Education and Science

Vol 45 (2020) No 203 153-176

The Effects of Literature Circles on Reading Fluency, Reading Comprehension and Reader Responses: A Mixed Method Study *

Dudu Kaya Tosun [1], Birsen Doğan [2]

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to determine the effects of literature circles on reading comprehension and reading fluency and to reveal readers' responses in this process. The model of the study was conducted in a mixed embedded experimental design. Literature circles method was applied in the quantitative dimension of the research, and reader responses to the books they read were revealed in the qualitative dimension Applications were carried out in two separate classes on the fourth grade of primary school one of which was the experimental group and the other was control group. Multiple choice reading comprehension test was used to determine the students' reading comprehension and multidimensional fluency scale was used to evaluate reading fluency as data collection tools. Reader responses were reveaked through an open-ended questionnaire. In the study, it was conclueded that the literature circles method had positive effects in terms of reading comprehension. On the other hand, it hs been observed that the literature circles method has positive effects in terms of reading speed in the narrative and informative texts. According to the findings obtained from the reader responses to the books they read, it is understood that the answers of the students to the books they read were mostly reader-centered in the qualitative dimension of the research. From the first literature circle to the last literature circle application, it seen that the reader-centered responses increased and text-centered responses decreased in each literature circle during the research.

Keywords

Literature Circles
Reading Fluency
Reading Comprehension
Reader Responses
Mixed Method

Article Info

Received: 04.29.2019
Accepted: 11.20.2019
Online Published: 06.30.2020

DOI: 10.15390/EB.2020.8716

* This study was produced from the first author's doctoral thesis titled "The Effect of Literature Circles on Reading Comprehension, Reading Fluency, Reading Motivation and Social Skills and Exploring of Reader Responses" for which the second author was the advisor. This study was produced in the Doctoral thesis project with no. 2015EGBE024, supported by the Scientific Research Projects Coordination Unit of Pamukkale University.

[1] Ministry of National Education, Turkey, dudukaya@gmail.com
[2] Pamukkale University, Faculty of Education, Department of Elementary Education, Turkey, bdogan@pau.edu.tr

Introduction

Throughout life, there are skills that act as the common key to open the locked doors on the way to success. Reading comprehension, one of these skills, is a prerequisite skill that is gained in elementary school and is critical for the realization of all learning (Bloom, 1979). Reading comprehension has a multidimensional structure that includes the interpretation of the text (Pearson & Cervetti, 2017). Fluent reading also plays an important role in this structure (Baştuğ & Akyol, 2012; Calet, Defior, & Palma, 2015; Padeliadu & Antoniou, 2013). Many studies state that reading comprehension is very closely related to success (Bloom, 1979; Reed, Petscher, & Truckkenmiller, 2017). Literature circles, which are emphasized in terms of precondition knowledge and skills, are expected to make significant contributions to the field literature as an attempt to improve reading comprehension and fluent reading. In addition, literature circles create an opportunity to realize aesthetic readings (Parsons, 2013), which include readers' experiences based on the text and a selection activity according to their expectations and desires in terms of reader response theory. Considering all these, literature circles are considered to be valuable as an economical and effective method since it enables the realization of many goals at the same time.

Reading and Reading Comprehension

When different definitions related to reading in the literature are examined, it is understood that the common aspect encountered includes understanding (Akyol, 2013; Graesser, 2007; Jabamani, 2016; Paris & Hamilton, 2009; Snow, 2002). Understanding, on the other hand, is defined as the process of creating meaning by integrating the information and experiences that readers have previously obtained and the information in the text (Pardo, 2004). Looking at the literature, it is seen that various methods and strategies are applied to increase reading comprehension (Ateş & Yıldırım, 2014; Doğan, 2006; Gangl et al., 2018; Kim, Vaughn, Woodruff, Reutebuch, & Kouzekanani, 2006; Taboada, Tonks, Wiffield, & Guthrie, 2009; Vaughn, Kligner, & Bryant, 2001). As distinct from these methods and strategies, literature circle practices are frequently encountered in the development of reading comprehension. (Blum, Lipsett, & Yocom, 2002; Briggs, 2010; Varita, 2017; Whittingham, 2013). It is possible to say that, in terms of the structure of the literature circles, they will contribute to the development of reading comprehension in terms of both the interaction of the group members and the roles it contains, integrating the previous information with the new information, interacting between the reader and the writer and creating meaning.

In the national literature, only one study (Avcı, Baysal, Gül, & Akıncı, 2013) was found covering the fifth grades at primary level regarding literature circles. Considering that it is very important to gain reading comprehension skills from a young age, when it is investigated whether there are studies on literature circles at the fourth grade level of primary school or not, it is seen that there is no study for this level.

Reading Fluency

Another skill that is important in terms of knowledge and skill in learning is reading fluency. It is stated that the three basic elements expressed in the definitions related to reading fluency are the correct analysis of words, automaticity (speed) in word recognition and correct and effective use of prosodic elements (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Reading words correctly and automatically forms the basis for prosodic reading. Therefore, all these dimensions are interrelated. It is stated that all three dimensions are important for a good reading and effective understanding (Rasinski, 2004, 2017). Reading fluency has a multidimensional structure that includes accuracy in word recognition, automatic and rapid recognition and analysis of words in the text, and meaningful interpretation of the text.

Various strategies are used and applications are developed to improve the reading fluency skills of students since primary school years (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Rasinski, Rupley, Pagie, & Nichols, 2016; Rasinski, Yıldırım, & Nageldinger, 2011; Yıldırım, Ritz, Akyol, & Rasinski, 2015). However, it is seen

that there is no research that reveals the relationship between reading fluency and literature circles in the literature review. At the meetings held in the literature circles, aloud reading activities are also conducted with the students. Literature circles are thought to contribute to the development of reading fluency skills due to the fact that a reading is made in this way and it is a continuous reading activity.

Reader Response Theory

The responses of the students in the process of reading comprehension and reading fluency are considered important because they also give an idea about how students structure their reading. The theory, which defines reading as a process of interaction between the reader and the text at a certain time and in a certain context, is known as the reader response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978, 1982). The structuring of the meaning is realized by integrating the reader's personal responses with their experiences in the reader response theory. In this context, the meaning created is relative because the individual interprets the world using his own experiences (Demeny, 2012). This created meaning also changes after discussions with one's friends and peers (Connell, 1996; Demeny, 2012).

In the reader response theory, two types of reading are mentioned as aesthetic reading and efferent reading (Rosenblatt, 1982). It is stated that aesthetic reading is mainly about the reader's experiences about the text, while efferent reading is related to the information obtained from the text (Anderson & Rubano, 1991). In this context, reading with the purpose of obtaining information is defined as the desire of the reader to restore and protect the information. In contrast, aesthetic reading is more related to reader experiences (Campbell, 2011; Demeny, 2012). In aesthetic reading, the emotional, expressive, sensory aspect of reading is more prominent than the cognitive, guiding, factual, analytical aspect (Lee, 2013).

Literature circles are thought to offer an opportunity to apply the model in Rosenblatt's (1982) theory and enable readers to approach the text using various perspectives. Literature circles, on the other hand, are an open-ended study and a natural discussion with a high value of natural debate, with no single correct answer and a change in roles. It is possible to reveal and determine the reader responses of the students with the applications of literature circles.

Literature Circles

Literature circles are known as a student-centered method, as it is the students themselves who decide the choice of books and discuss the book they read. In the literature circles, usually four or five students come together to choose and read the books based on their interests and discuss them actively and work actively in cooperation (Daniels, 2002; Ruby, 2003; Schoonmaker, 2014). Meetings are held regularly in the literature circles and discussion roles change in each session. These roles are various roles such as connector, literary luminary, questioner, illustrator, word wizard, and travel tracer. (Daniels, 2002). The conversations about the books are directed by natural interactions within the group. After the book is over, group members share their readings with other classmates. Literature circles include students presenting their books to their peers through creative presentations (Wilfong, 2009). Then the cycle of reading and discussion begins again, with the selection of a new text or a book (Daniels, 1994; Southwood, 2012).

Literature circles is an approach based on many different theories such as reader response theory, research-based learning, schema theory and sociocultural theory (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). According to the theory of the reader's response to the teaching process, the reader makes sense of the text by using his past experiences, accumulation and knowledge about the language in the reading process. Therefore, readers who read the same text can make different meanings (Rosenblatt, 1982; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). According to sociocultural learning theory, learning is seen as a social activity. In other words, it is stated that learning is not a single activity, but is created when the child is in mutual relations with other people (Vygotsky, 1978).

