

# **The Response of Indonesian Moslem University Students towards American Corner as the Product of Cultural Diplomacy**

(A Case Study on UPT American Corner UIN Walisongo Semarang)

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**Abstract**, in today's civilization, cultural diplomacy as a soft approach in constructing beneficial relationship has remarkably been developed within the international circumstances. In case of American government, the United States also focuses on developing educational services in form of library center as the direct product of its cultural diplomacy which one of them is the construction of American Corner. Aligned with the American Corner UIN Walisongo Semarang, to measure response of its users towards American Corner as the product of cultural diplomacy is interesting, particularly from the students point of view whose educational background has no relation with American Studies at all. This study applies a descriptive approach and quantitative method by distributing questionnaire towards 30 respondents. Theories used in this study are 'American Cultural Diplomacy Product' by Richard. T. Arndt and 'Leader Characteristics and Foreign Policy Performance' by Eugene R. Wittkopf. The data is presented in the form of tables and descriptive report. This study found that there is an ambiguity on the preference of Indonesian Moslem University Students towards the American cultural diplomacy product. Although they admit and realize with the political objectives of American Corner, they are still open to this political product since it brings beneficial features for their personal interests.

**Keywords:** *American Corner, cultural diplomacy, response*

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

In today's civilization, branding does matter since it relates to a reputation of something. In the context of international relation, branding is very important because it will lead cause and effect relation within the nationwide. In the United States, government determines the construction process of nation branding by the public diplomacy since it is a democratic country. The idea of cultural policy deals with the values of politics, ideas, educations, and ideals of American social construction and policy held by American people Marelman (1984: 243).

Cultural diplomacy is constructed in many ways which refer to the public policy that aims to build up a nation branding, and one of them is by educational approach (Richard: 1928: 243). One of them is by conducting services by packaging the cultural diplomacy in form of American Corner.

Previous study on the attitude towards services in American Corner has been done by Ana Afida. However, the study does not analyze the importance of cultural diplomacy and political objectives behind the construction of American Corner and also the response of its users towards this political product. In turn, this phenomenon leads the writer to discover further results of why the students go to American Corner which represents the students' motivation and how actually their response towards this cultural diplomacy product is.

## **B. LITERARY REVIEW**

### **1. Cultural Diplomacy of the United States**

The concept of cultural diplomacy refers to the diplomacy of ideals about American social and cultural values which are directly held by American societies (Arndt: 2005). The products of cultural diplomacy of the United States are diverse in some public facilities which are partnerships with many stakeholders. One of its ways is through educational approach towards literacy and library (Richard: 1928). Richard (1928) also believes that in the most out of the box dreams, none of the founding fathers before 1940 imagined that America would soon export freestanding libraries and American libraries in the whole world. Richard (1928) states that with dedicated leadership, the libraries enabled people everywhere to read American books while they showcased a profound political message about information access in a free society.

### **2. Leader Characteristics and Foreign Policy Performance**

Talking about cultural diplomacy, the assigned policy is considered by many factors. According to Roger William (1979), the main actor of the cultural diplomacy is the role of government as the policy maker of a country. The concept of foreign policy making process has many certain circles (Truman: 1966). Characteristics of the leader will finally lead to the foreign policy performances knowing that leader is the core of the policy maker. Truman (1966) believes that in the context of real situation, there are some people as part of the whole states who play an act in the foreign policy decision making which clearly consist of president and the firstline of his advisors.

### 3. Scale of Measuring Responses by Rensis Likert

In measuring the responses with the numeric data, the responses will be presented in the certain choices. This technique will provide data scoring which is in the form of values proposed by number, and the score is calculated by finding out the numerical values of the chosen choice (Likert: 1992). The respondent's score is summed across the statements and the total score is used as an index of their responses. Idea of analyzing responses might lead to an assumptive and unclear result, but by determining the scale of measurement, the abstraction of responses can be overcome by digging further analysis on the certain statements and observing the involvement intensity of the respondents towards the object which will be scaled into an arrangement of indicators (Likert: 1992: 15).

### **C. METHODS OF THE STUDY**

The writer observes the response of Indonesian Moslem University Students in a field research study by using the descriptive approach. Aligned with that, the writer chooses 30 students as the purposive samples of the visitors in American Corner. The questionnaire consists of 20 statements and 5 types of optional answers ranging from strongly agree, agree, hesitant, disagree, and strongly disagree. The statements are categorized into 4 statements about general knowledge of cultural diplomacy, 3 statements about facilities of American Corner, 2 statements about the activities conducted in American Corner, and 11 statements lead to the response towards cultural diplomacy of American Corner through leader characteristics and foreign policy performance.

