



St Joseph's Institution Singapore

Boys Talk: Learning a language for life



Outline



- Introduction
- Research design
- 3 Big Ideas
- Reflections
- Conclusion
- Video
- Question and Answer



Rationale



" ... reading literature
gave (me) wisdom,
humanity and a
capacity to empathise
with others."

Mr S.Rajaratnam, Singapore's first Foreign Minister

Extract is taken from the Straits Times Think Tank, 3 February 2010

Research Question



This research project investigated the effectiveness of using a Reading Circle framework which SJI English Language teachers adapted to help foreign users of the English Language speak more confidently.

Aims



We want our students

- To develop skills of reading and speaking
- To reflect on issues raised in reading material and associate them with personal experiences
- To deepen their learning of a language that they can use for life



Mission

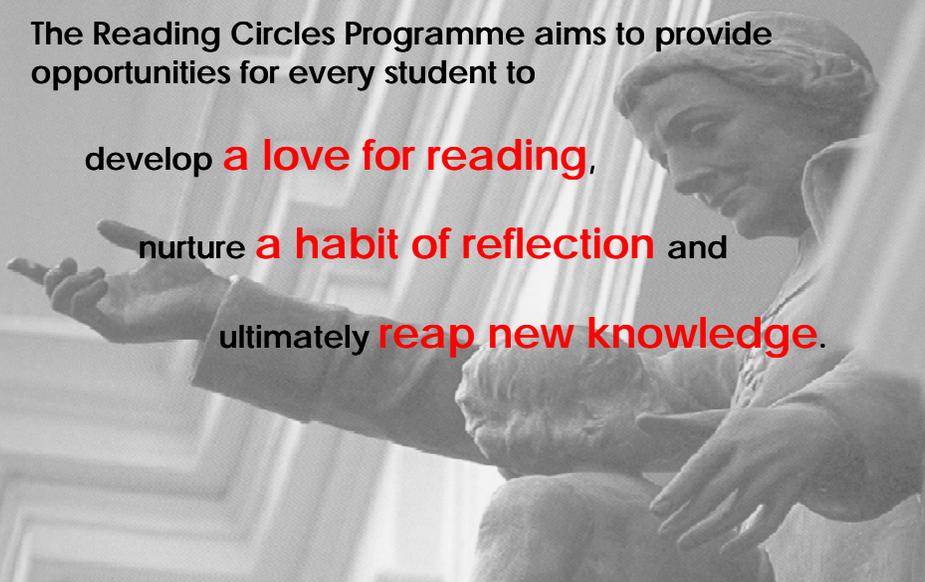


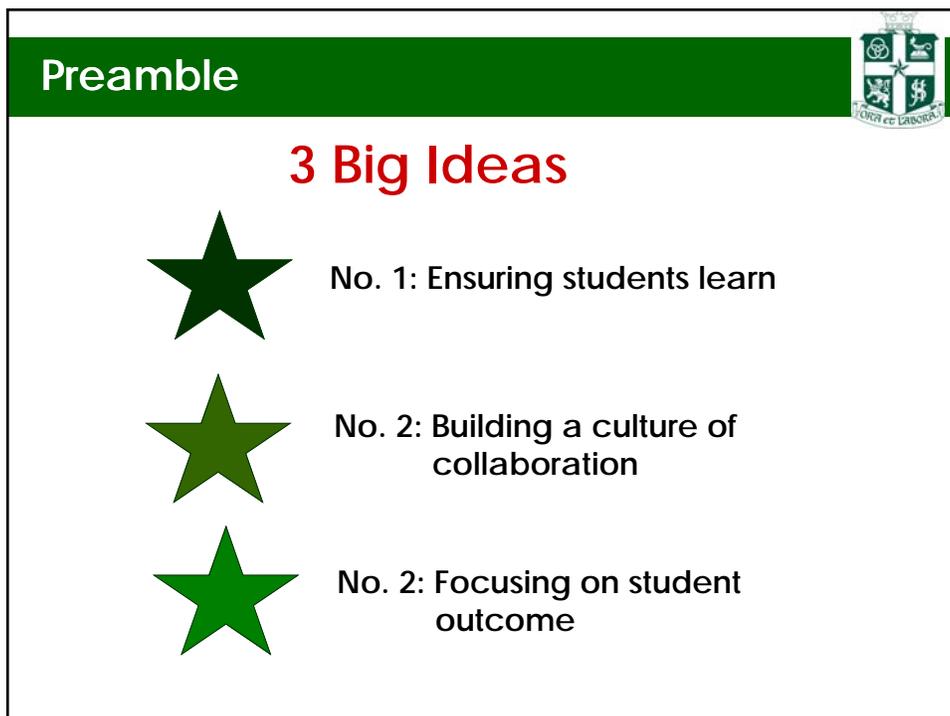
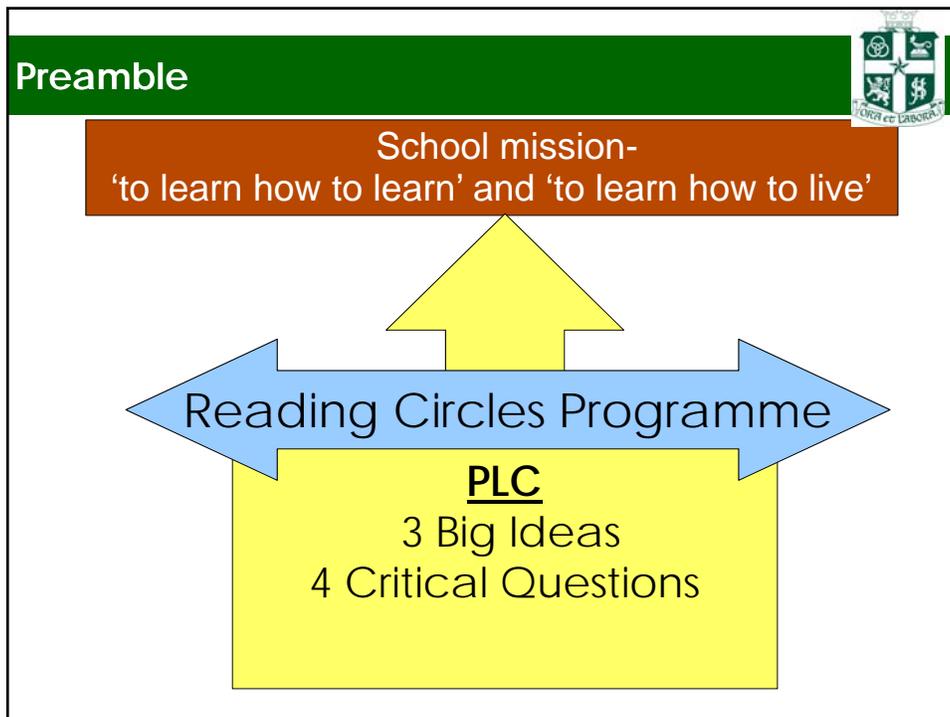
The Reading Circles Programme aims to provide opportunities for every student to

develop **a love for reading**,

nurture **a habit of reflection** and

ultimately **reap new knowledge**.





Preamble: 4 Critical Questions



"Was it learnt?" drives our research



What is it we expect students to learn?



How will we know when they have learned it?



How will we respond when they don't learn?



How will we respond when they already know it?



