teacher.

Moreover, another student indicated the majority of reading class was dedicated to recitation and translation. Also, students did not have the opportunity to use a dictionary themselves. It was part of teacher's instruction to translate the whole text word by word.

Ahmed: Teachers translated the story in Arabic. We memorized everything to give a lecture the next day. We did not use to make a new sentence like your class or free reading... Only reading, translating, and answering the assigned questions.

Lack of communication, language application, and usage. In terms of language application and communication, participants responded that teachers used to initiate the conversation and there were rarely student-student interactions and communication. Language teachers did not provide opportunities for ELs to communicate or practice the

taught vocabulary and grammar in the form of contexts. Participants believed that teachers did not present the language as a form of communication and the classroom was teacher- dominated, while free reading or speech was considered meaningless based on the educational system. Educators supposed that ELs would be able to communicate in target language by knowing the lexis, vocabulary words, and grammatical rules. When the researcher asked participants about application of language, Lili who is from Cuba, responded:

We used to memorize all the time. We seldom practiced speaking. We memorized dialogue and we practiced it with classmates. We were not allowed to change the format or apply synonyms. There was no free talk in public schools. I think memorization could not help us to learn the daily conversations and practical communication with native speakers.

Additionally, Tara expressed similar feelings:

Although we spent a long time to memorize and learn the grammar we did not learn how to communicate. Because we did not have enough chance to interact with other classmates. We had to listen to teacher's lecture.

The same response was also shared by another participant, Chris, who indicated that language instruction in Venezuela did not provide him with opportunities to learn the language and apply it in daily life.

Teachers used to translate the vocabulary words or the whole passages and we memorized them. We did not practice them in the form of conversation or sentence frames. Actually, we did not talk at all. I think it was not a good way to learn a new language. When I first moved to the United State

I had serious problem in speaking and listening, because we did not practice effectively.

Ahmed, who took a conversation class in the United States for two consecutive semesters, stated that:

I took conversation class for 9 months. I think it was a better experience in compare to language classes at home. The teacher assigned a topic for each session and introduced some related vocabulary words to apply in conversation and speech. We were supposed to practice at home and discuss about the topic in class. However, it was not structured and organized so usually students got off the track.

Theme 2: Anxiety Factors

In terms of affective factors, the researcher categorized interviewees' answers into two sub themes: (1) feeling pressure, (2) lack of motivation and self-esteem.

Feeling pressure. Regarding the affective factors that influence the interviews in their English language learning process, the majority of ELs revealed that they experienced different forms of pressures. For instance, Hamed shared his feelings:

I did not feel good. I felt stressed. I did not want teacher to call my name to answer questions. I wanted to hide. I felt embarrassed and shy. I think most of the students felt the same way. We were anxious in English language classes. Especially when we had to read aloud or at the time of taking a test.

Moreover, Chris expressed that he had studied English in the United States for about six months but he was still experiencing severe anxiety that stopped him from communication with others.

Most of the time I feel bad. I keep thinking with myself that my language a Vocabulary words that I use are not appropriate or polite. Also, I feel anxious because I cannot understand other people. It made me feel angry and nervous. I feel more stressed in speaking class. I cannot say what I think exactly. My pronunciation is bad and ugly. I think reading skill is better. I read a lot in Spanish. It is my hobby.

One of the other interviewees, Lili, who was considered to be an extroverted, social, and responsible shared the same point of view about anxiety in English language learning.

I am not a shy person at all. But sometimes I feel confused and anxious because I cannot express myself. It makes me mad. I usually have specific fear to speak in the language classes. I do not know enough vocabulary to say what I want. Also, I think talking in front of the whole class makes me feel stressed.

Lack of motivation and self-confidence. In addition to feeling pressure, a majority of the students indicated that the traditional form of English language learning did not motivate them, but lack of motivation and desire made the process of language learning more challenging. Hamed shared his feelings.

I believe English classes in Iraq were not interesting. Yes it was so boring. I can remember some of my classmates escaped from the class because

they did not have any reason to learn the language or listen to the teacher's lecture. To tell you the truth I escaped from the class two times. I was 11 years old.

Additionally, Tara who was one of the interviewees from Azerbaijan, believed that the traditional form of language teaching in public school did not promote motivation and desire of language learning.

During elementary school years, the text books included old pictures and boring topics that were repeated each year. It was all about grammar and new vocabulary words in isolation. Teachers did not use any supplemental materials to change the classroom environment.

In contrast, Ahmed who was an outgoing person possessed a different experience in terms of motivation in the English language learning process. Ahmed shared that he had a different experience because of his particular personality, family expectations, and his personal desires.

I started learning English when I was 10 years old. You know I am from Ashur. Ashur is an old historical city. Many tourists used to visit our city. I always liked to talk to them in English. They asked me questions about the city. I felt I am a leader. I was proud of that. However, my friends did not like English class. They used to escape from school.

Theme 3: Cognitive Needs

The cognitive needs are identified as having three sub-themes: 1) language application and usage, 2) practical strategies for reading comprehension, and 3) freedom of talk and read.

Language application and usage. In terms of language application and usage, all interviewees claimed that traditional methods of language teaching did not provide them with an opportunity to apply the language and have authentic conversations in English. For example, Hamed expressed his ideas regarding application of language in English language classrooms, both in his home country and the United States.

I think we need to read more and practice all the time. Teachers should push us to read and talk in classes. I am a refugee. I do not have any native speaker friend. I do not have anyone to practice English at home. Most of the time I speak Arabic and people try to help me. If teachers push us to practice more in classes, we will learn more. Language class is the only place I practice speaking and reading with others. The only place.

Additionally, Ahmed stated:

We do not speak English out of classroom. And, we watch Arabic TV programs....everything is in Arabic...we do not communicate with American community or speak to them. So, English class the only place that we practice real English.

In terms of having English conversation, dialogue, and texts, Lili, indicated English classrooms, even in the United States, did not prepare her to practice authentic conversation and get familiar with the new culture.

Lili: I personally need something related to my real life. I need to learn English to get a job and go to work.

Researcher: Can you please explain more about your needs?

Lili: for example dialogues in the book that we memorized were mechanical. I think it was not like the real conversation that we have in real life such as at school, work, or restaurant. We were not allowed to change the pattern of dialogue. I think this is the reason my speaking ability has not progressed for a long time.

Practical strategies for reading comprehension. When participants were asked about their reading skills and reading comprehension strategies in language classes, the majority of students explained that reading comprehension is a challenging skill for them, and they were not experienced with applying particular strategies to comprehend texts. For instance, Hameed expressed his idea regarding reading in English:

I did not like reading class. The books were boring. I could not understand the texts and I did not know how to answer the follow up questions. It was really boring.

Additionally, Chris, who was a doctoral student in Venezuela and was interested in reading, stated:

Reading is my hobby since I was a child. But in English.... no ways...I cannot comprehend. I try but it takes a long time to read and finally I do not understand what I read. Maybe, I do not know how to read properly. I can remember we all had problem in English pronunciation and reading in the public school.

Lack of freedom of discussion and choice. When participants were asked about having discussions in their language classrooms, most of them stated the traditional approach to language learning did not allow them to freely practice conversational skills

by discussing, participating, and negotiating with classmates. The reason for this was that ELs did not have the opportunity to express their point of views openly and share their ideas in the classrooms. On the other hand, they had to memorize a dialogue without any changes. For example, Lili shared her feelings:

We did not practice speaking a lot. We were assigned books which had some fixed discussion patterns. We had to memorize them. If we changed the pattern it was considered as a mistake. For example, a dialogue about vacation...a situation in vacation...we memorized and repeat dialogue in classrooms. That's it.

In terms of freedom of discussion and choice, Ahmed commented that they did not experience freedom of discussion and choice related to their text books. Unfortunately, students did not enjoy talking and sharing ideas because the text books were usually old with topics which were unrelated to the students' interests.

I usually did not understand the whole text. When you do not understand, so you cannot talk about it or even enjoy the story. Yes...because you do not know it. We did not enjoy the books. They were old books with unclear, black and white pictures. So boring.

Theme 4: Reading Habit

In terms of reading habit, the researcher categorized interviewees' answers into two sub-themes: 1) lack of reading in English, and 2) preference for reading and speaking in native language versus English.

Lack of reading in English. When the researcher asked participants about their reading habits almost all of them mentioned that they do not have any tendency to read in English because of lack of comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. For instance, Lili, who is a brilliant EL from Cuba, indicated that:

I read but in Spanish. In Cuba I used to read in news every day. I liked that. But here I cannot because I go to work and I do not have time. When I read in English I read very slowly to understand every word. It takes a long time. It is difficult for me to understand news. I do not get the main ideas because of that I have to slow down.

Chris, who was a doctoral student in Philosophy, shared his experience of reading in English:

I like reading. Reading is my hobby. But, I always read in Spanish. Sometimes it takes four hours to read a short story in English. I have to check the dictionary a lot. I cannot comprehend. That makes me mad. So, I do not continue.

Moreover, Ahmed, who was working hard to learn the language shared his feelings, regarding his reading habit:

I read in Arabic every day. But, I do not read in English. Only when I have a reading class. It is not interesting because it is very difficult to read newspaper in English. I tried several times. It makes me tired. I cannot understand, but I like to.

Preference for reading and speaking in native language versus English.

Concerning native language use, the majority of interviewees indicated that they prefer to read and talk in their native language, although they like to communicate in English.

Participants considered lack of opportunity to communicate with native speakers, lack of language knowledge, and lack of self-confidence to be the major reasons that they prefer to stick with their first language. For instance, Ahmed shared his feelings:

One bad thing is we often speak in Arabic at home or with friends.

Also, we watch Arabic TV programs. We do not speak English out of classrooms. Everything is in Arabic. I feel more comfortable this way. I know it is not good.

