Teachers' Perspective Toward Literature Circle to Elevate EFL Students' Reading Motivation

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Abstract—**Previous literature in the EFL context has reported that lack of learning motivation may cause a decrease in students' reading comprehension skills. Therefore, the literature circle is believed to be capable of elevating their motivation towards reading English texts. This article seeks to capture Indonesian English teachers' perspectives towards the literature circle in teaching narrative text for junior high school students, which is still understudied. Employing a descriptive study, this paper elaborates on the teacher of ninth grade in junior high school by using an interview technique, document analysis, and observation. The findings show that there are some progress in teaching-learning and some challenges that have to be faced by the teacher to be more creative in teaching-learning especially in reading by using the literature circle. To conclude, this method leads the teacher to seek their path to face the challenges in teaching reading. This study suggests the teacher be more creative and seek the appropriate step arrangement of implementing the literature circle in junior high school level.**

Keywords: EFL teacher, literature circle, motivation, perception, reading

I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English in a rural area has challenged English teachers to be more creative in teaching-learning. This point of view occurs as a result of the students' problems that have a lack of motivation in learning English especially in reading, and fewer information benefits of English towards their future career and education. According to Lamb (2012), the motivation of students, whether in a metropolitan area or a provincial town is similar in strength and characteristics, yet it has a different chase from the ones in a rural area significantly. The students in a rural area have a low positive feeling towards the learning process, fewer information benefits of English towards their future career and education, and a view towards an ideal L2 self.

Furthermore, Hannon and Daneman (2001) and Saarnio, Oka, and Paris (1990) as quoted in Cain, Oakhill, and Bryant (2004) stated that text comprehension draws on many different cognitive skills and processes which means to comprehend the text is a complex task. It is no surprise then that the data from the Nation's Report Card (2016) as quoted by Catts and Kamhi (2017) show that 66 % of eighth-graders are still reading below the proficient level on national assessment in America. It means despite in America that English as the first language in that country, the students still have a problem when dealing with reading class, especially at the junior high school level.

This case also commonly happens in Indonesia, this problem is not only felt by the rural area students but also the metropolitan students. According to the Regulation of the Indonesian Republic's constitutions, No. 43/2007, civilizing of reading interest is implemented through family, educational unit, and society. In short, the teacher is expected to improve students' reading comprehension. Commonly, the students' problem is the impediment to comprehend the reading text especially narrative text as one of the texts that need to be mastered by junior high school students. Genre-based learning becomes a principal assumption that students should learn the target language through that language itself (Widodo, 2015).

From the explanation above, this study aims to probe the teacher's perspective towards Literature Circle in Teaching EFL Reading on Narrative text in Junior High School Level

Reading skill is one of the four skills that should be mastered in both academic and non-academic English. To comprehend English holistically, someone has to be proficient enough in speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Lestrud (2013) specified that reading skills bridge someone's understanding and comprehensive knowledge from written language skills.

Moreover, Silvestri (2018) added that reading activity is more than about understanding particular words, sentences, paragraphs, or some sections in book chapters. Reading activity constructs meaning to be more critical for identifying and absorbing information and ideas which derive from the sources. It is in line with Miller (1990) as cited in Varita (2017) that reading comprehension means a process of interaction or communication of ideas from one person to another through the written text, and it is aimed to seek the ideas behind words severely.

A literature circle can be defined as a book-club, but it has a better structure, belief and precision. According to Widodo (2015), this activity is simply defined as reading groups or clubs where students choose their reading materials from different genres (e.g., books, articles, poems) and text types (e.g., narratives, procedures, discussions). A literature circle is a group of three to five students that gathered together to discuss the book which has read or just finished reading (Lubis, 2018; Moen, 2004). According to Shelton-Strong (2012), a literature circle means students' group work to read the same piece book or text, then each group has to share their interpretations with another group. Daniels (2002) is also strengthening the statement, he states that literature circle is the peer-led

discussion groups to read same book, poem, or article, then each group makes some notes for an upcoming discussion, after that the members share their ideas in the group, and then the members collect all ideas, after that, they unite the ideas and share with another group, and the last they move into a new cycle and choose more reading.

Previous studies have reported the advantages of implementing a literature circle in the classroom. The students can develop their reading comprehension skills (Fredricks & McColsky 2012; Lubis, 2018; Moen, 2004; Nurjati, 2013; Widodo, 2015), writing skills particularly the development of cohesion and coherence usage (Lubis, 2018), and meaning-making skills (Widodo, 2015). Some essential soft skills can also be gained by the students encompassing collaborative strategies (Lubis, 2018; Lubis & Rahmawati, 2019; Moen, 2004; Shelton-strong, 2012; Widodo, 2015), critical thinking (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012; Lubis, 2019; Lubis & Rahmawati, 2019; Maher, 2013), and cultural awareness (Iida, 2013; Moecharam & Sari, 2014).

Although the implementation of the literature circle has been examined quite extensively, little attention is devoted to exploring the teacher's perspective on the role of the literature circle to elevate the students' reading motivation in the EFL context. Specifically, this study addresses the teacher's perspective on the students' reading motivation development and on the challenges in implementing the literature circle to develop the students' reading comprehension.

II. METHOD

A descriptive qualitative study was selected since it was suitable to discern a complete description from this study. As stated by Hamied (2017) that qualitative research general principles are developed inductively from specific observations. Inductive reasoning means moving from specific observations to broader generalizations and theories. It is also called a 'bottom-up' approach.

The research was conducted in Islamic Junior High School (SMPI) Paniis located in a rural area in Tasikmalaya. One English teacher was purposefully selected as the research participant. The rationale is that the teacher has taught more than six years. Moreover, currently, and the teacher has implemented the literature circle method in teaching reading particularly to improve students' interest and motivation in reading.

