

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The research entitled “Critical Thinking Skill of Senior High School Students in Bandung as Reflected in Argumentative Text” was focused on investigating the critical thinking skill of one senior high school in Bandung students reflected through their argumentative text. This chapter provides background of the study, research questions, purposes of the study, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper.

1.1 Background of the Study

Critical thinking has been one of the skills highly needed in recent time. This is indicated by National Education Association (NEA) which declare critical thinking as a skill needed for citizen in order to survive in global world (National Education Association). Furthermore, critical thinking skill has been perceived as one of the most essential skills to survive in 21st century (Partnership, 2009).

The need for critical thinking in 21st century stems from ease of technology (Kreitzberg & Kreitzberg, n.d.). Owing to the massive growth of technology, information exchange is more rapid than ever. However, the flood of information overwhelm people (Menczer, 2016). In addition, not all information is reliable and factual (Kruglanski, 2017). A way to encounter the negative repercussion of information is needed in this situation and critical thinking fits appropriately. Critical thinking serves the purpose of enabling people to not only grasp the meaning of information but also to pick out information that is valuable and suitable with one’s need (Djiwandono, Critical thinking skills for language students, 2013).

Critical thinking according to Ennis (1987) is ‘reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do’. Meanwhile, Elder and Paul (1994) claimed that critical thinking is one’s ability to take control of their own thinking and developing criteria and standards which serve as analysis tool for their own thinking. Facione (1990) took one step further in defining critical thinking by gathering 46 experts of critical thinking in order to create a consensus of critical

thinking. The consensus, stated that critical thinking is purposeful and self-regulatory judgment. Then, Facione (2013) constructed several sets of skill which indicate and reflect critical thinking. They are interpretation, analysis, evaluation, explanation, inference, and self-regulation.

Realizing the importance of critical thinking, critical thinking starts to be taught in education and termed as *critical pedagogy*. Critical pedagogy refers to a way of learning critical thinking through learner-centered approach where students are engaged in critical activity (Larson, 2014).

In Indonesia, several years ago critical pedagogy was not fully accommodated due to conventional method usage, teacher-centered learning atmosphere, and rote memorization (Richmond, 2007). Students learned from copying what the teacher told them instead of thinking by themselves (Lengkanawati, 2004). The situation limited students' exposure to critical thinking and opportunity to exercise them. This was imperative because critical thinking is developed and sharpened only through practice (Kuhn, The skills of argument, 1991).

Fortunately, through the development of Indonesia's education system, critical pedagogy starts to be accommodated in 2013 curriculum. The prior curriculum that depends on rote technique has been changed into a contemporary one that places critical thinking as one of its focal points. In 2013 curriculum, learning process occurring in classroom setting is changed from the conventional, passive way into a more active learning process where students are centered and critical learning process is encouraged (Kementrian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2013). Although in practice, critical thinking was rarely exhibited by teachers in classroom (Suryanto, 2014), at least critical pedagogy's characteristics such as student-centered learning, interactive learning, and active-searching learning process have been constituted (Larson, 2014).

Not only implementing critical thinking in the curriculum and classroom activity, the government also takes one step further by applying Higher Order Thinking Skill (HOTS), an umbrella concept that includes critical thinking, into

nationwide assessment called National Examination (Ujian Nasional) for senior high school and junior high school students.

Regrettably, many voiced out their complaints for they deem the assessment is far too difficult and as much as 40% of students are unable to comprehend the exam (Kemendikbud, 40 persen siswa kesulitan jawab hots, 2018). Moreover, Minister of Education stated that HOTS assessment, which includes critical thinking, decrease National Exam's result (Antara News, 2018) This suggests that the assessment was not suitable with students critical thinking ability. That raised question about how high is the capability of Indonesia's students in displaying critical thinking.

Such question is worthy to be paid attention because the Ministry of Education and Culture has released statement that they will include HOTS in 2019 National Examination (Zunita, 2018). As a result, knowing at what level lies the skill of Indonesian students is a matter of importance so as to develop suitable assessment and critical thinking pedagogy. This is in line with Djiwandono (2013) who claimed that any endeavor at exploring Indonesian critical thinking should be given warm welcome for it would support the development of critical thinking implementation in Indonesia.

