



Improving Reading Comprehension Strategies as well as Reading Attitudes and Habits of 5th-Grade Students through the Reading Circle Technique

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Abstract

A reading circle is a small discussion group administered by peers who choose to read the same story, poem, article or book (Daniels, 2002, p. 2). Various studies have proven that reading circles have a positive impact on students' reading comprehension skills (Altınkaya, 2019; Avcı & Yüksel, 2011; Balantekin, 2016; Brown, 2002; Kaya-Tosun, 2018; Sarı, Kurtuluş, & Yücel-Toy, 2017). This study aims to improve students' reading comprehension strategies and help them develop a positive attitude toward reading as well as contribute to their reading habits using the reading circle technique. The researcher and a Turkish teacher cooperated within the scope of this study, which was designed as action research, and they used the reading circle technique to improve students' reading comprehension strategies as well as their reading attitudes and habits. This study was conducted with 28 students, and the students were divided into four groups with seven members to form small discussion groups. Reading circle sessions were held on Zoom for 10 weeks, with each session lasting 30 minutes for each group. In the present study, the "Book Metaphor Form" was developed by Gül (2019), and students' progress was monitored by administering pre-test and post-test with the "Reading Habits and Attitudes Scale" as well as the "Reading Comprehension Strategies Scale" developed by Susar-Kırmızı (2006). The process was monitored through "Task Cards," "Reading Circle Control List," "Researcher Observation Form" and "Reading Circle Evaluation Form." Results of the quantitative analyses showed that reading circles did not affect students' reading comprehension strategies as well as their reading attitudes and habits. Results of the qualitative analyses indicated that reading circles had an increasing effect on students' motivation to read a book, their positive attitudes toward books/reading, such as using the library and exchanging books, and their use of strategies to learn a new word. On the other hand, students were observed to be able to associate what they read with real life and improve their skills to make a summary and work in groups. At the end of the process, students' metaphoric perceptions

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of books changed, and those who perceived books as a tool of amusement decreased while the number of students who regarded books as a source of information increased. In brief, the qualitative analyses conducted within the scope of this study suggested that students' use of reading comprehension strategies as well as their attitudes and habits about reading improved, whereas this was not reflected in the quantitative data of this study. The current study results support the idea of using reading circles with secondary school students and point out because it is necessary to investigate the effect of reading circles with studies to be conducted with different groups for longer periods.

Introduction

Some of the fundamental concerns of Turkish classes at secondary schools include helping students gain reading comprehension skills and reading habits as well as develop a positive attitude toward reading. "Starting from the secondary school level, the main goal of reading education is to ensure students to be effective and good receptors for them to be able to deal with the classes and information included in textbooks" (Karatay, 2019, p. 221). When considered from this point of view, reading skill serves as a locomotive in students' learning and receiving knowledge (Memiş, 2020, p. 82).

Reading, which requires an individual to be active mentally integrating prior knowledge and the information in the text to produce new meanings, can be described as a process of grasping meaning depending on the interaction between the writer, the text and the reader (Akyol, 2020; Balcı, 2016; Güneş, 2021). Karatay (2018, p. 15) emphasizes that this communication, which is based on the written text between the reader and the writer, can be right or wrong depending on the reader's knowledge about the world as well as cognitive and affective developmental level. In this light, it seems possible to state that making sense of a text changes depending on the developmental level. Reading skill develops gradually. Individual factors, such as age and readiness, besides environmental factors, can influence this developmental level. Akyol (2014, pp. 18-20) categorizes the developmental stages of the reading process as 1. Preparation and imitation, 2. Beginning, 3. Development, 4. Progress, 5. Association, 6. Fluent reading, 7. Competence and 8. Independent reading. Although the age group is not specified in this categorization, secondary school students should reach the stages of progress, association and fluent reading, respectively. For example, Akyol (2014, p. 19) indicates that students occupying the stage of progress are expected to do silent reading, join a discussion about the book, and read and an informative text with pleasure and understand it without any difficulty. At the stage of association, students do repetition less, can read long texts, and have the skill of differentiating words. At the stage of fluent reading, students are expected to read complex texts, participate in group discussions with the guidance of a teacher and student, and analyse and discuss the events in a text. On the other hand, according to reading development stages suggested by Chall (1983), students of 9-13 years old read for the purpose of learning new information, experiences and ideas (Memiş, 2020, p. 96).

Literature Review

Reading Strategies

Reading is a process of making sense of a text through engaging in an interaction with the writer, and readers take advantage of various strategies, such as forming images, asking questions, establishing connections, making inferences, making guesses, conducting analysis/synthesis and responding emotionally (Brownlie, 2005, p. 7). Strategic reading occurs when a reader transfers prior knowledge to the reading environment, and reads after identifying an appropriate goal and method (Akyol, 2020, p. 5). Good and weak readers use different strategies before, during and after reading, while successful readers develop a strategic way of reading (Akyol, 2014; Karatay, 2018). Strategy training should not only increase students' awareness of strategies but also help them find their own ways to develop their own strategies for different reading tasks (Türkben, 2021, p. 116).

