

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter illustrates the introduction to the study which highlights the background of the study. This chapter focuses on students' critical thinking in writing an English exposition text that mostly identifies the elements of critical thinking reflected by students in writing an English exposition text, and to find out students' opinions about critical thinking in writing an English exposition text. The rest of this chapter elaborates aims of the study, research questions, scope of the study, the significance of the study, definition of the terms and thesis organization.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Critical thinking has become a great concern among educators and educational theorists today, including those who are involved in EFL context such as Alwasilah (2001, p. 65), Brown (2001), and Emilia (2005, p. 165). Because of its beneficial value, teaching English should be developed to foster students' critical thinking so that it enables the students to understand the hidden truth and to uncover the essence of a message (Alwasilah, 2001, p. 65). Thus, English classroom practices suggested by critical thinking seem to be worth carrying out immediately in order to improve not only their learning in EFL but also critical capacities (Emilia, 2001, p. 276). Since a number of "hot-topics" that addressed in classroom demand critical thinking, students are encouraged to express their points of view openly (Brown, 2001, p. 444). Parallel to the consensus above, other experts have also necessitated the practice of critical thinking that should be taught effectively in the classroom (Suherdi, 2012, p. 18; Reichenbach, 2001; Crawford et al, 2005; Weil & Anderson, 2000; Kagan, 1999; Brookfield, 1987; Browne & Keeley, 2007).

There are several research results regarding the implementation of critical thinking taught in teaching English, in particular, in writing, either from Indonesia (Emilia, 2005) or other countries such as, from Japan (Stapleton, 2002), and

Philippine (Flores, 2007). The first research is the one provided by Emilia (2005). The research was conducted to 18 semester six student teachers of a Bachelor Degree for 11 weeks in a tertiary EFL context in Indonesia. It reveals that the students' argumentative writing skills in English improve the achievement of argumentative genre which indicates their development in critical thinking.

Moreover, a research reported by Stapleton (2002) conducting in a semester in an English writing class in Japan indicates that changes in society resulted in a greater sense among a younger generation of Japanese to voice (through writing, in particular) their ideas clearly, and to criticize the ideas of others regardless their status. Another research investigated by Flores (2007) was conducted to forty students of non- English department in Philippine. The findings of the study show that the students' argumentative papers demonstrate relatively good level skill. Holistic score of 2 and 3 suggests that the papers are relatively good attempts at developing a moderately well-developed argument without having difficulties in stating their opinions.

However, those research results mentioned above still focus on a predominantly argumentative writing in general; it does not emphasize the type of argumentative genre, in particular, exposition text (as conducted in the present study). Moreover, all participants in the study mentioned above are more than six participants. Unlike the two other studies, namely Emilia (2005) and Stapleton (2002) (see also Aliakbari & Sadighdaghighi, 2012) whose research participants are in EFL context, Flores (2007), does not recruit participants under the context of EFL; the participants are the students of non- English department and in ESL context. The explanation above seems to provide an implication that it is still very rare for critical thinking in writing an exposition text to be investigated.

Recalling critical thinking leads students to a higher level thinking (Reichenbach, 2001; Kagan, 1999; Weil & Anderson, 2000), to have their own reasoning and decisions (Crawford et al, 2005; Ennis, 1996, p. xvii), and to become more self-reliant (Browne & Keeley, 2007), study emphasizes critical thinking in writing an English exposition text is worth conducting. In addition, it must be kept in mind that an exposition text is a type of genre text that is taught in

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writing class in a tertiary level. Besides, an exposition text that is a complex skill and thinking (Westwood, 2008, p. 56, p. 57) and as “a means to convey ideas of our own” (Reichenbach, 2001, p. 213), needs higher-level thinking and ability to synthesize information (Chaffee et al, 2002), and also is useful to judge critical thinking (Chaffee, 2000; Chaffee et al, 2002; Lipman, 2003 in Emilia, 2010, p. 4).

Since the study of exposition text is still rare and as it is worth conducting, this research is conducted to fulfill the intention and thus the research aims to investigate the elements of critical thinking that the students demonstrated in writing an English exposition text and to find out the students’ opinions about critical thinking in writing an English exposition text.

## **1.2 Aims of the Research**

As previously mentioned, this study is aimed at obtaining two following objectives.

1. To investigate the elements of critical thinking that the students demonstrate in writing an English exposition text;
2. To find out the students’ opinions about critical thinking in writing an English exposition text.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

This study is intended to answer two following research questions.

1. What elements of critical thinking do the students demonstrate in writing an English exposition text?
2. What do the students think about critical thinking in writing an English exposition text?

## **1.4 Scope of the Study**

The study focuses on the elements of critical thinking that students demonstrate in their exposition texts, and the students’ opinions about critical thinking in writing an English exposition text.

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### **1.5 The Significance of the Study**

The study is significant at least to three areas including theory, practice, and professional aspects. Theoretically, the result of this study can hopefully enrich the literature of critical thinking theory, in particular, exposition text. Further, it can become an effort to integrate and synthesize perspective and approach from different research areas regarding the development of critical thinking in writing. Practically, this research can provide an alternative methodology in teaching and assessing critical thinking. It is also expected that this study can encourage academic practitioners to try to implement this method in their classroom and can motivate the teachers and the students to engage the critical thinking in writing process effectively. Professionally, this study is expected to become an effort to prepare all parties (both students and academics practitioners) to be an agent of change that needs to be survived in the world which keeps changing.

### **1.6 The Definitions of Terms**

- Critical Thinking is defined as a process, a goal of which is to make reasonable decisions about what to believe and what to do (Ennis (1996, p. xvii).
- Writing is an English written communication which has been acquired through the proper instruction in learning the kind of genre text (Grabowski, 1996, p. 75 in Alderson & Bachman, 2002, p. 4).
- Exposition text is a type of argumentative essay that requires the student to investigate a topic; collect, generate, and evaluate evidence; and establish a position on the topic in a concise manner (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/685/05/>).

### **1.7 Thesis Organization**

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter I explains the introduction of the study, focusing on the basic concept of the study and the reasons behind the study. Chapter II consists of theoretical framework and reference of this study. It also contains the relation of the theories relating to the study. Chapter III presents

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the methodology of the study which consists of research design, method, research setting, research participants, data collections, and data analysis. Chapter IV comprises results and discussion. It contains the result of the study and its findings. Chapter V explains the conclusions of this study including the limitations of the study and recommendations for further studies. This chapter also elaborates the strengths and weaknesses of the study.