

Investigating the Effects of Reader Response Journals on the Quality of Teacher Trainees' Responses to Literary Works

Iskhak

Post Graduate School of State University of Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia

Mursid Saleh

State University of Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia

Ahmad Sofwan

State University of Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia

Rudi Hartono

State University of Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia

Abstract—The present study investigated the effects of writing reader response journals (RRJ) on the quality of responses to literary works assigned. The study is underpinned by Rosenblatt's Reader Response Theory, literacy principles, and sociocultural views. The study assumes that readers' responses to literature involve critical and aesthetic reading-writing (literacy) events that are collaboratively constructed. The study involved an intact group ($N=22$) comprising EFL teacher trainees of a private education college in Ciamis, Indonesia, taking Literature Criticism subject. This time series pre-experimental study entailed repeated measurements of critical reading and assessments of aesthetic responses before and after the treatment. Before the treatment, New Critics' conventional text-based teaching strategies were given. Findings of the study suggest that, quantitatively, as ANOVA proved, the use of reader response journal gave effects on the constantly better achievements, and, as the Paired *t*-Test indicated, the treatment resulted in better quality. Additionally, qualitative evidences revealed from observation, interviews, and document analysis showed better quality of the trainees' aesthetic experiences reflecting varied reader response strategies. The study recommends further studies develop reader response-based literature teaching model across contexts in reference to gender issues.

Index Terms—reader response theory, journals, critical, aesthetic, reflections

I. INTRODUCTION

"I believe that (this) educational process has two sides—one psychological and one sociological; ..." (Dewey, 1897)

Advocates of literature teaching pedagogy suggest that reading literary works offer multifaceted benefits. For example, Carter and Long (1991) propose three models of reading literary works connected to culture engagement, linguistic awareness, and personal growth. Culturally, readers can understand target culture embedded and reflected in the literary text engaged in. In transacting the knowledge of their own and others, readers can critically manifest their attitude towards the conflicting differences of cultures and thus know how to encounter those cultural differences. Bandura (2008) highlights the intercultural dialogue in reading foreign literature in that readers get acquaintance with a process of encountering other cultures in reading. Linguistically, readers, when reading the texts, at the same, can absorb the linguistic patterns framed and executed in the writers' ways of expressing ideas. That is, they get immersed in contextually making use of language usage in more varied styles. Aesthetically, readers can self-direct learning of moral values and develop their personality while and after reading and capturing the texts' messages. In addition, readers can also enjoy reading (i.e. reading for pleasure). Parallel to Carter and Long's views, Abdulmughni (2016) affirms that reading literary works involves textual feature mastery and meaning understanding. For Abdulmughni, the textual involvement in reading drives readers to absorb its linguistic aspects modelled in the text. The meaning exploration then entails readers' intertextualization and association with own life experiences in interpreting the text being engaged in.

Pedagogically speaking, literature teaching trends have indicated virtual paradigm shifts. Rosenblatt's (1976, 1978, 1983, 1985, 1988, 1990, 1991, 2005) reader response theory offers challenges against New Critics' views on text-oriented reading approaches. In Rosenblatt's conception, the former emphasizes on the role of readers as active meaning makers as reflected in their "lived-through reading experiences". By means of *aesthetic* reading, the readers have enough rooms to freely respond to literary works assigned and collaboratively share their feelings and critical views while and after reading with their peers through group discussions, journaling, peer-group feedbacking of text revision process, text transformations, performances, and creating or drawing pictures and posters. Thus, fixed answers

and interpretations of readers are not demanded for certain extent. Rather, readers' idiosyncratic and typical responses are welcome. The latter, having recently dominated the teaching directions in most schools and colleges in these spheres, is more concerned with text-based interpretation that entails such tasks as summarizing the story, describing textual features (plot, characters and characterization, setting, and other textual features), and answering correctly questions from the contents of the texts. The former tends to be reader-oriented, which is more personal, the latter has to do with general knowledge, which is more public. The present study is more concerned with former for its virtual, potentials for more empowerment to the readers, and classroom democracy issues. In addition, reader response-based teaching pedagogy offers communicative attainments for learners (cf. Hirvela, 1996) by which they can get involved in interactive communication among the learners' peers in sharing ideas as reader responses.

To create such a fruitful and challenging classroom of literature teaching, teachers should pedagogically develop well-negotiated lesson design. The ideal teaching design needs humanistic approaches that empower learners' potentials. Prominent experts in relevant educational fields have promoted educational reforms through reconceptualizing educational practices from pedagogical reconstruction as paradigm shifts. For example, John Dewey's pragmatism view has shared relevant points with Rosenblatt's Reader Response Theory (Connell, 1996) in viewing reading as a transactional process. In so doing, readers try to use their own schemata and (past) life experiences to interpret the text messages through collaborative works. In a sense, Connell further saw the democratic process in collaboratively interpreting texts as suggested by Dewey and Rosenblatt. Clearly, both advocates are very keen in an effort of elevating the position of readers in actively constructing meaning (cf. Connell, 2000). Thus, readers deserve optimal opportunities to make use of their critical and personal reflections in transacting with texts and intertextualizing them through engaging in those texts assigned. Instead of merely transferring knowledge the teachers hold in their minds to their students, the teachers/trainers play their roles as facilitators and mediators in socially constructed learning activities.

The educators' judgements in selecting appropriate theory-into-practice-based teaching models for creating conducive classroom is philosophically interwoven with the educational conceptions. For example, Dewey's (1897) previously mentioned creed at the opening of this paper supports the importance of promoting learners' psychological and sociological empowerments, which is meaningful for individual's critical thinking and affective development. Devendorf (n.d) argues,

"Dewey felt that teaching critical thinking skills was a far better utilization of education versus memorization of rote knowledge. Dewey's commitment to democratic education practices at the Dewey School was evidence of these philosophical beliefs. This school was a community of learners. Dewey was not only concerned with developing the minds of students, but also that of teacher's."

