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## HOW STUDENTS MAKE MEANING FROM LITERARY TEXT?

**ABSTRACT:** *This research was intended to explore how students make meaning whenever they read a literary text. It employed a qualitative method to find out how students responded to literary text in meaning making, type of responses produced by students after reading a literary text, and condition where students produced those responses. It was a case study involving seven students who were taking a course of Prose and their teacher. Classroom observation, questionnaire, and interview served as the data collection method. The result of this research indicated that students responded to literary text in making meaning through multiple reading with different purposes ranging from reading for gaining general idea, reading for learning from the text to reading for searching information. In addition, the way students read a literary text was through the continuum from aesthetic reading to efferent reading. The process of making meaning was demonstrated by most students through questioning about text itself and bringing the text to their lives. Students posed questions dealing with the element of story. Responses that students produced after reading a literary text was different, vary from restatement, associative, figurative, and emotional responses. Based on these findings, it is recommended for teachers that they should be explicit in stating their expectation on what students should achieve. Meanwhile, although students themselves who provide and choose literary text, they should select literary text based on their reading skills, in case of choosing the easy ones.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Meaning, reader response, literary text, aesthetic reading, efferent reading, and interaction of students and teachers in the classroom.*

### INTRODUCTION

Any text can be considered as literary text provided they are read as aesthetic objects by a number of readers. It is in line with what L.M. Rosenblatt (1991) says that texts become "literary" when they are chosen by a sufficient body or reader community to be read as aesthetic objects as opposed to documents. In other words, it is the reader who determines whether a piece of text is literature. Therefore, literature should be thought as literary evocation. Quoted L.M. Rosenblatt (1991), then, C. Cox and L. Many (1992:25) put forward that literary evocation is the process in which readers select out ideas, sensation, feelings, and images drawn from his past linguistics, literary, and life experience; and synthesizes them into a new experience. This literary evocation makes literature as expression of the personalities of readers. L.M. Rosenblatt (1978) and R.E. Probst (1990) quoted that all student's knowledge about

literary history, about authors and periods, and literary types will be so much useless baggage if he has not been led primarily to seek in literature a vital personal experience.

In turn, reading literary text requires highly involvement from reader. The more reader's attention is on the more personal lived-through evocation of literary work. In other words, the more aesthetic stance is the most appropriate when reading and interpreting literary text. It is the core of transactional theory from L.M. Rosenblatt (1978 and 1991) about transaction between reader and text. Besides, D. Bleich (1975:4) assumes that the role of personality in giving response is the most fundamental fact of criticism. Thus, there is no absolute response of a literary text rather there can be several probable responses, depending in part upon what the reader bring to the text.

The transaction between readers and text can only be done if classroom applies response-based-classroom; the task in teaching

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literature is to help students think, not to tell them what to think (Probst, 1998:16). J.W. Swope and E.H. Thompson (1986:75) also emphasize that teaching literature is aimed to help students to think actively about literary text. That is to engage students in active reading of text, to respond to and interact with it afterwards, and to explore meaning. It means that making meaning from reading literary text is dynamic, reflective, and interpretative process. It will come, in turn, to multiple responses among students and they tend to be more tolerant of multiple interpretation and they are better equipped to examine the arguments of others. In short, in response-based classroom, students become critical readers. Thus, making meaning in reading literary text can seem greatly interesting and challenging for EFL (English as Foreign Language) students (Alwasilah, 2001).

The main question of this research is: "How students make meaning from literary text?". The main question will be guided by following three questions: (1) How do students respond to literary text in making meaning?; (2) What responses do students produce after reading literary text in an attempt to make meaning?; and (3) In what condition are the responses produced?

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Reading based on transactional theory is defined as an event involving a particular reader and a particular text, happening at a particular time under particular circumstances in a particular social and culture setting, and as part of the ongoing life of the individual and the group (Rosenblatt, 1978; and Corcoran, 1987). The reader is active and the text only consists of marks on the page until the reader transacts with it. It means that meaning resides in the negotiation among readers in an interpretive community, not in the text, in authorial intention or in individual statement concerning that significant of text (Cox, 1999:268).