The teacher is not a participant in the discussions in the literature circles, but he/she acts as a facilitator for the students to gather for discussing the books they have chosen. Therefore, students have the right to speak, interpret, control the subject and do a job in turn. In this way, students gain experience in managing their discussions and their own speeches (Raphael & McMahon, 1994). In addition, students' discussions are structured with the roles taken. Regarding the book read, the questioner asks questions, the illustrator draws the parts that she is influenced, connector associates with previous knowledge or daily life, literary luminary determines interesting places (Daniels, 2002). Literature circles create an opportunity to deeply understand what students are reading through structured discussions (Bowers-Campbell, 2011).

In summary, due to the structure of the literature circles, students make in-depth readings, question them, and have a critical perspective. In addition, they work collaboratively, respect each other's views and take responsibility. With these aspects, it is seen that the literature circles method contributes to the development of students as a whole in terms of cognitive, affective and social aspects.

Purpose and Importance of the Study

One of the internationally held exams in which reading comprehension is measured is the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment). The last of the PISA exam, held every three years, was held in 2018. Cognitive processes defined in the framework of evaluating reading skills in the exam are stated as fluent reading, access to information, understanding and evaluation, and reflection. When the final results of exams taken into account, Turkey ranks fortieth in the area of reading skills among 79 countries participating in the exam although its average score is higher than the average score of the participating countries (Ministry of National Education, 2019). Given this result, it is clear that more efforts should be made to improve students' reading comprehension.

Insufficient reading comprehension can be considered as one of the main reasons for any academic failure. Therefore, it is necessary to use effective methods, techniques and strategies to improve students' reading comprehension. Achieving many goals at the same time with a method is also important in the process of teaching and learning in terms of economy and efficiency. Literature circles, which appear to have cognitive, affective, and social contributions, are likely to provide significant benefits in terms of understanding students' reading, fluent reading, and aesthetic readings called the reader's text-oriented experiences. Regarding literature circles, which are applied abroad and subject to many researches, no research is found in our country conducted at the fourth grade level of primary school. It is believed that this study will make an important contribution to the literature with the belief that it is original in this aspect and that its execution based on a mixed pattern makes the research stronger. In this context, the aim of the research is to determine the effects of literature circles method on reading comprehension and reading fluency and to reveal reader responses. Depending on this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought in the research.

1. Does the literature circles method show a significant difference on students' understanding of what they read?
2. Does the literature circles method show a significant difference on the reading fluency of the students according to the narrative and informative texts?
3. What are the reader responses to the books read in literature circles?
4. Do the quantitative findings regarding the reading comprehension and reading fluency of the students coincide with the reader responses to the books read in literature circles?

Method

Research Model

This research is designed according to the "embedded design (mixed embedded experimental design)" in mixed patterns. In the embedded design, quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously or sequentially, but one of the data types plays a supportive role to the other (Creswell, 2012). The researcher may add a qualitative stage into a quantitative study, such as an experimental study, or a qualitative stage, such as a case study, in a mixed embedded experimental design. In the mixed embedded design, the supporting phase is added to somehow improve the overall pattern (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The mixed embedded experimental pattern used in the research is shown in Figure 1.

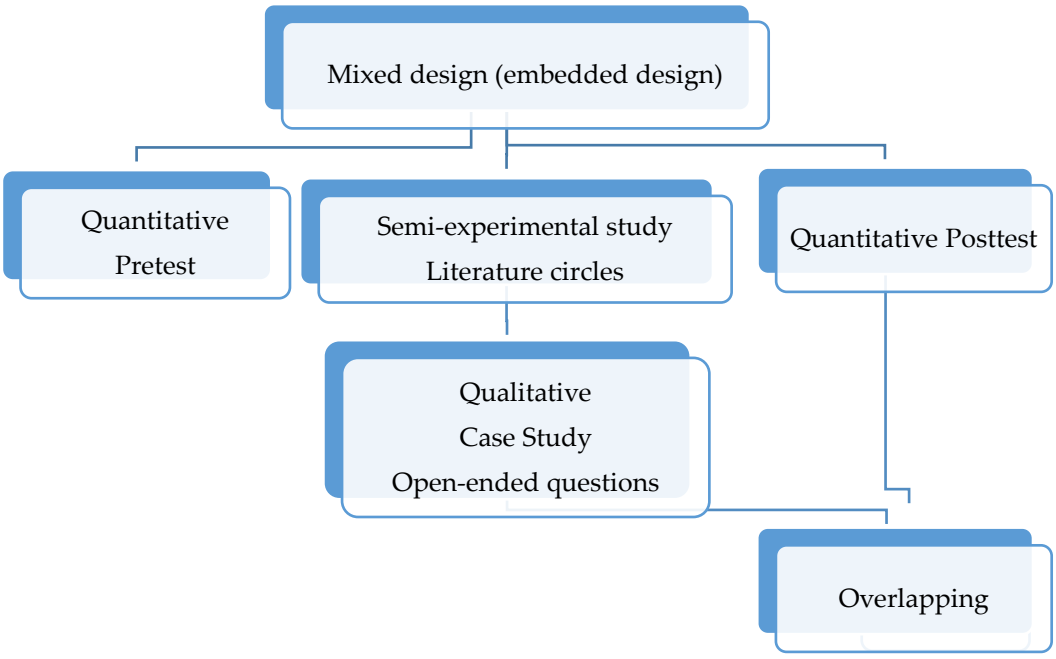

Figure 1. Mixed Embedded Experimental Design

When Figure 1 is examined, it is seen that the quantitative stage of the study is designed as a semi-experimental study and includes the application of literature circles. For this purpose, literature circles applications were made by using the "Pre-test Post-test Unsynchronized Control Group Model". The qualitative stage has been added to the semi-experimental study in order to determine the reader responses of the books that the students read. The qualitative phase was designed in a case study pattern and was applied in the form of students filling the open-ended questionnaire at the end of each literature circle application. During the semi-experimental application process, the qualitative data collection phase continued.

The Study Group

In order to implement the semi-experimental application in a healthy way, the school where the application will be carried out has been determined by the appropriate sampling method. As Creswell (2013) states, only appropriate sampling is possible, since spontaneous groups or volunteers must be used in many experimental studies. A meeting was held with the principal and fourth grade teachers at the designated school and the study was explained in detail. The reading fluency measurements and the reading comprehension test scores of the students in the three branches participating in the study were compared. One of the two classes with the closest points to each other was determined as an experimental group and the other was determined as a control group.

In order to determine whether there is a significant difference between the students' reading comprehension test and reading fluency measurements pretest scores in the fourth grade branches

determined as experimental and control groups, comparisons were made using t test for independent groups. As a result of these comparisons, it was found that the average scores of the students in the experimental group ($\bar{X}$=21.89) were higher than the average scores of the students in the control group ($\bar{X}$= 20.05). However, this difference (t = 1.701; p> 0.05) is not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be said that the reading comprehension pretest scores are equivalent in the experimental and control groups.

In fluent reading, reading speed and prosody scores were compared using independent group's t test in preliminary measurements in narrative and informative text type. According to the results obtained in the narrative texts in terms of reading speed, it is seen that the reading speed scores ($\bar{X}$= 82.89) of the students in the experimental group were higher than the reading speed scores ($\bar{X}$= 78.83) of the students in the control group. However, this difference (t = 1.007; p> 0.05) is not statistically significant. For this reason, it can be said that the students in the experimental and control groups are equivalent to the preliminary measurements in terms of the speed of reading the narrative texts. According to the results obtained in informative texts in terms of reading speed, it was found that the reading speed scores ($\bar{X}$= 83.05) of the students in the experimental group were higher than the reading speed scores ($\bar{X}$= 80.86) of the students in the control group. However, this difference (t = 0.512; p> 0.05) is not statistically significant. For this reason, it can be said that students in the experimental and control groups are equivalent in terms of their reading speeds.

In terms of reading prosody, when the difference between the scores of the students in the experimental and control groups in the narrative texts was examined, (t=1,471; p>0.05) there was no statistically significant difference. It was seen that the average of prosody points of the experiment ($\bar{X}$= 12.81) and control ($\bar{X}$= 12.13) groups were also close to each other. Therefore, it can be said that the experimental and control groups are equivalent to the preliminary measurements in terms of prosody in the narrative texts. In the informative texts, when the difference between the prosody scores of the students in the experimental and control groups (t = 1.204; p> 0.05) was examined, no statistically significant difference was found. It was seen that the average of prosody points of the experiment ($\bar{X}$= 12.65) and control ($\bar{X}$= 12.08) groups were also close to each other. Therefore, it can be said that the experimental and control groups are equivalent in the preliminary measurements in terms of prosody in informative texts.

Data Collection Tools

"Multiple Choice Reading Comprehension Test" developed within the scope of the research was used to evaluate reading comprehension in our study. "Multiple Choice Reading Comprehension Test" is a test consisting of narrative and informative texts and 32 questions related to these texts. The highest score that can be obtained from the test is 32, the lowest score is zero. The KR20 reliability value calculated for the test is .83.

