

# TAPESTRY OF CRITICAL THINKING IN INDONESIAN CONTEXT

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Critical thinking has been a prominent issue in several discourses lately. In this guest lecture I will discuss five main points. First is on the notion of critical thinking. Second, let's measure how critical thinker you are. The third presentation is on the discussion of examples if critical thinking is not processed well. Then, we will discuss whether critical thinking is equal to language skill. The last presentation is on critical thinking and media literacy

## What is Critical Thinking?

Many different definitions with similar meanings are given by scholars. Yet, the easiest one is that "Critical thinking is the ability to apply reasoning and logic to new or unfamiliar ideas, opinions, and situations." This is relevant to what Socrates, Greek philosopher said "I cannot teach anybody anything, I can only make them think."

Why Critical Thinking is important? In this case I need to mention the main three reasons:

- It fosters innovation and problem solving skills
- It promotes 'outside the box' thinking
- It also promotes higher rates of knowledge retention

What about for EFL students? The facts below emphasize how important CT is.

1. Critical thinking skills are teachable. For EFL, students need to become cognizant of cultural implications.
2. It makes classes better:
  - Classes are more interesting and engaging
  - It creates a sense of community and cohesiveness in the classroom

- Students are empowered to think and question

Now we come to the question whether you are a critical thinker or not. Please spend fifteen minutes to do the assessment and to check the result. Then, we will discuss how to deal with it.

### What if not think critically?

Some people do not realize that they are very productive in making fallacious statements as the result of ignoring the thinking critically. Fallacious statements may occur on several ways. It can exist between the statements in an argument attempt (logos), between the argument and the character of those involved in the argument (ethos), and between what is argued and the audience (pathos).

In a research on fallacies, it shows the pattern of fallacious statements made by English department students (Indah, 2015). The following are some examples of the statement

#### Examples of Logos on **Hasty generalizations**

- *The disadvantage of becoming career woman is that they cannot be a good housewife (B5.55)*
- *The family can be broken because they are busy with their work, the career women will lose the chance to make their family happy (B5.56)*
- *All of the program in television give disadvantages to the children (B11.66)*
- Examples of Logos

#### **Begging the questions**

- *Changing Indonesian perspective into liberal thinking is one of the dangerous disadvantages of prostitution (C1.80)*
- *After seeing the reality that Indonesia has more than 247 millions of people, Indonesian government tries to do something to decrease the number of Indonesian (C5.91)*
- Examples of Logos

#### **Oversimplifications**

- *Let's begin with closing the prostitution places in Indonesia, it will make Indonesian in good morality (C1.80)*
- *Early marriage can help them to prevent the bad effect of free sex (B3.50)*

- *University student should wear uniform to equalize the social level around them (B9.61)*
- *With uniform university students can improve their study (B9.62)*
- *By consuming pill KB we can prevent the cancer, because it can manage the number of children in the family (A10.35)*

Why this happens? There is tendency of leaping the premises to come to the direct conclusion. This finding is in line with the way Japanese students made flawed reasoning in their argumentative essays as found by Stapleton (2001). In addition, the more familiar the students with the topic, the more number of fallacies found (Indah, 2013).

### **Is critical thinking a matter of language?**

In one of my research, I found that students show their critical thinking skill in both Bahasa Indonesia and English. Their type of responses are translation (50%), elaboration (36%), reduction (14%). Through translating from English to BI, the improvement in the communicativeness quality can be seen in stating knowledge, making inference and giving evidence. Both reflective writing results in a not significantly different score of CT skills.

This fact shows that the use of different language gives no significant effect in communicating CT in reflective writing. This demonstrates that **communicating critical thinking can be done across different languages.**

Regarding the dynamic of critical thinking, one thing to be kept in mind: Don't blame technology. As technology has played a bigger role in our lives, our skills in critical thinking and analysis have declined, while our visual skills have improved. Students today have more visual literacy and less print literacy. Reading for pleasure has declined among young people in recent decades, which affects writing productivity. Therefore technology is only a tool, the key is in human's mind, to think critically or not.

Concerning the use of critical thinking and media today, some issues are relevant to discuss. One of the examples is the hoax and the need more reader's media maturity. Media maturity and literacy is characterized by the awareness to do some procedure such as learning to check the sources, question the credibility of the information, compare with other sources as critical competence in information society (Duperrin, 2013).

Why do we need media maturity? The first reason is that media texts possess components & influences for consumers containing values & points of view. In this case, audience determines the meaning & importance of the values (Worsnop, 2004). These values and points of view belong to conceptual framework requiring critical thinking.

Social Media and Critical Thinking can support one another in the context of academic purpose. For instance the use of Edmodo, Whatsapp messenger etc. Edutainment social media can foster CT through the online activities of literary appreciation, responding

arguments, and self-reflection (Sari et al., 2014)

Despite the socmed pro con, we need to realize that it also brings benefits. It can give learners confidence to be more expressive in sharing ideas (Rizal & Stephen, 2012). It also supports higher-order reasoning processes (Magolda & Magolda 2011). In this case we should also note that to enhance social connection is not primarily on learning (McEwan, 2012) and various fallacies may be produced by heterogeneous netizen (Indah, 2016)

If English department students realize that they can practise and implement critical thinking in daily life while being engaged in social networking, they can identify jump cuts, fades, and voiceovers. They also can detect bias and the power of words to shift meaning . However, if they do not have awareness to apply critical thinking, they can easily involve relatively passive reception without employing much more mental activity (Kubey, 2002)

## Conclusion

CT components should be brought to EFL setting, to enable students deconstruct and search for meaningful information supporting their learning process. To implement critical thinking also denotes to hold the success of student's academic career and achievement. It requires some stages. First, internalize your need to improve your thinking quality by realizing your own potential. Start with reflective thinking to your studying performance as students of English Letters and Language department. Second, sharpen your thinking skill by always developng questions that will construct your thought and understanding on conceptual framework to build systematic and strong knoweldge. Third, hold your commitment to be a critical thinker who is productive academically. These will lead you all to be students as figure of life long autonomous learner. Good luck!