

ANALYSIS OF THE ARABIC LANGUAGE DEBATE STRATEGY IN THE ASIAN PARLIAMENTARY FORMAT FOR DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS WITHIN THE DEBATE COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Arabic language debate strategy in the Asian Parliamentary format for developing critical thinking skills within the debate community. Using qualitative methods with thematic analysis, data were collected through interviews, documentation, and observation. The results show that participation in the Arabic language debate in the Asian Parliamentary format can enhance skills in argument analysis, evidence evaluation, and the construction of logical and structured arguments. Moreover, debates also play a crucial role in improving Arabic language skills such as vocabulary enhancement and public speaking. Debates help participants understand complex issues and think logically and systematically. Therefore, this debate strategy has proven effective in developing critical thinking and language skills within the debate community.

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INTRODUCTION

In the modern 21st century, advancements in technology and knowledge are increasingly sophisticated. The progress of a country can be measured by the quality of its human resources, which are produced through quality education. Education plays a vital role in improving the condition of a nation by guiding individuals to discover and develop their potential through relevant and disciplined learning processes (Syafitri et al., 2021). Education teaches many

competencies, and individuals are guided to master them so they can face various challenges in the future and compete in different aspects of life.

Critical thinking education encourages students to discuss and resolve surrounding issues boldly (Fikri & Munfarida, 2023). Many learning styles are nurtured through structured activities, one of which is debate. The skills gained through education in debate include critical thinking. Critical thinking is the ability to guide someone to think correctly and accurately determine something (Fahrurrozi, 2021). This ability can be developed through relevant activities. A critical thinker does not readily accept information but rather analyzes phenomena and seeks valid data sources. They do not immediately accept existing realities but can articulate the truth. One activity that can develop critical thinking skills is debate. The debate method is a highly effective tool for training critical thinking, presenting ideas, and logically concluding information.

Arabic debate is one method that teaches four skills in learning Arabic, such as "*maharah kalam*," "*maharah qira'ah*," "*maharah kitabah*," and "*maharah istima'*." Besides, Arabic debates also train critical thinking skills (Cinganotto in Nasir et al., 2021). As part of the debate learning strategy, critical thinking skills help convey ideas and produce confident and critical students. Prior research noted that debate had many positive and effective influences. A debater can listen and respond to phenomena at both national and international levels.

Despite the many benefits gained from the Arabic Language Debate in the Asian Parliamentary format, the researcher found several issues within the UiTM debate community. These issues emerged during the practice process, revealed through interview results, documentation, and observation sessions with debaters and debate coaches. The problems faced by the debate community include limited practice time and busy schedules, the inability to think analytically, and inadequate Arabic language skills. Consequently, the researcher concluded that these issues make it difficult for debaters to find time to practice, there is a lack of discussion and research culture among students, and not all debaters have the highest level of fluency in Arabic.

Generally, two debate models are very popular today and are used in debates at various levels, both nationally and internationally. This research aims to analyze the development of critical thinking skills through the Arabic Language Debate Strategy in the Asian Parliamentary format by the debate community at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Malaysia. The UiTM debate community has participated in competitions domestically and internationally. Furthermore, this debate community has won many awards through various events. They have also successfully represented Malaysia in the 7th International University Debating Championship in Qatar from May 24-30, 2024.

Many previous studies have discussed the analysis of the Asian Parliamentary debate strategy in various countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Qatar, and Turkey. However, most of the findings focused only on the influence of foreign language learning, such as Arabic or English. There is little research focused on developing critical thinking through the Asian Parliamentary debate strategy model. Therefore, this research focuses on critical thinking as it is essential to provide information about relevant and influential methods for

developing critical thinking skills. The results can also be used by educational institutions to apply appropriate learning models to develop critical thinking skills. Thus, the objective of this research is to analyze the Arabic Language Debate Strategy in the Asian Parliamentary format for developing critical thinking skills within the debate community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Arabic Language Debate in the Asian Parliamentary format is very popular among students in this era. This debate format significantly influences the development of critical thinking skills, information analysis, and the emergence of relevant ideas. Therefore, to focus this research on the research problem and produce new data, the researcher needs to review previous literature related to the research title.