Reading Attitudes and Habits

Children can acquire the skill of reading mechanically besides liking to read, getting interested in reading, motivating them only if different people, such as families, teachers, principals and peers, help them at their best (Akyol, 2014, p. 17). Ensuring that children gain reading habits requires conducting reading education in a planned and continuous way until the children are at the end of 15 years old (Yalçın, 2006, p. 54). Making it obligatory for children to read 100 Essential Books and that these books are not suitable for children cause children to develop a negative attitude toward reading (Arıcan & Yılmaz, 2010). Deniz (2015) conducted a study to investigate the reading habits of secondary school students, and found out that students spent most of their free time watching TV, playing computer games or surfing the internet. Moreover, most of the students specified that they could not read enough books because they were busy with lessons or they lacked reading habits. Similarly, Aksoy and Öztürk (2018) carried out a study in which they received teachers' and students' opinions, and they concluded that students preferred watching TV to reading a book, which had a negative impact on their reading habits. In a study conducted by İşcan, Arıkan, and Küçükaydın (2013), students stated that the factors that mostly prevented them from reading were TV and too much homework. İşcan et al. (2013) conducted this study with secondary school students, and they concluded that students did not spare much time for reading except for reading hours at school and they did not put any special effort with their own will to read a book. Aksaçlıoğlu and Yılmaz (2007) conducted a study with 5th-grade students, and they found out that watching TV and using computers had a negative effect on students' reading habit.

Students' negative attitudes toward reading or their lack of reading habits make it necessary to use methods and techniques different from traditional ones. One of the techniques that can be used for that purpose is the reading circle technique.

Reading Circle Technique

Reading circles are small discussion groups administered by peers who choose to read the same story, poem, article or book (Daniels, 2002, p. 2). The idea of reading circles has evolved with the development of reading meetings and book clubs in time, and today, it is accepted to be a technique that is used at many different educational levels (Yardımcı, 2021, pp. 52-53). Reading circle is the product of teachers who want to adapt reading clubs to the school environment (Avcı, Yüksel, & Akıncı, 2010, p. 6). Reading circle, which is supported by different theories to establish a rich learning framework, is a technique that requires students to do individual reading as well as working in groups and taking different responsibilities (Kaya-Tosun, 2018, p. 44). In a reading circle, unlike traditional methods, students – not teachers – are expected to hold a discussion, and students include their own questions and insight in the discussion (Brabham & Villaume, 2000, p. 278).

Using reading circles can contribute to students' cognitive, affective and social development (Doğan, Yıldırım, Çermik, & Ateş, 2018, p. 748). Reading circle is based on different theories, provides an appropriate framework for a constructive approach and is expected to contribute to students' development in terms of fluent reading, reading comprehension, social skills and reading motivation (Kaya-Tosun, 2018, pp. 2-6). Conducting groupwork through reading circles has many benefits for students, such as reaching a higher level of academic success, developing positive attitudes, gaining the skill of working together and developing a sense of belonging to school and class (Doğan et al., 2018, p. 762).

Implementing a Reading Circle

Avcı et al. (2010, pp. 9-11) suggest 13 basic principles for implementing a reading circle. These principles are listed as follows: (1) Students choose the material they will read on their own, (2) students establish small discussion groups according to the choice of books, (3) group roles are constantly changed, (4) different groups read different books, (5) groups regularly meet on previously-determined

days, (6) students take notes to administer their reading and discussions, (7) students themselves decide on the discussion topics, (8) group discussions are intended to have open-ended natural discussions, (9) teachers guide students, (10) evaluation is conducted with a combination of teachers' observation and self-evaluation, (11) making fun a part of the process is essential, (12) after reading is over, each group shares their books with the class through presentations, drama or other projects, (13) continuing the circle by forming new groups with new books is important.

Roles in a Reading Circle

Roles are crucial in a reading circle. Students individually have different roles in the books they have read. Having different roles in a reading circle makes it possible to implement different reading types and methods, such as audible reading, silent reading, reading by taking notes, reading by making a summary, reading as a group, reading by asking questions, reading in pairs or reading with discussion. Daniels (2002, p. 36) states that different roles in a reading circle highlight different learning styles and ensure variety in this way, which in turn enriches group discussions through different ideas, answers and connections.

When students undertake different roles in a reading circle, the learning process moves away from a teacher-centered approach, and this makes the process a student-centred one and students have the opportunity to work cooperatively (Doğan et al., 2018, p. 749). As different roles in a reading circle make it possible for students to use different reading strategies, students develop an awareness of their own reading process and improve their high-level cognitive skills indirectly. Akyol (2020, p. 5) expresses that strategic reading will make students like reading. Given that students' reading skills can be affected positively when they like reading and develop a positive attitude toward reading, it seems possible to state that using the reading circle technique in class has quite many advantages.

Daniels (2002, p. 103) divides students' roles in a reading circle into two, which are basic roles and optional roles. In this line, the basic roles include a connector, questioner, literary luminary/passage master and illustrator. On the other hand, optional roles consist of summarizer, researcher, vocabulary enricher, word wizard, travel tracer and scene setter.

Peterson and Belizaire (2006) conducted an action research in which they did not specify the roles before the reading circle, considering that reading circles can be implemented without previously-determined roles and students' expressions will not be restricted in this way. Some groups included in this study stated that they had difficulty finding a focus in discussions, and they needed role tasks. On the other hand, some other groups in this study expressed that there was no need for roles as this allowed a free discussion environment.

