

The Effect of Debate Activity in English Four Skills: The Students' Perspective

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In this 21st century, an integrative way to master four language skills is required. Debate is an activity which involves four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and enables students to practice skills properly. This study examines whether debate activity can lead to improve four language skills based on EFL students' experience. The participants were 121 university students in Indonesia from district I – XIV who participated in National University Debate Competition (NUDC) 2019. 97 students were debaters and 24 students were N1 adjudicators. They came from different faculties/majors, semester and year of a debate club member. The debate activity is taking on the British Parliamentary debate format. The data were gathered through a questionnaire and interview the students. The finding shows that the students feel their four-skills ability improved. Therefore, this study aims to propose instructions for teaching integrated four skills based on the students' debate training activity. Finally, this study is expected to contribute to the development of debate as a media in English Language Teaching.

Keywords: integrative four skill, debate, NUDC 2019, instruction for teaching

Di abad ke-21 ini, cara integratif untuk menguasai empat keterampilan bahasa diperlukan. Debat adalah kegiatan yang melibatkan empat keterampilan bahasa (mendengarkan, berbicara, membaca dan menulis) dan memungkinkan pemelajar untuk mempraktikkan keterampilan dengan benar. Studi ini meneliti apakah kegiatan debat dapat meningkatkan keterampilan bahasa berdasarkan pengalaman pemelajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing. Para pesertanya adalah 121 mahasiswa di Indonesia dari wilayah I - XIV yang berpartisipasi dalam Kompetisi Debat Universitas Nasional (NUDC) 2019. 97 mahasiswa adalah pendebat dan 24 siswa adalah juri N1. Mereka datang dari berbagai fakultas/jurusan, semester dan periode anggota klub debat. Aktivitas debat mengambil format debat Parlemen Inggris. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dan mewawancarai pemelajar. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pemelajar merasakan adanya peningkatan kemampuan empat keterampilan bahasa mereka. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengusulkan instruksi untuk mengajarkan empat keterampilan bahasa secara terintegrasi berdasarkan aktivitas pelatihan debat pemelajar. Akhirnya, penelitian ini diharapkan dapat berkontribusi pada pengembangan debat sebagai media di dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris.

INTRODUCTION

Innovation in teaching English continuously develop over the years, for example, structural language teaching turns to communicative language teaching. Communicative language teaching (CLT) focuses on giving students skills to communicate independently in any situation and context (Qalbi, 2016). The Objective of CLT is how to develop language skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading, writing and engage them with communicative teaching procedures (Tolla, 1996; Richard and Rogers in Qalbi, 2016). Thus, the attention of CLT is to prioritize the teaching of four language skills in an integrated way. An integrated language teaching is influenced by the communicative approach because it offers interactive language use in the classroom (Kumaravivelu, Krashen, Rost in Wicaksono, 2016). Therefore, it considers more efficient and effective way in increasing students' performance and participation. According to Brown, Chamot and O'malley (1994), one of the ways in teaching integrated four skills is using content-based instruction (CBI) which focuses on learning materials. Furthermore, the materials are arranged base on specific topics or theme-based (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992).

In line with the development of ELT, integration of teaching English especially four skills are also developing. This notion attracts the writers to introduce debate as a media in teaching integrated four language skills. In debating, the activities involve four language skills. Firstly, debaters read resources such as articles, news, literature, etc. to get information about issues. Furthermore, the resources can be the debate videos, pictures, and songs, therefore, it concerns as multimodality resources. Hence, those resources will help them to create arguments, analogy and building logic schema. Secondly, debaters should deliver opinions/argumentations in their speech. Along with the speech, other debaters must listen to the opponents' cases to offer a point of information (POI)/interruption or counter/rebut the case on their speech later on. Speaking and listening are automatically integrated while a debate is ongoing. Thirdly, debaters should write a re-case after getting constructive feedback from the trainers.