Furthermore, according to L.M. Rosenblatt (1978), although all reading occurs as experienced meaning, each reader assumes a stance or focuses his or her selective attention in different ways. Any text can be read more

aesthetically or more efferently. A reader moves back and forth on a continuum from aesthetic to efferent. During aesthetic reading, reader's focus is on his or her own "lived through" experience of reading event, or more private aspects. In other words, an aesthetic reading focuses on the association, feeling, attitudes and ideas that the text arouses in the reader.

During efferent reading, reader's focus is on the information he or she will take away from the text or more public aspects. Most readings involve a mixture of both stances, and a single reader may adopt a different stance toward the same text at different times and in different situations. Wolfgang Iser (1998:93) also conveys that the reader's communication with the text is dynamic process of self-correction, reader is always looking forward and backward at the same time.

Reading literary text, then, involves a great deal of critical thought, particularly characterized by the exploration of possibilities. This can be done by posing questions concerning issue on the literary text. Questioning is an effective tool which help readers make meaning of literary text by thinking about what is being read. Students posed questions when read literary text to what make them curious to know. Before reading, they use question to activate prior knowledge, make prediction.

During reading, students form questions to compare and generalize and clarify meaning. After they read, students use questioning to locate information, understand and remember events and characters, and identify theme. It can be regarded as a proof of transaction between readers and text. It is also supported by R.W. Beach and J.D. Marshall (1991:70) that more importantly it is a question that directs attention the transaction between readers and text and not simply to the text alone. In other words, it is such kind of aesthetic questions. Besides, J. Langer (1994) proposes that posing questions is treated as part of the literary experience as students themselves are regarded as envisionment builders.

Questions themselves often occurred in the second reading. It can be understood because

the first reading is generally uncritical (Pope & Woodlief, 2007). Plot or the reconstruction “what happens” is primary importance at this stage. Furthermore, they state that in second reading, readers are re-reading for questioning text. One way to make rereading more effective is to organize the specific questions that call for a comparison between the first and second reading. Reader will be asked to re-examine their position toward the story after second reading. They are also asked to speculate how closely they to the story through inferences, predictions, and connections. Mostly what makes respondents concerned is what is called as elements of story. It is parallel with J. Langan (2002a:611) who suggests that issue to discuss in literary text is element of story such as character, plot, and so on.

Another way that readers attempt to make meaning is through involving a text that they read to their own lives. In line with this, F. Palmer (1992) and M.R. Hancock (1992) assert that text to life connection is common in aesthetic transaction. This can be done throughout imagining what readers would do in character's place, try to understand characters in story, in term of how people would act in similar situation as if it is in the real world. In specifically, reader steps into the main character's shoes and relates what she/he imagines to the character's underlying emotions, feelings, and state of mind.

Literary experience also helps students understand the community in which they lived. It is in line with what D. Bleich (1975:48) states that at one side, individual's response to literature is subjective; and the other side, the process by which her/his response becomes a form of knowledge is determined by the community of interpreters, in this case in/out classroom, to which reader belongs. Furthermore, in specifically, students' expectations (Hancock, 1992; and Galda & Beach, 2001) to character in story influence their response to literary text.

For example, research has shown how readers have expectation for how people ought to behave, as readers treat characters as people regardless of the fact that they exist only in literary transaction; how readers become involved with characters, often comparing

character feeling, and action with their own or readers resist or reject a story which does not reflect their cultural expectation. Those are evidences for inter-textual connection that individual readers make between texts and their life experience.

However, it is very important to establish the purposes of reading. Because the different purposes of reading will lead to different modes of reading, in turn, to different criteria of evaluation of the “meaning” evoked. If the purpose is literary, the important think is that readers relate to the text and to one another (Rosenblatt, 1991:447). The different experience produced during their transaction with it or vice versa. The ability to adopt the stance on the continuum approach to their particular personal purposes and to the situation. In short, the ability to read both aesthetically and efferently. Meanwhile, Rabinowitz clarifies that when reading a piece of literary text for the first time, students are much more concerned with is called as reading of configuration, namely reading that seek to understand what will happen next (cited in Marshall *et al.*, 1995:126). It is done for gaining general idea from text that they read.