Roles in a reading circle can be shaped according to the demands of teachers and students, goals of the implementation, needs and technological developments (Yardım, 2021, pp. 56-57). In this respect, it seems possible to state that the reading circle technique is quite a flexible method, and roles can or cannot be identified beforehand depending on the conditions. In the current study, the researcher decided to identify the roles beforehand, considering the age, interest and demand of the participant students. The roles were identified in the light of the related literature (Avcı et al., 2010; Brown, 2002; Daniels, 2002; Doğan et al., 2018; Shelton-Strong, 2012) as well as students' interest in reading, level of reading comprehension and needs. The roles in a reading circle are as follows:

Summarizer: They are responsible for making an oral summary of the reading (Shelton-Strong, 2012, p. 216). Summarizers share the key points and the most important parts of what has been read with their friends in the reading circle (Daniels, 2002, p. 111). Starting the reading circle with the summarizer will be beneficial in terms of reminding group members of the important events in the parts that have already been read.

Word Hunter: They are responsible for sharing and defining new, important or interesting words/phrases or putting them in an appropriate context (Shelton-Strong, 2012, p. 216). Instead of explicitly explaining the words or word phrases they have chosen, word hunters read the sentence which contains the related word, ask their friends the meaning of it, and thus make it possible to guess the meaning of the word from the context and create a discussion environment.

Questioner: They wonder and analyse what has been read (Daniels, 2002, p. 103). Questioners ask questions to their friends in the group about the parts that have been read and make them think about what has been read. As underlined by Avcı et al. (2010), questioners should use open-ended questions that allow students to comment and think, as well as personal questions that make students share their values and experiences instead of asking close-ended questions that rely on remembering.

Character Tracer: They identify the characters in the parts that have been read and explain their qualities (Avcı et al., 2010, p. 116). Character tracers analyse the physical features and mental qualities of characters and share them with their friends in the reading circle. Moreover, they analyse how characters change and evolve over time and what causes this change.

Scene setter: They describe the setting or environment in the parts that have been read in detail. They can take advantage of words, mind maps or diagrams while making the description (Daniels, 2002, p. 114).

Artist: They use art to represent an important scene or idea in the parts that have been read (Brown, 2002, p. 4). They share the feelings and impressions they get from what they have read through different fields of art, such as painting, music or caricature.

Guess Hunter: They are responsible for guessing what might happen on the following pages in the light of what has been read. They make a guess about what a specific character will do or how the next event will develop (Doğan et al., 2018, p. 756).

Literature review shows that there are various studies on the reading circle technique. The related studies reveal that reading circles affect reading skill positively (Altınkaya, 2019; Balantekin, 2016; Brown, 2002; Sarı et al., 2017). There are also some other studies that focus on the effects of reading circles on different variables, such as reading habits, attitudes and behaviours toward reading, motivation for reading, vocabulary and speaking skill. Avcı and Yüksel (2011) investigated the effect of reading circles on reading habits and reading comprehension skills of 4th-grade students. They concluded in this study that especially those whose level of reading comprehension was low improved this skill significantly. In this study, which also included the opinions of teachers and students, students stated that they found it joyful to undertake different roles and cooperate with their friends while reading a book. They highlighted that they could remember each and every detail of the book they had read even after two weeks. They also expressed that book presentation projects were beneficial for them. Allan, Ellis, and Pearson (2005) conducted a study and concluded that the reading circle technique improved students' passive vocabulary and affected their attitudes and behaviours about reading positively. Topçam (2021) implemented a reading circle with 4th-grade students for 12 weeks and found out that students' motivation increased at the end of the implementation. In this study, which was designed as action research, Topçam received students' views about reading circle practices. Students stated that they found the reading circle technique very useful, amusing and functional, and their interest in reading increased thanks to this technique, which made them start liking reading.

Although there are quite many studies which focused on the positive effect of reading circles on attitudes toward and motivation for reading, some other results contradict this. Demir (2019) conducted a study and concluded that reading circles did not have a statistically significant effect on the reading attitudes of 7th--grade students. Yardım (2021) performed a doctoral thesis to investigate the effect of the reading circles on 7th-grade students' vocabulary, speaking skills and reading attitudes.

This thesis study showed that reading circle technique improved students' vocabulary and contributed to their speaking skills, but it did not have any significant effect on students' reading attitudes. Kaya-Tosun (2018) conducted a doctoral thesis to investigate the effect of reading circle technique on reading comprehension, fluent reading, reading motivation and social skills of 4th-grade students. In this experimental study, the reading circle was implemented with the experimental group for 18 weeks. The study results showed that the reading circle technique had a positive effect on students' reading comprehension, fluent reading and social skills. On the other hand, the study concluded that the reading circle technique did not have a statistically significant effect on students' motivation.

Literature review shows that there are various studies about the impact of reading circles on reading attitudes and habits. However, there is only one study on improving reading strategies using reading circles, which was conducted by Karatay (2017). The current study is different from Karatay's (2017) study about the study group; given that Karatay conducted the study with university students, the study group of the current study is 5th-grade students. Furthermore, while Karatay's study focused on the effect of reading circles on text analysis, reading strategies were addressed indirectly. Also, the current study is different from previous studies in that it was conducted online.

The current study aims to improve students' reading comprehension strategies, ensuring they develop a positive attitude toward reading and contributing to their reading habits by means of using the reading circle technique. In this line, this study seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of students as to their reading comprehension strategies, their attitudes and habits toward reading and their perceptions of books in the current study?
2. What are the thoughts and perceptions of students about the action plan and reading circles that were implemented within the scope of the current study?
3. What are the observations about the study?

Besides its practical benefits for students, this study is expected to contribute to Turkish teachers in terms of developing in-class reading practices. On the other hand, investigating the effect of the reading circle technique on reading comprehension strategies, reading attitudes and habits within the scope of the current study is thought to contribute to researchers in the field for further studies.