In order to evaluate reading fluency, two texts were taught to the students, one of which was narrative and the other was informative. These two texts were chosen among the texts proposed by Akyol, Yıldırım, Ateş, Çetinkaya, and Rasinski (2014) for the purpose of determining reading fluency. For fluent reading, a narrative and informative text was read to the students and it was recorded. Then, the number of words they read in a minute was determined without the knowledge of the child. The sections that the students read in one minute and the words that were read incorrectly were marked. Reading speeds were determined by calculating the total number of correct words that students read in one minute. In order to evaluate prosodic reading in fluent reading, the "Reading Prosody Rubric" developed by Zutell and Rasinski (1991) and adapted to Turkish by Yıldız, Yıldırım, Ateş, and Çetinkaya (2009) was used. This rubric is made up of four sub-dimensions: expression and sound level, meaning units and intonation, smoothness and speed. A maximum of four points can be obtained from each sub-dimension. When evaluating the rubric, if the sum of the scores from each dimension of the rubric is eight and below, it is considered insufficient in terms of prosody. However, if the scores obtained from the prosody rubric are eight or more, this situation is interpreted as having sufficient reading prosody (Akyol et al., 2014).

In the qualitative dimension of the research, the questions determined by Hancock (2008, as cited in Ulusoy, 2016) are directed to the students in order to determine the reader responses to the books they read at the end of each literature circle application.

Validity Studies in Quantitative Study

Threats to the Internal Validity of the Study and Measures Taken

The threats related to internal validity are explained as the selection and history of the participants, maturation, regression effect, loss of subject, spread of experimental process, reaction to experimental process (resentment / demoralization), competition and measurement tools (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2015; Creswell, 2013). In the experimental studies, many variables such as gender, age, socioeconomic level, vocabulary and ethnicity belonging to the participants in the experimental and control groups may affect the results of the study (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). The objective selection of the participants for this helps eliminate threats (Creswell, 2012). In our country, it is not possible to assign the participants to the experimental and control groups objectively. For this reason, the experimental and control groups selected for the semi-experimental study in this research were determined as a result of the pretests and analyzes in the personal information form among the three classes that were willing and volunteer to participate in the study from the fourth grade branches in the determined school. According to the results of the analysis, one of the two classes that did not differ in terms of reading comprehension test and reading fluency scores was determined as the experimental group and the other was determined as the control group. In addition, information about the family characteristics of the students and their history of reading books were chosen and classes with similar characteristics were selected as much as possible. On the other hand, since the classes with the closest feature in terms of score distributions were included in the study, the negative effect of the regression effect was tried to be controlled. In the research, there is no loss of subjects since no participant left the school during the application.

Biological and psychological factors (Christensen et al., 2015) arising from the individual himself include threats to maturation. A careful selection of participants who developed in a similar way for both control and experimental groups (eg individuals at the same grade level) can create protection against this problem (Creswell, 2012). In this study, students with the same grade level and similar demographic characteristics were studied in the experimental and control groups. Thus, it was ensured that the students showed similar development and change in the past period and the result of the experimental application was not affected by this situation.

Threats related to internal validity include the proliferation of experimental process, reaction to experimental process (resentment / demoralization) and competition. As a result of the communication between the participants in the experimental and control groups, students in the control group can be aware of the experimental process. This situation may affect the scores of the participants in both groups at the end of the experiment (Creswell, 2013). In this research, the story books read by the students in the literature circles studies applied in the experimental group were also taught in the control group. The students in the experimental and control groups were told that the study was a book reading activity. Students in the control group were not informed about the practice of literature circles. Similarly, it has been said that reading practices are carried out in the experimental group. It was said that the book reading activity was carried out in two classes and no information was given that they were experimental and control groups. In addition, classroom teachers were informed that students should not inform each other about practices. Students in the control group may feel that they are given less value because experimental procedures are not applied to their own groups. Against this situation, the researcher can take measures to ensure equality between the two groups. For example, he/she can reduce the expectations of the control group (Creswell, 2012). Since the activities based on reading the same books with the students in the experimental and control groups were applied together, the students in the control group did not feel worthless and there was no competition environment.

Finally, one of the threats to internal validity is measurement tools and their implementation. Different measurement tools used in pretest and posttests affect the scores to be obtained (Creswell,

2013; Fraenkel et al., 2012). In order to eliminate these threats, the same measurement tools were used in the pre-test and post-test measurements. In addition, measurement tools were applied by the researcher under similar conditions in pretests and posttests.

Threats Regarding the External Validity of the Research and Measures Taken

The four main types of validity expressed as external validity are expressed as the generalization of research results to other people, environments, times and experiments (Christensen et al., 2015). Threats to external validity arise when he researcher makes inaccurate and erroneous inferences about other people, environments, past and future times from the data obtained from the sample. One of the types of threats to external validity in an experimental study is the interaction between the selection method and the experimental process (Creswell, 2013). Since the characteristics of the participants in the experiment carried out in the research are limited, generalizations cannot be made about the individuals who do not have the characteristics of the participants. Therefore, the groups in which the results of the research can be generalized are limited as a precautionary measure. Another type of threat to external validity is the interaction between the experimental environment and the experimental process, and the interaction between the participant's history and the experimental process (Creswell, 2013). Due to the characteristics of the environment in which the experiment was applied and the participants were present, the researcher should not make generalizations towards individuals in other environments. Since the results obtained from the experiment are limited to a certain time period, the researcher should not make generalizations about the past and future events. Therefore, the results obtained in the research have been associated with studies and results carried out in similar environments and time periods with similar characteristics.

Validity and Reliability Studies in Qualitative Study

In a qualitative research, the important expectations that the researcher must meet are stated as taking necessary measures (validity) to reach correct information and defining the data clearly and in detail (reliability) (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). While internal validity is used in quantitative research, the equivalent is expressed as credibility in qualitative research. It is stated that researchers can use strategies such as long-term interaction, depth-oriented data collection, diversification, expert review and participant confirmation to ensure credibility (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In this research, long-term interaction with students was provided during the process of collecting qualitative data to ensure internal validity (credibility). At the same time, since the qualitative data were taken at the end of each literature circle, the data collected at each stage and their results were compared. The data presented by the students at the end of each circle was tried to be interpreted and conceptualized. Thus, in-depth data collection was carried out. Another strategy is expert review. Validity was tried to be achieved through expert review at every step of the research, from the data collection and data analysis phase to the reporting process. In addition, the collected data was shared with the students from time to time and it was tried to get the confirmation of the participants.

In qualitative research, what is stated as transferability is the external validity in quantitative research. Ensuring transferability in research is provided by detailed description and purposeful sampling (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). While the findings related to qualitative data are being transferred in the research, transferability is tried to be provided with direct quotations from student answers.

Reliability is considered as consistency (internal reliability) and confirmability (external reliability) in qualitative research. In order to ensure consistency and confirmability, consistency and confirmation review are specified as recommended strategies (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The data and interpretations obtained within the scope of this research are presented to the field expert for consistency and confirmation examination. Reliability value was calculated using the formula Reliability = Consensus / (Consensus + Disagreement). In reliability studies, 90 percent and above values are interpreted as high reliability values. (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The compliance scores obtained in this study were found to provide 100% reliability.

Data Collection Process

The data collection process within the scope of the research was carried out with fourth grade 74 students in two classes, one in the experimental and the other in the control group, in a public primary school in Pamukkale, Denizli. The studies in the research were carried out in 18 weeks. In the first week of the study, multiple choice reading comprehension test and reading fluency measurements were applied as pretest.

After the experimental and control groups were determined as a result of the pretest applications, the first researcher applied an awareness program for the literature circle method, which included the application of four two-week literature circles in the experimental group. With this program, awareness of students was developed for the implementation of roles in literature circles and the implementation of discussions in group meetings. After two weeks of practice, the books selected in the experimental group were read within the scope of literature circles practices and discussed in line with the roles determined in weekly group discussions. The main applications were carried out in three-week periods, and the applications were carried out twice a week. Applications started with the selection of books, the creation of groups and the distribution of roles in the first meeting. In the next meetings, students discussed the part of the book they read in line with their roles. After reading the entire book, group projects were prepared and presentations were made to other groups in the class. After reading the entire book, the reader responses of the students were obtained by responding in writing to the questions presented in the open-ended questionnaire form. These practices were repeated for each book, in every literature circle cycle.

The books read in the experimental group were also presented to the students in the control group. The students read the book of their choice in three weeks. Each student has read his book individually. During the book reading process, discussions were not made in line with the roles by forming a group. After finishing the whole book, current practices such as writing a summary about the book and verbally explaining the summary of the book were followed. The students read the summaries of the book they read to their friends, verbally told the class and answered 5W1H (what, where, when, how, why and who) questions about the book. In the last week of the study, fluent reading measurements and multiple choice reading comprehension test were applied as post-test.

