

Adapting Literature Circles to Foster Critical Thinking Skills in Indonesian EFL Classrooms: A Qualitative Case Study toward SDG 4

Junie Darmaningrum*, Lies Amin Lestari, Pratiwi Retnaningdyah

Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia



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ABSTRACT

Objective: To investigate how Literature Circles can be pedagogically adapted to the Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context to foster students' critical thinking while accommodating curriculum requirements, students' language proficiency, and classroom learning needs in support of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4. **Method:** A qualitative case study was conducted at an Indonesian senior high school involving one English teacher and twelve eleventh-grade EFL students. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, including lesson plans, students' worksheets, dialogue journals, and learning products. The data were analyzed using coding, categorization, thematic analysis, and triangulation. **Results:** The findings revealed that Literature Circles were successfully adapted through modifications to instructional procedures, collaborative learning stages, reading materials, and role assignments, including the addition of Text Analyzer and Grammar Pointer roles to align with the Indonesian genre-based curriculum. These adaptations promoted six dimensions of critical thinking interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation, and self-regulation while enhancing students' affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement in collaborative learning. **Novelty:** The study proposes a contextualized adaptation model of Literature Circles for Indonesian secondary EFL classrooms, demonstrating how collaborative reading can be integrated with curriculum demands to foster critical thinking, student engagement, and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) through student-centered learning.

INTRODUCTION

Developing learners who are capable of critical thinking has become one of the primary goals of education in the twenty-first century. In an era characterized by rapid information exchange, learners are expected not only to access information but also to interpret, analyze, evaluate, infer, and communicate ideas before making informed decisions (Facione, 2020; Duron et al., 2006; Carlgren, 2013). These competencies are increasingly recognized as essential for addressing complex educational and social challenges, making critical thinking a central component of contemporary education. Within language learning, reading instruction has also shifted from merely understanding textual information toward encouraging learners to actively construct meaning, evaluate evidence, and engage in reflective thinking (Grabe & Stoller, 2019; Hudson, 2007; Israel & Duffy, 2009). Consequently, English language classrooms are expected to provide meaningful learning experiences that integrate critical thinking with collaborative learning and authentic literacy practices (Brown, 2009; Ilyas, 2016).

Within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, the development of critical thinking extends beyond linguistic proficiency and requires learners to actively participate in reading, discussion, and knowledge construction. Students are expected to interpret information, formulate arguments, examine multiple perspectives, and communicate ideas collaboratively while using English in meaningful contexts (Brown, 2009; Elhess & Egbert,

2015; Day & Bamford, 2002; Day, 2015). Reading therefore becomes an interactive process in which learners negotiate meaning through individual reflection and collaborative dialogue (Grabe & Stoller, 2019; Hudson, 2007). However, previous studies have reported that EFL instruction frequently remains teacher-centered and emphasizes comprehension-oriented activities rather than higher-order thinking and collaborative inquiry, limiting students' opportunities to develop critical thinking through classroom interaction (Ilyas, 2016; Bedel, 2016; Avci, 2019).

The limited development of critical thinking in EFL classrooms indicates the need for instructional approaches that simultaneously promote reading comprehension, collaborative learning, and active student engagement. Student engagement has been widely recognized as an important factor influencing meaningful learning, encompassing affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions that encourage learners to participate actively in classroom activities (Fredricks et al., 2004; Appleton et al., 2008; Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Fredricks, 2014; Groccia, 2018). Learning environments that encourage collaboration and discussion also strengthen students' motivation, responsibility, and participation while creating opportunities to practice critical thinking in authentic contexts (Gregory, 2019; Maher, 2015; Maher, 2018). Therefore, EFL instruction requires pedagogical approaches that integrate collaborative reading with active student engagement to support the development of higher-order thinking skills.

One instructional approach that has received considerable attention in promoting collaborative reading and critical thinking is Literature Circles. Originally introduced by Daniels (2002), Literature Circles organize students into small discussion groups in which each member assumes specific responsibilities to facilitate reading, interpretation, and collaborative discussion. Daniels and Steineke (2004) further emphasized that role-based discussions encourage students to become active readers by sharing ideas, asking questions, and constructing meaning collaboratively rather than passively receiving information. In EFL contexts, Literature Circles have been adapted to accommodate learners' language proficiency while maintaining their collaborative learning principles (Furr, 2004, 2007). Previous studies consistently report that Literature Circles enhance reading comprehension, classroom interaction, learner autonomy, and language development by encouraging students to engage actively with texts and with one another (Bedel, 2016; Elhess & Egbert, 2015; Maher, 2015; Shelton-Strong, 2012).