W. Grabe and F.L. Stoller (2002:13) express that in reading literary text, we read for learning from text. It is usually carried out at reading rate slower and done by connecting text information with background knowledge. For example, connecting a character, event to other character events. Besides, P.L. Carell and J.C. Eisterhold (1988:88) explain that in EFL (English as Foreign Language) context, readers emphasize more for learning from text that they read. Thus, in process of understanding both other culture and our own culture through reading a literary text, readers try to apply real world beyond the printed page. Meanwhile, in reading for searching information, we sometimes slow down to process the meaning of a sentence in searching of clues that might indicate the right chapter.

D. Bleich (1975) and J.W. Swope and E.H. Thompson (1986) assert that after students read a work of literature, they need to connect the literature to their own experience. The literature journal enables students to make these connections. There are 4 types of responses:

*First, Re-statement responses.* It is a text-based response. Readers have not analyzed the text in depth. It is like a retelling of the content. R. W. Beach and J.D. Marshall (1991:104) express that retelling as one of response activities assist students to sort out the most from the least relevant event, relate to understanding the point of text. For example, students focus on aspects related to the story conflict, then, by recalling these particular aspects, students lay the groundwork for further interpretation of the story. In addition, B. Corcoran (1987:204) states that retelling is a necessary part of formulating more sophisticated responses. Retelling also lets teachers know what has not been understood and it allows people to know how they feel about a literary text.

*Second, Emotional responses.* This response indicates readers' immediate feelings about literature. It allows readers to analyze and make sense of their subjective reactions.

*Third, Associative responses.* It clarifies readers to relate their experience of reading to some part of the readers' subconscious experiences. It also shows us that each individual rework a poem according to the demands of her/his personality at her or his personality at the time of reading.

*Fourth, Figurative responses.* This response asks readers to identify a feature that regarded important such as word, phrase, sentence, theme, character, etc; and attempt to identify why that feature attracted their attention.

Those type of responses develop throughout the literary competence. As defined by D.L. Spiegel (1998) and Safrina Noorman (2003) that the ability to read a text as a whole is to master of a set of conventions for reading a literary text. Furthermore, they state that readers' knowledge of convention allows readers to make sense of a literary text. Understanding literature depends on experience and mastery. Therefore, reading literature means making sense of ways we try to make sense of our lives (Spiegel, 1998; and Noorman, 2003).

Since reading regarded as a transaction between text and reader, it implies how the importance of reader's role in interpreting text. It means that it rejects the idea of fixed

meaning which inherent in every literary text. In other words, through a transaction with text, readers create his or her meaning based on personal association – their emotion, concern, life experience, and knowledge to their reading; then, each interpretation from each reader will be subjective and unique. In turn, it will influence to the position of text, students, and teacher in response-centered-classroom.

In term of position of students, students will think actively about literature, that is, to engage in active reading of the text, to respond to and interact with it afterwards, and to explore meaning through class discussion (Langan, 2002b). L.M. Rosenblatt (1978) and B. Corcoran (1987) regard that the literary process as a negotiation of meaning and the readers' role as a co-creator. Students should be made to feel that her/his own response to literary text is worth expressing, and then encourage students to develop their own interpretation and gain vision from other because there is more than one way to interpret any piece of literature. Students are not simply taking information when they read. Students will begin to make personal connection between literary text, their own lives, and the world. Students will read and develop their own responses to text.

In term of position of teacher, teacher is not a source of the standard interpretation of a text anymore. There is no one "right" answer or "correct" interpretation, the diverse responses among students are key to discovering the variety of possible meaning a text can evoke. It is in line with what C. Cox and L. Many (1992:32-33) emphasize that teacher should allow students opportunities to make choice about how they will organize their evocation of text. Besides, teachers also allow students to talk to themselves as well as to each others; it means that teacher should invite and encourage students to make personal and inter-textual connection. Those can be achieved through the instruction that played by teacher.

