

## UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING IN WRITING ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS

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### Abstract

The ability to think critically is very important for students to acquire since it could assist them in solving problems. Critical thinking requires looking at an issue from several standpoints before reaching a final decision. One of the ways to teach critical thinking is through writing especially argumentative writing. All processes in constructing an argumentative essay require the writers to think critically. Regarding to the importance of critical thinking in writing argumentative essays, university students are the most appropriate subject of this study. Therefore, the subject of this research is the students in English Department of Unesa in 2013 academic year, particularly in Expository and Argumentative Writing B class. The objectives of this study are to identify how the students use critical thinking to construct argumentative essays and to describe how critical thinking is reflected in the students' argumentative essays. This research is descriptive qualitative research. There are two points that can be seen in the result of this research. First, the students had reflected their critical thinking by involving the characteristics of critical thinking as proposed by Cottrell's theory in their argumentative essays very well. While the second point, the students used their critical thinking to construct argumentative essay very well especially in choosing the topic, organizing the arguments, and resolving problems that they experienced in constructing the essay. In conclusion, the students' critical thinking was well applied in the writing of argumentative essay.

**Keywords:** *Critical thinking, argumentative essays, university students.*

### Abstrak

Kemampuan berpikir kritis sangat penting bagi siswa untuk memperoleh karena bisa membantu mereka dalam memecahkan masalah. Berpikir kritis memerlukan melihat masalah dari beberapa sudut pandang sebelum mencapai keputusan akhir. Salah satu cara untuk mengajarkan berpikir kritis adalah melalui menulis terutama menulis argumentatif. Semua proses dalam menulis sebuah esai argumentatif mengharuskan penulis untuk berpikir kritis. Mengenai pentingnya berpikir kritis dalam menulis esai argumentatif, mahasiswa adalah subyek yang paling tepat dalam studi ini. Oleh karena itu, subjek penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa Inggris Unesa pada tahun akademik 2013, khususnya di kelas Menulis Ekspositori dan Argumentatif B. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi bagaimana siswa menggunakan pemikiran kritis untuk membuat esai argumentatif dan untuk mendeskripsikan bagaimana berpikir kritis direfleksikan dalam esai argumentatif siswa. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Ada dua hal yang dapat dilihat dalam hasil penelitian ini. Pertama, siswa telah merefleksikan kemampuan berpikir kritis mereka dengan melibatkan karakteristik berpikir kritis seperti yang dikemukakan oleh teori Cottrell dalam esai argumentatif mereka dengan sangat baik. Sedangkan poin kedua, siswa menggunakan pemikiran kritis mereka untuk membuat esai argumentatif dengan sangat baik terutama dalam memilih topik, mengatur argumen, dan menyelesaikan masalah yang mereka alami dalam menulis esai. Kesimpulannya, kemampuan berpikir kritis siswa telah diterapkan dengan baik dalam penulisan esai argumentatif.

**Kata Kunci:** *Berpikir kritis, esai argumentatif, mahasiswa.*

## INTRODUCTION

Writing is a process of composing ideas that starts from exploring and researching to drafting, revising, and editing or perhaps publishing them to the world (Fulwiler, 2002). Fulwiler (2002) also adds that writing is a process that refuses a perfect formulation, which is complex, adjustable, and multifaceted. In other words, writing is not a simple activity that could be done in a spontaneous way, yet writing is a complex process that requires efforts. The complex process of writing requires the writers to express and pour their ideas to make a connection between the writers and readers (Nik et al, 2010). Consequently, McCrimmon (1973) states that the writers should think of their readers long before beginning to write, the choice of subject, the quality and arrangement of work, the types of specimens and examples, the sentence composition, and the choice of words. Thus, the writers must consider the readers' sense.