In addition, Hamed, who was from Iraq, explained to the researcher:

I believe and accept that we do not practice enough. I prefer to be with Arab people and speak in Arabic. I think we need to read and practice all the time in English all the time. Teachers should push us to practice more. I do not have any American friend. I do not have anyone to practice English. I go to Arabic community so I can speak Arabic. If teachers push us to practice in class, we will learn more.

Section Three: Qualitative Data Analysis of Post-Interview Process

Section three of the data analysis was designed to examine the perception of ELs after participating in LCs for two months. The researcher attempted to find out participants' ideas about the impact of LCs on development of literacy skills compared to the traditional form of language learning. After transcribing, reading, and coding the

transcriptions, four main themes emerged that helped to explain the perceptions of interviewees toward participation in Literature Circles.

Interviewees' Perception toward Participation in LCs

The researcher organized and coded the interviewees' responses. First, the researcher categorized the overall student interview transcriptions into four main themes: 1) development of literacy skills, 2) Development of social skills, 3) discussion roles, and 4) pre-selected book choice. In the second step, the researcher reviewed transcriptions several times and developed 15 sub-themes under the main themes (see Figure 1). In the third step, the researcher categorized and organized each interview transcription in order to code the participants' responses accurately.

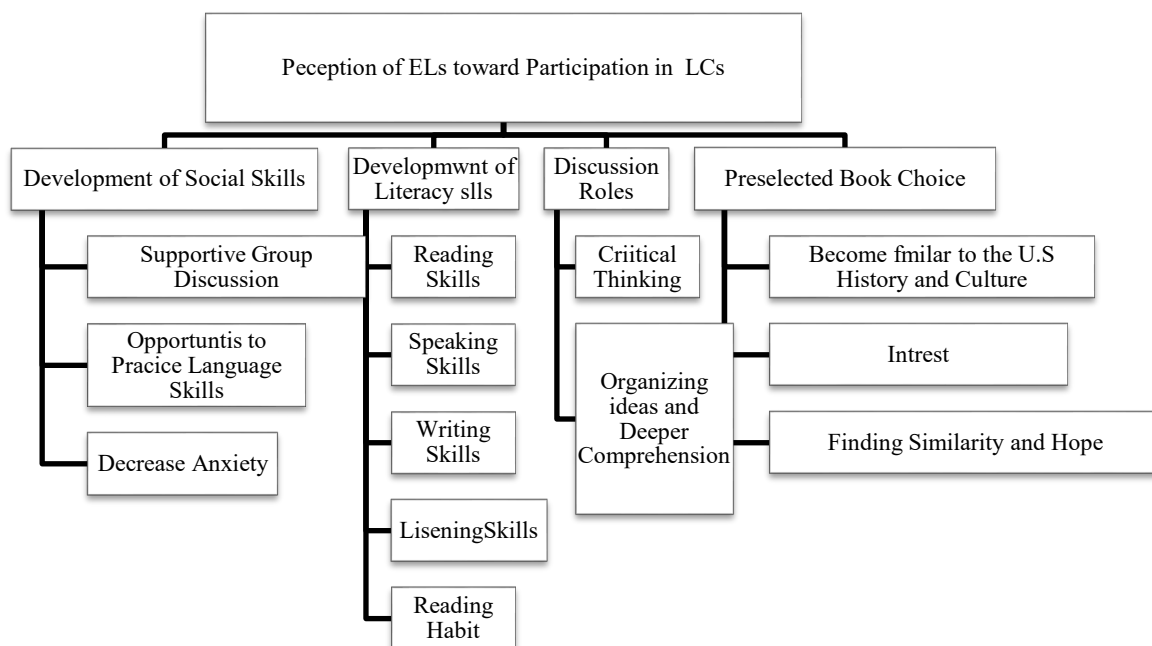


Figure 2. Categories of Students' Perception toward Participation in Literature Circles.

Discussion of Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme 1: Development of Literacy Skills

The development of literacy skills was identified as having five sub-themes: (a) reading skills, (b) speaking skills, (c) listening skills, (d) writing skills, and (e) reading habit.

Reading skills. When interviewees were asked about their thoughts regarding participation in LCs, all of them stated that participating in LCs was a great experience. Participants believed that LCs allowed them to not only practice reading skills, but also improve other literacy skills. Participating in LCs entirely changed ELs' mindsets about reading skills and reading classrooms. For instance, Ahmed, who was an active EL, said that LCs provided opportunities for him that he did not experience in any other language classes. He explained:

I think LCs improved my English skills specially reading and vocabulary...I read every day and practice at home so it helps me to learn more vocabulary and improve my reading skills... reading is not difficult and scary like before. I feel better now about reading skills. I understand and comprehend more.

In terms of development of reading skills, Chris indicated that LCs offered refugee ELs opportunities to experience different forms of English language learning. Chris shared his feelings:

It was great for me. You know...because I do not have any opportunity to speak or practice in English. In my country we did not study English or we did not study English at universities. At

the beginning it was difficult for me. It took a long time to read. I remember the first story took four hours for me to read. But now it is better. Last time it took about an hour to finish the passage. I think I can read faster and understand more words. Also, LC helps me to understand the text better.

Additionally, Lili, explained LCs offered her a chance to become familiar with different reading strategies that she had not heard before. Lili claimed:

LCs helped me to read and guess the meaning of new words. I learn that I do not have to check the dictionary all the time. So, that is cool. We have to learn about different subjects at home and become prepared. If we do not know about a subject, we have to check it in internet to learn more about it and find more information... background knowledge. In LCs we always learn new vocabulary words.

Tara, who studied English in her home country, Azarbijan, expressed entirely different thoughts and perspective about language learning compared to her pre-interview. When the researcher asked Tute, about her experience in LC discussions, she expressed that LCs helped her to improve all language skills. She stated:

I think all language skills can improve when we participate in LCs. We had time to read at home and get ready for class... I think all four skills can improve in LCs if we read the stories several times before class and become ready for discussion.

Speaking skills. In addition to helping ELs with development of reading skills, participants believed that LCs provided opportunities for them to practice speaking skills. All participants believed that LCs and text discussions not only enhanced their speaking fluency, but also helped in deeper understanding of the texts. Ahmed shared that LCs was a good way to practice speaking skills.

Interviewer: How do you think LCs help you to improve your speaking skills?

Ahmed: Oh, yes. Of course a lot. I think reading and practicing at home and then discussing in class was very good. When I came to class I was ready to talk. I checked all new words at home and practice speaking. I learned better this way. I think LCs really encourage students to practice speaking.

Additionally, Hamed who described himself as a person who did not like to communicate with others in English at the beginning of the semester, shared his feelings:

Oh, yes. I think it is clear that I speak better, is not it?.....before this class I was shy, I never started the conversation with others. I always felt I cannot do it. Now I think I can. I am brave now....I know I need more practice, but I feel better about my speaking skills.

With regard to the improvement of speaking skills, Tara responded that LCs provided her opportunities to practice conversational skills. She indicated that, compared with the traditional methods of language teaching, LCs helped her to practice conversational skills and become more proficient in speaking English.

As I said earlier, with LCs we practice all four skills together. We read, we take notes, we listen to each other, and more importantly we discuss about the texts. But in traditional forms...we only read the texts out loud and answered the questions individually. I usually did not understand the texts very well... deeply. In LCs, we practice together and learn more. I think I can communicate better both in class and outside.

In addition, Chris, who was an educator from Venezuela, expressed that, at the beginning of the semester, he had difficulties in speaking skills and having conversations with others, but LCs allowed him to practice conversational skills by discussing, participating, and negotiating ideas with classmates.

Writing skills. In terms of development of writing skills, the majority of participants believed that reading several stories regularly, completing the role sheets, and taking notes provided them with opportunities to practice writing skills. Participants indicated that reading different storybooks related to culture, history, and special populations helped them to gain ideas to write about different topics. Hamed shared his feelings regarding writing skills:

I told you in pre-interview I used to write short stories in Arabic. I have a good imagination. But, the problem was I could not translate and write in English. I could write only one paragraph or less. But now you cannot believe... I can write... not easily... but it is much better. I think when I read different stories; I learn to write my stories. I try to write my stories with fantasy. Sometimes I do

not know some vocabulary words but I learn to use Google translate.

The same response was also noted from one of the other ELs, Ahmed, who indicated that LCs developed his writing skills. Reading stories, taking notes, and completing the role sheets helped him to progress his writing skills over period of two months. Additionally, Ahmed stated that knowing more vocabulary words helped him to become confident in the writing.

On the contrary, Chris, who was a doctoral student in philosophy, shared his ideas regarding the impact of LCs on his writing skills:

LC can improve the writing skills, but I think two months practice was not enough. I took notes everyday but I could not practice writing a paragraph. But I think LC has great impact on speaking skills.

Listening skills. With regard to the improvement of literacy skills, four of the participants responded that LCs provided them with opportunities to practice listening skills indirectly. ELs became familiar with various English teaching websites and listened to YouTube video clips which were introduced by the researcher to get background knowledge about daily topics. When the researcher asked participants about how LCs improved their listening skills, Ahmed indicated that he became better at the listening skills:

I had problem in pronunciation and listening. I could not understand what people say. LC improved my listening skills and I

can read and pronounce better. I like watching different YouTube clips to improve my listening. It is both helpful and fun.

In addition, Chris stated that LCs allowed him to practice listening skills by listening to the researcher, classmates' discussions, and more importantly watching and listening to different audios and videos. Chris shared his thoughts:

About listening... yes, I learned to listen to different YouTube clips about the text we had or listen to each other. In this class, I learned that by surfing and watching different clips related to daily topics we can improve our listening skills and comprehension ability. I think LCs helped my listening skills. I do not have anyone to speak or listen to at home. So, English classroom is the only place.

