



LITERATURE CIRCLES AS A STRATEGY FOR DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION IN READING CLASSROOM, HOW?

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Abstract

This article describes how differentiated instruction can be implemented in the reading classroom using the literature circle strategy. Literature circle strategy provides a structured yet flexible framework that allows students to engage with literary texts in collaborative groups, each assuming specific roles that cater to their individual strengths and learning preferences. The article outlines how teachers can design and manage literature circles to accommodate varied reading levels, interests, and participation styles, making reading activities more inclusive and meaningful. It highlights practical steps such as selecting diverse texts, assigning differentiated roles, and facilitating student-led discussions. By focusing on classroom application, this article offers insights into how literature circles support student engagement, enhance comprehension, and foster a supportive reading environment that aligns with the principles of differentiated instruction.

Keywords: Differentiated instruction, Literature circle strategy, Reading classroom

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesian classrooms, particularly at the primary and secondary levels, students exhibit a wide range of reading abilities, interests, and learning preferences. These differences often pose significant challenges for teachers who are expected to deliver effective and inclusive reading instruction. Traditional teaching methods that apply uniform approaches

across all students frequently fail to engage learners equitably and may lead to gaps in reading comprehension and motivation. In response to this, differentiated instruction has been promoted as a pedagogical approach that addresses individual student needs by modifying content, process, product, and learning environment (Tomlinson, 2014). However, the practical application of differentiated instruction in

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Indonesian reading classrooms remains limited and underexplored.

Among various strategies that support differentiated instruction, the literature circle strategy offers promising potential. Literature circles encourage collaborative reading through small-group discussions, with each student taking on a specific role such as summarizer, questioner, or connector. This flexible structure allows students to engage with texts in ways that align with their strengths, readiness levels, and interests. International studies have highlighted the benefits of literature circles in improving reading comprehension (Amalia, 2017), increasing student motivation (Gu & Lau, 2021), and fostering a sense of classroom community (Jones, 2019). These findings are particularly relevant for Indonesian classrooms, where large class sizes and varied student backgrounds make it difficult for teachers to meet diverse learning needs effectively.

Despite its potential, there is a lack of practical resources in the Indonesian context that demonstrate how literature circles can be systematically designed to accommodate varying reading levels and learning profiles.

This article seeks to address that gap by presenting how literature circles can be effectively applied in Indonesian reading classrooms as a strategy for differentiated instruction. It offers practical guidance on organizing literature circles, assigning roles based on student strengths, selecting appropriate reading materials, and facilitating inclusive student-led discussions that promote engagement and comprehension for all learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Differentiated instruction has become one of the key approaches in modern education to address the diversity of students' abilities, interests, and learning styles. Tomlinson (2014) explains that differentiation involves modifying content, process, product, and the learning environment so that every student can reach their optimal potential. In the context of reading classrooms, this approach is highly essential since students' literacy skills often vary significantly. Therefore, strategies that provide flexibility and foster active student engagement are urgently needed.

One widely researched strategy that supports differentiated instruction is the literature circle. Daniels (2002) defines literature circles as small reading groups where students engage in discussions of texts, each taking on specific roles such as summarizer, questioner, connector, or vocabulary enricher. This structure allows students to contribute according to their strengths and interests, making participation more meaningful. In practice, literature circles not only enhance text comprehension but also foster students' ownership of their learning process.

Previous studies have shown that literature circles can significantly improve reading skills and student motivation. Amalia (2017) found that students involved in literature circles demonstrated increased reading interest and comprehension. Similarly, Gu and Lau (2021) reported that collaborative discussions encouraged more effective reading strategies and stronger intrinsic motivation. Thus, literature circles can be seen as an instructional tool that supports both academic achievement and affective development.

In addition to cognitive and motivational benefits, literature circles also contribute to the creation of supportive learning communities. Jones (2019) emphasizes that group discussions based on texts help

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strengthen social interaction, build a sense of belonging, and create a more inclusive classroom environment. This is particularly relevant in the Indonesian context, where large class sizes and diverse student backgrounds often pose challenges for teachers in ensuring equitable and meaningful learning experiences.

The differentiation aspect of literature circles is evident in role assignments. Blum, Lipsett, and Yocom (2002) argue that assigning roles based on students' strengths enhances confidence and provides opportunities to practice different skills. Role rotation is equally important as it allows students to develop a wide range of competencies, such as critical thinking, questioning skills, and summarizing abilities. This practice aligns with Tomlinson's (2014) principle of differentiating the learning process.

