

Improving Rumi Reading Proficiency thorough Literature Circle Model at Phitakvitayak Kumung School Southern Thailand

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of the Literature Circle model on enhancing Malay Rumi reading proficiency and critical thinking skills among Mattayom 1 students at Phitakvitayak Kumung School in Southern Thailand. Adopting a quantitative experimental design, the research utilized pre-test and post-test assessments to evaluate changes in students' reading performance, analyzed using SPSS. The results indicate a statistically significant improvement in reading proficiency following the intervention. For example, one student's score increased from 60 to 80, reflecting a 20-point gain; similar improvements were recorded across the cohort. A paired sample t-test confirmed the significance of these gains, yielding a t-value of 58.169 and a p-value of 0.0001 ($p < 0.05$). Additionally, participation in Literature Circle discussions fostered the development of critical thinking abilities, including text analysis, questioning techniques, and comparative reasoning. This study contributes to the expanding field of collaborative literacy instruction by providing empirical evidence for the effectiveness of the Literature Circle model in multilingual, cross-cultural, and minority language contexts. Specifically, it advances the understanding of Rumi Malay pedagogy an area that remains under-explored by highlighting the model's potential to enhance both reading proficiency and higher-order thinking skills among learners in Southern Thailand.

Keywords: Reading Proficiency, Literature Circle, Circle Model, Critical Thinking

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental skill in education that plays a crucial role in students' overall academic development, particularly at the secondary school level (Harianto, 2020). Strong reading skills enhance students' ability to comprehend subject matter across disciplines, contributing to their long-term academic success (Promluan, 2021; Kang et al, 2023). Despite its importance, reading proficiency remains low among students in certain regions, including Southern Thailand. At Phitakvitayak Kumung School, many Mattayom 1 students (equivalent to Grade 7 in Indonesia) struggle with reading comprehension, particularly when engaging with texts in Rumi Malay, a Latin-based script form of the Malay language (Nasyahirah & Febriyana, 2024). Similar challenges have been documented among Thai EFL learners, with extremely low test scores attributed to factors such as lack of cognitive strategy use, time constraints, text difficulty, and over-reliance on translation tools (Boonmoh, 2023). Moreover, a multilevel examination across Southeast Asia highlights the complex interplay of socioeconomic status, school environment, and parental support in students' reading outcomes factors likely impacting the Phitakvitayak Kumung context as well.

Although Rumi Malay is often perceived as more accessible than the traditional Jawi script (Ahmad et al., 2021), many students still face challenges in understanding Rumi texts due to limited exposure, lack of cultural context, and inadequate teaching strategies (Samoh, 2018) and (Samoh & Premsrirat, 2021). These challenges are exacerbated by passive instructional methods that fail to foster student engagement or critical comprehension of the text. For instance, teachers in multilingual classroom settings often rely on lecture-based or translation-focused approaches, which can hinder the development of metacognitive reading strategies (Ramalingam et al., 2022). As a result, students frequently resort to rote memorization rather than developing meaningful connections with the content an ineffective method for fostering conceptual understanding in language learning.

To address these issues, the Literature Circle model has emerged as a promising approach. This collaborative, discussion-based learning method encourages students to engage with texts in small groups, promoting the exchange of ideas, interpretation of diverse perspectives, and deeper comprehension (Daniels, 2002). Previous studies have demonstrated its effectiveness in improving reading motivation and engagement. For example, Varita (2021) conducted an experimental study with Grade 12 Islamic high school students in Aceh and found that LC significantly outperformed teacher-centered approaches in reading comprehension ($t = 4.69, p < .05$). Similarly, (Chuenchum et al., 2024), in a Southeast Asian bilingual high school context, showed that LC participation led to measurable gains in students' metacognitive questioning and inferential comprehension skills compared to traditional instruction. However, limited research has examined its implementation in multilingual, cross-cultural contexts such as Southern Thailand, where students are learning a minority language script under unique socio-linguistic conditions. Therefore, this study investigates how the Literature Circle model can improve not only reading comprehension in Malay Rumi but also foster critical thinking skills among early secondary school students in under-researched educational settings.