Beyond improving reading performance, Literature Circles also provide opportunities for learners to develop higher-order thinking skills through collaborative inquiry and reflective discussion. Students are encouraged to formulate questions, interpret textual information, justify opinions, evaluate different perspectives, and communicate their understanding during group interaction (Brown, 2009; Cave, 2018; Diego-Medrano et al., 2016). Such collaborative literacy practices align with the view that reading should involve active knowledge construction rather than simple comprehension of textual content (Daniels, 2006; Grabe & Stoller, 2019). Moreover, literature-based collaborative learning has been shown to increase students' engagement by strengthening affective, cognitive, and behavioral participation during classroom learning (Gregory, 2019; Groccia, 2018; Fredricks et al., 2004). These findings suggest that Literature Circles represent a promising instructional strategy for simultaneously promoting critical thinking and active engagement in EFL classrooms.

Despite these promising findings, previous studies have primarily focused on the effectiveness of Literature Circles in improving reading comprehension, learner motivation,

or classroom interaction, while relatively limited attention has been given to how the approach should be adapted for EFL contexts with different curricular demands and classroom characteristics. In Indonesian secondary schools, English instruction is implemented through a genre-based curriculum that requires students not only to comprehend texts but also to analyze text structures, language features, and communicative purposes. These contextual demands require pedagogical adaptations that go beyond the original Literature Circles framework (Furr, 2004; Daniels, 2006). Therefore, this study investigates how Literature Circles can be adapted to the Indonesian EFL context to foster students' critical thinking and engagement through collaborative reading practices. By examining the implementation of adapted Literature Circles in an Indonesian secondary classroom, this study contributes practical insights into contextualizing collaborative literacy instruction while supporting the broader goal of improving the quality of EFL education.

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the adaptation of Literature Circles to foster students' critical thinking in an Indonesian secondary EFL classroom. Rather than evaluating the effectiveness of Literature Circles alone, this study explores how the model is adapted to accommodate curriculum requirements, students' language proficiency, and classroom learning needs through modifications in reading materials, group organization, and role assignments. By examining these adaptations within authentic classroom practice, this study contributes to a contextual understanding of implementing Literature Circles in EFL education and provides pedagogical insights for promoting critical thinking as an essential component of quality education. In doing so, the study supports the realization of SDG 4 by demonstrating how context-sensitive instructional practices can enhance meaningful learning experiences and foster critical thinking competencies among secondary school students.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore how Literature Circles were adapted to foster students' critical thinking in an Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because it enables researchers to investigate instructional practices within their natural context while capturing participants' experiences, classroom interactions, and contextual factors influencing the learning process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2009, 2012; Duff, 2008). This design is particularly suitable for examining a bounded educational phenomenon in depth through multiple sources of evidence and within its real-life setting (Duff, 2008; Creswell, 2009). Rather than measuring the effectiveness of Literature Circles quantitatively, this study sought to understand how the instructional strategy was pedagogically adapted to accommodate curriculum requirements, students' language proficiency, and classroom learning needs. The qualitative case study approach also facilitated the integration of classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentary evidence, enabling data triangulation to enhance the credibility and comprehensiveness of the findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2012).

Research context and participants

The study was conducted in an Islamic boarding senior high school in Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia, which implements the Indonesian 2013 Curriculum emphasizing literacy, critical

thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity. During the COVID-19 pandemic, classroom instruction was delivered through a combination of face-to-face and online learning, with each classroom meeting lasting approximately 45 minutes. The English lesson selected for this study focused on Analytical Exposition texts taught to eleventh-grade students during the first semester of the 2020/2021 academic year.

The participants consisted of one English teacher and twelve eleventh-grade students. The teacher had more than five years of teaching experience and had participated in professional development related to the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum. She had previously incorporated collaborative reading activities into her English instruction, making her classroom an appropriate setting for investigating the adaptation of Literature Circles. The participating students represented different English proficiency levels and learning backgrounds and were actively involved in individual reading, peer discussion, collaborative learning, and classroom presentations throughout the implementation.

