



## The Effect of Fishbowl Technique on Pupils' Literary Awareness

Ghaidaa Ahmed Jasim<sup>1</sup>, Muthana Mohammed Badie<sup>1</sup>,  
Israa Burhanuddin Abdurrahman<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of English, College of Education for Women, University of Tikrit, Iraq

[\\*israaburhan@tu.edu.iq](mailto:*israaburhan@tu.edu.iq)

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of Fishbowl Technique on EFL Iraqi preparatory pupils' literary awareness. This study hypothesizes that there is no significant difference in the level of literary awareness between the experimental and control groups. The study uses a Non-Randomized Experimental Group Design and includes a sample of 60 students from the fifth scientific stage at Al-Hikma School for Girls in Al-Alam town in Saladdin, Iraq. Thirty students are in the experimental group Section A and thirty students are in the control group Section B. The study took place over a two-month period, with the researcher instructing two groups of pupils during the academic year 2024-2023. Various statistical methods, including weighted mean and percentile mean, were utilized to assess the pupils' awareness. The analysis of the data showed that teaching pupils using the Fishbowl technique was effective in improving their literary awareness. The findings led to conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

**Keywords:** *Effect; Fishbowl Technique; Literary Awareness*

Copyright © 2024 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0)

### INTRODUCTION

Teaching English to non-native speakers is a rewarding profession that allows educators to share their passion for the language with students from diverse backgrounds. Effective teaching techniques can bridge cultural and linguistic gaps, leading to successful learning and achievement for students (Rahmi & Beniario, 2018). Mastering the English language can have a positive impact on students' personal and professional lives. Iraqi students struggle with learning English literature, but this can be addressed by utilizing techniques like Fishbowl technique (FBT) to create a more engaging learning environment. FBT has the potential to enhance students' understanding and appreciation of literature, ultimately improving their overall learning experience.

This study aims at investigating Iraqi EFL preparatory Pupils' literary awareness. Accordingly, it hypothesizes that there is no statistically significant difference in the level of literary awareness among EFL Iraqi preparatory students in both the experimental and control groups. The study is limited to the 5th grade students in the scientific branch at Al-Hikma School for Girls in al-Alam town, Saladdin, Iraq in the academic year 2023 - 2024.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Fishbowl Technique*

Active learning involves students participating in activities like reading, writing, discussing, problem-solving, and working together in tasks that promote higher-level thinking. Enhanced active learning techniques encourage cooperative work among students, as research shows that collaborative learning leads to better academic progress and a deeper understanding of the subject matter. According to Gillies (2020), broad research has been conducted on the benefits of cooperative learning, particularly in terms of academic progress. When students collaborate, they have the chance to reciprocate their knowledge and insights, leading to a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Additionally, working with others fosters the development of crucial skills such as active listening, considering different perspectives, questioning ideas, and communicate effectively within a group.

There were several techniques found for fostering cooperation among Pupils, one of which is Fishbowl technique (henceforth FBT). There are countless scholars and educationalists who have diverse definitions of the FBT concept. Taylor (2007) for instance defines fishbowl as an approach for arranging and simplifying a discussion among a medium to large group of people. It encourages active participation from students and can also serve as a model for smaller group activities and discussions. The FBT is a useful technique for generating ideas that helps teams break free from repetitive patterns. It is a widely used method for group discussion and learning. Furthermore, it is considered as an effective technique that helps pupils to work cooperatively, participate and express their own ideas freely without feeling shy. "One productive theme for a fishbowl might be "what do we want our students to learn," a prompt that invites each participant to reflect on his or her values and priorities, to express them clearly, and to listen to others' views and perspectives"(Garrison & Munday, 2012, p. 5).

Fishbowl discussions come in two main formats: open and closed. In an open format, members of the outer circle can join the discussion by taking a seat in the inner circle when someone leaves. In a closed format, the inner circle discusses a topic for a set time before allowing the outer circle to join in. Both formats allow all participants in the classroom to contribute their ideas and opinions. The researcher in this study used the open format fishbowl type (Rahma, 2015).