It is thus safe to claim that there is a shared point between Rosenblatt's views on reader response-based teaching and Dewey's pragmatic philosophy in education in their ways of promoting learners as active meaning makers.

The social process in classroom that triggers learners to be engaged in should accommodate the dialogic classroom events. In this respect, Bakhtin's views have its contributions to the teaching pedagogy. Lee's (2010) qualitative case study revealed the integration of Bakhtin's theory and reader responses to improve second language reading comprehension. Lee further argues that through dynamic dialogic interaction between readers and the texts more understanding of learners can possibly take place. One of the principles of dialogism, as Fuadi (2014) assumes: "Thus the process becomes bilateral, or even multilateral and it includes criticism on both parts — a teacher and a student-reader as they are interpreting a literary text."

The shift from New Critic movements to Reader Response Theory has indicated the milestones of the contributions of critical theory and literary criticism fields to literature pedagogy. As much of the related literature suggests, the domination of New Critics' traditions have been illuminating the current trends of literature classes. The mainstream classes tend to be one-way direction of classroom interaction, which is more teacher-centered. The pitfalls of New Critics are associated with passive roles of readers in interpreting the texts. In a sense, readers are demanded to provide fixed answers or interpretations. Canonical texts are considered as the main focus of reading and literary interpretation. To compare with, Reader Response Theory offers readers more rooms to generate ideas as both personal and critical reflections. To date, the movements of literature teaching directions have been indicated by its time frame, though there remains 'pros' and 'cons'. Fuadi (2014) affirms,

"While the reader-response movement resulted in vast intellectual riches regarding our understanding of the reading process itself, its ongoing debate about the problematic of canonicity and the politics of interpretation played a role in engendering the vitriolic 'culture wars' of the 1980s and 1990s as well as the theoretical entrenchment of the present."

Historically, the movement of New Critic seven indicated strong influences to teaching literature. Sanders (2012) illustrates,

"Beginning in the 1920s, New Criticism emerged as the dominant theory used when teaching literature, and this theory places an emphasis on meaning that resides solely in the text. This theory remains a popular perspective for teaching literature, but the emergence of the contrasting reader response theory has challenged New Critical thinking. Reader response theory suggests that literature cannot be considered in isolation from the reader. Instead, the reader brings experience and knowledge to the text and creates meaning." (p. 2).

In praxis, the salient point for reader-response-based pedagogy shows readers' stances in reading (Kalorides, 2000), whether approaching to personal or public accounts (the former commonly referred *asaesthetic* and the latter *effere*nt in

Rosenblatt's notions). Pantaleo (2013) confirmed, "Rosenblatt maintained that any text can be read from either a *predominantly* aesthetic or efferent stance, with most reading events falling somewhere along the aesthetic/efferent continuum." (p. 127).

The application of reader response theory is seemingly meaningful in EFL context. For example, Garson & Castañeda-Peña (2015) report on their study in Colombia concerning the application of reader response journals. The case study indicated how to apply the Reader-Response Theory to respond to literary texts in EFL-pre-service teachers' initial education, and students kept a portfolio of their written responses to the stories assigned. The participants also discussed their interpretations in class. The main and core constructs of their study are of importance of the reader-response theory, the use of literature in English as a foreign language classes and its relation to critical thinking. Results of their study showed that the application of tasks based on the reader-response theory encourages a meaning seeking process as well as the development of higher order thinking skills in future language teachers. Similarly, Atkinson and Mitchell (2010) suggest that reader response strategies allowed readers as writers used critical interpretation so as to collude, collide, exclude, and compete for meaning. In addition, their study also offered pedagogical implications to the trainees' own classrooms in the future. To support their beliefs, Atkinson and Mitchell (2010) argued:

"When various interpretive frameworks are made visible across the context of a narrative text by the readers' or listeners' responses to it, they can be examined for how they collude, collide, exclude, and compete for meaning. At the same time, conversations evoked by narrative texts and through other arts can generate greater understanding across and through cultural differences. This offers dynamic pedagogical possibilities through appealing to our horticultural approach of seeking out knowledge gained from conversations across divergent interpretive communities."

Another earlier study conducted by Newell et al. (1989) also revealed the benefits of reader response strategies for encouraging and triggering readers as writers to elaborate and explore responses to literary works being enjoyed. The meaningful influences of reader-response approach have been also represented in EFL classroom practices of literature instruction across levels of language growth and sociocultural contexts in Indonesia (Citraningtyas, 2008; Iskhak, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2015, Iskhak et al., 2016a, 2016b). Unfortunately, the current trends of teaching and directions of research on the use of reader response theory, yet, seem to indicate declination for the last few years. Only few studies are directed on the effectiveness of using reader response in EFL classes in reference to mixed method of study.

Several qualitative studies on the use of reader response theory in EFL teacher education suggest the significant effects on the English literacy development among the participants or trainees. Kern (2000) emphasizes that engagements in reading and responding to literary works give effects to the target language literacy improvement. Through such literacy events as text transformations readers by enjoying literary works improve their target language. Similar insight revealed by Bonissone's et al. (1998) affirmation suggests that target language literacy can be enhanced through discussing literary works in culturally and linguistically diverse settings. Freppon and Dahl (1998) also suggest the supportive contribution of the use of literary works to the literacy development as evoked by reader response strategies. The possibly negotiated-literacy events generated by means of literary projects may include such varied reader response activities as discussion, writing, art, dance, music, and drama (Graves et al., 2004). Consequently, writing journals, for its valuable and meaningful effects in its nature, deserve more emphasis in this study.

