

# Promoting Students' Multicultural Awareness through Debate

Saiful Batubara<sup>1</sup> and Irpan Apandi Batubara<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara, Medan*

<sup>2</sup>*Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al Washliyah, Medan*

Keywords: Multicultural Awareness, Debate.

Abstract: Debate has been familiar to students in Medan. At least, 10 competitions are held in Medan every year since 2014. Debate Competitions involved students from inter-institutions. The competitions create interaction among students (debaters) from different institutions. Furthermore, the motions that released in debate competitions are also debatable upon minority and majority perspective (social and humanity motion). Therefore, debate not only remains interaction among debaters, its social motion, but also contains the matter of multiculturalism. This qualitative study is aimed at analyzing the effect of advanced interaction among the debaters. The subject of the study is debaters from Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al Washliyah, Medan Debaters Forum and Universitas Sumatera Utara. The study found that the students' attention on multiculturalism has been managed. The existence of understanding in their interactions is a form of awareness among them. Other than that, the motion of multiculturalism constitutes one of the topics that is always chosen by the debate committee as the debating topic.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian national motto, “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” which means “Unity in Diversity” is enough to explain how society in Indonesia consists of hundred of races and is multicultural. This study brings the case of diversity in education and introduces a multicultural education that developed in recent 4 years in Indonesia (Rachmawati, Yi-fong and Chen, 2014). The necessity of multicultural education in Indonesia is a hot issue nowadays because of the chaos that happened recently in the country. The problem with the multicultural awareness was assumed one of the causes; therefore, promoting it to students is very important to be implemented. Do the students even ever pay attention to multiculturalism? Content integration is one of the dimensions of multicultural education (Banks, 1995). Content here deals with the material development that is implemented at school. It is not fair merely to blame the handbook writers related to some books that still segmented to certain matter in exemplifying a case study because actually teachers have role in developing the material for the course such as giving more example or presenting the newest data. Debate makes students know more about minority case.

Empowering school culture and social culture is another dimension of multicultural education (Banks, 1995). How school design a program where all students from all backgrounds may join. Debate is a sound reason for establishing school community that concerns with practicing their public speaking and critical thinking potential. Debate community open doors for any university students who are willing to improve their skills.

Both reasons led this study to the basic assumption that the potentiality of indicating the element of multicultural education in debating practice is proper to investigate. Promoting multicultural awareness could be postulated as an initial step in growing students awareness, and debate is one of the educational elements that supports the platform.

English Language Teaching is moving to the next level today. The availability of teaching resources has brought a significant way on how students learn English. More than just learning English as a language, practicing debate allow students to practice their speaking ability beyond standard competency. Indeed, debaters are usually the highflyers in their public speaking class.

A debater can play his or her role as researcher, reader, writer, speaker and critical thinker. Case building is the activity to build an acceptable case to the house of debate; therefore, debaters are required to research all the data and fact for their analysis. In searching for accurate information, debaters must have good reading ability to get the point of resources they can refer such as book, journal, newspaper, and internet resources. Debaters must play good writing ability to construct their opinion on debate book. To win the case, speaking ability is highly considered because it represents how debaters convince people. Critical thinking is prominent to make their analysis acceptable even when the opponents rebut and give some point of information to their arguments.

As a technique of teaching, debate has been noted since 481 B.C (Freely and Steinberg, 2005). As a dynamic learning activities, debate is preferable because students learn more effectively by actively analyzing, discussing, and applying content in meaningful ways rather than by passively absorbing information (Bonwell and Eison, 1991); therefore, students benefit when instructors utilize instructional strategies that promote active engagement. Bonwell and Eison define active learning as “anything that involves students doing things and thinking about the things they are doing” also supports the spirit in debate; moreover, Meyers and Jones (Meyers and Jones, 1993) define active learning as anything that “provides opportunities for students to talk and listen, read, write, and reflect as they approach course content” where all activities are part of a debate. So, students learn best when applying what they are learning and that teachers need to use a variety of instructional strategies since students learn in different ways.