Reading habit. LCs provided ELs with opportunities to promote comprehension and cultivate the culture of reading regularly. Through LCs, students experienced having fun and enjoyment which led to motivation and reading interest. For example, Ahmed claimed:

I used to read in Arabic all the time. I did not think about reading in English at all because it took a lot of time and make me board but now I feel it is possible... it is still difficult but possible. As I said I learned some strategies and I learn that I should start with lower level books and then continue... Now I am thinking about going to a public library and get some books to read after this semester finish. Or I can find some short stories from Internet

because it is expensive to buy books. For example, today I had a presentation about pollution in the other class. I found some information in Internet... I summarized the information and I compared Houston's weather with my home country. I use the strategies and roles that I learned in LC class in my other classes.

Regarding the reading habit, Lili, who was an EL from Cube, shared her experience:

I think I feel better about reading now...at the beginning of this session reading was difficult and time consuming. I could not understand different things and it made me mad. But now I feel better about it. It is not as scary as before. Actually, I ordered two books... the Harry Potter books. I should receive them in a few days. I decided to read them every night... we will see.

Theme 2: Development of Social Skills

In terms of development of social skills, the researcher categorized interviewees' responses into three sub-themes: (1) group work, (2) opportunities to practice language skills, and (3) decrease anxiety

Small group work. Concerning group work, all participants felt that reading and having discussions in a small group would help them to help each other, learn from each other, and accomplish the assigned task successfully. Participating in a small group discussion promoted an affinity group and sense of belonging and responsibility. Ahmed indicated that having discussions in a small group allowed students to know each other better and feel more comfortable. Ahmed shared his feelings:

Group work let us to work and help each other. It makes the class fun and good...like friends. We help each other a lot in small group; even before class or after class.

When the researcher asked Hamed how he felt learning in small group discussion, he responded:

While I was in a group I felt I am in a party....or talking to a friend to have fun. I felt free. There was no any wrong or right answer. I did not feel scare or shy while I was in a small group. We were all the same. We helped each other a lot, especially before class started. If I could not finish the story or my role sheets, my group mates helped me before the discussion has started. It was fun.

Opportunities to practice language skills. In terms of discussion time, some of the interviewees believed that small groups and LCs provided them with the opportunity to have more time for discussion and sharing opinions with peer groups. When the researcher asked Ahmed what he thought about having discussion in a small group, he responded:

I think sometimes we need to be in small group like at the beginning of the semester. In small group, we had more time for discussion and practice. When we had more time we practiced more and finally learned more. In a large group we do not have enough time for in small group we learn to interact and practice with each other. We asked more questions. We practiced more because we had more time.

The following statement is Lili's comment after participating in LCs and being in a small group:

When we are in small group we have more time to talk. We can speak more. Sometimes in a whole class we cannot talk because too many people are there.

With regard to being in a small group discussion, Chris, who was an educator from Venezuela, indicated that a small group discussion can promote friendship among peer groups and provide more time for discussion. Chris described his feeling regarding small group discussion:

For me it is good to be in a small group. Because we share and compare different opinions. We have more opportunity to talk. I think small group is better for LCs. Because the primary goals are reading comprehension and speaking.

Decrease anxiety. Regarding anxiety, interviewees believed that involvement in LCs and small groups provided them an interesting and less stressful atmosphere for learning the English language. When the researcher asked Ahmed how he felt during participating in LCs, he stated that:

I feel less stressed in LCs. I think because I practiced LCs three times a week with classmates and we knew each other well in small group discussion...I mean we were not strangers. We knew friends, teacher, expectations, and what we had to do in class. So I felt comfortable.

Additionally, Chris illustrated that experiencing LCs and being in a small group allowed him to feel less stressed and more secure. He shared his feelings:

...when I am in LCs class, I do not feel shy or bad. I feel better in small group. Students are all like me and we help each other. This helps me to feel better. Also, in LC class we have a chance to read and practice at home, so I am ready in class to discuss and answer. This is another reason that I feel less stressed.

Theme 3: Discussion Roles

Discussion role was identified as having three sub-themes: (1) critical thinking, (2) deeper comprehension and understanding, and (3) organizing ideas. All the participants indicated that discussion roles: connector, summarizer, questioner, and word wizard, were entirely new concepts for them which provided a new prospective toward language learning.

Critical thinking. When the researcher asked interviewees about their feelings and thoughts regarding different discussion roles in LCs, most of them indicated that discussion roles such as connector and questioner allowed them to practice critical thinking by predicting, asking different types of questions, and making text to text and texts to self-connections. For instance, Hamed, who possessed a positive attitude toward LCs, stated that discussion roles helped him to think about different characters in the stories, as well as identify similarities and differences between them. Hamed share his thoughts:

Discussion roles helped me to think about the text in a different way. You know...I am a refugee and most of the stories we had

were about immigrants, culture, and social life. I could find similarities. For example, when I read the story of Ben Carson who was not a good student at the beginning and his friends called him stupid but later he changed his life by working and studying hard. I saw myself in those stories.

The same response was also indicated by Tara, who said LCs and role sheets not only helped her to increase her vocabulary knowledge, but also enabled her to think about the stories from different angles. Tara stated:

Discussion roles helped to think about the stories. Sometimes I thought about the characters and why bad things happened to them or why they could not make a right decision. What I could do... If I were them. As you asked us sometimes to change the ending of stories. I thought about it at home or even while I was driving my car to school. It was fun. I liked the stories of immigrants and I tried to think what I would do if I were them.

In terms of the development of critical thinking, Chris explained that discussion roles allowed him to prepare himself better for group discussions and brainstorm for problem-solving. Chris shared his feelings:

I think discussion roles helped me to improve different language skills. Well...I sometimes changed the characters or I enjoyed changing the ending of stories and talked about why I did that in a group discussion. I always thought how characters in the story could react in a different way to solve problems. Or... comparing

and contrasting characters. I practiced that several times. It was fun.

Organizing ideas and deeper comprehension. In addition to helping with critical thinking, participants believe that discussion roles allowed them to organize different ideas and information from texts that led to deeper understanding. Chris responded that he liked discussion roles because he thought they were helpful for reading purposefully and organizing his thoughts. Chris stated:

I think discussion roles push us to organize different ideas and read purposefully. For example, while I was working on questioner I thought about the story and I tried to think how I can write a challenging question. This way helped me to think about the text and practice grammatical points. When I asked the group members different questions it helped me to understand the text better. I always looked for something in the text and had purpose for my reading. Reading to find the author idea or reading to learn about characters. Yes. I think it is better to have discussion roles especially for ELs.

Additionally, Tara shared the same idea:

I think they were important. Important and new. Role sheets helped us to read more carefully and think about details. It makes me more responsible. Before LCs I never think about the connector or questionnaire. In English classes we just summarized. I think this way helped us to go deeper to the text. Also, it helped me to look

for specific details...I knew what to do with roles. You know...I try to use discussion roles in my other classes. When I read I think about different discussion roles unconsciously.

Theme 4: Pre-Selected Book Choice

Pre-selected book choice is identified as having three parts: 1) become familiar with culture and history, 2) increase interest, 3) and finding similarity and hope. The process of pre-selected book choice was challenging for ELs because of limited English ability and limited reading comprehension in English. However, through time and with the researcher's guidance students became more familiar with the concept of book selection.

Become familiar with culture and history. In terms of being familiar with the culture and history of the United States, all of the adult refugee participants indicated that reading short stories and texts related to the African American, life of immigrants, and their traditions provided them with opportunities to become more informed about history. Ahmed, who was a hardworking refugee EL, stated:

I liked the storybooks that we discussed, and the topics. I learned many things about history of the United States, people, and how they live. LCs is both learning and fun.

Hamed discussed the importance of stories and their impact on cultural familiarity. Hamed shared his thoughts:

I liked the books we read...the stories we had in class were very good about African American history, native American, and immigrants and refugees. I like learning about how they lived, their

traditions, and cultures. I did not know about them before. It was interesting.

Chris, who was interested in reading, mentioned:

Books were interesting. For me really informative. For example, the Escape North which was the story of Harriet Tubman was full of information about African American life, society, and life of people. It was all new for me and I enjoy learning things about history as well as practice learning English language.

Additionally, Tara, who was a language major student from Azerbaijan, illustrated how LCs helped her to become familiar with culture and history. Tara shared her feelings:

I think stories were enjoyable. I love most of them. They usually happen in real life. They were so real. So, I like to read them fast and learn about the ending. Also, reading and discussing about the topics of refugee and immigrants were increasing.

Increased interest. In addition to cultural familiarity and history, all of the participants expressed that the pre-selected book choice allowed them to maintain interest and become more engaged. Pre-selected book choice provided students with opportunities to have a voice during group discussions and take part in their own learning. Ahmed, who was always the first volunteer to express his feeling related to the topics, stated that:

When you like the topics and texts, you have more to talk about and share. I think all the stories were interesting and I was so

interested to talk about them. They were not boring. They were about real people and real life. I think they all make the discussing more exciting.

Moreover, Tara claimed that LCs provided ELs with opportunities to become interested in reading and experience different forms of reading classrooms:

As I said, LCs changed my idea about reading completely. One of the reasons was the interesting topics. always wanted to finish the stories. It was fun to talk about the books in class and know each other's ideas...sometimes group members had the same idea and sometimes we did not, so we argued a lot. We had different ideas and we argued... like debate. It was fun.

Finding similarities and hope. Regarding the ability to find similarities and hope, two of the students expressed that reading about immigrants' and refugees' lives, daily challenges, and problem-solving skills help them to find different points of view about their own lives. For instance, Hamed indicated that he was impressed by reading about people who shared the same lifestyle, problems, and challenges. Hamed shared his thoughts:

The stories we had in class about refugees and immigrants from different parts of the world were interesting. They had different problems. Like I do. But they worked very hard and they tried to solve them. I learn that if they could solve their problems so I can do, too. It gives more hope that I should continue to fight.

