

**Exploring EFL Secondary Students' Engagement in Reading Classroom  
Through Literature Circle**

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**ABSTRACT**

*In reading classroom, students are required to comprehend text. One of its requirements is engagement as it is successful things in learning. However, one of recommended strategy is literature circle. Because a literature circle is strategies guide students to a deeper understanding of what they are reading through structured discussions about texts and books, and help students practice and develop the skills and strategies of being good readers. This study aims to investigate the students' engagement of literature circles during the reading classroom. This is qualitative research with case study as a research design. To obtain data, observation, and interview were used for this research and then the obtained data was analyzed through thematic analysis. This research takes place in one of public junior high school in Telagasari and took several students from one class to interviews. There are three steps in the literature Circle, such as group discussion about books, they read books and discuss with the group and then find unfamiliar word. So we can solve the problem and find out the meaning of the word.*

**Keywords:** *EFL Secondary Students, Literature Circle, Reading Classroom*

**INTRODUCTION**

Reading classroom becomes essential class since it copes students to comprehend knowledge. Teaching and learning reading recently are mainly concerned with testing. According to Laily (2018), reading classroom is defined as the most important skills for students to learning English. This means that students can learn to read texts during reading, understand meaning by interpreting sentences, and understand information by answering question on the final course. However, students' engagement in reading classroom is relative low. The students lacked of interaction during reading and there are no details of instructional procedure. Indeed, students' engagement is successful things in learning (Hiver, et. al.2021). Students' engagement divide into three parts which are behavioral, cognitive, and emotional (Fredericks et al, 2004). Behavioral engagement refers to students' positive reactions in participated academic task, means students responses in reading classroom. Cognitive engagement is about self-regulated learning, the strategies students use, and their investment in learning. Emotional Engagement means students positive attitudes, their awareness of their teacher and school, means students feeling while using appropriate strategy in reading classroom.

Reading is one of the most important learning skills that allows students to learn new information about a subject and come up with different interpretations.

Reading is a means for children to synthesize and evaluate information at the same time practice thinking skills. Reading books allow students to improve their language skills or learn more about the subject.

According to the National Assessment (2022), the students in understanding of the reading English texts was quietly low and below the minimum criteria of successful action. This may be due to a variety of reasons, including students vocabulary still lacking, students having difficulty finding schematic structure, difficulty in taking a conclusion of the text may be caused by factors, and teaching strategy used by teacher are still conventional in reading classroom. Therefore, learning to use strategic reading skills effectively is an important part of becoming a good reader. For students to be able apply their skills, they need continuous reading practice to help them learn independently (Yurika, 2008). To improve students' reading skills, an appropriate technique in teaching reading can attract students to interact with various types of texts. In order to read efficiently, techniques in reading must be matched to the reading purpose to rread effectively. One of reading strategy that potentially engages students in reading classroom is using Literature Circle..

Studies have shown that literature circle is uniquely beneficial for students. A study conducted by Coccia (2015) found that literature circles can improve understanding of text through peer-to-peer discussions that help students take responsibility for learning and understanding the text in question. Noah (2018) also believes that students have a good awareness of literature circle like an activity. In addition, the literature circles also helps students gain four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. They build confidence when presenting their ideas in group discussion.

In line with previous study, a research conducted by Noah (2018) found that students responded positively to literature circle because they were able to learn in an interesting situation and freely share ideas and opinions. The previous studies mentioned above show that most students feel positively about the Literature circles in their language classroom. Subandini (2012) and Noah (2018) both used personal journals to collect students feedback resulting in positive students responses. Stout (2018) also mentioned positive behaviors in students participating in cooperative learning in literature circle. Subandini (2012) determined students' perceptions of literature circles through books, in which students write down their feeling and opinions about the activities of literature circle. Following the journal entry, the students were interviewed and ask questions about what they read. Both the journal result showed that students enjoyed the literature circle, because the activity allowed them to express their opinions, while also learning from the others. This idea is supported by Stout (2018), who argues that through discussion in literature circle, students look at texts from different perspective and even learn to understand a difficult text, even when that text maybe above their current level. According to Detty (2017), her article "The Effect of Literature Circles Strategies to Improve the Reading Ability". The result of study shows that students taught using literature circle strategy were significant better in the reading classroom, than who were not.