Profile of foreign students



- ASEAN students (Vietnam, China and Indonesia)
- 7-10% of the level
- Strong in Mathematics and Science
- Weak in English, particularly oral communication



Main weaknesses

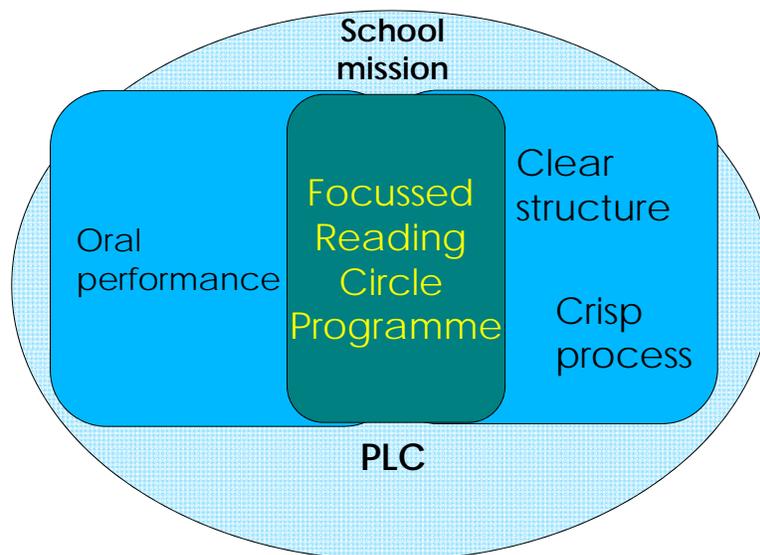


- Responses were fairly simple with little development.
- Not able to articulate their responses clearly.
- Require repeated promptings to sustain interactions with the examiners
- Peculiar accents affected their pronunciation and articulation



1st session: Le Thien's self introduction

Key Features



Why Reading Circle?



" Often boys receive less practice and have less experience in acknowledging the feelings of others, of understanding the world from someone else's perspective. While they certainly retain this capacity, it is very helpful to give them the opportunity to 'flex this muscle'. So much of success and ability to lead in the 21st century will be dependent on this aspect of their emotional intelligence."

Taken from " Teaching Boys: A global study of effective practices" by Michael Reichert and Richard Hawley

Why Reading Circle?



- A Reading Circle is a group that meets to discuss particular problems or issues
- Students will read a selection of text, reflect on issues/problems and share their opinions during the meetings.



Focused Reading Circle Programme



- Enabled boys to “extend themselves- mind, heart, interests, passion- into” the topics discussed.
- This “self-extension” makes the learning a “personal experience” for the boys, which ultimately, developed their empathy skills.



Research Design



Compulsory Reading

Skills-based text (Personal Recounts, Narratives & Expository)

Progressive over 2 terms on a fortnightly basis and 5 sessions

Clear Structure

Use of PLC framework to drive the research

Crisp process

Each teacher will ask 3 questions to guide the discussion
Students will take turns to share their responses and opinions.

Teacher evaluation

Each teacher will provide feedback to the students for every session using the Oral rubric.

Student evaluation

Each student will assess their participation in the discussion using the Contribution Meter rubric.
Each student will write their reflection at the end of the programme.

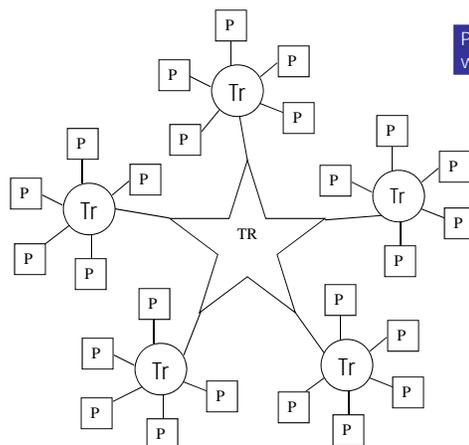
Students - Personal enjoyment and peer learning

Teachers - Hones professional skills and foster rapport

Structure of Reading Circles



TR- Teacher as the facilitator will provide overall direction for the session



P- Participant of each group will share views and opinions

Figure 2

Stages of the research



1. Identify a focus

2. Devise strategies

3. Implement the action plan

Compiles findings

Reading Circle Programme

4. Reflect on the strategies

*Meet regularly
*Respond to 3 questions
* Teacher and self evaluation

Extend RC to foreign users

Weak oral communication skills

Student sample



Based on their nationality, these 20 students were put into 4 groups under the guidance of a teacher.