Various previous studies have examined the impact of debate on developing critical thinking skills, particularly in the educational context. Zulaikha and Setyowati (2021) emphasized the importance of debate training to improve critical thinking skills among English teachers. This study showed that through debate techniques, teachers could increase their productivity in both oral and written forms. Although this study contributes to understanding how debate can be used as a tool to develop critical thinking skills, it is limited to the context of teachers and does not focus on students, which may affect the generalization of the study results.

Meanwhile, Hikam (2020) in his analysis of the use of interactive PowerPoint media in debate teaching among students of MA Sirajul Ulum highlighted how technology can facilitate the learning process and enhance critical thinking skills. This study used a qualitative approach and showed that using interactive media in debates could facilitate students in discussions and develop their critical thinking skills. However, this study focused only on one school and one type of interactive media, which might limit our understanding of the effects of other technologies or in different educational contexts.

In a more recent study by Muslihasari and Oktiningrum (2023), they examined the use of mind maps in debates as a tool to enhance argumentation skills among PGSD students. This study found that debate techniques with mind maps significantly increased students' courage in expressing their ideas and their ability to analyze phenomena critically. This study adds a new dimension to our understanding of effective teaching methods, but its approach, which is limited to one technique, may not reflect the full potential of other debate techniques.

Research on the application of debate in the educational context shows significant results in developing critical thinking and argumentation skills. Muslihasari and Oktiningrum (2023) discussed the use of mind mapping in debates to enhance argumentation skills among students of the Primary School Teacher Education Program (PGSD). This study used a classroom action research method with 25 students as subjects. Data were collected through observation, interviews, questionnaires, and field notes and analyzed qualitatively. The results showed that the application of debates with mind mapping improved students' argumentation skills, with 68% of students in the good category, 22% sufficient, and 10% less. This study

highlights the positive impact of debate in enhancing students' courage in presenting ideas, analyzing phenomena, and concluding information effectively.

Furthermore, Anqa' Woldan (2023) examined how the implementation of Qatar debate strategies affected students' critical thinking skills. This study used a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Data were collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and pre- and post-tests and analyzed using descriptive analysis and inferential statistics. The results showed a significant increase in students' critical thinking skills, with pre-test scores initially at 45.13%, rising to 82.63% in the post-test. However, the study also identified challenges faced by students, both internally, such as time management and understanding the role of the speaker, and externally, such as lack of motivation and educational facilities. This study demonstrates that debate strategies, when applied effectively, can overcome some of these obstacles.

In another study by Sholikhah, Syahab, and Eriyanti (2022), the impact of online-based English Parliament debate training on critical thinking and argumentation skills among English Language Education students at STKIP PGRI Jombang was studied. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and document analysis, then analyzed using thematic analysis. The results showed that debate training and mentoring programs yielded positive results, especially in improving students' willingness to speak publicly and strengthening their logic and argumentation skills. The main indicator of this success was the high student involvement in the training activities, reflecting their interest in developing speaking and critical thinking skills.

Overall, these studies show that debate with various methods has great potential in improving critical thinking and argumentation skills among students. Each study emphasizes the importance of structured approaches in debate training and how applying specific techniques can significantly enhance students' cognitive abilities. However, each study also acknowledges challenges that need to be addressed, both in terms of technical implementation and the motivation and external support for students.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach because this method can help in understanding phenomena, situations, and information (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Data were then generated through several structured elements regarding the Asian Parliamentary debate strategy in developing participants' critical thinking skills. Essentially, the case study method in qualitative research aims to focus on specific events within the Arabic debate community in detail and in-depth. The data collection techniques used by the researcher consisted of interviews, documentation, and observation. The researcher then processed the research data by presenting the findings through these data collection techniques. The collected data were then analyzed using thematic analysis.

Interviews

The purpose of these interviews was to obtain more in-depth information from experienced respondents. The researcher stated that data were obtained through structured interviews with several related respondents. The interviews were conducted with six debaters residing on the university campus. The debaters were students from different faculties with extensive experience in debate at UiTM. The researcher also interviewed two Arabic debate coaches who were references and directors of the Arabic Debate community at UiTM. The interviews were conducted over one hour.

