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## Using Literature Circles to Develop EFL Prospective Teachers' Creative Writing Skills and Motivation for Writing

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### Abstract:

The present study aimed at investigating the effect of a program based on literature circles on developing creative writing skills and motivation for writing of EFL student-teachers at Women's College, Ain Shams University. The study adopted the one-group research design and made use of two measurement tools; a pre-post creative writing test and a writing motivation scale. The creative writing program was designed in the light of literature circles principles and creative writing teaching techniques. The program was applied to a sample of 35 fourth year student-teachers of English at Women's College. The student-teachers participated in literature circles through reading some personal essays and short stories in groups, analyzing them and performing certain reflective tasks. Then they write their own personal essays and short stories. The results of the study have shown that the proposed literature circles program was effective in developing the participants' creative fiction writing skills, namely; plot, characterization, dialogue, setting and language style and non-fiction skills which are; narrative, organization, voice and language use. The program also proved to be effective in increasing writing motivation of EFL prospective teachers.

**Keywords:** literature circles, creative writing, motivation for writing

## استخدام دوائر الأدب في تنمية مهارات الكتابة الإبداعية والدافعية للكتابة لدى الطالبات معلمات اللغة الانجليزية

### المستخلص:

هدفت الدراسة الحالية إلى قياس مدى تأثير برنامج قائم على دوائر الأدب في تنمية مهارات الكتابة الإبداعية والدافعية للكتابة لدى الطالبات معلمات اللغة الانجليزية بكلية البنات جامعة عين شمس. استخدمت الدراسة التصميم التجريبي ذو المجموعة الواحدة وقامت الباحثة بتصميم أداتين للقياس: اختبار قبلي بعدي لمهارات الكتابة الإبداعية ومقياس للدافعية للكتابة. تم تصميم البرنامج في ضوء مبادئ دوائر الأدب واستراتيجيات تدريس الكتابة الإبداعية، وتم تطبيقه على عينة تتكون من ٣٥ طالبة من الفرقة الرابعة بقسم اللغة الانجليزية تربوي بكلية البنات في الفصل الأول من العام الدراسي ٢٠١٩-٢٠٢٠. شاركت عينة البحث في دوائر الأدب من خلال قراءة بعض المقالات الشخصية والقصص القصيرة في مجموعات وتحليلها والقيام ببعض المهام المطلوبة. بعد ذلك قامت الطالبات المعلمات بكتابة مقالاتهم الشخصية وبعض القصص القصيرة. وبعد معالجة نتائج الدراسة احصائيا ثبت فاعلية البرنامج القائم على دوائر الأدب في تنمية مهارات الكتابة الإبداعية الخيالية والواقعية لدى عينة البحث. كما أدى البرنامج المقترح الى زيادة الدافعية للكتابة لدى الطالبات معلمات اللغة الانجليزية بكلية البنات.

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## Introduction:

Creative writing is expressing one's ideas and thoughts in an imaginative way. Creativity and innovation are two demanding qualifications for the 21<sup>st</sup> century students. Wagner (2008) puts seven survival skills that students need to acquire in order to be able to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He divides the skills that we need to develop into our students into seven core survival skills. These skills are: critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration and leadership, agility and adaptability, initiative and entrepreneurialism, effective oral and written communication, accessing and analyzing information and finally, curiosity and imagination.

Thus, teaching creativity and developing imagination have become a must in English language learning courses to prepare students for the challenging world they will encounter. As for the field of ESL learning, creative writing is the device for teaching creativity for English learners.

Creative writing is a relaxed informal writing with the emphasis on content rather than mechanics. It is guided by the author's need to express his ideas and emotions rather than a set of structure that all kinds of academic writing are committed to. (Stenger, 2002).

Creative writing can improve students' thinking skills, imagination and self-esteem. As a consequence, it improves their achievement and language accuracy as they engage in activities that require reading, thinking, analyzing, criticizing and evaluating

beside the recreation of their own world as they express themselves freely (Khater, 2015).

Creative writing assignments can serve as an important meditational tool that fosters greater motivation and engagement with writing. Through creative writing, students can express themselves more freely and symbolically than they can do in oral expression. They express more personal thoughts and mental images. Therefore, creative writing tasks are motivating both for L1 and L2 students (Harmer, 2004).

In the recent research concerning language teaching and learning, a serious transfer has occurred as enormous focus has gone towards learner and learning rather than on teacher and teaching. Nowadays, indeed, it is an important target for the teachers to make their students less dependent on teachers and more autonomous on themselves (Ó Malley and Chamot, 1995). In fact, learner self-sufficiency is corresponding to contemporary ideas about the active association and interest of learners and the importance of learner-centered approaches such as literature circles (Littlewood, 1996).

In a literature circle, students gather together in small groups to discuss a piece of literature. Each reading group selects their own book and each group member is given a role or a job to complete. Students get the opportunity to discuss and reflect what they read in the story or chapter with their group, and engage in critical thinking. There are various literature circle roles for students to accomplish; among them are: discussion director, connector, illustrator, summarizer, character analyzer and vocabulary enricher. Each student has a worksheet for his role. He writes his responses in the worksheet then discuss it with the group.

The difference between literature circles and other small group instructional approaches like guided reading are discussed by Daniels (2002) as shown the following table:

Table (1) The difference between literature circles and guided reading

Guided reading	Literature circles
1. Usually consists of homogenous groups formed around students' strengths and needs	1. Can be heterogeneous groups formed around students' interests
2. Teacher-selected texts	2. Student-selected texts
3. Focus on reading strategies (for decoding and comprehension)	3. Focus on higher level thinking skills such as author's intent, writing style, characterization
4. Teacher plays central, guiding role in the lesson.	4. Teacher is more of a facilitator/ observer/ encourager.

Although literature circles integrate both reading and writing skills, most research conducted on literature circles was devoted to exploring its effect on developing reading comprehension skills. Little research is conducted to investigate its impact on developing writing skills. Thus, the present study is concerned with investigating the effect of literature circles on developing EFL prospective teachers' creative writing skills. Being a learner-centered method which is based on students' choice of their readings, literature circles is thought to increase students' motivation.