Most problems happen when the writers' statement seems clear for them but it is not quite clear for the readers since they could not always notice from the words alone just like what the writers have in mind. Thus, the ability to write effectively is increasingly important since it is a way of communication, which allows people to interact each other across nation and cultures (Weigle, 2002). Other problems come if the writers could not think properly since writing needs a systematic process of thinking to obtain a conclusion of knowledge (Murtadho, 2013). If the writers do not have a good quality of thinking, they would find it so hard in constructing their ideas, thoughts, or arguments into a good quality written form. The necessity of composing ideas, thoughts, or arguments is not a simple thing to do since the mastery of writing ability is the one that should be built and understood properly and perfectly (Murtadho, 2013).

At work or school at any levels, writing is essentially needed in many aspects. Writing could be one of the ways to develop critical thinking (Pujiono, 2012). Through writing, the students show how they articulate things. Likewise, it will show how they think. They will be required to actively and skillfully conceptualize, apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information to reach an answer or conclusion. Therefore, the ability to think critically is very important in writing. Critical thinking is a higher thinking order, which is different from thinking. It requires a high advance thinking skill in a various number of complex ways that involve knowledge and attitudes (Cottrell, 2005). It goes beyond the memorization of facts. It does not only reach what the facts are or what the arguments are since critical thinking is a cognitive process that is correlated with using mind. Furthermore, Cottrell (2005) states that critical thinking shows how the facts are sustained,

how the arguments are constructed and how the conclusions are attained.

Based on several levels of writing, the most appropriate level for developing critical thinking is argumentative writing. An argumentative essay is an essay where writers use some reasons to support their opinions regarding to an issue that they agree or disagree with (Oshima, 2006). In an argumentative essay, the writers must not only provide reasons to support their point of view but also expose the problems from the opposite reasons as the evidences of the false ones. This is aimed to make considerations for all the issues since it indicates that the writers are reasonable and open-minded. All processes in constructing an argumentative essay require the writers to think critically. Critical thinking is related to reasoning or the capacity of rational thought (Cottrell, 2005). "Rational" means using reasons to solve problems. Reasoning comprises analyzing evidences and drawing conclusions. The focus of critical thinking is often referred to as the 'argument' (Cottrell, 2005).

Regarding to the importance of critical thinking in argumentative essays, university students are the most appropriate subject of this study. As stated by Murtadho (2013), the most appropriate skill in language that could be developed by university students through critical thinking is writing skill since writing consists of some arisen problems, data regarding to those problems and analyses or evaluations that lead the problems into an effective solution. This study aims to focus on describing the critical thinking of students in English Department of Unesa in 2013 academic year, particularly in Expository and Argumentative Writing B class through their argumentative essay writing. Therefore, the researcher seeks answers to the research questions: (1) How is critical thinking reflected in the students' argumentative essays?, and (2) How do the students use critical thinking to construct argumentative essays?

## RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher selected qualitative research design as the approach to conduct this research. This research aimed to investigate how critical thinking is reflected in the students' argumentative essays and the use of critical thinking in constructing argumentative essays. Qualitative research is a research that investigates the eminence of affiliations, events, circumstances, and materials (Ary et al, 2010). It focuses on comprehending the settings and efforts to explain human behaviors.

The subjects selected were the students of Expository and Argumentative Writing B class in English Department of Unesa. The researcher selected the subject because the subjects because Critical thinking can be taught and developed

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through writing especially *Argumentative Writing*. The subjects at present were taking Expository and Argumentative Writing class and the subjects were in the fourth semester of study. There were nineteen students in the class. Thus, there were nineteen essays analyzed by the researcher.

The researcher used two instruments to help him collect the data. The first is document analysis and observation checklist as the instruments for evaluating the students' works. In this study, the researcher used the students' argumentative essays as the documents. Then the researcher analyzed the documents by using observation checklist. Second, the researcher used interview as the instrument to investigate the use of critical thinking by the students in constructing their argumentative essays. The researcher used qualitative structured interviews. It means that the researcher used the same questions to all the subjects. The interview guidelines were adapted from Kirsznner and Mandell (2007) and Hunter (2014). The questions were about the subjects' experiences related to the study.