Moreover, the use of diverse reading materials represents an important dimension of content differentiation within literature circles. Irawati (2016) highlights that employing texts with varying levels of difficulty, themes, and lengths ensures that all students can participate meaningfully. Teachers may either assign texts or allow students to choose based on their interests, thus making reading experiences more relevant and enjoyable. This strategy directly reinforces the principle of differentiated content.

Nevertheless, implementing literature circles is not without challenges. Rahman (2022) notes that large class sizes, limited time, and teacher readiness are among the key factors affecting its effectiveness. Therefore, careful planning is required, including the selection of texts, role assignments, and facilitation of discussions. Professional development for teachers and access to diverse reading resources are also crucial to ensure successful implementation of the strategy.

Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrates that literature circles are highly compatible with the principles of

differentiated instruction. This strategy not only helps accommodate students with varying reading abilities but also boosts motivation, builds learning communities, and develops both cognitive and social skills. Hence, literature circles can be positioned as an innovative alternative in reading instruction, particularly in the Indonesian educational context where diversity of students' abilities and learning needs is highly prevalent.

METHOD

This study employed a library research method aimed at describing how literature circles can be implemented in reading classrooms to support differentiated instruction. Therefore, this study relied on the collection, review, and analysis of existing literature—both theoretical and empirical—that discusses literature circles, differentiated instruction, and their applications in English language teaching, particularly in reading.

The data sources in this study was selected based on its relevance to the topic, with a focus on works that provided practical frameworks for literature circle implementation, studies that examined differentiated instruction in reading classrooms, and research that discussed student engagement and learning outcomes in relation to collaborative reading activities.

The data collection technique involved a systematic review of relevant literature using academic databases. Keywords used in the search included "literature circles," "differentiated instruction," "reading classroom," "English language teaching," and "collaborative reading strategies." Each selected source was carefully reviewed to extract information on the strategies, benefits, challenges, and classroom applications of literature circles in the context of differentiated instruction.

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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Literature circle and differentiated instruction in reading classroom

The findings of this study indicate that literature circles can be effectively implemented in reading classrooms to support the principles of differentiated instruction by addressing students' varied readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles. Through a synthesis of literature from various sources, it was found that literature circles provide a flexible, student-centered structure that promotes collaborative learning, deeper comprehension, and increased engagement. Daniels (2002) emphasizes that literature circles allow for student choice and active participation, essential components of differentiated instruction, where students engage with texts that are suitable for their readiness levels.

One of the key findings is that literature circles allow for role differentiation, which directly supports differentiation in the learning process. According to Daniels (2002), assigning specific roles such as summarizer, connector, questioner, and vocabulary enricher enables students to contribute based on their strengths and preferences. This approach aligns with Tomlinson's (2014) framework, which emphasizes modifying content, process, and product to meet individual learner needs. Several studies (Brown, 2017; Gu & Lau, 2021) have shown that when students are allowed to select roles and texts based on their readiness and interests, their motivation to engage with reading materials significantly improves.

The reviewed literature also highlights that literature circles promote student autonomy and ownership of learning, which is often limited in traditional reading instruction in Indonesian classrooms. In a study by Blum, Lipsett, and Yocom (2002), students participating in literature circles reported greater confidence in expressing ideas and more meaningful engagement with texts.

This is particularly important in the Indonesian context, where large class sizes and standardized instruction often limit personalized learning. Implementing literature circles addresses this issue by allowing differentiation within small-group settings (Rahman, 2022).

Furthermore, the use of diverse reading materials is a significant component of differentiation within literature circles. Teachers can select or offer choices among texts that vary in complexity, theme, and length to accommodate students' different reading levels. As suggested by Daniels (2002) and reaffirmed by more recent findings (Irawati, 2016), this practice enhances comprehension and allows all students to participate meaningfully, regardless of their reading proficiency. This supports the concept of differentiated content, one of the core pillars of differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2014).

Literature circles can serve as a practical and effective strategy for implementing differentiated instruction in reading classrooms with proper planning, training, and support. The use of clear role structures, diverse texts, and collaborative discussions makes literature circles an adaptable model for addressing the diverse needs of Indonesian students (Jones, 2019; Irawati, 2016).

How to implement literature circles to support differentiated instruction in reading classroom?

