

# APPLYING DEBATE METHOD IN EFL CLASSROOM

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**Abstract:** *Tulisan ini berfokus pada penerapan metode Debat didalam kelas bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing. Metode yang diterapkan lebih bertujuan untuk memberi kompetensi linguistik daripada pengetahuan tentang debat itu sendiri. Karena tidak ada metode terbaik yang cocok untuk semua situasi belajar, metode ini dapat menjadi alternatif dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggris. Para ahli mendefinisikan metode ini sebagai metode belajar bahasa Inggris aktif. Hal ini dikarenakan metode ini benar-benar melibatkan seluruh siswa dalam situasi belajar. Metode ini menawarkan siswa untuk bekerja dan mengerti dengan lebih baik sendiri, menjadi lebih independen, bergerak, dan berfikir dengan keras namun menyenangkan. Ini sangat penting karena memberikan siswa kemampuan bahasa Inggris yang beraneka ragam, seperti mendengarkan, berbicara, mengambil catatan, berfikir kritis dan sebagainya. Untuk tingkatan lanjutan, metode Debat dapat menjadi pemicu yang baik bagi siswa untuk memiliki kemampuan membaca bahasa Inggris yang lebih baik karena metode ini memotivasi siswa untuk membaca lebih banyak literatur dan sumber untuk mendapatkan lebih banyak referensi bagi alasan terhadap argumen dalam kelas Debat. Beberapa ahli yang lain mendefinisikan metode Debat sebagai metode inovatif. Metode tersebut inovatif karena metode ini berkembang dari metode diskusi. Untuk membuat diskusi tradisional lebih bermakna (meaningful), Debat merupakan pilihan yang baik dan layak untuk dicoba.*

**Keyword:** *Metode Debat, Belajar Aktif, Belajar Inovatif*

## A. BACKGROUND

The progress of EFL teaching and learning has emerged from the traditional ways to the communicative ones. This means the English language is learned for the purpose of communication. By using communicative approach, learners are

hoped to be able to communicate in English in their daily life in real situation or context. This condition insists a learning process to be stressed on the communication (use) instead of knowledge about the language itself (usage). However, in many schools and higher institutions, the communicative philosophy is not accompanied by communicative method and techniques. This condition happens because many of the teachers still use the old paradigm in teaching EFL. Suyatno (2009: 7) stated that the old paradigm could be indicated as follow:

1. Teacher is only a teacher (not educator), the source of any knowledge who seems to know everything.
2. School are bound with the schedule.
3. Learning is limited to the curriculum.
4. The learning is merely based on facts, the content, and theories.
5. Memorizing is the priority.
6. The one-kind or similar treatment to every student.
7. Learning in the classroom as the focus
8. Computer is as seen as the object not media.
9. The dominance of using static media
10. The use of limited communication.
11. The use of only normative scoring.

Furthermore, he also explained the new paradigm of learning which should be applied in education in general. Especially to teach EFL, this paradigm should be the basis of teaching and learning. The new paradigm is:

1. Applying “learning”, not “teaching”.
2. Seeing teacher as facilitator, not instructor.
3. Seeing students as subject not object.
4. Using multimedia, not mono-media.
5. Being humanism.
6. The learning is inductive, not deductive.
7. Using meaningful material, not memorable.
8. Having students active participation, not passive ones.

These new paradigm indicators are very important to achieve successful learning because the old paradigm is moving out to the new one which makes the learning innovative. Learning innovatively is very useful to EFL teacher and learner. When the teachers are innovative, the learning process will be more fun and meaningful to the students. Here are some principles of innovative learning:

1. *Student center.* The students are not the subject of the learning anymore. Instead, they become the subject of the learning itself.
2. *Problem basis.* The learning must be based on the problems. The problems to discuss are the actual, authentic, relevant, and meaningful to the students.
3. *Integrated.* The learning should be integrated to other disciplines. The learning cannot focus on only the material regardless any disciplines that come to follow. Since language are integrated, In EFL learning, the learning cannot focus on only one skill.
4. *Society basis.* The learning should see the condition of the society. It is very important to notice the condition of the society because the knowledge got from the learning would be implemented in the society. If the learning is based on the society development, the learners will be easy to implement the knowledge.
5. *Give choices.* The learning should give choices to students. It is because students have their own skills an characteristic. Learning should give varieties of options to the students which means by using multiple methods to accommodate students' interest.
6. *Systematic.* A systematic learning will be seen from the output of the learning itself. When learning is systematic, it will be easy to measure so that the evaluation and follow up done well.