In collecting the data, the researcher used observation checklist as the document. Since it was found that from nineteen students' essays there were only eight students whose essays were argumentative essays thus the researcher only analyzed eight students' essays. There were several reasons the researcher considered that the eleven essays were not argumentative essays. First, the content of the essays were only giving information to the reader but did not aim to persuade, defend, or attack some position. Second, the topics of the essays were not debatable. Third, the writer did not take a position or stand point on an issue. While for the eight students' essays, The researcher described the results of the students' argumentative essays by setting up the characteristic of critical thinking in writing based on the theory of Cottrell (2005). The characteristics were the writer's position, the writer's reason, the writer's main reasons and key points, the writer's evidence, the writer's opposing arguments, the writer's conclusion, the essay's content, and the writer's belief.

While in attempting to answer the second research question, the researcher did the interviews to the representative of the class. Since from the whole class, the students' writing results showed that there were only eight from nineteen students whose essays were argumentative essays while the rest were not argumentative essays, thus the researcher only interviewed eight students. The researcher met each student to conduct interviews after the researcher had collected and analyzed all the results of the students' argumentative essays.

In doing data analysis, the researcher occupied three stages as suggested by Ary et al (2010) to analyze qualitative data: (1) familiarizing and organizing, (2) coding and reducing, and (3)

interpreting and representing. To fulfill the answer of the first research question, in familiarizing and organizing stage, the researcher read and reread the documents (students' argumentative essays) repeatedly one by one to comprehend the data. After that, the researcher organized the data based on the essays' creator. Then the researcher went to coding and reducing stage. The researcher analyzed each essay of the students by comparing the students' essays with the observation checklist of critical thinking. The irrelevant data were reduced, as it did not meet the checklist. In the interpreting and representing stage, the researcher interpreted the data then provided in-depth description on how critical thinking was reflected in the students' argumentative essays.

Furthermore, to meet the answer of the second research question, the researcher went to familiarizing and organizing stage. The researcher read and reread the transcriptions frequently then organizes them into a proper organization. The transcriptions were the result of interviews. Then the researcher went through the next stage, coding and reducing. In this stage, the researcher categorized the data into more specific and detail classifications. The researcher marked the data into some categories: data 1, data 2, data 3, data 4, data 5, data 6, data 7, and data 8. Each data represented the result of the students' interview; data 1 represented students 1 and data 2 represented students 2. These marks helped the researcher to analyze the data and to reduce or decrease the huge data that were going to be elucidated. In the last stage, the researcher presented a detail description on how the students used critical thinking in constructing argumentative essays in chapter 4.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### RESULTS

#### Critical Thinking in the Students' Argumentative Essays

Related to the first research question investigating how critical thinking was reflected in the students' argumentative essays, the researcher went to analyze the essays of the students. As stated earlier that from nineteen essays of the students only eight students whose essays were argumentative essays while the rest (eleven students' essays) were not argumentative essays. There were several reasons the researcher considered that the eleven essays were not argumentative essays. First, the content of the essays were only giving information to the reader but did not aim to persuade, defend, or attack some position. Second, the topics of the essays were not debatable. Third, the writer did not take a position or stand point on an issue. Therefore, the researcher only analyzed eight students' essays.

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Meanwhile, for the eight students' essays that considered as argumentative essays, the researcher use observation checklist that adapted from a theory proposed by Cottrell related to critical thinking in writing argumentative essays. Therefore, the researcher analyzed eight of the students' essays based on each characteristic in the Cottrell's theory. Cottrell (2005) claims that there are some characteristics that indicate someone has applied critical thinking in writing. The characteristic are the writer's position, the writer's reason, the writer's main reasons and key points, the writer's evidence, the writer's opposing arguments, the writer's conclusion, the essay's content, and the writer's belief. The explanations of each characteristic are shown below:

| No. | Characteristic                          | Explanation   |
|-----|---|---|
| 1.  | The writer's position                   | The writer's position must be clear. It means the writer must have a standpoint in making decisions; whether the writer stands for one side or stands against it.   |
| 2.  | The writer's reasons                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is clear that the reasons are for writer's point of view. It is intended that the reasons are provided to support the writer's point of view.</li> <li>• The reasons are presented in a logical order, as a line of reasoning. Thus, the reasons must be arranged in a way that the readers could find what they need to read first in order to be acquainted with the writer's point of view.</li> <li>• The reasons are clearly linked to one another and to the conclusion. It implies that the reasons must be correlated to each other so the readers can be easily engaged with the writer's position.</li> </ul> |
| 3.  | The writer's main reason and key points | The main reasons and key points stand out clearly to the reader. It requires the writer to give more space of information on the core and most important reasons in supporting the writer's argument.   |

|    |                                 |  |
|----|---------------------------------|--|
| 4. | The writer's evidence           | The writer must use evidences very well to strengthen the arguments. The writer must provide enough evidences that will convince the reader to the argument.   |
| 5. | The writer's opposing arguments | The writer should make a reasonable evaluation of other people's views that contradict his or her point of view. In this point, the writer must decide the opposite arguments that will lead the reader to recognize why the writer is in that standpoint.   |
| 6. | The writer's conclusion         | The conclusion should be clear and based on the evidence. In other words, the conclusion must summarize all reasons and evidences to settle the writer's point of view.  |
| 7. | The essay's content             | The content must be consistent. It means that the writing has to be coherent to the writer's first argument.   |
| 8. | The writer's belief             | The writer's beliefs or self-interest are not distorting the argument. The writer has to be objective in positioning his argument in the writing. In other words, the writer must not be controlled by any personal principles and advantages in stating and providing reasons and evidences related to his arguments. |

Derived from the analysis for the first characteristic "the writer's position", it was found that there were two categories from the students' essays that had been decided by the researcher; a clear position and an unclear position. A clear position means that the writer had clearly taken a stand toward the issue. In the other hand, an unclear position means the writer did not take a stand whether the writer agree or disagree to the issue being discussed.

Anchored in the analysis of the second characteristic "the writer's reasons", it was revealed that there were some students' writing results that were categorized by the researcher into six categories; a supported reason, an unsupported reason, a logical ordered reason, an illogical unordered reason, a clearly linked reason, and an

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unclearly unlinked reason. The first is supported reason. It means that the reason appeared was clearly intended to support the writer's point of view. Second, an unsupported reason means that the reasons provided did not clearly support the writer's point of view. The third, a logical ordered reason means that the reasons were arranged well so that the readers could find what they needed to read first in order to be acquainted with the writer's point of view. The next, an illogical unordered reason means that the reasons provided were not put in a way that the reader could find what they have to read first in order to be acquainted with the writer's point of view. The fifth, a clearly linked reason means that the writer's reasons were correlated to one another until it reached the conclusion so that the readers could be easily engaged with the writer's point of view. The sixth is an unclearly unlinked reason. It means that the writer did not correlate each reason very well until it arrived at the conclusion.

Found on the analysis of the third characteristic "the writer's main reason and key points", it was shown that some essays were categorized by the researcher into two categories; a clearly stand out reason and an unclearly stand out reason. A clearly stand out main reason means the writer had given more space of information on the core and most important reasons in supporting his or her argument. While, an unclearly stand out main reason means that the writer did not give a space of information that was correlated to the main idea. The rest of the supporting statements did not stand out clearly to support the main reason.

Based on the analysis of the fourth characteristic "the writer's evidence", it was revealed that some of the students' writing results were categorized by the researcher into two categories; good supporting evidences and poor supporting evidence. Good supporting evidence means the writer had given and provided evidence very well to support the writer's arguments. Furthermore, poor supporting evidence means that the writer's arguments was not provided and supported by enough evidence.

Anchored in the analysis of the fifth characteristic "the writer's opposing argument", it was found that most of the students did not provide an opposing argument. There were only three students that stated and refuted the opposing arguments. In this point, by providing opposing arguments, the readers will be engaged easily to the essay. Moreover, the arguments also lead them to recognize why the writer is in that position.

