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

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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,