

CHAPTER V

STUDENTS' OPINIONS ON DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT

The previous chapter has provided information of how the implementation of dynamic assessment affected students reading comprehension performance and the integration of dynamic assessment in the teaching reading. It talked about the stages of dynamic assessment including pretest, mediation, and posttest. The mediation program was provided with the mediational strategies of reading comprehension in order to help the students overcome their problems in reading.

This chapter will discuss the data collection techniques obtain from the interview. The interview was administered at the end of the mediation program after the researcher conducted the posttest in order to seek students' opinions on the implementation of dynamic assessment in the teaching reading. Interview, as described in Chapter 3 section 3.3.3, is used as a tool for verify, extend, and elaborate the impressions of the researcher gained through observations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007 p. 351). The interview can be categorized into a semi structure interview (see Appendix 7 interview guideline) since some questions were created during the interview based on the students' answers. Moreover, the interviews also aims to find out the students' suggestions on the mediation program.

5.1 Students' Opinions on Dynamic Assessment

The data from the interview indicated that the mediation program of dynamic assessment had improved the students' reading skills and it promoted their reading strategies potential. All participants assumed that the activities of dynamic assessment mediation were useful and helpful to improve their reading comprehension. It can be seen from the students' answers below:

The activities in the class helped me in comprehending the text faster through the reading strategies and applied it immediately in doing the reading practices.
(Cindy)

I found the activities are useful for me, I knew my problems in reading and how to solve it. (Irfan)

These comments show that the mediation program given is useful and helpful for the students in order to improve their reading comprehension performance. The students could know their problems and solve their problems together with the teacher's assistance. It is in line with Chu & Flores (2006 p. 6) who states in dynamic assessment, mediation is designed to teach the students problem-solving strategies to achieve successful test-taking performance and it enables the students to move to another development in their ZPD (Shrestha & Coffin, 2012 p. 5). Moreover, the strategies and skills given in the mediation program helped the students to be easier to comprehend the texts. Reading strategies are essential for successful comprehension and overcome the reading problems for the students and it also helps the students to be a better reader and have a good comprehension (McNamara, 2009 p. 34). In addition, these comments support the tests' results since the students were aware of their reading problems, it can be assumed that their improvement of reading comprehension abilities are caused by their awareness of their reading problems and their understanding to overcome those problems.

Students' opinions on the implementation of dynamic assessment in reading comprehension classroom were categorized into the functions of the mediational strategies namely managing the interaction, identifying the problems, overcoming the problems, promoting language competence, and reading skills development. The data from the interview are integrated with the data from the classroom observation (see Chapter IV section 4.1) and the tests' results (see Chapter IV section 4.2). Each of the function will be explained below.

a. Managing the interaction

The function of mediation typology namely managing the interaction is assumed to be useful for the students even though this function does not really focus on identifying the problems. However, this function encourages the students

to participate in the classroom discussion and interaction. It can be seen from the following statements below.

When the teacher asked some questions, I felt challenged and motivated to join classroom discussion. I wanted to be active in the class (Fifi).

I felt more motivated when the teacher asked several questioned in the class and gave more chances to the students especially the students who never participated in the class liked me (Lena).

These statements show that the teacher encouraged the students to participate in the classroom discussion. Managing the interaction is aimed to encourage the student to actively participate in the interaction between the teacher and the learner. These statements also confirm the data from classroom observation where the teacher asked several questions to the students and provided feedback as the responses (see Chapter IV section 4.1.2.1). As stated by Alavi, Kaivanpannah & Shabani (2012, p. 40), accepting responses in mediational typology of dynamic assessment is aimed to encourage the students to take part in the interaction and to provide affective scaffolding since feedback served as motivation for sustaining and furthering cooperation. In addition, these statements also in line with the definition of dynamic assessment proposed by Lidz (1987 in Poehner, 2008) (see Chapter 2 section 2.2.1) who states dynamic assessment is the interaction between the examiner-as-intervener and the learner-as-active participant which seeks to estimate the learners' learning potential.

Moreover, the data also show that the teacher gave a chance to the students who were not active in the classroom discussion. It can be seen from Lena's statement that she was one of the students who did not participate actively in the class discussion. Since the teacher actively asked the students, Lena felt motivated to speak and to interact in the class discussion. It is relevant to the roles of the teacher in the interaction as suggested by Brown (2001, p. 167) who claims the teacher as controller can manage and control the interaction in the classroom. This data supported the data of classroom observation in which the teacher tried to engage the students actively in the interaction and discussion.