Derived from the analysis of the sixth characteristic "the writer's conclusion", it was shown that the students' writing results were categorized by the researcher into two categories; a clear conclusion and an unclear conclusion. A clear conclusion means that the writer restated the thesis

statement and summarized her reasons and evidences clearly to the reader. In the other hand, an unclear conclusion means that the writer did not restate the thesis statement clearly in the beginning of the paragraph. The conclusion did not briefly summarize all the reasons and evidences.

Based on the analysis of the seventh characteristic "the essay's content", it was revealed that the students' writing results were categorized by the researcher into two categories; a consistent content and an inconsistent content. A consistent content is the essays showed coherent and consistent sentences and arguments until it reached the conclusion. The reason was clearly consistent to support the writer's position. Then, an inconsistent content imply that the writing is not coherent or correlated to the writer's arguments.

Finally, anchored in the analysis of the last characteristic "the writer's belief", it was found that the students' writing results were categorized by the researcher into two categories; an objective argument and a distorting argument. An objective argument means that the writer has to be objective in positioning his argument in the writing. In other words, the writer should not be controlled by any personal principles and advantages in stating and providing reasons and evidences related to his arguments. It was indicated by the opposing arguments that had been provided by the writer. While, a distorting argument is the writer's belief distort the arguments. It can be indicated that the writer did not provide any opposing arguments.

### **Students' Use of Critical Thinking in Constructing Argumentative Essays**

Regarding the second research question examining how the students used critical thinking to construct argumentative essays in expository and argumentative writing B class of English Department of Unesa in 2013 academic year, the researcher interviewed the students. As stated earlier that from nineteen students there were only eight students whose writing were argumentative essays thus the researcher interviewed eight students only. The interview guidelines were adapted from Kirsznner and Mandell (2007) and Hunter (2014).

Kirsznner and Mandell (2007) states that the writer should select a debatable topic. Since an argumentative essay tries to adjust the way people think thus it must be focused on a debatable topic. Beside that the writer should take a position in the argumentative essay. The writer should state an argumentative thesis. Thesis statement is the foundation for developing the arguments in the essay. Then the writer should consider the audience or the reader of their writing. Considering the readers will help the writer determine the arguments of his writing so it is important to assume that the readers will question the

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assumption of the arguments. This condition will make the writer critically evaluate the arguments presented in order to make it more solid and logically ordered.

Moreover Hunter (2014) states that critical thinking should be reflective since it comprises thinking about problems at different points and angles at once, and it demands appropriate methods to solve the problems. A problem is undefined when it is undecided from the beginning what the solution to it. Therefore, a problem requires thinking hard to find the solution for it. To solve the problem may require analyzing the problems, thinking the best approach to find the solution and thinking about the appropriate way to employ the approach.

The first aspect of the interview is about the use of critical thinking in choosing the topic of the essay. It is indicated by the first question of the interview, i.e. "How do the students choose the topic?" Most of the students (eight students) selected the topic from their own experience and what they had found in their daily activities. The second aspects of the interview, that is about the use of critical thinking in organizing the reasons is indicated by the second and the third questions of the interview. For the second question "How do the students organize the arguments?", three students answered that they started to organize their arguments by making an outline. There were only two students stating that they organized their arguments by using deductive and inductive reasoning. Then, there were three students answering that they organized their arguments that support their point of views by providing evidences, examples, and opinions. However, one of those three students added that she also stated the opposite argument and included the references.

After that, it was found from the third question "Have you considered whether the readers are likely to be unreceptive toward, neutral toward, or in agreement with your position? Why?" that six students considered that the readers would be in agreement with their point of views. There was one student answering that she did not know whether the readers would be in agreement with her point of view or not. In addition to that, another one student was not sure that the readers would agree with her position.

Meanwhile, the third aspect which focuses on the use of critical thinking in resolving problems that the students experience when writing the essays are indicated by the fourth and the fifth questions of the interview. Derived from the fourth question "What problems did the student experience in writing the essay?", the students found problems in deciding the topic, looking for a proper conjunction, adding more evidences, examples, theory, opposing arguments, and organizing the paragraphs. Furthermore, they also

made some grammatical errors. Meanwhile, from the last question stating as "How did the students resolve the problems?", it was found that most of the students tried to find their solution to resolve the problems by searching in the internet, asking suggestion to their friend, and reading books. And from the eight students, there were only five students were able to resolve the problems while the other three students did not find the answers to their problems.