### **D. ANALYSIS**

#### 1. Profile of Respondents

Due to the primary data taken in March 2017, the writer found that from 30 respondents, there were 9 students from Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business, 6 students from Faculty of Da'wa and Communication, 5 students from Faculty of Shariah and Law, 3 students from Faculty of Ushuluddin and Humanities, 3 students from Faculty of Social and Political Science, 3 students from Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teaching Sciences, and 1 student from Faculty of Science and Technology.

a. *The Intensity of Visiting American Corner*

Table 4.1.

The Intensity of Visiting American Corner

<b>No</b>	<b>Intencity</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Once a month	0	0%
2	Twice a month	2	7%
3	3-5 times a month	7	23%
4	> 5 times a month	3	10%
5	Everyday	1	3%
6	Uncertain	17	57%
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Primary Data 2017

Based on Table 4.1, 57% visitors come to American Corner depending on the periodic agenda of that educational activity itself. Another data shows that 7 respondents are sure that they come to American corner for 3-5 times a month which can be assumed that in a week, they can visit American Corner for at least once. There is 10% of the total respondents who come more than 5 times a month which can be assumed that in a week, they can visit American Corner for more than once. Therefore, 2 respondents come for only twice a month while there is only one respondent who comes to American Corner everyday.

2. American Corner as the Product of Cultural Diplomacy

Richard (1928: 153) states that United States has a direct product of formal cultural diplomacy which has been separated in the world since 1940s in form of American library center and in more than sixty years, libraries were built by the cooperation between the U.S government and stakeholders in many countries all over the world. In addition to cultural diplomacy of educational services, government of the United States has constructed American cultural center which is packaged in form of American Corner. Since American Corner is a library, it can be concluded as the product of cultural diplomacy.

As the product of cultural diplomacy, American corner meets the definition which is stated by Richard T. Arndt about the function of the library to project knowledge and political power. The visual of American Corner that is tasted really American collaborated with the actual and attractive educational activities such as seminars on women empowerment and the value of

multiculturalism or even religion is evidence that it reflects the function of American Corner as cultural diplomacy product.

### 3. President and The Construction of American Corner

Hilman's conceptualization (1967: 495) states that president, the firstline of his advisers, and another urgent stakeholders in politics are categorized as the most important circle in the process of policy making. In accordance with the characteristics of the president, Barber has a formulation which draws upon the typical of the leader into some specified behaviours. American Corner was firstly constructed in Indonesia on March, 2004 which was under the regime of George W. Bush and Megawati Soekarno Putri. Similarities on political family background, the ideology of multiculturalism, and mutual support against terrorism have remarkably correlated to their decision to construct American Corner as the cultural diplomacy product between Indonesia and the United States.

### 4. General Knowledge of The Respondents about American Corner as The Product of Cultural Diplomacy

Richard (1928) states that United States has a direct product of formal cultural diplomacy which has been separated in the world since 1940s in form of American library center. Therefore, the writer proposes 4 statements to measure the general knowledge of the respondents towards American Corner as the product of cultural diplomacy.

Table 4.2.

General Knowledge of Indonesian Moslem University Students about American Corner as The Product of Cultural Diplomacy

No	Statements	Answers					Total
		SD	D	H	A	SA	
1	Cultural diplomacy is a form of political policy which emphasizes soft approach.	1	5	3	15	6	30
		3%	17%	10%	50%	20%	100%
2	Cultural diplomacy aims to construct an international cooperation due to social and cultural approaches.	0	0	5	15	10	30
		0%	0%	17%	50%	33%	100%

3	American Corner is the example of cultural diplomacy.	0 0%	0 0%	3 10%	24 80%	3 10%	30 100%
4	Due to the role of government on its construction, American Corner is defined as a political product.	0 0%	1 3%	10 33%	16 53%	3 10%	30 100%

Sources : Primary Data 2017

Four of the statements which are fully completed can indicate respondents' understanding about cultural diplomacy and American Corner as the cultural diplomacy product. 70% agreement towards the definition, 83% agreement towards the aims, 90% agreements that American Corner is a product of cultural diplomacy, and 63% agreement that American Corner is political product indicate that the respondents are sure about cultural diplomacy and American Corner as the product of cultural diplomacy.

#### 5. The Response of Indonesian Moslem University Students towards American Corner as the Product of Cultural Diplomacy

##### a. *Facilities of American Corner*

Table 4.3.

The Response of Indonesian Moslem University Students towards Facilities of American Corner

No	Statements	Answers					Total
		SD	D	H	A	SA	
5	Sources of books and non books in American Corner are suitable with what I need in my study.	1 3%	4 13%	9 30%	11 37%	5 17%	30 100%
6	Computers, wifi, and other facilities in American Corner are suitable with what I need in my study.	1 3%	2 7%	3 10%	15 50%	8 27%	29 97%
7	Facilities in American Corner should continuously be developed.	0 0%	0 0%	1 3%	6 20%	22 73%	29 97%

Sources : Primary Data 2017

Based on table 4.3, 54% of the respondents need sources while 77% needs the technological facilities provided in American Corner. Aligned with that, 93% respondents support that facilities in American Corner should be developed.