Motivation is a key factor for explaining the success or failure in any activity. It is obvious that success in a task is due to the fact that someone is motivated. Second language learning is influenced by learner's motivation and desire to learn a particular language. Many academic studies have been done over this area and tackled the issue of how motivation can facilitate and increase learners' achievement (Pardee ,1990, Crookes and Schmidt, 1991 and Narayanan,2006).

For Gardner (1985), motivation is the combination of attempt plus desire to obtain the aim of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language.

There are many elements in both literature circles and creative writing that promote students' motivation. In literature circles, students choose what they want to read, participate actively with their group to accomplish the assigned task, enjoy learning independently and work in a safe atmosphere which encourages them to take risks. As for creative writing, students enjoy expressing their ideas freely without being afraid of making mistakes and writing about their own personal experiences. Therefore the present study made use of literature circles to develop student-teachers' creative writing skills and motivation for writing.

### **Context of the problem:**

Despite the fact that reading and writing are two closely related skills and that practicing reading improve students' writing skills, most research done on literature circles- such as Balkind (2009), Al Sherif (2014), Jacobs (2015) and Irawati (2016)- aimed at investigating its effect on improving reading comprehension skills. A few studies - specifically Huntley (2000) and Niño & Páez (2018) - were conducted to explore the effect of literature circles on developing writing skills. Huntley's study (2000) showed that students did better in research writing skills after using literature circles with them. It also concluded that using literature circles promoted student-directed learning and increased student engagement. Niño and Páez's study (2018) improved fifth graders of primary students' writing ability in English as a Foreign Language through the application of some literature circles techniques. It is obvious that these two studies tackled the effect of using literature circles on research writing skills and writing ability of students. Thus, the present study tried to investigate the effect of using literature circles on students' creative writing skills.

In spite of the importance of teaching creative writing in English language learning, it is neglected in EFL prospective teachers' preparation courses. Many studies such as Khater (2015) and Abdel Razik (2019) proved that creative writing in English as a foreign language is practically unused in EFL teaching in the Egyptian educational system. This fact necessitates its introduction into EFL teaching as one of the successful ways of promoting and intensifying "students' linguistic and intellectual development by helping them to create written English texts that come to reflect their maturity and expertise" (Leki, 2002, p. 9).

To ensure the existence of the study problem, the researcher conducted a pilot study to 15 fourth year student-teachers of English in Women's College. Those student-teachers were excluded from participating in the present study. The fifteen student-teachers were asked to write a personal essay and a short story. Their writings were analyzed and shown the following results:

For the personal essay:

- Thirteen students wrote a very weak introduction that didn't attract the reader's attention.
- Eight of the students wrote the essay without clear organization or division of the essay into paragraphs.
- Twelve students made dull description of details.
- In 11 personal essays, the personality of the writer was not expressed clearly and the writing didn't evoke strong emotions in the reader.
- All the students made many spelling and grammatical mistakes.

As for the short story:

- Twelve students introduced the characters in a flat way.
- Ten students didn't arrange the plot in a logical order or follow the five elements of the plot.
- Fourteen students didn't use dialogue to establish characters or create scenes.

- Eleven students didn't introduce setting in a way to present emotions or convey the mood of the story.
- In all students' writings, there were a lot of punctuation, spelling and grammar mistakes.

Besides, the researcher applied an open-ended questionnaire to the fifteen student-teachers to explore their level of motivation for writing. The questionnaire included five questions and the student-teachers' responses indicate that they are not motivated to learn writing. Students state that in writing courses they write in topics that they are not interested in. The writing courses focus more on writing mechanics than on expressing their own ideas, experiences and feelings. They do not see writing as a way to express themselves and employ their imagination.

### **Statement of the problem:**

The present study tackles an important problem facing English prospective teachers in Women's College, Ain Shams University, that is, the student-teachers' incompetence in creative writing skills. Thus, the present study tried to investigate the effect of a program based on literature circles in developing English prospective teachers' creative writing skills and to measure the effect of the program on student-teachers' writing motivation.

In order to overcome this problem, the present study tried to answer the following main question:

What is the effect of using literature circles on developing EFL prospective teachers' creative writing skills and writing motivation?

From this main question, some sub-questions emerged:

1. What are the creative writing skills suitable for fourth year student-teachers of English?
2. What are the features of a program based on literature circles to develop creative writing skills of fourth year student-teachers of English?

3. What are the procedures for applying a program based on literature circles to develop creative writing skills of fourth year student-teachers of English?
4. How far will a program based on literature circles develop the creative writing skills of fourth year student-teachers of English?
5. How far will a program based on literature circles enhance student-teachers' motivation for writing?

### **Study Hypotheses:**

1. There is a statistically significant difference between the overall mean scores of the treatment group on the creative writing pre-test and post-test in the non-fiction skills in favor of the post-test.
2. There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the treatment group on the creative writing pre-test and post-test in each non-fiction skill in favor of the post-test.
3. There is a statistically significant difference between the overall mean scores of the treatment group on the creative writing pre-test and post-test in the fiction skills in favor of the post-test.
4. There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the treatment group on the creative writing pre-test and post-test in each fiction skill in favor of the post-test.
5. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the treatment group on the pre and post administrations of the writing motivation scale in favor of the post administration.

### **Delimitations of the Study:**

This study was delimited to:

1. A sample of fourth-year student-teachers of English in Women's College, Ain Shams University.
2. Fiction creative writing skills namely; plot, characterization, dialogue, setting and language style.

3. Non-fiction creative writing skills namely; narrative, organization, voice and language use.
4. Duration of an academic term to apply the literature circles program on the student-teachers of English.

### **Definition of terms:**

#### **Literature Circles:**

In the present study, literature circle is defined as an activity in which a group of student-teachers meet to discuss and respond to an essay or short story that they are all reading. Student-teachers are assigned specific roles in the literature circle to allow the group to function productively and to help members remain focused on the chosen text. Literature circle roles used in this study are discussion director, connector, illustrator, summarizer, and vocabulary enricher.

#### **Creative writing:**

Kenny (2011) defined creative writing as a piece of work that expresses feelings, thoughts and ideas in an imaginative way. It is an attempt to express all the feelings that we experience every day as love, hate, violence, boredom and brute fact. In this study, creative writing is defined as EFL prospective teachers' expressing themselves creatively in writing personal essays and short stories. This study focused on four non-fiction skills which are; narrative, organization, voice and language use and five fiction skills; plot, characterization, dialogue, setting and language style.