### *Cooperative Learning and Fishbowl Technique*

Cooperative learning is a key part of active learning, where students work together in small groups to improve their own learning and help their peers learn as well. This approach focuses on achieving common goals that benefit everyone in the group. (Johnson & Johnson, 1989, 1999; Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 2013). Dyson & Casey, (2016) also mentioned that in cooperative learning, students should work closely together, give positive feedback, and engage in supportive conversations. Encouragement and face-to-face interaction are important aspects, but not the only ones. Implementing cooperative learning can help educators achieve their goals, especially when using the fishbowl technique.

The study by Hendrichova in (2012) showed that the use of fishbowl in cooperative learning can benefit for the learners by allowing them to apply their knowledge in practical situations, gain first-hand experience, and relate it to their daily lives. This approach helps students better understand and retain information in their long-term memory. Additionally, Benz's study in (2004) found that involvement among learners

stimulates discussion and peer learning. In classroom activities, active participation is crucial as it promotes engagement and provides opportunities for language practice. Cooperative learning and the FBT both support collaboration, equal participation, and effective learning from each other.

### *Teacher's Role in Fishbowl Technique*

The FBT is a teaching technique that involves a specific role for the teacher. Al-Shennawa & Al-Kazem, (2015) mentioned many roles for the teacher within this technique where the teacher should model the technique before implementing it; should create a suitable environment, stimulate the discussion, and support non-participating students by dividing them into two groups; and should not interfere in the discussion, show respect and remain calm, monitor both groups.

### *Fishbowl Technique's Procedures*

Brozo (2007) illustrated the procedures of FBT as mentioned below:

1. The teacher decides a specific topic for the discussion the class.
2. The teacher explains how a fishbowl discussion works.
3. The teacher selects four or five volunteers to sit in the middle of the room, either around a table or a few desks.
4. The teacher tells the students to talk to each other and share their thoughts and opinions.
5. The teacher allows the students to write notes and gives them sufficient time for communicating ideas and their points of view.
6. The teacher starts the discussion by asking the students in a group to engage in conversation about their ideas and opinions.
7. During a small group discussion, the teacher instructs the students to pay close attention to their classmates and take notes.
8. The teacher allows the students to talk for 5 minutes. They only step in if the conversation stops or to ensure that everyone gets involved and has a chance to speak.
9. When a small group of students are discussing, the teacher tells them to keep going with the Fishbowl process until everyone has had a chance to participate.

### *Literary Awareness*

1. Rainsford, (2014) mentioned that it is not difficult to find other definitions of literature that are entirely different. Such definitions tend to fall within one, or more than one, of the following categories:
2. Form and Content: Literature is a form of writing where the manner in which something is expressed is just as important as the content itself. In other words, the way something is said is an integral part of what is being conveyed.
3. Imagination and Creativity: Literature is a form of writing that goes beyond simply presenting facts. It involves the creation of stories and ideas, often in the form of fiction.
4. Subjectivity: Literature is a form of writing that presents things, people, and events from a unique and subjective perspective, rather than an objective understanding.

Hence, literary awareness includes the mastering of the above components of

literature.

### ***Using Different Genres of Literature in Language Teaching***

In this study the researcher uses poetry, drama, and short story to employ FBT based on the pupils' learning level.

#### **1. Advantages of Using Poetry in Language Teaching**

Poetry is a form of language that can be sung, chanted, spoken, or written. It follows a pattern of repetition that highlights the connections between words based on their sound and meaning. This pattern is usually a rhythm or meter, which can be enhanced by rhyme or alliteration, or even both (Baldick, 2001). Saraç (2003) stated that Poetry has the potential to enhance the learning and teaching of fundamental language skills. The key link between learning and poetry lies in metaphor. Metaphor is a prevalent technique used in poetry, making it a valuable tool for learning.

#### **2. Advantages of Using Drama in Language Teaching**

Drama is a broad term that refers to performances where actors portray the actions and words of fictional or historical characters (or even non-human entities) to entertain an audience. This can take place on a stage or through a broadcast. It can also refer to a specific example of this art form, such as a play (Baldick, 2001). Using drama in a language classroom is an effective tool for teaching language. It helps learners understand grammatical structures in different contexts and teaches them how to use language to express themselves, control conversations, and provide information. Drama also enhances students' awareness of the target language and culture (Sarıçoban, 2004).