Observation

The researcher directly observed the Arabic debate training activities at UiTM. The debate training was held in classrooms. This training was usually conducted once or twice a week. Through this observation, the researcher found it easier to get a deeper understanding of the debate process and the strategies used to develop foreign language and critical thinking skills.

Documentation

The researcher collected various documents related to the Arabic Debate community at UiTM, such as photos during training, video recordings, debate materials, and participant notes, as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Debate Training at UiTM, taken by author on 27th July 2024

Data Analysis

This study used thematic analysis to process research findings. The stages the researcher went through in this thematic analysis were:

1. Understanding the data through repeated audio or video recordings of interviews with participants from the debate community. The researcher had to review the data multiple times to ensure validity.
2. Organizing codes or determining subjects contained in the interview transcripts; these

codes could be likened to open descriptions of what was explained in the data collection technique.

3. Searching for themes relevant to the research objectives; these themes would represent something important in the data related to the research problem formulation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected by the researcher through data collection techniques were then analyzed using a qualitative approach with thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is one way to analyze data to identify patterns or themes through the data collected by the researcher (Heriyanto, 2018). Based on the thematic analysis, five (5) main themes emerged, consisting of: (1) factors influencing the forms and implementation of debates; (2) forms of parliamentary debates; (3) Asian parliamentary format in Arabic language debates; (4) stages of building a strong argument in the Asian parliamentary format; and (5) strategies to improve critical thinking skills and Arabic language proficiency.

Factors influencing the forms and implementation of debates

In this discussion, the researcher explains that debates take various forms and are often conducted by various parties, including students and other professionals. The differences in the forms and implementations of debates are influenced by the factors present in the activities. These factors are discussed below.

1. Debate Candidates

Generally, candidate debates often occur in society; these debates are not based on competitions held at universities, but rather they are activities to assess the eligibility of groups or individuals who will later be expected to lead and govern an area, such as the debates organized by the KPU (General Election Commission) between legislative, presidential, and vice-presidential candidates. These debates are also frequently conducted in other educational institutions.

2. Competitive Debates

The fundamental difference in competitive debates is that they do not aim to make policy decisions but rather to develop certain skills among participants, such as critical thinking skills: the ability to present logical, clear, and factual arguments, foreign language skills, listening, and the ability to write ideas or arguments and refute issues that are not factually based on clear data sources. However, over time, a format change has occurred in competitive debates, which are now often formal and parliamentary in nature. This change is where the term parliamentary debate originated, becoming one of the most popular competitive debate models today, especially for academics.

Forms of parliamentary debates

In this era, the parliamentary format has spread to many countries, but the most popular are the two formats commonly used in international competitions, as follows:

a) Asian Parliamentary

The Asian Parliamentary debate model evolved from the Australs debate format, commonly used in Asia-level competitions. There are only slight differences between the Asian and Australs debate formats, such as allowing rebuttals from the first to the sixth minute.

b) British Parliamentary

The British Parliamentary debate style is usually popular for debates conducted in English, but this format is also often used in various countries with their respective languages. In this format, there are four teams consisting of two participants per team, with two teams representing the Government (*al-hukumah*) and two representing the Opposition (*al-Mua'radah*). The difference between the British Parliamentary and Asian Parliamentary formats is the number of teams and participants involved in the competition. Below are illustrations (Figures 2 and 3) depicting the differences between the Asian and British Parliamentary formats based on their positions and the number of participants.

Opposition	Government
First Speaker	First Speaker
Second Speaker	Second Speaker
Third Speaker	Third Speaker

Figure 2: Asian Parliamentary

Government	Opposition
Prime Minister (PM)	Leader of the Opposition (LO)
Member of the Government MG)	Member of the opposition (MO)

Figure 3: British Parliamentary

Implementation of the Asian parliamentary format in Arabic language debates

Qatar debate is a competition that often hosts various tournaments participated in by schools and universities in Asian countries. A national selection is usually held first to determine the international representative, typically conducted in Qatar. Qatar Debate Center is part of the Qatar Foundation for Education, established in 2008, with the aim of fostering enthusiasm,

sharpening critical thinking skills, and training foreign language proficiency. In Arabic debates using the Asian Parliamentary format, each speaker in a team has their own role in presenting an argument based on the motion or debate theme.