Method

Research Model

The current study was designed as action research in line with the purpose of this study. Mills (2000, p. 6) describes action research as a systematic research study conducted by different stakeholders of education, such as teachers, researchers or principals, to gather information about the functions of schools as well as teaching and learning processes.

The current study was designed as a "collaborative action research," which is a type of action research. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2018, p. 308) state that collaborative action research is a kind of research that includes a high level of interaction between the researcher and the practitioner. Because of that reason, the researcher and the practitioner worked in collaboration and created an action plan within the scope of the current study. The same interaction continued during the implementation of the action plan, which ensured collaboration between the researcher and the practitioner.

Table 1 shows the action plan for the current study:

Table 1. Research Action Plan

Planning	Implementation and Observation	Reflection and Exploration
Literature review	Conducting the pre-tests	Exploring the effects of the implementation
Evaluating the research problem and questions in the light of the literature	Holding the first reading circle sessions	The practitioner and researcher coming together to evaluate the process with a reflective perspective
The practitioner and researcher coming together to plan the study process	Observing the implementations	Analyzing and interpreting the study data
	Administering the Reading Circle Evaluation Form	Reporting the results
	Reviewing the action plan for the following four weeks, starting from the point of observations and evaluations by students	
	Holding the second reading circle sessions	
	Conducting the post-tests	

Participants

An action research comprises action, research and participation (Greenwood & Lewin, 2007). Gürgür (2019, p. 39) states that practitioners or employees are natural member of the research process in action research, which is based on participation. The participants of the current study consisted of the researcher, the practitioner and the students. In the current study, 28 5th-grade students who were attending a state school in the 2021-2022 academic year participated. Students' participation relied on the principle of voluntary participation, and both the students and parents were clearly informed about this study. The research process started when the Turkish teacher asked for help from the researcher in search of different methods instead of traditional ones to improve students' reading habits. The Turkish teacher, who has been working at state schools since 2011, was the practitioner in the current study and stayed in touch with the researcher throughout the research process, which ensured following the process in collaboration.

The researcher was one of the participants of the current study. The researcher conducted a literature review and developed an action plan about how to implement a "reading circle," followed the process with the "Researcher Observation Form" and intervened in the process when a problem arose. The researcher worked as a Turkish teacher at state schools between the years 2011-2019. The researcher completed Turkish Education Doctoral Program in 2022. The researcher aimed to transfer their theoretical knowledge and experience into the research process.

Data Collection Tools

Although action research makes use of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, the current study is considered to be a qualitative study. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2018, p. 307), action research has a flexible structure, and it does not aim for generalizations. In this line, in the current study, both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools were used, while the results of qualitative data collection tools were used not to make generalizations but to analyze the effects of the implementation in detail.

The researcher obtained the necessary written permission from the related researchers and used the "Reading Habits and Attitudes Scale" developed by Gül (2019), the "Reading Comprehension Strategies Scale" developed by Susar-Kırmızı (2006) and the "Book Metaphor Form" conducted by the researcher to conduct a pre-test and post-test to monitor students' progress. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the Reading Comprehension Strategies Scale was .80, while KMO Barlett's value was .84; the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the Reading Habits and Attitudes Scale was .89, while KMO Barlett's value was .88. These results showed that both of the measurement tools were valid and reliable. The Reading Comprehension Scale is a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of 26 items in total. The Reading Habits and Attitudes Scale is a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of 19 items in total. The process was monitored with "Task Cards," "Reading Circle Control List" and "Researcher Observation Form, "Practitioner Observation Form" and "Reading Circle Evaluation Form."

Task Cards: Students were asked to fill in task cards about their roles before the session every week.

Reading Circle Control List: To monitor students during the process, the researcher developed a "Reading Circle Control List" by means of using the criteria of "fulfilling role tasks, joining group discussions, listening with respect," suggested by Avcı et al. (2010).

Researcher Observation Form: The researcher observed the process by joining online sessions. The researcher decided to use the criteria of "fulfilling role tasks, joining group discussions, listening with respect," suggested by Avcı et al. (2010) also in the Researcher Observation Form developed by the researcher. Different from the Control List, the researcher decided to observe different issues, such as how appropriate the book is to use in a reading circle or what the students' attitudes are toward the book.

Practitioner Observation Form: The practitioner had the opportunity to observe the effect of reading circles not only in online sessions but also in face-to-face Turkish classes at school and also in contact with parents. Therefore, after implementing the first and second reading circles, the practitioner filled in the Practitioner Observation Form to tell about their observation. The practitioner noted down their observation about the problems with the implementation, what should be done to improve the implementation and the positive and negative changes in the students.

Reading Circle Evaluation Form: This form was developed by the researcher to allow students to evaluate the first four weeks of the implementation. Receiving feedback from the students about the first four weeks made it possible to make plans for the next four weeks of the process.

Implementing the Action Plan and Ethical Considerations

After obtaining the necessary ethical permission, the researcher started to implement the action plan.

Avcı et al. (2010, pp.13-20) suggest that implementing a reading circle requires identifying the books to be read, introducing the technique to students, introducing the books to students, establishing groups, identifying roles, planning time, carrying out group projects and making an evaluation, respectively. In this line, the participant students were informed about the reading circle technique. Then they were divided into four different groups with seven members to establish reading circle groups.