#### **Motivation:**

In this study, motivation is defined as prospective teacher's desire and interest in learning creative writing skills and their willingness to express their ideas creatively while writing personal essays and short stories.

### **Significance of the Study:**

It was hoped that the present study would:

1. Develop a program based on literature circles to enhance EFL prospective teachers' creative writing skills.
2. Help fourth year student-teachers of English improve their creative writing skills and writing motivation.
3. Draw the attention of teacher educators to the importance of developing EFL prospective teachers' creative writing skills.
4. Be a springboard to a number of studies using literature circles to develop EFL prospective teachers' other language skills.

### **Theoretical background:**

This part will deal with a review of related literature and previous studies. It will tackle literature circles' definition, roles and benefits. It will also deal with creative writing's definition, importance and genres. Finally, it discusses writing motivation and its relationship with literature circles and creative writing.

### **Literature circles:**

Literature circles are a powerful tool to use in the EFL classroom. They have become the cornerstone for many English teaching programs. Studies have shown that when the teacher implements literature circle teaching strategies, it can have a positive impact on students' attitudes towards learning as well their reading and writing abilities (Daniels and Steineke, 2004; Burner, 2007 and Nagy & Townsend, 2012 ).

In literature circles, small groups of students gather together to discuss a piece of literature in depth. The discussion is guided by students' responses to what they have read. They may talk about events and characters in the book, the author's craft, or personal experiences related to the story. Literature circles provide a way for students to engage in critical thinking and reflection as they read, discuss, and respond to books. Collaboration is at the heart of this

approach. Students reshape and add onto their understanding as they construct meaning with other learners. Finally, literature circles guide students to deeper understanding of what they read through structured discussion and extended written response. (Hill et al, 2001)

The easiest way to understand what literature circles are, is to examine what they are not. This is shown in the following table.

Table (2) Literature circles

Literature circles are...	Literature circles are not...
Reader response centered	Teacher and text centered
Part of a balanced literacy program	The entire reading curriculum
Groups formed by book choice	Teacher-assigned groups formed solely by ability
Structured for student independence, responsibility, and ownership	Unstructured, uncontrolled "talk time" without accountability
Guided primarily by student insights and questions	Guided primarily by teacher- or curriculum-based questions
Intended as a context in which to apply reading and writing skills	Intended as a place to do skills work
Flexible and fluid; never look the same twice	Tied to a prescriptive "recipe"

(Katherine, Schlick and Johnson, 1999)

As Cameron et al. (2012) explain, literature circles are led mostly by students, while the teacher remains in the background and performs only basic control functions. Roles are usually assigned to members of the literature circle to allow the group to function productively and to help members remain focused on the chosen

book. Examples of individual roles are discussion director, connector, illustrator, summarizer, character analyzer and vocabulary enricher.

**Literature Circles Roles:**

1. **The Discussion Director:** whose task is to develop at least five questions about the text and then share these questions with the group. Their task is to have students in the group talk about the big ideas and share their reactions to the chapter.
2. **The Illustrator:** This job entails drawing pictures related to the reading and shares the drawings with the group; the group members then speculate on the meaning of the pictures and connect them to their own ideas about the text.
3. **The Summarizer:** whose role is to recall what happened in the reading and prepare a summary for the group.
4. **The Vocabulary Enricher:** who helps the group find and discuss new or difficult words. They are allowed to use a dictionary to find out the meaning, then put the meaning into their own words and discuss the words with the group.
5. **The Connector:** The connector's job is to find connections between the chapter that was read and the outside world. Their task is to connect what is happening in their own life (school, home, etc.) with the book.
6. **The character analyzer:** The character analyzer's role is to write about the characters. They tell what the characters are like and how they know that they're like that. They help the group to compare the characters with other people they know.

(Daniels and Steineke, 2004)

**Benefits of literature circles:**

Recent evidence demonstrates that literature circles positively impact student learning processes and language development. Much of this impact is directed towards several important areas of language learning, including the following:

### **1. Improved comprehension skills**

Literature circles help students develop comprehension skills that are essential when reading a text. Literature circles support strategies such as visualizing, questioning, connecting, and analyzing that are vital to solid comprehension and lively conversation.

(Daniels and Steineke, 2004)

### **2. Increased student participation in a safe environment**

Literature circles help to provide a safe environment where students can build confidence and take risks while interacting in the second language (Burns, 1998; Larson, 2008). Learners may feel more comfortable working with their peers than being constantly monitored by the teacher and may be more willing to share their viewpoints without feeling anxious about making mistakes.

### **3. Enhanced responsibility and motivation**

Another benefit of literature circles is helping students feel a sense of ownership and responsibility. Student choice of the reading text and social interaction in the group support student motivation and can have a very powerful effect on achievement (Burner, 2007). Researchers have also found that when students work in collaborative groups they encourage each other's efforts and that this leads to increased motivation and effort (Daniels, 2002; Chi, 2008; Williams, 2009).

### **4. Expanded collaborative discussion**

Some aspects of literature circles such as discussion, student response, and collaboration are important for providing a way for students to engage in critical thinking and reflection (Schlick Noe and Johnson, 1999).

### **5. Developed oral proficiency**

Research has found that the target language is learned more effectively when second language learners have opportunities to

practice real communication (Krashen 1981); working in literature groups provides students with opportunities for social interaction and communication about issues important to them (Nagy and Townsend, 2012).

### **6. Reinforced writing skills**

After reading the text, teachers can assign challenging group writing activities that stimulate students' critical thinking, such as choosing a different ending to a short story, writing a short critique, or addressing writing prompts that reflect knowledge of what they have read. It is proved that reading interactions have positive effects on writing skills. They also support greater participation and involvement as students share and shape their opinions on paper (Webb et al.,x,df 1998).

Based on the above, literature circles may have a positive effect on students' writing skills. Thus, the present study tried to investigate the effect of using literature circles on developing prospective teachers' creative writing skills.