D. Bleich (1975:4) states that classroom also play role in term of how a classroom as a literary community can negotiate among students' responses. Responses to literary text can be enhanced through community in the classroom. In turn, it will lead to create a



democratic classroom. Finally, students who are schooled in response-centered-classroom where their responses to literature are valued in developing a sense of ownership, pride, and respect with regard to learning.

### **METHOD, RESPONDENTS, AND DATA COLLECTION**

This research used a qualitative method, because it searched to investigate how students respond to literary text. What type of responses that students produce and in what condition the responses are produced. It is in line with what S.B. Meriam (1991) and J. Maxwell (1996) emphasize that the focus of qualitative study is on process. This research also a case study as it was an examination of a specific phenomena. Yin, as quoted by S.B. Meriam (1991:10), defines case study as a design particularly suited to situation where it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variable from their context. It means this research was only an analysis of single social unit, namely the chosen students, in a certain period of time (Meriam, 1991:9). Relating to this research, it referred to students who took prose subject and their teacher. Therefore, a qualitative case study allowed me to explore what students experience when interacting with literary text.

The research also used of multiple sources for evidence such as data derived from questionnaire, observation, and interview (Alwasilah, 2002). In this research, I used detailed observation, questionnaire, and interviews to provide me a real picture of what was happening to students and a teacher.

In doing this research, I needed not only appropriate method but also appropriate respondents as key informants who were struggling for their prose assignment, and they were also able to reflect on and articulate their thought and experience in making meaning for the researcher what is going on. The selection of respondents was very important decision. I selected a small group of students for in-depth case study. Seven students were selected to form a purposeful sampling for providing important information that can't be gotten as well from other choices. J. Maxwell (1996:70-71) also states that purposeful sampling is

done to search people who are able to be informative, because they are expert in area or were privileged witnesses to an event.

Multiple data collection were employed in this research. There were observation, questionnaire, and interview.

*About Observation.* In this research, I positioned myself as participant, as observer, or observer-as-participant. It meant I participated in classroom interaction; however, my participation was not dominant as my role as an observer of teaching-learning process as what as observer as participant was suggested to do (Alwasilah, 2002:220). Observation was aimed to get authentic data on the actual activities that occurred in prose. During observation, I found students often wrote their response on journal toward stories that they had read before they did presentation in the classroom. Thus, students' response journal play as a part of observation data.

*About Questionnaire.* Questionnaire was intended to gain authentic data from students in form of written data. I used two form of questionnaires: open and closed questionnaire. The data from questionnaire were employed as a basic of the questions in the interview. Thus, questionnaire data were only used to cross check the answer from other data.

*About Interview.* I formulated interview questions into three parts. The first part addressed about the responding to reading short story. The second part identified responses that students produce. The last part concerned about the condition of teaching-learning process which made students produce the responses of literary text. By conducting this interview, it made me confident to get comparable data across subject.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The data were analyzed through the use of qualitative data analysis. I analyzed the data from observation including students' journal, the data from questionnaire, and the data from interview to seven students and one teacher. Those and other relevant document were read repeatedly. The data consists of analysis to answer research questions. The first is to describe how students respond to literary text; the second is to identify the type of responses

**Table 1:**  
 Responding to Literary Text

Responding to Literary Text	R#1	R#2	R#3	R#4	R#5	R#6	R#7	Total
1. Multiple reading with different purposes:								
a. Reading for general idea	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	7
b. Reading for learning from text	v	-	v	-	v	v	-	4
c. Reading for searching information	-	-	v	-	v	v	v	4
2. Questioning about story	v	-	v	v	v	v	v	6
3. Bringing text to life	v	v	v	v	v	v	-	6

that students produced; and the third is to investigate in what condition the responses are produced. Summaries the responding to literary text, as showed by respondents, are as follows.