According to Freeley and Steinberg (2009) debate is the process of inquiry and advocacy, a way of arriving at a reasoned judgment on a proposition to reach a decision in their minds; alternatively, individuals or groups use it to bring others around to their way of thinking. Debate is a particular form of argument. It is not a way of reconciling differences – that is a misconception. Debate is a way of arbitrating between differences. The purpose of a debate is not for two disputing parties to leave the room in agreement. Instead, through the debate between them, others will form a judgment about which of the two to support (Smith, 2011). Besides, Budesheim and Lundquist (2000) argue that people will change their perspectives if they have to defend a viewpoint that is contrary to their original perspective.

Some of previous study has similar notion to this study for making debate as a tool of language learning in the English language class as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) (Morse, 2011; Alasmari and Ahmed, 2013; Zare and Othman, 2013; Aclan and Azis, 2015; Brown, 2015; Syaprizal, 2018). However, most research on the debate only focuses on improving speaking/communicative skills and other aspects such as critical and creative thinking, increasing competitive power, collaborative and learning motivation as well as the ability to analyze and solve problems. Meanwhile, this study offers students' perspective and eventually create the instructions for teaching integrated four skills base on the students' debate training. British Parliamentary format is applied for the debate training.

1.1. Debate Format

Morgan (2012: 4) says that there are many different styles of debating around the world, for example, the United States Parliamentary, Asian Parliamentary, Australian Parliamentary, and British Parliamentary or BP, for short. British Parliamentary is the standard form used at the university level. In 1994, the World Universities' Debating Council decided to adopt BP as the style for all future World championships (Smith, 2011). Therefore, Indonesia also adopts the format (RISTEKDIKTI, 2019). British Parliamentary (BP) debate grew out of the traditions of the United Kingdom parliament in Westminster and follows some of the conventions of the House of Commons. The debate is divided into government and opposition with opening and closing benches. There will be eight speeches, with every speaker getting equal time (7 Minutes 20 Seconds). Every speaker has slightly different role. Opponents can interrupt speeches with POI and it is around after 1 minute – 6 minutes signed by one clap.

<u>Opening Government</u>	<u>Opening Opposition</u>
☐ Prime Minister	☐ Leader of Opposition
☐ Deputy Prime Minister	☐ Deputy Leader of Opposition
<u>Closing Government</u>	<u>Closing Opposition</u>
☐ Government Member	☐ Opposition Member
☐ Government Whip	☐ Opposition Whip

Figure 1. British Parliamentary Format

METHODS

Research Design

This study used a qualitative design. Qualitative data analysis also is applied to discover and describe issues in the field or structures and processes in routines and practices (Flick, 2013:5). Qualitative data analysis can give a deeper explanation and insight finding because it facilitates exploration of a phenomenon and answer “how” and “why” questions as the case. This study reported information about the effect of debate activity in English four skills based on students' perspectives.

Setting and Participants

National University Debate Championship (NUDC) 2019 was followed by the best teams in each Region I to XIV (the teams had passed Region level selection) across Indonesia. The original number of participants in NUDC 2019 was 336 students which consisted of 224 students acted as debater and 112 students acted as N1 adjudicator. They had joined the debate club for less than 1 year to more than 2 years and their achievements started from regional to international

competitions. The participants also came from different majors (English, Law, Architecture, Psychology, Economy, etc.), 3rd-5th semester, and age (mostly 20 years old).

Data Collection Method

The data were collected by using a questionnaire on Google form platform and interviews. Only 121 participants filled and sent the questionnaire out of 336 students. They were 97 debaters and 24 N1 adjudicators. The interview involved 33 students as a representative from each region and some of them won debate competition and best speakers in main and novice categories. The questionnaire consists of 15 questions while the interview consists of 10 questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to explore the effect of debate activity in four language skills based on students’ perspective. The findings revealed that most of the students felt their skills are getting improve after active in debating. The perception results are:

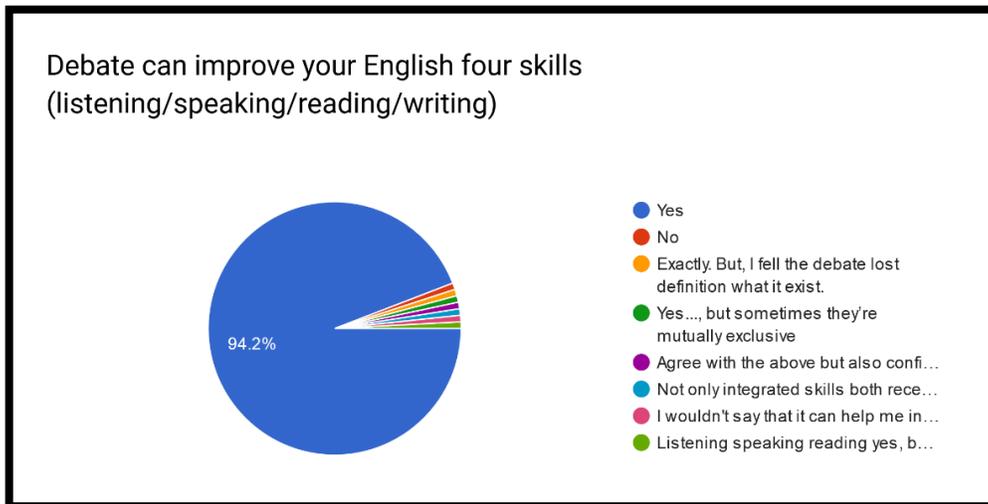


Figure 2. Students’ Perception in Four Skills

There are 114 students agreed that debate can improve their four language skills and others said that not only the skills but also confidence, enrich the knowledge and critical thinking. Unfortunately, two students said no improvement at all and one student said that speaking, listening, reading skills got improve while writing skill didn’t. Furthermore, he explained about the grammar and structure issues in writing.

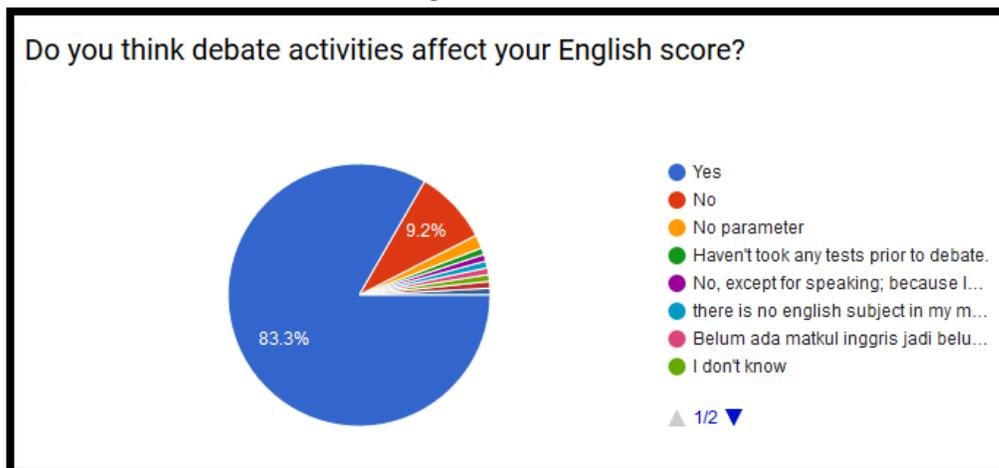


Figure 3. Students' English Score

The second is about their English test, it could be a general English classroom test or standardize test. 101 students agreed that debate activities affect their score while others doubted or haven't had a test before. They said before joined debate, their score range 60 up to 70 then finally the score range 80 up to 90 after joined the debate. One of them used to get straight E when learning English at the X institution course eventually he got the 2nd highest score at college. For students who took standardized tests, the IELTS band was from 7.5 to 8 and 6.5 to 8.5; the TOEFL score was from 450 to 600; TOIEC was from 500 to 875. Besides that, some students felt no difference because they got A score before and after having debate activity.