### **Creative Writing:**

Creative writing is one's ability to put ideas and feelings of a particular topic in paper using imagination. This ability allows the creative writer to go beyond the ordinary, creating new ideas that are different from everyone without deviating from the normal values (Temizkan, 2011).

It is directly related to authenticity and imagination instead of standardization and accuracy of thoughts. Creative writing is more than transferring knowledge and communication; it is possession of language proficiency to represent what are received from the outer world in a different creative way (Brooks and Marshal, 2004).

For writing a creative written text, the writer uses all the five senses. He shows what is happening instead of just telling the reader. He links the ideas, feelings and imagination in one piece of work in a quest for self-expression.

Teaching creative writing to students is very beneficial to their development as English language learners because focusing on

accuracy and grammatical structures rather than imagination and freedom of expression can lead to dissonance and low motivational levels. According to Abdel Razik's study (2019), some students are conditioned by red-lined first draft, so they are scared to make mistakes and they are blocked. Students need confidence in their writing in order to gain fluency in writing and become flexible writers. Creative writing activities connect directly to students' imagination and therefore, are useful in allowing exploration of interests and ideas in a spontaneous way.

Another reason for integrating creative writing in language teaching programs is the emotional response which is a main factor to distinguish creative writing from functional writing. Creative writing can create an emotional response in readers. While reading we are connecting our feelings and emotions directly with the text as if we live in the world of the text. (Stenger, 2002)

Besides, Maley's study (2012) proved that creative writing practices led to a dramatic increase in students' self-confidence and motivation. Creative writing also arouses motivation and gives space for self-expression through making learning more enjoyable and stimulating and holding learners as active participants.

Moreover, creative writing combines both learning and entertainment at the same time. While writing, the student writers express their own ideas creating new things and "enjoy playing with language" (Khater, 2015).

Creative writing has two main types; fiction and non-fiction. These two genres will be discussed here in detail.

### **Creative fiction writing:**

Fiction allows the writer to break the borders to be creative, as he doesn't have to write about facts, instead he tries to create imaginative world using all possible methods of rhetoric and figurative language such as symbols, similes, mental images in order to attract the reader to feel as if he or she is a part of the

narration. Fiction writing has some genres such as drama, short story, narration, poetry, etc. (Gotham writers' workshop, 2003)

The short story will be discussed here as it is the fictional genre targeted in the present study. A short story is defined in Merriam Webster dictionary (2018) as an invented prose narrative shorter than a novel usually dealing with a few characters and aiming at unity of effect and often concentrating on the creation of mood rather than plot. It is usually read in one sitting. Because of the shorter length, a short story usually focuses on one plot, one main character (with a few additional minor characters), and one central theme. The present study focused on five main short story skills which are; plot, characterization, dialogue, setting and language style.

**1. Plot:** is a literary term used to describe the events that make up a story. These events relate to each other in a pattern or a sequence. The structure of a short story depends on the organization of events in the plot. The plot is the foundation of the story, around which the characters and settings are built and it organizes the events in a logical manner. There are five main elements in a plot:

- 1) **Exposition:** which is the beginning of the story, where characters and setting are established. The conflict or main problem is introduced as well.
- 2) **Rising Action:** which occurs when a series of events build up to the conflict. The main characters are established by the time the rising action of a plot occurs, and at the same time, events begin to get complicated.
- 3) **Climax:** is the turning point of the story. It is be the moment of highest interest and emotion, leaving the reader wondering what is going to happen next.
- 4) **Falling Action:** occurs when events and complications begin to resolve. The result of the actions of the main characters is put forward.

5) **Resolution:** is the end of a story, which may occur with either a happy or a tragic ending.

(Dufresne, 2011)

2. **Characterization:** which refers to the methods the writer uses in order to develop the main character and supporting characters within a story. In short fiction, the writer can employ two methods: direct characterization or indirect characterization.

3. **Dialogue:** is the written words of what the characters say. It allows the writer to develop the character's personality, opinions, thoughts, and impressions. It allows the writer to dramatize the story; to show readers what is happening instead of telling them.

(Gioia and

Gwynn, 2018)

4. **Setting:** is the time and place of the story. It's a literary element of literature used in novels, short stories, plays, etc., and usually introduced during the exposition of the story, along with the characters. The setting may also include the environment of the story, which can be made up of the physical location, climate, weather, or social and cultural surroundings.

(Butterworth, 2020)

5. **Language style:** is the way in which an author writes and tells a story. It is what sets one author apart from another and creates the "voice" that audiences hear when they read. There are many important pieces that together make up a writer's style; like tone, word choice, grammar, language, descriptive technique, and so on.

### **Creative non-fiction writing:**

Creative nonfiction uses valid facts and present them in rhetorical and literary method that draws the readers' attention;

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giving precise description, using narrative structure (beginning, middle, end) and using figurative language that evokes the readers' senses (Farner, 2014). Nonfiction creative genres are memoir, autobiography, biography, personal essay, reportage, etc. The present study is concerned with personal essays.

The personal essay is the freest form of literature; this also makes it the hardest to define. Broadly speaking, it can be broken into two sections: narrative and opinion. A personal essay is a written assignment, which aims to render the writer's personal story to the audience. It is an account of the writer's experience, thoughts and feelings on a subject. The best essayists are able to weave these sections together (Shanks, 2013). Expressing one's thoughts and feelings in writing is also considered a kind of therapy and give him/her great relief.

The present study focused on four skills for writing personal essays which are; narrative, organization, and voice and language use.

1. **Narrative:** The essayist must be a good storyteller. Storytelling devices constantly occur in good essays: descriptions of people, places, incidents, conversations, and conflicts all add up to help shape and communicate the essayist's random thoughts into a good narrative.
2. **Organization:** A regular personal essay should contain three elements: introduction, which explains the main goal of your story, and express the writer's outlook on the subject; main paragraphs, depending on the number of issues the writer wants to discuss; and a conclusion, which is a summary of everything the writer has discussed in his work and some predictions for the future.
3. **Voice:** The personal essay is a dialogue between the writer who writes, and the reader who reads. The use of humor and irony may help the writer to give the essay a conversational tone. By displaying the writer's individuality, he widens the readers' view of who he is.

4. **Language use:** is the correct use of rules for punctuation, capitalization, spelling and grammar.