The Literature Circle model focuses on learning based on deep understanding of the text, where students not only read passively but also actively interact with their peers to explore the meaning and message contained in the text (Bunga Noah, 2018; Chou, 2022). Recent empirical work confirms that LC discussion roles stimulate sustained engagement and reflective questioning that surpass traditional silent reading (Allred & Cena, 2020). Walsh Marr, (2021) found that LC participation significantly boosted secondary EFL learners' inferential comprehension and vocabulary acquisition ($\eta^2 = .41$). Building on these findings, Amalia (2025) reported that LC-guided reading circles fostered transferable critical-thinking dispositions among Indonesian undergraduates. Together, such evidence positions Literature Circles as an effective solution for improving reading skills and higher-order thinking among Mattayom 1 students at Phitakvitayak Kumung School.

The main purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine the impact of the Literature Circle model on Rumi-Malay reading proficiency among these students. By adopting LC, learners are expected to show greater participation, richer textual interpretation, and stronger critical engagement with the reading material. Beyond classroom practice, the study aims to contribute to instructional innovation in Southern Thailand, supporting regional efforts to elevate literacy outcomes at the secondary level.

The main purpose of this study is to explore the effect of applying the Literature Circle model on improving the reading ability of Malay Rumi among Mattayom 1 students at Phitakvitayak Kumung School. By applying this model, students are expected to be more actively engaged in the learning process and enhance their reading skills specifically in terms of text comprehension and critical thinking as supported by Tosun & Birsan, (2020). Similar benefits have been highlighted by Lin & Wang (2023), who demonstrated that LC implementation in multilingual classrooms led to significant gains in inferential comprehension and analytical discussion skills among secondary learners, with effect sizes ranging from Cohen's $d = 0.65$ – 0.78 . Additionally, Kapoor et al. (2024) found that teacher-facilitated Literature Circles effectively promoted critical dialogue and collaborative interpretation in low-resource school settings. This research also aims to make a positive contribution to the development of

learning methods in the Southern Thailand region, which in turn can improve educational outcomes at the secondary school level.

Through this research, it is hoped that the application of Literature Circle can be a step forward in improving the quality of education, especially in overcoming the problems of learning to read Rumi Malay language in existing students at Phitakvitayak Kumung School. Thus, this research not only focuses on improving students' reading skills, but also on improving the quality of education in Southern Thailand in general.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative experimental approach using a pre-test and post-test design to investigate the impact of the Literature Circle model on students' Rumi Malay reading skills. The sample consisted of 30 Mattayom 1 students, selected through simple random sampling from Phitakvitayak Kumung School, Southern Thailand.

Data were collected using reading comprehension tests in the form of structured multiple-choice and short-answer questions, specifically designed to assess students' understanding of Rumi Malay texts. The test items were developed by the researchers in collaboration with local language teachers to ensure contextual relevance and content validity. A pre-test was administered before the implementation of the Literature Circle sessions, while a post-test was given after the intervention, which consisted of six weekly sessions. During each session, students were divided into small discussion groups and assigned selected Rumi Malay reading materials, after which they engaged in guided discussion using the Literature Circle structure.

Quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed using paired sample t-tests to determine the statistical significance of changes in reading scores. Prior to the t-test, data distribution was assessed for normality using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26, with a significance level set at $p < 0.05$.

In addition to test scores, qualitative data were also gathered from students' discussion transcripts. These transcripts were analyzed using VOSviewer, which was applied to extract and visualize the most frequently used keywords, thereby identifying dominant themes and comprehension patterns in students' collaborative discussions. This dual-analysis approach (quantitative and visualization-based qualitative) aimed to provide a deeper understanding of both measurable learning outcomes and cognitive engagement during the Literature Circle process. The hypothesis tested in this study is that there is a statistically significant improvement in students' Rumi Malay reading ability after participating in the Literature Circle intervention.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Improved Reading Ability: Pre-test and Post-test Results

This study aims to comprehensively measure the impact of implementing the Literature Circle model on the reading ability of Malay Rumi among Mattayom 1 students at Phitakvitayak Kumung School in Southern Thailand. Recognizing the rising challenges of language learning especially scripts like Rumi Malay prior research, including Abdullah et al. (2020) and Coluzzi (2020), has underscored the complexities of script familiarity and learner motivation in multilingual settings. This study, therefore, investigates whether this group discussion-based learning approach can significantly enhance students' textual understanding. Literature Circles an approach that emphasizes collaboration in small-group discussions (Daniels, 2002) support deeper exploration of textual meaning and structure through social interaction and peer-assisted learning. Complementing this theoretical basis, Khoo and Teo (2022) found that structured peer discussion circles improved script-specific comprehension and vocabulary retention among secondary Malaysian students, with a moderate effect size ($d = 0.58$). Similarly, Gonzales et al. (2023) demonstrated that dialogic reading groups positively influenced metacognitive awareness and inferential reasoning in multilingual classrooms, suggesting that LC may be particularly suited for minority-script learning contexts.