Based on previous research, it is understood that study about students' engagement in reading classroom through literature circle is rarely conducted. Therefore, this present study aims to investigate students' engagement in reading classroom through literature circles.

## **LITERATUR REVIEW**

### **Engagement in Literature Circle**

Literature circles gives students the opportunity to create connections between texts and personal experiences, monitor and take ownership of their own learning. The students' have the opportunity to listen to other group members interpretations of the same text. It provides students with an discuss and share thoughts and opinions. All of this adds to their enjoyment of the text (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1993).

A literature circle is a reading group of 4 or 5 people in which students with different levels of academic achievement and reading ability voluntarily read together to read literary text messages such as novels, stories, or books. They like and also to share their reading experience (Daniels, 2002; Karatay, 2015)

### **Teaching and Learning Reading**

Reading is a process of communication between the reader and the writer. Caldwell (2008, p.4) defines reading as the process of simultaneously removing and form meaningful thinking interaction and participation through written language. When the reader reads the text, a dialogue takes place between the reader and the writer, during this dialogue the reader should formulate auxiliary questions anticipate meaning, seek information, response intellectually and emotionally, and derive ideas from the content of the text and explain it more precisely. This is clear information that the reader must strive to construct the meaning of what he reads, get ideas and observation from the written text. Therefore, an interaction can be made readers can expand their knowledge and reading skills as stated by Alyousef (2005, p. 2), what the interactive reading makes the reader achieve reading fluently.

### **Students' Engagement in Learning Language**

Language learning approaches are considered as a way for learners to develop their academic skill through meaningful practice with realistic and understand input and output (Nation & Newton, 2009). A study on learner engagement found that successful language learners have strong engagement that sets them up for success in the language learning process. Because this study included a narrative inquiry method, this study uses another method to learn how more participants cope with language learning.

In terms of behavioral engagement, its means students participation in language teaching learning, its very important in learning process. It was also shown that teacher perceived students participation in class to presentation (Fritschner, 2000). This can take many forms, including students questions and comment (Fassinger, 1995). That is the quality of students participation is probably just as

important, but it is more subjective and more difficult to measure. By participating in class, students become active and enjoy the learning process. Students can actively participate in the teaching and learning process by participating in her lessons, which facilitates instruction (Solten, et al. 2006). Student ability to overcome difficult mental challenges and the use of self-regulation techniques to monitor the process (Reeve, 2012). It depends on a variety of interrelated variables that influence students' motivation to learn, their engagement with the learning process, and their participation in the language learning. Moreover, it plays an important role in predicting students' academic performance and is directly related to the use of learning strategy.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study focuses on students' engagement in the reading classroom through Literature Circle. The students' learning process and perception are mainly concerned in this study. Yin (2017) stated that case study is research focuses on a deeper understanding of certain phenomena in individuals. Case studies are also useful in exploring questions about what is known about a particular phenomenon. The researcher uses a case study because it is a qualitative design using a small sample. Out of 31 students as a population, only 4 students to be the participants for this study.

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The qualitative research method in this study, its aims to collect and analyze non –numerical data to understand individuals and social reality, including attitudes, beliefs and motivation (Clair, 2022). A case study is valuable when investigating issues about which little or nothing is known about a particular phenomenon. The research used case study because in this research a qualitative design uses a small sample. The researcher analyzes the engagement of literature circle through reading classroom in secondary students. Variable is described as in the chapter, but in a simple way say variable is object of research, to show in the research. Creswell (1994) defines qualitative research as a process of inquiry aimed at understanding a social or human problem based on the construction of a complex and holistic picture, formed in words language, reports the informant's detailed perspective, and conducted in a natural setting. The researcher used 31 students as a population and acquired 4 students to volunteered to be the samples for this study. In this case, the small sample represents the entire population. The researcher assumed that with a small sample, the research process will work efficiently and optimally.

