

**IMPLEMENTING LITERATURE CIRCLES TO
PROMOTE STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN READING
COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES**

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the implementation of Literature Circles in promoting students' engagement during reading comprehension activities in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The study employed a qualitative case study design involving one English teacher and eighth-grade students at a junior high school in Karawang, Indonesia. Data were collected through classroom observation and semi-structured interviews with the teacher and six students. The findings revealed that Literature Circles were implemented through several stages, namely preparation, individual reading, group discussion, sharing and reflection, and teacher feedback. The implementation encouraged students to participate actively during reading activities through collaborative discussion and role-based interaction. Students also demonstrated positive engagement by sharing ideas, helping peers, discussing vocabulary, and participating during group discussions. Furthermore, the activity increased students' motivation and involvement in reading English texts. However, several challenges were identified, such as unequal participation, vocabulary difficulties, and nervousness during presentations. Overall, Literature Circles can support collaborative and interactive learning environments that promote students' engagement during reading comprehension activities.

Keywords: Literature Circles, Students' Engagement, Reading Comprehension, EFL Classroom, Collaborative Learning

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi implementasi Literature Circles dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa selama kegiatan membaca pemahaman di kelas English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif yang melibatkan satu guru bahasa Inggris dan siswa kelas delapan di salah satu sekolah menengah pertama di Karawang, Indonesia. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas dan wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan guru serta enam siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Literature Circles diterapkan melalui beberapa tahapan, yaitu persiapan, membaca individu, diskusi kelompok, berbagi dan refleksi, serta umpan balik guru. Implementasi tersebut mendorong siswa untuk berpartisipasi aktif selama kegiatan membaca melalui diskusi kolaboratif dan interaksi berbasis peran. Siswa juga menunjukkan

keterlibatan positif dengan berbagi ide, membantu teman, mendiskusikan kosakata, serta berpartisipasi dalam diskusi kelompok. Selain itu, kegiatan ini meningkatkan motivasi dan keterlibatan siswa dalam membaca teks berbahasa Inggris. Namun, beberapa tantangan juga ditemukan, seperti partisipasi yang tidak merata, kesulitan kosakata, dan rasa gugup saat presentasi. Secara keseluruhan, Literature Circles dapat mendukung lingkungan belajar yang kolaboratif dan interaktif untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa dalam kegiatan membaca pemahaman.

Kata Kunci: Literature Circles, Keterlibatan Siswa, Membaca Pemahaman, Kelas EFL, Pembelajaran Kolaboratif

A. Introduction

Reading comprehension is one of the important skills in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Through reading activities, students are expected not only to recognize words but also to understand, interpret, and construct meaning from texts. Reading activities also play an important role in helping students gain information, develop vocabulary knowledge, and improve language skills. Therefore, reading comprehension becomes one of the essential aspects in English language learning.

However, many students still experience difficulties in understanding English texts. Students often struggle to identify the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary, understand the content of the text, and connect ideas presented in reading materials. In addition, reading activities in

classrooms are sometimes conducted through teacher-centered approaches that limit students' opportunities to participate actively during the learning process. As a result, students may become passive and less motivated during reading lessons.

Student engagement is considered an important factor in successful learning activities, particularly in reading comprehension. Engaged students tend to participate actively, interact with peers, and become more motivated during classroom activities. In EFL classrooms, student engagement may support students in understanding texts more effectively because they are involved cognitively and socially during the learning process. Students who are actively engaged are more likely to participate in discussions, share opinions, and collaborate with peers to solve learning difficulties.

Collaborative learning strategies are widely used to create more interactive classroom environments. Through collaborative activities, students are encouraged to exchange ideas, discuss problems, and support each other during learning activities. This interaction may help students improve comprehension and classroom participation simultaneously. Collaborative learning also provides opportunities for students to become more confident in expressing their opinions during discussions.

One strategy that can support collaborative learning in reading classrooms is Literature Circles. According to Daniels (2002), Literature Circles are small discussion groups in which students read the same text and discuss it collaboratively through assigned roles such as discussion leader, summarizer, connector, and word finder. Through these roles, students become actively involved in the reading process and develop understanding through peer discussion.