**On the multiple reading with different purposes.** Students had multiple literary texts for reading. There are different purposes that emerging from respondents:

**First, Reading for general idea.** Research showed that readers were reading a literary text for the first time. They were much more concerned with what L.M. Rosenblatt (1978 and 1991) called that reading which seek to understand what will happen next as aesthetic reading. It focuses on what readers experience in the act of reading. While in what C.A. Purves (1993) calls it as reading for configuration.

R#4 (Respondent 4) stated that her first purpose whenever reading a short story was to achieve a general idea. She stated that *“Reading for the first time, I cannot imagine how the content of story is. Then, I read the whole story and understand where the plot is but I just understand and I have no expectation how all character should act”* (interview with R#4, 9/10/2012).

**Second, Reading for learning from text.** Some respondents admitted that they read short story for learning as a lesson. They seemed believe that story brought something useful for their own life. It is in line with what R.E. Probst (1990) said that a piece of literary text has moral lesson. R#6 (Respondent 6) admitted whenever she read a story to gain something useful for her life. *“Frankly speaking, I read story because I want to learn for knowing more the various characters in human life as story is a picture of daily life”* (interview with R#6, 11/10/2012).

**Third, Reading for searching information.**

Some respondents focus was on the information that she or he took from story. R#5 (Respondent 5) admitted that she slowed down to process the meaning of a sentence to get the right information. *“I read short story carefully to find out the right information what story means. It means firstly I translate words or foreign terms by looking up the dictionary”* (interview with R#5, 10/10/2012). It is in line with W. Grabe and F.L. Stoller (2002) idea that we sometimes slow down to process the meaning of a sentence. It is done to locate the information that might indicate what sentence means.

**On the Questioning about story.** Respondents posed questions to make them become involved to story. Besides, respondents had expectation relating to what character did. It is supported by Mellor and Petterson that how readers’ expectation for characters’ action influence their responses (cited in Galda & Beach, 2001:65).

R#4 (Respondent 4) experienced in questioning text. She was rather surprised and disappointed to the character’s attitude. *“I am surprised and disappointed to Ryan. He should be glad to have a wife who is smart. Because of his egoism, he is ashamed to his friends in the office that his wife has higher education than he has. Therefore, he doesn’t allow his wife to study again because the wife’s job is to take care household and children”* (interview with R#4, 9/10/2012).

Related to the end of story, respondents expressed their disappointment in term of how writers closed their stories, the resolution of plot. Besides, the way respondents interact with a literary text was influenced by their expectation to have happy ending. R#7 (Respondent 7) conveyed that although he

**Table 2:**  
Types of Students' Responses

	R#1	R#2	R#3	R#4	R#5	R#6	R#7	Total
1. Restatement responses	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	7
2. Associative responses	v	v	v	v	v	v	-	6
3. Figurative responses	v	v	v	v	v	v	-	6
4. Emotional responses	v	-	v	v	v	v	-	5

made a distance to text because he wanted to make text objective, he still had a question for text dealing with element of story such as plot especially in the part of resolution. "I am always interested to know how ending of this story is" (interview with R#7, 12/10/2012).

**On the Bringing text to life.** It means that readers step into characters' shoes, then, they relate what they imagine to be the character's underlying emotions, feeling, and state of mind (Cox & Many, 1992:30).

R#2 (Respondent 2) said that he tried to involve to story to make him concern and understand about story. It was done through tolerating what character did. "We cannot blame why A acts like that and B does because they have different reasons" (interview with R#2, 7/10/2012).

Meanwhile, R#3 (Respondent 3) conveyed that it was easier for her to understand story because her feeling was involved to story. Then, she sateted as follows:

*I am the sensitive one, my emotion always involves to story, I am so upset to Caren as she kicks the old lady who adopts her. I am glad to Caren when she dances by wearing the red shoes and I feel sad when Caren passed away. That's me, I always involve to what I watch like watching television. If there is a sad scene, I cry but if there is funny thing I laugh* (interview with R#3, 8/10/2012).

The majority of respondents demonstrated their responses toward what short story they had read. The responses ranged from text-based, respondent's personal feeling to what part of short story that respondents think, it is the most important.