Adaptation of literature circles

The present study adopted Harvey Daniels' Literature Circles model while introducing several pedagogical adaptations to suit the Indonesian EFL context. The adaptations were designed to accommodate students' language proficiency, the text-based English curriculum, classroom learning objectives, and teacher guidance. Besides maintaining the collaborative discussion format proposed by Daniels (2002), two additional instructional roles—Text Analyzer and Grammar Pointer—were incorporated to facilitate students' analysis of text organization and language features, both of which are compulsory learning objectives in the Indonesian senior high school curriculum. Furthermore, reading materials, group formation, and independent reading activities were adjusted to fit classroom conditions and students' learning needs.

Table 1. Roles in literature circle (adapted from Daniels,2002)

Roles	Tasks
Discussion Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a few questions (whatever questions burst into mind while reading) • Lead the discussion and introduce the section of text to be discussed
Vocabulary enricher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for important words in the text. It can be new, interesting, odd, bewildering, or uncommon. • Write down their definition from the text, a dictionary, or other sources. • Discuss the words chosen with friends in a group
Illustrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw some pictures related to the reading. It can be a "sketch", "cartoon", "diagram", "flowchart", or "stick-figure scene" • Show them and let the other speculate and connect with their ideas
Text analyzer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify text structure and its social function • Discuss them in group
Grammar pointer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the language feature of the text • Discuss them in group
Summarizer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a summary of the text that has been read • Discuss the summary in the group

Roles	Tasks
Connector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find a connection between the reading passage and the world outside, such as life, happenings, events, news, problems, stories, books, or writings on the same topic.

The additional instructional roles distinguish the adapted Literature Circles implemented in this study from the original framework. These modifications enabled students to engage not only in collaborative reading discussions but also in textual and linguistic analysis required by the national curriculum, thereby supporting the development of higher-order thinking skills within authentic classroom activities.

Research procedure

The implementation of the adapted Literature Circles was conducted over three classroom meetings and three independent learning sessions. During the first meeting, the teacher introduced Analytical Exposition texts, activated students' prior knowledge, explained Literature Circle procedures, assigned collaborative roles, and distributed reading materials. Students subsequently completed independent reading and role-based tasks outside the classroom.

During the second meeting, students participated in collaborative group discussions by presenting the findings associated with their assigned roles. The teacher facilitated classroom interaction, guided discussions, and encouraged students to interpret, analyze, and connect textual information with their prior knowledge. Finally, during the third meeting, students completed extension activities through collaborative writing and reflection tasks designed to reinforce their critical thinking and understanding of Analytical Exposition texts.

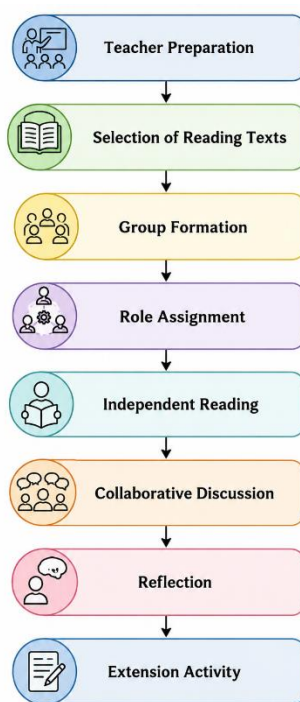


Figure 1. Procedure of the adapted literature circles

Data collection

Data were collected using methodological triangulation involving classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations were conducted during three instructional meetings to examine classroom interaction, teacher practices, students' participation, and the implementation of the adapted Literature Circles. Semi-structured interviews with the teacher explored her instructional considerations, perceptions of critical thinking, and reasons for modifying the original Literature Circles framework. Documentary evidence included lesson plans, students' worksheets, role-task assignments, dialogue journals, observation notes, and students' learning products, providing additional evidence for understanding instructional adaptation and students' critical thinking development.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using an interactive qualitative analysis process involving data reduction, coding, categorization, theme development, and interpretation. Interview transcripts, classroom observations, and documentary evidence were repeatedly reviewed to identify emerging themes related to instructional adaptation, students' critical thinking, and classroom engagement. The coding process was guided by Facione's framework of critical thinking, including interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. Categories generated from different data sources were continuously compared through triangulation before being synthesized into overarching themes representing the implementation of adapted Literature Circles in the Indonesian EFL classroom.