(Hertzberg, 2017)

Both literature circles and creative writing have some elements that can improve students' writing motivation.

### **Learning Motivation:**

Motivation is a basic and essential part of language learning. Pardee (1990) said that a motive is what encourages the person to act in a certain way or develop an inclination for particular behavior. Ellis (1994:715) considers motivation as the attempt which learners make for learning a second language because of "their need or desire to learn it".

From a cognitive viewpoint, two types of motivation are recognized: extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. According to Ryan & Deci (2000) intrinsic motivation is the eagerness and interest to do and take part in some certain activities because an individual feels that they are attractive and pleasant. Students who have intrinsic motivation are inclined to stay with complicated problems and gain knowledge from their slips and mistakes. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is the tendency to take part in activities because of the reasons which do not link to the activity. These reasons can be the anticipation of reward or punishment, like being successful in the exam or getting a good mark (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006).

Dornyei and Csizer (1998) conceptualized the instructions for teachers who focus on improving the learner's motivation. The instructions are summarized as follows:

1. Create a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. A sense of humor in the classroom as well as bringing in laughter and smiles can make the classroom atmosphere more relaxed.

2. Present the task properly. Teachers should be very clear in explaining the required task because any ambiguity can create negative effect on the learners.
3. Develop a good relationship with the learner. Learners will make effort to please the teacher with their achievement because they are energized by the affective motive.
4. Increase the learners' linguistic confidence. Teachers should select tasks suitable to their learners' current competence and encourage them to accept mistakes as a natural part of the learning process.
5. Make language classes interesting. Teachers are recommended to select challenging and interesting tasks built up on learners' interest.
6. Promote learners' autonomy. Teachers are asked to encourage learner's creativity and involve them in organizing the learning process and choosing the kind of materials they are interested in.
7. Personalize the learning process. Tasks should be filled with personal content that is related to the learner's life.
8. Increase the learners' goal-orientedness. Teachers can do this by helping student develop expectations about their learning and set specific learning goals.

It is obvious that literature circles make use of some of these instructions. In literature circles, there is a pleasant and relaxed classroom atmosphere where students work together in small groups. The language classes become more interesting as students read books of their choice. Students become more autonomous and responsible for their own learning. They personalize the learning process and connect the readings with their own lives and experiences. Besides, creative writing makes students motivated as they express themselves freely and write about their interests and feelings.

## **Method and procedure:**

### **Design of the Study:**

The present study employed the quasi-experimental design to test the effect of a program based on literature circles in developing EFL prospective teachers' creative writing skills and its effect on their writing motivation. The study adopted the one group pre-post experimental design.

### **Participants:**

Thirty-five fourth year student-teachers were chosen randomly to participate in the present study. Those student-teachers were enrolled in the English Educational Department in Women's college, Ain Shams University in the academic year 2019-2020. The researcher had chosen fourth year student-teachers of English because she wanted the participants to have enough background in English writing skills and mechanics to be able to participate in a creative writing program.

### **Tools of the Study:**

#### **Measurement tools:**

The study made use of the following tools:

- A pre-post creative writing test
- A writing motivation scale

#### **Application tools:**

- A rubric for the creative writing test divided into two sections; a section for fiction skills (plot, characterization, dialogue, setting and language style) and other for non-fiction skills (narrative, organization, voice and language use).
- The creative writing program based on literature circles to develop EFL prospective teachers' creative writing skills and writing motivation.

**Description of the study tools:**

**The pre-post creative writing test:**

After determining the appropriate creative writing skills for fourth year student-teachers of English, a creative writing test was designed to be used as a pre-posttest. The test measures the fiction and non-fiction skills of the participants. The test consisted of two sections;

- Section one is devoted to non-fiction skills. Student-teachers were given two topics and were asked to write a personal essay on one of them. The topics were:
  - A place where you would like to live in your whole life.
  - A movie that had a great impression on you.
- Section two dealt with fiction skills. It included the following short story topics and student-teachers had to write on one of them:
  - Two childhood friends stopped talking after high-school hostility, until they find themselves on the same international flight five years later. What conversations unfold over the next hours, and do they keep in touch, or go their separate ways?
  - Ali and his father met their ancestor, who has been dead for centuries, and they go on a walk through the city. Write a short story on the weird situations and conversations that took place.

**Scoring the test:**

Student-teachers' answers on the pre and post administrations of the creative writing test were scored through a rubric adapted from Vaezi and Rezaei's study (2018). The rubric is divided into two sections: the creative writing fiction skills (plot, characterization, dialogue, setting and language style), and the creative writing non-fiction skills (narrative, organization, voice and language use). The scores ranged from high=3, middle=2, and

low=1. So the fiction section was scored out of 15 and the non-fiction section was scored out of 12.

**The Writing motivation scale:**

The researcher designed a 3-point Likert scale for writing motivation and submitted it to a panel of jury specialized in the field of curricula and methods of teaching English to ensure the validity of the scale and they suggested dividing it into sections; each section has some items related to one factor of motivation. The scale tackles five factors of motivation embedded in 20 items. Student-teachers were given three options to each item: agree, neutral, and disagree. The factors and the number of items allocated to each of them are shown in the following table:

Table (3) factors of motivation

	<b>Factors</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>
1	Intrinsic Motivation	5
2	Self-efficacy	3
3	Self-determination	5
4	Career Motivation	3
5	Grade Motivation	4

Student-teachers' responses to the 20 items of the scale were scored as follows: agree = 3, neutral = 2, and disagree= 1, so the total score was 60.

To ensure the reliability of the scale, the motivation scale was applied to the pilot group and Alpha coefficient was calculated. The calculated alpha coefficient was (0.83) which is an accepted level of reliability.

**The program:**

**Rationale for the program:**

1. Teacher should offer students choice in the reading texts. The groups are formed around students' interests.

2. Teacher should not play the central role in the lesson instead he is a facilitator and encourager.
3. Teacher should encourage reflection. The discussion should focus on higher level thinking skills: author's intent, writing style, characterization, etc.
4. Creative writing provides students with opportunities to realize forms of imaginative writing as an engagement in thinking and development. (Farokhi and Hashemi, 2012)
5. Teacher should stimulate the creative imagination of the students and motivate them to share their ideas using language. Creative writing gives students opportunity for free expression of feelings and experiences. (Griva, 2007)

**Aim of the program:**

The program aimed at developing EFL prospective teachers' creative writing skills and enhancing their writing motivation.