#### **3. Advantages of Using Short Story in language Teaching**

A short story is a brief piece of fiction written in prose. Many of the terms used to analyse novels, such as the elements, types, and narrative techniques, can also be applied to short stories. Short fiction allows readers to explore language and life through characters that reflect everyday actions in different styles and tones (Collie & Slater, 1993). It mirrors human life and can inspire students to read by exposing them to a world of excitement and uncertainty.

## **METHODS**

### ***The Design of the Experiment***

The process of experimental design involves a series of well-defined steps. By establishing a clear research purpose, stating the hypothesis, identifying the target population, selecting an appropriate methodology, defining the experimental conditions, and determining the method of data recording and analysis tools, researchers can conduct rigorous research. In this process, the researcher manipulates independent variables to examine their impact on the dependent variables. Experimental research involves making changes to one or more variables and then studying the impact of these changes on another variable (Rose & Mckinley, 2020). The attitude questionnaire was designed in a way that includes 10 parts to be a tool to collect the data related to the participants.

### ***Population and Sample of the Study***

The study includes EFL Iraqi preparatory students in the fifth grade at girls' schools in Al-Alam. There are a total of 208 girls in this grade, spread across five

preparatory schools in Al-Alam. The study focuses on Al-Hikma Secondary School for Girls, Saladdin, Iraq. The sample includes 60 pupils from two sections of the scientific branch. Section A is the experimental group, while section B is the control group. Each section has 30 pupils

### *The experimental Material*

The current study aims to explore how the FBT impacts the literary awareness of Iraqi EFL Preparatory Pupils. The textbook being used is a standard material in all Iraqi schools for teaching English to students in the fifth preparatory stage, who have been learning English for at least 7 years. The sample for this experiment consists of **fifth-year pupils from AL-HIKMA Preparatory Schools in Salah al din Governorate, Iraq**. The researcher herself taught the experimental group, with lectures scheduled for Sundays and Mondays.

### *Application of the Experiment*

The experiment began on October 26, 2023, and lasted for eight weeks. The experimental group received two hours of lectures per week and completed a questionnaire. The control group was taught using conventional teaching methods, while the experimental group was taught using the fishbowl technique.

The researcher followed the following procedures in teaching fishbowl technique:

1. The steps for the task are clearly explained to help students understand what they need to do.
2. Pupils are given topics, passages, and scenarios related to literature in their English textbook.
3. The researcher makes the pupils watch videos about applying fishbowl technique to understand how to apply it.
4. The pupils are provided with literary texts (poetry, drama, short story) and asked to work in two groups (inner and outer) circles to discuss the questions.
5. Pupils are encouraged to use English in discussing how to define literary devices in different types of literature such as poetry, drama, and short stories.

### *Questionnaire Construction*

A questionnaire is a written list of questions that respondents answer. Students read the questions, understand what is being asked, and write down their responses (Kumar, 2011).

In this study, a questionnaire was given to both the experimental and control groups at the same time and on the same day, but in different places. The questionnaire was limited to 30 minutes to ensure completion within the allotted time frame. To ensure a smooth questionnaire process, the researcher read the items of the questionnaire and clarified it to make it more understandable and to get clear results.

## **RESULT**

The pupil's responses to the questionnaire items have been analysed statistically as follows:

Comparison between the students' attitudes towards literary awareness of the Experimental Group and that of Control Group according to the questionnaire.

