

## THE USE OF LITERATURE CIRCLE IN TEACHING READING FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

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**Abstract :** *This article describes about the concept of Literature circle in teaching reading for young learners. Many people agree that English has a great important as one of International languages. It is taught almost in all levels of education in the world, including Indonesia. Students need to master the four English language skills :listening, speaking, writing and reading. Reading is one of skilss for students acquire. There are some reasons why the students have difficulties in reading such as they are unfamiliar with the vocabulary, they can't understand the topic of the reading and the teaching method used by the teacher do not attract them. As teachers, we should have new method in teaching and learning process. Literature circle is a good method to support, facilitate and persuade students to enjoy learning English. This method provides students to work with team or make a group discussion who are reading the same work of literature and also students have responsibilities during the discussion sessions in order the students enlarge their knowledge from story that they read.*

**Key words:** *Literature circle, Young Learners, Teaching Reading For young learners*

### Introduction

Learning English is really necessary today. English as the most common language that is used nowadays which is useful for communication with other people. It can help people accessing any information easily in order to enrich the knowledge. Besides that, by mastering English, people will get a good chance to have a good job and have a better future.

In this globalization era, English takes the important role in our life. Throughout the world, when people with different languages come together they commonly use English to communicate. As a universal language, it is really helpful people in order to build a good communication. English is also used in many books, articles, newspapers, magazines, or even most of the websites in internet use English. Therefore, English as an international language is really important to be learned. There are three main reasons why English is really important to learn.

The first reason is English is one of the most important language which is used by many people in the world. By using English, people can travel to many countries in the world without worrying about the language in the certain country. The second reason is English is the most language that is used in order to provide the knowledge whether it is in the books, newspapers, websites in internet, etc. Therefore, people should learn English if they want to be able to understand the meaning of the information that they read. The last reason is English will offer a good opportunity to get a good job. Nowadays, most of the companies

should build a good relationship with international clients and need someone who can represent the company and can speak English well. And so, English is an important language to be mastered by all the people.

In line with above matters Crystal (2003) states that this language is learnt by a higher number of people with every passing day because of its two importance in this globalization era: (1) a means to communicate; and (2) to create a great opportunity for a job. In Indonesia, English is learned as a foreign language. As we know that Indonesians communicate to other people by using Bahasa Indonesia. Nowadays in Indonesia, English is introduced from kindergarten to University. An important thing for human is education because it is a process that people should have in order to be educated person. Education related with teacher, students, material, strategy, curriculum, syllabus, etc.

Based on the Standard of Contents for Junior High School (SMP/MTs) stated in Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan (BSNP), English is one of the compulsory subjects to be studied (2006: 13). There are four skills that students have to master, they are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The aims of studying English is to improve students' ability in those skills so that students are able to communicate orally or written in their daily life (BSNP, 2006: 123). Unfortunately, the time allocation is not effective and efficient because it only provide 4 x 40 minutes in a week for English subject.

Murray & Christison (2010), observed that many students think English is only a school subject and they don't see its significance for their prospective employment to work with multinational or national companies where English is employed. Nowadays, in teaching and learning process many children are lazy to read because in their opinion it is an activity which make them bored. They interested in watching TV, listening music, playing games and hanging out with their friends. It is relevance with the result that the writer asked to the students, they were not really interested in English especially in reading because they thought English was difficult subject to be learnt and also they don't know the meaning of vocabulary in the text. It may result from some reason in teaching learning process sometimes teacher as a centered learning. Teaching and learning process should involve students learning so students can improve their ability in English especially in reading.

There are another factors that make students are lazy to read such as lack of attention from their parents because their parents are busy, lack of access to book especially in library at school, most of library at school in Indonesia provide old book, the condition of library is not comfortable, lack of role models and incentives, reading materials are difficult to read, culture and personal values do not prioritize reading and the last reading not taught in such

away to promote interest.

In relation with the statement above, Normazidah, Koo, & Hazita (2012); Trawiński (2005), also presented the factors that impact the EFL learners to have poor performance in English language learning as followings: a) English is regarded as a difficult subject to learn b) Learners' learning depends on the English teachers as authorities c) There is a lack of support to use English in the home environment and the community d) Learners have insufficient or lacking of exposure to the language as there is a limited opportunity to use English outside the classrooms e) Students have a limitation of vocabulary proficiency as well as English reading materials are not always available f) Learners have an unwillingness and lack of motivation to learn English as they do not see the immediate need to use the language g) Lack of motivation for learning or the negative attitude towards the target language.

