

CHAPTER V

STUDENT'S RESPONSES TOWARDS THE TEACHING PROGRAM

The previous chapter has discussed the findings from the analyses of students' answers on critical reading questions. It reveals the students' promotions in their critical capacities examined in this study, in spite of some features that still needed improvement. This chapter will discuss data from other sources, namely interviews which were held on the 6th meeting and at the end of the program, and also students' comments of each meeting, containing what students learned from friends and teacher on that day. Interview sessions, as described in Chapter 3, are used as tools for "checking the accuracy of – verifying or refuting – the impressions the researcher had gained through observations" (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2000). Each interviews lasted around 10 minutes. The interview can be categorized into a semi structured interview because the interview conducted in a fairly open structure; some questions in fact were created during the interview based on students' answer.

All the activities were conducted in order to obtain complete data from various sources. The last section of this chapter illustrates the finding from the whole process in gaining the view of students' opinion towards the program as the complement in describing the wide-ranging conclusion of the study as will be presented in chapter 6.

5.1 Discussion of Data from Interview

Interview was held two times, in the 6th meeting and in the last meeting. However, the results do not reveal too much difference. Both interviews divulge similar general responses of the student. So the discussion for two interviews will be presented in one section only.

In interviews 1 and 2 students showed their interest in the program. Their answer revealed their enthusiasm in joining the program. Students' responses in the interview more or less had similarity with their answer on questionnaire. They give positive feedback towards the program especially because they were interested in the new method in reading as can be identified below.

Generally, this part presents two themes: students' perceptions of the teaching program, including the development they thought they gained from the teaching program and students' suggestions for further implementation of the teaching program.

5.1.1 Students' Perception toward the Teaching Program

The complete data are presented in Appendix 7. Data from the interview indicate that the teaching program was perceived by students to have achieved most of its goals. All participants thought the program was useful and enjoyable, besides that they admitted that this program enables them to see the word and the world (Freire, 1987) which was emphasized in students answer below:

I found this program very useful for me, new knowledge which make me have new view about the world (silvia).

I enjoy in this program, this really give me new experience, new knowledge (Teten).

One of the best things of this class is the comfortable, relax, fun (Rizal).

Students' opinions above suggest their recognition of the inevitability of the pleasurable and generate satisfaction in teaching learning process (Freire, 1998). From ESL teaching perspective, comments above inline with Cummins's (1996) notion which mention "instruction must evoke intellectual effort on the part of students, i.e. be cognitively demanding, if it is to develop academic and intellectual abilities".

When students were asked about the difference between the teaching program and their official classes, every student appeared to recognize the significance of the steps in the critical reading phase to help them comprehend the text easier. As Wawan indicated:

One of the big differences between this class with my normal reading class is the method. I feel the advantages of critical reading strategy to help me besides understand the text or any other information I get, also to improve my critical reading and critical thinking skill.

Another opinion was put forwarded by Teten who has similar thoughts with other; furthermore he relates the advantages of critical reading procedure with his daily life experience:

This is new for me, I never know critical reading before. This method help me in understand the text during study in the classroom and of course this will be useful also in my daily life when I meet with many information from outside so I can decide my position.

All students concurred that the controversial and current topics discussed represented another positive feature of the program. It is noticeable in Mestaria's comment, which signified the importance of appropriate topic choice to challenge the students to think and to read critically. Furthermore, Mestaria's comment seems to validate the idea that the topics of reading which can trigger students' critical capacity should be controversial (Chaffee et al, 2002).