The interview technique was chosen to collect the data from this study. This instrument revealed some facts and information from the teacher's perspective about reading in general, its strategies, and its application in the classroom. Moreover, an open-ended interview was conducted to explore some new cases or ideas directly. The interview has been divided into two sessions; the first session (pre-interview) set up the general questions and the respondent's knowledge and point of view about reading and the second session (main interview) revealed the teacher's deeper information related to reading comprehension through experience and strategies implemented in the classroom. Moreover, through the interview session, the teacher was encouraged to elucidate and explain what was happened from the classroom observation by looking at the

video recorder to clarify some missing or untold explanations that could not be exposed in the previous session. To ensure the data credibility, the document was collected to confirm the step in the form of the lesson plan with the teaching process.

This study used Miles and Huberman (1994) data analysis; data reduction, data display, and data verification. This research has compiled and separated the data according to the research question that has been set. The interview data result has been broken down, displayed, and verified based on its necessity of benefits and challenges in applying the literature circle method in teaching reading.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Benefits of Literature Circle Regarding Students' Reading Motivation

It showed 4 benefits from a teacher's perspective; firstly, the teacher is guided to have clear steps in developing the reading class that tends to be boring. The teacher says, *"The teaching learning is going well, I have guided with the steps and I am able to manage the whole class efficiently. Moreover, students enjoy the class"* (TA: Q5). It means that before conducting a literature circle method, a teacher has to establish a sustainable strategy development should be planned.

Secondly, the teacher also has an opportunity to collaborate his favorite method with LC method. *The teacher says, "LC gives me so many opportunities to collaborate with an appropriate reading method such as intensive, and extensive reading to gain the information from the intrinsic and extrinsic side of the narrative text"* (TA: Q6). It is a flexible method that a teacher can comprehend a literature circle that joins with all parts of the text. Therefore, the literature circle is one of the best methods in teaching reading.

Thirdly, the teacher gains many experiences when conducting this method in the classroom. The teacher says, *"I surprise that the students are motivated and cooperate each other, for instance, they want to gain the information from the story that is told from the text which they have chosen according to their interest"* (TA: Q7). Additionally, a literature circle also enriched the classroom procedures between the teacher and the students. They became more active and sharing information seemed clear and the teacher was having a good experience in the class.

The last, the teacher gains unique activities when dealing with the students in the classroom. The teacher says, *"Usually, the students follow the reading class passively they just say yes or no in the class from my stimulant questions, but this method stimulates them to ask me with several question whether in the way of pronouncing the word or the moral message from the story. Furthermore, they seem to be closer with their friend because they have similar interest with their friends to be discussed with"* (TA: Q8). The students were challenged with this type of method. Some following questions challenged some students to answer and to be asked again to the other students as a challenge question. Moreover, the discussion became livelier because students shared their genuine experience related to the reading topic.

The clarity of learning steps was also confirmed by previous studies from the students' perspectives (Lubis, 2018). The literature circle offered a structured but flexible learning guide so that the teacher and the students could have adequate preparation before group discussion in the classroom.

B. The Challenges

The teacher described four main problems or challenges that had to be faced when dealing with the EFL students especially in a rural area that had low motivation to learn English. Firstly, the students are not able to comprehend the text because they have less awareness during the activities. The teacher says, *"Sometimes, when students are in the bad mood condition, I have to motivate them with making a joke because this condition influents students' awareness in the process of learning"* (TA: Q1). Furthermore, controlling a student's emotions was sometimes quite difficult because they have already grown up and could manage themselves without any interference from the others. However, a teacher should have many strategies and a way to cope with such a problem like this. Creating jokes, making laugh with stories could boost up their mood.

Secondly, they need to be scaffold to gain the main idea from the text. The teacher says, *"for high achieved students, the activities are going well, yet for low achieved students, they need to be scaffold because they have a weak English vocabulary"* (TA: Q2). Sometimes, it was a problematic situation when in the classroom situation, some students understood the materials, but some of the others did not. It could create a gap between them. In this case, the teacher might do a role play by pairing a high achiever student with the low one. Once they got motivated, the more they easier to adapt to the following material.

Thirdly, for high achieving students, the teacher should guide them for analyzing the text deeper. The teacher says, *"When we get more concern into the low achievement students, the high achievement students tend to be boring and lose their concern. Therefore, I need to give them harder task to make them busy for instance by asking them to analyze the text deeper. In other hand, the heterogenic class has to be given an appropriate approach, technique, or method"* (TA: Q3). The following activity was a collaboration between students with a student. It could also help the low achievers to be more confident and more understand the topic by cooperating with their pair friends.

The last, for low achievement students, the teacher should motivate them to be more active in discussing with high achievement students with always give them advice. The teacher says, *"Low achievement students tend to be passive and shame if they have a similar group with high achieved students. Thus, I have to give them the motivation"* (TA: Q4). Moreover, the teacher has to respond to enhance students' confidence to make the teaching reading activities became more meaningful and all students involved in the process of acquiring knowledge.

IV. CONCLUSION

To conclude, this study shows that the essence of reading is comprehending. Besides, motivation and appropriate methods are an integral part to make the situation and condition become better. However, LC leads the teacher to be more creative and has clear steps to conduct with the reading class. It is important to make a little experiment or research before managing and conducting LC to the students. A teacher should conduct some plans and manage classroom anxiety to minimize boredom in the process of learning a language in the class.

Moreover, according to the findings that some students were good at acquiring the materials, but some students were not, could be a major problem if the teacher was unable to cover the problem. The teacher has to cooperate with the students to join deeper with the LC method in the classroom. By involving some students to help each other such as motivating, helping them with the questions, creating main ideas or difficult words could increase the others not only the cognitive level of reading material but also their minds as well.

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