Data Analysis

When analyzing the data obtained from the research, percentage, frequency, chi-square analysis were used. For independent groups, t test and covariance analysis were used as statistical techniques. Kolmogrov Simirnov test was used to determine the statistical techniques to be used. Reading speeds have been determined by taking into account the total number of correct words read in one minute in the reading speed dimension of the students' fluent reading skills (Akyol et al., 2014). T test was applied for independent groups on the reading speed and reading prosody and multiple choice reading comprehension test pretest scores of the students in the experimental and control groups. Thus, whether there is a difference between the groups in terms of the points regarding the mentioned variables was determined. On the other hand, percentage, frequency and chi-square analyzes were used to examine the students in the experimental and control groups in terms of demographic features in the personal information form.

As a result of the pretest analysis obtained, one-way covariance analysis (ANCOVA) was used in the analysis of the post-test scores, although there was no significant difference between the pre-test scores of the reading speed, reading prosody and multiple choice reading comprehension test of the students in the experimental and control groups. Although experiment and control groups are balanced in terms of the mentioned variables, it may be more appropriate to use covariance analysis (ANCOVA) to eliminate the effect of one or more of the unwanted variables affecting the dependent variable. In this way, more accurate, consistent and reliable results can be obtained (Sönmez & Alacapınar, 2014). Bonferroni, one of the Post Hoc multiple comparisons, was used to determine the difference between the groups. According to Yıldırım (2010), Bonferroni test reduces the error variance in the data obtained since it divides the alpha value [reliability value (= 0.05)] in the total number of tests applied. Thus, it is stated that more consistent results are obtained.

Descriptive analysis was used in the analysis of qualitative data. The categories developed and used by Wollman-Bonilla and Werchadlo (1995) were used when analyzing the written responses from students. The responses received are evaluated under two headings: text-centered and reader-centered. Text-centered responses include retelling the story, understanding characters, asking questions, guessing, and finding the main idea. The main idea finding phase was added to the text-centered responses title by Ulusoy (2016). The reader-centered responses are evaluated under three subtitles as personal reaction (thoughts and feelings), connection between the story and experiences and the desire to participate in the events in the story. In the analysis of qualitative data, percentage and frequency values were calculated and descriptive analysis was made on qualitative data. In descriptive analysis, the data obtained are interpreted by summarizing them according to the previously determined themes. The purpose of this type of analysis is to present the findings to the reader in an organized and interpreted way; then descriptions are explained and interpreted. Cause and effect relationships are examined and some conclusions are reached (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Qualitative data in this research were also developed by Wollman-Bonilla and Werchadlo (1995), analyzed according to the categories used and presented in the findings section. Direct citations are also included in the findings. Codes such as S1, S2… were used while making direct quotations about students' answers.

Results

In this section, firstly, the findings about whether the literature circles method obtained from quantitative data show a significant difference on the students' comprehension and reading fluency according to the narrative and informative texts. Then, the reader responses to the books were presented in literature circles obtained from qualitative data. Finally, the findings reveal whether the quantitative findings related to students' reading comprehension and reading fluency coincide with the reader responses, which are qualitative findings for the books read in literature circle applications.

Effects of Literature Circles on Students' Reading Comprehension

The first sub-problem of the study was expressed as whether the literature circles method showed a significant difference on students' understanding of what they read. In order to find an answer to this sub-problem, the arithmetic means and standard deviation values of the pre-test-post-test scores of the students in the experimental and control groups, which consisted of multiple choice questions, were calculated. With these results, post-test corrected mean scores and standard error values calculated as a result of covariance analysis and based on multiple comparison test are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Pretest-Posttest Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviation Values, Posttest Corrected Means and Standard Error Values of Reading Comprehension Test of Students in Experimental and Control Groups

Groups	*n*		Total Scores		Posttest Corrected Means	
			$\bar{X}$	*Sd*	$\bar{X}_d$	*SE*
Experimental Group	38	Pretest	21.89	4.93		
		Posttest	22.47	4.83	21.83	.61
Control Group	36	Pretest	20.06	4.33		
		Posttest	18.17	5.10	18.85	.63

When Table 1 is examined ($\bar{X}$= 21.89; 22.47), it is seen that the post-test mean score of the experimental group is higher than the pre-test mean score, while the control group post-test mean score is lower than the pre-test mean score. ($\bar{X}$=20.06; 18.17). As seen in Table 1, the corrected posttest total score mean of the experimental group ($\bar{X}$= 21.83) is higher than the control group ($\bar{X}$= 18.85). The covariance analysis was applied to test whether this observed difference is meaningful or not, and the results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The Covariance Analysis Results of Students' Reading Comprehension Test Posttest Total Scores in Experimental and Control Groups

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	*Sd*	Mean Squares	*F*	*p*
Controlled Variable (Pretest)	811.582	1	811.582	58.745	.000
Grouping Main Effect	157.666	1	157.666	11.412	.001***
Error	980.891	71	13.815		
Total	32866.000	74			

***p<.005

As seen in Table 2, the results of covariance analysis show that when the pre-test total scores are taken under control, the main effect of the grouping is significant in terms of the post-test corrected mean scores. [F (1, 71) = 11.412, p=.001]. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons test was applied to determine between which groups the determined difference is, and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Bonferroni Test Results Regarding the Significance of the Differences between Students' Reading Comprehension Test Posttest Total Scores and Corrected Means in Experimental and Control Groups

Comparison	Real Difference	Standard error	*p*
Experimental Group / Control Group	2.979	.882	.001

When Table 3 is examined, a statistically significant difference was found between the experimental and control groups in favor of the experimental group. This finding can be interpreted as the application of literature circles in the experimental group contributes to the development of students' reading comprehension.

The Effects of Literature Circles Method on the Reading Fluency of the Students According to the Narrative and Informative Text Type

The second sub-problem of the study was expressed as whether the literature circles method showed a significant difference on the reading fluency of the students according to the type of narrative and informative text. In order to find an answer to this sub-problem, reading fluency of the students were handled separately as reading speed and reading prosody and findings were presented according to the text type.

In order to test the reading fluency of the students, they were first examined according to the narrative text type in terms of reading speeds. The arithmetic means of the pretest-posttest scores calculated as the reading speed of the narrative texts, the standard deviation values, the posttest corrected mean scores calculated as a result of the covariance analysis and the standard error values of the students in the experimental and control groups are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Pretest-Posttest Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviation Values, Posttest Corrected Means and Standard Error Values of the Reading Speed of the Students in the Experimental and Control Groups

Groups	*n*		**Total Scores**		**Posttest Corrected Means**	
			$\bar{X}$	*Sd*	$\bar{X}_d$	*SE*
Experimental Group	38	Pretest	82.89	16.75		
		Posttest	99.21	19.12	97.65	1.85
Control Group	36	Pretest	78.83	17.93		
		Posttest	85.94	16.06	87.58	1.90

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that the posttest mean of the experimental group ($\bar{X}$= 82.99; 99.21) and the control group ($\bar{X}$= 78.83; 85.94) is higher than the pre-test mean score. As seen in Table 4, the corrected posttest total score mean of the experimental group ($\bar{X}$= 97.65) is higher than the control

group ($\bar{X}$= 87.58). To test whether this observed difference is significant or not, covariance analysis was applied and the results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. The Results of Covariance Analysis of the Posttest Total Scores of the Narrative Texts of the Students in the Experimental and Control Groups

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	*Sd*	Mean Squares	*F*	*p*
Controlled Variable (Pretest)	13338.284	1	13338.284	102.625	.000
Grouping Main Effect	1851.117	1	1851.117	14.243	.000***
Error	9227.921	71	129.971		
Total	662502.000	74			

***p<.005

As seen in Table 5, covariance analysis results show that when the pretest total scores are under control, the main effect of the grouping is significant in terms of the posttest corrected mean scores. [F (1, 71) = 14.243, p=.000]. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons test was applied to determine which groups the determined difference is among, and the results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Bonferroni Test Results Regarding the Significance of the Differences between the Adjusted Means of the Students in the Experimental and Control Groups in the Reading Speed Posttest Total Test Scores of the Narrative Texts

Comparison	Real Difference	Standard Error	*p*
Experimental Group / Control Group	10.077	2.670	.000

When Table 6 is examined, a statistically significant difference was found between the experimental and control groups in favor of the experimental group. According to this finding, it can be said that the students in the experimental group, where the literature circles method is applied, read the narrative texts faster than the students in the control group. In other words, the literature circles method can be interpreted as contributing to the development of the reading speed of students according to the narrative type of text.