In reading circles, the choice of the books to be read is crucial. Balcı (2016, p. 3) emphasizes that personal interest plays an important role in gaining reading habits. Likewise, Daniels (2002, p. 18) points to the fact that reading circles are significant because, unlike traditional methods, they allow students to choose the books they will read, which helps them become independent readers. The reading circle technique is a method that allows students to take control of what they will read and how much they will read, and so teachers introduce the books they have chosen in line with their students' interests in class and then they help students make their own choice (Brownlie, 2005). Because of this reason, in the current study, the participant students were allowed to choose the book they wanted to read as a group

from among the books the teacher had brought to the classroom. The books offered to students in the class had been chosen upon receiving opinions from group teachers and reviewing studies in the literature (Dinç, 2017; Yıldırım & Dinç, 2017; Yıldırım, 2019). Table 2 below shows the books chosen by the groups:

Table 2. Assortment of Books in the Reading Circle

Choice of Books in the First Reading Circle		
Name of the Book	Name of the Author	Publishing House
The Distance Between Me and The Cherry Tree (Kiraz Ağacıyla Aramızdaki Mesafe)	Paola Peretti	Timaş
Where the Mountain Meets the Moon (Dağın Ayla Buluştuğu Yer)	Grace Lin	Altın Kitaplar
Children of the Last Island (Son Adanın Çocukları)	Zülfü Livaneli	Doğan ve Egmont Yayıncılık
The Story of a Seagull and the Cat Who Taught Her to Fly (Martıya Uçmayı Öğreten Kedi)	Luis Sepulveda	Can Çocuk Yayınları
Choice of Books in the Second Reading Circle		
Name of the Book	Name of the Author	Publishing House
Time Bicycle (Zaman Bisikleti)	Bilgin Adalı	Can Çocuk
Powder of Exaggeration (Abartma Tozu)	Şermin Yaşar	Taze Kitap
Sadako	Takayuki Ishii	Yakamoz Genç
A Little Star a Big Discovery (Küçük Yıldız Büyük Keşif)	Chloe Daykin	Timaş Genç

Each group conducted reading circle sessions online on Zoom for the book they had chosen for four weeks. During the next week, the students combined their task cards in a single file as a group and made a presentation to their classmates about the book they had read. After completing the first reading circle in this way, new groups were established for the second reading circle. As most of the students wanted to stay in the same group, only two students voluntarily decided to change their groups. Thus, the second reading circle was implemented with almost the same groups. Thus, the action plan was conducted and reading circles were implemented in 10 weeks. Table 3 shows the plan of the study:

Table 3. Action Plan of the Current Study

Implementation	Date
Conducting the pre-tests	September 27- October 3 2021
Holding the reading circle sessions	October 4 - October 29 2021
Receiving students' evaluations and presenting the results	November 1 – November 5 2021
Organizing the action plan according to evaluations and observations	November 5 – November 14 2021
Holding the reading circle sessions	November 22 – December 17 2021
Conducting the post-tests and presenting the results	December 20-24 2021

Problems Faced during the Implementation and some Suggestions for Solutions

The researcher faced some difficulties during the implementation:

1. Summarizer students made very long and detailed summaries, and they quoted all events instead of summarizing them.
2. The role task of the artist was more passive than other tasks.
3. Time was not used wisely; the students having the first role tasks were given more time and so the next students had less time to talk.
4. Some students were impatient and hasty to have a word, and they did not obey the rules of listening exactly.
5. Connection problems disturbed the sessions from time to time.
6. Some students did not fulfil their tasks fully as they did not get prepared enough.
7. There was a risk for the task to repeat itself in the following weeks.
8. The roles in the reading circle were always the same, and this affected students' creativity negatively.

The researcher and practitioner came together to decide what precautions they could take to solve the aforementioned problems. At the end of this consultation, they decided to take the following actions before starting the next sessions:

- In-class activities targeting students' summarizing skills were increased.
- The student undertaking the role of the artist was directed to ask questions to her/his friends about the photos, pictures, and songs they presented, and they were ensured to be more active in the sessions in this way.
- While starting the sessions, the students were reminded about using time effectively and obeying listening rules. The teacher started to be more careful about time management.
- The students were asked to check their internet connection before the sessions.
- A more active and flexible learning environment was created to prevent repetition of tasks and ensure that the students' creativity was not affected badly by this. The students were encouraged to use their creative power without being limited to the task roles defined for them, and they were guided to share their ideas beyond their own task roles in the reading circles.

Data Analysis

Literature review shows that the sample size should consist of 30 or more participants to ensure that study data display a normal distribution (Demir, Saatçioğlu, & İmrol, 2016, p. 133; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2017, p. 200). As the current study group was composed of 28 participants, the current study did not meet the criteria of sample size for normal distribution. Therefore, the quantitative data were analysed using the Wilcoxon signed rank test, which is a non-parametric alternative to the independent t-test. While interpreting the data, the value of $p < 0,05$ was accepted to be statistically significant. On the other hand, content analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data of the study obtained using the Researcher Observation Form, the Practitioner Observation Form, the Book Metaphor Form and the Reading Circle Evaluation Form. Content analysis relies on bringing similar concepts and themes together and organizing and interpreting them in a reader-friendly way (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018, p. 242). In the Book Metaphor Form, the students were not provided with ready metaphors but were asked to rewrite their own metaphors. The metaphors written by the students were evaluated regarding frequency. In the Reading Circle Evaluation Form, the students' answers were evaluated in frequency and similarities. First of all, the common items in the observation forms, including the notes regarding

the implementation process taken by the researcher and practitioner, were listed, and the ideas appearing in one but not the other were identified. To ensure the study's reliability, the answers were coded both by the researcher and practitioner in the observation forms identifying the common points and during the process of evaluating the Reading Circle Evaluation Form.

