Students' Engagement in Reading Through Literature Circle

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Abstract:

This qualitative study explores the implementation of literature circles on student engagement in reading. Literature circles are collaborative learning approaches where students read the same book and participate in group discussions to share their understanding and opinions about the literary work. The research design employed a qualitative methodology, specifically narrative inquiry, to gain insights into the participants' experiences and perspectives. The study was conducted at a private university in Banjarmasin, Indonesia, with participants consisting of four students majoring in English education who had previous experience with literature circles. Data was collected through interviews, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the students' engagement in reading through literature circles. Thematic analysis was utilized to identify patterns and themes within the interview data. The result of the study indicates that literature circles have a positive result on student engagement in reading. Through active participation in group discussions, students develop critical thinking skills, improve reading comprehension, and enhance their ability to articulate their thoughts and ideas. The collaborative nature of literature circles fosters a supportive and inclusive learning environment, where students learn from each other and build upon their collective knowledge

Key Words: Students' Engagement, Literature Circle, Reading Skill

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a process carried out to obtain a message and then convey it using written words [1], [2]. Apart from that, reading is one of the things that most important in life [3], [4]. Reading proficiency is one of the four abilities in academic and nonacademic English that should be learned [5]. Reading ability refers to an individual's skill and capability to read and understand written text. It encompasses various cognitive and linguistic abilities, including the capacity to identify and understand individual words, grasp the meaning and context of the text, and relate the text to prior knowledge [6]. Reading entails more than just comprehending specific words, sentences, paragraphs, or chapters of a book. It is a complex process that requires the integration of various cognitive and language skills, including the ability to decode words, understand the meaning and context of text, and make connections between the text and prior knowledge. Reading activity constructs meaning to be more critical for identifying and absorbing information and ideas which derive from the sources.

Reading is essential for student learning [7]. Many courses at universities are built around a textbook, and course materials make it clear to students that they should expect to do a lot of reading. Students in higher education require the functional academic literacy skill of reading [8]. It enables to acquire, interpret and apply knowledge from written text, to engage in critical thinking, and to develop their writing abilities. Reading is capturing and understanding ideas [9]. To recognize and comprehend the main ideas and supporting details, one must actively engage with the text, as well as making connections between the text and prior knowledge. For this reason, it has been said that reading is a window to the world.

Literacy is a general term that refers to a person's ability and skills in reading, writing, speaking, calculating, as well as solving problems in everyday life [10], [11]. Reading literacy has been a big issue in Indonesian education progress. Many research findings present the university students' reading literacy is still unsatisfactory [12]. This fact serves as a warning about the low literacy rate. Reading is a monotonous task that students are required to perform in class, which quickly satisfies their attention spans and causes them to become bored [13]. According to this point of view, English learning will be impacted by the students' issues with a lack of interest in learning the language, particularly in reading. The knowledge gained will also be lessened by a lack of interest in reading. It is the duty of a teacher to increase students' interest in reading through the educational process. Thus, it is important to employ learning techniques that may increase students' interest in developing their reading abilities. According to a common practice that in a reading activity, this condition may be the result of teachers

not paying enough attention to or making an effort to develop their students' thinking skills.

Indonesian students find it difficult to read English literary texts because reading for literary experience differs from reading for information. This explains why reading within the content or across the curriculum has grown to be a crucial part of many school improvement initiatives. In order for students to be active participants in the classroom, teachers must persuade them to develop thoughtful interpretations of what they read as well as effective strategies for reading a variety of texts. Students struggle to comprehend the texts, especially if they employ improper study techniques [14]. The teacher should assess the appropriateness and efficacy of these techniques before implementing such a framework in the classroom. A teacher can also do this if they want to test out each tactic formally to see how the students respond and how it affects the group's performance.

In order to facilitate learning and inspire students, the teacher takes on the role of a facilitator [9]. Teacher acts as a guide, helping students to navigate the learning process, providing support and direction when needed. Teacher creates a positive and safe learning environment, and provide students with the necessary resources and materials to support their learning. One of the key responsibilities of a teacher as a facilitator is to create and design learning activities that are engaging, interactive and motivating for students. This can include group work, hands-on activities, and real-world projects that connect to students' interests and experiences[15], [16]. Furthermore, the teacher uses different teaching strategies that cater to the diverse learning needs and styles of the students, providing students with the appropriate support and guidance. One of strategy in teaching reading comprehension is literature circle.