Implementing literature circles in a reading classroom to support differentiated instruction requires thoughtful planning and strategic execution to meet the diverse needs of students. The following steps outline an effective approach for teachers aiming to integrate literature circles as part of their differentiated instruction model.

Selecting Diverse Texts

The first step in implementing literature circles is choosing a range of texts that cater to different reading levels, interests, and cultural backgrounds. It is essential to

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provide students with options that span various genres, themes, and complexity levels to ensure that all learners find materials that resonate with them. According to Daniels (2002), the selection of texts should align with the students' interests, but also offer the challenge needed to foster growth. Teachers can either assign specific books or allow students to choose from a curated list, ensuring that each text has varying levels of complexity so that learners can work at their respective proficiency levels.

Assigning Roles Based on Student Strengths

Literature circles involve students taking on specific roles such as the summarizer, questioner, vocabulary enricher, connector, and illustrator (Daniels, 2002). These roles can be differentiated to meet students' individual strengths and learning preferences. For instance, students who excel at vocabulary could take on the role of vocabulary enricher, while those with strong organizational skills might assume the role of summarizer. This role differentiation supports the principles of differentiated instruction by allowing students to contribute in ways that align with their strengths. Additionally, the rotation of roles across meetings ensures that all students experience different responsibilities, helping them develop various skills and abilities.

Forming Flexible Groupings

The literature circle model promotes collaborative learning, and the groups should be flexible to support various instructional needs. Teachers can organize groups based on similar reading levels, interests, or learning styles, but it is important to periodically mix up groupings to promote diverse perspectives and interaction among students with different strengths and challenges (Heacox, 2012). By forming dynamic groups, teachers can ensure that students are exposed to a wide range of ideas and that the learning experience remains rich and varied.

Facilitating Student-Led Discussions

One of the core aspects of literature circles is student-led discussions, where students take responsibility for their learning and the learning of their peers. Teachers should act as facilitators rather than direct instructors. They can guide discussions by prompting questions or providing scaffolding, when necessary, but students should primarily drive the conversation. Giving students ownership over the discussion allows them to practice critical thinking, develop communication skills, and engage with the text in a meaningful way. In a differentiated setting, students can express their understanding in various formats—oral, written, or even through visual means, depending on their preferences and strengths.

Providing Scaffolding and Support

While literature circles allow for student autonomy, it is essential for teachers to provide scaffolding, especially for students who may need additional support. This can include pre-reading activities to build background knowledge, vocabulary instruction, or providing graphic organizers to help students track their roles and contributions. Additionally, teachers should offer ongoing formative assessments to monitor students' progress and offer individualized support when needed. As Tomlinson (2014) suggests, effective differentiation requires ongoing adjustment to meet students' evolving needs. In a literature circle setting, this might mean adjusting group dynamics or modifying role responsibilities to ensure that all students are continuously challenged and supported.

Encouraging Reflection and Feedback

After each literature circle session, it is important for students to engage in reflection, either individually or as a group. Reflection allows students to consider what they have learned, how they contributed to the group, and how the text impacted their thinking. Teachers can also encourage peer feedback, allowing students to provide constructive comments on each other's contributions. This process helps to reinforce the goals of differentiated

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instruction, as it fosters self-awareness and encourages students to take ownership of their learning journey.

By following these steps, teachers can successfully implement literature circles in a way that supports the principles of differentiated instruction. This strategy not only promotes a more inclusive and engaging reading environment but also fosters skills that are critical for lifelong learning, such as collaboration, communication, and critical thinking. The use of literature circles ensures that every student, regardless of their learning needs or reading abilities, has an opportunity to actively participate and contribute to the classroom community.

CONCLUSION

this library research underscores that literature circle strategy is not only compatible with the principles of differentiated instruction but also offer a realistic and engaging approach to inclusive reading instruction. While challenges remain in terms of implementation and teacher readiness, the evidence supports the integration of literature circles as a promising classroom practice that promotes equity, student voice, and active learning in diverse reading classrooms.

To effectively implement differentiated instruction in reading classrooms, particularly in contexts like Indonesia where student abilities vary widely, teachers should consider adopting the literature circle strategy. This approach, as highlighted in the article, provides a flexible, student-centered framework that allows for tailored learning experiences by enabling teachers to select diverse texts, assign roles based on individual strengths, form flexible groupings, and facilitate student-led discussions, ultimately fostering deeper comprehension, increased engagement, and a more inclusive reading environment.

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