**First, Re-statement responses.** All respondents used the retelling of the short story's content by using their own words as a first response to what short story they have already read. Bleich explained that re-

statement is a text-based response (cited by Noorman, 2003:268). The readers have not analyzed the text in depth. R#7 (Respondent 7) said in interview that "Readers want to know the content of short story, so when I share my story to my friends I just retell what the content of story is. Besides, the message of story as a human being, we have to be able to survive wherever we live" (interview with R#7, 12/10/2012).

**Second, Associative responses.** In this response, respondents related their reading experience to some part of the readers' subconscious experience. D. Bleich (1975:48) stated that associative response is the most complex and the most useful form in expressing feeling about literature. Readers rework a poem according to the demand of his personality at the time of reading. Respondents tried to become involve through such a way like becoming one of characters in the story. Story related to reader's own world (Langer, 1994; and Marshall *et al.*, 1995).

R#3 (Respondent 3) claimed that by involving through story, it made her understand story easily, feel symphaty to character of a story. In her journal, she wrote as follows:

*Reading this story, I feel like on the earth. It means Karen reminds me about parents' love. I can feel the same as Karen, so that I must change my attitude to make my parents proud of me. If I were Karen, I would love the old lady who adopts me. I won't make her hurt because of my egoism. I will obey her command. If I make mistakes, I'll beg her apologize, then I will try to forget all my dreams about the princess and willingness to using the red shoes. That old lady is the most important person for my life. This story also likes "Malin Kundang". He disobeys parents and get curse. Karen got died with her confession of sin, but "Malin Kundang" died with his sin to his mother* (interview with R#3, 8/10/2012).

It was obvious that association made reading literary text became meaningful for

students themselves. D.L. Spiegel (1998) pinpoints that making connection between what students have read to the world around them, it helps students to make sense to their own world. When students first begin responding, their responses are often somewhat superficial. Later, as they gain experience and trust in the process, their responses often become more reflective and show a greater depth of understanding.

R#4 (Respondent 4) asserted that although she has not experienced yet like character experiences in story, she could get lesson that story made her realized to her existence in the world. She inserted the famous proverb to support her reason why she wrote like that. She said then as follows:

*The story reminds me that in real life I cannot close my eyes to the people surrounded me. Sometimes, I asked myself why life is so hard to pass. On one side, I see people that lived in the wealth but on other side, I see people that lived in poverty. I aware that "God disposes, man purposes". It is normal, there are rich men and poor men and if that happens may be the balance of it will happen. This story makes me realize and thank fullness to God for His gift to me and reminds me to keep holding to God every time. Everywhere and whatever happened because everything lives because of HIM (interview with R#4, 9/10/2012).*

**Third, Figurative responses.** Each readers had a different sense of what "important" means for them. What one reader regards important is various. According to D. Bleich (1975:57), the importance of story is a result of importance to the reader. The subjective importance is the first matter to be determined, and the importance in the story is a secondary consideration. These sense of importance is showed in figurative responses.

R#2 (Respondent 2) explained that the plot of story was the most important for him. He claimed that he plot of story *The Adventure of Tom Sawyer* liked his own life. Furthermore, he wrote as follows:

*After I read this story, it reminds me to my own experience. I have experience whatever was done by the boy. The boy wanted to be a good boy, that want I experience now, being a good boy. He promised to free from bad things. However, finally he returns to be a bad boy after everyone lies him. In this case, because I myself have experience too, whoever wants to make the*

*life better, there must be supported by other elements such as friends, neighbor, etc. (interview with R#2, 7/10/2012).*

**Fourth, Emotional responses.** It clarifies readers' immediate feeling about literature. Readers treat characters as people regardless of the fact that they exist only in literary transaction, how readers become involved with characters, often comparing character feeling and action with their own, and how readers resist or reject a story which does not reflect their cultural expectation. Those are evidences for inter-textual connection that individual readers make between texts and their life experience. It was obvious that reader's emotional responses are essential to understand a text (Purves *et al.*, 1990a and 1990b).