In line with statement above John & Ehow (2011), stated that the problems of learning English language derived from many different factors in different environments such as school resources, class size, quality of teachers, and the school attendance of learners. Teaching is a process of showing, guiding or facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, and setting condition for the learner (Brown, 2000:6). Teaching English is not easy for students of Indonesia therefore as a teacher, we should give technique or strategy to make our students interested and develop a love and passion in reading by giving children access to all varieties of literature is extremely important for their success. Reading is one of the language skill, should be mastered well by the students because through reading students can get many information and knowledge widely without going away. Using children's picture story book in the classroom can motivate and influence the students ' reading interested and willingness to read.

Ellis and Brewster (1991) give several reasons why teachers should use storybooks. The first is Storybooks can enrich the pupils' learning experience. Stories are motivating and fun and can help develop positive attitudes towards the foreign language. The second is stories exercise the imagination and are a useful tool in linking fantasy and the imagination with the child's real world. The third is listening to stories in class is a shared social experience. The fourth is children enjoy listening to stories over and over gain. This repetition allows language items to be acquired and reinforced. The fifth is listening to stories develops the child's listening and concentrating skills. The last is stories create opportunities for developing continuity in children's learning (among others, school subjects across the curriculum).

Collie and Slater (1987) one of our aims in teaching literature is to encourage learners to feel that they can read and enjoy books on their own. According to Morrow et al. (1997), integrating literature in all content areas shows an increase in language skills development as well as content area knowledge improvement. The integrated language arts perspective involves incorporation of reading, writing, listening, and speaking into content areas and using literature as the major source of instruction. In addition, Diem (2011), who did a research that used 3-L- Libraries, Literature, and Literacy as a teaching model for young learners, found that literature circle was one of the two substrategies which was significantly effective to improve students' reading habit. It similar to Novasyari finding (2012) which showed that literature circle not only helps the students get the higher score in English achievement but also makes them enjoyable to learn English because they involved in discussion therefore they become active during the learning process. Students made the comfortable learning environment in order to help them understand the lesson easier.

Literature gives many benefits for learners if teachers use in teaching and learning process. According to Collie and Slater (1990), there are four reasons for using literature in the classroom :

- a. Valuable Authentic materials. It means that, literature is authentic material. Through reading literary texts, students will familiar with many different linguistic forms, communicative functions and meanings.
- b. Cultural Enrichment. Through reading literary text such as novels, short stories, etc students know the characters background, traditions, feeling customs, how they speak and behave in different setting.
- c. Language Enrichment. Through literature, students become familiar with many features of the written language, reading a substantial and contextualized body of the text.
- d. Personal Involvement. Through reading literary text, students become enthusiastic to find out what happens in the end of the story, students feel close to certain characters and shares their emotional responses. In this process, students can develop their introvert person to become extrovert.

Therefore in this article, the writers will define the use of literature circle in teaching English for young learners.

### **The Concept of Literature Circle**

There are many concept of Literacy circle, but every concept has one basic point in common: each student is responsible for most of their learning. Some definition, say that Literacy circle are cooperative approaches that give students the opportunity to control and

manage their own learning. Daniels (2002) states that literature circle are small group, student-led discussion groups in which members read the same book. Group members take on various 'roles' that guide the reading and the discussion. The true intent of literature circle is "to allow students to practice and develop the skills and strategies of good readers" (Dalie, 2001). Noe&Johnson (1999) states that literature circle compares reader response criticism, students centered, groups formed by book choice, structured for students independence, responsibility, and ownership. It provides an opportunity for students to control their own learning, to share thoughts, to concern and understand the materials that they read.

Literature circles manifest most of these key features (Daniels, 2002): First, students choose their own reading materials. Second, small temporary groups are formed, based on text choice. Third, different groups read different texts. Fourth, groups meet on a regular, predictable schedule to discuss their reading. Fifth, students use written or drawn notes to guide both their reading and discussion. Sixth, discussion topics come from the students. Seventh, group meetings aim to be open, natural conversations about texts, so personal connections, digressions, and open-ended questions are welcome. Eighth, the teacher serves as a facilitator, not a group member or instructor. Ninth, evaluation is by teacher observation and student self-evaluation. Tenth, a spirit of playfulness and fun pervades the room. Eleventh, when books are finished, readers share with their classmates, and then new groups form around new reading choices.