Research has indicated that writing journal (henceforth reader response journal/RRJ) affects readers as writers to be high risk-takers (Iskhak et al., 2016b) in expressing what they have in mind (critical reflections) and feelings (personal reflections). For example, Carlisle (2000) made use of journals to trigger Taiwanese collegestudents to express their critical and personal views on the literary texts engaged in. Zainal et al. (2010) showed similar indications of the learners' improvements in increasing their quality of literary responses through writing RRJ in the context of Malaysian college. Other studies of using RRJ in teaching short stories (see Dreyfuss and Barilla, 2005; Liang, 2011) also indicate similar findings. In the EFL contexts, relevant studies also suggest that the use of RRJ offer academic benefits (for example Al-Bulushi, 2011; Carlisle, 2000; Hiew, 2010; Khatib, 2011; and Zainal et al. 2010).

Developing reading-writing (literacy) skill in English language as the target language as affected by RRJ among EFL teacher trainees is an interesting issue. The meaningful merits of including EFL teacher education as the focus of the study is associated with possible pedagogical implications of the praxis for the trainees' future own classroom practices (see McIntosh, 2010). Grisham's (2001) study revealed pre-service teachers' conception of reader response through journalling. Grisham strongly emphasizes the effects of writing journals on the trainees' more productive expressions as their reader responses to literary works. Moreover, Park's (2013) study reports on how preservice English teachers perceive reading literature that needs an interdisciplinary stance, accommodating close reading and reader-centered technique. Park argues that to elevate readers' more critical competence in reading teachers should trigger the trainees to write their prompts as responses guided and scaffolded by trainer's meaningful questions. The similar evidences of studies in EFL teacher training contexts also suggest that the use of RRJ offers personal, linguistic, academic, and pedagogic significances (also see Garzon and Castaneda-Pena, 2015; Harfitt and Chu, 2011; McIntosh, 2010; Sanchez, 2009).

The evident benefits of applying reader response theory through writing journals as response activities in reading-writing of literature emerge from the arrays of quests scrutinizing its operational inquiries provoked by relevant researchers in both English speaking countries and EFL contexts. The issue of evocation of aesthetic reading that result

in readers' better willingness in reading-writing events in literature class have mostly been investigated through qualitative studies though some mixed method have proved their informative findings. While the promotion of the reader response journals needs exploring, there are still limited studies on its effectiveness and comprehensive discussions through thick qualitative description of its process and products. The present study thus tries to infer its effectiveness by means of time series pre-experimental study and providing the embedded qualitative attributes to the treatment process of using reader response journals. The study also tries to enhance EFL teachers' awareness of keeping endless efforts to promote literature class to be more popular subject since Langer (1994) worried about less popularity of learning literature among educators and learners.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study is guided by general touring question, "Can the use of reader response journals /RRJ give effects to the quality of pre-service EFL teacher trainees' responses to literary works assigned?" The three more specific questions include: 1. *Through quantitatively repeated measurements before and after being treated by means of RRJ, will the quality of the trainees' critical responses improve?*, 2. *As attributed to and embedded in the process of writing RRJ project, what personal reflections as aesthetic experiences of trainees will emerge?*, if so, 3. *Are there meaningful differences in the trainees' critical and personal reflections before and after the treatment?*

III. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

A. Reader Response Theory, Journalling, and English Literacy: Its Interconnectivity

The interconnectivity among an activity of responding to literature, journal writing, and the target language literacy calls for prolific language education experts' concerns in their ways of pedagogically cater for doing researches. Sanders (2012) reports on the importance of Rosenblatt's Reader Response Theory in improving readers' literacy. Believing in close connection between reading and writing driven by responding to literature, Sanders further offers fruitful strategic classroom empowerments that enable reader writers to freely and democratically create their own meanings. Supported by Rosenblatt's (1993) concept of transactional process, responding to literature normally involves private and public elements, or *aesthetics effluent* stances of readers, which tends to take place in the continuum. The reader response theory's basic premise tends to reject New Critics' views on structured knowledge of reading literature. To Rosenblatt (1988), the interconnection between reading and writing refers to the argument that reading is an integral part of the writing process. In addition, writer's reading both resembles and differs from the readers. Thus, transaction process of each individual reader is very dependent on the contexts shaping and being shaped by, and their own schemata.

Atkinson & Mitchell (2010) suggest how each person in the reader response community contributes to the journalling process. Atkinson & Mitchell report on their study suggesting that each person in the conference session produced a story about the experience of reading, even each individual's experience was produced by and through and with multiple intersecting narratives composed through multiple intersecting interpretive frameworks. They also argue that attempts to graph or plot would be ineffectual and non-productive. To make the journalling project meaningful to the reader writers, Spiegel (1998, p. 43) suggests, "In most response-based approach, reading is done through sustained silent reading". Thus, responding is a follow-up activity done through writing of what the readers have been read. RRJ is then the most feasible means of catering for the readers' needs to share their comprehensive ideas during and after reading. Practically, the expected reader response strategies, as Beach and Marshall (1991) suggested, normally cover such strategies as engaging, describing, conceiving, explaining, interpreting, connecting, and judging. In addition, critical reflections include the readers' critical thinking as represented in the readers' achievements in interpreting the texts; whereas personal reflections cover such individual accounts as self-perception and evaluation, feelings, wants, expectations, and imaginations.