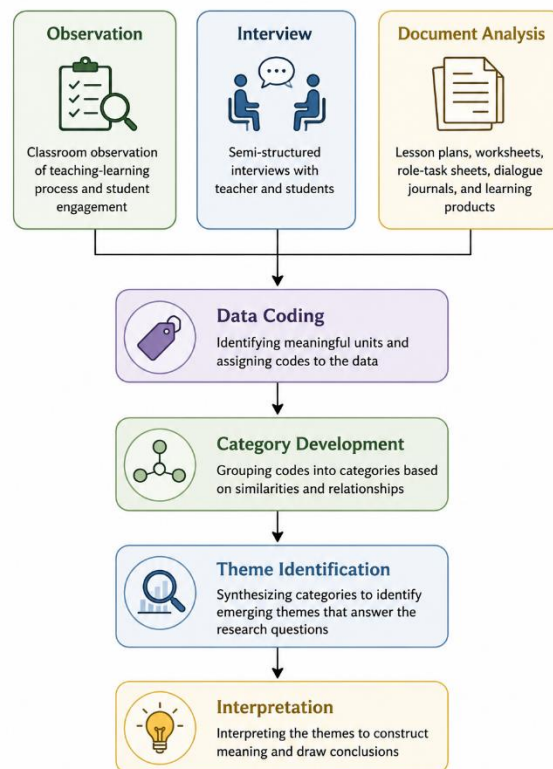


Figure 2. Interactive data analysis process

Trustworthiness

To ensure the credibility of the findings, methodological triangulation was employed by integrating evidence from classroom observations, interviews, and documentary analysis. Information obtained from different data sources was continuously compared to verify consistency across emerging categories and themes. Furthermore, prolonged engagement throughout the three instructional meetings enabled the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the adaptation of Literature Circles within its authentic classroom context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Adaptation of literature circles in the Indonesian EFL classroom

The findings revealed that the implementation of Literature Circles in this study was not a direct adoption of Daniels' original framework but an instructional adaptation designed to accommodate the characteristics of Indonesian EFL classrooms. The teacher modified the instructional procedures to align with the genre-based English curriculum, students' language proficiency, classroom conditions, and the learning objectives of Analytical Exposition texts. While preserving the collaborative principles of Literature Circles, the adaptations emphasized structured reading activities, role-based learning, and gradual student participation throughout the learning process.

The adaptation was reflected not only in the classroom procedures but also in the organization of learning activities across three classroom meetings and independent learning sessions. Before classroom implementation, the teacher prepared lesson plans, learning materials, assessment instruments, and role-task worksheets that supported collaborative reading activities. Students were introduced to the selected reading texts, organized into discussion groups, assigned specific learning roles, and guided to complete individual reading tasks before participating in collaborative discussions. These instructional modifications allowed students to engage in a more structured learning process while gradually assuming greater responsibility for their own learning.

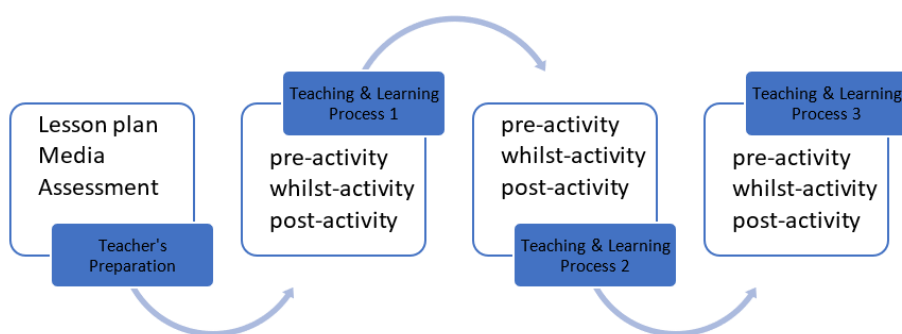


Figure 3. Adaptation process of literature circles in the Indonesian EFL classroom

As illustrated in Figure 3, the implementation of the adapted Literature Circles followed a sequential instructional process consisting of teacher preparation, classroom learning, independent reading, collaborative discussion, and extension activities. The first classroom meeting focused on introducing the learning objectives, reading texts, and collaborative roles while preparing students for independent reading outside the classroom. During the second meeting, students presented and discussed the findings obtained from their respective role

tasks. The final meeting extended the collaborative learning process through analytical discussions and writing activities, allowing students to apply their understanding of the reading texts in a broader learning context.

The implementation also demonstrated that classroom activities were systematically organized into several learning stages that gradually shifted learning responsibility from teacher guidance toward collaborative student learning. Students first developed individual understanding through reading and role-task completion before negotiating meaning collectively during group discussion and reflection. This learning sequence provided opportunities for students to actively construct knowledge through both independent inquiry and collaborative interaction.