All topic was challenging, it train me to think much, to read critically, not to swallow all the information I get but to do the procedure that Bu Restu teach us. (Angga)

Before I join this class I never think the effect of information when we do not take seriously the process of reading it. The topic also, I never think before that this controversial topic can be so interesting, challenging, and fun to discuss. (Rizal)

Regarding to the matter of topic choice, questionnaire also revealed suggestion that the discussions about the topic allowed them to have consciousness of wider social realities. Silvia, for instance, said:

Most of the topics that Bu Restu offered to us were interesting and challenging. I get many new knowledge from it. The topics also controversial, honestly I never think about it deeply before. This class and the topic has improve my consciousness to be more care to my social environment. Topics like Gay, Woman, Smoking discussed in interesting and challenging and also from various perspective really help me in the class and also I believe in my life later. (Silvia)

The responses above in fact is different from Chaffee et al's (2002) theory, which specified that the materials used to teach critical literacy should be relevant to the students (i.e. students' gender, and cultural experiences). The topic then, for the next study should be sufficient and carefully selected by still considering the main criteria that is controversial topic.

Other students seemed to be aware of the procedure as allowing them to engage in extended discussions about an issue in groups, as indicated by Indra:

Discussion session in reading class? Wow, it's interesting activity. I can discuss and sharing information about the topic of the text with others. I never have this before. Besides getting opportunity to share information and adding knowledge I also can train my braveness in speaking. What a rare chance out of speaking subject.

My braveness in express my opinion is increasing, and also I can train my self to have serious talking a bout a topic with my friends. That activity also order me to be able to be more critical in viewing something. (Angga)

Statements above are relevant to the theory which mention discussion in groups is "the best way to expand one's thinking" (Chaffee, 2000). Similarly, in the teaching of ESL, pair and group work has been emphasized (Nunan, 1988) which offers opportunities for cooperative

learning and “real” language practice (Hyland, 1991, cited in Lunt, 2001) which believe can improve language proficiency.

In relation with the critical pedagogy concept all students looked contented with democratic atmosphere in the class, which allowed them to take a role as agents, to participate actively in learning, with no fear of being judged wrong. Measure up to their regular classes, this appeared to be an exception, as noted below:

Different situation with my regular class which has no freedom or even opportunity to share ideas, this class train as to be brave in giving opinion. (Irna)

All students treated equally, we can speak up freely. No worry to deliver our own idea. Democratic situation is a rare thing in our educational institution nowadays, this program has given satisfying opportunity for every students to show their best ability (Nopiyanti)

A student, Anggraeni seemed to feel encouraged to deliver her ideas in the program and said:

In every subject I’m included into passive student, I always feel afraid in speaking, to deliver my idea. But here I can say it without burdened.

Irna’s and Nopiyanti’s comments seemed to indicate that the students in this study (and also in other contexts in Indonesia, as reported by Exley, 2002, cited in Emilia, 2005) have the potential to be critical and become active participants in their learning if the situation in the classroom allow them to do so. Exley reports “They (Indonesian students) are very critical but they chose who they are going to be critical with” (2002, cited in Emilia, 2005). This may indicate that “to help the students improving their critical capacity, students need the guidance and support of their teachers who in turn must be able to provide the right environment to nurture their thinking” (Cheah, 2001 cited in Emilia, 2005). This also implies the importance of the notion that schools (classes) should become “public places where students learn the knowledge and skills necessary to live in an authentic democracy and which can support individual freedom and

social justice, dedicated to forms of self and social empowerment” (Giroux, 1988, cited in Emilia, 2005).

When they were asked further questions relating to their courage to speak during the program, whether it was caused by the environment which was set to small class, or the teaching method; Silvia said, “It is not only the component but also the teacher who lead the program”. Comments of some students indicate their consciousness of the need for a teacher “to make the students have a voice” (Giroux, 1988), and “to create public spaces for expression, for freedom to articulate distinctive perspective, within social relation that strengthens the possibility for active citizenship” (Giroux, 1997 cited in Emilia, 2005). That indicates one of the requirements to help students succeed academically, in this case to help students develop their critical capacities, there should be a willingness of teachers, individually and in a group, to adjust the power structure within the classroom, which will applicable in the wider society (Cummins, 1996).