**Table1.** Experimental group students' perceptions of literary awareness results.

No	Items	Strongly Agree	Somehow Agree	Somehow Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Weight Mean	%
1	I can specify the types of literary texts (Poetry, Drama, Short Story).	19	8	2	1	3.533	70.7
2	I can understand and appreciate poetry, drama, and short stories	19	9	2	0	3.600	72
3	I can understand how the literary devices are used to affect the meaning	10	16	3	1	3.200	64
4	I can identify the metaphor, simile, and personification in poetry	17	10	3	0	3.500	70
5	I can understand literary concepts such as theme, symbolism, characterization, and plot in short stories	26	4	0	0	3.900	78
6	I can recognize the elements of drama (setting, characters, plot, and theme)	26	4	0	0	3.900	78
7	More ideas are aroused when I want to express and discuss literary works	11	16	3	0	3.300	66
8	I can better comprehend the literary texts	10	15	4	1	3.167	63.3
9	My critical thinking skills are enhanced	15	11	4	0	3.400	68

	more						
10	My ability to express my thoughts and ideas effectively is increased	13	12	3	2	3.233	64.7

Most responses from the experimental group align with all items related to the advantages of using the fishbowl technique in teaching literary text. Notably, items 5 and 6 have the highest weight means of 3.900 each, followed by item 2 with a weight mean of 3.600, and item 1 with a weight mean of 3.533.

**Table 2.** Control group students' literary awareness perceptions

No	Items	Strongly Agree	Somehow Agree	Somehow Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Weight Mean	%
1	I can specify the types of literary texts (Poetry, Drama, Short Story).	1	3	6	20	1.533	30.7
2	I can understand and appreciate poetry, drama, and short stories	0	2	12	16	1.567	31.3
3	I can understand how the literary devices are used to affect the meaning	0	3	7	20	1.467	29.3
4	I can identify the metaphor, simile, and personification in poetry	0	4	10	16	1.633	32.7
5	I can understand literary concepts such as theme, symbolism, characterization, and plot in short stories	0	7	9	14	1.800	36
6	I can recognize the elements of drama (setting, characters, plot, and theme)	0	3	19	8	1.867	37.3
7	More ideas are aroused when I want to express and discuss literary works	0	8	12	10	1.967	39.3
8	I can better comprehend the	0	6	10	14	1.767	35.3

	literary texts						
9	My critical thinking skills are enhanced more	1	7	7	15	1.833	36.7
10	My ability to express my thoughts and ideas effectively is increased	0	1	14	15	1.567	31.3

## DISCUSSION

Going through the results for each point of the questionnaire and comparing the control group and the experimental group:

1. Types of literary texts: Experimental group: 70.7% either strongly or somehow agreed that they can specify the types of literary texts (poetry, drama, short story). Control group: Only 30.7% either strongly or somehow agreed with this item, indicating a much lower ability to identify literary genres compared to the experimental group.
2. Understanding and appreciation of literary genres: Experimental group: 72% strongly or somehow agreed that they can understand and appreciate poetry, drama, and short stories. Control group: Only 31.3% either strongly or somehow agreed, suggesting a significantly lower level of understanding and appreciation for literary genres.
3. Understanding of literary devices: Experimental group: 64% strongly or somehow agreed that they can understand how literary devices are used to affect meaning. Control group: Only 29.3% either strongly or somehow agreed, demonstrating a much weaker understanding of the role of literary devices.
4. Identification of literary techniques: Experimental group: 70% strongly or somehow agreed that they can identify metaphor, simile, and personification in poetry. Control group: 32.7% either strongly or somehow agreed, indicating a considerably lower ability to recognize these poetic devices.
5. Understanding of literary concepts: Experimental group: 78% strongly or somehow agreed that they can understand literary concepts like theme, symbolism, characterization, and plot in short stories. Control group: Only 36% either strongly or somehow agreed, suggesting a much poorer grasp of these literary concepts.
6. Recognition of dramatic elements: Experimental group: 78% strongly or somehow agreed that they can recognize the elements of drama (setting, characters, plot, and theme). Control group: 37.3% either strongly or somehow agreed, demonstrating a significantly lower ability to identify the key components of drama.

The remaining items (7-10) show similar patterns, with the experimental group consistently outperforming the control group in areas such as idea generation, comprehension of literary texts, critical thinking, and effective expression of thoughts and ideas.