B. Journal Writing

Writing journals challenges reader writers to express their thoughts and feelings as well as perceptions as their worldviews (see Parsons, 1990, 1994). The use of journal is, as Lee (2008) argues, "to reflect the trainees' views including critical thinking and personal accounts". Reader responses as reflections represent the trainees' active roles in making meanings while interpreting the texts. Lee (2008) further outlines that reflection enables teacher candidates to construct knowledge through asking questions, critiquing, evaluating, etc., and helping them, and bridge the gap between imagined views and realities of reading. The study is concerned with personal journal, though it is considered as academic account in terms of its consideration for educational assessment for the course requirements. Personal journal, as Lee (2008) defines, refers to students' record of "their personal reactions to questions about, and reflections on what they read, listen, discuss, do, and think" (p. 117).

Response journal is informally, socially, and critically constructed. Flitterman-King (1988) argues that, "...the response journal is a sourcebook, a repository for wanderings and wonderings, speculations, questions ...in effect, a place to make room for the unexpected." Flitterman-King also postulates that the process of writing is a recursive process. In writing journal, reader writers, as the classroom community members take active parts in creating new

things in language use. Parsons (2001) sees that, “the classroom should be a place for processing language” (p. 101). All trainees thus can experience success in responding to literature regardless of reading ability (Fulps & Young, 1991, p. 109). Furthermore, Parsons (2001) affirms that the readers can unlock literary works being engaged in through reader response journals. He further explains that through their response journals, they can “set out to unravel the mysteries of a literary work, first by detecting and mapping out their own observable emotional reactions to it and then using those findings to trace the intellectual plan of the work that produced them” (Parsons, 2001, p. 32).

Relevant study concerning the use of reader response journal in EFL teacher training was conducted by Sanchez (2009). Using mixed method between quasi-experimental study and qualitative approach, Sanchez’s (2009) study in Argentina suggests that the use of reader response journal improved the trainees’ critical and personal responses. Emerging data from interview and documented written journals informed the trainees’ betterments in making interpretations of the texts. Yet, Sanchez’s study still needs exploring in its quantitative evidences proved by sufficient quantitative inferences.

C. Literacy Principles

It is admitted that, as its nature suggests, the application of reader response theory through writing journals is connected to reading-writing events. Musthafa (1994) outlines the tenets of how to make reading-writing connection infused in classroom by means of reader response strategies. Among other things, teachers/trainers should let students/trainees freely express what they feel and have in mind, and give more rooms and nontreating atmospheres with viable multimedia to celebrate their freedom through negotiated literacy-based programs that entail such demanding programs as writing journals, group discussions, peer-feedbacking, and refining final drafts. Kern (2000) argues that there is a strong connection of reader response strategies and literacy skills, since by doing so, the reader writers are required ‘to comment freely in writing upon them’ (p. 112). Thus, Kern further stresses, “Journalling leads to reader writers’ getting immersion techniques to improve motivation in writing” (p. 193). The contribution of reader response theory to literacy events in classroom enriches and strengthens the reading and writing connections. Sanders (2012, p. 6) emphasizes, “Connections are emerging in the literature between Rosenblatt’s reader response theory and new literacies, and these connections demonstrate new possibilities for pedagogy and literacy learning.”

D. Sociocultural Theory and Socio-constructivism

It is acknowledged that in socio-constructivism views knowledge is socially constructed. It also happens in language learning process. Donato (2000) clarifies that Vygotsky’s theory of learning and development implies that learning is also a form of language socialization between individuals and not merely information processing carried out solo by an individual. Literacy events as generated in RRJ projects can be possibly constructed and shaped in social interaction by means group discussion and peer group collaboration. The interactive process of academic socialization involves care-taking and -giving from the more to the less in the group or community of learners, and scaffolding is thus likely needed. Lantolf & Thorne (2007) argue that inmaking scaffolding, “...peer interaction should be included among participant structures conducive to learning through ZPD, especially in secondary and higher education settings.” By means of scaffolding, each member of the community can reach their own zone proximal development in their psycholinguistic growths and ready to get ‘care’ given by the more from others to construct their own language expressions in most optimal developments.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Design

Using time series pre-experimental study mixed with qualitative approach (Creswell, 1994, 2008), the investigation aimed to show the effects of RRT project on the quality of teacher trainees’ responses to literary works. The type of ‘embedded mixed method’ (Creswell, 2008, p. 559), integrating quantitative and qualitative approach, was run out to legitimize the quantitative data showing the effectiveness of using RRJ. Repeated assessments before and after the treatment (Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2008; Fraenkel and Wallen, 2007) were aimed to identify whether the variances of grouped and gained improvements would suggest different indication, which was proved by using *ANOVA*, and the significant differences between the two groups of repeated assessments of the same subjects before and after the treatment (by using *Paired sampled/Matched t-Test*) (Hatch and Farhady, 1982). It was ideally expected that there were equal variances within each group of the assessment results. Quantitative evidences were generated from reading test that measured critical reflections, and academic essays to assess both critical and personal reflections. Likert 1-5 scale questionnaires (Brown, 2009), with its high reliability (0.98), were also administered to investigate the trainees’ perceptions about their experiences (Burns, 2009, 2010) after attending the RRJ projects. Qualitatively, the captured classroom through videotaping was to see the trainees’ active engagement in the negotiated reader-response process of journaling projects. Additionally, the trainees’ continuously improved written drafts of RRJ completed the documentation analysis that entailed identification of emerging varied response strategies.

B. Site of the Study

The study took place at English Education Study Program of a global vision-based private Teacher Training College in Ciamis, West Java, Indonesia. The research site was bounded by such ecologically and culturally medium-level of academic sophistication and English literacy exposures. The participants yet are also recently exposed by such challenging requirements of passing through TOEFL-like threshold as standardized basic level of EFL competence, ranging from 475-500 score.