7. *Sustainable*. Learning cannot be limited to the school, classroom, and formal teaching hour only. This learning should be a never ending process.

For the background which has been explained above. An innovative learning is a certain thing to do. Therefore, teachers are insisted to be innovative to teach. EFL teachers are hoped to seek, try, and apply the most effective methods to teach in the classroom. Based on the principles of innovative learning, EFL teachers can try Debate method to teach English.

## **B. DISCUSSION**

### **1. DEBATE METHOD**

Debate method is the method that allows students to express their arguments. Unlike discussion which focuses on solving problems together and to find the solutions of certain problems, Debate cleaves the class into two separated or contradictive arguments. This forces the students to compete, defend, and clarify their arguments with the opposite arguments in the class. They should stick on their arguments that they have built although the arguments are contradictive to their personal opinions.

Debate has named variously by expert. Some of them say that debate is active method of learning. Some others say that debate is part of innovative method. Silberman (1996: 141) asserts Debate as an active method of learning, it means that all students could be involved in the debate. He also clarifies that it is a valuable method to improve students' thinking, especially students who are expected to deliver their points nevertheless they actually do not agree with the topics. Active debate, if conducted with good procedure, will create an enthusiastic atmosphere among the students because everyone will be encouraged to utter their thought, do rebuttals, and state the confirmation arguments.

In rhythm with Silberman's theory, Suyatno (2009:70) added that Debate method as part of innovative learning. It is

innovative because it is extremely suitable with the principles of innovative learning. Debate focuses on the students as the subjects. The students are the ones who choose the topics, find the arguments, find proofs, and present their opinions to their then so called opponents. This is what innovative learning expert call “student center”. What the students will debate about is called topic or resolution, or motion which are basically problems. These problems will be solved together in the form of debate. These activities are called “problem based” activities. This method also promotes an integrated learning because the students will learn many English skills such as listening, speaking, note taking, critical thinking, and reading. The learners will also debate about current issues or social issues which are set to be debatable. These kinds of issues are also related to what happened in the society. Therefore the learning is a “society based” learning. Furthermore This Debate method gives choices to the learners. The learners are not only encouraged to speak up, but also to sharpen their other English skills. If they are good at critical thinking, they can share their thought to their teams. If they are good at note taking, they can work hand in hand to conclude and summarize the overall results of the debate. When the debate is done systematically, the output of this method will be very beneficial to the students. It will give them advanced benefits of the debate. For example they will be aware with the society’s phenomenon and problems. The learner will be able to think critically for the development of themselves. the learners will be accustomed to read a lot because to find the arguments, the students need to read a lot of literatures like newspaper, magazine, articles, etc. this is important to broaden their knowledge and understanding about the topics they are going to debate. This hopefully will be a sustainable learning, as learners will consider reading as the habit.

Furthermore, Krieger (2005) declares the debate as an excellent activities because the students will engage to various cognitive and linguistic ways. it means that the students will learn

to think, understand, elaborate their thought as well as to utter or to express what they feel or what they have already observed. He adds that these integrated activities will provide meaningful listening, speaking and writing process. Debate is highly effective for developing argumentation skills for persuasive speech and writing. Debate needs a lot of practice. It is important to gain maximum benefits of the method. Davidson (1996 in Krieger) says: “*with practice many students show obvious progress in their ability to express and defend ideas in debate (and) they often quickly recognize the flaws in each other’s arguments*”. In debate, the learners will brainstorm for the ideas. Relating to ideas used in the debate, Nisbett (2003: 210 in Krieger) states: “*debate is important educational tool for learning analytic thinking skills and forcing self-conscious reflection on the validity of one’s idea*”. From various researches it is found that debate Method is beneficial to learners confidence in delivering speeches and expressing opinions. Fukuda (2003, cited from Krieger) explained:

Before the debate only 30.8% of the students were not afraid of expressing their opinions when they were not the same as others’. After the debate this figure rose to 57.7%. the knowledge or skills which come from the practice in the debates led the students to become more accustomed to expressing opinions.