R#5 (Respondent 5) expressed her feeling to a main character in the story *Three Hundred Pesos* as follows:

*I so hated to Anastacio as the main character of this story. Because he is stingy and greedy. He does not care to other's problem even his own sister's problem, but truly. I have ever felt like Anastacio. I don't know why. It is hard for me to lend money for my own friend eventhough at that time I had enough money to be lent. On the other side, I like Anastacio. I like his working hard, his willing to be succeed and make his dream become the fact, have his own store (interview with R#5, 10/10/2012).*

Later, R#5 analyzed her own position toward story whether she liked Anastacio or not, then she noted that:

*Thus, I can see the positive and negative side of Anastacio. I really feel sorry to the end of Anastacio's life. He did not beg an apologize to his brother and sister of what he has done to them many times ago. I hope it does not occur to my life and I think Anastacio's death is too easy, because he passed away without getting the suffering as well as his brother and sister got (interview with R#5, 10/10/2012).*

**About Condition where the responses are produced.** The response-based-classroom occurs in the certain condition of classroom. D. Bleich (1975) claims that responses to the text can be enhanced through community in the classroom.



**Table 3:**  
The Condition of Classroom

	R#1	R#2	R#3	R#4	R#5	R#6	R#7	Total
1. A classroom where students' talk is dominant	v	v	v	-	v	v	v	6
2. A classroom where non threatening atmosphere	v	v	-	v	v	-	v	5
3. A classroom where multiple interpretation is accepted	v	-	v	v	-	v	-	4
4. A classroom where cooperative work between teacher and students occurs	-	v	v	v	-	v	-	4

**First, A classroom where students' talk is dominant.** J. Langer (1994:208) explained that one of guidelines of literary instruction is to encourage students to speak to one another, to explore possibilities, and develop understanding one another. R#6 (Respondent 6) admitted that *"For the first time I take the benefit of discussion. During discussion we find differences among friends and we can solve it, the lecture does not involve at all. She really plays as a good facilitator"* (interview with R#6, 11/10/2012).

Students time talking occurred in small group discussion. R.W. Beach and J.D. Marshall (1991:58-59) asserted that small group discussion allows each participants to have more opportunities to speak. Students are not dependent on the teacher to guide them, they become accountable to themselves. R#2 (Respondent 2) noted what he got from small group discussion. *"The teacher asked us to hold a small group discussion. There, we can express our opinion and develop our imagination where the plot of story will go"* (interview with R#2, 7/10/2012).

It was in line with what teacher expected. Through interview, R#5 (Respondent 5) explained the objective to make a small group discussion as follows:

*There are some objectives of forming small group. First, it is one of learning activities in classroom in order to make prose not boring. Second, through grouping, students discuss, learn each other, share ideas, and I am sure that they will understand text more than if they learn by themselves. Third, through discussion, they encourage to develop their thinking activities and it will develop their critical thinking. Fourth, it gives opportunities to in-active students for participating as they are more ready to share in small group discussion (interview with R#5, 10/10/2012).*

The condition is accordance with what L.M. Rosenblatt (1978 and 1991) said that classroom situation and the relationship with the teacher should create a feeling of security. Class must become a comfortable and non combative place.

**Second, A classroom where non-threatening atmosphere is created.** The classroom situation and the relationship with teacher should create a feeling of security. It is important to run response-centered classroom. In line with this, R.E. Probst (1990:25) called as receptivity. Teachers have to establish an atmosphere in which students feel secure to respond openly. R#1 (Respondent 1) said that *"I am not scared to ask something if I don't understand. If other lessons, I am ashamed because my vocabulary is limited. Indeed, I am not scared when my friend in my group ask me to speak in front of class"* (interview with R#1, 6/10/2012).

**Third, A classroom where multiple interpretation is accepted.** Leaving room for possible interpretation is a heart of critical thinking in literature (Langer, 1994:204). Students learn to see themselves as readers. Instead of relying on a teacher of a standard interpretation of text, students also learn to construct their own meaning by connecting the text to issues in their lives. Besides, through interacting in groups, students move beyond their initial reaction to take into multiplicity interpretation. R#3 (Respondent 3) noted, *"The teacher does not give us the limitation whatever our responses, so she gives us a room for exploring our understanding"* (interview with R#3, 8/10/2012).