Debate has become familiar with many students in many universities in all around Indonesia, including in North Sumatra. The existence of World Universities Debating Championships is the proof of the trend of debate globally. Most countries send their delegation to compete in that prestigious championship. However, this research focused on how debate can be one of the ways of promoting multicultural awareness.

Why debate? A simple debate is a discussion about a matter on which people have different views (Collins, 2003). Furthermore, debate is a formal discussion usually found in a parliament or institution, in which people express different opinions about a particular subject. Different views from different people are very potential to happen in the classroom. The different view is derived from the result of people research about a matter. The global

matter is possible to correspond to multi cultural issues. Research references that a person referred to is potential to be different from another one. In practice, the ability to read comprehensively as well as to write structurally could also result different opinion. At last, to convince people about one’s opinion, he/she must justify the case.

Now, specializing the case is needed to do. We focus on who are involved in debate activity and what motions they debate. As this study is aimed at promoting multicultural awareness in education fields through debate, the existence of debate in education will be discussed too.

## 2 METHOD

The study applied qualitative method with debaters from Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al Washliyah (UMN), Medan Debaters Forum (MDF) and Universitas Sumatera Utara (USU) as the subject of the study. The debaters are members of UMN Chamber of Debate (UMN CODE), USU Society for debating (USD), and MDF members. The instruments of research was designed to identify the content of the debates and the advanced interaction among debaters.

## 3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The UMN Chamber of Debate (UMN CODE) is the community for English debating at Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al Washliyah, The USU Society for Debating (USD) is the community of debating in University of Sumatera Utara, and Medan Debaters Forum is the community for debate enthusiasts in Medan. These three Communities contribute to this study in case of identifying the motions (contents) of the debate and the advanced interactions among debaters.

As one of the dimensions of multicultural education, content of lesson is prominent in promoting the multicultural awareness to the students. In 2017, there have been six competitions that the debaters from the communities join. The content they debate (motions) covers some motions relating to multiculturalism. The related motions to multiculturalism i.e

Table 1: Motions of Debate.

No.	Motion	Content Integration
1	This house believes that development aid should be made conditional on poor countries aggressively pursuing population control in the pursuit of promoting development	Rich Vs Poor
2	This house believes that governments of conservative societies should financially incentivize men to be house-husbands	Conservative Vs Modern
3	This house would give automatically grant refugees citizenship; if the conflict they are escaping from continues for an equal amount of time it takes for a person to acquire citizenship in the sheltering nation	International Citizenship
4	This house would make labour union membership mandatory	Vocational union
5	This house believes that the state should pay reparations to homosexuals after it recognises marriage equality	LGBT as a global issue
6	This house believes that states should not allow individuals with dual citizenship to vote in either of their national elections, unless they give up one of their citizenship status	Dual Citizenship
7	This house believes that Western governments should cease their efforts to universalise liberal values	Liberal Vs Conventional

Debating is no longer a conventional class of speech as we do in English Teaching i.e practicing a speech delivery. The public speaking tools is here to elaborate students' critical argument about broader content (matter). The content of debate that is called motion turns students to be familiar to a various kinds of motions. It focuses now on the content that supports the multicultural awareness. The students debate about poor countries which build their awareness about the existence of poor and rich in detail. The debate on conservative society has promoted to them to understand how they justify modern people. Further from discussion on local society, students are also aware about the

circumstance of refugees who look for shelter in a new country as international concern.

The issue of gender and LGBT are also in the list of students' concern. They debate about homosexual marriage so that they must justify how normal couple marriage in society is. In addition, the international citizenship is more complex in their mind after debating the issue of dual citizenship. Then, students are aware that multicultural issue is not segmented to races or ethnics. They now comprehend the life of people with double citizenship in certain countries in the world. The western and eastern culture is also inside their horizon because they also debate the liberal values.