In order to test reading fluency, the type of informative text was also examined after the narrative text in terms of reading speed. The arithmetic means of the pretest-posttest scores calculated as the reading speed of the informative texts, the standard deviation values, the posttest corrected average scores calculated as a result of the covariance analysis and the standard error values of the students in the experimental and control groups are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Reading Speed Pretest-Posttest Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviation Values and Posttest Corrected Means and Standard Error Values of Students in the Experimental and Control Groups

Groups	*n*		**Total Scores**		**Posttest Corrected Means**	
			$\bar{X}$	*Sd*	$\bar{X}_d$	*SE*
Experimental Group	38	Pretest	83.05	17.25		
		Posttest	97.84	19.96	97.06	2.08
Control Group	36	Pretest	80.86	19.54		
		Posttest	86.83	16.82	87.65	2.14

When Table 7 is examined, it is seen that the posttest mean scores of the experimental group ($\bar{X}$= 83.05; 97.84) and the control group ($\bar{X}$= 80.86; 86.83) are higher than the pre-test mean scores. As seen in Table 9, the corrected posttest total score mean of the experimental group ($\bar{X}$= 97.06) is higher than the control group ($\bar{X}$= 87.65). To test whether this observed difference is meaningful or not, covariance analysis was applied and the results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Results of Covariance Analysis of the Post-Test Total Scores of the Reading Speed of Informative Texts of the Students in the Experimental and Control Groups

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	*Sd*	Mean Squares	*F*	*p*
Controlled Variable (Pretest)	12922.130	1	12922.130	78.150	.000
Grouping Main Effect	1632.142	1	1632.142	9.871	.002***
Error	11739.922	71	165.351		
Total	659880.000	74			

***p<.005

As seen in Table 8, covariance analysis results show that when the pre-test total scores are taken under control, the main effect of the grouping is significant in terms of the post-test corrected mean scores. [F (1, 71) = 9.871, p=.002]. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons test was applied to determine between which groups the determined difference is, and the results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Bonferroni Test Results regarding the Significance of the Differences between the Corrected Means of the Post-Test Total Scores of the Reading Speed of Informative Texts of the Experimental and Control Groups

Comparison	Real Difference	Standard Error	*p*
Experimental Group / Control Group	9.413	2.996	.002

When Table 9 is examined, a statistically significant difference was found between the experimental and control groups in favor of the experimental group. According to the findings obtained in terms of the speed of reading the informative texts, it can be said that the students in the experimental group where the literature circles method is applied read the informative texts faster than the students in the control group. As a result, the literature circles method can be interpreted as contributing to the development of students' reading speed in both narrative and informative text types.

To test the reading fluency of students, reading prosody was examined after reading speed. Arithmetic means, standard deviation values of pretest-posttest scores, posttest corrected means calculated as a result of covariance analysis and based on multiple comparison test, and standard error values calculated as reading prosody for students in experimental and control groups in narrative texts are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Narrative Reading Prosody of Students in Experimental and Control Groups, Pretest-Posttest Arithmetic Averages, Standard Deviation Values and Posttest Corrected Means and Standard Error Values

Groups	*n*		**Total Scores**		**Posttest Corrected Means**	
			$\bar{X}$	*Sd*	$\bar{X}_d$	*SE*
Experimental Group	38	Pretest	12.81	1.73		
		Posttest	14.10	1.46	13.92	.241
Control Group	36	Pretest	12.13	2.20		
		Posttest	13.19	2.13	13.38	.248

When Table 10 is examined, it is seen that the posttest mean scores of the experimental group ($\bar{X}$= 12.81; 14.10) and the control group ($\bar{X}$= 12.13; 13.19) are higher than the pre-test mean scores. The corrected posttest total score mean of the experimental group ($\bar{X}$= 13.92) is higher than the control group ($\bar{X}$= 13.38). To test whether this observed difference is meaningful or not, covariance analysis was applied and the results are shown in Table 11.

Table 11. The Results of the Covariance Analysis of the Narrative Reading Prosody Posttest Total Scores of the Students in the Experimental and Control Groups

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	*Sd*	Mean Squares	*F*	*p*
Controlled Variable (Pretest)	84.932	1	84.932	39.084	.000
Grouping Main Effect	5.221	1	5.221	2.403	.126
Error	154.286	71	2.173		
Total	14067.000	74			

As seen in Table 11, covariance analysis results show that when the pre-test total scores are taken under control, the main effect of the grouping is not significant in terms of the post-test adjusted mean scores [F (1, 71)= 2.403, p=.126]. According to this finding, no significant difference was found between the scores obtained by the experimental and control groups in terms of the Narrative reading prosody.

In order to test the fluent reading of the students, the reading prosody was examined according to the informative text type after the narrative text type. The arithmetic means and standard deviation values of the pretest-posttest scores calculated as the reading prosody of the informative texts, Post-test adjusted mean scores and standard error values calculated as a result of the covariance analysis and based on multiple comparison test of the students in the experimental and control groups are presented in Table 12.

Table 12. Pretest-Posttest Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviation Values and Posttest Corrected Means and Standard Error Values of Informative Reading Prosody of Students in Experimental and Control Groups

Groups	*n*		**Total Scores**		**Posttest Corrected Means**	
			$\bar{X}$	*Sd*	$\bar{X}_d$	*SE*
Experimental Group	38	Pretest	12.65	1.83		
		Posttest	14.05	1.65	13.88	.239
Control Group	36	Pretest	12.08	2.25		
		Posttest	13.13	2.11	13.31	.245

When Table 12 is examined, it is seen that the posttest mean scores of the experimental group ($\bar{X}$=12.65; 14.10) and the control group ($\bar{X}$=12.08; 13.19) are higher than the pre-test mean scores. As seen in Table 12, the corrected posttest total mean score of the experimental group ($\bar{X}$=13.88) is higher than the control group ($\bar{X}$=13.31). The covariance analysis was applied t5o test whether this observed difference is meaningful or not, and the results are shown in Table 13.

Table 13. Covariance Analysis Results of Posttest Total Scores of Informative Reading Prosody of Students in Experimental and Control Groups

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	*Sd*	Mean Squares	*F*	*p*
Controlled Variable (Pretest)	105.956	1	105.956	49.413	.000
Grouping Main Effect	5.974	1	5.974	2.786	.100
Error	152.244	71	2.144		
Total	13977.000	74			

As seen in Table 13, covariance analysis results show that when the pre-test total scores are taken under control, the main effect of the grouping is not significant in terms of the post-test corrected mean scores. [F (1, 71) = 2.786, p=.100]. In line with this finding, no significant difference was found between the scores obtained by the experimental and control groups in terms of the informative reading prosody. In other words, it can be said that the literature circles method has no effect on the reading fluency of the students in a way that makes a difference according to the informative text type.

Reader Responses to Books Read in Literature Circles

The qualitative data of the research constitute the reader responses to the books read in the literature circles applied every three weeks. The questions determined by Hancock (2008, as cited in Ulusoy, 2016) were directed to the students in order to determine the reader responses of the books they read, and their answers were obtained in black and white. While analyzing these data about the qualitative sub-problem of the research, the categories developed by Wollman-Bonilla and Werchadlo (1995) were used. While analyzing the data, percentage and frequency values for the responses that fit into the categories were calculated and presented in Table 14.

Table 14. Distribution of Reader Responses to Books in Literature Circles by Category

	Books read in Circle 1		Books read in the Circle 2		Books read in the Circle 3		Books read in the Circle 4	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Reader-centered responses	**97**	**61.39**	**98**	**65.77**	**99**	**66.89**	**102**	**68.91**
Personal responses (thoughts and feelings)	34	35.05	37	37.75	35	35.35	36	35.29
Making connection between the story and experiences	27	27.83	28	28.57	28	28.28	29	28.43
Desire to participate in events in the story	36	37.11	33	33.67	36	36.36	37	36.27
Text-centered responses	**61**	**38.61**	**51**	**34.22**	**49**	**33.10**	**46**	**31.08**
Retelling the story	15	24.59	12	23.52	8	16.32	14	30.43
Understanding the characters	21	34.42	20	39.21	18	36.73	11	23.91
Asking question	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Guessing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Main idea	24	39.34	19	37.25	23	46.93	20	43.47
Total	158	100	149	100	**148**	**100**	148	100

When Table 14 is examined, the responses are evaluated under two headings: reader-centered and text-centered. The reader-centered responses are evaluated under three subtitles as personal response (thoughts and feelings), making connection between the story and experiences and the desire to participate in the events in the story. Text-centered responses include retelling the story, understanding characters, asking questions, guessing, and finding the main idea. The main idea finding phase was added to the text-centered responses title by Ulusoy (2016).