C. Subjects

The subjects of study included the intact group ($N= 22$) who were enrolled in the fourth semester included students of English Education taking Literary Criticism course. The teacher trainees had taken supporting related courses or subjects for their course of English education within 8 semesters, which cover personal and social competence developments, pedagogical basics for TEFL, linguistics, language skills, and literary studies. As far as the study is concerned, the trainees' reading-writing (literacy) development level indicated their mediocre level and belonging to novice or young teacher trainees. Their racial, language, and cultural diverse backgrounds included multicultural inputs, which can shape and be shaped by the social contexts.

D. Materials and Instructional Intervention as 'Treatment'

The short stories assigned in treatment included eight different titles: four for before (while using conventional text-based teaching strategies), and the other four for after the treatment (using RRJ). The democratic classroom selection of the short stories was based on the subjects' needs and interests. Through a sixteen meeting-session course in instructional intervention, the subjects were assigned to read the eight selected short stories and write their responses in written journals. During interventions, guiding questions and scaffolding were run out to trigger and stimulate the subjects' first thoughts and prompts as genuine reader responses. Drafting process of each subject deserved serious peer feed backs so as to get betterment in the next writing step. Yet, the first four assessment results were expected to indicate no similar variances and similarly those after the treatment. As the effects of RRJ has suggested, it was expected that there was significant difference in the quality of reader response to short stories between before and after the treatment. In addition, qualitative evidences embedded in the treatment triangulated the quantitative findings. The four selected short stories assigned before the treatment were *The Necklace* (Guy de Maupassant), *The Chaser* (John Collier), *The Story of an Hour* (Kate Chopin), and *Misery* (Anton Chekhov), and another four ones after the treatment included *The Tell-Tale Heart* (Edgar Allan Poe), *The Spirit of Giving* (Maxine Chernoff), *The Man Who did not Smile* (Kate Chopin), and *The Unicorn in the Garden* (James Thurber).

E. Data Analysis

Several different types of data were analyzed in its own ways. Applying SPSS (Larson-Hall, 2010), quantitative data analyses included the use of *ANOVA* and *Paired t-Test*. *ANOVA* was aimed to see "whether groups defined by independent variables performed differently on the dependent measure" (Larson-Hall, 2010, p. 298), while *Paired t-Test* was intended to see "whether scores of groups where the same people were tested twice are statistically different from one another" (Larson-Hall, 2010, p.397). Qualitative data analyses led to the occupied steps of how to deal with reduction, categorization, and coding, and constructing the patterned themes (see Miles and Huberman, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) corresponding to reader response principles.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

1. Quantitative Evidences

The study showed that RRJ gave effects to the pre-service EFL trainees' quality in writing reader responses to literary works, short stories, assigned. Quantitatively, the subjects' critical thinking improved as the statistic evidences indicated differences between before and after the treatment. Similar evidences of academic essays suggested the same findings. Analysis of reading test results using *ANOVA* revealed that, as time series design suggests, there were equal variances of improvements before and after the treatment. The statistical evidence indicated no differences among the four time assessments before (Sig 0.074, $p > 0.05$) and for those after the treatment (Sig 0.067, $p > 0.05$). The *Paired t-Test* calculation then showed significant differences between scores gained in reading test before and after the treatment (Sig (2-tailed) 0.000, $p < 0.05$). Statistical analysis of academic essay scores similarly indicated equal variances before treatment (Asymp. sig 0.567, $p > 0.05$), and the same finding after the treatment (Sig 0.613, $p > 0.05$). More importantly, the *Paired t-Test* indicated that there was a significant difference in academic essay improvements before and after the treatment (Asymp. sig (2-tailed) 0.000, $p < 0.05$). Additionally, the meaningful effects of RRJ on the quality of reader response were also seen in the administered questionnaires to show the subjects' positive perceptions about the use of RRJ (Sig (2-tailed) 0.000, $p < 0.05$), which is based on RRT.

2. Qualitative Emergence

Qualitatively, the videotaped subjects' active participation in RRJ projects in literature class indicated their deep engagements in the stories, which reflected their critical and personal accounts in RRJ. Their enjoyment in aesthetic reading-writing events was also driven by their engagement in the story. Thus, group classroom discussions, laughs,

spontaneous comments, critical views, and humorous senses typically characterized the reader response-based classroom practices. Very often, each member of the class got involved in serious debate and even showed their anger, bad mood, and other personal emotions.

Varied reader responses strategies employed after the treatment by the subjects also embraced the more reflective strategies as suggested by Beach and Marshall (1991). In a sense, the subjects' response strategies dominantly embraced such high order thinking skills as *engaging* (as indicated by the use certain verbs such as feel, imagine, etc), *judging* (related the ways of evaluating the quality of the stories), *conceiving* (using their own words) the messages of the story, *connecting/associating* with their own life experiences, and *interpreting* the texts. The subjects' way of using first singular person was also more evident after the treatment. Overall, being treated by RRJ, the subjects positively perceive that RRJ offered multilayered benefits in terms of academic, linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical significances.

The subjects' improvements in writing journals were seen in terms its schematic structure of journal. Moving from very spontaneous steps to modelled and guided patterns, the subjects tried to carefully re-arrange their ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Yet, the well-designing criteria of concerning high level cohesiveness were not the ultimate goal. The study virtually focuses on how the use of RRJ gave effects on the quality of personal and critical reflecting modes.