Literature Circles also encourage student-centered learning because students are responsible for

participating in discussions and completing their assigned roles. Instead of relying only on teacher explanation, students actively interact with peers to understand the text together. This strategy may create a more interactive classroom environment and increase students' engagement during reading activities.

Several previous studies have shown positive findings regarding the implementation of Literature Circles in EFL classrooms. Chou (2021) found that Literature Circles improved students' reading comprehension and learner autonomy. Similarly, Kaya Tosun and Doğan (2020) reported that Literature Circles encouraged active participation and reflective learning among students. In the Indonesian context, Wati and Yanto (2022) revealed that collaborative reading activities through Literature Circles supported students' confidence and classroom participation.

Although previous studies have discussed the effectiveness of Literature Circles, there is still limited research focusing on how Literature Circles promote students' engagement during reading comprehension activities in Indonesian junior high school EFL

classrooms. Most previous studies mainly focused on reading achievement or comprehension outcomes rather than classroom engagement and collaborative interaction among students.

Therefore, this study aimed to explore the implementation of Literature Circles and investigate how the strategy promotes students' engagement during reading comprehension activities. The study is expected to provide useful insights for teachers regarding the use of collaborative learning strategies in EFL reading classrooms.

B. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the implementation of Literature Circles in an EFL classroom. Qualitative research was chosen because the study aimed to understand classroom interaction, students' engagement, and participants' experiences during the implementation of Literature Circles.

The research was conducted in one eighth-grade classroom at a junior high school in Karawang, Indonesia. One English teacher and approximately twenty students

participated in the classroom observation. Meanwhile, six students were selected for interviews based on the teacher's recommendation.

The data were collected through classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. Observation was conducted to examine how Literature Circles were implemented during reading comprehension activities and how students participated during the learning process. During the observation process, the researcher focused on students' participation, classroom interaction, collaborative discussion, and students' responses during the activity.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher and six students to gain deeper insights regarding students' engagement and classroom experiences during Literature Circles activities. The interviews were conducted after the classroom observation.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis involved several stages, namely familiarizing the data, generating initial codes, identifying

themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and producing the report. Thematic analysis was used to identify patte

C.Results and Discussion

1. The Implementation of Literature Circles in Promoting Active Reading Activities

The findings showed that Literature Circles were implemented through several structured stages, namely preparation, individual reading, group discussion, sharing and reflection, and teacher feedback.

During the preparation stage, the teacher explained the objectives and procedures of Literature Circles and assigned specific roles to students. The teacher also divided students into small groups to support collaborative discussion activities. The students appeared enthusiastic when forming groups and receiving their assigned roles. According to the teacher, the preparation process was relatively easy because students could understand the explanation directly after the teacher explained the procedures and learning method. The teacher stated that students understood the instructions and responsibilities of each role after receiving clear explanations.

During the individual reading stage, students read the assigned text independently and prepared notes according to their assigned roles. Most students were able to complete their tasks and showed focus during the reading activity.

However, several students still experienced difficulties in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary from the text. The group discussion stage became the main activity that encouraged students' engagement. Students actively discussed unfamiliar vocabulary, exchanged ideas, and shared interpretations related to the text. Most students participated actively during the discussion, although unequal participation was still observed in several groups.

The teacher explained that during the discussion process, the teacher walked around the classroom to monitor students' activities and provide assistance when students experienced difficulties. The teacher also guided students by asking questions related to vocabulary and text comprehension.

During the sharing and reflection stage, students presented their discussion results in front of the class.

Students generally appeared enthusiastic and confident while sharing their ideas, although some students still relied on their notes during presentations.

Finally, the teacher provided feedback regarding vocabulary understanding, text comprehension, and students' role performance during the activity. Teacher guidance helped students remain engaged throughout the learning process.

These findings indicate that Literature Circles can create a more interactive and student-centered reading environment that encourages active participation during reading comprehension activities.

This finding is consistent with Daniels (2002), who states that Literature Circles encourage collaborative discussion and student-centered learning through role-based interaction.

