

INVESTIGATING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH DEBATE IN EFL CLASSROOM

Careninda Ahdaa Ratu Presdyasmara¹⁾, Syafi'ul Anam²⁾

^{1,2}Universitas Negeri Surabaya

¹carenindaahdaa@gmail.com

²syafiulanam@unesa.ac.id

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ABSTRAK

Berpikir kritis merupakan keterampilan kognitif yang perlu dimiliki oleh siswa di abad kedua puluh satu termasuk pemecahan masalah dan argumentasi. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki cara guru menerapkan kegiatan debat sebagai cara yang efektif untuk meningkatkan kemampuan berpikir kritis siswa di kelas EFL, jenis keterampilan berpikir kritis yang diwujudkan melalui kegiatan debat, dan persepsi siswa terhadap pelaksanaan kegiatan debat sebagai sebuah teknik yang dapat membantu mereka untuk berpikir kritis. Data diperoleh melalui semi wawancara, observasi kelas, dan dokumen. Seorang guru bahasa Inggris dan total 12 siswa berprestasi tinggi dan rendah dalam kemampuan berbicara dilibatkan. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa sistem Debat Parlemen yang digunakan sangat membantu guru EFL yang bermaksud untuk meningkatkan kemampuan berpikir kritis siswa karena siswa terus dilatih untuk membangun argumen dan memperkuat klaim mereka. Namun, para siswa mengakui bahwa keterbatasan pengalaman dalam praktik debat menjadi kendala utama. Dengan demikian, diperlukan lebih banyak pelajaran dan praktik dalam membangun argumen yang baik untuk siswa. Lebih jauh lagi, kualitas argumen yang dibangun oleh peserta didik harus dievaluasi untuk mencegah peserta didik dari kekeliruan.

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Corresponding Author:

Careninda Ahdaa Ratu Presdyasmara
Universitas Negeri Surabaya
carenindaahdaa@gmail.com

1. PENDAHULUAN

One of the twenty-first century skills that is crucially necessary to be possessed is critical thinking along with communication, creativity, and collaboration skills which also play an important role in a human's cognitive development. Students are able to be actively involved in various information by thinking deeply about certain things. When students use their brains to think deeply, it empowers them to analyze, critique, apply knowledge, and develop new ideas. However, most students still do not possess and reach at this level of thinking. This may result from the effect of the learning process that does not yet motivate students' thinking skills is the impact of students' critical thinking skills that are still indirectly low (Ekoningtyas, 2013).

Besides the importance to think critically, expressing our ideas is not less necessary. The ability

to express our ideas and opinions to other people properly and correctly is a very much needed skill, especially in this era, where we must be able to convey our ideas and opinions to others in a way that is easily understood by that person, in other words, we must be able to adjust who we are speaking to. Gilakjani & Sabouri, (2016) claimed that speaking is very important in people's experiences because they speak everywhere and all the time. This skill must be possessed since early age so that students will be successful language learners. To convey our ideas and opinions, deep thinking skills are also needed, so that the ideas we convey have strong main point and there are less mistakes in thinking or logical mistakes.

The debate about the issue of how to teach critical thinking to students has also been extended. Several ways to teach and enhance students' critical thinking have been explored through some studies. A

study conducted by Bezanilla et al. (2019) found that teachers tend to use methodologies involved oral and written communication, including text analysis through reading, for instance, students are taught to construct argumentation and synthesize a reading passage, this method is considered the most effective by some teachers. However, this does not rule out the possibility that the other methodologies have higher level of effectiveness to improve critical thinking ability when implemented in particular circumstances (El Soufi & See, 2019). Other methods implemented by teachers are case studies, lectures, collaborative and cooperative learning, as well as problem and project-based learning which allow students to find a way to solve a problem (Bezanilla et al., 2019).