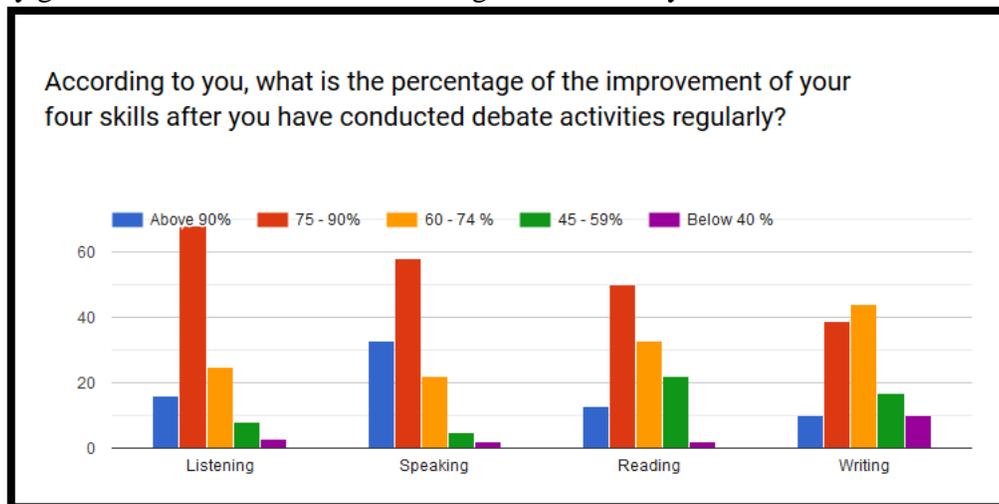


Figure 4. The Student Improvement Percentage of Four Skills

This figure shows that most of the students thought that listening, speaking, reading range improvement is 75% up to 90% while writing is 60% up to 74%. It is interesting to take a look at the above 90% range; the highest rate is on speaking skill while the lowest rate is writing skill. It is because speaking gets more exposure to practice and exercise in debate training activities than other skills, especially in writing. They stated that the debate trainers less pay attention to writing moreover some debate clubs didn't conduct writing activity on their training at all. Therefore, the speaking skill dominates other improvements; it relates to figure 5 below.

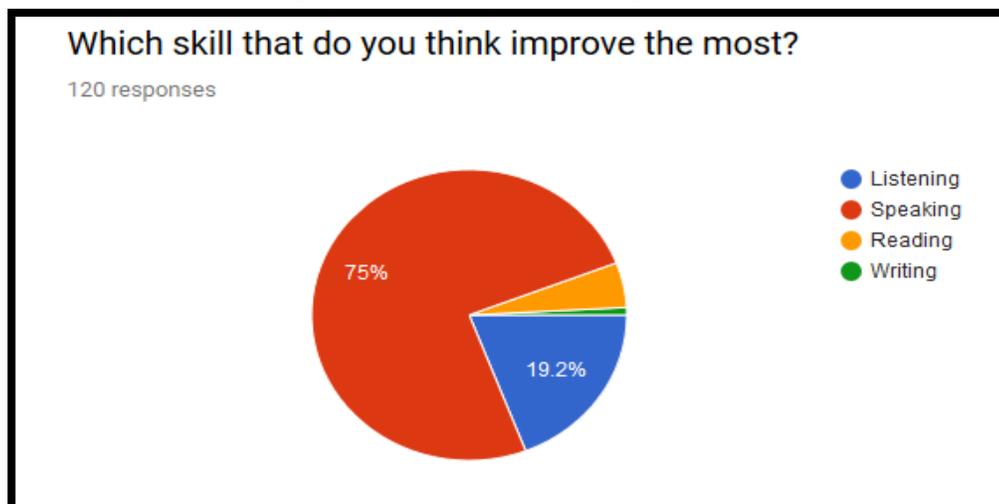
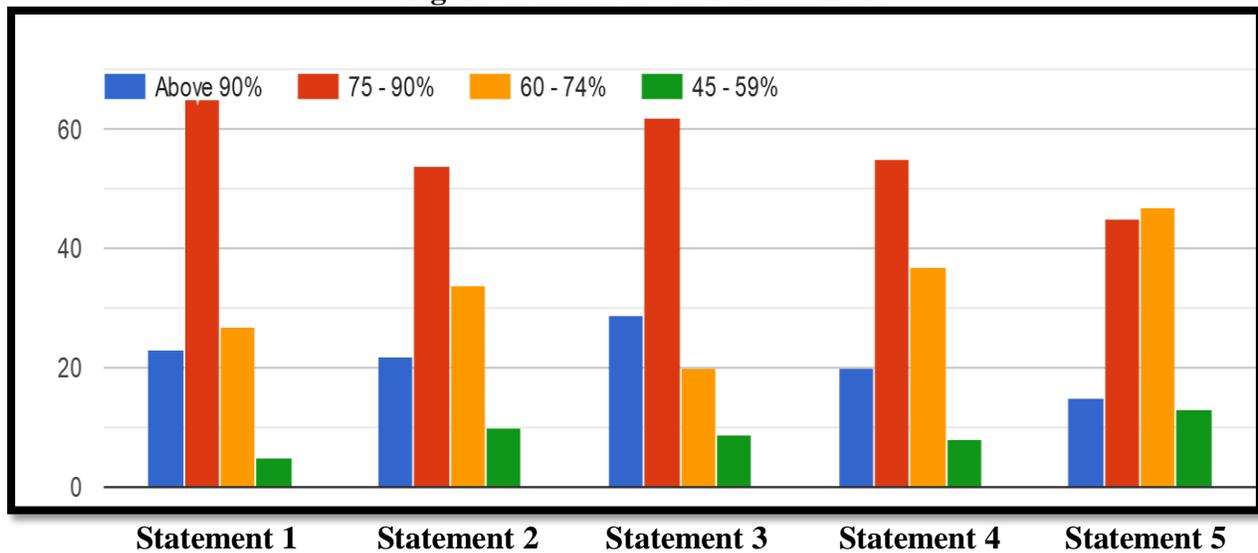