B. Discussion

The quantitative evidences indicated constant effects of instructional intervention before using RRJ. Text-based and information-oriented New Critics' teaching strategies shaped the passive stances of reading among the subjects. Consequently, as seen in reading tests, as to examine critical reflections, the subjects' answers to the comprehensive questions were limited with the information or ideas encountered only from the texts (see Rosenblatt, 1991). After the treatment, their constant betterment in reading was evident. It means that RRJ offered chances to the subjects to critically develop and explore their answers.

The subjects' improvements in academic essays after being treated by RRJ also indicated constant betterment after the treatment. Before the treatment, the subjects seemed to have no reader-response-based models of developing writing. Consequently, they tended to use their limited rooms and lack their own authorship driven by their own original thoughts and affective experiences (see Spiegel, 1998). Within the treatment, then, the subjects deserved an 'apprenticeship' of the 'more competent' care giver (the teacher as the researcher) in trying to express their feelings and critical comments while and after enjoying the stories. Peer-feed backing to each draft of journal produced in writing process shaped the improvement process.

The subjects' positive perception of RRJ also corroborates the similar tendencies of the previous studies claiming that the use of RRJ is meaningful for EFL pre-service trainees in the research site context (see Zainal et al., 2010; Sanchez, 2009). The emerging findings as embedded in the instructional intervention also virtually corresponded to the subjects' active engagement in reading-writing process facilitated by collaborative meaning making (see also Musthafa, 1994). To sum up, the present study findings, to some extent, relatively support relevant theories and findings across levels of education and educational settings and contexts. For some reasons, the present study, yet, have limitations in terms of diversity of the subjects' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, time frame of giving the treatments, and gender issues.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Conclusion

The present study has revealed the evident effects of RRJ underpinned by Rosenblatt's RRT on journaling process. This theory-into-practice driving force can strengthen and enlighten the assurance of the successful classroom practice of literature in pre-service EFL teacher training, which offers pedagogical implications. RRJ thus can give effects to the quality of readers' responses to literary works. Yet, it is admitted that RRJ is practical in some cases. It is feasible only if the supporting conditions and teachers' role significantly can cater for the subjects' needs. In addition, teacher understanding about teaching pedagogy and awareness of teaching innovation and reform, very much influence the classroom practice.

B. Recommendation

The present study is concerned with endeavours to make sure that the use of RRJ offers theoretical and practical insights. Owing to its limitations, the study suggests that further study focus on the gender influence on the quality of RRJ across different socio-cultural contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article is based on a portion of my doctoral dissertation. The present study is supported by the grant sponsored by the Indonesia Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education. Warm thanks also go to Prof. Mursid Saleh, PhD, Ahmad Sofwan, PhD, and Dr. Rudi Hartono for their valuable suggestions. An earlier version of this paper was

presented at ASEAN Comparative Education Research Network/ACER-N Conference 2016, November 30-December 1, 2016, in Padang, West Sumatra, Indonesia.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abdul mughni, S. A. S. (2016). Teaching skills through literature. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature* 5.2, 10-16.
- [2] Al-Bulushi, Y. (2011). Teaching short stories in the Omani context: The use of the reader response theory. *Literacy Information and Computer Education (LICEJ)* 2.3, 450-455.
- [3] Atkinson, B. & Mitchell, R. (2010). "Why didn't they get it?" "Did they have to get it?": What reader response theory has to offer narrative research and pedagogy. *International Journal of Education & the Arts* 11.7, 1-24. <http://www.ijea.org/v11n7/>. (accessed 5/6/2017).
- [4] Bandura, E. (2008). Intercultural dialogue in reading foreign literature. *Studia Linguistica* 125, 19-27.
- [5] Beach, R. W. and Marshall, J. D. (1991). Teaching literature in the secondary school. San Diego: HBJ.
- [6] Bonissone, P., Rougle, E., and Langer, J. (1998). Literacy through literature in culturally and linguistically diverse classroom. Report Series 11008, National Research Center on English Learning & Achievement, University at Albany, SUNY.
- [7] Brown, J.D. (2009). Open-response items in questionnaires. In J. Heigham and R.A. Croker (eds.), *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 200-219.
- [8] Burns, A. (2009). Action research. In J. Heigham and R.A. Croker (eds.), *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 112-134.
- [9] Burns, A. (2010). Doing action research in English language teaching. New York: Routledge.
- [10] Carlisle, A. (2000). Reading logs: An application of reader response theory in ELT. *ELT Journal* 54.1, 12-19.
- [11] Carter, R. And Long, M. N. (1991). Teaching literature. New York: Longman.
- [12] Citraningtyas, C. E. C. (2008). Literature course made interesting: The effect of reader response approach in teaching Introduction to Literature at the English Department, Universitas Pelita Harapan. *Jurnal Ilmiah POLYGLOT* 2.2, 26-37.
- [13] Cohen, L., Manion, L, and Morrison, K. (2007). Research methods in education. New York: Routledge.
- [14] Connell, J. M. (1996). Assessing the influence of Dewey's epistemology on Rosenblatt's reader response theory. *Educational Theory* 46.4, 395-413.
- [15] Connell, J. M. (2000). Aesthetic experiences in the school curriculum: Assessing the value of Rosenblatt's transactional theory. *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 34.1, 27-35.
- [16] Creswell, J. W. (1994). Research design: Qualitative & quantitative approach. California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- [17] Creswell, J. W. (2008). Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating, qualitative and quantitative research (3rd ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- [18] Devendorf, S. (n.d). John Dewey: A pioneer in educational philosophy. TED502, State University College at Oswego.
- [19] Dewey, J. (1897). My pedagogic creed. *School Journal*, 54, 77-80. Available at: <http://dewey.pragmatism.org>. (accessed 7/6/2017).
- [20] Donato, R. (2000). Sociocultural contributions to understanding the foreign and second language classroom. In J. P. Lantolf (ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 27-50.
- [21] Dreyfuss, K. And Barilla, R. (2005). Making meaning through written response: An action research inquiry. Teachers Network Leadership Institute.
- [22] Fraenkel, J. R. And Wallen, N. E. (2007). How to design and evaluate research in education. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies Inc.
- [23] Flitterman-King, S. (1988). The role of the response journal in active reading. *The Quarterly* 10.3, 4-11.
- [24] Freppon, P. A. & Dahl, K. L. (1998). Balanced instruction: Insights and considerations. *Reading Research Quarterly* 33.2, 240-251.
- [25] Fuadi, M. A. (2014). Formalist criticism and reader response theory. *Семантика. Семантика* 4, 119-128.
- [26] Fulps, J. S. & Young, T. A. (1991). The what, why, when and how of reading response journals. *Reading Horizons* 32.2, 109-116.
- [27] Garson, E. & Castañeda-Peña, H. (2015). Applying the reader-response theory to literary texts in EFL-pre-service teachers' initial education. *English Language Teaching* 8.8, 187-189.
- [28] Graves, M. F., Juel, C., and Graves, B. B. (2004). Teaching reading in the 21st century (3rd ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- [29] Grisham, D. L. (2001). Developing pre-service teachers' perspectives on reader response. *Reading Horizons* 41.4, 211-238.
- [30] Harfitt, G. and Chu, B. (2011). Actualizing reader-response theory on L2 teacher training programs. *TESL Canada Journal* 29.1, 93-103.
- [31] Hatch, E. and Farhady, H. (1982). Research design and statistics for Applied Linguistics. Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, Inc.
- [32] Hiew, W. (2010). The effectiveness of using literature response journal to improve students' writing fluency. *Journal of Arts Science & Commerce* 1.1, 27-39.
- [33] Hirvela, A. (1996). Reader-response theory and ELT. *ELT Journal* 50.2, 127-175.
- [34] Hong, C. S. (1997). The reader response approach to the teaching of literature. *REACT* 1, 29-34.
- [35] Iskhak (2010a). Pembelajaran sastra (Bahasa Inggris) berbasis response dan pemerolehan bahasa kedua (Studi multi kasus di SMA di Jawa Barat). *KOLITA 8 (Konferensi Linguistik Tahunan Atmajaya 8 Tingkat Internasional)*. Pusat Kajian Bahasa dan Budaya, Unika Atmajaya, Jakarta.
- [36] Iskhak. (2010b). Response-based literature teaching in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context: A study of three High School English teachers' eliciting language use in classroom. National Conference on Language in the Online and Offline World, Peta Christian University, Surabaya.