The researchers believe that the essential role of students when doing debate activities is having deep understanding of the topic given, they must seek information as much as needed in order to strengthen their arguments against the opposing view. A research done by Bezanilla et al. (2019) found that most teachers prefer oral and written communication along with text analysis as effective techniques to teach critical thinking. Other techniques used are collaborative learning as well as problem and project-based learning. By the means of a notion explained by Mohammad et al., (2016), debate is a methodology that is integrated with collaborative learning method. This denotes that debate is commonly used by English for Foreign Learners (EFL) teachers since it covers what has been found in several previous studies, such as oral communication and collaborative learning methodology.

Some relevant studies have been conducted to explore the best methodologies to improve student's critical thinking ability through teachers' perspective and how debating activities are frequently used and has been believed as an effective way to inductively teach critical thinking. Bezanilla (2019) in her study states that despite a preferred methodology to teach critical thinking is various and different from one another depending on one's concept of critical thinking, the most effective methods by university teachers for teaching critical thinking, specifically in Latin America, continue to be case studies, text reading, analysis, and synthesis of selected sources, spoken and written reflection, and argumentation. Other similar studies concerning with the use of debate that is strongly believed can enhance students' critical thinking skills have been conducted by Yén & Tran (2022) and Wahyuni et al. (2020). The results of the study show that debate method is effective, the students feel enjoy during debating activities as a major technique in teaching critical thinking of Thai Nguyen Specialized High School students, particularly those joined English club meetings (Yén & Tran, 2022). Additionally, a study held by Wahyuni (2020) found that students are faced by three major challenges during debating activities including institutional, procedural, and intellectual challenges.

Although Acehnese lecturers, in the same study, have suggested solutions to overcome the problems encountered, the solutions need to be explored Wahyuni (2020).

Having been said that, the current study mainly aims at investigating a senior high school English teacher's way in utilizing debating activities as an effective way to improve students' critical thinking ability in EFL classroom, the type of CT skills manifested through the debating activity, and how students perceive the implementation of debating activities as a technique that can help them to think critically in order to fill the gap between previous studies. Furthermore, different settings are also provided in this study. Bezanilla (2019) found that most teachers agree that oral communication and collaborative learning are preferable, higher education teachers in particular. In contrast, the current study explores the strategy used by high school teacher. In addition, a study done by Yén & Tran (2022) only covers students who join English club meetings. Therefore, this study intends to investigate senior high school students' critical thinking through debating activities in EFL classroom setting.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is designed by means of qualitative method. Basic Interpretive research as the type of this study is used, it aims to comprehend the perspective of participants, describes and interprets a phenomenon or process (Ary et al., 2009). The qualitative concern of this study is apparent in the process of data collection, which attempts to obtain a teacher's strategy in implementing debating activities to improve students' critical thinking and explore students' perspectives by holding in depth interview. The current qualitative study allows an understanding from the educators' perspective (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2009). Additionally, the process of data collection is supported by classroom observations over a period of time.

The subjects involved in this study are a senior English teacher class at 11th grade of one of the Senior High Schools located in Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia who often uses techniques involving speaking practice such as discussion, presentation, and debate activities. The other research subjects selected are ten students from the 11th grade natural science class. The students selected are classified based on the score of their speaking performance, which are high achiever students and low achiever students.

Three stages of analyzing qualitative data proposed by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) consisting data condensation, data display, and data conclusion are applied. In data condensation phase, the raw data obtained from interview and classroom observations such as transcripts and field notes are organized and filtered. Next, during the phase of data

display, a way to present the classified data were in form of table. Lastly, the data conclusion stage must clearly show intelligible explanation of how the research and the data that have been obtained can precisely answer the formulated research questions

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Implementation of Debate System in EFL Classroom to Promote CT ability

The results from the interview with the teachers revealed the debating activities implemented in classroom. She elaborated the details of number of sides, members of each side, the order of speakers delivering argumentation, and the procedure of the debate system which are elaborated in this sub subsection. This study found that the debating activities implemented in EFL classroom setting did not strictly follow a global debate format. Some of famous debate systems commonly implemented are Parliamentary debate, Karl Popper debate, and Lincoln-Douglas debate, these debate approaches are recommended to be used for a content-based course (Brown & Bown, 2014).