Results

The first sub-problem of the current study was "Is there a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of students as to their reading comprehension strategies, their attitudes and habits toward reading and their perceptions of books in the current study?" Within the scope of the study, "Reading Comprehension Strategies Scale," "Reading Habits and Attitudes Scale" and "Book Metaphor Form" were used as a pre-test and post-test. Table 4 shows the findings of reading comprehension strategies pre-test and post-test scores:

Table 4. Comparing the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Reading Comprehension Strategies

Post-test-Pre-test	N	(Mean Rank)	Sum of Ranks	Z	p
Negative Ranks	13	11,54	150,00		
Positive Ranks	15	17,07	256,00	-1.207	0,227
Ties	0				
Total	28				

As shown in Table 4, there was no significant difference between students' pre-test and post-test scores ($p=0,227$). This finding showed that reading circle practices did not have a statistically significant effect on students' reading comprehension strategies.

Table 5 below shows the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test of pre-test and post-test data gathered using the "Reading Habits and Attitudes Scale:"

Table 5. Comparing the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Reading Habits and Attitudes

Post-test-Pre-test	N	(Mean Rank)	Sum of Ranks	Z	p
Negative Ranks	13	15,27	198,00		
Positive Ranks	13	11,73	152,50	-584	0,559
Ties	2				
Total	28				

As is seen in Table 5, the change between the pre-test and post-test showed that there was no statistically significant difference ($p=0,559$). This finding showed that reading circle practices did not have a statistically significant effect on students' reading habits and attitudes.

The current study also investigated the effect of reading circles on students' metaphoric perceptions of books. The analyses conducted in this line show that there were 33 metaphors in the pre-test, while there were 35 metaphors in the post-test. Table 6 shows students' metaphoric perceptions of books:

Table 6. Students' Metaphoric Perceptions of Books

Themes	Pre-test (f)	Pre-test (%)	Post-test (f)	Post-test (%)
A source of fun	9	27,27%	8	21,05%
A door opening to other worlds	6	18,18%	7	18,42%
A friend	5	15,15%	7	18,42%
A source of information	5	15,15%	7	18,42%
Something valuable	4	12,12%	6	14,29%
A boring tool	4	12,12%	3	8,57%

As is seen in Table 6, the results of the pre-test showed that students viewed books as a source of information less in pre-test (15,15%), while they started to see it more as a source of information in the post-test (20,00%), and they viewed books as a source of fun less (Pre-test =18,18, Post-test=17,14). The number of students who viewed books as a boring tool decreased from the pre-test (12,12) to the post-test (8,57%).

Some of the examples of students' responses to the theme of a source of fun are below:

"A book is like an entertainment because there are always adventures." (S13)

"A book is like my family because it is fun." (S10)

Some of the examples of students' responses to the theme of a door opening to other worlds are as below:

"A book is like a life because a new world open when you get into it." (S2)

"A book is like a friend because it throws you to a different world whenever you read it." (S5)

Some of the examples of students' responses to the theme of a friend are below:

"A book is like a friend because sometimes I feel as if I am talking to a book." (S4)

"A book is like a friend because reading a book makes me feel better." (S25)

Some of the examples of students' responses to the theme of a source of information are below:

"A book is like important advice by a wise man because it gives very important information that should not be forgotten." (S11)

"A book is like a chest of knowledge because it is full of plenty of knowledge." (S7)

Some of the examples of students' responses to the theme of something valuable are below:

"A book is the biggest treasure." (S17)

"A book is like gold." (Ö1)

Some of the examples of students' responses to the theme of a boring tool are below:

"A book is like a person who thinks they know as well as the internet because you can reach information with one click on the internet, but learning from a book causes you to lose money and you put too much effort in it." (S28)

"I resemble a book to an empty box because there is no good book." (S4)

The second sub-problem of the current study was "What are the thoughts and perceptions of students about the action plan and reading circle that were implemented within the scope of the current study?" After the first implementation was over, the "Reading Circle Evaluation Form" was administered to students to improve reading circle practices with the feedback given by the participant students. In this line, the students were asked which role tasks they liked the most. Table 7 shows the findings:

Table 7. Distribution of Roles which Students Liked

Reading Circle Roles	f	%
Questioner	8	27,59%
Word hunter	7	24,14%
Scene researcher	4	13,79%
Artist	4	13,79%
Summarizer	3	10,34%
Character tracer	2	6,90%
Guess hunter	1	3,45%

As is seen in Table 7, students liked being a questioner (f=8) and word hunter (f=7) the most, while they liked being a guess hunter (f=1) the least.

Students answer to the question, "Which role did you like the most? Why?" is below:

"Questioner: Because I received curious answers."

"Questioner: I like receiving my friends' ideas."

"Word hunter: Because I learnt new words and different meanings, and my vocabulary improved."

"Scene Researcher: Because I gathered information about the writer and learnt something new."

"Artist: Because I share the melody in me with my friends."

