



## The Development of Multicultural Discourse in the Historical Learning: A Case Study on Samudra University Langsa Aceh

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### **Abstract**

The research analyzed the efforts conducted in the domain of historical learning in a university, especially related to how the past memory influences the recent multicultural discourses. The method used in this research is qualitative descriptive analysis with case study approach. The research was divided into three parts: (1) collecting data, (2) analyzing data, and (3) reporting the results of the research. Subjects of the research were selected by using purposive sampling technique; they were the 4<sup>th</sup> semester students up to the 6<sup>th</sup> semester students of the History Education Department in Samudra University Langsa Aceh. The research resulted findings that conceptually the students had understood about the concept of multicultural. Nevertheless, multicultural discourse had not touched the context of locality. Historical learning was designed to develop and expand the students' multicultural discourse. The design of historical learning contains the learning strategy of ENACT, consisting of six stages: *apperception, exploration, narrowing, analyzing, creating* and *teaching*. Historical learning forms the students' multiculturalism discourse, built from a historical understanding and the dynamics of Acehese society. The students viewed that multicultural is a social condition, formed from historical process. Conflict understood by students as the dynamics which is inseparable from a multicultural society. However, the students considered that conflict caused many endless problems, therefore, the students' multicultural discourse tended to lead to peace condition.

**Keywords:** Historical learning; ENACT; multicultural

### **Introduction**

Acehese society consists of various ethnicities: Aceh is the majority ethnicity, Gayo, Alas, Aneuk Jamee, Tamiang, Simeulu, Kleut and ethnicities outside of the islands such as Javanese, Maduranese, Chinese, and other ethnicities (Wajdi, 2008). The ethnic diversity in Aceh was constructed by a historical process, resulting in a harmonious society and multicultural thought among the Acehese society (Van Leur, 2016; see also Lombard, 1991). The harmonious societies disrupted by Dutch and then New Order (Orde Baru) political system. Moreover, New Order government implemented military

operation area to deal with Aceh-Sumatera National Liberation Front (ASNLF) or *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (The Free Aceh Movement) (Misbach, 2012).

The historical process caused conflict and people's trauma that faded the multicultural values of Acehese society. In the Acehese perspective, history is not only past events, but history is present and united with the recent era (Abdullah, 1987). Consequently, history becomes an important part of discourse construction and debate on contemporary issues in the society (Gillis in Gillis, 1994). The impact of the people's trauma resulted in a potential of disharmony, leading to ethnicity and religiosity issues in the Acehese society (see Sulaiman in Mustafied, 2015). This condition is different from the ethnicity conflict of Nigeria which was triggered by a basic factor that was a political dilemma, especially related to the political policy making from the local government and the federal or state government (Jacob, R.I, 2014).

In the construction of the thought and discourses, historical memory is an important factor which is necessary to be paid attention in the dynamics of the Acehese society. The historical memory was socially constructed through transfer of information in public space and also in the education field (Abdullah, 1987). Most of peoples learnt and obtained historical knowledge from the elementary school up to the senior high school. The historical learning implemented in a university also participated in influencing and forming the historical memory of the Acehese society. Multicultural education, hence, ideally becomes a construction in the historical learning in Aceh.

The connection between multicultural and learning process had attracted the academicians' attention. Mayo and Larke (2011: 1-9) conveyed that it is important to develop a transformative multicultural education in a university, as a response to the globalization which urges a meeting among ethnicity, race, culture, and religiosity. Sasaki and Vorauer (2013: 246-259) concluded that multicultural triggered a positive attitude and behaviour on relations among groups. Najeemah Mohd Yusof, Anna Christina Abdullah, and Norlida Ahmad (2014) conveyed that the multicultural education and learning in a classroom is an important part in building a multicultural society. Classroom learning in the level of preschool plays a role in forming the students' consciousness on diversity. Therefore, the role of the learning in an educational institution has an important role in the formation of a multicultural society. This research analyzed the efforts conducted in the domain of historical learning, especially related to how the past memory influences the recent multicultural thought. This effort was conducted through a learning strategy of ENACT in the historical learning in Samudra Langsa University of Aceh. The focuses of the research analysis were the development of historical learning and the change in the students' multicultural discourse. The students' discourse has an important role to form a thought and discourse of peace among the students.