The teacher (henceforth, T) explained that each debating activity consists of two teams of three in which each time is on different side. One team stands with the proposition given, which is known as affirmative team. The other one argues against the proposition, this is later called as negative team. Without strictly following a particular debate rules, the teacher stated that the debating activities employed in the classroom is designed closely the same with general debate system used in debate competition, she did not clearly state the type of debate system implemented.

L101 "Jadi apakah itu sistem namanya yang jelas memang satu kelompok ada 6 orang yang terbagi menjadi ee.. 3 orang untuk pro, 3 orang untuk kontra" (T)

Further explanation about the debate mechanism was given by the teacher. The motion is given preliminary before each team gets the side they will be on. Later after the motion is given and each side is determined, each team is allowed to discuss and compromise the motion. They can use the time given to construct arguments that later will be delivered individually. The teacher suggested the constructed arguments must be relevant with the motion. As both teams discuss the motion, the teacher did not state any limited time that might be given for the discussion session. This is shown by her statements during the interview was that both teams can be invited and later start the debates after the time given is enough. Speaking about the mechanism, the order of speakers in particular, the teacher generally stated that every argument from each team should be delivered individually. Therefore, monologue is more highlighted rather than dialogue. Starting from the first speaker of affirmative team, the first speaker of negative team's turn, the second speaker of

affirmative team, the second speaker of negative team, the third speaker of affirmative team, and finally the third speaker of negative team. The teacher's explanation can be seen as follows:

L126 "Jadi, itu yang jelas jadi first speaker dari pro, kemudian ee.. kita berikan setelah itu kesempatan untuk the first speaker dari kontra untuk me-rebut itu ee.. kemudian menyampaikan argumennya sendiri seperti apa, kemudian begitu juga selanjutnya, kemudian the second speaker dari.. ee.. pronya, tadi kan the first speaker dari pro kemudian di-rebut di-rebuttal oleh the first speaker dari kontranya maksudnya, dari kontranya. Kemudian berikutnya ya the second speaker dari pro kemudian dia memberikan sanggahan dulu dari apa yang dia sampaikan, dia ungkapkan, dia ungkapkan argumenasinya, kemudian dia memberikan suatu penguatan dari pendapatnya dari second speaker sendiri, seperti itu sampai ending-ending-nya sampai the third speaker, sampai the third speaker memberikan suatu kesimpulan" (T)

The result of the interview with the teacher showed that steps in debate system allow students to activate their critical thinking skills while debate activities are employed in the classroom. The teacher believes that critical thinking skill is very much necessary in debating activities. When being asked how important critical thinking is, she associated critical thinking with debating activities that occur during the current learning material, Discussion Text. **L57** "Dalam Discussion Text itu kan orang harus mengeluarkan pendapat, harus memberikan ee.. sanggahan terhadap pendapat yang dikeluarkan oleh temennya begitu. Otomatis, dalam memberikan sanggahan, itukan pasti ada informasi yang dia terima, yang dia telan, kemudian dia berfikir, mengolah ya.. tentang pendapat temannya itu, dia berfikir di sini kemudian untuk memberikan balasan ulang atau rebuttal-nya itukan kalau orang gak punya pikiran kritis kan gak bisa untuk memberikan respon, begitu lho.. betul kan?" (T)

As she asserted the importance of Critical Thinking ability, she believed that debating activities in the classroom which is included in Discussion Text material allow students to activate their CT skills since it requires students to process information and construct arguments to give responses towards the opposite side.

In conjunction with what has been explicitly elaborated by the teacher, the debate practice implemented in classroom that has been observed denotes that students as the debate speakers, moderator, and adjudicator demonstrated debate activities precisely as previously explained during the interview with the teacher. Moreover, the categorization of students' utterances during the debate session into CT skills is going to be explained in the upcoming part.

Type of Critical Thinking Skills Manifested in English Debate Activities

The debate session involved two groups. Every group was given different motion. The first group was discussing matters on whether or not the use of earphone should be limited. Meanwhile for the second group, the motion given was the abolishment of same sex education.