- [37] Iskhak. (2010c). Enhancing students' freedom and enjoyment in response-centered literature curriculum. *LLT (A Journal on Language and Language Teaching)* 13.2, 115-124.
- [38] Iskhak. (2011). Literary criticism and its significance to classroom practices in multicultural education in EFL context: A bridge to build democratic characters. International Seminar, Applied and Multiculturalism, Faculty of Culture Studies, Brawijaya University, Malang, Indonesia.
- [39] Iskhak. (2013a). Catering for students' needs to promote aesthetic experience in EFL literature class with reference to response-centered curriculum. *CELT (A journal of culture, English language teaching and literature)* 13.1, 66-86.
- [40] Iskhak. (2013b). Literature studies curricula for EFL teacher education: Revisited for catering for pre- and inservice teachers' needs. TIE-ALLSAW (The first international seminar on English Applied Linguistics), English Education Department, Galuh University, Ciamis, West Java, Indonesia.
- [41] Iskhak. (2014). The application of reader response theory in EFL teacher education in an Indonesian context. The 12th Asia TEFL International Conference-23rd MELTA International Conference 2014, Kuching, Serawak, Malaysia, 28-30 August 2014.
- [42] Iskhak. (2015). The application of reader response theory in enhancing student teachers' affective and linguistic growth: A classroom action research in EFL teacher education in Indonesia. *The English Teacher* 44.2, 43-55.
- [43] Iskhak, Sofwan A., and Hartono, R. (2016a). Transitivity analysis of EFL college students' reader responses to short stories. Konferensi Linguistik Tahunan Atmajaya Keempat Belas (KOLITA 14), Pusat Kajian Bahasa dan Budaya, Universitas Katolik Indonesia Atma Jaya, Jakarta, 6-8 April 2016.
- [44] Iskhak, Saleh, M., Sofwan, A., and Hartono, R. (2016b). Making readers become 'high risk-takers' in writing reader response journals: A theory-into-practice approach to teaching literature to Indonesian college students. International Conference 2016, The Association for The Teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia (TEFLIN). University of PGRI, Adi Buana, Surabaya, 8-10 September 2016.
- [45] Karolides. N. (Ed.) (2000). Reader response in secondary and college classroom (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- [46] Kern, R. (2000). Literacy and language teaching. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [47] Khatib, S. (2011). Applying the reader-response approach in teaching English short stories to EFL students. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 2.1, 151-159.
- [48] Langer, J.A. (1994). A response-based approach to reading literature. National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning, Report Series 6.7. SUNY, Albany. (cela.albany.edu/reports/langer/langerresponsebased.p.d.f). (accessed 7/6/2017).
- [49] Lantolf, J. P. And Thorne, S. L. (2007). Sociocultural theory and second language learning. In V. B. Van and W. Jessica (eds.), *Theories in second language acquisition*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 201-224.
- [50] Larson-Hall, J. (2010). A guide to doing statistics in second language research using SPSS. New York and London: Routledge.
- [51] Lee, I. (2008). Fostering preservice reflection through response journals. *Teacher Education Quarterly* 35.1, 117-139.
- [52] Lee, Y. L. (2010). The application of Bakhtinian theories on second language reading comprehension: A qualitative case study. *The Reading Matrix* 10.2, 222-242.
- [53] Liang, L. A. (2011). Scaffolding middle school students' comprehension and response to short stories. *Research in Middle Level Education* 34.1, 1-16.
- [54] Lynn, S. (2008). Texts and contexts: Writing about literature with critical theory (5th Ed.). New York: Pearson Education, Inc.
- [55] McIntosh, J.E. (2010). Reader response journal: Novice teachers reflect on their implementation process. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education* (Online) 6.1, 119-133.
- [56] Miles, M. B. And Huberman, A. M. (1994). Qualitative data analysis (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- [57] Musthafa, B. (1994). Literary response: A way of integrating reading-writing activities. *Reading Improvement* 31.1, 52-58.
- [58] Newell, G. E., Suszynski, K., and Weingart, R. (1989). The effects of writing in a reader-based and text-based mode on students' understanding of two short stories. *Journal of Reading Behaviour* 21.1, 37-57.
- [59] Pantaleo, S. (2013). Revisiting Rosenblatt's aesthetic response through *The Arrival*. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy* 36.3, 125-134.
- [60] Park, J. Y. (2013). All the ways of reading literature: Preservice English teachers' perspectives on disciplinary literacy. *English Education* 45.4, 361-384.
- [61] Parsons, L. (1990). Response journals. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann.
- [62] Parsons, L. (1994). Expanding response journals in all subject areas. Ontario: Pembroke Publishers Ltd.
- [63] Parsons, L. (2001). Response journal revisited: Maximizing learning through reading, writing, reviewing, discussing, and thinking. Markham, Ontario: Pembroke Publishers Ltd.
- [64] Rosenblatt, L. M. (1976). Literature as exploration (4th ed.). New York: The Modern Language Association of America.
- [65] Rosenblatt, L. (1978). The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of literary work. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- [66] Rosenblatt, L. (1983). Literature as exploration. New York: The Modern Language Association of America.
- [67] Rosenblatt, L. (1985). The transactional theory of literary work: implications for research. In C.R. Cooper (ed.), *Researching response to literature and the teaching of literature*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 33-53.
- [68] Rosenblatt, L. M. (1988). Writing and reading: The transactional theory. New York: Centre for the Study of Reading Research and Education, Centre Report, Technical Report No. 416.
- [69] Rosenblatt, L. M. (1990). Retrospect. In E. Farrel and J. Squire (eds.), *Transactions with Literature: A fifty-year Perspective*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 97-107.
- [70] Rosenblatt, L. M. (1991). Literature-S.O.S.! *Language Arts* 68, 444-448.
- [71] Rosenblatt, L. M. (1993). The transactional theory: Against dualisms. *College English* 55.4, 377-386.
- [72] Rosenblatt, L. M. (2005). Making meaning with texts: Selected essays. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- [73] Sanchez, H. S. (2009). Building up literary reading responses in foreign language classrooms. *ELTED* 12 (Winter), 1-13.
- [74] Sanders, A. (2012). Rosenblatt's presence in new literacies research. *NCTE* 24.1, 1-6.