Tabel 1 Themes of Students' Engagement Findings

Themes	Description
Active Participation	Students participated actively during discussions and reading activities
Collaborative Interaction	Students helped peers understand vocabulary and text meaning
Motivation and Reading Involvement	Students became more motivated during reading activities
Challenges During Engagement	Students experienced vocabulary difficulties and unequal participation

2. Students' Engagement During Literature Circles Activities

a. Active Participation

The findings revealed that Literature Circles encouraged students to participate actively during reading activities. Students became more involved in classroom discussions because they were responsible for completing their assigned roles and contributing ideas to their groups.

Several students explained that they enjoyed discussing the text collaboratively with their peers. One student stated that the activity was enjoyable because students could "learn together, help each other, and laugh a lot" (S4). Another student mentioned that group discussion activities made learning less boring and more interactive.

Students also appeared more confident in expressing their opinions during discussions because the activity created a relaxed classroom atmosphere. The role-based discussion encouraged students to participate because every student had responsibilities during the activity.

These findings suggest that collaborative discussion activities can increase students' active involvement

during reading lessons. This finding is consistent with Daniels (2002), who states that Literature Circles encourage students to become active participants during reading activities through collaborative discussion and role-based interaction.

b. Collaborative Interaction

The findings also showed that students actively interacted with their peers during group discussions.

Students shared opinions, explained vocabulary, and helped each other understand difficult parts of the text. One student explained that students could “help each other when they do not understand something” (S1). Another student stated that discussion activities helped students understand the text more easily because they could rely on peer support during the learning process.

Collaborative interaction also encouraged students to exchange ideas and clarify misunderstandings together. During discussions, students discussed vocabulary meaning, shared interpretations of the text, and solved problems collaboratively.

5This indicates that Literature Circles support collaborative interaction and encourage students to engage socially and academically during reading activities. Collaborative interaction also supports social learning because students are able to construct understanding together through peer discussion and idea sharing.

c. Motivation and Reading Involvement

The findings revealed that Literature Circles increased students’ motivation and involvement in reading English texts. Students reported that reading activities became more enjoyable and interesting when conducted collaboratively.

One student mentioned that reading English texts became “easier and more interesting when we read together with friends” (S2). Another student stated that the activity made reading “more motivating and enjoyable” (S6).

The enjoyable classroom atmosphere encouraged students to participate more actively and become more engaged during reading activities. Students also explained that collaborative discussion activities

reduced boredom during reading lessons.

These findings indicate that Literature Circles can positively influence students' motivation during reading comprehension activities. This finding is in line with previous studies which state that collaborative learning activities may increase students' classroom engagement and participation.

d. Challenges During Engagement

Despite the positive engagement, several challenges were still identified during the implementation process. Some students experienced difficulties in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary, while others reported unequal participation among group members.

One student explained that "sometimes there are group members who work while others do not" (S1).

In addition, some students also felt nervous when presenting their discussion results in front of the class because they were afraid of making pronunciation mistakes.

The teacher also explained that monitoring all groups became challenging when many students asked questions at the same time. Vocabulary difficulties among

students sometimes affected the discussion process because several students still struggled with basic vocabulary understanding.

These findings indicate that although Literature Circles promote students' engagement, teacher guidance and classroom management remain important to support equal participation and effective discussion. Overall, the findings demonstrate that Literature Circles can promote students' engagement through collaborative discussion, active participation, and interactive reading activities.

D. Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that Literature Circles were implemented through structured

collaborative activities, including preparation, individual reading, group discussion, sharing and

reflection, and teacher feedback.

The implementation created a more interactive and student-centered

learning environment that encouraged students to participate actively during reading comprehension

activities.

In addition, Literature Circles promoted students' engagement through collaborative interaction, active participation, motivation, and reading involvement. Students became more engaged during reading activities because they could discuss texts collaboratively, share ideas, and support each other during group discussions.

Despite several challenges, such as unequal participation and vocabulary difficulties, Literature Circles remain a promising strategy for promoting engagement in EFL reading classrooms. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to apply collaborative reading activities to create more meaningful and interactive learning experiences for students.

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