## **Method**

The method used in this research is qualitative descriptive analysis with case studies approach. The research was divided into three parts: (1) collecting data from interview, giving an open questionnaire and document, (2) data analysis by using the approach of critical discourse analysis, and (3) the reporting of the results of the research. The subjects of the research are the lecturers and the 4<sup>th</sup> semester students up to the 6<sup>th</sup> semester students of History Education Department in Samudra University Langsa Aceh. The subjects of the research were selected using the technique of purposive sampling with the criteria as follows: the students who showed a multicultural discourse during the learning process.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **The Students' Multicultural Discourse**

The students' discourse on multiculturalism was framed in the terms of: tolerance, diversity, peace, respecting difference, mutual interest, harmony, respect, honour, unity and conflict. It meant that conceptually, the students had understood the concept of multiculturalism. In the students' view, there was consciousness on the importance of relation among ethnicity, religiosity, and culture.

For the students, harmony resulted from cultural acceptance in the social life, was considered as an important factor that had an implication on the strength of national unity. In the students' perspective, harmony must be in line with tolerance. Harmony and tolerance is a base for multicultural society which urges the emergence of a peaceful society. The students conveyed that their perception on multiculturalism was built in the framework of the *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* ideology. Implicitly, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* grows an understanding to respect each other on the local traditions and cultures of other societies' ethnicities.

On the other side, the students were aware that the framework of multicultural has potential and obstacle if it is not managed well, that is, it causes conflict among ethnicities, among religiosity, and among cultural. The students understood that multicultural is closely related to conflict. The students conveyed that a multicultural society is difficult in generating a peaceful situation, except in a homogenous society. Therefore, the main obstacle of multiculturalism for the students is the potential of conflict in society.

Based on the students' discourse, multicultural had developed in the students' understanding as a part of their worldview in viewing the national life. The presence of the term '*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*' showed that the students understood multiculturalism in the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. The nature of multicultural society is rich in social and cultural values, and those values become a socio-capital power. Socio-cultural capital is useful to strengthen individual self-development, as well as to social groups to face the future, modernization and globalization (Tilaar, 2004). Nevertheless, multicultural discourse had not touched the context of Acehese multiculturalism discourse. The students seemed not touching the multicultural problem in the local level. Hence, the discourses developed in the students were still macro. The historical learning functions to relate the macro understanding and the understanding on multicultural history in Aceh, as well as to build an understanding on the networking collective memories between the dynamics of Indonesian history and the multicultural history of the Acehese society.

### **Multicultural Exploration**

The design framework of historical learning which was arranged by the lecturer contains a learning strategy of ENACT. The strategy of ENACT consists of four stages: *apperception*, *exploration*, *narrowing*, *analyzing*, *creating* and *teaching*. *Apperception* is a preliminary stage by conveying the objectives of a multicultural-based historical learning for a peaceful education. *Exploring* is a stage of finding historical data through tracing the primary source and library source on the dynamics of the Acehese multicultural society. In the stage of *narrowing*, the students take a special theme independently by selecting and organizing the historical data on the Acehese multiculturalism collected in groups during the stage of *exploring*. The stage of *analyzing* is conducted by the students by analyzing the special theme using the social theories and the causality approach to explain the phenomenon of Acehese multiculturalism. The next stage is *creating* that is the students find facts and argumentation on the

dynamics and history of the multicultural society in Aceh. In the stage of *teaching*, the students articulate their paperwork findings in front of a classroom discussion forum.

The principles of ENACT strategy in the historical learning are; (1) to build an understanding on *networking collective memories*, and (2) to grow *societal cohesion* among the students of different ethnicities and religiosities. Theoretically, ENACT learning strategy consists of two learning concepts: *zone of proximal development (ZPD)* and scaffolding. ZPD is an area to expand the learners' knowledge. Scaffolding is a process through which a teacher or a more competent learner helps other learners to solve the problems beyond their cognitive, affective and psychomotor levels. Learners should be encouraged to achieve ZPD as their cognitive development. In the ZPD, the distance among actual developmental level and potential developmental level can be enhanced through interaction with peer groups and interaction with adult to improve the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor competences (Schunk, 2012).