This study adopted the three categorization of CT skills including analysis, inference, and evaluation involved in each stage of debating activities by Liqing (2021). The current study focuses on the stage of in-class preparation and the presentation session. The table can be seen as follow:

Tabel 1. Liqing CT skills in English Debate Practice's table (2021)

Core tasks	CT skills	CT sub-skill
Argumentation	Analysis and Evaluation	Build the case
	Analysis	Analyze the burden of proof
	Inference	Make claims or arguments
	Inference	Provide reasons and linkage to help reach the conclusion
Presentation	Analysis	Predict the opposite view
	Evaluation and Analysis	Establish criteria to judge arguments

As students' utterances were categorized into CT sub-skills, the evidences are summarized as follows; Firstly, analysis skill can be seen during the stage of preparation in which students are required to build the case after the motion is given, such as when the first speaker of government side included outline or general explanation about the motion given beforehand. Another task for the government side, especially in Parliamentary Debate format, is to show burden of proof to the adjudicator which more likely to be done by the second speaker supported by the third speaker, the government side responded to rebuttal and give strong refutation by rebuilding arguments and the burden of proof, importantly, they needed to predict and guess the opposite view from the opponent and did comparison so that they knew how to counter arguments since they already took distinguish views into account.

The second CT skills proposed in Liqing's framework (2021) is inference, the students demonstrated sub skill of making claim supported by evidences or convincing reasons that are related with the topic argued for or against. This is done to lead to the final conclusion and strengthen their own arguments. As the results of this study show, all speakers who argues for either the proposition or opposition are obligated to prove a claim made by them or their other team mates.

Lastly, another skill that can help debaters strengthen their arguments while attacking the weaknesses found in the other side's arguments is evaluation. For instance, the speaker of government side and negative side, when they make a judgement

towards each other's arguments. Both debaters showed examples of how a debater would evaluate the other side by emerging criteria (Rybold, 2006), this action can make them have a bigger chance to draw the adjudicator's attention to notice any fallacies might be made by a debate speaker. The explanation is supported by the following data:

Table 2. Students' utterances' categorization into CT skills

CT Skills	Utterances
Analysis	"... the education is a place to develop and improve the quality of understanding and knowledge of everyone, so far the place where we go to school is not only used to study but also used a mean of social interaction between one student and another, this interaction often occurs when there are learning activities of developing interest and tolerance, currently there are two types school in Indonesia, there are heterogenous school and homogenous school, so they create homogenous school on the ground that if there were two genders in class it would be a distraction, but if they separate the two genders there is big problem that will occur, the problem is if we limit the space and time of interaction between the two genders, then when the two gender enter the wider wall, it is feared and they will not be able to carry out normal interaction" (Observation, 2023)
Inference	"... our final argument is same sex education prevents boys and girls to impress other gender. Some boys may have feelings that make them try to impress girls most of the time, these feelings are very natural and reasonable, if the boys cannot manage their emotion it will be dangerous for their education processes and lead them to focus on chasing girls, if boys fall into relationship with girls, they are most likely to spend money on them and will lose their times, it will also make girls uncomfortable if boys are chasing them, and potentially ruin their life, if we are not concern about this phenomenon, sexual harassment will happen frequently, especially in school, same sex education schools are the best choice if we do not... if we don't want these things happen. Therefore, we need to prevent this phenomenon to have.. two genders have a better life" (Observation, 2023)
Evaluation	"... with the way how opposition side argue, it looks like they are under.. underestimating the importance of understands other gender, because even a really small misconception understanding about other gender can have a big impact" (Observation, 2023)

Students' Perception of Debating Activity in EFL Classroom to Promote Critical Thinking Ability

All students have various responses and feelings about the activity, some of them are used to such activity while the rest are not. The results of the interviews are categorized into responses from low and high achiever students in terms of speaking performance.

The result of the interviews on both achievers does not differ when being asked whether or not critical thinking is important. Both achievers' answers show uniqueness and their genuine feelings based on their experiences, particularly in debating activities. According to the interview results, all participants of high achievers enjoyed the debating activities, they mostly got nervous because they were not used to debate so they struggled at constructing and delivering their arguments. They suggested that debating activities highly contributed on significantly promoting CT skills because during the debate session, they were required to analyze, evaluate, express opinion, and deliver arguments

which, they believe, are parts of Critical Thinking ability.