Through the use of the peer group's social networks, literature circles have the potential to encourage leisure reading [17]. By bringing students together in small groups to discuss and analyze literature, literature circles create a social context for reading that can make reading more enjoyable and meaningful for students. Literature circles enable students to discuss their opinions and insights about literature with their peers, which is one of their main advantages. This creates a sense of community and belonging among group members. Literature circles can also promote reading for enjoyment by allowing students to explore literature that is of interest to students. This can be done by giving students a choice of texts to read or by allowing students to select their own books to read and discuss. By creating a social context for reading, by enabling students to explore literature of their interests, have informal and relaxed discussions, and share their thoughts and insights with peers about literature, literature circles can help students find reading more enjoyable and meaningful.

A reading group called a literature circle consists of four or five people with varying reading abilities [13]. The group members are responsible for reading and discussing a common text and take on specific roles in the group. It provides an opportunity for students to engage in critical thinking and analysis of literature in a collaborative and supportive environment. Students are given the chance to be active and communicative in the classroom through the use of literature circle strategies. Literature circle allow students to take ownership of their learning, to actively engage with the text, and to communicate their ideas and insights to their peers. This approach to literature instruction promotes critical thinking, active reading, and reflective writing, and creates an engaging and stimulating learning experience for students. It is will make more interactive learning process where teacher is not only a facilitator.

Literature circles were implemented not only in offline classes but can also be used online class and implemented in 2022. The studies look into implementing literary circles in the extensive program [18]. The studies investigate online literature circle in extensive reading program. Students can participate actively in online discussion as a result of the literature circle. For extensive practice with EFL texts, undergraduate students are encouraged to practice their navigating skills while exploring a variety of texts.

Other studies have looked at the the involvement and opinions of students in literature circles during reading class [19]. The results demonstrate that the students engaged in the literature circles actively and thought highly of them. The literature circle also notes that students had favorable opinions of the activity [20]. Instead of using the standard chalk and talk method, it helped the students understand the literature component better. In addition, literature circles give students confidence in speaking in front of a group and help them hone the four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Several previous studies that have been conducted exploring students' engagement reading through literature circles have provided good results and are useful for teaching reading strategies. however, all previous research has only focused on learning processes, not many researchers have focused on students' engagement in higher education and therefore this research is very important to do. The research questions raised in this study are 1) How is the implementation of literature circle in the classroom? and 2) How is students' engagement during implementation of literature circle in classroom?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
a. Reading Theory

In English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL), reading is acknowledged as being the most important skill to learn. Reading serves as a tool for learning about language as well as a source of information [21]. Reading encourages learners to use more foreign language by demonstrating their comprehension of the text they are

reading. Despite the fact that students comprehend the text with ease, language learning improves language acquisition.

The importance of reading for student learning is generally acknowledged [7]. Reading is one of the most essential variations to literacy and one of the most crucial academic abilities in an EFL lesson that enables students to learn new knowledge and interpret it with various viewpoints is reading [19]. It's mostly because reading helps children acquire new words or gain better understanding. Reading is capturing and understanding ideas [9]. It involves the active engagement of cognitive and linguistic abilities, including the ability to recognize and decode individual words, to understand the meaning and context of the text, and to make connections between the text and prior knowledge. An outpouring of their soul reflects the reader's activity in appreciating the script. That is why people said reading is the window of the world.

Reading is a challenging task because it necessitates using a variety of reading strategies [14]. It is not simply the act of recognizing individual words on a page, but also involves understanding the meaning and context of the text as a whole. The division between metacognitive and cognitive strategies that can be applied to aid in understanding the reading text is the most typical classification of reading strategies.

b. Literature Circle

In literature circles, members read the same story or book (or are required to do so), take notes to summarize the material, and then get together frequently to discuss their interpretations of what they have read [22]. This activity can be simply described as reading clubs or groups where students select their reading material from a variety of genres (such as books, articles, and poems) and text types [5]. Literature circles are learner-cantered teaching methods that incorporate collaborative learning and independent reading, which must be included in current teaching concepts [19]. A discussion group that reads the same book, shares their understanding, and analyzes the text in accordance with their roles is referred to in this phrase. Each student participates in the discussion by playing various roles, such as leader, summarizer, connector, etc.

A reading group called literature circle consists of four or five people with varying reading abilities [13]. The books that the students read can be either novels or storybooks. All members of the literature circle read the same textbook, but in a different way from other groups. In order to facilitate group discussion, literature circles combine a communicative method with task-based language instruction (Stout, 2018). This allows students to collaborate with one another to complete the task. Because this is a group method, students learn to compare themselves to other students, which will make learning more interactive. Reading-related discussions in literature circles are primarily about the roles of the students rather than the teacher or text. The teacher also serves as a facilitator to help the students in the discussion rather than being the focal point of the activity.