- [75] Spiegel, D. L. (1998). Reader response approaches and the growth of readers. *Language Arts* 76, 1, 41-48.
- [76] Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1990). Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory, procedures and techniques. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- [77] Zainal, Z. I., Termizi, A. A. Yahya, R. W. and Deni, A. R. M. (2010). Advancing students' responses to literary texts through the use of literary journals. *The English Teacher* 34, 222-232.

Iskhak teaches at English Education Program of Galuh University, Ciamis, West Java, Indonesia. Currently, he is pursuing his PhD in Postgraduate School of State University of Semarang majoring English education. His research interests include literature teaching pedagogy, literacy studies, EFL teacher training, and curriculum development. He is a member of ASIA TEFL and plays as board member of ASEAN Comparative Educational Research Network/ACER-N based in UKM, Malaysia. His articles have been presented in international conferences (*KOLITA, ASIA TEFL, BUU Thailand annual conference*), and published in *CELT* and *The English Teacher* (by MELTA). His email: iskhak.said@yahoo.com.

Mursid Saleh a Professor in English Department, Faculty of Languages and Arts, State University of Semarang, Indonesia. He earned his master's degree and PhD from Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. He can be reached at: mursids@hotmail.com.

Ahmad Sofwan is an English lecturer at English Department, Faculty of Languages and Arts, State University of Semarang, Indonesia. He received a bachelor's degree in English education from IKIP Yogyakarta and a master's degree and PhD in linguistics from La Trobe University, Australia. He is interested in Academic Writing, Pragmatics, Second Language Acquisition, Translating, and Interpreting. His research activities focus on English education and Second Language Acquisition. His articles were published in *Language Circle Journal, English Education Journal, and Humaniora Journal*. His email: sofwan1589@yahoo.com

Rudi Hartono is an English lecturer at English Department, Faculty of Languages and Arts, State University of Semarang, Indonesia, and he is currently the chair of the department. He received a bachelor's degree in linguistics from Padjadjaran University and a master's degree in English education from Indonesia University of Education in Bandung, and a PhD in Translation Studies from Sebelas Maret University in Surakarta, Indonesia. He is interested in Academic Writing, Translation Theories, and ICT in language teaching and learning. His research activities focus on literary translation and teaching translation. His articles were published in *Prosodi Journal, Language Circle Journal, English Education Journal, Arab World English Journal, and Thai TESOL Journal*. His email: rudy_fbsunnes@yahoo.com