

EFL STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING IN SPEAKING ACTIVITIES

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana siswa EFL menerapkan berpikir kritis dalam aktivitas berbicara dan untuk mengeksplorasi tingkat berpikir kritis yang dicapai oleh siswa EFL dalam aktivitas berbicara di e-COLINK Pontianak. Populasi dalam penelitian ini adalah siswa EFL tingkat advanced 3 e-COLINK Pontianak yang berjumlah delapan siswa. Sampel penelitian ini dipilih dengan menggunakan teknik total sampling. Peneliti menerapkan jenis penelitian deskriptif dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah observasi dan komunikasi langsung. Untuk pengumpulan data, peneliti menggunakan instrumen berupa catatan lapangan dan wawancara. Untuk menganalisis data, peneliti menggunakan analisis deskriptif kualitatif, yang didasarkan pada teori dari Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker (2014). Hasilnya, peneliti mengungkapkan bahwa siswa EFL menerapkan berpikir kritis dalam aktivitas berbicara berdasarkan indikator berpikir kritis dari beberapa penulis yang telah diringkas menjadi enam bagian. Tingkat berpikir kritis yang dicapai oleh siswa EFL adalah tingkat Understand dan Apply yang ditunjukkan sebagai tingkat rendah, dan tingkat Evaluate yang ditunjukkan sebagai tingkat tinggi.

Kata Kunci: siswa EFL, berpikir kritis, aktivitas berbicara, presentasi, debat

Abstract

This research aimed to investigate how EFL students apply critical thinking in speaking activities and to explore the levels of critical thinking achieved by EFL students in speaking activities at e-COLINK Pontianak. The population of this research was the EFL students of advanced level 3 at e-COLINK Pontianak with a total of eight students. The samples of this research were selected using total sampling technique. The researcher applied the type of descriptive research with a qualitative approach. The techniques of data collection used in this research were observation and direct communication. For collecting the data, the researcher used the instruments such as field notes and interview. To analyze the data, the researcher used descriptive qualitative analysis, which was based on the theory from Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker (2014). As the results, the researcher revealed that the EFL students applied critical thinking in speaking activities based on the indicators of critical thinking from some authors that had been summarized into six sections. The levels of critical thinking achieved by the EFL students were level of Understand and Apply which indicated as low level, and level of Evaluate which indicated as high level.

Keywords: EFL students, critical thinking, speaking activities, oral presentation, debate

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INTRODUCTION

In performing English-speaking activities, the students are frequently trained to think, remember, solve problems, and make decisions that are parts of the cognitive domain. It has an essential role for students' success in speaking activities because they do not practice only on speaking English. Still, they also practice understanding, explore

information, and create new ideas. The cognitive domain is involved in the strategies used by most students in developing their speaking skills while doing speaking activities (Kusumaningsih, Baharuddin, & Anita, 2021: 274). The speaking activities, which contain the cognitive domain, can train the students to think critically in receiving various types of information, think creatively in solving problems using their knowledge and make decisions in complex situations. Thus, the students have to improve their abilities in the cognitive domain to develop communication competence in all conditions.

One of the skills that the students need in the 21st century based on curriculum 2013, which involves the cognitive domain is critical thinking skill. It refers to the ability to use general cognitive processing skills to analyze, evaluate, and construct new ideas or create and allow students to think deeply in solving problems in different ways (Kivunja, 2015: 227). It means that critical thinking is an important thing that the students must own because it stimulates students' cognitive reasoning in acquiring knowledge. Critical thinking skills can train the students to be more active during the speaking activities because the students are used to listening carefully to other students in discussion before criticizing the ideas and making the best decisions to argue the other students' arguments. Therefore, the ability of critical thinking is needed by the students because during the speaking activities, the students must be able to develop ideas about the problems contained in the learning.

Critical thinking can encourage the students to improve their speaking performance in the classroom. The success of speaking performance is influenced by some factors, one of which is students' critical thinking. When the students are making presentations, the students who are critical thinkers are able to tell ideas well and be ready with answers to questions that may be given related to the topic being presented. The students who have critical thinking skills search the information first before they speak, and then they analyze the data, make rational decisions, and take purposeful action. Therefore, they will have better performance in speaking activities because they can express the idea accurately (Ramezani, Larsari, & Kiasi, 2016: 196).