The results now show how debate involved students in a multicultural discussion. Students' views on multiculturalism change because the implementation of multicultural awareness through the content happens there. They now open to themselves for sharing and contributing their idea to debating partners who are from different cultural background.

Besides the contents, the community empowerment also indicates a multicultural element in education. Besides delivering the content, debate also delivers students to a community where they can express their idea and where they are accepted as a critical thinker without any further cultural term and condition. The study indicated several advanced activities among debaters after the competitions. The form of advanced activities are listed in the following table.

Table 2: Form of Advanced Activities amongst Debaters.

No	Advanced Activities	Form of Empowering Multicultural Awareness
1	Sparing Partner	Debaters from UMN CODE, USD, and MDF practice debating together
2	UMN CODE Recruiting a Chinese mentor	UMN CODE with Islamic institution background recruited a Chinese debate coach who is an alumni of USD
3	One panel with friends from different institution in adjudication	Debaters from the three institutions work together as adjudicators
4	Hangout together	Debaters from three communities hangout together in their leisure times.

5	Being good friend in social media and real life	Debaters from the three communities makes friend in real life as well as social media as good friends.
6	Joining voluntary programs	Debaters from UMN CODE and USD joined voluntary programs that were conducted by MDF

Universitas Muslim Nusantara (UMN), the background of UMN CODE, as an Islamic based university is dominated by moslem students. USU, the basecamp of USD, has been a place for students from all around Indonesia with much more various ethnical background. MDF members are from different institution and ethnical background. However, they can collaborate in one spirit of proliferating debate in Medan. The data at least indicate that the debaters are aware about multicultural matter now. Therefore, they can accept every single person in their community by respecting everybody background.

It is something where multicultural awareness grows in Medan in which students from Islamic-based university join together in a sparing partner debate practice with students from other universities who are different culturally with them. Even, it is not a normal situation when Chinese students hang out together with non-Chinese one, but debate bring something different. They go to movie together and they bring the name of North Sumatra together in nation-wide competition.

Debaters from different cultural backgrounds also work together in a team work in a voluntary program. Debaters from UMN CODE and USD participate as voluntary adjudicators in the competition that was conducted by the MDF. More than that, they also contribute in debate seminar and debate proliferation program in Medan.

When the students' cultural awareness is the ideal situation, the result of this study has showed that the awareness grows in debaters' community. The idea of promoting it through debate is reasonable. The existence of "Unity in Diversity" is not only a motto if the next generation is aware about the diversity itself. The integration of English teaching and debate is undeniable nowadays. A sustainable English language teaching is the one that can bring students to a better life. A multicultural education has been there for years even though some students of religious school (i.e Islamic or Christian-based) did not directly

involve. Debate content as well as debate community has brought something new to students' life.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

Debate which has been familiar with students in Medan is potential to promote the issue of multiculturalism. The multicultural awareness is initiated by the matter or the motion that the students debate because the issue of minority and majority society is one of the most important matters in debate. The content that the students discuss includes the issue of citizenship, western culture, conservative society, and other motions that support the idea of multiculturalism. The contents that the students debate has brought a multicultural awareness. Indeed, the interactions of students who join several debate competitions are not only while they were competing but also when they interact further in real life.

## REFERENCES

- Banks, J.A. 1995. *Multicultural education: Historical development, dimensions, & practice*. New York: Macmillan
- Bonwel, and Eison. (1991). *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom*. Washington DC: Jossey-Bass.
- Freely, A., & Steinberg, D. (2005). *Argumentation and Debate: Critical Thinking for Reasoned Decision Making*. Belmont: Wadsworth.
- Meyers, C., & Jones, T. (1993). *Promoting Active Learning: Strategy for College Classroom*. San Francisco: Jsey-Bass.
- Racmawati, Y., Pai, Y.F., & Chen, H. H. (2014). *The Necessity of Multicultural Education in Indonesia*. International Journal of Education and Research Vol 2 No.8.