When students 'responses to the books they read in the literature circle are analyzed, it is seen that the students' reading-centered responses are higher than the text-centered responses in each literature circle. From the point of view of meaning, the reader-centered responses are evaluated within the scope of aesthetic reading and have more importance. It is seen that the answers given by the students differ from text-centered responses to reader-centered responses from the first literature circle to the fourth literature circle application. When the answers given from the first literature circle to the fourth literature circle are compared, the reader-centered responses appeared in the first literature circle as 61.39%, in the second literature circle as 65.77%, in the third literature circle as 66.89%, and in the fourth literature circle as 68.91%. According to this result, it is understood that the reader-centered responses of the students have increased continuously. This increase also reveals that students can relate what is described in the books with their own lives and the world, they read from different perspectives, they ask questions about the book and thus they understand the book better. There is also a steady decrease in text-centered responses. These results can also be interpreted as providing an increase in the reader-centered responses of the students due to the activities included in the literature circles and how the literature circles work. In other words, it can be said that students develop personal response to the

book with the literature circles, make more connections with the events in the book and show a desire to participate in the story.

When the students' responses in the four literature circles are classified according to the categories, it is seen that the personal response category (thoughts and feelings), the category of making connections between the story and their experiences, the category of the desire to participate in the events in the story, the category of retelling the story, the category of understanding the charecters, and the main idea category are formed.

Personal Response (Thoughts and Feelings)

When student responses are analyzed, it is seen that students express their feelings and thoughts about the book clearly. When the examples of the students' responses are examined, the answer of the student with code S1 is as follows: *"I was excited, impatient and happy while reading this book."* Another example of this is the answer given by the student with the code S11: "This book is nice. I was very excited while reading this book." In another example, the student coded S17 expressed his personal responses to the chapters of the book as follows: "I think the first part is boring, the second part is adventurous, the third part is emotional and the last part made me feel all the emotions.". Another example is the response of the student with code S38: "It was very exciting, it was a very fluent story." In the examples given, it is seen that the students feel more than one emotion. Expressed feelings emerged as positive emotions. While the students explained their feelings, they also talked about the events and expressed their personal responses to the events. In addition, when students' personal responses are examined, it is seen that they express their pleasure from reading. This situation can be interpreted as students like reading books.

Making Connections between the Story and Experiences

In this category, students are expected to connect with the events, places, people they read in the book, their own lives, other books they read, stories or situations they encounter in their daily lives. When student responses are analyzed, it is seen that students can establish these connections. S17 coded student said, "There was a girl in the book who didn't like her name. But at the end of the book she began to like her name. My friend Necla didn't use to like her name either, but she likes it now." This answer shows that the student connects the character in the book "Sakız Sardunya" and one of her friends. S32 coded student said, "The author is Yaşar Kemal. I have read another book of him". One of the examples in this category is the response of the student named S14: "Yes, this book reminded me of the book "Küçük Kara Balık". Because the fish in this book wants to reach the river, and the man in the book wants to reach Africa. This answer has established a similarity and connection between the desires of the heroes of both books to achieve their goals. On the other hand, these answers are important in terms of showing that the students have already known with the books they read and that they have made connections with other books they have read. Another example is the response of the student named S24: "When my cousin's brother was born, he cried and felt sad like Yazu." This answer shows that the characters in the book that the student is reading understand the events they have experienced and that they can relate them to the situations they encounter in their daily lives.

Desire to Participate in Events in the Story

Another category used to determine reader responses is stated as the desire to participate in the events in the story. When the student responses for this category were examined, S22 coded student said, "I would like to be a peach and I would not give the gardener fruit as in the book." The answer shows that the student wants to be in place of the peach tree. It is also stated that the peach tree does not want to give fruit to the gardener because of the emotionality in the event. In another example, the student with the code S31 gave the following answer. "I would like to be Neriman who doesn't lie." Given the examples, they expressed that the students sometimes thought of acting like the characters they chose and sometimes they thought of acting like what should the characters do in the books although they didn't. One of the sample responses to the "Siyah İnci" (Black Pearl) book is the S2 coded student's response: "If I were the first owner of Black Pearl, I would not go abroad." S19 coded student answered, "I would like to be a grandmother and I would like to protect nature." With this response,

the student states that he chose to be in place of the main character of the book and to perform positive behaviors. These answers can be interpreted as that students interact with the book, sometimes they can empathize with heroes and thus make the book better understood.

Retelling the Story

Re-telling the story is one of the text-centered answers and the students re-expressing the events in the book themselves. In the following answer given by the student named S16, "The child helps the old woman. When I see an old person, I sometimes try to help him.", it seems that he/she chose to re-tell the story to connect with his own life. Another example is given by the student with the code of S12: "The hero in the book could not decide which flower to be. We couldn't decide which costume to wear." This answer shows that the student retells the story in the story to explain the connection he / she established"I was sad and happy," said the S27 coded student. "The reason I feel sorry is that they treated Black Pearl badly. The reason I am happy is that Black Pearl has good owners.". This answer is in the form of a description of the events that led to the emotions the student felt. In the examples given, it is seen that the students re-tell the events in the book. S9 coded student stated, "I was angry because they were going to build a hotel. I was sorry that Dilruba died. I was happy for the rest of the book." In this response, it is seen that the student tells the story in order to indicate the reasons for the feelings he/she feels. When the examples given in this category are examined, it is seen that the students use the retelling of the story to express their feelings, make connections or define the features of the characters they choose. For this reason, it can be said that students use them for purposes such as explanation and justification, beyond simply re-expressing the story.

Understanding the Characters

Understanding characters is a category for understanding the characters in the book, empathizing with them and expressing what the students would do if they were in the place of the characters. One example for this category is the answer given by the student with code S20: "I would like to be Cemre. Because he was not as spoiled and messy as Emre." Another example is the answer given by the student with code S13: "I would like to be a harpooned man. Because he helped everyone." The answer expressed by the S32 coded student is one of the examples. "I would like to be Defne. I would help Neslihan." One of the answers to the book "Kaşağı" is the answer given by the student named S33: "I would like to be Dadaruh. I would like to live on the farm and take care of the horses." The answer in this example shows that the student chooses Dadaruh from the characters and understands his work. Another example is the answer to the student with code S25: "If I were the child who was lying in the book of "Kaşağı", I would not lie." It is seen from the statements given in the last example that the student noticed the wrong behaviors of the characters in the book. It is also stated that they would not make these mistakes if they were in place of the character of the book.

Main Idea

Another category in which students' responses are distributed is the main idea finding category. The students expressed the message of the book they read by finding the main idea. These results can be interpreted as that students understand the books they read well and can make inferences. Some examples of these statements are given. One of these examples is the response of the student with code S11: "We should not lie." One of the responses given for the book "Kaşağı" can be seen in the first example. The lesson or message from the book is expressed as "not lying". This result shows that the student understands the book. The student coded S28 replied: "We have to help those in need." The student coded S36 replied: "*We must treat animals well.*". The answer given by the student with code S27 is as follows: "The environment is our greatest heritage and we must protect it." This answer is a good example showing that the student understands the book he is reading. The students expressed themselves by drawing lessons and meanings from the books. In the examples given about the main idea finding category, it is seen that the students express the messages in the books they read and the conclusions drawn. The correct expression of the main ideas about the book is also an indication that the students understand the book well.

Findings Concerning the Correspondence of Quantitative Findings Regarding Students' Reading Comprehension and Reading Fluency with Reader Responses to Books Read in Literature Circles

The last question of the research was expressed as "Does the quantitative findings regarding the reading comprehension and fluent reading of the students coincide with the reader responses to the books read in the literature circles?". The findings obtained from the quantitative stage of the research are that literature circles contribute to the improvement of students' reading comprehension and reading fluency in terms of reading speed. It is seen that reader responses at the qualitative stage mostly emerge as reader-centered. In reader response theory, meaning is structured by combining the reader's personal responses with his experiences. The meaning created changes after discussions with student's friends and peers. Organized within the framework of personal experiences, the original thoughts of the student are renewed with new ideas and information shared by their peers (Connell, 1996; Demeny, 2012). During group discussions in literature circles, students share their feelings and thoughts about what they read in line with certain roles. The meaning achieved with individual reading changes with this sharing of students. Thus, students move away from the text-centered point of view depending on the book they read and create individual reader responses. Also, reader-centered responses increase from the first literature circle to the last literature circle. This increase also reveals that students can relate what is described in the books with their own lives and the world, they read from different perspectives, they ask questions about the book and thus they understand the book better. In this context, it can be said that students make sense of books by using their own personal lives and thus create reader-centered answers in this study. As a result, the findings regarding that the literature circles method obtained from the quantitative stage of the research has positive effects on reading comprehension and reading fluency and the qualitative findings obtained from determining reader responses are supportive of each other.