By the end of the program, student-teachers were expected to:

1. Write personal essays with proficiency in the four non-fiction skills included in the program.
2. Write good short stories with convenient use of plot, characterization, setting, dialogue and language style.
3. Express their thoughts and feelings creatively in writing.
4. Have a positive attitude towards learning writing.
5. Have good critical skills to analyze reading texts.

**Content of the program:**

The program was designed in the light of literature circles principles and the techniques of teaching creative writing. The program was applied in seven sessions. The content of the sessions is clarified in the following table:

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Table (4) Content of the program sessions

Session	Content
Session 1	Discussion of literature circles' definition, difference between literature circles and guided reading, different students' roles, benefits of using literature circles, golden rules for applying literature circles.
Session 2	Explanation of personal essays' definition - the four skills for writing personal essays (narrative, organization, voice and language use) – general tips for writing a good personal essay.
Session 3	Conducting literature circles with student-teachers through reading some authentic personal essays and reflecting on them through literature circle different roles.
Session 4	Student-teachers practiced writing their own personal essays choosing the topic they want to write on. The researcher gave them feedback analyzing their mistakes and giving them suggestions for improvement.
Session 5	Explanation of how to write short stories focusing on the five skills addressed in this research which are plot, characterization, dialogue, setting and language style.
Session 6	Conducting literature circles through reading some authentic short stories and analyzing them.
Session 7	Student-teachers wrote their own short stories getting feedback from the researcher.

**Sample of a literature circle lesson:**

**Pre-instructional Planning**

**Objectives:**

**By the end of the lesson students would be able to:**

1. Read a personal essay critically.
2. Perform a specific role in the literature circle.
3. Work cooperatively in a group to assign a certain task.
4. Evaluate the literature circle experience.

**Materials**

- A variety of personal essays with different topics. Student-teachers would choose the essay that they would like to read and the groups would be formed consequently.
- Role sheets for each group
- A rubric for roles assessment

**During Instruction**

1. The researcher started the lesson by explaining the role sheets and discussing the topics of the personal essays.
2. The student-teachers formed groups of 4-6 members according to their choice of personal essays they are willing to read.
3. Each group member selected a role sheet for this practice round (discussion director, connector, illustrator, summarizer, character analyzer and vocabulary enricher) and they were informed that they would choose a different role in the next literature circle round.
4. Each group member read the text, completed the role sheets then shared with the group.
5. While the student-teachers were reading and discussing, the researcher circulated providing any needed help.
6. After the groups finished their tasks, the researcher made a discussion with the whole class about the literature circle experience: What did student-teachers think went well and what could be improved?

## Post Instructional

The researcher filled in the roles assessment rubric to evaluate the literature circle round and to give student-teachers some suggestions for improvement.

## Statistical analysis and display of results:

Having analyzed the data collected from the pre-post creative writing test and the motivation scale statistically, a detailed presentation of the results in relation to the hypotheses of the study will be displayed and discussed.

### Hypothesis 1:

**There is a statistically significant difference between the overall mean scores of the treatment group on the creative pre-test and post-test in the non-fiction skills in favor of the post-test.**

In order to verify the validity of this hypothesis, t-test for paired samples was used to compare the overall mean scores of the treatment group in the non-fiction skills on the pre and post administration of the creative writing test. The results of the t-test proved to be statistically consistent with the hypothesis. See table (5).

Table (5) t-test results comparing the overall performance in non-fiction writing skills before and after treatment

Administration	N	M	S.D.	D.F.	t-value	Sig.	Effect Size
Pre-test	35	5.31	0.832	34	30.45	0.00	0.92
Post-test		10.17	1.224				

As shown in table (5), the calculated t-value (30.45) is statistically significant at 0.01 level. Thus, it can be said that there is

a statistically significant difference between the overall mean scores of the treatment group on the creative pre-test and post-test in the non-fiction skills in favor of the post-test.

For further verification of the first hypothesis, the effect size was calculated. The referential framework for identifying the effect size of t-values is shown in the following table:

Table (6) The referential framework for identifying the effect size of t-values

Effect size	Interpretation
From 0.2 till less than 0.5	Small
From 0.5 till less than 0.8	Medium
0.8 or more	Large

As shown in the previous table, the calculated effect size value of the proposed program on student-teachers' overall creative non-fiction skills is (0.92). Therefore, it can be inferred that the literature circles program had a large effect on the treatment group students' overall creative non-fiction skills on the post-administration of the creative writing test as compared to that of the pre-administration. The difference can be shown in the following figure:

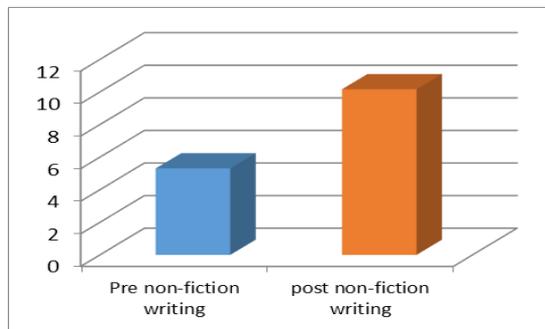


Figure (1) Means of the student-teachers in non-fiction skills before and after the treatment

## Hypothesis 2:

**There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the treatment group on the creative pre-test and post-test in each non-fiction skill in favor of the post-test.**

A number of t-tests for paired samples were conducted in order to compare the mean scores of the treatment group on the pre- and post-administration of the creative writing test in each non-fiction writing skill. The results of the t-tests proved to be statistically consistent with the above stated hypothesis. The following table shows the statistical significance.

Table (7) t-test results comparing the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the treatment group in each non-fiction writing skill

Creative non-fiction skills	Administration	M	S.D.	D.F.	t-value	Sig.	Effect Size
Narrative	Pre-test	1.46	0.5	34	12.15	0.00	0.77
	Post-test	2.66	0.48				
Organization	Pre-test	1.37	0.49	34	10.39	0.00	0.8
	Post-test	2.71	0.52				
Voice	Pre-test	1.4	0.5	34	12.9	0.00	0.83
	Post-test	2.83	0.45				
Language use	Pre-test	1.09	0.28	34	8.30	0.00	0.67
	Post-test	1.97	0.62				

From the previous table it can be concluded that:

1. There is statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the treatment group on the pre- and post-administration of the creative writing test in the narrative skill in favor of the post-administration. Besides, the literature circle

program had a medium effect on the treatment group students' performance in the narrative skill.