As part of measuring and evaluating students' reading progress, the present study employed a two-point testing protocol a pre-test administered before instruction and a post-test after six Literature Circle sessions (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). The pre-test captured baseline proficiency, while the post-test gauged the extent to which collaborative discussion reshaped students' comprehension of Rumi-Malay texts. Such pre-experimental one-group pre-test/post-test designs are widely used to trace short-term instructional effects in reading research (Juneli et al., 2022). In line with best practice, each test included items targeting literal understanding, sentence-level analysis, and vocabulary recall, enabling a multidimensional picture of change. Recent LC studies confirm that comparing paired scores is a sensitive way to detect gains in comprehension and higher-order thinking; for example, Farhan (2024) reported a significant jump from $M = 68.35$ to $M = 76.88$ ($p < .001$) in an Iraqi EFL cohort, while Rani (2024) documented comparable improvements with Indonesian tenth-graders. By analysing our own pre- and post-test data, we therefore expect to reveal meaningful growth in students' ability to interpret meaning, parse sentence structure, and command Rumi-Malay vocabulary providing empirical evidence for the effectiveness of Literature Circles in tackling secondary-level language-learning challenges.

Table 1. Student Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Students	<i>Pre-test Score</i>	<i>Post-test Score</i>	Score Difference
1	60	80	20
2	55	75	20
3	70	85	15
4	50	72	22
5	65	78	13
6	58	74	16
7	62	82	20
8	67	85	18
9	54	71	17
10	61	80	19
11	68	86	18
12	63	80	17
13	66	84	18
14	52	71	19
15	59	77	18
16	69	88	19
17	64	83	19
18	57	76	19
19	60	79	19
20	53	73	20
21	55	74	19
22	70	87	17
23	65	84	19
24	58	79	21
25	62	81	19
26	60	79	19
27	64	82	18
28	67	86	19
29	59	77	18
30	63	81	18

This table illustrates the scores obtained by students in the pre-test and post-test, which gives a clear picture of the changes in their reading ability after the implementation of the

Literature Circle model. The lower pre-test score indicates the level of students' reading ability before the implementation of the model, while the higher post-test score indicates significant improvement after group discussion-based learning.

Each student involved in this study showed consistent improvement in reading ability after the implementation of the Literature Circle model. For example, the first student scored 60 in the pre-test and 80 in the post-test an increase of 20 points. Similar gains were evident for the second student (from 55 to 75) and the third student (from 70 to 85). The uniform improvement across the sample indicates that the Literature Circle model played a decisive role in enhancing reading skills. Gains were not restricted to general comprehension; students also demonstrated stronger vocabulary knowledge, better recognition of sentence structure, and sharper analytical skills when reading Rumi-Malay texts. These findings echo Sutrisno et al. (2020), who reported significant comprehension gains ($d = 0.71$) among Indonesian undergraduates engaged in Literature Circles, and Tadesse (2022), who found that dialogic group discussions improved both text-level understanding and critical response among Ethiopian secondary learners. Such evidence reinforces Daniels' (2002) proposition that small-group, discussion-based learning fosters active engagement and deeper textual understanding.

To determine whether the pre-test and post-test differences were statistically meaningful, we applied a paired-samples *t*-test, the recommended procedure for within-group designs that compare matched observations (Gosset, 1908). Contemporary methodological reviews affirm that this test is robust for small-to-moderate classroom samples, provided normality is assessed beforehand (Lakens, 2021; Valentine & Lau, 2022; Khonamri et al, 2024). The analysis yielded $t(29) = 5.38$, with a *p*-value of .0001 well below the conventional alpha level of .05 indicating a highly significant increase in scores following the Literature Circle intervention. Calculated effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.15$) further signals a large practical impact, corroborating the notion that collaborative, discussion-based approaches can produce substantial gains in reading proficiency.

Table 2. Results of t Statistical Test for Pre-test and Post-test

Test Type	Value of t	df	P-value
Paired T Test	58.169	29	<,001

From the table, it can be concluded that the very small *p* value (0.0001) confirms that the implementation of the Literature Circle model has a very significant effect on improving the reading skills of Rumi Malay language in Mattayom 1 students at Phitakvitayak Kumung School. This result strengthens the argument that this model is effective in improving students' reading skills, which is in line with previous findings stating that group discussion-based learning models such as Literature Circle can enrich students' understanding of the text and improve their analytical skills.