	Name	Class	Nationality	Teacher
1	Owen Yunaputra Kosman	303	Indonesia	Mrs Mishaelle Chua
2	Vincent Rijanto Heru	303	Indonesia	
3	Nguyen Xuan Bach	304	Vietnam	
4	Yang Dichui	304	China	
5	Le Thien	305	Vietnam	

Student sample



	Name	Class	Nationality	Teacher
6	Clifford Ananda Surya	303	Indonesia	Mr Vinson Tan/ Mrs Chung Boon Siang
7	Nguyen Gia Huy	304	Vietnam	
8	Djunarto Ng	305	Indonesia	
9	Timothy Co Tan	304	The Philippines	
10	Hans Toby Limanto	305	Indonesia	

Student sample



	Name	Class	Nationality	Teacher
11	Hans Krisnata Muten	303	Indonesia	Ms Adeline Ng
12	Xu Jun	304	China	
13	Tran Hoang Minh	304	Vietnam	
14	Harvin Iriawan	305	Indonesia	
15	Nicolas Tarino	305	Indonesia	

Student sample



	Name	Class	Nationality	Teacher
16	Andree Hansen Wibowo	303	Indonesia	Mr Krison Tan
17	Wu Zhaoxuan	303	China	
18	Bui Thien Thanh	304	Vietnam	
19	Nguyen Dam Gia Bao	305	Vietnam	
20	Vincent Setiawan	305	Indonesia	

Big Idea #1: Ensuring students learn



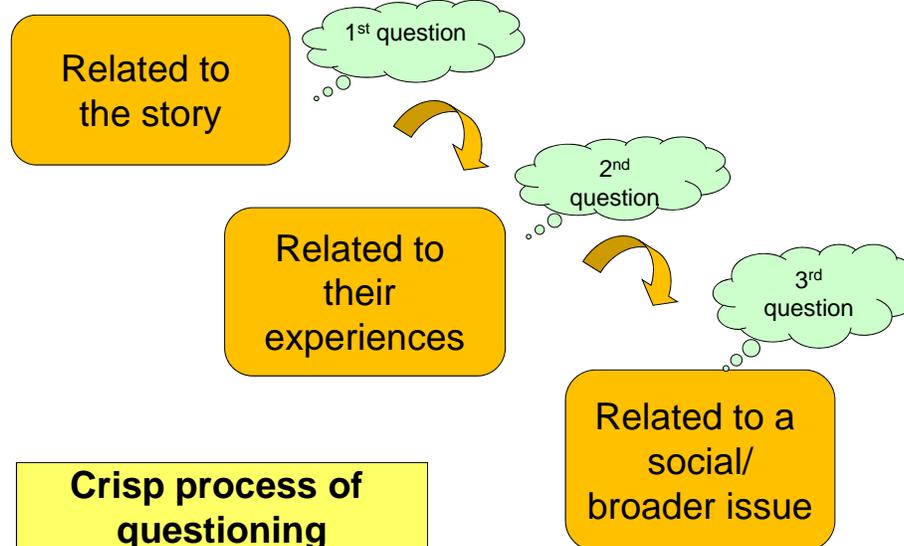
What is it we expect students to learn?

Draw on prior knowledge through reading the texts

Respond to questions and issues

Title	Author	Guiding questions
Sorry, wrong number	Lucille Fletcher	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are some important points one should take note of when speaking? 2. How can we express ourselves more effectively?
A devoted son	Anita Desai	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Was Varma being unreasonable when he rejected his son's advice and help? Why or why not? 2. Do you think Rakesh was a good son to his father? Why or why not? 3. What makes a 'devoted' son?

Big Idea #1: Ensuring students learn



Big Idea #1: Ensuring students learn

How will we know when they have learned it?