Table 2. Literature circles practiced by the teacher in the classroom

Learning Stage	Activities
First Meeting (Class Activities)	Reading, Discussion, Grouping
After-Class Activities	Independent Reading, Role Tasks
Second Meeting (Class Activities)	Discussion, Presentation, Reflection
Third Meeting (Class Activities)	Comparison and Prediction, Reading, Discussion

Following the instructional sequence presented in Table 2, the implementation of Literature Circles consisted of four major stages, namely classroom preparation, independent reading, collaborative discussion, and extension activities. Each stage served different instructional purposes while remaining interconnected throughout the learning process. The structured progression enabled students to move from teacher-supported learning toward greater collaborative participation and independent engagement with the reading texts.

One of the most notable adaptations identified in this study concerned the modification of student roles. Besides maintaining the collaborative roles commonly found in Literature Circles, the teacher introduced additional responsibilities to accommodate the learning objectives of the Indonesian secondary EFL curriculum. In particular, the inclusion of Text Analyzer and Grammar Pointer enabled students to analyze text organization, social functions, and language features, which are essential components of genre-based English instruction. These additional roles extended the original Literature Circles framework beyond collaborative reading by integrating explicit textual and linguistic analysis into classroom discussions.

Table 3. Role tasks in literature circles

No	Roles	Tasks
1	Director	a. composing some questions from the texts b. giving the questions to the member of the group c. leading the discussion
2	Vocabulary Enricher	a. identifying new/interesting/odd/bewildering/unfamiliar/ vocabularies b. finding the meaning based on the text or in a dictionary c. giving an example of sentences in the vocabulary d. presenting and discussing the words and sentences with the other students in group discussion
3	Illustrator	a. drawing some kind of picture that represents the meaning of the reading text. It could be a sketch, cartoon, diagram, flowchart, or stick-figure scene.

No	Roles	Tasks
4	Connector	b. presenting and discussing the picture in group discussion a. Connecting text to text, life, happenings, events, news, problems, stories, and books.
5	Text Analyzer	b. Explaining and discussing the connection in group discussion a. Identifying and examining text structure and its social function. b. Explaining and discussing the analysis of the text structure with the group.
6	Grammar Pointer	a. Identifying and examining language features and the examples b. Explaining and discussing the analysis of the language features and examples

As presented in Table 3, each collaborative role required students to accomplish different learning responsibilities before participating in group discussions. While the Discussion Director, Vocabulary Enricher, Illustrator, and Connector facilitated collaborative interpretation of the reading texts, the additional roles of Text Analyzer and Grammar Pointer specifically supported students in examining text structure and language features. The integration of these two roles represents the primary pedagogical adaptation implemented in this study, allowing Literature Circles to better accommodate the instructional requirements of Indonesian EFL classrooms. Figure 4 is showing discussion of role tasks.



Figure 4. Discussion of role tasks

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the implementation of Literature Circles involved substantial pedagogical adaptations rather than direct adoption of the original framework. These adaptations were reflected in the instructional sequence, collaborative learning procedures, additional learning roles, and classroom activities implemented throughout the three classroom meetings, establishing a contextualized model of Literature Circles suitable for Indonesian secondary EFL classrooms.

Critical thinking skills fostered through adapted literature circles

The findings indicate that the adapted Literature Circles facilitated the development of multiple dimensions of students' critical thinking throughout the learning process. The implementation of role-based collaborative learning enabled students to engage in various

higher-order thinking activities during group formation, independent reading, collaborative discussion, and extension activities. Analysis of classroom observations, lesson plans, interviews, and students' learning documents revealed that six dimensions of critical thinking proposed by Facione (2020) interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation, and self-regulation were consistently demonstrated during the implementation of the adapted Literature Circles.

Table 4. Critical thinking skills fostered through adapted literature circles

Critical Thinking Skills	Learning Activities	Role Tasks	Literature Circles Main Activities
Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify meaning • Give examples • Convey questions • Illustrate text through pictures/drawings/sketches/mapping/graphics/table 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary enricher • Vocabulary enricher/text analyzer/grammar pointer • Discussion director • Illustrator • Passage master 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent reading
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine text structure and language feature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text analyzer/grammar pointer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent reading
Inferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclude information/idea/meaning based on the text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illustrator • Connector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent reading
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relate the text to other texts or life • Response to other people's ideas/opinions by giving arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connector • All role tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent reading • Discussion
Explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate ideas/opinions/arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All role tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion
Self-regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulate independent learning and discussion • Complete self-assessment (smiley face/dialogue journal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All role tasks • All role tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group formation • Independent reading • Discussion

As presented in Table 4, the adapted Literature Circles facilitated the development of all six dimensions of critical thinking proposed by Facione (2020), namely interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation, and self-regulation. These skills emerged through role-based learning activities implemented during group formation, independent reading, collaborative discussion, and reflection. Each collaborative role encouraged students to engage in different higher-order thinking processes, enabling them to actively construct meaning from the reading texts.