Figure 5. Students' Perception for the most improvement skill

In aligning figure 4, figure 5 shows that 91 students felt that speaking skill is the most improve while 23 students choose listening skill, 6 students choose reading skill, and 1 student choose writing skill. The students stated that speaking is the most important visible performance in the debate even it is closely happening also toward other three skills. Next, the students who acted as N1 adjudicators had a duty to listen to all debaters' speeches to make a decision on which team will win or lose the debate. Therefore, they used to practice their listening skill moreover most of the debaters speak very fast and fluently and it enables them to catch the information immediately and comprehensively. In reading, the students are motivated to read to expand their argumentations, therefore, it affects their literacy habit. Lastly, in writing, an introvert person who did not brave enough and comfortable to say the opinions properly, thus, the student delivered the notions into writing.

Figure 6. Students' Self-Assessment



To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the students' perspective, the students were provided a self-assessment section in the questionnaire. The self-assessment statements adopted from CEFRL (Common European Framework of Reference for Language) for C2 proficiency level; above 90% equals to strongly agree that they are at that levels to 45-59% equals to doubtful (unsure); they are: the first-row statement is for listening *"I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed"*. The second-row statement is for reading *"I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialize articles and literary works"*. The third-row is for speaking as interaction *"I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly"*. The fourth- row is for speaking as production *"I can present a clear, smoothly flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure"*. The fifth-row is for writing *"I can write clear, smoothly flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present*

a case with an effective logical structure". Most of the students thought that they agree (75-90%) for those statements, but in writing mediocre (60-74%). Furthermore, some students felt they strongly agree while others were unsure about it.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATION

These instructions for teaching integrated four skills below are mostly based on the debate training activities that the NUDC 2019 participants had. The debate training was conducted by using British Parliamentary Format. Some points are adjusted to the classroom condition such as giving teacher and students' roles, strategies, tasks and proficiency level issues. The significance of these instructions has not been done yet, therefore; it needs further research and investigation. Take a look at the table below to understand how debate activities run and the instructions as follows.

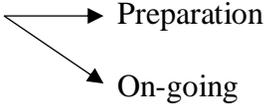
Input	Output
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Listening <div style="margin-left: 40px;">  </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking • Writing
To get the information	To deliver the information