However, giving freedom for expressing whatever students' response made some of students confused to decide which one was more acceptable for each responses.

Furthermore, R#1 (Respondent 1) stated, “*Teacher never says whether our response is right or wrong. Whatever our responses, she will say it is good. Therefore, all responses are regarded as a good response. It makes me confused*” (interview with R#1, 6/10/2012).

It is obvious that teacher should also be explicit in stating her instruction and her expectation to avoid students’ confusing. Teacher seemed to take for granted that students understand to what she expected and asked.

**Fourth, A classroom where cooperative work between teacher and students occurs.** Teacher who joined the class as another reader like themselves made them encourage to participate in learning activity. R#3 (Respondent 3) explained, “*Teacher as a friend in learning makes me comfortable and I have spirit in learning Prose and if we hold discussion she sometimes poses a question*” (interview with R#3, 8/10/2012).

Teacher had a decisive role to make students become an active reader. Starting from giving some guiding questions in some meeting, posing some aesthetic questions, making small group, giving help if needed, putting herself as a member of classroom. R#4 (Respondent 4) expressed her high appreciation to teacher’s attitude when conducting teaching learning process, as follows:

*Every student has to give response to what story that we have read and during discussion we learn to appreciate our classmates’ responses. She is different from other teacher in term of giving opinion and input. When we have different ideas with her, she accepts it and then she conveys her opinion. So, she is more open-minded. I think she is the best teacher, the first teacher who can receive feedback from students* (interview with R#4, 9/10/2012).

## CONCLUSION

Students responded to literary text in making meaning through multiple reading with different purposes. *First*, they read short story for gaining general idea. *Second*, they read short story for learning from text itself and the last, they read short story for searching information. In term of how they read short story, they demonstrated by continuum between aesthetic reading to efferent reading.

In addition, during reading a literary text, they also posed questions about text itself. To make literary text easy to understand, they brought the text to their own lives.

Students produced different kind of responses in making meaning. The responses themselves are ranging from re-statement, associative, figurative to emotional responses. All respondents produced associative as well as figurative responses. The associative responses were produced through bringing the literary text to their lives. However, the difference sense of what most importance of literary text, in figurative responses, was varying among most respondents. Expressing feeling as one way to make meaning presented by some respondents in emotional responses.

The classroom condition which enables students to produce literary text as described by respondents are: classroom where students’ time talking was dominant, non-threatening atmosphere was created, multiple interpretation was accepted, and students-teacher’ cooperation occurred. In applying response-based classroom, although students themselves are meaning makers, teacher had a decisive role in helping students to make meaning from literary text. This involves selecting texts, welcoming any responses, and creating a conducive classroom.

Based on the research results, there are two suggestions, especially for teachers as well as for students related to this study, as follows:

**First, suggestion for teachers:** regarding to teacher’s instruction, teacher should be explicit in stating his/her expectation what students should achieve in writing their response journal. It is needed because not all students understand what teacher expects. Teacher also needs to set his/her own interpretation as a guidance to keep students’ response journal still on the right tract, in case of avoiding students’ confusing. In addition, it is important for teacher to encourage students’ personal to improve their ability in constructing meaning. In term of giving guiding questions, it should be given at earlier meeting because teachers’ knowledge is an asset and it should share with students in the proportional scope.

**Second, suggestion for students:** in selecting a literary text, although students themselves

who provide and choose it, they should consider it in term of the degree of difficulties. It is done to avoid some students who choose the easy one. Since responses is resulted not only based on students' personality but also as a result of students' community, it will be better if students hold group discussion outside classroom from improving their own responses before presenting in the classroom discussion.

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**Interaction of Students and Teacher in the Indonesian Context**  
(Source: ASPENSI Album Photo, 9/10/2012)

Students produced different kind of responses in making meaning. The responses themselves are ranging from restatement, associative, figurative to emotional responses. All respondents produced associative as well as figurative responses.