*b. Activities in American Corner*

Table 4.4.

The Response of Indonesian Moslem University Students towards Activities in American Corner

No	Statements	Answers					Total
		SD	D	H	A	SA	
8	Seminars, conferences from Native Americans, and cinema studies in American Corner are very interesting.	1	0	1	12	15	29
		3%	0%	3%	40%	50%	97%
9	Education fair, TOEFL preparation, and cultural exchange opportunity in American Corner are very important for my study.	0	0	1	10	18	29
		0%	0%	3%	33%	60%	97%

Sources : Primary Data 2017

Table 4.4 shows that conferences in American Corner is supported by 90% respondents. In addition to that, academic features such as TOEFL is supported by 93%. From those data, it can be interpreted that more than 90% respondents support the activities conducted in American Corner.

*c. Cultural Diplomacy of American Corner*

The writer determines 11 statements which lead the respondents into the preference of supporting American Corner as the product of cultural diplomacy or not.

Table 4.5.

The Response of Indonesian Moslem University Students towards Cultural Diplomacy of American Corner

No	Statements	Answers					Total
		SD	D	H	A	SA	
10	Cultural diplomacy is more effective	0	2	1	12	15	30

	than hard diplomacy such as wars.	0%	7%	3%	40%	50%	100%
11	The construction of cultural diplomacy such as American Corner needs the role of president.	0 0%	9 30%	10 33%	10 33%	1 3%	30 100%
12	The first construction of American Corner in 2004 during the presidency of Megawati Soekarno Putri and George Bush indicates the openness of Indonesian towards American government.	1 3%	0 0%	10 33%	15 50%	4 13%	30 100%
13	Megawati's childhood background which was used to interact with politics supports her acceptance on cultural diplomacy.	1 3%	1 3%	10 33%	17 57%	1 3%	30 100%
14	Megawati's ideology of tolerance and multiculturalism supports her acceptance on cultural diplomacy.	0 0%	4 13%	8 27%	15 50%	3 10%	30 100%
15	Megawati's act on delivering the sorrow about WTC 2001 to George Bush reflects their good relation.	0 0%	1 3%	12 40%	14 47%	3 10%	30 100%
16	George Bush' attention towards educational development supports the construction of cultural diplomacy such as American Corner.	0 0%	0 0%	7 23%	20 67%	3 10%	30 100%
17	American Corner is more beneficial for American interests.	4 13%	13 43%	9 30%	4 13%	0 0%	30 100%
18	American Corner is more beneficial for Indonesian societies.	2 7%	7 23%	13 43%	5 17%	1 3%	28 93%
19	American Corner or other American political diplomacy is not a problem for Indonesian societies.	0 0%	2 7%	10 33%	15 50%	3 10%	30 100%



20	Continuance of American Corner and other political cooperations should be expanded.	0	4	2	10	14	30
		0%	13%	7%	33%	47%	100%

Sources : Primary Data 2017

Table 4.5 proves that from 11 statements proposed in the questionnaire, 8 statements are supported by more than 50% respondents while the rest 3 statements are supported by less than a half respondents. Therefore, ambiguity towards the elaboration of the last 4 statements indicates the inconsistency of the respondents on their preference towards fully supporting American Corner as the political product or just because American Corner is beneficial for their personal needs, particularly as the worthwhile educational facility.

## E. CONCLUSION

The existence of American Corner as the product of cultural diplomacy is constructed in Indonesia on March, 2004 during the regime of George W. Bush and Megawati Soekarno Putri (Afida: 2011). Both of Bush and Megawati's similarities in the political family background, idea of multiculturalism, defense againsts terrorism, and their good political relation support their idea of conducting bilateral cultural diplomacy which one them is in the construction of American Corner. On the other hand, to know response of Indonesian societies about this cultural diplomacy product, particularly Moslem University Students whose daily routine meets the learning system which is based on Islamic values, can be measured by the point of view of American Corner visitors whose educational background is not related to American Studies at all. Four indicators have been elaborated to quantify the response of 30 respondents towards American Corner as the product of cultural diplomacy which are general knowledge, facilities, activities, and cultural diplomacy itself.

Basically, 90% respondents agree that American Corner is a political product, and 93% respondents agree that facilities in American Corner should be developed. Moreover, 90% of them also support the activities conducted in American Corner. All of these criteria reflect their acceptance that American Corner is not a problem for them. In contrast to that is when surprisingly, the last 4 statements prove that they are actually hesitant with the political objectives behind American Corner.

In conclusion, the inconsistent response of Indonesian Moslem University Students simply proves that although they admit and realize with the political objectives behind American

cultural diplomacy product, they still open with that political product since it brings beneficial features for their personal interests. Moreover, the Indonesian Moslem University Students also strongly support any forms of expansion in bilateral political cooperation between Indonesia and the United States.

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