Based on the researcher's experiences in teaching English at e-COLINK Pontianak, most students who can think critically during the speaking activities are students of advanced level. They are used to practice how to speak English fluently and practice criticizing problems or issues, argue different opinions from others, create some solutions and ideas about concepts, and other critical thinking skills. In learning English, the students

of advanced level frequently perform the speaking activities such as group discussions, debates, making presentations, describing many kinds of issues, role-playing, making speeches, and others (Brown & Lee, 2015). However, they do not know how far their level or how good their critical thinking skills are in speaking activities. By knowing the level of critical thinking, the students can more effectively use critical thinking skills in any speaking activity and attempt to improve their speaking performance. In addition, they would realize how important critical thinking is for their success in speaking activities. Therefore, it was necessary to conduct a study to explore further the levels of critical thinking achieved by the students in the speaking activities especially in presentation and debate because these two activities can show the students' critical thinking effectively, where the students need to prepare in advance both material and other relevant information and provide detailed and logical explanations.

There were three previous studies that had investigated about students' critical thinking in speaking activities. First, Rahmawati (2018) reveals that most EFL students' ability to think critically in giving opinions during the discussion was low. Second, Utari (2020) establish that most EFL students could not achieve all of the levels of critical thinking based on Bloom's Taxonomy revised by Anderson & Krathwohl during the class discussion. Last, Erito, Bharati, & Astuti (2021) claim that EFL students positively perceived their use of critical thinking skills in their presentation, they believed that critical thinking skills help them to enable their presentation, English skills, and performance.

Based on the explanation above, other previous researchers who had conducted research related to the students' critical thinking in speaking activities have only investigated one type of speaking activity, which is only dialogue or monologue, but not both. Therefore, in this research, the researcher provided a further scope about the students' critical thinking in speaking activities, which are not only dialogue or monologue but also both of them. The researcher was eager to explore students' critical thinking in monologue activity that performed presentation and dialogue activities that performed English debate. These speaking activities were applied to the EFL students of advanced level 3 who are at the highest level at e-COLINK Pontianak and could use critical thinking skills better than the students are at other levels.

METHOD

The researcher applied the type of descriptive research with a qualitative approach, which focuses on the analysis or interpretation of the material in context to obtain

information about existing conditions according to reality (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2014). This research was conducted as descriptive qualitative because the data are in the form of words describing how the students apply critical thinking in speaking activities and the levels of critical thinking achieved by the students in speaking activities. The population of this research was EFL students of advanced level 3 at e-COLINK Pontianak There are two classes for students of advanced level 3 which the total number of students is eight. The researcher used total sampling to select the sample of research because according to Sugiyono (2015), total sampling was used if the population of the research was relatively small or not more than thirty people. Therefore, the sample of this research was equal to the number of the population, which is only eight students of advanced level 3 at e-COLINK Pontianak

To collect the data, the researcher conducted observation which was assisted with field notes and camera. By observing, the researcher can directly see how the students apply critical thinking in speaking activities which aims to determine the levels of critical thinking achieved by the students based on the revision of Bloom's Taxonomy which are stated by Anderson & Krathwohl (2010). The levels of critical thinking are divided into six parts, i.e. Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate and Create. The researcher needs the indicators of students' potential in speaking activities as a reference in determining the levels of critical thinking. These indicators indicate some different ways of students in applying critical thinking in presentation and debate for each level of critical thinking. However, the data about how the students apply critical thinking in speaking activities could not completely obtained only by observation. The researcher needed to conduct direct communication in the form of interview with each student. It aims to gain more complete data especially about the students' potential in applying critical thinking which are related to the level of Analyze, Evaluate, and Create. The researcher would ask some questions based on the six indicators of critical thinking, which are relevant to each level of critical thinking based on the revision of Bloom's Taxonomy in interview guidelines, which are summarized by the researcher from some authors. In addition, the interview process was assisted by mobile phone as voice recorder, so the researcher would obtain the data more effectively. Therefore, the researcher could analyze how the students apply critical thinking in presentation and debate to determine the levels of critical thinking achieved by each student accurately.