In conclusion, managing the interaction as one of the functions of mediational strategies seems useful to encourage the students to participate in the classroom interaction and it gives a chance to the students who do not actively participate in the classroom.

b. Identifying the problems

Identifying the problems is one of the functions of mediational intervention namely identifying the problem area. This mediational strategy aims to help the teacher to determine the students' reading problems and the difficulties that they faced during reading the passages. Moreover, this mediational strategy also helps the teacher to design an effective instruction (Barjesteh & Niknezhad, 2013, p. 532, see also Poehner & Lantolf, 2005) which suits the students' needs.

When the students were asked whether the implementation of dynamic assessment in reading classroom helps them to overcome their problems, the students' statements revealed that the activities that have been done for the past two months have affected their reading abilities. The students were also aware of their reading problems. It can be seen from the following excerpt below.

The activities in that I have followed for this two months helped me to overcome my reading problems and I could know about my reading problems such as identifying main idea and making inferences (Verdy)

I could know what are my problems when I read the English passages and after following this class, I knew to solve my reading problems and applied the reading strategies (Cindy)

These comments show that the students are aware about their reading problems and they know how to overcome their problems. This is relevant to the definition of dynamic assessment proposed by Lantolf and Poehner (2004, p. 53) who state dynamic assessment not only provides more complete picture of the the learners' abilities but also assists them to develop their language abilities. It also confirms the observation data where the teacher determined the students' problems and helped them to overcome the problems (see Chapter IV section 4.1.2.1).

Moreover, the data also show the students could apply their reading strategies. It confirms that dynamic assessment promotes the students' learning potential (see Chapter 2 section 2.2.3) especially in reading abilities. It also supports the classroom observation session in which the teacher taught and guided the students while they were reading the passages (see Chapter IV section 4.1.2.2). Moreover, it also supports the test results in which the students had improved their reading comprehension performance (see Chapter IV section 4.2).

Then, when the students were asked about the effects of dynamic assessment in one of the reading skills namely using context clues to predict the meaning, it revealed that they had problems with vocabularies. The students said predicting the meaning of the words is difficult. It is caused since they confused to determine the clue to predict the meaning of the words. It can be seen in the following excerpt;

Difficult vocabularies make me lazy to read the English passage. Teacher's assistance in determine the context and predict the meaning of vocabularies make me easier to understand the text without looking up the dictionary (Fifi)

I felt confused sometime when I have to predict words meaning using context clues. The instruction and assistance from the teacher helped me to determine the clue to understand the words. (Luthfi).

These comments show that one of the problems that make the students felt lazy to read is the lack of vocabulary. This is relevant to the part of the importance of vocabulary stated by Anderson (1999, p. 22), vocabulary plays an important role in reading and comprehension which it is the fuel that ignites the fire of it. Confronting the problem above, the teacher's assistance helped the students to use context clues to predict the meaning of the words since vocabulary comprehension is important in order to catch the meaning of the words and to comprehend the text better.

In conclusion, identifying the problems is also effective for the teacher and the students. It is effective for the teacher since the teacher can determine the reading problems that the students faced and she can determine the instruction and guidance to overcome those problems which are explained more in Chapter IV. It is also effective for the students since they can know their own problems and try

to solve it by using the teacher's instruction and guidance like have been explained in Chapter IV session 4.1.2.

c. Overcoming the problems

Overcoming the problems is the function of the mediational strategies namely providing clues, offering a choice, and translation. These mediational strategies aim to provide the students with some instruction and guidance that are relevant to their problems. The overcoming the problems has significant relationship with the intervention given during the reading practices in the classroom.

The interview revealed the students' opinions on the teacher's intervention during answering the reading tasks. Most of the students said that the intervention was very helpful. This intervention helped them provide ideas and direction to complete the reading tasks. Sometimes, the students did not know how to relate their ideas with the texts and they were confused and obstructed to solve their problems. As stated by Riana, when she got trouble in solving the reading problems, the teacher's intervention was helpful to guide her to complete the reading tasks. This statement is in line with the basic principles of dynamic assessment namely intervention. Intervention of dynamic assessment happens when the students need feedback and guidance to answer the tasks and solve their reading problems (Grigorenko & Sternberg, 1998 p. 75). It also confirms the observation data in which the teacher provided clues; choices and translation to help the students to solve their reading problems (see Chapter IV section 4.1.2.2).