Also, Chris indicated:

Reading stories related to refugees and immigrants was new and impressive. The characters in the stories were suffering a lot but finally they changed their lives and also other people lives. It gives me hope that hard days will finish. I connect their lives to my own life. In my country I was working for human rights. I tried to help people. But the government did not let us. So I moved.

Section Four: Qualitative Data Analysis of Group Interview Process

Section four of the data analysis was designed to examine the perceptions of the adult refugee ELs after class participation in LCs for two months. The researcher attempted to determine participants' ideas about the impact of LCs on development of literacy skills compared to the traditional form of language learning. After transcribing, reading, and coding the transcription, three main themes emerged that helped to explain the perceptions of interviewees toward participation in Literature Circles.

Interviewees' Perception toward Participation in LCs

The researcher organized and coded the interviewees' responses. First, the researcher categorized the overall students' interview transcription into three themes: 1) conversational skills, 2) social skills, and 3) integration of technology and literacy. In the second step, the researcher reviewed the group interview transcription several times and developed six sub-themes under the main themes (see Figure 4.4). In the third step, the researcher categorized and organized the interview transcription in order to code the participants' responses accurately.

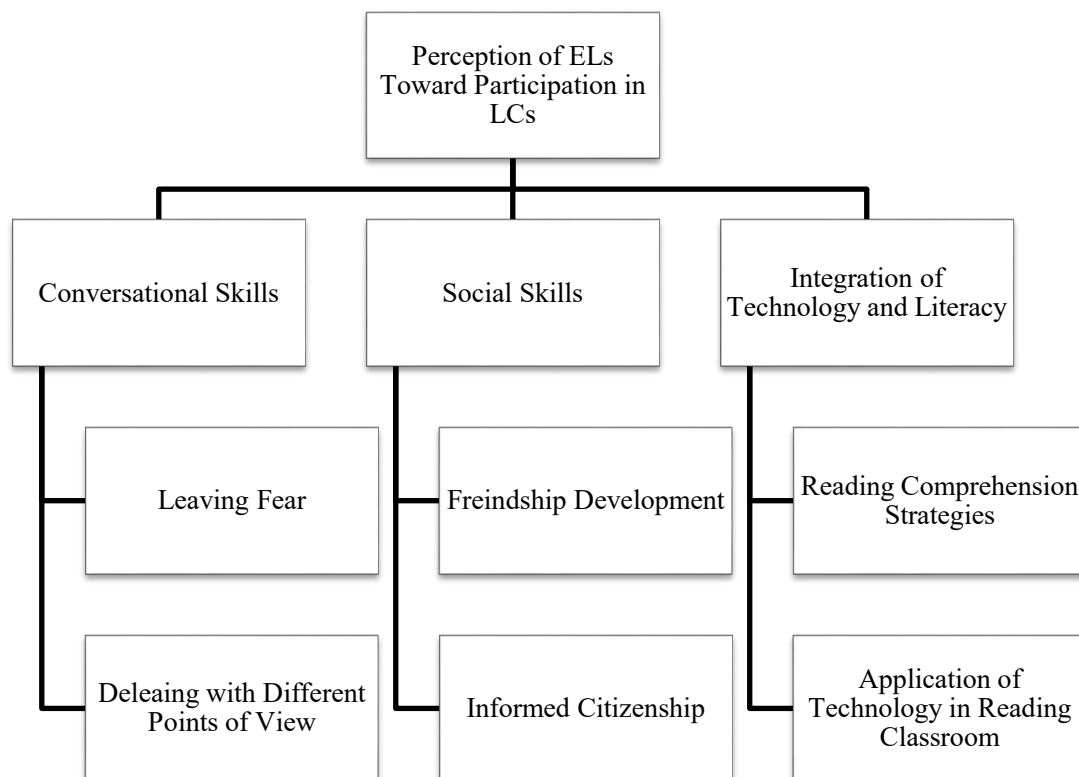


Figure 3. Categories of Students' Perceptions toward Participation in Literature Circles

Discussion of Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme 1: Conversational Skills

In terms of conversational skills familiarity, the researcher categorized interviewees' responses into two sub-themes: 1) dealing with different points of view, 2) leaving fears.

Evaluating with different points of view. When students were asked about the impact of LCs discussion on their speaking skills, some of the students declared that LCs provided them opportunities to learn how to respond and react to different points of view. Pedro explained, compared with the traditional method of language teaching, the LC approach provided more opportunities to experience conversational discourse and pragmatics. He stated:

My group members talk about their ideas and I talk about mine.

Our ideas were not always the same. Sometimes I rejected their points of view and I tried to give reasons.

Chris had the same opinion and responded:

Pedro is right. I think we always tried to defend our ideas and provide reasoning. Like a debate. We analyzed different ideas. We learned how to show agreement or disagreement with orders; like in real life. I did not have this experience before in language classes.

Alleviating fear. In addition to learning how to respond to different points of view, almost all of the students declared that LCs reduced their fear of English speaking and anxiety. They believed that small group discussions and cooperative learning activities allowed them to lose their fear and experience a comfortable and relaxed environment. Hamed shared his feelings:

I think I lost my fear. I can talk and express my ideas better now. To start a conversation with other people was really difficult for me, but not anymore. I feel more comfortable. When students are not anxious, they can talk more and share their ideas.

Moreover, Chris, who was dedicated to learning English, illustrated that he felt more comfortable sharing his comments and being engaged in LCs discussions.

For me, as I said in the pre-interview, at the beginning of the semester, I felt very very bad. I could not and express myself, but

now during two months, I learn many new vocabulary words, strategies and technique that help me to communicate better.

Theme 2: Social Skills

The theme, social skills, was identified as having two sub-themes: friendship development and informed citizenship.

Friendship development. When the researcher asked participants about friendship development, most of the students responded that the LC approach helped develop friendships among students through interaction and collaboration. The following statement is Fathi's comment after participating in LCs for two months.

When we are in small group and we meet regularly, three times a week, we become familiar with each other's country and culture. Sometimes we like to learn other students' native languages. We become close friends.

With regard to friendship development, Chris shared a similar response:

I think LC approach helped us to know our classmates better. LCs and small group discussion helped me to find more friends and develop friendship. Also, I used to talk to students from my home country. I preferred to be friend with Hispanic people like myself. But now I would like to interact with everybody. LCs discussion helped us to grow relationship with students from different cultures and nations.

New prospective about social issues. In addition to friendship development, interviewees in the group interview responded that the LC approach and the pre-selected

books helped them to become familiar with the new culture and environment that they live in. Engaging in discussion provided opportunities for students to exchange ideas, become familiar with the history of the United States, and think critically about stereotypes. For instance, Hamed, who was a refugee from Iraq, shared his experience:

I think when we read different books we can learn about history, people, and the country we live in. We can get clear idea about different topics and change our minds. For example, we read two stories about homeless people. I think reading those stories helped me to think more about their life. I thought about homeless people in my home country and the United States. I compared and contrasted their lives. Reading and thinking changed the way I thought about them.

Theme 3: Integration of Technology and Literacy

Integration of technology and literacy was identified as having two sub-themes: 1) application of technology in reading classroom and 2) reading comprehension strategies. In group discussions, adult refugee students indicated that the LC classroom not only helped them to improve literacy skills, but also provided them opportunities to apply technology to become more proficient in literacy skills.

Application of technology in reading classroom. With regard to the application of technology in the reading classroom, most of the participants declared that, through the LC discussions, they realized how technology can help them to improve their literacy skills. When the researcher asked students about the impact of technology on their language learning process, Pedro, who was a refugee language learner from Mexico,

mentioned that applying technology helped him to learn the language faster as well as improve his vocabulary knowledge. Pedro shared his opinion:

Googling different pictures and images in internet helped us to understand the meaning of vocabulary words better. When I look at pictures, I learn the vocabulary words better. I hate the dictionary. It takes a long time to find the words in it. Also, I have fun whenever I use Internet and I learn faster.

Moreover, Fathi, who was from Iraq and had difficulties in reading comprehension skills, mentioned that applying technology in the classroom was something new for him that he had not experienced before. Applying technology helped him to gain more general information and comprehend different texts better, as noted in his statements:

I think we get more information by watching some clips in YouTube or checking the internet. By this way, I understand the stories better; I practice listening, and learn more vocabulary words. For example, when we read a story about Ben Carson, I searched in You Tube before reading the text. It helped me to comprehend the story better and faster.

Reading comprehension strategies. In addition to application of technology, all of the students' believed through LCs they learned various reading strategies such as summarizing, making predictions, and guessing new vocabulary words. Students indicated reading comprehension strategies applied in LCs increased their comprehension

of the complex reading materials. Lili, whose favorite common role was summarizer, shared her feelings:

I like summarizing. After I finish reading the story, I use WH words...you know the strategy you taught us in class who, where, when, and how... to summarize the story. I take a note and I used them in class. This strategy helped me to remember the story.

Another student, Pedro said that the LC approach provided an opportunity for him to become familiar with reading comprehension strategies and comprehend the long and complex stories better. Pedro shared his thoughts:

One good result of the LC class was learning various reading strategies. For example, guessing the new vocabulary words. I learned that how to guess the meaning instead of checking every single word in a dictionary.

Conclusion

This chapter presented an analytical discussion of qualitative data that reflected the four research questions of the study. The first part of this chapter described the implementation of LCs and the participants' background information. In the second and third sections, the researcher analyzed and reported the pre and post interview data analysis. Finally, a qualitative data analysis was performed to summarize and report the group interview and follow-up interview data. Chapter V presents the summary, findings, and conclusion as well as recommendations for classroom implication and future research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the relationship between the previous research and discuss the findings of this study. The chapter is organized into the following sections: (a) summary of findings, (b) connection of result with theoretical framework, (c) connection of result with existing literature, and (d) pedagogical implementations and recommendations for practice and future research studies.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of study was to determine if participation in LCs decreases FL reading anxiety and better supports reading comprehension than traditional approaches to second language learning. Also, the goal of the study was to engage refugee students in LCs and expanding their knowledge and experience with FL reading. The findings indicated that implementing LCs had a significant positive impact on the degree of adult refugee ELs' reading comprehension and the level of their language learning anxiety. The summary of findings addressed the following research questions.