The similar question was asked to the low achiever students. The answers showed genuine feelings about their debate experience. Apparently, the responses showed differences regarding students' excitement during the debating activities. A male student declared that he struggled the most at keeping the balance between the limited time given for him to deliver his speech and his argument. Having a more enormous feelings of nervousness and anxiety, this learner firmly stated he did not enjoy debating activities as much as his other peers did. Nonetheless, he believed debating activities can be a benchmark for one's CT ability.

All participants of the low achiever students highlighted the nervous feelings faced when they were about to start delivering their speech as the first, second, or third speaker. The results from the interview with the low achievers do not much differ from the high achiever students who mostly felt the same about their emotions during debating activities. Nonetheless, the distinction can be seen through the way both achievers see the debate system and deal with their feelings during the debate session, as the high achiever students are more likely to be given exposure to debating activity and its system, they know how to construct argument and overcome their mixed feelings and emotions when going to deliver their speech. The data below is to support the previous explanation:

Table 3. Student's perception

"But generally though, the.. debating activities in class actually like it helps you again the same with Marhen, like it helps you uh.. improve your critical thinking I guess, because you actually you know.. give argument that is actually reasonable and also tried to make it so that the opponents can't.. well.. well.. it depends on what position you are as a speaker, but like if you are as opponent you actually try to find the um.. the escape, right?" (Interview, 2023)

The findings of the current study support several researches in the same field, a research was once executed by Alén et al. (2015) have found in their study that besides enjoying the debating activities although facing some difficulties, the implementation of debating activities was believed to be able to significantly enhance students' communication skills including speaking in public and conveying arguments, fact-checking abilities, as well as increasing their interest and broader knowledge in certain topics.

Lastly, more exploration on students' perception about the impact of debating activities was done by Zare & Othman (2015) who found lots of CT skills manifested in debating activities. They successfully got students' confessions that classroom debate could enhance their logical reasoning skills, help them to see a problem from different point of views to gain more understanding, improve their oral communication ability, evaluate others' statements, provide strong and reasonable argumentation skills, improve their open-mindedness since they learn to accept criticism from the opposing view, allow them

to work on team and make decisions on their own which could enhance their collaboration and decision making skills, and increase their learning motivation as well as interest on the subject matter.

4. CONCLUSION

Taking everything into account, global debate systems happen to be exceptionally helpful to EFL teachers who intend to promote their students' critical thinking ability. By implementing classroom debate, the teacher can recognize and evaluate his or her students' CT ability through a claim made and arguments conveyed. Students are constantly trained to construct arguments and strengthen their claim, they eventually learn how to gather evidences from various sources and provide warrants when conveying their arguments. Not only debating practice helps learners to solve a problem and come up with an alternate solution during the debate session, but it will also contribute in their real-life situation when they are faced with critical issues that require critical thinking to deal with. Finally, teacher ought to evaluate the weaknesses of students' claim or arguments that might fall into fallacies and he or she will have the opportunity to develop students' critical thinking ability.

Since many obstacles of implementing debating activities in EFL classroom often encounter teachers, an attempt to alleviate problems that might exist is a necessity in order to enhance effective and efficient learning that finally can achieve the learning objectives successfully. The student participants admitted confusion they experienced due to their first time ever being involved in debating activity, it is greatly suggested that teacher explains the debate system used and its mechanism in details prior to the day they need to debate, this action should be done to prevent students from various misunderstandings which can affect the entire process of debate practice in the classroom.

Furthermore, the fact that some learners have never involved in any debate practices obviously leads to an assumption that they also have never learned about making a strong claim through constructing a strong argumentation. Therefore, further research about the quality of argumentation constructed by learners should be conducted to evaluate students' critical thinking. In addition to that, a deeper exploration by conducting interviews to teachers who frequently implement classroom debate using global debate format is recommended to discover their solutions to challenges faced in order to develop the quality of teaching and learning activity.

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