These facts indicate that Debate method is very significant to help improve many areas of students’ skills. They are ranging from cognitive to linguistic sides. When being applied with good structure, this debate can help develop learners’ listening, speaking, writing, developing arguments, analytical thinking, as well as improving students’ confidence for public speaking.

## **2. DEBATE PROCEDURES**

In general, Debate method requires students to divide themselves into two separate groups consisting positive and negative side. A speaker of a group will deliver their discussion

result or thought. Then another speaker of the other side will give comments and oppose the opinion.

According to WolfWikies (2011) Debate involves students selecting and researching an issue, then presenting their positions on the issue. The debate ends with each side summing their positions and panel determining a winner. Note that this activity requires teacher pre-select materials for debate team members to use or carefully review materials being used by students.

To end the debate, it is not necessary to announce the winner. Nevertheless, discussion after a heated debate is needed. This is important to meet understanding between the groups. The way is to place students face to face, the pro and con teams.

Silberman (1996: 142) emphasizes that topics are given randomly. The topics should be those that are controversial which is related to students' ability and lessons. About the division of the students, he also suggested the class is divided into two up to four sub-debate teams, in order every class member can be actively involved in the debate. Here are detailed procedures based on Silberman:

1. Arrange a statement containing ideas about controversial issues on students' ability.
2. Divide students into two debate teams. Assign them on the position of "pro" or "con" randomly. Divide again the students into several sub-debate teams. Dobson (1981: 65) suggests that teacher should select an equal number of students depending on the total number of students.
3. Place two to four seats for the represented speakers of the team. The seats have to be placed face to face.
4. Place the other students at the back of each position and the speakers while they are waiting their turn to perform.

X			X
X			X
X			X
X	PRO	CON	X

*Picture 1. Debate method seats arrangement.*

5. After all students listen to opening arguments, stop the debate and ask the students to return to their own team and give them time to discuss. After that the teacher assigns the students to get back to the seat, it is better to have different representative each sub debate team.
6. Instruct the students to give counter arguments toward the previous one's. Make sure that the students do it at intervals. The other students are asked to take notes on the debate. Dobson (1981: 64) added that they can speak from notes, but not reading the arguments in three minute limits each speaker.
7. In a considerable time, stop the debate to allow a discussion after the debate. In addition according to Dobson (1981: 65), debate can be stopped End the debate when the subject is exhausted or if the students get involved in heat argument.

### **C. DEBATABLE TOPICS.**

The choice of debate topics is very essential to guarantee the learners are debating something they really know about. This is important because if the students understand the topics, they will be easier to get the hints to find the materials. Talking about materials, EFL teachers need to prepare the right materials for the debate. It is suggested that the teacher prepare bring some materials like texts, newspaper, magazines, etc. Teacher can also



allow the students find the materials of the debate through the internet. Based on Dobson (1981: 65) here are some debate topics or statements suitable for classroom debate, note that the teachers can find the topics which are more suitable to the learners background, culture, and the current issues circulating in the learner's societies. The suggested topics are:

1. Childhood is the happiest time of life.
2. It is better to marry when you are very young.
3. Men should do some of the house work to help their wives.
4. No family should have more than 2 children.
5. Television does more harm than good.
6. Mothers who work outside the home neglect their children.
7. The younger generation knows best.
8. Women should be allowed to enter any profession they choose.
9. Money is the most important thing in life.
10. The educational system should be reformed.
11. Examinations are unnecessary.
12. Travel is the best education.
13. Living in the city is better than living in the country.
14. Dangerous sport should be prohibited.
15. Books, plays, and films should be censored.
16. Fashion contributes much to the society.
17. A universal language is possible

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

There are actually many ways to promote active and innovative learning. One of the ways is through Debate method. As has been explained above, Debate method has been proven to be an active as well as innovative method that offers activeness of the students. This method is seen to be successful because it can encourage almost all learners in the class to be involved actively in the learning. Based on the EFL experts, this method cover

almost all English skills like listening, speaking, note taking, expressing arguments, etc. In an advanced level, debate will trigger reading habits because in conveying arguments, learners should first seek and find the right arguments through reading. These overall activities will optimistically create an innovation in learning.

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