Furthermore, questions coupled to critical reading components dealing with reading beyond the surface as stated by Indra that “ability of being sensitive towards information, in this course means textual and visual information which we can easily get.” Other students also mentioned similar ideas about it that is “an attempt to analyse any information whether in audio or visual format.” Some students showed their concern in responding to a text by “having evaluation of someone’s idea before we as receiver decide our position.” Nopiyanti seemed to realize the significance of critical reading by relating it to her daily life:

Modern era has allow media to give us many information. By having critical reading skill we as people who always become the consumer, will have filter skill to select the appropriate information which are useful for us and throw the garbage.

Mestaria seemed to evaluate the relevance of a text with her context, and critical reading feature (Wallace, 1992) Mestaria explained:

Right now when I meet a text, I can recognize which statement is fact and which statement is opinion, I also able to read not only from writers' point of view, the critical reading procedure help me in improving my critical reading skill.

Still regarding critical reading component, other students also seemed to be aware of their capacity to evaluate writer's idea in a text, by seeing several features, including the textual purposes (what is the text really about?), gaps and silence in the text (who is missing from the text, what has been left out from the text, why); power and interest (whose interest is preserved in the text?, is the text fair?) This, for example, was stated below:

Surprising thing is when the first time I don't know anything about critical reading concept, right now I am able to know what is missing from the text or what information is hiding by the author. All the exercise during the program is useful for me (Dwi)

Before following this program I never think to decide my position when I read a text or when I get information. After this class I become more aware about writer's intention, who benefit from the text... (Wawan)

Regarding their improvement in grammar after they followed the course, all classroom members expressed positive responses by stating that the program also helped them increased their grammatical ability, as shown below:

I feel my grammar is increase since during this program we get so many opportunities to speak English, to read English, to write English, and to listen to English language. (Indra)

The activities done in the program make me be more concern in grammar because during the program we use English in most of our time, so I think my grammar is better than before (Nopiyanti)

Other students expressed similar opinion. This condition is inline with Ellis (1985) theory in framework for investigating second language acquisition that the linguistic output is developmental, it changes as the learner gains more experience of the language.

In general, students' responses are commonly positive to the teaching program. The students seemed to be conscious of the value of each element of the teaching program in facilitating their learning and providing them with experiences needed to optimise their development in critical reading skills and various aspects of critical capacities investigated in this study. This supports the findings discussed in previous section on students' developments, as revealed in the texts they constructed in various procedures. All these may direct to some of the benefits of implementation of the teaching program in Indonesia, to English teacher education in particular and in various levels and contexts in general to help EFL learners develop their critical capacities in reading.

For better implementation of the program, there are some issues of practical importance for further study, as indicated by the students' suggestions about improvements to the teaching program. These will be discussed in the following section

5.1.2 Students' Suggestion about Improvement to the Teaching Program

The questionnaire revealed that generally the students did not mention much suggestion towards the program. Most of students expressed their satisfaction towards the program, as can be seen below:

The program is good, I have no suggestion because this is new for me and I found this is good to increase my critical capacity. (Mestaria)

This class is different with my normal class, and I found this class is interesting, fun, give me new experience and knowledge. I don't have any suggestion for this class. (Indra)

There are two students who proposed similar suggestion which is very beneficial and may signify their capability to propose critical comments on the program. That is regarding the leading during the discussion session. Two students expressed their concern that the teacher's instruction frequently made them feel over-supported by saying "just give us the bait, and let us do the rest" (Silvia) and "would be better if teacher just guide the basic topic and let the students explore the discussion" (Nopiyanti).

From teacher's point of view the "over-leading" in discussion happened from the worries of the teacher and in this case also as the researcher if the students unable to follow the procedure well or feeling afraid that the discussion will be stuck since the topic given needed deep understanding and critical reading. This is a very valuable input, the teacher is not allowed to involve too deep, just "act as a controller" (Harmer, 2002).

5.2 Conclusion of Chapter Five

Overall, the students had given valuable suggestions for further implementation and improvement to the teaching program in an Indonesian teacher education context. An effort should be taken to improve the teaching program, and further research is therefore require to scrutinize the effectiveness of the teaching program, particularly when it is applied to the class where researcher also acted as teacher at different levels and in different settings to avoid intention out of the pure motive in teaching.