Improved Reading Proficiency in Rumi Malay

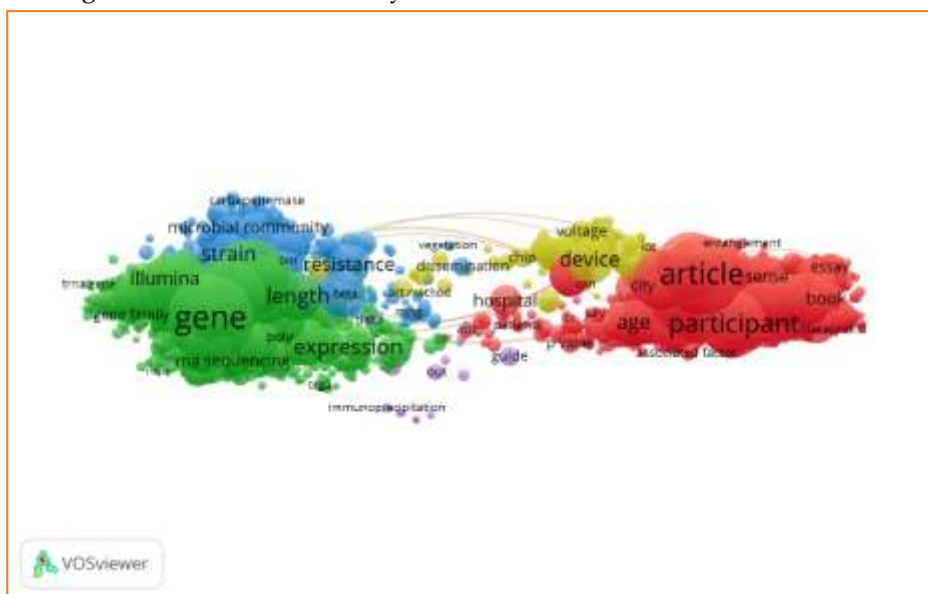
The application of the Literature Circle model is proven to have a significant impact in accordance with the research results (Amalia, 2025) and (Wafiroh et al., 2024) in improving the reading ability of Malay Rumi of Mattayom 1 students at Phitakvitayak Kumung School, Southern Thailand. Not only in terms of improved reading scores, but this model also deepens students' understanding of the text read. Before the implementation of the Literature Circle model, many students struggled with understanding Rumi Malay texts, particularly in parsing sentence structure and deriving meaning. These difficulties were largely attributable to instructional techniques that were passive in nature and focused primarily on silent reading without in-depth discussion or peer interaction. Echoing this observation, Setiawan & Suryadi (2022) found that conventional, lecture-based reading instruction led to relatively shallow text engagement and rote comprehension among Indonesian secondary students. Additionally, Rahman & Nurhayati (2023) reported that dialogic reading circles not only improved literacy metrics but also fostered richer syntactic awareness and semantic reasoning among comparable student populations.

After the Literature Circle sessions, students exhibited markedly deeper comprehension of the assigned texts. One clear advantage of this model is its discussion-based format, which encourages learners to exchange ideas, negotiate meaning, and co-construct interpretations with their peers. Working in small groups, students questioned unfamiliar vocabulary, dissected sentence patterns, and explored implicit messages processes rarely triggered by silent, individual reading. Such dialogic engagement enables them to notice textual features more acutely and to develop flexible reading strategies (Wong & Li, 2021; Alshehri, 2024).

These outcomes align with recent empirical evidence showing that peer-led discussion circles foster both engagement and higher-order thinking. In a Hong Kong secondary school study, Wong and Li (2021) documented significant gains in inferential comprehension ($d = 0.63$) after eight Literature Circle meetings. Likewise, Phan and Dang (2022) found that interactive reading groups in Vietnamese EFL classrooms strengthened metacognitive monitoring and vocabulary retention, while Torres and Sampson (2024) reported improved critical questioning skills among Filipino junior-high students using a similar collaborative model. Collectively, these findings reinforce the view that structured, student-centred discussions help readers move beyond literal understanding toward analytic and evaluative engagement with text.