In this study, the researcher used descriptive qualitative analysis to analyze the data from observation and interview based on the theory from Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker (2014). There are three simple stages for descriptive qualitative analysis, i.e. (1) familiarizing and organizing, (2) coding and reducing, and (3) interpreting and representing. Therefore, the researcher conducted these stages of descriptive qualitative analysis along with the conclusion as the result of analyzing the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher would like to present the findings regarding the problem of this research. The findings indicate the result of the data that had been obtained through observation and interview. The data obtained from the observation are in the form of video recordings organized as transcript of observation, while the data obtained from the interview are in the form of audio recordings organized as transcript of interview. These two results were used to support the data in the field notes. It could answer how the students apply critical thinking in speaking activities based on the six indicators of critical thinking and then, it would use to determine the levels of critical thinking achieved by the students.

The result data about how the students apply critical thinking in speaking activities was summarized into a bar chart to determine the levels of critical thinking achieved by the students as follows:

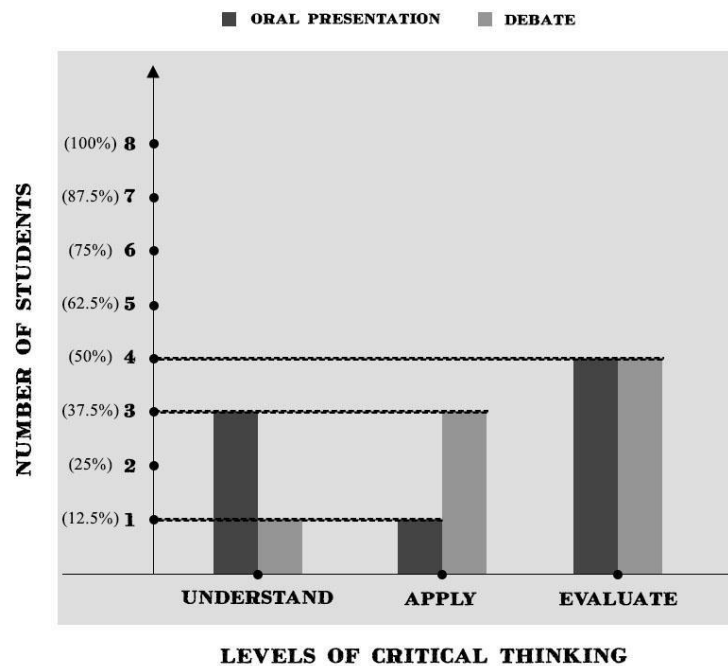


Figure 1. Levels of Critical Thinking Achieved by the Students

This bar chart shows the number of students who achieved levels of critical thinking in the presentation and debate. The total number of students is 8. However, there are only 4 (50%) students named BQ, DW, FN, and SM who could reach the level of Evaluate in both presentation and debate. In addition, the level of Understand was achieved by more students in the presentation than in the debate. There were 3 (37.5%) students named AG, JC, and MN who achieved the level of Understand in the presentation, while in the debate there was only 1 (12.5%) student named JC who achieved the level of Understand. Meanwhile, the level of Apply was achieved by more students in the debate than in the presentation. There were 3 (37.5%) students named AG, MN, and SS who achieved the level of Apply in the debate, while in the presentation there was only 1 (12.5%) student named SS who achieved the level of Apply.

Based on the research findings, the researcher discussed the results more in detail about how the EFL students apply critical thinking in speaking activities and the levels of critical thinking achieved by the EFL students in speaking activities as follow:

The EFL Students Apply Critical Thinking in Speaking Activities

In applying critical thinking, the EFL students need to carry out all the indicators of critical thinking, which are classified into six sections. *First*, identifying the terms, facts, and basic concepts through retrieval or recall of previously learned information (Ennis, 2011; Fisher, 2011; and Facione, 2015). Each student must have found new words, which they never knew before in English when conduct the presentation and debate. However, not all the EFL students often find the unknown words, some of them find only occasionally or sometimes. Moreover, the EFL students must have a way that they always do when they find the unknown words. For identifying the unknown words, all the EFL students have the same way, which is by searching on Google Translate to get the information about translation and meaning of the words. As stated by Raza & Nor (2018), EFL learners find Google Translator as an efficient tool and a handy tool for learners and educators for semantic understanding of the new vocabulary items. In addition, there are other EFL students who do not only search on Google Translate, but also have other ways to identify the unknown words, which are by looking for translations in the dictionary and asking friends or people who understand more.