In relation to the reading skills, such as identifying main idea and reading for details, the students revealed and gave various opinions on the implementation of dynamic assessment and the mediation program in reading comprehension classroom. Regarding the skills namely identifying main idea of the passage, all of the students said that the teacher's assistance and instruction facilitated and guided them to find the main idea of the texts. It can be seen from Luthfi's and Verdy's statements below.

The teacher helped and guided me in identifying the main idea of a text. Sometimes, I was confused to determine the main idea of the text (Luthfi).

When the teacher questioned and instructed me to identify the idea of a text, I did not need to read a whole paragraph since the teacher instructed me to read the part of the text which contained the main idea (Verdy).

The comment that the student felt confused in determine the main idea of the text confirms that identifying main idea is a difficult skill in reading comprehension (Duffy, 2009 p. 138; Jitendra & Gracia, 2011 p.199). Jitendra & Gracia (2011) state that one of the problems faced in comprehending the text is constructing the meaning which is in this study refers to identify the main idea. It supports the data of classroom observation in which the students got difficulties to identify the main idea of the paragraph whether it is stated or implied (see Chapter IV section 4.1.2.2).

In relation with reading for details, the students said that they did not need the teachers' assistance in answering the question because they have already known to use and apply scanning and skimming skills. The teacher only explained and proposed the key to the students which aimed to make them become easier to find the details information of the texts. It is mentioned in the following statement below.

In reading for details, the teacher helped me by giving the key clue to be found in the passage which is stated in the questions. By knowing the clue of the passage, I could find the details information without reading all of the passage. (Cindy)

By doing scanning and skimming, I could find the details information stated in the passage, but sometimes, I need teacher's assistance to find the implicit information in the passage. (Yanti)

These comments indicate that the teacher asked the students to do skimming and scanning in order to find out the details information stated in the passage. As suggested by Grabe & Stoller (2002 p. 13), skimming and scanning are important in reading comprehension in which the readers are going through a text quickly (Alderson, 2000 p. 96) and it involves a combination of strategies for guessing where important information in the text to form a general idea. Moreover, in relation to dynamic assessment in which the teacher gave clues to the students was suitable with the principle of dynamic assessment namely modifiability (see Chapter 2 Section 2.2.2). The students could perform a task with the teacher's

intervention which modified the assessment that affected to the students' reading comprehension abilities. Yanti's statement revealed that she could find the implicit information in the passage because of the teacher's assistances and intervention.

As the conclusion, overcoming the problems reveals how the teacher implementing mediational strategies of dynamic assessment in the classroom to overcome the students' problems in reading comprehension performance. The data from the interview reveals that the students have problems in identifying the main idea and reading for details which are also found during the observation session of the implementation of the mediation program of dynamic assessment. Teacher's assistances and instructions help the students to overcome those problems.

d. Promoting language competence and reading skills development

Promoting language competence and reading skills development are the function of the last mediation typology namely requesting for re-answering the question and providing the correct response and explanation. Students' opinions on this function of the mediational strategies are commonly positive. When the students were asked about the changes of their reading abilities after following the mediation program, some of the students stated that they felt their reading abilities were better and had improved. It can be seen from Yanti's statement below.

My reading abilities improved after following these activities. I just knew that we need to identify the main idea to catch the meaning of the texts and we can use context clues to understand the meaning of difficult words. I felt lazy to read English texts because I do not know the meaning of the difficult words, but, when the teacher taught me how to use context clues, it became easier to understand and comprehend the texts especially English texts. (Yanti)

The data above show that the activities in the mediation program during the implementation of dynamic assessment has changed the students' reading abilities. Yanti's statement revealed that she did take advantages of the following activities which can be seen from her statement "when the teacher taught me how to use context clues, it became easier to understand and comprehend the English

texts". In this study, the researcher used a reading text with practices as a media of teaching. This is relevant with the basic principles of assessment namely washback where the teacher can create a classroom test that serves as learning devices (Messick, 1996 p. 243, see Chapter 2 section 2.1.2). Moreover, Yanti's statement also confirms the classroom observation data where the students were taught about some reading strategies. It also strengthens the results of the textual analysis of the test where the students had improved their reading abilities.