### DISCUSSION

#### THE STUDENTS' ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS

Based on the field observation, the lecturer started to give argumentative materials in the twelfth meeting. The researcher did not focus on observing the teaching and learning process of argumentative writing. Instead, he focuses more on investigating the students' writing compositions. The researcher took and analyzed the data of observation in the fourteenth meeting. The researcher only analyzed the students' first draft writing products. The essays were analyzed by the researcher using an observation checklist that was adapted from a theory by Cottrell (2005). There were eight characteristics that had been analyzed by the researcher. They were the writer's position, reason, main reason and key points, evidences, opposing argument, conclusion, essay content, and belief.

In the writer's position, it was found that most students clearly stated their positions. It has a clearly stated thesis statement which indicates that the writer agreed or disagreed to the issue. Therefore, it is in line with Cottrell's theory that one of the critical thinking characteristics in writing is that the writer's position must be clear. It means the writer must have a standpoint in making decisions, whether the writer stands for one side or stands against it.

In the writer's reason, it was found that most of the students clearly stated the reasons for their points of view. It was shown that the reasons were provided to support and strengthen the writer's point of view. This is related to Cottrell's theory that the writer's reasons are supposed to clearly reflect the writer's point of view which is intended that the reasons are provided to support the writer's point of view. It was also found that most of the students presented the reasons in a logical order as a line of reasoning. It is related to Cottrell's theory that the reasons must be provided in a logical order as a line of reasoning. It means that the reasons are arranged in a way that the readers could find what they needed to read first in order to be acquainted with the writer's point of view. However, it was also found that most of the students did not link the reasons clearly to one another. It is not in line with Cottrell's theory that

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the reasons must be linked to one another and to the conclusion. It means that the writer should use any correlative words or conjunctions to correlate the reasons. Therefore, the readers can be easily engaged with the writer's position.

In the writer's main reason and key points, it was found that most of the students stood out their main reasons and key points clearly to the reader. It is related with Cottrell's theory that the main reason and key points should stand out clearly to the reader in which it requires that the writer should give more space of information on the core and most important reasons in supporting the writer's argument.

In the writer's evidence, it was revealed that most of the students used evidence to strengthen the arguments very well. It is related to Cottrell's theory stating that critical thinking characteristics in writing also require the writer to use evidences to strengthen the arguments very well. Therefore, the writer should give enough information, data, examples, or expert's opinion to strengthen the point of view.

In the writer's opposing arguments, it was shown that most of the students did not provide any opposing arguments. It is not in line with the theory of Cottrell that there should be a reasonable evaluation of other people's views that contradict the writer's point of view.

In the writer's conclusion, it was revealed that four students stated clear conclusions while the other four students did not state clear conclusions. Having clear conclusion is in line with Cottrell's theory which states the conclusion should clearly restate the thesis statement and briefly summarize all the reasons and evidences to settle the writer's point of view.

Related to the essays' content, it was presented that most of the students' essay content were consistent. It is in line with Cottrell's theory that the essay content must be consistent. It means that the writing has to be coherent to the writer's first argument.

In the writer's belief, it was shown that most of the students' belief or self interest distorted the arguments. The students were not objective in positioning their arguments. It is not related with the Cottrell's theory that the writer's self interest or belief should not distort the arguments. It means that the writer has to be objective in positioning his argument in the writing.

### **The Use of Critical Thinking to Construct Argumentative Essay**

After the students accomplished the essay and the researcher had analyzed the results of the essay, the researcher conducted an interview regarding to the use of critical thinking by the students to construct argumentative essay. The interview guidelines were adapted from Kirsznner and Mandell (2007)

and Hunter (2014). The questions of the interview consist of three aspects. The first aspect is about the use of critical thinking to choose the topic of the essay. The second aspect is about the use of critical thinking in organizing the reasons or arguments. Meanwhile, the third aspect is about the use of critical thinking in resolving problems that the students experience when writing the essay.