The students were asked the question of, "Were the reading circle practices beneficial for you?" Table 8 shows the students' responses:

Table 8. Benefits of Reading Circles for Students

Themes	f	%
I gained the habit of reading a book.	9	21,43%
I learnt to work in groups.	6	14,29%
Reading a book turned out to be fun.	5	11,90%
I started to like reading a book.	4	9,52%
I analysed the content of books better.	4	9,52%
I met new books.	3	7,14%
I learnt to shoulder my responsibilities.	2	4,76%
My vocabulary improved.	2	4,76%
I learnt to express myself better.	2	4,76%
I learnt to make a summary.	1	2,38%
My guessing skill improved.	1	2,38%
My thinking skill improved.	1	2,38%
I remembered what I had read better than before.	1	2,38%
I learnt to assess books.	1	2,38%

The participant students were asked to fill in the gap in the sentence "It would have been better if the reading circle had (...)." Table 9 shows the students' responses:

Table 9. Changes that can be Made with the Reading Circle

Themes	f	%
There is nothing I want to change.	8	28,57%
It would have been better if (...)		
My friends performed their tasks fully.	5	17,86%
We role-played the books.	4	14,29%
The sessions were longer.	3	10,71%
The sessions were conducted face-to-face.	3	10,71%
I did my duty better.	2	7,14%
I was able to choose my task myself.	2	7,14%
The author of the book joined the sessions.	1	3,57%

The third sub-problem of the study was, "What are the observations about the study?" In this line, the researcher used the "Researcher Observation Form" and the "Practitioner Observation Form," and the results about the positive occasions and positive changes in students are given below:

Positive Aspects of the Implementation

1. The students were eager to participate in discussions.
2. The teacher created an appropriate setting for discussion.
3. While fulfilling their role tasks, the students created a setting for discussion and associated the book with real life.
4. The words whose meanings were asked were used in a sentence, which helped students to guess the meaning of the word from the context.
5. The students could associate the book that was discussed in the reading circle with other books they had read, and they could precise similarities and differences.
6. When a group member did not fulfil their task, other group members helped them to fulfil the task in cooperation.
7. While the students were researching about the author, they introduced to their friends' other books by the same author or books that this author suggested reading, which created an interest in other books among students.
8. The teacher encouraged students to think and speak.
9. Extra in-class activities for the summarizing skill contributed to the summarizing skill positively, and the students found the opportunity to implement what they had learnt theoretically through reading circles.

On the other hand, both the researcher and the practitioner observed that quite many skills and behaviours of the students improved thanks to the use of the reading circle technique. These changes are listed below:

Positive Changes in Students

1. They were more willing to learn the words they did not know.
2. They improved their skill of guessing the meaning of a word from the context.
3. They put special effort into using the words they had just learnt.
4. They started to compare the characters in the books with the characters they read in textbooks.
5. They improved their summarizing skill.
6. They improved their critical thinking skill.
7. They improved their reading skill.
8. They started to exchange more books with their classmates.
9. They started to create their own library at home.
10. They started to use the school library more regularly.

Discussion, Result and Suggestions

This study aims to improve students' use of reading comprehension strategies, and their attitudes toward and interests in reading through reading circles. To this end, the researcher used the "Reading Comprehension Strategies Scale", "Reading Habits and Attitudes Scale" and "Book Metaphor Form" as pre-test and post-test. The process of implementing reading circles was monitored through "Task Cards", "Reading Circle Control List" and "Researcher Observation Form," "Practitioner Observation Form" and "Reading Circle Evaluation Form."

The results of the pre-test and post-test conducted within the scope of the current study revealed that using the reading circle technique did not make a significant difference in students' reading comprehension strategies. The current study results contradict the results of a study conducted with

university students by Karatay (2017), who found out that reading circles contributed to different strategies, such as text analysis, identifying a topic, finding the main idea or finding the keywords in a text. In this respect, it is possible to state that the results of the quantitative analysis of the current study do not comply with other studies in the literature which concluded that reading circles affected reading comprehension positively (Altunkaya, 2019; Avcı & Yüksel, 2011; Balantekin, 2016; Brown, 2002; Kaya-Tosun, 2018; Sarı et al., 2017).

According to another study finding, the reading circle technique did not have an impact on students' attitudes toward reading. Similarly, Roche (1998) conducted an experimental study with 4th-grade students, and found out that there was not a significant improvement in the attitudes of students within the experimental group toward reading.

The results of the qualitative analysis showed that using reading circles produced an increase in students' motivation to read a book, positive attitudes toward reading/books, such as using the library or exchanging books and use of vocabulary learning strategies. Moreover, it was observed that the students learnt new words and they developed a positive attitude toward learning new words. The current study finding is consistent with the study conducted by Yardım (2021), who concluded that the reading circle technique affected students' vocabulary positively as well as another study by Allan et al. (2005), who found that reading circles improved students' passive vocabulary. Similar to the current study findings, Allan et al. (2005) concluded in their study that primary and secondary school students gained autonomy about reading and they got more enthusiastic about reading thanks to the reading circle technique. Also, Jacobs (2015) conducted a study with primary school students and concluded that reading circles increased students' motivation to read and deepened their understanding.

Mrak (2021) carried out a study and found that reading circles had a positive impact on students' use of reading comprehension strategies, such as making a summary, illustration, questioning or making a connection. Although the current study statistically concluded that reading circles did not make a significant difference in students' reading strategies, it was observed in the current study that students could associate what they read with real life and their summarizing skill improved. On the other hand, it was observed that reading circles affected students' speaking and listening skills positively. It was seen that in the following stages of the implementation, students started to express themselves better, they improved their presentation skills and they obeyed listening rules better. Similarly, Karatay (2017) conducted a study and concluded that students' speaking skills improved and they were more confident about making an effective presentation.