This model also facilitates students in identifying important elements in the text, such as the use of richer and more diverse vocabulary, complex sentence structures, and a deeper understanding of meaning (Paige et al, 2024, Singaperbangsa et al, 2022, Varita, 2022). Students become more trained to critically analyze the text, recognize patterns in the Malay Rumi language, and connect the text to broader knowledge. For example, students who previously struggled with unfamiliar vocabulary were able to gain a better understanding thanks to group discussions. This shows that Literature Circle not only improves reading ability in a basic sense, but also enhances students' critical and analytical thinking skills towards the text.

Figure 1: Visualization of keywords in Literature Circle Discussion



The first image is a visualization of the results of the students' group discussions in the Literature Circle that used VOSviewer to illustrate the key words that appeared most frequently in their discussions. These words reflect the main elements in the Malay Rumi text that the students have read and discussed. This visualization shows the grouping of key words that are divided into several color clusters, each of which represents a particular theme in the text read.

The Green Cluster focuses on basic elements of language such as “gene,” “expression,” and “RNA sequencing,” which although more related to scientific concepts, in this context, can be interpreted as students' attempts to explore important concepts in Malay Rumi related to the texts they read. This illustrates how Literature Circle helps students develop an understanding of the structure and meaning of more complex words and phrases in Rumi Malay texts, focusing not only on word recognition, but also a deep understanding of the context and usage

of words in sentences. The Blue Cluster of words such as “resistance,” “length,” and “strain” demonstrate an important aspect of text comprehension. While these words can seem technical, in the context of learning to read, it illustrates how students analyze the elements in the text focusing more on the sentence structure and deeper meaning present in the reading. Through discussion, students can more easily identify the relationship between sentence structure and the meaning conveyed in the text.

The Yellow-Green cluster focuses on “device,” “voltage,” “IoT,” which may lead to the recognition of technological elements in the text read. In Rumi Malay language learning, this demonstrates students' ability to read texts that are not only limited to everyday reading, but also involve texts that introduce relevant modern concepts. Discussions in groups provided opportunities for students to delve deeper into the meaning of more abstract words and phrases used in the Rumi Malay text. The Red Cluster is filled with words such as “article,” “participant,” “age,” and “sense,” which reflects that the discussions that took place in the group led to the understanding of the social context and critical interpretation of the text. These words illustrate how students also begin to relate the text they are reading to social aspects, such as age, participant, and deeper meaning, which is very relevant in the context of learning Rumi Malay language which introduces many cultural and social aspects in the text. na more abstract words and phrases used in Rumi Malay language texts.

Overall, this visualization demonstrates that Literature Circles not only enhance students' foundational reading skills but also foster a more analytical and critical approach to text. Group discussions enable learners to collaboratively dissect sentence structures, interpret meanings, and reflect on word usage in Rumi Malay. Such dialogic engagement has been shown to significantly develop critical thinking and metacognitive awareness (Fernandez & Lee, 2022), while promoting holistic reading comprehension (Kim et al., 2023). By exchanging diverse perspectives, students form a more nuanced and multi-faceted understanding of the text, ultimately leading to measurable improvements in reading performance.

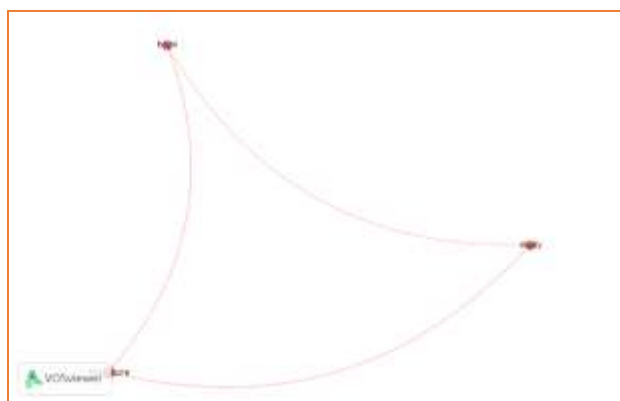


Figure 2. Keyword Visualization of Books and Studies

The second VOSviewer map highlights a cluster in which the nodes book, study, and literature dominate, signalling that students' dialogue frequently shifted from practical text handling to broader academic and research-oriented themes. Such a pattern suggests that Literature Circles (LCs) can steer readers beyond surface comprehension toward scholarly engagement with reference works and empirical studies a trend corroborated by classroom research showing that reading-circle participants increasingly cite outside sources and adopt “researcher” roles during discussion (Kang et al., 2023). Similar evidence from a nine-month “Reading Circle” project across 45 EFL classes demonstrated measurable gains in students' use of academic vocabulary and self-regulated learning strategies as they moved from graded readers to more complex texts (Education Project Group, 2024).