Among the identified dimensions, interpretation and analysis were primarily demonstrated through activities involving vocabulary clarification, questioning, text structure analysis, and language feature identification, whereas inference, evaluation,

explanation, and self-regulation emerged during collaborative discussion, argument construction, reflection, and independent completion of role-task responsibilities. Overall, the findings indicate that the adapted Literature Circles provided systematic opportunities for students to practice multiple critical thinking skills within authentic EFL learning activities.

Student engagement during literature circles

The findings indicate that the implementation of the adapted Literature Circles promoted students' engagement across three dimensions: affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement. Throughout the collaborative learning process, students demonstrated varying levels of participation, motivation, and learning responsibility while engaging in role-based reading and discussion activities. These engagement dimensions were identified through classroom observations, students' dialogue journals, and reflective learning documents.

Table 5. Indicators of students' engagement during literature circles

Dimension	Indicator	Description of Student's Feelings, Attitudes, and Activities
Affective	Enthusiastic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Respond quickly to the teacher's questions ● Ask the teacher to explain once again if they do not understand ● Do the teacher's instruction ● Convey their opinion
	Encourage each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Help the other students when they find difficulties in the learning ● Respond to other's opinion
	Attentive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Listen to the teacher's explanation or instruction attentively ● Listen to the other's opinion attentively
	Enjoyment the learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feel happy in the learning

As presented in Table 5, affective engagement was reflected in students' enthusiasm, attentiveness, enjoyment of learning, and encouragement toward peers. Cognitive engagement was demonstrated through task accomplishment, understanding of learning materials, and self-regulation, whereas behavioral engagement was identified through students' willingness to participate, cooperate with peers, complete assigned tasks, ask questions, and remain actively involved throughout the learning activities.

Table 6. Students' affective engagement across classroom meetings

Indicator	Class XI		
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
Enthusiastic	8 (S1-6, S10, S11)	4 (S1, S3-4, S7)	9 (S1-7, S10-11)
Encouraging each other	4 (S5-6, S10-S11)	3 (S3-4, S7)	5 (S5, S7-10)
Attentive	8 (S1-6, S10-11)	4 (S1, S3-4, S7)	9 (S1-7, S10-S11)
Enjoyment of learning	8 (S1-6, S10-11)	4 (S1, S3-4, S7)	9 (S1-7, S10-11)

Table 6 the observation data showed that students' affective engagement varied across the three classroom meetings. Higher levels of enthusiasm, attentiveness, and enjoyment were observed during the first and third meetings, whereas participation decreased during the

second meeting when students were still adapting to role-task responsibilities and collaborative discussion procedures.

Table 7. Students' cognitive engagement across classroom meetings

Indicators	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
	Achievement		
Accomplishing task on time	9 (S1-S8, S10)	3 (S3-4, S7)	10 (S1-8, S10-11)
Understanding the learning	9 (S1-S8, S10)	3 (S3-4, S7)	12 (S1-S12)
	Self-regulation		
Completing self-reflection sheet	12 (S1-12)	9 (S1-3, S5-6, S8-11)	9 (S1-8, S10-S11)
Setting a strategy to achieve the goal of learning	8 (S1-4, S6, S8-10)	9 (S1-3, S5-6, S8-11)	12 (S1-S12)

Similarly, students' cognitive engagement demonstrated progressive improvement throughout the implementation (see Table 7). Although only a limited number of students successfully completed their tasks and fully understood the learning materials during the second meeting, most students showed greater task completion, understanding, and self-regulated learning during the final meeting. Overall, these findings suggest that repeated implementation of the adapted Literature Circles gradually enhanced students' engagement across affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions, supporting more active participation in collaborative EFL learning.

Challenges in implementing adapted literature circles

Although the adapted Literature Circles were successfully implemented, the findings revealed several challenges encountered during the instructional process. These challenges influenced the implementation of collaborative learning and became important considerations in adapting the original Literature Circles framework to the Indonesian EFL classroom. The identified challenges primarily related to cultural values, students' English proficiency, limited instructional time, and students' understanding of collaborative learning procedures.