The learning outcome from the ENACT learning strategies is that the students understand the presence of values that they can learn implicitly, that is the growth of consciousness on *the networking collective memories* from their society. The consciousness of the networking collective memories reveals that recently, the self-existence of the students or the Acehnese society is a heritage of past harmonious memory. According to Grant Bage (1999), the learning of history has emphasis on encouraging the highest excellence of character, linking to life, linking us to our past, helping develop skills, and inspiring to greatness. Those functions of learning history are directed to explore networking collective memories (Joebagio in Garvey & Krug, 2015).

The exploration of networking collective memories will encourage inspiring to greatness. Deepening networking collective memories implicated on the formation of consciousness that in the past, Indonesian societies have built great socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-politic relations. Deepening past events grows self-respect, human brotherhood, social equality, security of life, becomes just, and becomes educated. Hence, the learning activities require an instructional design that produces an output quality which is appropriate to the learning objectives.

### ***The Development of Multicultural Discourse***

The students' knowledge on the multicultural dynamics, developed through the ENACT learning strategy. The development of knowledge can be viewed from the enrichment of multicultural discourse includes the enrichment of historical argumentation and an in depth analysis conducted by the students. The enrichment of multicultural discourse can be viewed from the students' Paperwork analyzed with critical discourse analysis approach.

The students' understanding on the multicultural society in the traditional kingdom era was built from the power and political bases of kingdom. Multiculturalism was viewed by the students as a *political will* of the Acehnese sultanate ruler in building interaction and relation with their own society or other countries. The *Political will*, in the perspective of Acehnese history, was developed by Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636) who built interaction and relation structures with outside world, in this case is the development of foreign trade. The students' understanding on multiculturalism in Aceh grew rapidly due to the presence of consensus.

The Acehnese multicultural society grew from the implication of the ruler's *political will* to build an Acehnese identity by giving recognition on the cultural ties of the societies, which were differed in ethnicity and religiosity. The cultural ties form a new social structure which was loyal to the local ruler at that time. One of discussion group members gave argumentation in the stage of *teaching* activity that the multicultural structure was due to: (1) communication among ethnicities, (2) a sense that they need each other, and (3) the development of trade.

The discourse of political will from the *sultanate* government was viewed by the students as a constant thing because the political will always undergoes a change depends on the vision of the ruler. When the political will undergoes a change, it must cause a hard situation, for example: conflict among ethnicities. Conceptually, the members of discussion group believed that the conflict among ethnicities will arise if the government and the ruler do not have a culturally plural polity.

The discourse of multiculturalism network in the *sultanate* era of Aceh Darussalam in the 17th – 18th centuries owned by the students was clearly elaborated in the chart below:

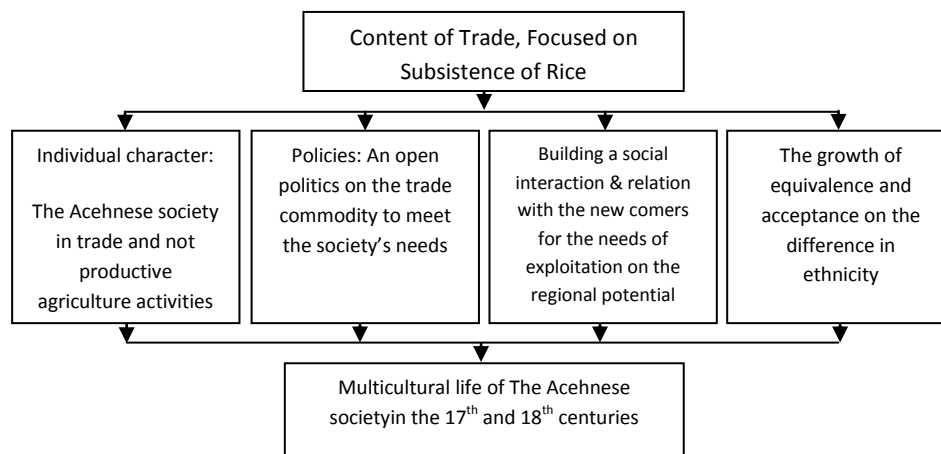


Fig. 1 Chart of multicultural discourse network in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries from the students

With the focus on the subsistence of rice above, the students must try to find interrelatedness between rice and the growth of a multicultural society. The activity is not easy because to find the interrelatedness, in the thought of Michael Foucault (2004), it must rearrange the historical pieces contained in the theme above.