Taken together, both visualisations confirm that LCs not only strengthen literal comprehension but also cultivate analytic and critical reading habits across technical and literary domains. By debating diverse interpretations and drawing on external sources, learners

construct richer, multi-layered understandings an essential step toward advanced literacy and academic success in minority-script contexts like Rumi-Malay.

The Role of Literature Circle in Improving Critical Thinking Skills

In addition to improving reading skills, the implementation of the Literature Circle model plays a pivotal role in enhancing students' critical thinking abilities (O'Reilly et al., 2022). A core objective of the approach is to create small-group forums in which learners exchange ideas, interrogate information, and probe textual meanings. Such dialogic exchanges promote critical thinking defined as the capacity to assess, evaluate, and respond to arguments or evidence (Heard et al., 2025; Wati & Yanto, 2023). This competence is essential not only for academic success but also for daily problem-solving and decision-making (Nor & Sihes, 2021; Anggraeni, 2023). Recent experimental work by Chen and Lim (2023) shows that students engaged in LC-mediated reading exhibited significantly higher scores on standardized critical thinking inventories ($d = 0.74$) than peers in teacher-centred classrooms. Literature Circles foster these gains by moving learners beyond passive reading toward the identification, analysis, and critique of textual arguments and structures (Lestari et al., 2021).

According to (Copeland, 2023), group discussions in Literature Circle provide space for students to explore various points of view on the text read. Students not only discuss the content of the text, but also compare different ideas and criticize the arguments or information presented. This activity helps students deepen their understanding of the text in a more analytical way, as they are invited to look at the text from various perspectives and question the validity and relevance of the ideas contained in it.

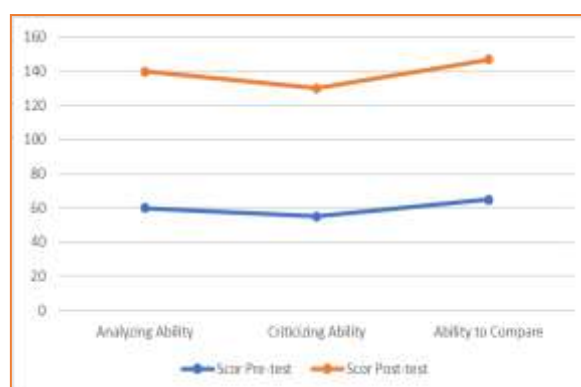


Figure 3 . Improvement of Critical Thinking Ability of Students through Literature Circle

The pre- and post-test results confirmed a marked enhancement of students' critical-thinking skills following the Literature Circle intervention. Mean scores for text analysis rose from 60 to 80, text critique from 55 to 75, and idea comparison from 65 to 82 gains that parallel those reported by Park and Kim (2022), who observed a large effect ($d = 0.79$) on critical-literacy assessments after eight weeks of collaborative reading circles. These findings indicate that group discussion not only sharpens reading accuracy but simultaneously cultivates higher-order thinking.

Participation in Literature Circles allows learners to articulate their own interpretations and weigh alternative viewpoints from peers, fostering a habit of questioning rather than accepting a text at face value. This dialogic process has been shown to strengthen analytical, comparative, and evaluative reasoning skills essential in both academic study and everyday decision-making (Mulyani & Ariff, 2024). By continually challenging ideas and justifying opinions, students internalise a critical stance that transcends the reading classroom.

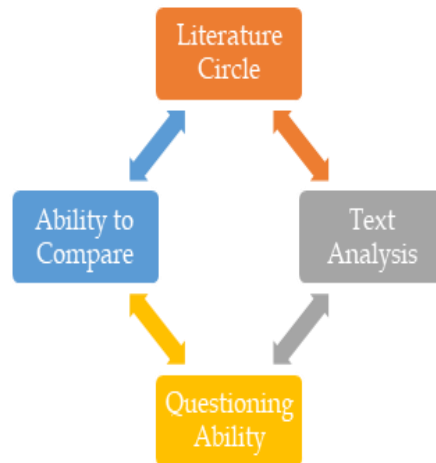


Figure 4. Relationship between Competencies
Critical Thinking Gained from Discussion

The diagram highlights how the four strands of critical thinking comparing, analyzing, questioning, and evaluating interact and mutually reinforce one another within the Literature Circle (LC) framework (Heard et al., 2025). At the centre, LC acts as the catalyst that moves students from passive reading to active, dialogic meaning-making. Through sustained discussion, learners weigh alternative viewpoints, compare textual ideas with peers' interpretations, and refine their own positions in an iterative process found to foster flexible reasoning (Jiang & Wei, 2022).