Stages of building a strong argument in the Asian parliamentary format

There are three key stages in building a strong argument as discussed below.

1. Strengthening (التأكيد)

In this point, debaters must clarify the definition and intent of the argument presented, based on the issue or *qodhiyyah* given. Generally, this is just a reinforcing sentence.

2. Providing Reasons (التعليل)

After reinforcing the argument, it is usually followed by an explanation grounded in reasoning about a phenomenon. At this point, the speaker can articulate why the argument presented is more credible than the opponent's argument. It is even better if the speaker can link the previous arguments to the team's initial debate objectives.

3. Presenting Data and Facts (التدليل)

After the speaker strengthens the argument and provides logical reasoning, they should present data or facts based on field evidence, including the words of scientists or actions that have been proven true. Valid data sources will strengthen the speaker's argument and enhance the team's accuracy compared to the opponent's arguments.

Strategies to improve critical thinking skills and Arabic language proficiency

Critical thinking has two levels: low-level critical thinking and high-level critical thinking. To achieve high-level critical thinking, one must start from a lower level of thinking. This means that to achieve high-level critical thinking, it must be based on a foundation of lower-level thinking first. The steps to improve critical thinking skills require knowledge and understanding of the content of previous lessons. Critical thinking can develop if done intentionally and structured through the application of a student-centered learning model (Mahanal, 2019). This study highlights the influence of the Asian Parliamentary Arabic Language Debate Strategy on several aspects:

a) Arabic Language Learning

Arabic language debate training significantly impacts Arabic language learning as there are four skills that must be mastered: reading (*qira'ah*), writing (*kitabah*), listening (*istima'*), and

speaking (*kalam*). Arabic debates help participants enrich their vocabulary, increase their confidence in presenting arguments in public, and develop the ability to write critiques based on valid data sources.

According to interviews with Arabic debate coaches at Universiti Teknologi MARA, proficiency in Arabic is crucial for clearly presenting arguments to opponents. Debaters must also be able to listen to their opponents' arguments. Therefore, developing critical thinking skills through Arabic debates must begin with mastering the four Arabic language skills. Critical thinking can be achieved through continuous training.

The Arabic debate coaches at UiTM mentioned several activities conducted during training to improve the participants' Arabic proficiency:

1. Watching Arabic debate videos from Qatar on YouTube to train participants to become accustomed to listening (*istima'*) to terms commonly used in debates. Debaters were also asked to write (*kitabah*) what they heard from the debate videos, both in terms of arguments and rebuttals.
2. In addition to watching Arabic debate videos, debaters were encouraged to debate among themselves. Beforehand, the debate coaches provided them with motions or issues to debate. This was to familiarize them with presenting arguments based on valid data sources through speaking (*kalam*) skills. For writing (*kitabah*) skills, the coaches provided books or journals related to the debated motion for them to read at the end of the training session.

b) Development of Critical Thinking Skills

The Arabic debate coaches at Universiti Teknologi MARA stated that debaters who consistently participate in debate competitions develop better analytical skills, can conclude issues, provide strong data sources, evaluate arguments, and construct strong arguments. This is because the Arabic debate strategy provides a structured understanding of how to respond to various issues.

CONCLUSION

The researcher concluded that the Asian Parliamentary debate strategy in Arabic language debates within the UiTM debate community not only has a significant impact on improving participants' critical thinking skills but also positively impacts Arabic language proficiency. Therefore, this strategy can be used as a learning method in education to develop critical thinking skills and communication in Arabic. Overall, this study confirms that the Asian Parliamentary Arabic Language Debate strategy is not only effective in enhancing critical thinking skills but also positively impacts participants' language and analytical abilities. Therefore, debates can be considered an essential learning method in education to develop critical thinking and Arabic language skills.

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