Second, describing the problems through interpretation of the main ideas or facts that have been known (Angelo, 1996 as cited in Seventika, Sukestiyarno, & Mariani, 2018; Ennis, 2011; Fisher, 2011; and Facione, 2015). In the implementation of presentation and debate, the

topic and motion are determined by the teacher. In the presentation, the EFL students prepare the material according to their business plan properly with brief texts and relevant pictures that support each other as an explanation of the material. In addition, some of the EFL students prefer to bring notes when explaining the material that they think is difficult in order not to forget the material. As claimed by Al-Nouh, Abdul-Kareem, & Taq (2015), many students reported “always” bringing their written notes with them during their oral presentation, even if well- prepared because notes make students feel more secure and reduce their anxiety. However, in explaining the material about business plan, the EFL students do not bring notes and explain further the material clearly in their own words by speaking English fluently. Moreover, the EFL students explain the material in presentation clearly and easily for the audience to understand by using simple words, not in a low voice, and not nervous. This finding is in line with the previous research conducted by Erito, Bharati, & Astuti (2021) which reveal that EFL students could practice in explaining the result of their work in their presentation.

Meanwhile in the debate, the EFL students describe the argument according to the motion of debate and their team correctly with specific, logical, and clear reasons or facts by speaking English quite fluently and politely. The students explain the arguments logically by providing examples of daily events, facts, and various other information that has been read, while explain politely by speaking in formal language, clear voice, and not interrupting. As mentioned by Beqiri (2018), the important skills for debating are speaking clearly and concisely, keeping the language simple to avoid confusion, putting aside personal views and remain objective so the argument remains logical, and avoiding interrupting other debaters. As mentioned by Chakravorty (2018), the good debaters are very clear about what they speak and state the same in a loud and clear tone. In order not to be easily rebutted by the opponent team, the EFL students strengthen the arguments in debate by telling the reasons, facts, examples of real events, and effects or consequences.

Third, using the acquired knowledge and information in new ways to solve the problem (Facione, 2015). In conducting the presentation and debate in online meeting, the EFL students need to prepare several things so that the presentation and debate could be carried out properly. What EFL students prepare before conducting online meetings are internet network; neat clothes; laptop or PC or hand phone; earphone; and a quiet room. As stated by Liu (2020) and Fadiyah (2020), some guidelines to look professional in online meeting are making sure that all tools work properly, checking the appearance which must dress professionally, using a laptop and not a smartphone, and making sure the room is free from

interruption. In addition to the internet network, there are other things that must be managed well such as condition of room, angles of camera, lighting, and video background. Liu (2020) and Fadiyah (2020) describe that another things that should be managed are background that must be neutral-coloured, creating good lighting by using LED desk lamp, and raising the webcam to eye-level. In the online presentation, the EFL students provide the information according to their business plan correctly accompanied by relevant pictures and brief text. Furthermore, the EFL students conduct successfully the presentation in online meeting, while some of the students conduct unsuccessfully because of turning off the camera, speaking nervously, and explaining the material briefly. Meanwhile in the online debate, there is EFL student who conducts unsuccessfully because of speaking in low voice, turning off the camera, and explaining the argument with brief and unclear reasons or facts.