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

In this study, the effect of the literature circles method on the comprehension and fluent reading of the fourth grade students of primary school was investigated and the reader responses to the books they read were determined. In line with the findings obtained from the research, it was concluded that the literature circles method is effective in terms of reading speed on students' understanding of reading and reading fluency. The results obtained from the reader responses show a change from the text-centered responses to the reader-centered responses that support these results.

The conclusion that the literature circles reached in the research have positive effects on students' reading comprehension supports the results of many researches (Avcı et al., 2013; Berne & Clark, 2008; Blum et al., 2002; Briggs, 2010; Campbell, 2011; Certo, Moxley, Reffitt, & Miller, 2010; Hinds, 2019; McElvain, 2010; Pambianchi, 2017; Varita, 2017; Whittingham, 2013). In the literature circles, the discussion takes place with the roles taken by the members of the group. Among these roles, the questioner, the illustrator, the literary luminary and the connector are the basic roles; word wizard, travel tracer, summarizer, researcher, etc. are optional roles (Daniels, 2002). In accordance with these roles, the questioning student prepares questions and thus uses the questioning strategy. As Lloyd (2004) states it, questions and answers open a window for the integration of students' thinking processes and understanding strategies. The illustrator uses his drawing strategy based on what he has read. Thus, students use many reading comprehension strategies (Gangl et al., 2018; Taboada et al., 2009) that have positive effects on improving reading comprehension. Therefore, in accordance with every role taken, students actually use their reading comprehension strategies and this improves their reading comprehension. On the other hand, it is thought that students' reading books and discussing with each other according to different roles and perspectives required by these roles have an effect on reading comprehension. According to the sociocultural learning theory, it is stated that learning takes place more effectively in the interaction of the child with other people, that is, it is based on interaction. (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, it can be stated that it is easier to construct meaning through interaction between students. It is understood that weak readers within the group understand better what they read, due to

the interaction they have with good readers and the book related to the book. In addition, students regularly read books with literature circles practices. In addition to the reading activity, they came together in certain time periods and discussed and shared the ideas about the book. It is thought that students' reading books regularly during the applications contribute to their reading comprehension. As Mills and Jennings (2011) stated, it is thought that students' discussions contribute to their reading comprehension. Literature circles practices create an environment and provide opportunities for students to use and reinforce different reading comprehension strategies. Therefore, literature circles are thought to contribute to the development of students' reading comprehension skills.

Another result of this research is that the literature circles method has an effect on the reading fluency of the students in terms of reading speed in terms of both narrative and informative texts, but not in a way it makes a difference in reading prosody. In the literature, no research was found to reveal the effect of literature circles on reading fluency. It can be said that only loud reading studies are carried out to improve the reading prosody in the literature circles, and therefore the literature circles do not have an effect on the reading prosody, which includes reading as if speaking more, in other words, sound information elements such as emphasis, pause, and melody. Research on reading fluency in the literature emphasizes the effect of repeated reading, regular reading and more specific methods to be applied against reading difficulties in the development of reading fluency (Hawkins, Marsicano, Schmitt, McCallum, & Musti-Rao, 2015; Jefferson, Grant, & Sander, 2016; Kaşkaya, 2016; Sukhram & Monda-Amaya, 2017; Rubin, 2016; Therrien, 2004; Yıldırım et al., 2015). It is thought that the reason for the contribution of the literature circles method applied to students who do not have any reading difficulties within the scope of this research, to the development of reading speed in terms of reading fluency is the students' regularly reading books and doing activities such as paired reading and sharing in group discussions. In addition, the students continued to read books with a regular reading habit during the practice of literature circles. Literature circles method has provided students with a continuous and regular reading study. Thus, it can be said that the literature circles method contributes to the development of fluent reading skills in terms of students' reading speed.

The qualitative results obtained from the reader responses show a change from the text-centered responses to the reader-centered responses that support the quantitative results obtained in the research. According to the results of the reader responses of the students towards the books they read at the end of each literature circle, it is seen that the reader-centered responses of the students are higher than the text-centered responses in each literature circle. In a study investigating reader responses, it is seen that reader-centered responses are more common than text-centered responses (Ulusoy, 2016). In addition, it is seen that the reader-centered responses increase continuously with the literature circles. Similar to the result of Woodruff and Griffin (2017) research, the literature circles method contributes to students' interpretation and understanding of the book from a reader-centered perspective. In other words, students interpret the text by associating it with their own knowledge and experiences, and thus can better understand it. As stated by Connell (1996) in reader response theory, it is important for the reader to construct the meaning in his/her own literary experience through his/her personal life and to establish a relationship between the reader and the text. In this context, it can be said in this study that students make sense of books using their own personal lives and thus create reader-centered answers.

Some suggestions can be made in the light of the results obtained from this research, which is carried out using the literature circles method and reveals reader response in this process. Literature circles method can be applied by teachers as a fun reading activity that can be used in classrooms. By developing common reading circles with different branches at the same grade level, social relations and skills can be developed between students in different classes. Determining reader responses will be able to guide teachers in choosing suitable books for students. For this reason, it may be beneficial for teachers to carry out studies to reveal the reader responses of the students in their classrooms, both to choose the most effective and interesting book for the students, and to make the students love reading. In addition, by determining reader responses, students can be provided with a more dynamic and meaningful reading process. Thus, students can better understand what they read. Literature circles

were applied to the fourth grade students in this research. Literature circles can be applied at different grade levels. Different levels of studies can be planned to determine the effect of literature circles on reading habits. In new researches, reader responses can also be examined for the purpose of obtaining information besides aesthetic reading. The selection of books, which is shown as one of the limitations of the research, can be further diversified in line with the interests of the students and different studies can be designed.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Prof. Dr. Kasım YILDIRIM for his support and support at every stage of this research.

References

Akyol, H. (2013). *Türkçe ilk okuma yazma öğretimi.* Ankara: Pegem A Yayınları.

Akyol, H., Yıldırım, K., Ateş, A., Çetinkaya, Ç., & Rasinski, T. (2014). *Okumayı değerlendirme*. Ankara: Pegem A Yayınları.

Anderson, P. M., & Rubano, G. (1991). *Enhancing aesthetic reading and response. Theory and research into practice (TRIP) series*. Urbana: NCTE.

Ateş, S., & Yıldırım, K. (2014). Classroom teachers' reading skills: Strategy teaching and understanding. *Primary Education Online, 13*(1), 235-257.

Avcı, S., Baysal, N., Gül, M., & Akıncı, Y. (2013). The effect of literature circle method on reading comprehension skills. *Theoretical Journal of Educational Sciences, 6*(4), 535-555.

Baştuğ, M., & Akyol, H. (2012). The level of prediction of reading comprehension by fluent reading skills. *Kuramsal Eğitimbilim Dergisi, 5*(4), 394-411.

Berne, J. I., & Clark, K. F. (2008). Focusing literature discussion groups on comprehension strategies. *The Reading Teacher, 62*(1), 74-79. doi:10.1598/RT.62.1.9

Bloom, B. S. (1979). *İnsan nitelikleri ve okulda öğrenme* (D. A. Özçelik, Trans.). Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi.

Blum, H. T., Lipsett L. R., & Yocom D. J. (2002). Literature circles: A tool for self-determination in one middle school inclusive classroom. *Remedial and Special Education*, *23*(2), 99-108.

Bowers-Campbell, J. (2011). Take it out of class: Exploring virtual literature circles. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 54(8), 557-567. doi: 10.1598/JA AL.54.8.1

Briggs, S. R. (2010). *Using literature circles to increase reading comprehension in third grade elementary students* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Dominican University of California San Rafael, CA.

Calet, N., Defior, S., & Palma N. G. (2015). A cross-sectional study of fluency and reading comprehension in Spanish primary school children. *Journal of Research in Reading*, *38*(3), 272-285.

Campbell, J. B. (2011). Take it out of class: Exploring virtual literature circles. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *54*(8), 557-567.

Certo, J., Moxley, K., Reffitt, K., & Miller, J. A. (2010). I learned how to talk about a book: Children's perceptions of literature circles across grade and ability levels. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, *49*(3), 243-263. doi:10.1080/19388070902947352

Christensen, L. B., Johnson, R. B., & Turner, L. A. (2015). *Araştırma yöntemleri* (A. Aypay, Trans.). Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık.

Connell, J. M. (1996). Assessing the influence of Dewey's epistemology on Rosenblatt's reader response theory. *Educational Theory, 46*(4), 395-413.

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research.* Boston: Pearson.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Araştırma Deseni* (S. B. Demir, Trans.). Ankara: Eğiten Yayınevi.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L.P. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods researh.* Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Daniels, H. (1994). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in the student-centered classroom.* Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Daniels, H. (2002). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in book clubs and reading groups.* Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Demeny, P. (2012). Developing written text production competence using the reader-response method. *Acta Didactica Napocensia, 5*(3), 53-60.