2. There is statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the treatment group on the pre- and post-administration of the creative writing test in the organization skill in favor of the post-administration. Moreover, the literature circle program had a large effect on the treatment group students' performance in the organization skill.
3. There is statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the treatment group on the pre- and post-administration of the creative writing test in the voice skill in favor of the post-administration. Besides, the literature circle program had a large effect on the treatment group students' performance in the voice skill.
4. There is statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the treatment group on the pre- and post-administration of the creative writing test in the language use in favor of the post-administration. Besides, the literature circle program had a medium effect on the treatment group students' language use.

For more illustration, the figure below shows the graphical representation of the mean scores of the study participants' performance in the skills of non-fiction creative writing before and after the treatment.

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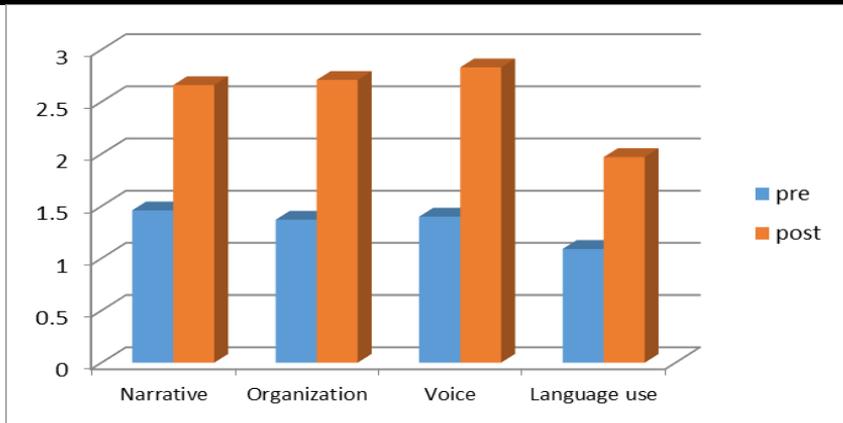


Figure (2) Means of the student-teachers in each non-fiction skill before and after the treatment

**Hypothesis 3:**

**There is a statistically significant difference between the overall mean scores of the treatment group on the creative pre-test and post-test in the fiction skills in favor of the post-test.**

To test this hypothesis, t-test for paired samples was used to compare the overall mean scores of the student-teachers in fiction writing skills before and after the treatment. The results of the t-test proved to be statistically consistent with the hypothesis. See table (6).

Table (8) t-test results comparing the overall performance in fiction writing skills before and after treatment

Administration	N	M	S.D.	D.F.	t-value	Sig.	Effect Size
Pre-test	35	6.2	0.96	34	34.68	0.00	0.95
Post-test		12.6	1.2				

Table (8) shows that there is a statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the treatment group on the creative pre-test and post-test in the fiction skills in favor of the post-test (t-value = 34.68).

Furthermore, the effect size value of the proposed program on the student-teachers' creative fiction skills is (0.95). Therefore, it can be inferred that the literature circles program had a large effect on the treatment group student-teachers' fiction skills in the post-test as compared to that of the pre-test. The difference can be shown in the following figure:

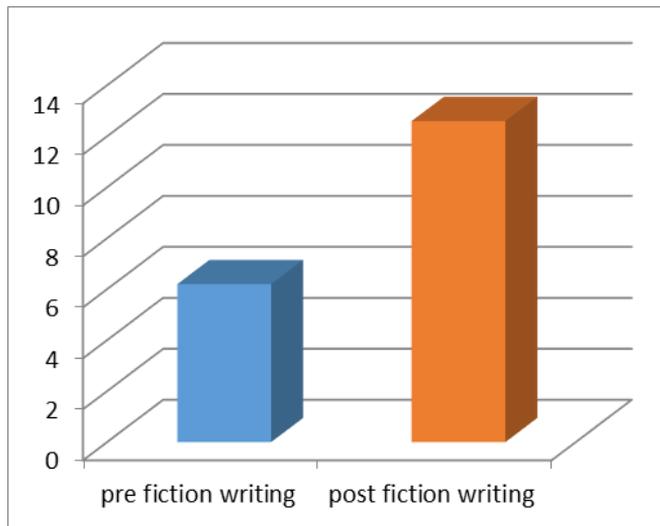


Figure (3) Means of the participants' fiction skills before and after the treatment

#### **Hypothesis 4:**

**There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the treatment group on the creative pre-test and post-test in each fiction skill in favor of the post-test.**

A number of t-tests for paired samples were used to compare the mean scores of the treatment group students on the creative

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writing pre-test and post-test in each fiction writing skill. The results of the t-tests proved to be statistically consistent with the hypothesis. The following table shows the results of the t-tests.

Table (9) t-test results comparing the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the treatment group in each fiction writing skill

<b>Creative fiction skills</b>	<b>Administration</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>D.F.</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Effect Size</b>
<b>Plot</b>	Pre-test	1.37	0.49	34	14.11	0.00	0.86
	Post-test	2.83	0.38				
<b>Characterization</b>	Pre-test	1.23	0.42	34	16.7	0.00	0.89
	Post-test	2.8	0.4				
<b>Dialogue</b>	Pre-test	1.29	0.46	34	9.48	0.00	0.75
	Post-test	2.63	0.69				
<b>Setting</b>	Pre-test	1.14	0.36	34	11.26	0.00	0.79
	Post-test	2.37	0.55				
<b>Language style</b>	Pre-test	1.17	0.18	34	6.6	0.00	0.66
	Post-test	1.94	0.59				

From table (9) it can be concluded that:

1. There is statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the treatment group on the pre- and post-administration of the creative writing test in the plot writing skill in favor of the post-administration. Besides, the literature circle program had a large effect on the treatment group students' performance in the plot skill.
2. There is statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the treatment group on the pre- and post-administration of the creative writing test in the characterization skill in favor of the post-administration. Moreover, the literature circle program had a large effect on the treatment group students' performance in the characterization skill.