Fourth, examining the information obtained by distinguishing between the components of different parts with concepts and strategies (Angelo, 1996 as cited in Seventika, Sukestiyarno, & Mariani, 2018; Ennis, 2011; and Facione, 2015). In comparing the presentation and debate conducted between face-to-face and online, EFL students describe some differences between of them which are divided into three parts, namely the implementation, the difficulties, and how to overcome the difficulties. The differences of implementation between presentation and debate conducted both face-to-face and online stated by the EFL students are internet network, displaying the presentation screen, devices, location, atmosphere, contact with the audience, time, and additional information. In addition, the EFL students explained the difficulties that they faced in the presentation and debate both face-to-face and online, namely memorizing the material for presentation, limited time in debate, maintaining eye contact with the audience, seen face-to-face by the audience or other students, sick, rebutting others' statements, weak internet network, other speaker spoke in low voice, noisy place, and devices did not support. As mentioned by Al-Nouh, Abdul-Kareem, & Taq (2015), one of the difficulties face the EFL students is lack of eye contact with the audience.

Another difficulty in oral presentation stated by Rajoo (2010) is memorizing problem which can led the students to the blankness. Furthermore, the EFL students also distinguish the way they overcome the difficulties in the presentation and debate conducted both face-to-face and online, namely practicing more; bringing a note; glancing at the sheets of paper provided; checking first the internet network, devices, and room; looking at the audience's forehead; changing the direction of view to the audience; collecting as much information as possible; eating a lot; and enriching vocabulary. Moreover, EFL students compare with

specific enough the presentation and debate that are conducted between face-to-face and online. This finding is in line with the previous research conducted by Erito, Bharati, & Astuti (2021) which state that EFL students could use their analysis skill in their work well to succeed in delivering the result of their analysis of the story in presentation. However, there are some EFL students who compare them without being specific enough because of not mentioning the differences completely.

Fifth, judging the quality and value of information or ideas based on specific criteria and standards (Angelo, 1996 as cited in Seventika, Sukestiyarno, & Mariani, 2018; Fisher, 2011; and Facione, 2015). When carrying out the presentation and debate, there must be mistakes made by the students. All the mistakes described by the EFL students are providing a lot of text in the material, speaking nervously, not explaining further, speaking in low voice, turning off the camera, and not paying attention to other speaker. As said by Arriesgado (2019), the common mistakes in presentation that should be avoided are too much text or information in slides, not getting straight to the point, not dressing appropriately, not making eye contact, not speaking clearly, and reading the presentation slides. In addition, each student also give some advice for the other students who made mistakes in the implementation of presentation and debate, namely lowering the text, adding more explanation, not speaking nervously, speaking louder, turning on camera, not paying attention to anything else, practicing more, improving understanding, checking microphone, being more confident, and eating a lot. As claimed by Chakravorty (2018) and Beqiri (2018), the important things that the debaters should do is acting confident, speaking loudly and clearly, doing research well, giving a reason to make the statement valid, understanding the material, emphasizing using gestures and avoiding nervous gestures. Moreover, there are some EFL students criticize the implementation of other students' presentation and debate completely and appropriately. Meanwhile other EFL students criticize them without being complete and appropriate enough because of stating the mistakes and advice briefly. This finding is in line with the previous research conducted by Erito, Bharati, & Astuti (2021) which claim that EFL students cannot give evaluations to other students because their explanation skills are not good enough in presentation.

Sixth, synthesizing the information from different sources or materials to create new perspectives or ideas (Angelo, 1996 as cited in Seventika, Sukestiyarno, & Mariani, 2018). Between presentation and debate, there must be one that the students want to improve the most. Some EFL students prefer to improve debating skills rather than presentation because it can train for speaking and thinking skills and also some students are still not good

at arguing and. Meanwhile, other EFL students would like to improve the presentation skills because it is needed in work and education and there is a student who is still nervous. In order to improve presentation and debate skills, the students must be able to design strategies accurately. The strategies must show a process of methods systematically and in detail, which include all aspects of presentation and debate. Some strategies to improve presentation and debate skills designed by EFL students are watching more the implementation of debate, observing problem, having speaking skills, being confident, improving how to explain the material, speaking practice, and enriching vocabulary. However, none of the EFL students design strategies accurately and describe them in detail.