Doğan, B. (2006). The effects of teaching strategy on reading comprehension skills in cooperative and traditional classrooms. *Educational Research Journal, 23*, 82-93.

Fraenkel, J., Wallen, N., & Hyun, H. H. (2012). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (8th ed.). Boston: McGraw Hill.

Gangl, M., Moll, K., Banfi, C., Huber, S., Schulte-Körne, G., & Landerl, K. (2018). Reading strategies of good and poor readers of German with different spelling abilities. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, *174*, 150-169. doi:10.1016/j.jecp.2018.05.012

Graesser, A. C. (2007). An introduction to strategic reading comprehension. In D. McNamara (Ed.), *Theories of text comprehension: The importance of reading strategies to theoretical foundations of reading comprehension* (pp. 3-26). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Hawkins, R. O., Marsicano, R., Schmitt, A. J., McCallum, E., & Musti-Rao, S. (2015). Comparing the efficiency of repeated reading and listening-while-reading to improve fluency and comprehension. *Education and Treatment of Children*, *38*(1), 49-70.

Hinds, J. (2019). *A case study for improving reading comprehension in third grade using literature circles* (Unpublished master's thesis). Trinity Western University, Canada.

Jabamani, J. V. (2016). The teaching of reading comprehension and overcoming of reading difficulties under the psychological aspects. *International Journal of Language, Literature and Humanities, 4*(11), 196-205.

Jefferson, E. R., Grant, C. E., & Sander, J. B. (2016). Effects of tier I differentiation and reading intervention on reading fluency, comprehension, and high stake measures. *Reading Psychology, 38*(1), 97-124.

Kaşkaya, A. (2016). Improving resding fluency and reading comprehension with NIM- assisted teaching: An activity research. *Education and Science, 41*(185), 281-297.

Kim, A., Vaughn, S., Woodruff, A. L., Reutebuch, C. K., & Kouzekanani, K. (2006). Improving the reading comprehension of middle school students with disabilities through computer-assisted collaborative strategic reading. *Remedial and Special Education, 27*(4), 235-249.

Kuhn, M., & Stahl, A. S. (2003). Fluency: A review of developmental and remedial practices. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 95*(1), 3-21.

Lee, H. C. (2013). An examination of ESL Taiwanese University students' multimodal reading responses. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 52*(3), 192-203.

Lloyd, S. L. (2004). Using comprehension strategies as a springboard for student talk. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 48*(2), 114-124. doi:10.1598/JAAL.48.2.3

McElvain, C. M. (2010). Transactional literature circles and the reading comprehension of English learners in the mainstream classroom. *Journal of Research in Reading*, *33*(2), 178-205.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Mills, H., & Jennings, L. (2011). Talking about talk: Reclaiming the value and power of literature circles. *The Reading Teacher*, *64*(8), 590-598. doi:10.1598/RT.64.8.4

Ministry of National Education. (2019). *PISA 2018 Türkiye eğitim ön raporu. Eğitim, analiz ve değerlendirme raporlari serisi. No: 10*. Retrieved from http://pisa.meb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/PISA_2018_Turkiye_On_Raporu.pdf

Padeliadu, S., & Antoniou, F. (2013). The relationship between reading comprehension, decoding, and fluency in greek: A cross-sectional study. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 30*(1), 1-31.

Pambianchi, L. C. (2017). *Literature circles in a fifth grade classroom: A qualitative study examining how the teacher and students used literature circles and the impact they have on student learning* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Mississippi State University, Mississippi.

Pardo, L. S. (2004). What every teacher needs to know about comprehension. *The Reading Teacher*, *58*(3), 272-280.

Paris, S. G., & Hamilton, E. E. (2009). The development of children's reading comprehension. In S. E. Israel ve G. G. Duffy (Eds.), *Handbook of research on reading comprehension* (pp. 32-53). New York: Routledge.

Parsons, L. T. (2013). An examination of fourth graders'aesthetic engagement with literary characters. *Reading Psychology*, *34*(1), 1-25. doi:10.1080/02702711.2011.566762

Pearson, P. D., & Cervetti, G. N. (2017). The roots of reading comprehension instruction. S. E. İsrael (Ed.), *Handbook of research on reading comprehension* (2nd ed., pp. 12-56). Newyork, NY: The Guilford Press.

Raphael, T. E., & McMahon, S. I. (1994). Book club: An alternative framework for reading instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, *48*(2), 102-116.

Rasinski, T. V. (2004). Creating fluent reader. *Educational Leadership*, *61*(6), 46-51.

Rasinski, T. V. (2017). Readers who struggle: Why many struggle and a modest proposal for improving their reading. *The Reading Teacher*, *70*(5), 519-524.

Rasinski, T. V., Rupley, W. H., Pagie, D. D., & Nichols, W. D. (2016). Alternative text types to improve reading fluency for competent to struggling readers. *International Journal of Instruction*, *9*(1), 163-178.

Rasinski, T. V., Yıldırım, K., & Nageldinger, J. (2011). Building fluency through the phrased text lesson. *The Reading Teacher, 65*(4), 252-255.

Reed, D. K., Petscher, Y., & Truckenmiller, A. J. (2017). The contribution of general reading ability to science achievement. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *52*(2), 253-266.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1978). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Rosenblatt, M. L. (1982). The literary transaction: Evocation and response. *Children's Literature, 21*(4), 268-277.

Rubin, D. (2016). Growth in oral reading fluency of Spanish ELL students with learning disabilities. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 52*(1), 34-38.

Ruby, J. (2003). Fostering multilayered literacy through literature circles. *TESOL Journal*, *12*(3), 47-48.

Schoonmaker, R. G. (2014). A blended learning approach to literature circles for English language learners. *Second Language Studies, 33*(1), 1-22.

Snow, C. E. (2002). *Reading for understanding: Toward an R&D program in reading comprehension*. Washington DC: RAND Corporation.

Southwood, S. (2012). The joy of reading groups. *Adults Learning*, *23*(3), 36-37.

Sönmez, V., & Alacapınar, F. G. (2014). *Bilimsel araştırma yöntemleri.* Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık.

Sukhram, D., & Monda-Amaya, L. E. (2017). The effects of oral repeated reading with and without correctiand feedback on middle school struggling readers. *British Journal Special Education*, *44*(1), 96-111.

Taboada, A., Tonks, S. M., Wiffield, A., & Guthrie, J. T. (2009). Effects of motivational and cognitive variables on reading comprehension. *Reading and Writing*, *22*(1), 85-106. doi:10.1007/s11145-008-9133-y

Therrien, M. J. (2004). Fluency and comprehension gains as a result of repeated reading a meta-analysis. *Remedial and Special Education, 25*(4), 252-261.

Tracey, D., & Morrow, L. M. (2006). *Lenses on reading: An introduction to theories and models.* New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Ulusoy, M. (2016). Resimli çocuk kitapları ve okur-tepki teorisi. *İlköğretim Online*, *15*(2), 487-497.

Varita, D. (2017). Improving reading comprehension through literature circles. *English Education Journal*, *8*(2), 234-244.

Vaughn, S., Kligner, J. K., & Bryant, D. (2001). Collaborative strategic reading as a means to enhance peer-mediated instruction for reading comprehension and content-area learning. *Remedial and Special Education*, *22*(2), 66-74.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in sciety: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Havard University Press.

Whittingham, J. (2013). Literature circles: A perfect match for online instruction. *TechTrends*, *57*(4), 53-58.

Wilfong, L. G. (2009). Text masters: Bringing literature circles to textbook reading across the curriculum. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *53*(2), 164-171.

Wollman-Bonilla, J., & Werchadlo, B. (1995). Literature response journals in a first-grade classroom. *Language Arts, 72*(8), 562-570.

Woodruff, A. H., & Griffin, R. A. (2017). Reader response in secondary settings: Increasing comprehension through meaningful interactions wıth literary texts. *Texas Journal of Literacy Education, 5*(2), 108-116. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1162670.pdf

Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2013). *Qualitative research methods*. Ankara: Şimşek Publishing.

Yıldırım, K. (2010). Nitel araştırmalarda niteliği artırma. *İlköğretim Online, 9*(1), 79-92.

Yıldırım, K., Ritz, E., Akyol, H., & Rasinski, T. (2015). Assisting a struggling Turkish student with a repeated reading fluency intervention. *Reading Matrix: An International Online Journal*, *15*(1), 252-261.

Yıldız, M., Yıldırım, K., Ateş, S., & Çetinkaya, Ç. (2009). An evaluation of the oral reading fluency of 4th graders with respect to prosodic characteristics. *International Journal of Human Science*, *6*, 353-360.

Zutell, J., & Rasinski, T. V. (1991). Training teachers to attend to their students' oral reading fluency. *Theory Into Practice*, *30*(3), 211-217.