Table 8. Challenges in implementing adapted literature circles

No	Challenge	Description
1	Cultural practice and values	Students are not accustomed to stating their opinion orally.
2	Language proficiency	Most students cannot communicate well orally and written in English, so they use Indonesian instead of English when discussing their work. Because of language proficiency, they experience difficulties in conveying their opinion.
3	Time allocation	The time provided for students to learn English in this curriculum is only 45 minutes for each meeting
4	Students' understanding of the literature circles technique	There are eight of twelve students still do not understand how to learn using the literature circles technique

As presented in Table 8, cultural values influenced students' willingness to express opinions and engage in classroom discussions, while limited English proficiency reduced students' confidence in communicating their ideas during collaborative activities. Time allocation also constrained the completion of role-based discussions within a single classroom meeting, requiring several learning activities to be continued outside the classroom. In addition, students initially experienced difficulties in understanding their assigned collaborative roles and responsibilities, particularly during the early stages of implementation.

To address these challenges, the teacher introduced several instructional adaptations, including explicit role explanations, continuous guidance during collaborative discussions, additional independent reading activities, and structured reflection sessions. These adaptations enabled students to gradually become familiar with the collaborative learning process while supporting more active participation throughout the implementation of Literature Circles. The findings suggest that adapting Literature Circles to local classroom characteristics was essential for ensuring the successful implementation of collaborative learning within the Indonesian EFL context.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that adapting Literature Circles is essential when implementing the strategy in Indonesian EFL classrooms. Unlike the original Literature Circles proposed by Daniels (2002), which emphasize students' autonomy in selecting reading materials and conducting discussions, the present study shows that several instructional modifications were required to accommodate curriculum demands, students' English proficiency, classroom conditions, and limited instructional time. The addition of Text Analyzer and Grammar Pointer, together with structured teacher guidance and independent reading activities, illustrates that Literature Circles should be viewed as a flexible instructional approach rather than a fixed teaching procedure. This finding supports Daniels (2006), who argued that Literature Circles should remain responsive to classroom contexts to maximize learning outcomes. Similarly, Furr (2004, 2007) emphasized that adaptations are particularly necessary in EFL settings because learners' language proficiency, instructional goals, and curricular expectations differ from those in first-language classrooms. The present findings also extend previous work by Widodo (2016), Tracey and Morrow (2017), Shelton-Strong (2012), Varita (2017), and Marcellino (2008), demonstrating that contextual adaptation enables Literature Circles to function effectively within Indonesian genre-based English instruction while addressing local educational challenges.

The implementation of the adapted Literature Circles also facilitated the development of students' critical thinking skills. The findings revealed that students demonstrated all six dimensions of critical thinking proposed by Facione (2020), namely interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation, and self-regulation, throughout role-based reading and collaborative discussion activities. These findings reinforce the argument of Paul and Elder (2020) that critical thinking develops when learners actively analyze information, justify opinions, and construct reasoned arguments rather than merely recalling knowledge. Likewise, Willingham (2008) and Yang and Gamble (2013) argue that higher-order thinking is fostered through meaningful learning tasks that require learners to question, interpret, and evaluate information. Consistent with previous studies, collaborative discussion encouraged students to interpret textual information, examine multiple perspectives, and construct

evidence-based arguments (Avcı, 2019; Cave, 2018; Tung & Chang, 2017). Furthermore, independent reading and role-task completion promoted students' responsibility for constructing meaning before discussion, supporting Brown (2009), Diego-Medrano et al. (2016), Sanacore (2013), and Ng et al. (2019), who emphasized that collaborative reading, reflective writing, and extensive reading practices contribute to deeper comprehension and critical thinking development. These findings also complement Mbato (2019), who highlighted the importance of contextual reading activities in strengthening Indonesian EFL learners' critical thinking.

Besides promoting critical thinking, the adapted Literature Circles enhanced students' engagement throughout the learning process. The findings indicate that students demonstrated affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement during collaborative learning activities, showing greater enthusiasm, participation, responsibility, and collaboration as they became familiar with the Literature Circles procedures. These findings are consistent with the multidimensional engagement framework proposed by Fredricks et al. (2004, 2014), which emphasizes that meaningful learning occurs when emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement develop simultaneously. Likewise, Groccia (2018) and Zepke (2015) argue that active participation and meaningful engagement create richer learning experiences, while Klem and Connell (2004) highlight the importance of teacher support, task completion, and self-regulation in sustaining student engagement. The collaborative nature of Literature Circles also supports previous findings reported by Gregory (2019) and Maher (2015, 2018), who concluded that literature-based discussion groups promote peer interaction, collaborative knowledge construction, learner autonomy, and sustained engagement in EFL literacy learning.