3. There is statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the treatment group on the pre- and post-administration of the creative writing test in the dialogue skill in favor of the post-administration. Besides, the literature circle program had a medium effect on the treatment group students' performance in the dialogue skill.
4. There is statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the treatment group on the pre- and post-administration of the creative writing test in the setting skill in favor of the post-administration. Besides, the literature circle program had a medium effect on the treatment group students' performance in the setting skill.
5. There is statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the treatment group on the pre- and post-administration of the creative writing test in the language style in favor of the post-administration. Besides, the literature circle program had a medium effect on the treatment group students' language style.

For more illustration, the following figure shows the graphical representation of the mean scores of the student-teachers' performance in the fiction writing skills before and after the treatment.

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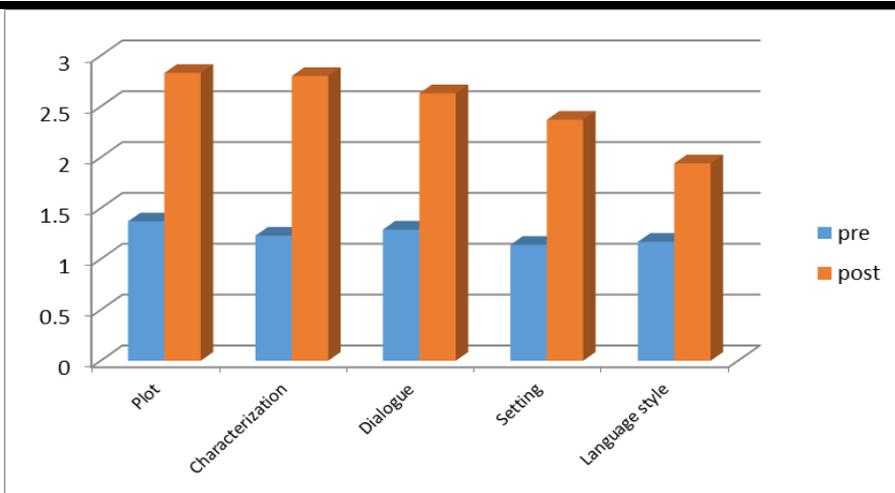


Figure (4) Means of the student-teachers in each fiction skill before and after the treatment

**Hypothesis 5:**

**There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the treatment group on the pre and post administrations of the writing motivation scale in favor of the post administration.**

A number of t-tests for paired samples were used to compare the mean scores of the treatment group students on the pre and post administration of the motivation scale as a whole and in each motivation factor. The results of the t-tests proved to be statistically consistent with the hypothesis. The following table shows the results of the t-tests.

Table (10) t-test results comparing the mean scores of the treatment group students on the pre and post administration of the motivation scale

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Factors of motivation	Administration	M	S.D.	D.F.	t-value	Sig.	Effect Size
Intrinsic motivation	Pre	8.5	1.5	34	21.06	0.00	0.9
	Post	13.9	0.7				
Self-efficacy	Pre	5.09	1.07	34	19.81	0.00	0.89
	Post	8.43	0.56				
Self-determination	Pre	9.26	1.74	34	13.4	0.00	0.83
	Post	13.34	0.77				
Career motivation	Pre	7.29	1.69	34	5.03	0.00	0.4
	Post	8.49	0.62				
Grade motivation	Pre	9.14	1.67	34	6.43	0.00	0.48
	Post	10.57	0.69				
Total	Pre	39.3	4.8	34	20.05	0.00	0.9
	Post	54.8	1.6				

Based on the above table, the total t-value of the writing motivation scale is (20.05) and the effect size is large (0.9) which means that the literature circle program had a large effect on student-teachers' motivation for writing. Besides, the proposed program had a large effect on student-teachers' intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy and self-determination. On the other hand, the program had a small effect size on student-teachers' career and grade motivation.

Thus, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference at 0.01 between the mean scores of the treatment group on the pre and post administrations of the writing motivation scale in favor of the post administration.

## **Discussion of results:**

The results of the study revealed that the literature circles program had a large effect on the student-teachers' creative writing skills and motivation for writing. This large effect may be due to the following:

1. Reading authentic personal essays and short stories and engaging in a critical process of analyzing the different characters, working out new vocabulary, and writing a summary of the text during the literature circle rounds help to improve student-teachers' own writing skills of fiction and non-fiction texts.
2. Working in groups help student-teachers to learn from each other and practice language in a safe and relaxed environment where they built confidence and took risks while communicating and sharing their viewpoints. Student-teachers felt more comfortable working with their peers than being constantly monitored by the teacher.
3. Student-teachers' choice of the reading texts made the class more interesting and help promote their motivation for reading and writing. They read topics that they are interested in, made connections between the reading text and their personal lives and experiences and drew illustrations of the text. All these elements improved their learning motivation.
4. Student-teachers are the center of the learning process and they are assigned specific tasks to achieve with a worksheet describing their tasks clearly. This helped in raising their learning autonomy and made them feel engaged in the learning process which increased their motivation.

5. Writing new genres -like personal essays and short stories- rather than the traditional genres they used to write in help student-teachers express their own thoughts, emotions and experiences. This made them more motivated to write.

On the other hand, the literature circle program had some limitations:

1. The language use skill in non-fiction writing and the language style in fiction writing were the least developed skills. This can be due that these two skills need more time to be improved.
2. As for motivation factors, the proposed program had a small effect on student-teachers' career and grade motivation as the literature circles do not work on these two types of motivation.

### **Recommendations:**

- Educators should give adequate care to integrating creative writing in their writing courses especially prospective teachers' language programs which will be reflected on their teaching in schools afterwards.
- Using literature circles in teaching different language skills help develop their learning motivation.
- Applying student-centered approaches in language teaching to increase learners' autonomy and responsibility for their own learning.
- Collaborative learning methods help students practice language in a safe environment communicating with their peers.

### **Suggestions for further research:**

- More studies need to be conducted to investigate the effect of literature circles on other language skills.
- Further research should be made on other methods of developing creative writing for EFL students.

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