Name of student: *Hung Phu Gia Hung*

Session 1
4 Apr 2011

CONVERSATION			
Personal Response			
Simple personal responses, little development	Some personal responses to theme and some elaboration	Intelligent, personal response to theme	
Clarity of Expression			
disconnected; sentences, phrases disjointed	Ideas unclear, disjointed response; some apt vocabulary and structures	Ideas clear, coherent; mainly apt vocabulary and structures	Ideas well developed; very clear, succinct, natural; very apt vocabulary and structures
Engagement			
repeated phrases, unable to interact	Depends on prompting and encouragement	Responds well to prompts but little initiative	Shares ideas, opinions; initiates discussion of relevant issues

Comments: *Hung has a thick VN accent so he's trying to speak to express his ideas but is hampered by his poorer command of the language*

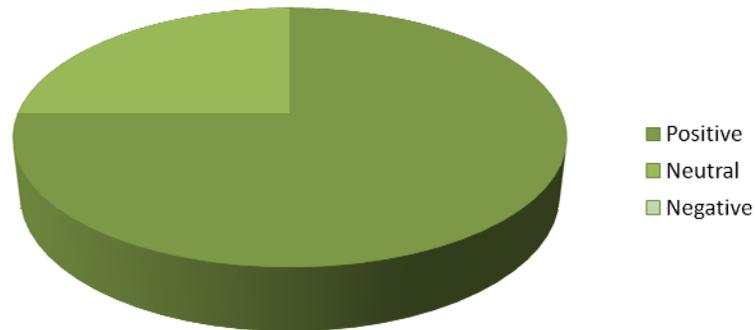
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Teacher evaluation:

Teachers evaluate the students based on their ability to offer personal responses in a coherent manner using apt vocabulary and structures.

I. Effect of Reading circle on enjoyment of story

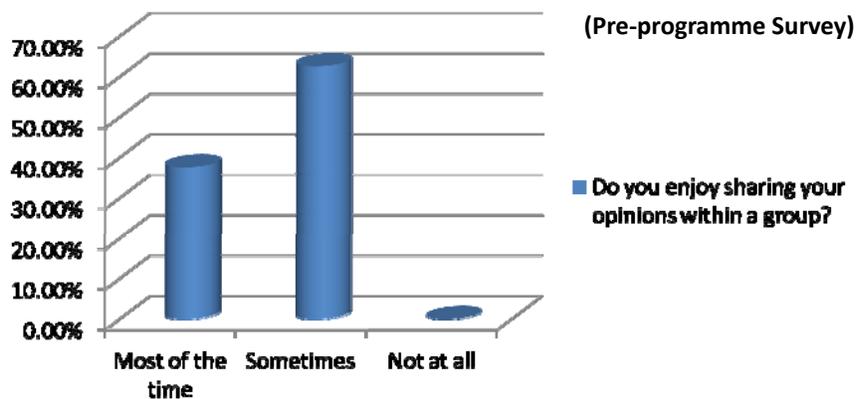
Do you think Focused Reading Circle programme has a positive, neutral or negative effect on how much you enjoy the book you are reading?



75% thinks that the program has a positive effect on their enjoyment of the book

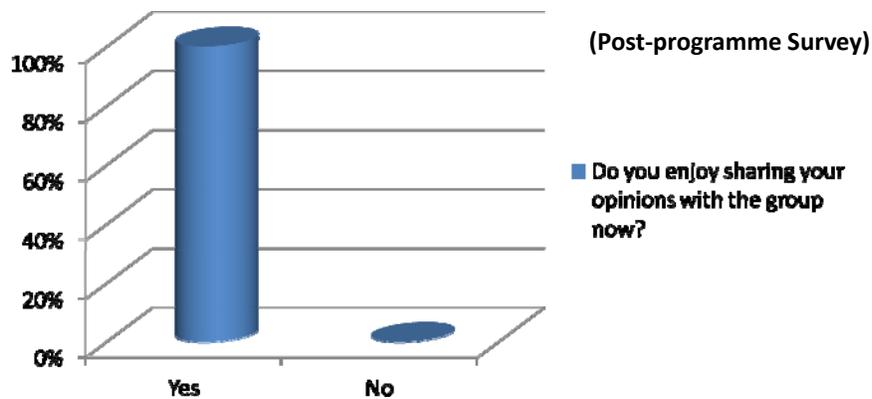
I. Effect of Reading circle on enjoyment of story

Do you enjoy sharing your opinions within a group?