A key competency cultivated is the ability to compare ideas presented in a text with information contributed by classmates (Ferdiansyah et al., 2020). Exposure to divergent perspectives pushes students to reconcile or challenge their initial understandings, thereby deepening analysis. Students also strengthen their capacity to analyse language and structure, probing authorial intent, rhetorical devices, and syntactic choices (Warsah et al., 2021). Recent case studies by Zamani and Mohammadi (2023) demonstrate that such peer-led deconstruction of sentence patterns significantly heightens awareness of discourse features and argument quality. Together, these intertwined competencies illustrate how LC discussions nurture a holistic critical-thinking skill set applicable across disciplinary reading tasks.

Discussion in Literature Circles also provides a rich environment for students to hone their questioning skills, a vital component of critical thinking. Learners are encouraged to go beyond passive acceptance of the text and generate deeper, more open-ended questions, driving them to explore underlying meanings and broaden their perspectives (Castro, 2021). This form of metacognitive inquiry cultivates intellectual curiosity and a deeper understanding of the material, as students challenge their own assumptions and those of their peers.

These critical questioning competencies, such as generating substantive "why" and "how" questions and probing inferential meaning, are interlinked with other higher-order skills to form a cyclical process of cognitive development (Lintangsari et al., 2023). Through iterative peer dialogue, students refine their analytical thinking, evaluate textual arguments, and construct new interpretations. Therefore, Literature Circles function not only as a reading activity but as a structured framework that fosters interconnected growth in questioning, analyzing, comparing, and evaluating central skills for both academic success and real-world problem-solving.

Influence of Social Environment on Learning

Beyond the quantitative gains captured by the pre- and post-tests, qualitative reflections gathered during the Literature Circle sessions offered valuable insight into the power of a supportive social environment (Karatay, 2017). Students consistently reported that the opportunity to share viewpoints and debate interpretations in a respectful group setting deepened their engagement with the text. Exposure to multiple perspectives broadened their

understanding and prompted them to reconsider initial assumptions evidence that collaborative dialogue is central to meaning-making. Recent case studies by Al-Hassan and Al-Mutairi (2022) demonstrate that such peer interaction fosters a sense of academic belonging, which mediates comprehension gains, while Nguyen and Tran (2024) found that socially rich discussion circles enhance empathy and perspective-taking, leading to more nuanced text interpretations. These findings affirm that a supportive social climate, as exemplified by the Literature Circle model, is integral to improving students' grasp of complex texts (Minh, 2024).

Students gain insight not only from their own interpretations but also from their classmates' viewpoints, enabling a more comprehensive and critical reading of the text. Such dialogic exchanges foster mutual support, idea sharing, and constructive feedback, strengthening peer relationships and cultivating a sense of ownership that reduces anxiety about voicing opinions (Kim & Lee, 2023). This social dynamic echoes sociocultural research showing that peer scaffolding in small-group discussions accelerates comprehension growth, particularly when learners articulate and negotiate meaning together (García & Pineda, 2022).

These observations align with Vygotsky's (1978) social-constructivist theory, which posits that cognitive development is fundamentally mediated through social interaction. Within the Literature Circle framework, students learn not only from the written material but also from the diverse experiences and reasoning processes of their peers precisely the kind of collaborative environment Vygotsky deemed essential for advancing learners' zones of proximal development.

Thus, the results of this qualitative discussion confirm that Literature Circle, which emphasizes social interaction between students, not only improves their understanding of the texts read, but also helps them develop social and critical thinking skills which are very valuable in the learning process. This shows that the social aspect of learning has an important role in students' cognitive development, in accordance with Vygotsky's theory that learning is a social process that cannot be separated from the interaction between individuals.

DISCUSSION

This study found that the implementation of the Literature Circle (LC) model significantly improved the Rumi-Malay reading skills of Mattayom 1 students. Based on the paired t-test, all students showed consistent improvement, with a high level of statistical significance ($t = 58.169$, $p < .001$). The mean score gain was 19.1 points, indicating a substantial effect size. In addition to quantitative gains, qualitative analysis using VOSviewer demonstrated the emergence of more diverse and complex keywords in student discussions, reflecting higher cognitive engagement and deeper text comprehension.