When the students were asked about how the instructions and questions offered by the teacher influenced them to answer the reading practices namely making inferences, some students agreed that the activity was useful and helpful. The data are below;

I think, with the teacher's instruction or guided question, I could more comprehend the text and took a conclusion in making inferences. (Riana)

The teacher exemplified and corrected my answer helped me in making inferences. (Yanti)

These comments, that the teacher's instructions or guided questions help the students to make inferences, indicate that dynamic assessment has similarity with scaffolding. Mediation, as one of the stages in dynamic assessment, is almost similar with scaffolding but it has a different purpose (Lantolf in Davin, 2013). The purpose of mediation is to develop the students' potential learning whereas scaffolding aims to help the students to find the correct answer (Lantolf & Poehner, 2005).

Moreover, Yanti's answer also revealed that the teacher explained and modeled how to make inference which indicated that in dynamic assessment the teacher could model and explain the lesson in order to develop the students' learning potential. This is relevant with the concept of dynamic assessment (see Section 2.2.1) which proposed by Lidz & Gindis (2003, p. 99) who states dynamic assessment embeds instruction and assessment into one activity in order to lead the students to the higher level of thinking. The data above show that the teacher instructed and modeled the reading strategies which aimed to develop the students' abilities in reading.

In conclusion, promoting language competence and reading skills development have a positive effect toward the students' reading comprehension performance that are stated and seen in their opinions towards the implementation of mediational program of dynamic assessment.

In general, the students' opinions are commonly positive to the implementation of dynamic assessment in reading comprehension classroom. The students seemed very helpful with the assistances and guidance of the teacher while they were doing the reading practices. The mediation program was assumed to be successful in revealing students' problems in reading comprehension and in overcoming those problems. The students were aware with the reading strategies used during reading and comprehending the texts. It supports the findings discussed in the previous section of the mediational strategies given in dynamic assessment and the textual analysis of the students' tests result (see Chapter IV section 4.1 and 4.2). It can direct to some benefits of the implementation of dynamic assessment in Indonesia in general and to English reading classroom in particular.

For better implementation of the mediation program in dynamic assessment, there are some issues of practical importance for further study which is indicated by the students' suggestions on dynamic assessment. It will be discussed in the following section

5.2 Students' Suggestions on Dynamic Assessment

The interview revealed that most of the students did not mention much suggestion toward the program implemented. They expressed their satisfaction of the program as mentioned below;

The program is good, I have no suggestion since I have gained more than enough in this program and I found that reading is easier if we know the main idea of it (Bagus).

Following this program is challenging and interesting for me because I had new experience and knowledge. I don't have any suggestion for this class. (Fifi).

However, three students proposed two suggestions regarding the mediation program conducted in the classroom. They were related to the instruction given by the teacher and the activities conducted in the classroom.

Dealing with instruction given by the teacher, the students suggested that the instruction should be simple with the choice of the words that they can understand. It would make them think and act faster in perceiving the instruction given during the dialogue and interaction to answer the reading tasks.

Regarding the activities conducted in the classroom, the students suggested to conduct some games in the classroom which aimed to make the class more fun and alive. Playing a small games would increase their motivation and make them feel relax to study. The class was offered in the afternoon where some of students felt tired and sleepy in following reading class subject.

5.3 Summary of Students' Opinions on Dynamic Assessment

To summarize the data obtained from the interview, it was found that the students' opinions on the implementation of dynamic assessment are commonly positive. The students felt the implementation of mediation program has affected their reading comprehension performance especially in the five skills. It can be seen from the mediational strategies functions namely managing the interaction, identifying the problems, overcoming the problems, promoting language competence, and reading skills competence. Students' opinions on the teacher's assistance in identifying the main idea indicated that it was useful to improve their knowledge and ability in finding the main idea. Moreover, they also said that they felt helpful when the teacher guided them in doing the reading comprehension practice. It is also stated above that the implementation of dynamic assessment helps the students to realize their problems and learning potential.

Moreover, students' proposal toward the improvement of the program is related to the instruction given and the activities in the class. The students proposed that the teacher should include games in the class since the class was held at noon where the students felt tired and hungry. They also proposed that in this activity, the teacher could conduct a small classroom games in order to make

them relax and motivate to study especially studying Reading for Academic Purposes subject.

5.4 Conclusion of the Chapter

This chapter has presented the findings from interviews which reveal students' opinions on the implementation of dynamic assessment in reading comprehension performance. Overall, the students had given valuable suggestions for further implementation and improvement of the mediation program in the classroom. Some efforts should be taken to improve the mediation program and further research is required to scrutinize the effectiveness of the mediation program particularly in reading classroom and in different settings of classroom generally.

The following chapter will present the conclusion, the limitation of the study and ideas for future research. It will summarize the findings and arguments of previous chapter and describes probable future investigation either to replicate or complement this study.