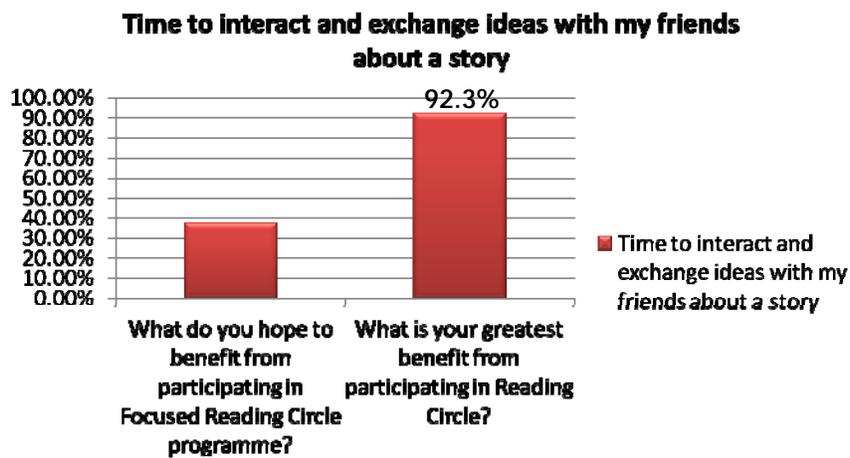


I. Effect of Reading circle on enjoyment of story

Do you enjoy sharing your opinions with the group now?

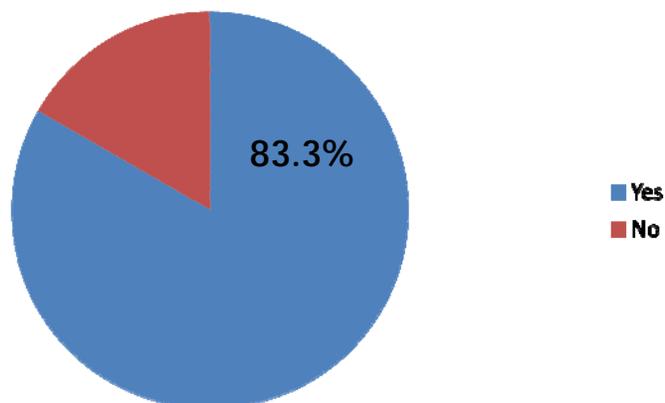


II. Improvement in oral communication

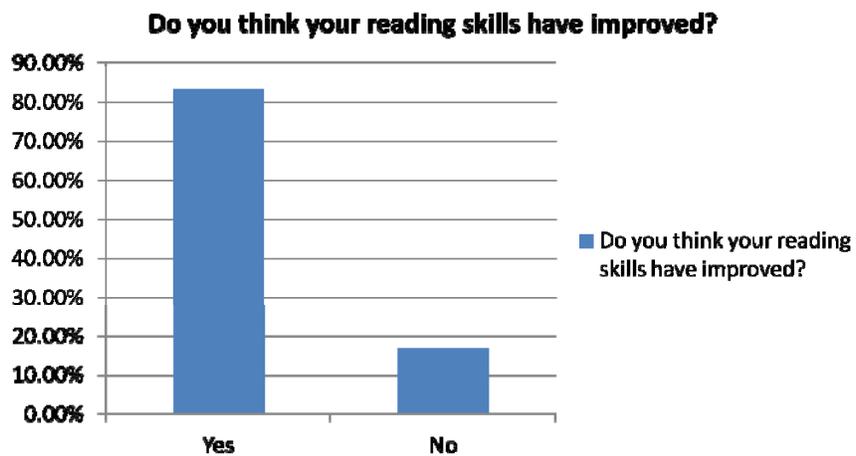


II. Improvement in oral communication

Do you speak up more often in class now?