In literature circles, students engage actively in reading and writing activities because it is recognized that collaborative learning offers opportunities to work within students' abilities, engage learning, and provide access to literacy materials and activities. Students' engagement is an important aspect of the literature circle method in the classroom. Literature circles provide opportunities for students to actively engage with the text by asking questions, making connections, and discussing their thoughts and reactions with their peers. This active engagement can help to increase students' motivation and interest in reading. With the help of this strategy, students can develop a habit of reading, learn to enjoy reading, and improve their reading comprehension abilities [23].

3. METHODS

A qualitative research methodology was applied in this study. The goal of qualitative research design is to comprehend social phenomena from the participants' points of view [24]. The researcher employed the narrative inquiry method to carry out this study. The narrator tells a story based on the participant's firsthand experience, making it the most effective method for learning about people's inner lives [25]. The use of narrative inquiry in this study is expect to give an idea of information of the students' engagement in reading through literature circle [26].

Participants in this study were students majoring in English education at private campus in Banjarmasin who previously used literary circles in their classes. Four students from different grades were selected to conduct interviews to gain their experiences in student engagement in reading through the literature circle class. The researcher employed an interview for the instrument to collect the data. It used to get in depth information about the participants' experience. It related to engagement in reading through literature circle in the classroom. In a narrative interview, the researcher and the participant engage in a conversation that is focused on the participant's story. The researcher acts as a facilitator, asking questions and encouraging the participant to share their experiences in their own words.

The researcher used the tool from narrative analysis by Riessman (Febrianto, 2022), in which include thematic analysis by [26]. It consists of three steps namely reading the data repeatedly, coding and categorizing the data extract, and recognizing the thematic heading. Thematic analysis provides a flexible and effective means of analyzing qualitative data to identify meaningful patterns and themes. The method is widely used in various

disciplines and can be applied to a variety of research questions and data sources.

4.   RESULTS

4.1 The implementation of the literature circle in class

The implementation of literature circle in learning helps students to actively engage in reading and understanding literary works. This strategy improves students' reading skills, critical thinking, and collaboration. The implementation of literature circle in classes P1 and P2 has similarities in the rules given by the lecturer, as it is guided and facilitated by the same lecturer, although it is applied to different classes. The difference lies in the way groups are formed, the provision of reading materials/articles, the differences in the courses taught, and the additional assignments or final projects given by the lecturer. However, basically the rules for implementing literature circle are the same, namely each group is required to read, and discuss so that they can master/become experts in the material/article owned by each group, and each representative of the group can explain to other groups and can answer questions asked by other groups or lecturers, and can summarize the contents of the presented article. The main goal is to create an active class in collaboration with student involvement in reading.

> "The literature circle method is used in the classroom because the lecturer doesn't want a boring class where all the students do is watch power point presentations. This way, all the students can participate in class discussions and presentations by presenting articles that each group has read and discussed." (P2)

The implementation of literature circle in P1's class focuses on ESP (English for Specific Purposes) which studies the application of English language learning in various fields and the groups are directly distributed by the lecturer based on attendance in the class along with the articles provided by the lecturer in a Google Drive folder. In contrast, P2 studies CCU (Cross-Cultural Understanding) which discusses cultures in various countries with group division using games, and each group that gets the highest score is allowed to choose the article provided by the lecturer first. After the group division, the group representatives are asked to present the shared articles.

> "Every group in the literature circle was required to read and discuss one article per meeting. The articles that each group has discussed will then be presented or explained again to the other groups during the following meeting. Each group has five minutes to discuss with their own group during the meeting. Following that, each group member will take a turn explaining the article to the other groups for five minutes each." (P1)

In the implementation of literature circle, there are no specific rules for each group other than the rules for implementing literature circle that has been explained by the lecturer. After the group formation, each group has the freedom to discuss. P1 conducts online discussions due to the busy schedules of each group member, while P2 conducts offline discussions in the classroom. In the implementation of the literature circle strategy, not all instructions given by the lecturer run smoothly, as there is a potential for failure caused by several factors. The main factor is that there are some students who still do not understand the content of the article they will present.