The main sources of FL reading anxiety among refugee English Learners

In response to the first research question adult refugee ELs were interviewed about the sources of FL anxiety both in their home country and the United States. In addition, observation of participants' behavior through the implementation of LCs was noted by the researcher. The result of the interviews suggested there are several possibilities that cause anxiety in adult refugee ELs. All the participants reported that: (a) speaking and reading English in front of a whole class, (b) public speaking, (c) fear of negative evaluations, (d) lack of vocabulary knowledge, (e) low level of English

language proficiency, (f) poor pronunciation, (g) inability to find words to express ideas, (h) and lack of comprehension, made participants feel extremely shy, embarrassed, speechless, and forgetting the content easily were all causes of anxiety.

Public Speaking Anxiety

The result of the study revealed that public speaking anxiety such as giving a lecture in a large group made participants extremely anxious. The majority of participants did not like to participate in large group discussions either in classrooms or at work. Speaking in public or having a conversation with English speakers made them feel anxious and worried. Also, the results of the study showed that it is important to practice the new language in small groups and then let students move to a larger group discussion when they feel comfortable.

Additionally, various factors that trigger public speaking anxieties are related to one another which increase the difficulty of the process. Based on some cultures and personality traits, making mistakes is considered unacceptable and they did not understand that mistakes are the natural process of language learning. This mindset made participants feel more anxious and stressed.

Fear of Negative Evaluation

One of the factors that made participants feel anxious was lack of confidence and belief about their ability. Many of participants believed they did not have enough background knowledge to learn the new language and their language skills were weaker than other students. Also, most of the participants brought up the notion that they pronounced words and/or phrases incorrectly which made them feel shameful about communicating with others. They expressed that as adults, they did not have the aptitude

to learn the English language. Most of the participants claimed they felt they did not accomplish their tasks successfully. Comparing their abilities with other peers or native speakers made them feel they lack adequate skills in language learning. Ultimately, all these factors hinder ELs' risk taking to communicate with others in English and practice the language.

Lack of English Language Knowledge

The findings of this study also revealed that some of the adult refugee ELs who were more extroverts attempted to communicate with English native speakers and peers; however, the lack of language knowledge, inability to express themselves, and limited vocabulary words hindered the communication and made them anxious. Additionally, inability to find suitable words and poor pronunciation made the participants feel embarrassed. Poor pronunciation has been identified as a possible source of FL anxiety. Interestingly, most participants claimed that native English speakers could understand them clearly; however, at times they were humiliated by their peers through the experience of their language learning. As a result, they usually stopped attempting to learn the language.

Perceptions of Adult Refugee English Learners with Regard to Participation in

Literature Circles as a Means to Decrease FL Anxiety

The second research question explored the perceptions of adult refugee ELs with regard to participation in LCs as a means to decrease anxiety. To discover the perceptions of adult refugee ELs pre, post, and group interviews were conducted. All the participants claimed that LCs had a significant impact in decreasing their anxiety level. When analyzing the interview data, findings indicated that small group discussions, interest in

topics, friendship development, cooperative activities, and practice opportunities were the main factors respondents expressed made them feel relaxed and more comfortable in LC discussions.

Small Group Discussions

The result of the study demonstrated that small group discussions provided opportunities for participants to develop friendship and express their ideas freely. Small group discussions created a safe and secure environment for lower level language learners where they felt confident to express themselves. Also, informal atmosphere in small group discussions brought all students into conversation and gave them encouragement to express their thoughts as well as practicing social skills. In more intimate small group discussions students felt more comfortable to express their thoughts and receive feedback from the teacher or other members of the groups which might be offensive in a larger group.

Collaborative Learning

The result of the study revealed that collaborative learning bringing students together and let them learn from each other's skills to solve problems and overcome obstacles that may take place during learning process. Additionally, When ELs share their thoughts, ideas, and help each other learning become more accessible. Participants of the study reported that collaborative learning foster interpersonal skills and improves their social interaction as well as acceptance of other cultures. The findings of study illustrated that through collaborative learning, ELs worked together closely and meaningfully to reach their goals as well as sharing their thoughts without hesitations that led to developing literacy and speaking skills.

Practice Opportunities

One of the factors that helped students to experience less anxiety in the process of foreign language learning were more opportunities to practice the new language and develop comprehension. The result of this study indicated that insufficient opportunities to practice the English language and not having clear comprehension made students feel anxious and stressed. However, LCs provided reading comprehension strategies and opportunities for adult refugee ELs to practice the language authentically more often. This can be justified by emphasizing the fact that the English is not spoken or included in classrooms in many countries; therefore, students do not have opportunities practice the English language in some countries such as Iraq or Venezuela. Thus, no sufficient input or spoken communication both inside or outside the classrooms occurred; thus students did not have sufficient opportunities to practice the language. However, the result of this study indicated that through LCs this problem was addressed as students practiced their English skills with the support of others.

Perceptions of Adult Refugee English Learners with Regard to the Influence of Participation in Literature Circles on Foreign Language Reading Comprehension

The third research question examined the adult refugee ELs' perceptions toward the influence of LCs on their FL reading comprehension. The results presented in Chapter IV revealed the participants believed that LCs had a positive impact on their reading comprehension. In this section, explanations and discussions are included with regard to the influence of participation in LCs on FL reading comprehension. Adult refugee ELs believed that LCs and engagement in purposeful small group discussions had a great

impact on the development of their literacy skills, critical thinking ability, and deeper comprehension of the text.

Literacy Skills Improvement

The result of the study indicated that LCs provided opportunities for participants to practice listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills by reading different texts and having small group discussions. Students considered LCs to be the best approach to provide opportunities to improve their reading comprehension as well as speaking, listening, and writing skills at the same time. Also, participants experienced freedom to collect information from the texts, find connections between their life and the texts, and share their feelings in discussion groups. The findings of this study demonstrated that through LCs participants became familiar with a variety of knowledge and skills that helped them to become engaged in discussions and practice different literacy skills through reading texts.

Literature Circles provided opportunities for adult refugee ELs to understand the importance of literacy skills which are necessary in today's social, educational, and workplace, as well as opportunities to develop those skills. Also, through activities that integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing participants could practice and master different literacy skills at the same time.

Reading Comprehension

Analyzing the participants' interview responses revealed that LCs created a culture in which students become aware of the importance of reading in daily life and valued learning from each other. Purposeful discussions, common roles, and getting ideas from other members in the group helped students to develop a deeper understanding of

the texts and have authentic discussions. Through LCs, students practiced thoughtful discussions based on findings from the texts and shared their personal assumptions and interpretations. Reading and participating in critical, in-depth discussions provided opportunities for students to become familiar and experience daily conversations, along with developing and understanding of others' thoughts and opinions.

Critical Thinking Skills

Literature Circles provided an avenue for adult refugee ELs to practice critical thinking by reading purposefully, having logical discussions, asking questions and expressing ideas and disagreements. Having critical discussions helped students to analyze the author's point of view from different perspectives. Critical thinking led participants to express their disagreements about various subjects and defend their thoughts by providing logical reasoning. The findings of the interview analysis demonstrated that critical thinking and argumentative discussions enabled refugee students to develop a deeper understanding of the texts, gain understanding of the author's purpose, and practice literacy skills.

Literature Circles versus Traditional Approaches to Foreign Language Instruction

The last research question examined and compared the perceptions of adult refugee ELs with regard to participation in LCs versus traditional approaches to foreign language instruction. The findings of this study indicated that participants believed there were significant differences between traditional methods of language teaching and Literature Circles. Participants' perceptions of the differences are provided in the subsequent discussion.

Focus on Grammar Rather Than Usage

The analysis of participants' interview responses revealed traditional methods of language teaching were heavily teacher-centered, with a focus on grammar, memorization, translation, and lack of communication. All participants in this study believed traditional language teaching classrooms emphasized memorization, repetition, and mastery of grammatical rules while little time was devoted to listening and speaking skills. Also, English classrooms were the only opportunities that refugee ELs had to learn the new language in a foreign country. However, the traditional methods of language teaching did not provide opportunities to meet the needs and interests of language learners. Oral skills were limited to structural patterns, drills, dialogue, and repetition until responses became automatic.

Lack of Language Learning Opportunities

Traditional methods of language teaching do not provide opportunities for language learners to practice and learn daily conversational skills. The books and classroom materials are most often outdated and not based on students' interests. Teachers assume by attending language classes regularly, reciting, memorizing, and repeating the drills, ELs can master the new language. English Learners rarely had the opportunity to practice the meaningful, authentic, and informal conversation that applied to their daily lives. As a result, most of the students felt anxious, lost their self-confidence, as well as interest and hope to learn the English language. However, LC discussions provide them opportunities to speak informally in small groups, but also had a role that required participation and preparation to discuss thoughtfully.

Lack of Comprehension Strategies and Techniques

The findings of this study revealed the majority of refugee EL participants enrolled and completed English language courses both within and outside of the United States for an extended period of time; however, they were unfamiliar with any reading comprehension strategies to help them understand the text and enable them as readers to stay focused and become actively engaged. Additionally, the result of the study demonstrated that participants were not familiar with any strategies and tools to determine the meaning of words, understand author's purpose, or make predictions when reading texts. The reading comprehension strategies which were introduced in LCs class and common roles were entirely new concepts for refugee ELs and they provided participants with opportunities to not only comprehend the texts deeply, but also develop better reading habits and skills.