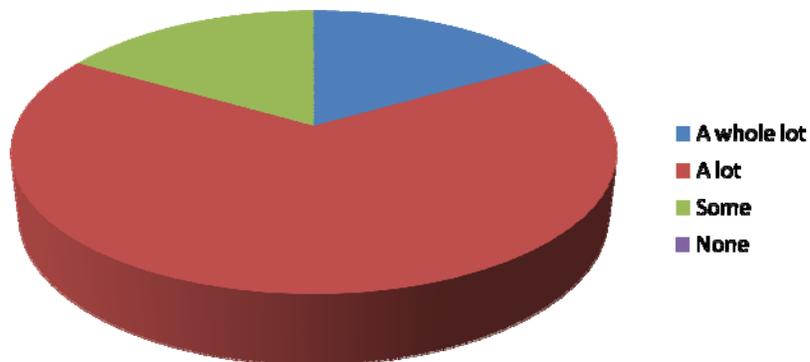


III. Improvement in reading skills



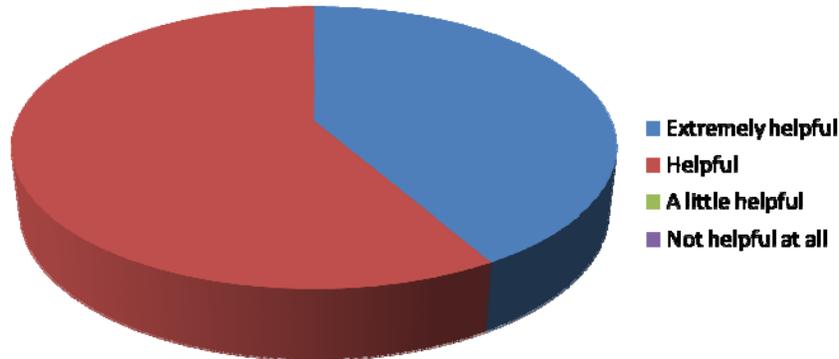
III. Improvement in comprehension skills

How much do you think the discussion questions helped you better understand the stories?



III. Improvement in comprehension skills

How helpful were the discussions for your understanding of the story?



Big Idea #1: Ensuring students learn

How will we know when they have learned it?

Self-evaluation:

Students are involved in self-evaluation of their discussion skills using a checklist.

	I am beginning	I am better at	I am very good at
I listen to what other participants say in my group.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
I take an alternative point of view, discuss it and try to understand it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
I give good answers when someone asks a question. I know what I know, am interested and try to help and appreciate their contribution.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I ask a peer-review question when someone's question or response makes me want to learn more. (Can you elaborate on...?)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I answer questions with elaboration and explanation. I can read from the short stories or articles.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I give personal opinions about issues when it is appropriate and back up my opinions with facts and examples.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
I prepare for the discussion by reading the stories preparing the responses beforehand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
I use the discussion to help me get my questions answered.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Improvement in maintaining eye contact while talking
21.07.2011

Results from students' contribution metre

- **Half** of the respondents indicated that they have improved in the skill of giving personal response with substantiation and elaboration.
- **More than half** the students in the program indicated that they have improved in the area of listening to others' point of view when it differs from their own.
- **Half** of the respondents also indicated that in terms of using appropriate tone suited to an academic discussion in a small group sharing, they have also improved.
- **One-third** of the respondents indicated an improvement in their use of good eye contact during group discussion and sharing.
- **One-third** of the respondents also showed improvement in being an effective communicator as they would ask 'piggy-back' questions for clarification or to learn more. Similarly, 4 students indicated that they made more use of the discussion to get their queries answered. This reflects an engagement in discussion through the process of clarification.
- **One-third** of the students indicated they improved in their elaboration skills.