Table 1. Conceptual Debate Activities Process

1. *Reading activity*, the teacher asks students to read books, articles, literature, news, current or international issues at home. At the first, the students can choose the reading texts that they want to read for example about the environment, economics, law, politic, health, psychology, etc. it helps the students to enrich the level of knowledge and enhance their reading habit. This activity is similar to the extensive reading activity. Secondly, the teacher encourages and directs the students to read more about the current issues in a specific discipline. The teacher can choose the topics which relate to the motion. In reading sources, the teacher also can teach highlighting the idea strategy to the students, especially in the digital literacy platform. Besides that, the teacher should provide debate videos for exercises in listening, so the students will use to listen to fast speech in debate. Both reading and listening debate videos are the basic input for students. It will help them to have background, urgency and strong stance in their case, so they can create logical justification for their argumentations. Eventually, the students gather the information, characterize the issues and discuss it in the classroom to have a collective knowledge.
2. *Speaking activity*. Speaking is the center of debate activity because it enables people to bring and deliver their opinions in their speech to the audiences. At first, students might talk under time (less than 6 minutes), slowly, and stutter. Therefore, the teacher should encourage the students to get used to speak up their opinions. Regular practice will help the students to improve and maintain their fluency/performance. The time constraints also affect the students to talk fluently as if they have built their argumentation very well. The teacher can assess students' accuracy, pronunciation, choice of words, relevancy and debate matter to build logical justification. The teacher should provide constructive feedback for students to get better

performance. Finally, this activity will encourage the students to overcome their fears then speak confidently and persuasively.

3. *Listening activity.* During the debate, the students are automatically listening to their opponents and team (on-going listening). They should listen to the opponents' proposal/argumentations, so they can respond by using rebuttals, interruption/point of information (POI) or answer POI directly. They also have to listen to their teammate argumentations, so they will not do repetition, against and irrelevant with the teammate's case. Along with the exposure, the students' listening skill might improve. Teachers should teach the strategy in listening such as to get the whole main points of the speech and not as pieces. In assessing, the teacher should focus on relevancy of the students' responses, answers the POI immediately, and comprehensible.
4. *Writing activity.* There are three conditions about writing in debate. *The first is preparation*, the students compose and organize the debate speech script before the debate. Teachers can teach how to write big points (mind mapping styles) or newspaper style (write the whole speech). *The second is on-going*, the students write notes while debate is still on-going. Teachers can teach notetaking strategy to comprehend the opponents' proposal/argumentations. The third is debate afterglow, the students write re-case as their report task. Before writing a re-case, the teacher should give constructive feedback and suggestions for the better argumentations and emphasize their accuracy in writing. Re-case activity is the starting point to create argumentative text, essay, and article. In this way, the students can master various writing styles.

CONCLUSIONS

Debate activity is one of the possible alternatives that can be used for teaching integrated four language skills communicatively, but it still lacks exposure compare to another way such as drama, technology, etc. This study shows a positive effect on students' language skills by conducting regular debate activities. Furthermore, to prove this perception, the instruction for the pedagogical implication has been made. It is expected for implementation in classroom teaching formally to have further justification for this perception.

The Author

Ira Atika Zahra finished her undergraduate study at University of Sumatera Utara and graduated with Bachelor of Arts in English Studies. Since then, she had experienced in teaching English for young learners, special needs, high/boarding school and university students. She is currently taking a postgraduate degree majoring in Linguistics at University of Indonesia, with Foreign Language teaching as the focus. Besides, she was a member of debate club, debate trainer, adjudicator and participated in several debate tournaments. Her research focuses on method, strategies, approach in English Language Teaching.

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APPENDIX 1

The NUDC Regions are as follows:

- a. Region I : 1. North Sumatera
- b. Region II : 2. South Sumatera, 3. Bangka Belitung, 4. Bengkulu, 5. Lampung
- c. Region III : 6. Jakarta
- d. Region IV : 7. West Java, 8. Banten
- e. Region V : 9. Yogyakarta
- f. Region VI : 10. Central Java
- g. Region VII : 11. East Java
- h. Region VIII : 12. East Nusa Tenggara, 13. West Nusa Tenggara, 14. Bali
- i. Region IX : 15. South Sulawesi, 16. North Sulawesi, 17. Central Sulawesi,
18. South East Sulawesi, 19. West Sulawesi, 20. Gorontalo
- j. Region X : 21. West Sumatera, 22. Riau, 23. Riau Islands, 24. Jambi
- k. Region XI : 25. South Kalimantan, 26. West Kalimantan, 27. Central Kalimantan,
28. East Kalimantan, 29. North Kalimantan
- l. Region XII : 30. Maluku, 31. North Maluku
- m. Region XIII : 32. Aceh
- n. Region XIV : 33. Papua, and 34. West Papua