Connection of Result with Theoretical Framework

Socio-Cultural Learning Theory

Regarding the theoretical framework of LCs, the socio-cultural perspectives, transactional learning theory, collaborative approach, and constructivist approach were the main bases of contribution for LCs approach. Socio-cultural learning theory which was introduced by Vygotsky (1978) described learning as a social process. Vygotsky (1978) posits that learning is the result of social interaction and development of cognition. Through scaffolding and social interaction students can develop knowledge and master new tasks. Socio-cultural learning theory states that not only teachers and peer's impact on one's learning, but also cultural beliefs have a great impact on the process of individual learning. Socio-cultural learning theory supports the ideas of LCs

regarding how ELs can successfully comprehend the texts and become deeply engaged in meaningful discussion. Literature Circle provides opportunity for ELs to extend their ZPD by learning the knowledge and skills that they cannot yet understand but they are capable of learning with little guidance from teachers or observing and interacting with advanced peers. In early learning stages ELs may need more guidance to from peers and teachers but later they will develop and extend their ZPD. Literature Circle provided opportunities for ELs to learn the language through sharing experiences, discussions, and social interactions. The result of this study indicated that interaction between group members provided opportunities for unskilled and lower level ELs to improve cognition. In this study, participants agreed that they received the academic benefits of doing better quality work and learning more information through collaboration in small group discussions. Additionally, participants indicated that collaborative and small group discussion increased the level of comprehension because materials become easy to read through conversations. As socio-cultural learning theory suggests learning is heavily a social process; therefore, the LC approach is a strength in developing comprehension because it allows ELs to interact and cooperate with each other to understand the text, ask and respond questions to accomplish the tasks.

In addition, the result of the study reinforced Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural perspective, which claims that the guided support from skilled peers in reading and comprehending the texts may provide opportunities for unskilled learners to comprehend, increase learning, and become motivated to engage in literary works (Burnes, 1998). The power of small group discussions and peer interactions in LCs created a positive climate

where adult refugee ELs became motivated and engaged while producing meaningful literary work.

Transactional Learning Theory

Transactional learning theory, which was introduced by Rosenblatt, revolutionized reading instruction. Rosenblatt (1968) believed that reading comprehension is the result of interaction between texts and readers. Through transactional learning theory, educators noted that the knowledge and experiences the reader brings to the process supports making meaning to texts.

Through LCs and discussions, participants of the study learned how to apply their knowledge and experiences from the real world to comprehend the texts. Hsu (2004) introduced three factors that help in the process of literacy development “natural talks, personalization, and internalization of learning” (p. 5). The result of this study revealed that through LCs and small group discussions adult refugee ELs had the opportunity to interact, express their points of view and experiences, and learn from each other in a safe, friendly, and positive environment.

Additionally, the result of the study demonstrated that through LCs and common roles, participants became familiar with asking and responding to questions personally and with other members of groups. Through questioning and responding, adult refugee ELs had the opportunity to make connections to the texts and real world which is the main criteria in transactional learning theory.

The LC approach helped participants to demonstrate and transfer knowledge that they acquired from interaction with the world or books to their peers. LCs which is largely rooted in transactional learning theory invited participants to openly discuss and

share their knowledge and experiences through reading, interactions, and ultimately built on each other's understanding and comprehension.

Constructivist Learning Approach

Constructivism, which was introduced by Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget enhances students' logical and conceptual growth and focus on learners' experiences and knowledge. Constructivists believe that knowledge is not passively received; however, it is actively constructed by students while they connect to their previous experiences or knowledge. In a constructivist approach, teachers are the facilitators who assist learners to transfer new knowledge to past experiences to construct meaningful and comprehensible knowledge.

The findings of current study reinforced Piaget's constructivist approach, which states that learners construct their knowledge and learning. Adult refugee ELs' discussions and sharing of ideas were grounded and supported in the theory of social constructivism. The power of discussing previous experiences and making connections between texts and real world created an environment where participants built knowledge from each other's experiences and more importantly became familiar with the new society that they live in. Also, the result of the study indicated that LCs increased ELs collaboration, motivation, and classroom discussion which helped participants to learn how to support their thoughts as well as develop reasoning skills.

Collaborative Learning Approach

Collaborative learning approach is a significant shift from teacher-centered classrooms to student- centered classrooms where students can share ideas and be actively involved in the learning process. A collaborative learning approach encourages

students to have active voice and sensitive ears to others and practice critical thinking skills.

When analyzing the interview data, findings indicated the LCs approach, which is grounded in collaborative learning theory, helped adult refugee ELs to cooperate, share knowledge and learn from each other effectively. Classroom discussions provided opportunities for ELs to become engaged and thoughtful learners and develop better literacy and social skills. The result of the findings demonstrated that LCs helped adult refugee ELs to develop social skills, break stereotypes, and grow tolerance and acceptance toward diversity.

Connection of Result with Existing Literature

Research studies associated with literacy instruction have emphasized that applying the LC approach as a teaching strategy has a positive impact on students reading abilities and comprehension. It encourages students to have effective interactions and increases motivation while providing opportunities for learners to improve literacy skills (Daniels, 2002; Furr, 2004; Maher, 2018).

In past years, several research studies were conducted on the impact of LCs on ELs' reading achievement and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the LC approach on EFL or ESL students' literacy development (Furr, 2004). However, few studies can be found on the impact of the LC process on adult refugee ELs' literacy skills and reading achievement in the United States. Additionally, little is known about the impact of LCs on adult refugee ELs' anxiety level. In the literature review, the role of FL anxiety was considered as one of the affective factors that can influence foreign language learning processes (Krashen, 1982; Kimura, 2008; Liu, 2016; Otair & Abd Aziz, 2017).

ELs who have lower levels of FL learning anxiety were more likely to receive comprehensible input and learn the language. It is very important for educators to lower the level of anxiety and implement the best approach to assist ELs' literacy development.

This motive of this researcher was to investigate the impact of the LC approach on the reading comprehension and literacy skills of five adult refugee ELs toward their participation in a collaborative LC reading classroom. A qualitative research design was conducted through pre-post and group interviews to discover the perceptions of adult refugee ELs toward participating in LCs.

The findings of this study suggest that a greater majority of adult refugee ELs believe participation in LCs helped them to improve reading comprehension as well as speaking skills. ELs had opportunities to practice the language by expressing, reacting, and participating in daily conversations. Also, refugee ELs indicated they do not have enough opportunities to practice the target language both in and out of classroom settings. Therefore, lack of sufficient practice and appropriate opportunities hinder or slow the process of language learning. The findings echo the results of studies conducted by Rafada and Madini (2017) and Maher (2018), which suggest creating English clubs help students to practice target language and develop speaking skills in authentic situations while learning about the culture simultaneously.

Moreover, the findings of the study reveal that although participants studied English both in their home country and the United States for long periods of time, they were not familiar or capable in applying reading comprehension strategies to help them understand the texts. However, the adult refugee ELs indicated that LCs provided an opportunity to become familiar with different reading strategies, such as identifying the

author's intension or determining the meaning of new vocabulary words. Moreover, participants of the study noted that learning different strategies increased their level of comprehension, interest in communication, and self-confidence. The findings of the current study also confirm the result of Benseman's (2012), Karatay's (2017), and Lee's (2016) studies, which indicated applying effective strategies helped learners to progress academically, facilitate communication, and increase self-confidence. Similarly, Elhess & Egbert (2015) and Liao and Wang (2018) found that implementation of comprehension strategies assists ELs with self-affirmation, perseverance, verbal persuasion, and performance.

In addition to increasing the reading comprehension and literacy skills, the result of participants' responses indicated LCs had great impact on developing students reading habit, reading desire, and reading interest. Several adult refugee ELs expressed that although reading comprehension was challenging and time consuming at the beginning of project, later in time they developed enjoyment in reading and desire to continue and reading short stories became part of their habit. Also, through LCs, adult refugee ELs who did not consider themselves to have aptitude to learn a new language, realized and discovered their ability to learn the language by having opportunities and appropriate practices. The findings reaffirmed the previous research of Aytan (2018), which indicated that the LC process can provide a situation where learners become aware of their hidden talent and create an environment for academic growth.

In terms of anxiety, the participants of the study identified pronunciation, inability to express their thoughts, fear of negative evaluation, and cultural differences as main causes of FL learning anxiety. Adult refugee ELs claimed that not having enough

vocabulary words, knowledge of English language, and inability to express their thoughts made them frustrated, anxious, and blocked comprehension. The results of study were parallel with the studies of Al-Otaibi (2014), Altunkaya and Ates (2018), and Buriro and Aziz (2015) in which they found out being put on the spot, poor oral ability, and lack of self-esteem were major factors of FL learning anxiety.

Additionally, the findings illustrate that adult refugee ELs had a positive perception toward small group discussions. Participants of the study claimed that through small group discussions they had more time to express their ideas and practice the target language, increase comprehension, hear different points of view, and become involved. The findings confirm previous research that denote how small group discussion promotes comprehension by increasing learners input and output and allows students to be exposed to different perspectives versus working individually (Maher, 2018; Peterson, 2016)

Additionally, the findings of this study reveal that small group discussion helped students to feel secure, decreases anxiety, and develops self-confidence. When there was a friendship between the members of the group, they felt more safe and secure in expressing their opinions without hesitation, shyness, and fear of making mistakes. Additionally, adult refugee ELs believed that LC discussions, common roles, comprehension strategies, and peer support provided them opportunities to learn the language differently from previous learning experiences. As participants of the study indicated LC discussions not only helped them to read the texts purposefully and reach deeper comprehension, but also assisted them to develop social skills and become familiar with the new culture. The findings of the study illustrate LCs supported social

skills and cultural familiarity which are some of the main factors refugee ELs need to survive in a new society (Morales & Carrol, 2015).