The present study also provides important pedagogical implications for achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education. The adapted Literature Circles demonstrate how student-centered instructional practices can simultaneously promote critical thinking, collaborative learning, learner autonomy, and meaningful classroom participation. Rather than positioning students as passive recipients of information, the adapted learning process encourages them to construct knowledge independently and collaboratively through reading, discussion, reflection, and writing activities. These learning experiences contribute to the development of essential twenty-first-century competencies that support inclusive and quality education. Therefore, adapting Literature Circles to local educational contexts not only improves English language learning but also provides a practical pedagogical strategy for supporting the realization of SDG 4 by fostering critical thinking and active learning in Indonesian secondary EFL classrooms.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Findings: This study demonstrates that adapting Literature Circles is essential for effectively fostering students' critical thinking in Indonesian EFL classrooms. Rather than directly adopting Daniels' original framework, the instructional strategy was modified to accommodate curriculum requirements, students' English proficiency, classroom characteristics, and limited instructional time. The integration of additional collaborative roles, structured learning stages, and independent reading activities enabled students to develop the six dimensions of critical thinking interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation, and self-regulation while simultaneously promoting affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement. These findings highlight that contextual adaptation is a key factor

in maximizing the pedagogical value of Literature Circles in EFL learning. **Implications:** The findings provide both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this study extends the application of Literature Circles by demonstrating that the framework can be effectively adapted to a genre-based EFL context without compromising its collaborative learning principles. Practically, the study offers an alternative instructional model for English teachers seeking to integrate critical thinking into classroom practice through structured reading, discussion, and reflection. More broadly, the adapted Literature Circles support student-centered learning and contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 by promoting quality, inclusive, and meaningful learning experiences that foster essential twenty-first-century competencies. **Limitations:** This study was conducted in a single Indonesian secondary EFL classroom involving one teacher and a limited number of participants. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted within the specific context of this qualitative case study and may not be directly generalized to other educational settings. In addition, the implementation focused on Analytical Exposition texts over a relatively short instructional period, which may not fully capture the long-term impact of the adapted Literature Circles on students' critical thinking development. **Future Research:** Future studies are encouraged to investigate the implementation of adapted Literature Circles across different educational levels, language proficiency groups, and text genres to examine the broader applicability of the instructional model. Further research may also employ mixed-method or experimental designs to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of the adapted Literature Circles in improving critical thinking, collaborative learning, and other twenty-first-century competencies. Additionally, future investigations may explore the integration of digital technologies or online collaborative platforms into Literature Circles to support more flexible and inclusive EFL learning environments.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Junie Darmaningrum contributed to the conceptualization of the study, methodology development, data collection, data analysis, investigation, literature review, visualization, and drafting of the manuscript. **Lies Amin Lestari** contributed to conceptualization, supervision, validation, critical review, and manuscript revision. **Pratiwi Retnaningdyah** contributed to supervision, validation, critical review, and manuscript revision. All authors have read, reviewed, and approved the final version of the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors state that no financial or personal conflicts of interest exist that may have affected the content or findings of this research.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF AI OR DIGITAL TOOLS IN WRITING

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools or other digital writing assistants were used in the preparation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All stages of the research process, including data analysis, interpretation, and manuscript writing, were conducted solely by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the content presented in this article.

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***Junie Darmaningrum (Corresponding Author)**

Doctoral Program of Language and Literature Education, Graduate School,
Universitas Negeri Surabaya.
Jl. Lidah Wetan, Surabaya, East Java 60213, Indonesia.
Email: pak.ning.junie@gmail.com

Prof. Lies Amin Lestari, M.Pd.

Doctoral Program of Language and Literature Education, Graduate School,
Universitas Negeri Surabaya.
Jl. Lidah Wetan, Surabaya, East Java 60213, Indonesia.
Email: lieslestari@unesa.ac.id

Dra. Pratiwi Retnaningdyah, M.Hum., M.A., Ph.D.

Doctoral Program of Language and Literature Education, Graduate School,
Universitas Negeri Surabaya.
Jl. Lidah Wetan, Surabaya, East Java 60213, Indonesia.
Email: pratiwiretnaningdyah@unesa.ac.id