In Indonesia, critical thinking has been integrated in English for foreign language classroom as per the 2013 curriculum instruction which proposed critical thinking to be taught to students (Kementrian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2013). One of the benefits of critical thinking in foreign language classroom is that it promotes meaningful learning (Shirkhani & Fahim, 2011) and improves language proficiency (Liauw, 2007). On the other hand, lack of meaningful learning and limited critical thinking are assumed to be the reason why students have low language proficiency (Masduqi, 2011).

A study about critical thinking in English for foreign language classroom was conducted in China by Pei Z. , Zheng, Zhang, & Liu (2017). The research was administered to investigate the association between critical thinking and argumentative writing among undergraduates. As much as 132 English majors from

two universities in Nanjing. The assessment tool is a five-category model which encompasses relevance, clarity, logicality, profundity, and flexibility. The result demonstrated by the research showed that the participant's critical thinking skill was not potent. This indicates that there is a strong need to integrate critical thinking into EFL writing instruction.

Then, another study was conducted by Putri (2018) which investigated the correlation between students' critical thinking level and argumentative writing using Cornell Critical Thinking Test as one of the assessment tools. The research involved 60 senior high school students from one Islamic senior high school. The study found that argumentative writing and students' critical thinking were significantly linked. In addition, most students performed high level of critical thinking and none of them exhibited low critical thinking.

Inspired by the aforementioned studies, this research employed argumentative writing as a means to analyze students' critical thinking ability. However, different from the previous studies, this research used an assessment tool which manifests several sets of sub skills that reflect critical thinking ability according to Facione (2013). Those sub skills are interpretation, analysis, evaluation, explanation, and inference.

1.2 Research Questions

In order to direct the study to be more specific, this study is focusing on addressing the following question:

- How is the critical thinking skill of students as reflected in argumentative text?

1.3 Purpose of Study

Regarding the issue mentioned in previous sub-chapters, the purpose of the study is to explore the critical thinking skill of one public senior high school students of as reflected in argumentative text writing in English for Foreign Language class supported by interview and classroom observed activity.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Viewed from theoretical perspective, the research is expected to give interrelated contribution in enriching the literature of critical thinking in language learning. In addition, there is also an expectation that this research is able to, at least, give valuable information about how the critical thinking ability of senior high school students is.

As from practical perspective, this study is expected to give beneficial contribution for policymakers, education stakeholders, and other professional institution in education to develop school curriculum in accommodating critical thinking skill advancement.

1.5 Clarification of Terms

In order to avoid misunderstandings, below are several clarifications of term:

- 1.5.1 *Critical Thinking*: Critical thinking is an act of thinking sensibly and reflectively based on underlying belief (Ennis, 1989). Indicators of critical thinking referred in this research is according to Facione (2013) which are interpretation, analysis, evaluation, explanation, and inference.
- 1.5.3 *Argumentative Text*: Argumentative text is the product of a process that involves grasping the topic, developing statement, organizing coherent discourse, and putting ideas into writing (Pei, Zheng, Zhang, & Liu, 2017). Argumentative writing requires a critical ability of questioning, reasoning, and rationalizing. Thus, argumentative writing reflects critical thinking to some extent.

1.6 Organization of Paper

The paper is arranged in five chapters. Each chapter will focus on different topic that is carried out. The paper will be organized in the following arrangement:

Chapter 1 consists of the introduction of the study which includes the background of the study, literature review, research questions, purposes of the

study, literature review, research questions, purposes of the study, research methodology, clarification of terms, and organization of paper.

Chapter 2 focuses on theoretical framework of the study. It talks about theories related to the research, ideas, and issues. This chapter will be the basic part of the research. Chapter 2 covers some parts: the overview of the critical thinking, importance of critical thinking, characteristics of critical thinker, framework of the study, critical writing, and argumentative text.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology. It explains approaches and procedures, research designs, research site and participants, data collection and data analysis employed in the research.

Chapter 4 discusses the findings and discussions of the study. This chapter will describe the result of the research and the interpretation of the data.

Chapter 5 covers conclusions and suggestions derived from the research findings.

1.7 Concluding Remark

This chapter has discussed the background of the study, research questions, purposes of the study, significance of the study, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper. The next chapter will elaborate the theoretical background as well as related research to be used as the foundation to develop a clear framework of the formulation of the problem to be investigated.