Another study finding revealed that the students liked the roles of the questioner and word hunter the most, while they liked being the guess hunter the least. On the other hand, the students' metaphoric perceptions of books changed at the end of the implementation, and the number of students who viewed books as a source of fun decreased, while the number of students who saw books as a source of information increased. This study result is supported by the results of a study conducted by Akbulut, Özdemir, and Cıvğın (2017, p. 39), who found out that secondary school students mostly considered the concepts of books and reading as a tool for learning and development. Chall (1983) carried out a study with students who were 9-13 years old, which was the age group of the current study, and found out that students were reading to acquire new information, experiences and ideas. Their perceptions of books changed in accordance with the age group through reading circles.

The participant students stated that reading circles had many benefits, such as developing reading habits, learning to work in groups and making reading a fun activity. Likewise, Avcı and Yüksel (2011) concluded that students thought reading circles produced four benefits which are "understanding what you read, learning and permanence, developing reading habit and a chance of social interaction." Students think that reading circle practices were negatively affected when group members did not fully do what their task required, the books were not role-played and the reading sessions were short.

To summarize, the qualitative analysis conducted within the scope of the current study showed that reading circles significantly improved students' attitudes toward and habits of reading, whereas this finding did not appear in the quantitative analysis. In other words, while the qualitative results implied that the implementation was not effective, the participants perceived that it effective. For example, the results obtained from the Reading Habits and Attitudes Scale showed that the implementation did not have any effect on students' reading attitudes and habits, whereas the participant students and the Turkish teacher conducting the implementation stated that it had a positive impact on students' reading habits. Similarly, unlike the results of the quantitative analysis, which revealed that the implementation did not have an effect on students' strategies for reading comprehension, the Turkish teacher observed that it affected students' strategies for reading comprehension positively. Besides the time dedicated to the reading circles, the teacher had six Turkish classes with the participant students and so had a chance to observe the students, which increased the reliability of the teacher's opinions about the issue. Likewise, the researcher also observed the students during the implementation and noticed that toward the end of the implementation, students got better at various strategies, such as making a summary, asking questions about the text or making a connection between their own life and what they have read. This difference in the results of the study can be explained using the basic differences inherent in qualitative and quantitative methods. In quantitative methods, the priority is the method and the dominant viewpoint is objective, whereas the priority is the research case and the dominant viewpoint is subjective in qualitative methods (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018).

On the other hand, this might result from the fact that it is necessary to implement reading circles for longer periods to create statistically significant differences, or it might mean that only one technique is not enough to improve reading strategies as well as reading attitudes and habits. Furthermore, this might be about that affective skills, such as reading attitudes and habits, need longer time to develop than cognitive skills. The study results might not have created statistical differences due to the online conduct of the study. However, it will be possible to come to concrete conclusions about that after comparing the current study results to the results of similar future studies that will be conducted face-to-face. In short, it seems possible to state that further studies on this topic will make it possible to make more precise inferences to explain the difference between qualitative and quantitative results.

The current study finding supports the idea that reading circles should be implemented with secondary school students and points to that it is necessary to investigate the effects of reading circles on different groups for longer periods.

Suggestions as to the implementation of reading circles are as below:

1. Although being a summarizer in a reading circle contributes positively to students' skills of summarizing, it might be helpful to conduct extra activities to improve this skill for students who need that.
2. Students who assume the role of an artist should be encouraged to ask questions to their friends to make sure that this role is not limited to drawing a picture, writing a poem or playing a song. For instance, the artist who draws a picture of a part in the book, which amazed them, can ask their friends which part they are drawing. Another activity that can be used in this line is that the artist can share caricatures that are appropriate for the main idea of the book, can ask questions about the caricature to their friends and start a discussion just like other roles.

3. It was observed that keeping the roles the same in reading circles affected students' creativity badly. To prevent this, the content of the roles can be enriched, students can be given different roles or reading circle sessions can be held three or four times at most for each time to prevent repetition of the roles. Repetition of the roles should be prevented in the following sessions. For instance, if there is no new character in the book, the students undertaking the role of a character tracer will tell similar things to their friends every week. Because of that reason, the content of the roles should be enriched. When the character tracer is supposed to talk about the same characters in the following week, they can be guided to find which features of a specific character they have explored instead of just describing the character. This way, students can be encouraged to explore the changes in a character or characters.
4. Sometimes, two students who have different roles can work together to increase groupwork. The teacher can encourage students to this end. For example, the character tracer and artist can work together to draw a picture depicting the features of a character, and they show this picture to their friends during the reading circle session and guide their friends with questions, such as "Who might be the character drawn in this picture? Why is this character drawn this way? Which feature of the character is depicted in this picture?"
5. Students' performance in the sessions is affected by their attitudes toward the book or if they like it or not. Therefore, the choice of books should be made very carefully.
6. As the person who conducts the discussion, the teacher should manage the time effectively and spare an equal amount of time for each student. Therefore, the teacher needs to be careful about time management.
7. Being a word hunter should not be limited to words, and this role should be enriched to consist of word groups, such as idioms and proverbs. This way, students can take the opportunity to think over the idioms and proverbs they have come across in the book.
8. Using different techniques, such as pantomime, role-play or drama in reading circles, can be useful.
9. It is essential to be flexible while implementing reading circles and evaluating the process with a reflective viewpoint.

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