Recommendations

The LC approach is an effective way for ELs to increase reading comprehension, listening and speaking skills, as well as developing reading interests and reading habit (Daniels, 2002 & Maher, 2018). It has also proven to be a helpful teaching strategy to facilitate English language learning process and foster cultural familiarity of adult refugee ELs who studied in advanced reading classroom. To implement LCs effectively based on adult refugee ELs educational and linguistics needs, some recommendations for pedagogical implications are proposed as follows:

Teacher Modeling and Scaffolding

Research studies have demonstrated that development of reading comprehension strategies are regarded as key factors in reading instruction (Burnes, 1998 & Daniels, 2000). Adult refugee ELs usually come from countries with different cultures, different educational backgrounds, and levels of English language fluency. Limited English abilities, different educational systems, and lack of appropriate training may account for ELs lack of interest for engagement. To promote effective and productive LC discussions, teachers should be aware of refugee ELs language abilities, their emotional and linguistic needs as well as providing sufficient training for book discussions, book reflections, preparing appropriate questions, and cooperative learning. For instance, to provide an opportunity for refugee ELs to become familiar with the concept of the LC approach and how to have a cooperative book discussion, teachers may let all groups

work on the same book for the first book cycle. Also, teachers need to spend some time modeling how to apply roles appropriately and effectively.

Modify Literature Circle Based on Students Needs

Additionally, educators should keep in mind that refugees and immigrants are usually not familiar with different reading strategies that help students to comprehend the texts. In these circumstances, teachers are required to devote some time to teach mini-lessons on how to apply different strategies to summarize texts, develop appropriate questions, and determine the meaning of new vocabulary words. Additionally, it is necessary for teachers to teach ELs how to compare and contrast different perspectives or make connections between books and real world. Also, it is important for teachers to modify common roles based on refugee ELs' needs and help them to apply the common roles and strategies, not only in reading classrooms, but in all classes. Through modeling, scaffolding, and modifying the LC approach, teachers provide opportunities for ELs to organize their thoughts, comprehend more complex texts, as well as improve English language skills.

Choosing Materials Based on Students Needs

Choosing appropriate materials should be considered as a crucial part of the LC process and English language improvement. Teachers need to be aware of refugee ELs' educational needs to select right materials. Results from the present study illustrate adult refugee ELs prefer types of books that assist them to become familiar with the culture of the United States, the challenging life of immigrants, as well as the ways they overcome barriers. Also, the findings of this study show that adult refugee ELs often do not have enough opportunities to transfer and apply the language they have learned in classrooms

when in society. Additionally, the results of the study show that ELs cannot make connections between the grammar rules they have learned to daily conversations. Therefore, it is necessary for classroom teachers to provide ample of opportunities for refugee and immigrant ELs to practice the authentic language and learn how to use the language in their daily conversations. It is necessary for ELs to understand that language skills are all connected and it is not possible to learn the language in isolation.

To provide quality materials, teachers should spend some time to recognize students' needs, their reading levels, as well as their likes and dislikes. In addition, at the beginning of the semester teachers should constantly offer scaffolding by checking ELs comprehension of the texts, help them to organize their thoughts, and remind them to apply appropriate reading strategies.

Professional Development

The LC approach and group discussions may promote students' interest and classroom engagement. However, implementing LC approach in adult refugee classes might be different from mainstream classrooms because of refugees' special linguistic and educational needs. Also, adult ELs might have different interests. As a result, teachers should update their knowledge about LCs, modify this approach based on their students' needs and their grade level or level of English acquisition, as well as create supportive environments to help ELs' academic growth and master the English language. These are not possible except through seeking or attending different professional developments to become familiar with the concepts, skills, and new strategies to teach and prepare ELs to get involved effectively in LC discussions.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study provides information that addresses the perceptions of adult refugee ELs toward participations in the LC approach and its impact on their reading comprehension and level of FL learning anxiety. To highlight the value of applying LCs in refugee FL learning classrooms, several recommendations deserve attention for future study.

First, this study represents the implications of the LC approach for a short period of two months. As a result, the findings of study may not reflect an extended impact of LC discussions on adult refugee ELs performance and language learning process. Therefore, future research might be conducted for a longer period of time in order to provide clear insight regarding the long-term impact of LCs on adult refugee ELs' reading comprehension and the level of their language learning anxiety.

Second, the participants in this study were limited to five adult refugee ELs, who migrated to the United States from one to three years and were enrolled in an advanced reading classroom in a Bilingual Language Institute. The findings of this study may not represent other adult refugee ELs enrolled in different courses, at different language levels, and in different educational settings. Therefore, it is recommended for future researchers to implement the LC approach in different pedagogical settings such as public schools, different grade levels, and with a larger sample size.

Third, several research studies conducted on application of the LC approach on ELs has proven to be an effective teaching method to increase students reading comprehension as well as support reading interest. However, there are a limited number of research studies regarding the impact of LCs on refugee English Learners. Thus, to get

a broader sense of the impact of LCs on refugee populations' language learning process; research studies as to the LC approach in a refugee community should be explored. Also, it is recommended that future research studies should involve mixed method research design in the field of the LC approach and refugee community.

Fourth, the researcher applied fiction books through the study related to the participants' interests and cultural needs. However, it is encouraged that a future study should involve different genres to investigate the impact of LCs on refugee populations. Fifth, findings of this research study provide ways for educators to become familiar with the anxieties and emotions that adult refugee ELs experience through the process of English language learning. However, few research studies have been conducted regarding the impact of the LC process on adult refugee ELs' anxiety level. Therefore, more research studies regarding the impact of the LC approach on FL learning anxiety are encouraged in future.

Finally, teachers can have great impact on participants' English language learning process in classrooms. It is recommended that a future research study be conducted to investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding application of the LC approach on adult refugee language learning. Implications and recommendations of this study can hopefully provide clear guidelines to help educators develop clear ideas about the emotional and educational needs of refugee ELs. More importantly, by gaining knowledge of new research approaches and ideas, teachers can reform their teaching methods by implementing the LC approach in an appropriate way in EFL or bilingual contexts to help the refugee community.

CHAPTER IV

CLOSING THOUGHTS

In the educational system that I grew up, English was part of the curriculum from sixth grade to the 12th grade. The focus of teaching was on grammar, reading aloud, translation, and memorizing vocabulary words. I can remember that content of the instructional materials consisted of simple dialogues and pictures which did not convey the target culture. English classes in our public-school system were mainly based on the concept of repetition and memorizing conversations; comprehension was omitted from instruction. The only school materials that we had were English textbooks. English class was scary and boring for the majority of students. I personally did not learn much in the English classes in public school except some grammatical rules and plenty of vocabulary words without knowing how to apply them in daily conversations; the classes were boring, tiring, and passing without any comprehension.

My language journey began when I was 12 years old and started to study EFL in a foreign language institute in an after-school program. Years ago, in my home country, English Institutes were considered as prestigious environments where prosperous families used to send their children for extra-curricular activities. I attended EFL classes twice a week for two hours. The method of language teaching was slightly different from public schools. I was grateful to attend language school because ELs had more opportunity to practice the language and teachers were willing to share their knowledge and experiences in friendly ways. However, it was still based on memorizing dialogue and acting out the conversation in front of the whole group. For instance, in upper grade levels we used to memorize long passages and give a lecture without clearly comprehending them.

Unfortunately, no reading comprehension strategy was involved in the process of learning a new language. But, I was determined to learn the English language and I was passionate to pursue my education in second language teaching.

After completing my bachelor's degree, I had the opportunity to move to the United States and pursue my education in multicultural studies and teaching the second language. I should confess that the opportunity of studying in the United States changed my philosophy of teaching and helped me to think about factors that I had not thought before. For instance, I realized that the theories and strategies related to second language acquisition that I learned during the bachelor's degree was over simplistic and too abstract. As a result, I struggled to apply them in my classrooms.

One of the most important factors that I became familiar with in a college of education was the variety of teaching methodologies and strategies that could be applied in classrooms, and more importantly, considering the importance of students' feelings and emotions. I realized that the importance of acknowledging students' feelings and cultural background in instruction were the missing parts of puzzle in the educational system in my home country. I also realized that teaching a foreign language is more than just teaching the grammatical rules and vocabulary words. There are other factors involved such as culture, anxiety, student and teacher relationships, environment, attitude, and classroom enjoyment. Classrooms in my home country were almost entirely teacher-centered; the teacher was the sole authority who controls everything. Because of cultural factors, those students who sit quietly with crossed arms are considered as a good student even in language classrooms.

Similarities between the Researcher and Participants

Implementing this research study and having interviews with language learners from different countries helped me to discern that I learned the English language in a similar way as they learned. While I was listening to the participants during the interviews, I could see myself here and there. The first factor was similarity in teaching methodology. In both contexts the focus was on learning about the language rather than applying the language. As a result, ELs took language courses for a long time; however, they could not achieve the appropriate level of language fluency and accuracy. Apparently, ELs did not have enough opportunities to learn the new language. The only environment that ELs could practice the language was limited to the language classes. The more opportunities that students have to speak, read, listen, and write in English, without the fear of penalty for doing/saying something wrong, the quicker they will acquire the English language.

Regarding reading comprehension, ELs were not familiar with any forms of strategies or techniques to help them comprehend the texts. Although I studied English about 10 years in my country, I did not know any particular strategies to comprehend the texts. The first memory that comes to my mind is giving a lecture or acting out the conversations with friends. It is so sad that ELs memorized several texts without fully comprehending and inferencing the authors' intentions. While I think deeply, reading comprehension was limited to knowing the vocabulary words, which was good, but absolutely not enough. There was a misconception that the only way to comprehend the text is reading and reading. The importance of teacher modeling and creating learning opportunities was neglected.