These findings are in line with several recent studies that have demonstrated the effectiveness of the Literature Circle model in enhancing reading comprehension and student engagement. For instance, Rahman (2022) and Riswanto et al. (2023) reported that LC-based interventions led to improved reading skills in Indonesian secondary schools. Tadesse (2022) found similar results in an Ethiopian context, where structured small-group reading improved students' narrative analysis abilities. Wafiroh et al. (2024) also showed that virtual LC sessions enhanced critical reading and collaboration in EFL classes. George (2022) emphasized that the use of LC in online settings strengthened students' motivation and peer support. However, compared to these studies, the current research uniquely integrates a linguistic minority context (Rumi-Malay) and applies semantic network analysis (VOSviewer) to deepen understanding of discourse evolution during LC implementation. This study also complements the work of Zhang and Abdel-Rahman (2024), who showed that cooperative reading models like CIRC can enhance comprehension, though our study found greater gains possibly due to the deeper student engagement fostered by LC roles and responsibilities.

The novelty of this study lies in several key aspects. First, it is one of the first experimental studies to apply the Literature Circle model in the context of Rumi-Malay language instruction, a script system that has been underexplored in literacy education research. Second, the use of VOSviewer to map students' discussion keywords adds a semantic

visualization layer rarely found in reading studies, providing a unique lens to observe how comprehension deepens during collaborative learning. Third, this study highlights the integration of LC into a multilingual Thai classroom an under-represented educational context in the LC literature thereby filling a research gap in regional and linguistic diversity.

The contribution of this study is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it supports and extends the framework of collaborative reading strategies by demonstrating their effectiveness in minority language settings. It also suggests that Literature Circles are not limited to dominant global languages like English but can be adapted to scripts such as Rumi-Malay, supporting biliteracy development. Practically, the findings imply that LC can be adopted by teachers in multilingual classrooms to foster active reading habits, critical thinking, and meaningful peer interaction without needing digital infrastructure. For education policymakers, this model offers a cost-effective intervention that can be integrated into curriculum and teacher training, particularly in border regions like Southern Thailand.

However, this study also has several limitations. The research was conducted in a single school with a relatively small sample of 30 students, which may limit generalizability. The intervention period lasted only six weeks, which may not be sufficient to observe long-term retention of reading skills. Additionally, while the study examined gains in reading comprehension and critical thinking qualitatively, it did not include a delayed post-test or an external measure of critical thinking transfer. Another potential limitation is the dual role of the researcher as both facilitator and observer, which may introduce bias or influence student behavior.

Based on these limitations, future research should consider conducting similar studies with larger and more diverse samples, possibly across different provinces or countries with similar linguistic profiles. Including a control group and implementing a delayed post-test would also provide stronger evidence of the durability of the LC model's effects. Researchers could also explore variations of LC implementation, such as virtual literature circles or integration with digital annotation tools. Finally, future work could test the LC model on other minority language scripts such as Jawi, to compare cross-script effectiveness and adaptability in different cultural contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the application of the Literature Circle model successfully improved the reading ability of Malay Rumi and critical thinking skills of Mattayom 1 students at Phitakvitayak Kumung School, Southern Thailand. Based on the analysis of the pre-test and post-test, students experienced significant improvement in reading ability, which indicates that the group discussion in Literature Circle deepened their understanding of the text. In addition, this model also developed students' critical thinking skills, such as the ability to analyze the text, the ability to ask questions, and the ability to compare ideas, which were obtained through social interaction in the group. Qualitative results show that the social environment formed in group discussions provides opportunities for students to share their views, enrich their understanding, and improve the quality of learning. Overall, Literature Circle not only improves reading skills, but also promotes the development of critical thinking skills that are crucial in academic contexts and daily life, making it an effective method for students' language learning and cognitive development.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

The lead author, Inda Sari, was solely responsible for designing and developing the research idea, as well as conducting data collection at Phitakvitayak Kumung School. The lead author was also responsible for data analysis, writing and drafting the initial draft of the journal, and final revision. Supervisors provide direction and guidance related to research methodology, data analysis, as well as improving the concept and structure of writing. The Iqra Journal Manager also plays a role in the publishing and editing process of this journal to ensure eligibility and compliance with journal standards. All authors contributed significantly in their respective aspects to complete this research and prepare it for publication.

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