The interview result shows that the students chose the topic from different sources and different perspectives based on their point of view. They selected the topic from their own experience, daily observation, social media and electronic. Some of the students also selected the topic that was considered as an interesting and fascinating topic for their essays. It was also found that most of the students selected the topic that is debatable. It is related with the theory of Kirsznner and Mandell (2007) that the topic of argumentative essays should be debatable. Since an argumentative essay tries to adjust the way people think thus it must be focused on a debatable topic. The topic should be narrow enough and not too broad since it will help the writer to develop ideas and to present convincing support while also providing the strength and the weaknesses of opposing arguments. Moreover, the topic should be interesting. The writer should select the topic that has not been discussed or written frequently so that the writer will be able to involve something to the debate.

While in organizing the reasons, the students mostly stated the reasons orderly as the organization of the argumentative essays. At last, it was found that the students had different problems in constructing their writing such as making grammatical error, finding the right topic, looking for more evidences, and providing and refuting opposing arguments. Furthermore, most of them stated that they were able to resolve the problems. It is in line with the theory of Hunter (2014) about resolving problems. He states that critical thinking should be reflective since it comprises thinking about problems at different points and angles at once, and it demands appropriate methods to solve the problems. Thus, a problem requires thinking hard to find the solution for it. To solve the problem may require analyzing the problems, thinking the best approach to find the solution and thinking about the appropriate way to employ the argument approach.

### **CONCLUSION**

Related to the observation checklist and document analysis results that attempting to answer the first research question investigating how critical thinking was reflected in the students' argumentative essays, there were tenth criteria or characteristic of critical thinking in writing based on the theory of Cottrell (2005). The first

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characteristic is the writer's position. The writer's position must be clear. It means the writer must have a standpoint in making decisions; whether the writer stands for one side or stands against it. Second, the writer's reasons should be clear that the reasons are for writer's point of view. It is intended that the reasons are provided to support the writer's point of view. Then, the reasons should be presented in a logical order, as a line of reasoning. Thus, the reasons must be arranged in a way that the readers could find what they need to read first in order to be acquainted with the writer's point of view. The last, the reasons must be clearly linked to one another and to the conclusion. It implies that the reasons must be correlated to each other so the readers can be easily engaged with the writer's position. Third, the writer's main reasons and key points should stand out clearly to the reader. It requires the writer to give more space of information on the core and most important reasons in supporting the writer's argument. Fourth, the writer's evidence must be provided enough so that it will convince the reader to the argument. Fifth, the writer's opposing arguments. In this point, the writer must decide the opposite arguments that will lead the reader to recognize why the writer is in that standpoint. Sixth, the writer's conclusion should be clear and based on the evidence. In other words, the conclusion must summarize all reasons and evidences to settle the writer's point of view. Seventh, the essay's content must be consistent. It means that the writing has to be coherent to the writer's first argument. The last is the writer's belief. In this point, the writer has to be objective in positioning his argument in the writing. In other words, the writer must not be controlled by any personal principles and advantages in stating and providing reasons and evidences related to his arguments. It was concluded that from all the criteria mentioned, most of the students had been considered successful in reflecting critical thinking in writing their argumentative essay.

While regarding to the result of the interviews that endeavor to answer the first research question examining how the students used critical thinking in constructing argumentative essays, it was concluded that the students had applied the critical thinking very well. It was shown from the first aspect of the interview about the use of critical thinking in constructing argumentative essay that the students mostly chose a debatable topic. Therefore, it was considered that the students had applied critical thinking very well. From the second aspect of the interview, it was also considered that the writer had successfully used critical thinking in constructing their argumentative essay by using an orderly good organization of argumentative essay and presenting the reasons very well. Then in the third aspect of the interview, it was shown that the students were also considered

successful in using critical thinking by resolving problems that they experienced in writing the essay.

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