Rogers (2002) asserts that literature Circles are also a forum that provides students with opportunity to interact with reading material at different levels. Students examine literal aspects of the book, make connections to their own lives and seek out elements of the story that are important and an activity that helps to establish positive reading behaviors in students by demonstrating cooperation and communication within a group. A literature circle invites students to become part of a community of readers. Students take part in discussions with other readers with varied backgrounds and reading experiences. By encountering the reactions and opinions of others to literature, students develop a better understanding of their own views and thoughts.

The following are roles frequently used in literature circle. Brief descriptions are included as guidelines only the names and description of the roles can be determined with the students once the teacher has set students criteria for learning. Modeling by the teacher is critical so that students are aware of what is expected from each role:

1. Discussion Director: This role involves creating open-ended question and facilitating group discussion. The purpose of the question is to generate deep discussion within the group.

Students will require modeling around creating these types of question and an-anchor chart with solid co-created sample question should be available.

2. **Illustrator:** This role requires that key scenes and setting changes from the reading be represented in a visual form. The illustrator may create a drawing or sketch a collage image, a model or any other visual representation. The artistic representation should be thought – provoking and students should be given some general guiding question to assist in their creation, as it is meant to be a discussion point. This is a great role for the artistic student who is not keen on writing.

3. **Literary Luminary:** This role requires choosing section from the reading that will be of interest to the group and will promote deeper discussion. The luminary might include selections that are funny, questionable, unclear, or powerful in moving the plot to help the luminary see how student selection will impact the depth of group discussion.

4. **Vocabulary Enricher:** This role asks the student to select words from the text that are important, unusual, offensive, unfamiliar, or that may seem out of context. The enricher will provide a definition of the word and may also provide substitute words found in a thesaurus. He/she should come to discussion with a couple of key questions around the author's choice of the words and suggestion 21 for how they add or take away from the reading. This is a good role for a student who struggles with meaning and/or is frequently.

5. **Connector:** This role has the student finding connection between the reading and the real world. The connector should be looking for text-to-self and text-to-world examples to bring back to the group discussion. The more connections that can be made to the students' own real world experiences, the richer the discussions will be, text-to-text connection may also be made.

6. **Summarizer:** Prepares a brief summary of the passage read that day.

7. **Investigator:** Looks up background information related to the book. The teacher will determine what roles be used depending upon the age and ability of the students as well as the reading selection.

8. **Travel Tracer**

This role involves recording where the major shifts in action or location take place in the novel for the reading section. Keeping track of shifts in place, time, and characters helps students keep track of important shifts in the novel. Artistic students also are drawn to this role, as artwork can be incorporated into this role as well. The student's role is to describe each setting in detail, using words or maps that illustrate the action.

## 9. Figurative Language Finder

This role includes identification of various types of figurative language, including but not limited to simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and idiom. This may lead to discussion about the author's craft - why the author chose to use those particular words or phrases, and whether or not they were effective. This in-context identification can be more relevant and memorable than isolated instruction by the teacher of these types of tools.

Literature circle can be effective to learn English as students center. It demands students to search, work and learn with their friends. So, teacher as a facilitator will guide and revise if the students make mistake. These are some illustrations of literature circle:

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"

(cited with permission: SchlickNoe, K.L. & Johnson, N.J. (1999). *Getting Started with Literature Circles*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.)

## The Concept of Young Learners

Cameron (2001, p. 1) defines young learners are those between five to twelve years old. In addition, Fauziati (2010, p. 89) gives some characteristics of young learners. They are: children love playing, children talk about 'here and now', and children understand and retain the meaning better when they have seen some objects associated with it. For this reason, the teacher should expose the students to real life situation; when this is not impossible, the visual aid can serve as a useful substitute, as pictures and their images are more vivid than words. Thus, in teaching and learning process pictures should be an integral part of every teacher's professional equipment (Ernestova in Fauziati, 2001, p. 93).

Harmer (2008: 38) argues that young children learn differently from older children,

adolescents, and adults in the following ways:

- 1) They respond to meaning even if they do not understand individual words.
- 2) They often learn indirectly rather than directly.
- 3) Their understanding comes not just from explanation, but also from what they see and hear and have a chance to touch and interact with.
- 4) They generally display an enthusiasm for learning and a curiosity about the world around them.
- 5) They have a need for individual attention and respond well to learning.
- 6) They are keen to talk about themselves and respond well to learning.
- 7) They have limited attention span; unless activities are extremely engaging, they can easily get bored, losing interest after ten minutes or so.