In the periods of New Order and Post-Reform, the multicultural discourse owned by the students was closely related to conflict and peace. The students' discourse on peace in Aceh conveyed that conflict was resulted from the economical policy of New Order that exploited the natural resources of Aceh. The New Order government paid less attention to the local society, and on another side, the local society did not give opportunity to be involved in the exploration process of the economy activities. A deep disappointment resulted in the occurrence of intercultural struggle among the local elites and the national elites.

The students' discourse was limited on the problem of endless conflict and placed Aceh as *Daerah Operasi Militer* (Military Operation Area). This political condition was unhealthy because it formed the society's orientation on two political powers, they are: the government bloc and the opposition bloc. In the students' discourse, it was proposed that the endless conflict caused many problems faced by the Acehnese society, such as: (1) the occurrence of mental disorder in the Acehnese society; (2) the destruction of the leadership structure and the culture of Acehnese community or their custom system; (3) women faced a serious problem that was becoming a shield to protect their husband or their children by

becoming the sympathizers of *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (The Free Aceh Movement); (4) conflict isolated the society, therefore, they were not free to do social and economic activities.

The placement of multicultural strategy in learning history is metaphor for humanistic approach (Maslow, 1970). In this approach, the multicultural values are used to encourage the needs for togetherness (Schunk, 2012). In inter subjective interaction, the relations in the dialogue or discussion show that the learners feel that they need each other. The learning activities are held through a dialogue between learners, rests on equality and differences. Dialogues and discussions promote recognition of “private spaces” and “public spaces” (Supardan, 2015).

Dialogue between them develops virtue, includes moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Ryan & Lickona in Ryan & McLean, 1987). Psychologically, virtue is the core character to encourage social and cultural changes towards harmony and peace culture. Harmonious and peaceful society is not a necessity but it is a social reality that must be fought (Bertrand, 2012). In the dialogue, there are positive and negative comments in the dialogue. Comments are representation of the diversity that must be respected by every learner and teacher (Supardan, 2015).

The discourse of diversity in the historical learning encourages the learners to gain the freedom of thought (Baidhaw & Thoyibi, 2005). The consciousness of diversity indicates existence of universal human values, and those values grow along modernity (Hardiman, 2012). With consciousness of diversity, learners are able to overcome ethnocentrism problems, even they can show multicultural solidarity action that goes beyond the issues of race, religion, social class and culture. The relationship and interaction in the learning history activities build consciousness not to exploit, harm, and keep off intolerance.

Based on the analyses, historical learning formed the discourse which is built from the students' acceptance of the history of Aceh society. The students viewed that multicultural is a social condition formed from the historical process. The students viewed conflict as an inseparable part of the multicultural society. Nevertheless, the students considered that conflict causes many endless problems, so that the students' multicultural discourse tended to lead to peaceful condition.

## **Conclusion**

Multiculturalism had developed in the students' understanding as a part of their worldview in viewing the national life. Nevertheless, the multiculturalism discourse had not touched the context of the Aceh multiculturalism discourse. Therefore, the historical learning functions to relate the macro understanding and the understanding on the multicultural history in Aceh. The historical learning multicultural arranged by the lecturer consisted of the components of: planning, implementation and evaluation. The framework of historical learning design contains a learning strategy of ENACT. The strategy of ENACT consists of six stages: apperception, exploration, narrowing, analyzing, creating and teaching. The historical learning formed a discourse build by the historical understanding and the dynamics of the Aceh society. The students viewed that multicultural is a social condition formed from the historical process. The students viewed conflict as a part inseparable from the multicultural society. Nevertheless, the students considered that conflict causes many endless problems, so that the students' multicultural discourse tended to lead to a condition of peace.

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