> "Members of the group occasionally find themselves explaining articles' contents to other groups even though they may not fully understand them themselves. This may be the result of some members failing to read the article or forgetting to do so, or it could be due to a language barrier. According to the theory, the group explaining the article to other groups must truly comprehend it in order to properly respond to questions from other groups or lecturers." (P2)

One of the goals of literature circle is for each group member to become an expert in the article that will be presented each week. With a deep understanding of the article, each group member can present the content of the article to other groups. This allows each other group to provide feedback or questions about the content of the article. Thus, a "circle" is formed where each group member shares knowledge with other groups by presenting the article they bring.

Another factor that becomes a constraint in the implementation of literature circle is students who are absent during the presentation. P1 mentioned that:

> "Because no one of my group members could spread to other groups to explain, I attended a meeting alone and explained our group's article in front of the entire class. Meetings occasionally have to be postponed until we have a different class to take its place because incomplete groups frequently occur in class." (P1)

The absence of students during the presentation has a significant result because each group member is responsible for dispersing and presenting the article they have. This cannot be carried out according to the instructions given by the lecturer if group members are not present.

At the end of each meeting, P1 is required to submit article reviews each week, which are in line with the articles that will be presented each week. Each group will submit the article review files to the Google Drive link provided by the lecturer, and at the end of each meeting, the lecturer will check the task using Turnitin. The lecturer will send back the checked file, and for groups with high levels of plagiarism or many corrections, they must resubmit the revised task. The aim is for students to read and understand the content of the article after completing this task, as well as to learn how to write well and correctly.

In contrast to P1, P2 does not have additional tasks such as reviewing articles. Instead, at the end of each meeting, all students are required to watch a video.

"Before class ends the lecturer always ends by watching the video to better understand the material that has been studied. The video is about culture, but doesn't specifically mention the origin of that culture. for example like in Thailand the culture is like this, but the video leads to a universal discussion of examples of micro culture." (P2)

The video watched at the end of each meeting is related to the article that has been presented, with the aim of helping students better understand the material learned in that meeting.

When implementing literature circle, students read and analyze articles in group discussions. They are also given additional tasks to make article reviews or watch related videos. The goal is to deepen students' understanding of the material learned. Each student has an individual task before the group meeting, which they then discuss together. This approach develops critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills. Through discussion and relevant videos, students can link theory with practice in a broader context. Literature circle provides an active opportunity for students to learn, expand knowledge through reading, and improve their ability to work together to achieve learning goals.

4.2 Students' engagement in reading through the literature circle

In the next sub-topic, researcher was interview participants controlling anxiety when they want to present at the International Conference. Even from one participant there was a statement that he managed to control his anxiety when he was about to start the presentation and that stated that he when he started the presentation did not feel anxious anymore. This makes researchers interested in discussing participants who are very anxious to participants who are not even anxious at all.

The main goal of the learning process is to involve students in reading. One effective strategy to increase student engagement in reading is by using literature circle in the classroom. Literature circle is a collaborative approach where students read the same book and then participate in group discussions to share their understanding and opinions about the literary work they are reading. This strategy encourages students to actively engage in reading, build a deep understanding, and engage in critical thinking and reflection. In literature circle, student involvement in reading is done through various stages and interactions. They are divided into small groups and given specific roles. After reading individually, they gather to discuss in their groups. During the discussion, they share their understanding with each other and the lecturer's role is to guide and support the discussion, provide feedback.

According to interviews with P1 and P2, the literature circle strategy has a positive impact on students' reading activities. This strategy can increase their motivation to read and understand texts better. Students also feel actively involved in group discussions, sharing views, and enriching their understanding. The literature circle strategy provides an active opportunity for students to learn, expand their knowledge through reading, and improve their ability to work together to achieve learning goals.

"This literature circle can make my friends contribute to reading, talking and discussing. The biggest benefit we get and feel from the literature circle method is that students become more active in class. Because each student is required to understand the article to be able to explain it to other groups. We don't know how critical other groups will ask us after we explain the contents of the articles we have, therefore we must become experts in the articles we have." (P2)

The literature circle strategy makes students more active in reading and helps them understand texts better. They discuss in groups, share their understanding, ask interesting questions, and support arguments with relevant evidence. The lecturer helps guide the discussion and provides useful feedback. With this strategy, students not only improve their understanding but also develop critical thinking, speaking, listening, and collaboration skills in learning

The results of interviews with P1 and P2 show that some students also face challenges in literature circle activities. Some of these challenges are due to a lack of motivation and reluctance to read, while others have difficulty understanding the language.