The young learners' characteristics stated above show similarity to those stated by Brewster and Ellis (2004:27-28). Some of the characteristics are that children have a lot of physical energy and need to be physically active, they have great emotional needs, they are emotionally exciting, they tend to be self-oriented and pre-occupied with their own world, they get bored easily, they are excellent mimics, they can concentrate for a surprising long time if they are interested, and that they can be easily distracted but also very enthusiastic.

According to Scott and Ytreberg (2004: 3), some general characteristics of children are related to their capabilities and aptitudes. Those are as follows:

- a) Their basic concepts are formed. In teaching learning process, the teacher needs to give objects and pictures so that the children can understand easily and memorize the meaning because they can see something directly.
- b) They can tell the difference between fact and fiction. The children have already understood which one is fact and which one is fiction. Something is a fact if they can see and touch the object, and something is fiction if they cannot see and touch the object.
- c) They ask questions all the time. Children will ask all the time about something that they do not know because they are very curious about something around them. They will ask something to the people around them although they do not always understand the answers.
- d) They rely on the spoken word as well as the physical world to convey and understand meaning. Children learn from the real world. They may know new words or objects that they have not known before although the teacher does not teach or tell them about the objects.
- e) They are able to make some decisions about their own learning. Children will learn something if they like to learn it and no one can force them. They can be enthusiastic and positive about learning when they like it.



f) They have definite views about what they like and don't like to do. There is a possibility that when children like doing something, they will do it frequently and even every day. But if they do not like it they can be very reluctant to do it.

g) They have a developed sense of fairness about what happens in the classroom and begin to question the teacher's decision. The teacher must give equal attention to every child in the classroom, unless they will think that he/she is unfair and they will not trust him/her anymore.

h) They are able to work with others and learn from others. Most children like to have other children around them. Therefore, children like to work in groups so they will cooperate with their friends and compete with other groups. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that young learners love to play and learn best when they enjoy themselves.

### **Teaching Reading For Young Learners Through Literature Circle**

Reading is one of difficult skills for students to acquire. There are some reasons why the students have difficulties in reading comprehension, such as they are unfamiliar with the vocabulary, they cannot understand the topic of the reading, and the teaching technique used by the teacher do not attract them. In addition, Nuttall (1982) summarizes that the students' problems in reading comprehension involved five related areas: (1) identifying the main idea of reading text, (2) identifying specific information (3) vocabulary problems, (4) the difficulty of structure, and (5) drawing intelligence. From those difficulties above, it can be said that teaching reading is not an easy job for teacher.

There are some principle in teaching reading. Nunan (2003) defines that there eight aspect to teach reading for the students: 1) exploiting the readers' background knowledge, 2) Building a strong vocabulary base, 3) teaching for comprehension, 4) working increasing reading rate, 5) teaching reading strategy, 6) encouraging readers to transform strategies into skills, 7) building assessment and evaluation into your teaching and 8) striving for continuous increase as a reading teacher. In addition Ahuja (2004) states that there are internal and external factors which influence the efficiency in reading. Internal factors include vision, vocalization, reading per-words analyzing wrong words, repetition, pointing the words, head-moving, re-read and the objective of reading. External factors includes lighting, readable of the written text and motivation.

Lauren Coccia (2015) in her research with the title Literature Circles and Their Improvement of Comprehension said that "Literature circles allow students to cooperatively learn and comprehend texts through casual conversation amongst their peers as well as

immersion in discussion surrounding purposefully chosen questions that will aid in text comprehension. Literature circles diverge from heavy teacher-led instruction that is commonly seen within our schools as a result of pressure of demanding curriculum and standardized testing.

There are many benefits of using literature circles for teaching reading comprehension. They not only develop the abilities of students but they also contribute to improve students' communication skills and to foster social and interpersonal skills. In line with Daniels (2002), where Literacy Circles provide an opportunity for students to engage with their peers about a selected text. They have responses with their peers, listen respectfully to one another, sometimes disagree strongly, but dig back into the text to settle arguments of validate different interpretations. In addition to improving students' reading comprehension, using literacy circles can also practice their communication skills by giving opinions about what they have read and also giving input when there are opinions that they disagree with.

## **Conclusions**

By using literature circles in teaching reading for young learners, teacher can improve reading of the students. The literature circle assignments or roles guide students to deeper understanding of what they read through structured discussion and extended written and artistic response. Literature circles provide a constructive educational opportunity for students to control their own learning as they share thoughts, concerns and their understanding of the concepts, events, and material presented in the material being read. Literature circles allow students to learn and practice the reading comprehension Strategies (Briggs, 2010, p. 16).

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