Results from students' contribution metre

Discussion Skills	Elaboration of Skills involved	Students who showed improvement
I listen to what other participants say in my group.	Non-verbal cues: Listening (Oral)	2: 1 Indonesian 1 Vietnamese
If I have a different point of view, I express it politely.	Communication skills suited to purpose, audience and context: using appropriate tone suited to an academic discussion in a small group sharing	6: 2 Indonesian 2 China, 2 Vietnamese
If someone disagrees with me, I listen and try to think it through from their point of view.	Empathy skills: perspective-taking (IBSC)	7: 3 Indonesian 1 China 3 Vietnamese
I use good eye contact- when someone asks a question, I look at them so they know I am interested in what they are saying and appreciate their contribution.	Non-verbal cues: establishing eye-contact	4: 1 Indonesian 1 China 2 Vietnamese

Results from students' contribution metre

Discussion Skills	Elaboration of Skills involved	Students who showed improvement
I ask a 'piggy-back' question when someone's question or response makes me want to learn more. (<i>Can you talk more about...?</i>)	Effective communication: clarification	4: 1 Indonesian 1 China 2 Vietnamese
I answer questions with elaboration and explanation that I have read from the short stories or articles.	Personal response is developed, coherent; student willingly shares ideas, opinions and takes initiative to discuss relevant issues.	4: 1 Indonesian 2 China 1 Vietnamese
I give personal opinions about issues when it is appropriate and back up my opinions with facts and examples.	Personal response with elaboration/substantiation	6: 3 Indonesian 1 China 2 Vietnamese
I prepare for the discussion by reading the stories and preparing the responses beforehand.	Interest and enjoyment (IBSC)	4: 1 Indonesian 1 China 2 Vietnamese
I make use of the discussion to help me get my queries answered.	Discussion aids comprehension; reflects engagement in discussion through clarification	4: 1 China 3 Vietnamese

Big Idea #1: Ensuring students learn

How will we respond when they don't learn?

Personal Response			
personal development	Simple personal responses, little development	Some personal responses to theme and some elaboration	Intelligent, personal response to the
Clarity of Expression			
connected; precise, phrases	Ideas unclear, disjointed response; some apt vocabulary and structures	Ideas clear, coherent; mainly apt vocabulary and structures	Ideas well developed; very clear, structured; natural; very vocabulary
Engagement			
motivated; able to contribute	Depends on prompting and encouragement	Responds well to prompts but little initiative	Shares ideas; initiates discussion on relevant issues
students:	Hung shows a lot of enthusiasm and willingness to contribute though the vocabulary might not be the best.		

Students are given feedback so that they can improve on their weaknesses in the next session.

Big Idea #1: Ensuring students learn

How will we respond when they already know it?

Able to offer personal responses

Expression of ideas was clear

Responds well to questions



Last session: Toby on the topic of capital punishment

Reflections of teachers and students



Shed their inhibitions of speaking English.

International mix ensured they don't lapse into their native tongue.

A chance to learn from students and colleagues

Discussions were culturally enriching.

Reflections of teachers and students



"I have quality talks with my friends and teachers instead of mindless chatter."

"I can speak freely and understand the issue better in a small group."

"I learnt to listen and maintain eye-contact when I speak in a group."

"It has helped me to grow as a person. I learnt not to give up."

Success factors

- **Strong support from teachers**
- **Clear expectations and outcomes articulated to the students**
- **Strong focus on peer collaboration and pupil- centred activities**
- **Active facilitation by the EL teachers**
- **Structured approach to use good spoken English during the sessions**

Limitations

- **Manpower constraints, insufficient number of sessions**
- **Inconsistent attendance of students**
- **Choice of themes and selection of articles**
- **'Standard' accents take time to develop**

Conclusion

Reading Circle programme

Offers a structure for discussion to take place

Breaks down the inhibition faced by foreign users of the language

Promotes life-long learning

Lots of potential in what it can accomplish

