

# FOSTERING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS THROUGH ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

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## ABSTRACT

The urgency for developing students' critical thinking (CT) abilities has left English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers trying hard to integrate CT into their teaching practices. This study highlights the role of language as a way of thinking, judging and assessing. It seeks to investigate how the elements of CT are displayed in students' essay so as to reveal the development of their CT skills. The data are in the form of essay written by the fourth semester Indonesian students taking essay writing course. The analysis is based on Stapleton's criteria of CT (2001), i.e. claims, kinds of reasoning, the extent of evidence, recognition of opposing arguments and refutation, and fallacies. The results show that there are many weak arguments in the essays due to the insufficiency of reasons and evidence. It is highly possible for an essay to have multiple arguments. However, the logical correlations between them are not clearly articulated in the essays and many students fail to show them. Students also lack of refutation skills as they tend to accept a claim from other sources without trying to judge and evaluate it. While most conclusions are in the form of suggestion, they can be made better by clearly showing the position of the writer in relation the arguments posed in the essay. Fallacies are mostly found in the form of generalization and over-simplification. The results are expected to give insights to teachers about how CT skills could be effectively taught and improved in writing classes.

Kata Kunci: *argumentative writing, critical thinking (CT), English as a Foreign Language (EFL)*