The Levels of Critical Thinking Achieved by the EFL Students in Speaking Activities

The levels of critical thinking are based on the revised version of Bloom's Taxonomy, which are stated by stated by Anderson & Krathwohl (2010). The levels are divided into low levels, namely Remember, Understanding, and Apply, and high levels, namely Analyze, Evaluate, and Create. Each level has potentials that show the students apply critical thinking in speaking activities. These potentials have different levels of difficulty. Thus, the higher the levels of difficulty, the higher the levels of critical thinking achieved by the students.

In the presentation, the EFL students could achieve the levels of critical thinking, namely levels of Understand, Apply, and Evaluate. This finding is in line with the previous research conducted by Utari (2020) which reveal that EFL students could not achieve the highest levels of critical thinking in speaking activities, namely level of Create, but the students only achieve the level of Understand and Evaluate. The levels of Understand and Apply indicate that the EFL students had low level of critical thinking. This finding is in line with the previous research conducted by Rahmawati (2018) which claim that EFL students` ability to think critically in speaking activities was low. It is because the EFL students at these levels have potentials that do not involve the complex thinking processes. It was proven based on the potentials of students which showed that the EFL students were not good enough at analyzing the differences, evaluating the implementation, and creating the strategies to improve the presentation skills. The EFL students who achieved level of Understand could only explain the material for presentation as usual, while those at the level of Apply, apart from being able to explain the material, they could also make the presentations in new or unfamiliar situation that was in online meeting. However, this finding is also in contrast to what Rahmawati (2018) claim because the EFL students who achieve level of Evaluate indicate that they have high level of critical thinking. It was proven based on the potentials

of students, which showed that the EFL students could properly carry out the complex thinking processes, namely comparing the differences between the face-to-face and online presentations and criticizing the presentations of other students. Meanwhile, the EFL students at this level could not design strategies accurately in improving presentation skills.

The levels of critical thinking achieved by the EFL students in the debate were the same as that achieved in the presentation and in line with the previous research conducted by Utari (2020). The low level of critical thinking achieved by the EFL students in the debate were levels of Understand and Apply which in line with the previous research conducted by Rahmawati (2018). At level of Understand, the EFL students had potentials, which only involve the simple thinking processes, namely explaining the arguments for debate as usual, while those at the level of Apply, apart from being able to explain the arguments, they could also conduct the debate in online meeting. However, the number of EFL students who achieved the level of Apply in the debate was more than in the presentation. Moreover, this finding is also in contrast to what Rahmawati (2018) state because the EFL students also achieved the high level of critical thinking in the debate, namely level of Evaluate. At level of Evaluate, the EFL students had potentials, which involved the complex thinking processes, namely criticizing the other students who had conducted the debate both face-to-face and online. Even so, they could not design strategies appropriately in improving their debating skills.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that the way EFL students apply critical thinking in speaking activities are divided into six sections, which are based on the indicators of critical thinking. *First*, the students identified the unknown terms or words by searching on Google Translate, in dictionary, and asking someone who understand more. *Second*, the students described the problems formulated in speaking activities by providing detailed explanations with some relevant information in simple words, logical reasons or facts, and polite manner. *Third*, the students applied the way to explain the problems in a new situation, namely in online meeting by managing the internet connection, angles of camera, lighting, condition of room, and video background in order to look professional in conveying the information to the audience. *Fourth*, the students examined the different processes of interpreting the problems by comparing the implementation, the difficulties encountered, and how to overcome the difficulties based on what the students had done in face-to-face and online meetings. *Fifth*, the students criticized the procedures in solving the problems by mentioning all the mistakes made by other students during the implementation of speaking

activities from beginning to end. *Sixth*, the students constructed new ideas in improving the ability to solve problems by designing the strategies in the form of method processes that can encourage the students to develop their potential in dealing with problems in any situation.

The critical thinking of EFL students was not satisfactory enough, because they could not achieve the highest level of critical thinking, namely level of Create. It could be seen by the way they could only make a deal with the levels of Understand, Apply, and Evaluate, which were based on their potentials in applying critical thinking in speaking activities. The EFL students who achieved level of Evaluate indicated that they have high level of critical thinking because they could use their thinking skills in solving complex problems. Meanwhile, the EFL students who achieved level of Understand and Apply indicated that they have low level of critical thinking because they could only solve simple problems with their thinking skills.

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