"For an example of a case where my friend didn't want to read an article that had been given by the lecturer for our group, he just wanted me to explain the contents of the article. Facing my friend who is like that I still tell him to read and ask what obstacles he has. It turned out that the problem was that he did not understand the language barrier. So I help to translate the article. After he read the article to test whether he understood the article, I asked the content of the article and he really understood the content of the article." (P2)

Students are engaged in reading by using literature circle, discussing, and sharing understandings. This strategy has a positive impact on students' reading activities, increasing their motivation and comprehension of the text. Through group discussions, students can enrich their understanding and develop critical thinking, speaking, listening, and collaborative skills. However, there are also challenges students face, such as a lack of motivation, difficulties in understanding the language, or reluctance to read. In facing these challenges, it is important for lecturers and fellow students to provide support, assist understanding, and create an inclusive environment. Through literature circle, students not only increase their understanding of texts, but also strengthen social relationships, build a network of classmates, and learn together effectively.

DISCUSSION

This section discusses the importance of research findings by comparing them with previous studies and the theoretical framework used. The focus of this research is on how literature circle implementation in the classroom can help students engage in reading using the literature circle strategy.

By introducing cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies, reciprocal teaching is a teaching method that can be used to increase reading comprehension [27]. Analyzing, summarizing, judging, and identifying the main idea of reading texts are some of the cognitive and metacognitive techniques used in reciprocal teaching. The strategy involves small groups of students working together to learn comprehension monitoring strategies. This strategy can be adapted to different classroom settings, with the most common being the literature circle. A reading group called a "literature circle" consists of four or five people with varying reading levels [13]. The literature circle strategy is a cooperative learning strategy that can encourage students to read by having group discussions and text analyses [19]. The strategy is based on a textbook discussion group, in which students take on various roles to direct the reading and discussion. The goals of literature circles are to encourage reading and teach group collaboration. In the classroom, collaboration, active participation, and the development of critical thinking skills can all be encouraged by literature circles and reciprocal teaching.

Based on the results of interviews with P1 and P2, the implementation of literature circle in the classroom begins with the formation of small groups within the class. Each group is given an article to be presented every week. With the rules given by the teacher, the same literature circle rules apply to classes P1 and P2. Each group is required to read and discuss together with the aim of mastering and becoming experts in the material/article given to them. The group representative is responsible for explaining the content of the material to other groups, answering questions from other groups or the teacher, and summarizing the essence of the presented article. The objective of literature circle is not only to improve students' reading and discussion skills but also to develop their presentation skills, critical thinking, and deep understanding of the material being studied. This collaborative learning approach creates an active, collaborative, and engaging classroom environment that maximizes student involvement in the learning process.

The second finding of the study is that the literature circle strategy promotes students' engagement in reading. The literature circle strategy has been found to promote students' engagement in reading and improve their reading comprehension skills. This strategy involves students in reading, discussing, and sharing their understanding of texts in a group, which can help them develop critical thinking, speaking, listening, and collaboration skills [28]. The essential components of reading, writing, speaking, and listening are successfully incorporated into literature circles, making it an effective strategy for motivating students to read independently. reading in literature circles and using them to learn to read becomes easier and more enjoyable as a result, which encourages student engagement in reading [13]. Through group discussions, students can develop a deeper understanding of texts and become more engaged in the reading process. However, some students may face challenges such as lack of motivation, difficulty in understanding the language, or reluctance to read. In facing these challenges, support from teachers and peers is crucial. Literature circle not only improves students' understanding but also strengthens social relationships and promotes effective learning. Therefore, literature circle is a valuable strategy for promoting students' engagement in reading and improving their reading comprehension skills. Teachers need to be trained in the use of this strategy and to use it consistently in the classroom to ensure its effectiveness. By using this strategy, students can develop a reading habit that has been quite successful [23].

By using literature circle, students can develop critical thinking, speaking, listening, and collaboration skills, and strengthen social relationships, which may result in a learning environment in the classroom that encourages maximum participation from the students.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the thematic analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn regarding the implementation of literature circle and students' engagement in reading: 1) The literature circle method was a great way to get students excited about reading. It involves students reading a book together and then talking about it in a group. This helps them think better, speak more confidently, and work well with others. 2) The literature circle approach plays a vital role in enhancing students' engagement with reading. Through this method, students actively participate in group discussions, fostering a sense of involvement and motivation to delve deeper into their reading materials. As a result of these interactive discussions within the literature circle framework, students not only sharpen their reading comprehension skills but also develop a heightened appreciation for the texts they explore. This approach not only bolsters their understanding but also encourages a lifelong enthusiasm for reading and learning.

6. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

7. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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