### **DISCUSSION**

The discussion section aims to explore deeper into the findings in the context of Reading Classroom Through Literature Circle. The discussion will explore findings and comparison to existing literature.

**1. Students' Engagement Literature Circle in Reading Classroom**

**1) Behavioral Engagement**

Based on the finding, it is clear that students actively in participation and showed positive attitude toward literature circle. This is evidenced by their willingness to present their roles within literature circle, including their willingness to fill out role sheets in timely manner and make notes to record their reading progress. There is no doubt that cognition influences how perform and complete tasks (Bohmer & Wanke; Sweet et al, 1996).

The same goes for the literature circle, if students have positive attitude towards the literature circle, they will be able to successfully complete the task and happy when prepare subsequent related to tasks. And perhaps more importantly, when students view a task positively, they feel confident that they can complete it successfully. In the case of this current study, participants reported that literature circle help them engage their learning and reading skill. Apparently, learners who participated in literature circle often outperform those who read in a conventional way in terms of concepts.

**2) Cognitive Engagement**

Based on the finding in this research, found that students who read books based on content sometimes felt that the vocabulary was difficult and beyond their knowledge of English. On the other hand, teachers choose books to read based on students' English level, some learners unmotivated by this learning. In terms assignments, one of biggest challenges in literature circle was the lack of responsibility for students to read and complete individual assignment outside the classroom. If this happens, even if serious students will not able to fully develop their group discussions and will become discourage. To overcome these problems, motivation is the key to success (Stabile, 2009).

**3) Emotional Engagement**

Assigning roles to students also helps create a positive atmosphere in literature circle. The majority of participants reported that they were more motivated to read because they were assigned a specific role. Furthermore, students feel empowered and can focus clearly on what they are doing when assuming a role (Widodo, 2015). By assigning different roles to each students, they also have the opportunity to become experts in the books what they read. This was evident in how the students prepared their roles and perform them well during the literature circle in reading classroom, and that seems to one of emotional. Due to the responsibilities through different roles and the activity, students showed a positive attitude toward the literature circle.

**2. Students' Responses Toward Using The Literature Circle in Reading Classroom**

The students' positive perceptions and high motivation to complete the reading task, and literature circle good impact on their teamwork. Some of them stated that because they were responsible for their accountable for how the literature circle worked. They actively participated in discussions while encouraging others to do the same. This is in line with Graham-Marr and Pellowe (2016) and Stout (2018) who stated collaboration helps optimize students learning and increase motivation. In fact, the students highly valued the group work in the literature circle. Most students felt motivated to read a books because they wanted to discuss books with other. They also enjoyed learning with their peers because they were able to learn better.

They believe that discussing what they read with others improve their reading skill, a belief support by Shelton-Strong (2021). This was also confirmed in a recent study by Thomas and Kim (2019), who found that participating in literature circle helps the students engage their assigned texts by participating in group discussions and exchange opinions. I found that understood it well and could connect with it.

**CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

The result of the study showed that most of students had a positive perception towards literature circle in reading classroom. The perception was also evident in her preparation before participating in literature circle with group discussion. Most participants also satisfied with their roles and involvement in the literature circle. Research on the method literature circle in education has positive result.

However, there are a challenge in this reading classroom. While the students struggle to stay on-task in small groups or give one-word answer to discussion questions, also students confusing about the meaning of the words and sentences what they read.

**1. English Teacher**

While using this method to teach English, teachers can carefully monitor each student's acts closely as they work independently or form small groups with other students, provide feedback, and follow the instructions presented in the reading classroom.

**2. Students**

Based on the findings, literature circle has positive impact on students. You can use this learning reading strategy while in the class or outside in reading activity to get the same benefits. This strategy provides reading skill to engage students in reading classroom.

**3. Future Research**

This study is limited to exploring students' engagement in reading classroom through literature circle. For future research can explore students'

engagement in other learning process or explore another engagement proposed by Friedrichs (2004), such as cognitive and emotional.

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