Overall, the results clearly indicate that the experimental group, which used the fishbowl technique, had a significantly better understanding, appreciation, and ability



to engage with various aspects of literary texts compared to the control group, which used a conventional teaching method. This suggests that the fishbowl technique was more effective in enhancing the students' literary awareness and critical engagement with literary works.

The current research aims to find out if there are significant differences in literary awareness between two groups: the experimental group and the control group. The findings indicate that students in the experimental group, who were taught using the fishbowl technique, were able to actively participate, stay motivated, interact with others, and enhance their English skills. The aim of the study has been achieved. As a result, the data analysis from this study supports previous research findings, showing a clear difference in performance between students who were exposed to the fishbowl technique and those who were not.

## CONCLUSION

Exposing pupils to the fishbowl technique enhances their understanding of literary devices like setting, plot, simile, and personification. This method also boosts motivation and eagerness to learn, which are crucial for effective teaching. By providing a safe environment for expression, the fishbowl technique helps students overcome fear and shyness, fostering open discussion and successful learning. Tailored teaching materials further support this progress, as evidenced by improved posttest scores. The experimental group taught with the fishbowl technique scored significantly higher than the control group, demonstrating increased awareness and effectiveness. Based on these findings, it is recommended that English language teachers incorporate the fishbowl technique in teaching literary texts and that curriculum designers enhance teacher guides with this approach to improve literature education.

## REFERENCES

- Al-Shinawa, S & Al-Kadhim, M. (2021). The Effect of the Fishbowl Strategy on the Achievement and Retention of Fourth-Grade Female Students in History. *Ahl al-Bayt Magazine*, Vol.12 No.13, 2610-2621.
- Baldick, C. (2001). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brozo, B. (2007). *Fishbowl Discussion*. Retrieved on February 8, 2018 from: [http://pd-network.com/lessons/Fishbowl\\_Discussions.pdf](http://pd-network.com/lessons/Fishbowl_Discussions.pdf)
- Collie, J. & Slater, S. (1993). *Short Stories for Creative Language Classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dyson, B., & Casey, A. (2016). *Cooperative Learning in Physical Education and Physical Activity: A Practical Introduction*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Garrison, K. & Munday, N. K. (2012). Toward authentic dialogue: origins of the fishbowl method and implications for writing center work. *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal*. 9(1), 2-8. doi:10.15781/T2DJ58Z5G.
- Gillies, R. (2020). *An Introduction to Cooperative Learning*. The Education Hub.
- Hendrichova, N. (2012). *Developing Oral Skills with Cooperative Learning in EFL Classes*. Retrieved on 3rd January 2013. <http://tenntlc.utk.edu/files/2011/10/fishbowl->

[technique.pdf](#)

- Johnson D. W. & Johnson R. T. (1989). *Cooperation and Competition: Theory and Research*. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.
- Johnson D. W. & Johnson R. T. (1999). *Learning Together and Alone: Cooperative, Competitive, and Individualistic Learning*. 5th ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Johnson D. W., Johnson R. T. & Holubec E. J. (2013). *Cooperation in the Classroom*. 9th ed. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.
- Rahma, D. (2015). *The Fishbowl Method to Improve the Students' Speaking Skill (An Experimental Study in Ninth Grade of SMPN 2 AMBARAWA (Unpublished Thesis)* Skripsi: STAIN Salatiga.
- Rahmi, I. & Beniario, H. (2018) The Effectiveness of ESA (Engage, Study, Activate) Element on Reading Comprehension of Report Text at X Grade. MA. KM. Muhammadiyah. Padang Panjang: 3rd International Conference on Education, *Teachers in the Digital Age*, 159-168.
- Rainsford, D. (2014). *Studying Literature in English: An Introduction*. Routledge.
- Rose, H., & Mckinley, J. (2020). *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. Taylor and Francis.
- Saraç, S. (2003). *A Suggested Syllabus for the Teaching of Poetry Course in ELT Departments of Turkey*. Unpublished M.A Thesis. Ankara: Hacettepe University.
- Taylor, B., D. & Karen D. W. (2007). Fostering Engaging and Active Discussion in Middle School Classrooms. *Middle School Journal*. Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 54-59.