According to John Dewey the classroom should be a place where students learn how to live in real world (1938). Through time and gaining additional experience, I realized that teachers should adopt the dual role of facilitator and leader. Successful teachers attempt to be a partner in students learning process, guiding them to independently discover meaning. Language classrooms should represent real life situations where learners practice how to function and solve problems in a variety of social settings (Dewey, 1938; Gutek, 2014). As a person who strongly believes in Socio-cultural learning theory (Vyghotsky, 1978), I feel that teachers have tremendous impact on language learners. It is essential for educators to realize that language learning occurs in an interactive way. How can we expect ELs to master a new language in silence and without any interactions?

Moreover, I am familiar with the feeling of anxiety and frustrations that refugee language learners experienced while they could not comprehend what others were talking about or the negative experiences and memories that hinder the language learning process. As a language learner, I experienced the same anxiety that participants of this study dealt with when they were learning English in both their home-country and the United States. As a personal experience, I have never forgotten the moment when one of my English teachers told me “Whenever you read in English, nobody can understand even a single word; your reading is awful”. I felt extremely embarrassed in front of the whole class. I just wanted to hide under the desk. I still prefer not to read aloud in public.

All these similarities help in understanding refugee ELs’ emotional and educational needs better. Having common experiences sheds light on the reality of some of the challenges ELs often face in a new society; therefore, helpful strategies to

overcome linguistics and educational obstacles can be offered. As an educator and a language learner, I always like to share my experiences and acknowledge the ups and downs of the language learning process. We are not powerless in overcoming language learning difficulties. However, we should always attempt to be productive and move forward step by step to achieve our goals.

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APPENDIX A

Participants Questionnaire

My name is Sekineh Nasiri and I am a doctoral student conducting a research study through Sam Houston State University under the direction of Dr. Lory E. Haas, Assistant Professor.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to learn more about you and your personal experiences learning English, as well as your experiences as a student in English language classes. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. Please answer every question directly on the questionnaire. If you do not feel comfortable responding to some questions, please skip them. Your participation is entirely voluntary and your responses will be kept confidential. Your participation in this brief questionnaire is greatly appreciated.

Your name:

Please write the number of years or length of time you have been in the United States:

Please circle the most appropriate response.

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Please write your age: _____

3. Ethnicity/Race:

_____ Asian/Pacific Islander

_____ Black

_____ Hispanic

_____ White

_____ Other (please specify)

4. Highest degree earned or school year completed:

_____ Grade 7

_____ Earned a High School Diploma

_____ Grade 8

_____ Attended a University (please include number of years)

_____ Grade 9

_____ Earned an Associate Degree

_____ Grade 10

_____ Earned a Bachelor's Degree

_____ Grade 11

_____ Earned a Master's Degree

_____ Grade 12

_____ Earned a Doctorate

5. I have studied English for _____ before I moved to the United States.

_____ Less than 1 year

_____ 1-2 years

_____ 3-4 years

_____ 5 or more years

6. How often do you read in English outside of class?

_____ Never

_____ Once a week

_____ Two to three times a week

_____ Every day

_____ I only read in English during class

Please check all that apply for the following questions.

7. How do you usually feel in English reading classes?

_____ Relaxed

- _____ Confident
- _____ Most often nervous/anxious
- _____ Sometimes nervous/anxious
- _____ Shy/reluctant
- _____ Embarrassed

7. How do you usually feel in writing classes?

- _____ Relaxed
- _____ Confident
- _____ Most often nervous/anxious
- _____ Sometimes nervous/anxious
- _____ Shy/reluctant
- _____ Embarrassed

7. How do you usually feel in speaking classes?

- _____ Relaxed
- _____ Confident
- _____ Most often nervous/anxious
- _____ Sometimes nervous/anxious
- _____ Shy/reluctant
- _____ Embarrassed

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

First Interview part (week one/ reading experience in and outside of the U.S.)

1. Tell me about the background of your English language learning? How long did you study English? Where?
2. Describe your attitude toward reading?
 - A. Do you enjoy reading? Why or why not?
 - B. What do you like to read?
 - C. Do you think you are a good reader? Why or why not?
3. Describe your reading classroom experience? What did you do?
4. In what ways do you think the traditional form of reading can help you to become lifelong reader?
5. In what ways (if any) do you think applying Literature Circles can impact your reading learning experience?

Second Interview (Week eight/ Literature Circles' class experience and comparison with traditional form of reading/ engagement with text)

1. How do you feel about participating in Literature Circles? What about traditional book reading?
2. Did participating in Literature Circles assist with your reading goals?
3. Did you enjoy participating in the Literature Circles? Why or why not?
4. Compared to reading alone and oral book report, as a member of Literature Circles did you feel more or less pressure to complete your assigned reading?

5. How do you think Literature Circles is different from other methods/ ways of learning reading skills?
6. When you read a book do you feel connected to the real life? Or other books?
7. How did reading and talking about the same book with a group of your peers affect your reading experience?
 - A: Did it improve your reading experience?
 - B: Did it harm your reading experience? How so?
8. How do you think about preparing a role sheet t and book report?
9. How would you compare talking about a book in a Literature Circles to traditional reading class?
10. How did reading and talking about the same book with a group of your peers affect your reading experience?
 - a. Did it improve your reading experience? How so?
 - b. Did it harm your reading experience? How so?
11. Do you think Literature Circles can help you to become a lifelong reader?
 - a. What would it take for you to become a lifelong reader?
12. Can you describe some of the advantages of applying Literature Circles in reading class?
13. Describe your attitude toward reading after participating in Literature Circles?
 - a. Do you enjoy reading? Why or why not?
 - b. What do you like to read?
 - c. Do you think you are a good reader? Why or why not?

14. What is your preferred choice? Traditional form of book reading or Literature Circles?

Group Interview (Week eight / Follow up questions based on participants' responses)

APPENDIX C

Method and Procedures for Data Collection

The following steps will be taken in order to collect data and make sure the participants are kept anonymous:

1. The researcher will receive permission to conduct the study from the Bilingual Language Institute schools and Institutional Review Board (IRB).
2. Upon approval from the Bilingual Language Institute and IRB, the researcher will meet with the classroom teacher to introduce and discuss the process of Literature Circles and research study.
3. First week:
 - a. The teacher will introduce the Literature Circles and talk about the purpose of the research study to adult refugee ELs.
 - b. The researcher will distribute the consent form, read it aloud, and ask students to sign it if they would like to participate in the research study.
 - c. The researcher will introduce the books and ask students to rank them based on their preference.
 - d. Before administering the information sheet and interview, the researcher will collect consent forms.
 - e. Adult refugee ELs will complete the information sheet which will be prepared by the researcher.
 - f. The researcher will administer the pre-interview individually.
4. Week two:

- a. Students will experience the first cycle of Literature Circles. To learn about the Literature Circles and experience the process, all of the participants will have the same book.
 - b. Researcher will have 5 minutes discussion to help student who needs support and guidance.
- 5. Week three to seven:
 - a. Adult refugee ELs work on Literature Circles in different groups.
 - b. Researcher will have 5 minutes discussion to help student who needs support and guidance.
- 6. Week eight:
 - a. The researcher will administer the post-interview individually. After the post interview process, ELs will participate in group interview. All interview process will be audio taped.
 - b. Upon interview completion, the researcher will listen to the audio recording several times and transcribe the interview. For the purpose of validity, the researcher will ask each participant to read the interview transcription. Lastly, the data will be analyzed in relation to the students' responses.

VITA

Sekineh Nasiri

EDUCATION

Doctoral Students in Literacy at Sam Houston State University, Houston, Texas, January, 2015- present.

Master of Arts in Multicultural Studies in Education (August 2013) at University of Houston-Clear Lake, Houston, Texas.

Bachelor of Arts in English Literature (August 2005) at Azad University, Mazandaran, Iran.

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Adjunct Instructor, Gulf Language School, North American University, October 2018-present. Responsibilities included: Plan, develop, and use a variety of teaching methods and materials that assist students in meeting course objectives.

Adjunct Instructor, Houston Community College, August 2014 to December 2016. Responsibilities included: Teach students using a variety of effective methodologies and provide engagement and support activities that encourage student learning.

PUBLICATIONS

Nasiri, S., & Marquez, G. (2017). Caring Across Communities: Strategies to Meet the Academic and Cultural Needs of Refugee Language Learners. Texas Association for Literacy Education Year book 4 (1), 40-44.

Nasiri, S., & Marquez, G. (2018). Foreign Language Anxiety. NYS TESOL: Idiom.

PRESENTATION AT PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS

Nasiri, S. Foreign Language Learning Anxiety, TESOL, Atlanta, Georgia, 27 February 2018.

- Nasiri, S. ESL Pedagogies and Strategies: Focusing on Teaching North African and Middle Eastern (MENA) Students, Presentation for Diversity Leadership Conference, Houston, Texas, 16 March 2018.
- Nasiri, S. Caring Across Communities: Helping Refugee Students to Succeed. Presentation for TALE conference, Corpus Christi, Texas, February 2017.
- Nasiri, S. From silence to active participation: Using literature circles to reduce anxiety among refugees and ELLs, Dallas, Texas, March 2017.
- Nasiri, S. Mini-Lessons: Magic Strategies to meet the needs to ELLs. Presentation for TextESOL, Houston, Texas. February 2017.
- Nasiri, S. Using Literature Circles in ESL/ EFL classrooms. Presentation for Joan Prouty Conference, Houston, Texas, January 2017.
- Nasiri, S. Literature Circles in classrooms. Presentation for regional TextESOL, Houston, Texas, February 2016, February 2016.
- Nasiri, S. Refugees as English Language Learners: Issues, Concerns, and Solutions. Presentation for Diversity and Leadership Conference, Houston, Texas, March 2016.
- Nasiri, S. The SIOP Model for Language Learners. Presentation for TALE Conference, San Antonio, Texas, February 2016.