Vol. 7, No. 3, 2021, pp. 462-468
DOI: https://doi.org/10.29210/020211213

Contents lists available at Journal IICET

JPPI (Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Indonesia)
ISSN: 2502-8103 (Print)ISSN: 2477-8524(Electronic)

Journal homepage: https://jurnal.iicet.org/index.php/jppi

Students' critical thinking ability in analyzing descriptive paragraph

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Aug 06th, 2021
Revised Sept 30th, 2021
Accepted Oct 23rd, 2021

Keyword:

Critical thinking ability
Descriptive paragraph
Learning strategy
Paragraph analysis

ABSTRACT

Learning that is oriented to the development of critical thinking skills is one of the main priorities of an educator in their learning activities. This study aims to analyze students' critical thinking skills in analyzing a descriptive paragraph. This study uses a descriptive method with a quantitative approach. This research will be carried out during the odd semester of the academic year 2021/2022. The subjects of this study were all 1st-semester students in the English language education study program FKIP UMPAR which consisted of 18 students. The research instruments are observation and interview which involves the descriptive paragraphs observation and the interview guide sheet. Data analysis using descriptive statistical analysis. Referring to the data gained in the study, the researcher found that the critical thinking ability of students to analyze a descriptive paragraph was still very low. It was discovered that students' critical thinking skills in analyzing descriptive paragraphs were in a low category, students achieving a score below the minimum graduation standard set by the university. The data is also reinforced by the results of interviews which show that students are not accustomed to doing English paragraph analysis.

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Introduction

Learning is essentially a process of teaching students as learning subjects to learning objects in the form of living things and their lives with relevant learning resources and in a learning environment that has been conditioned by educators, which is expected after following the learning process students can achieve the learning objectives set. Learning is a conscious effort from a teacher to set up well-organized learning activities and teach his students to achieve the expected goals and (Faizah, 2020; Mawarny et al., 2020; Miftahussaadah & Subiyantoro, 2021; Muhajirah, 2020; Vince, 2018). In learning, educators have the main role of acting as a facilitator so that the student learning process can occur, by providing the learning tools needed so that students can be encouraged to achieve the learning objectives that have been set.

Critical thinking ability is the ability to analyze and evaluate existing information in determining reliable information so that it can be used to draw valid conclusions(Akib & Muhsin, 2020; Verawati et al., 2019; Yasir & Alnoori, 2020). Another point of view coming from (Franco et al., 2018; Karakoc, 2016; Lorencová et al., 2019; Qablan et al., 2019; Santos, 2017; Siswono, 2016) which states that the critical thinking ability of each individual is different from one another so it needs to be nurtured from an early age. Moreover, it is said that

critical thinking is a systematic process that allows learners to formulate and express their opinions and opinions (Araya, 2020; Reis Costa et al., 2021; Rositawati, 2019; Suhardiana, 2019). The ability to think critically is a thinking process that occurs in someone who aims to make rational decisions about something that he believes is true. Therefore, the ability to think critically plays a very vital role in solving problems. The role of critical thinking skills here includes the ability to formulate, formulate, and solve problems.

Critical thinking can be achieved easily if a person has abilities that can be considered as traits and characteristics of critical thinkers. A person's attitudes and actions in addressing each issue can be used as a barometer in assessing the capacity of a person's critical thinking character. This is in line with the idea of (Hidayah et al., 2017), which says that critical thinking is thinking rationally and reflectively by emphasizing making decisions about what to believe or do. Therefore, it can be concluded that critical thinking is the ability to make decisions by prioritizing systematic and accountable principles.

Critical thinking indicators according to (Siswono, 2016) are identified in 5 critical thinking indicators which are grouped into five major activities as follows: (a) providing simple explanations, (b) building basic skills, (c) concluding, (d) providing further explanations, and (e) set strategies and techniques. The indicators used to analyze critical thinking skills in this study are the development of critical thinking assessment theory popularized by (Ennis, n.d.) which covers: (a) formulating major problems, (b) revealing existing fact, (c) choosing a logical argument, (d) detecting bias, and (e) conclude.

Research on critical thinking ability analysis conducted by (Falahuddin et al., 2016) revealed that the level of critical thinking skills of students at the school is still low, this is because students are not trained to analyze existing problems and information so that there is very little creativity that can be built by students at school. Moreover, Jusmaya & Efyanto, (2018) also prove that more than half of 15-year-old students in Indonesia do not have the basic ability to think critically (Critical Thinking). So when the quality of Indonesian human resources is weak, one of them can be caused by weak critical thinking abilities.

Based on the description above, this study aims to analyze the students' critical thinking skills in writing a descriptive paragraph at the english education department of teachers training and education faculty of Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare (FKIP UMPAR). The use of research is useful so that students are motivated to continue practicing to improve and hone critical thinking skills. Operational definitions in this study are 1). The ability to think critically (critical thinking) is a mental process to analyze or evaluate information using previously understood concepts, strategies, and caution, the right arguments in finding results so that these results can be accounted for. 2). Problem-solving is the process of finding the right and correct answers to the questions given. Moreover, this study aims to instill the basic foundations of critical thinking through paragraph analysis, especially in the analysis of the components of the writing assessment rubric.

Method

This type of research is descriptive with a quantitative approach. This research was carried out to the fresh year students at semester gazal 2021/2022 academic year and took place at English Education Department of FKIP UMPAR, Parepare, South Sulawesi Province. This research applied total sampling technique so that the sample of this study was all fresh year students of the English Education Department which consists of 18 students. The procedures in this study include: 1) preliminary stage, 2) planning stage, 3) implementation stage, 4) data collection stage, 5). Data analysis stage, 5) conclusion stage.

The instruments used in this research are analyzing descriptive paragraph tests and interview guide sheets. The students were asked to choose one of the three paragraphs to be analyzed in 45 minutes after the learning process is complete. Indicators of critical thinking skills used are formulating a major problem, revealing existing facts, choosing a logical argument, detecting bias, and drawing conclusions. The critical thinking ability score rubric is measured using a scale of 0 to 4. The number of scores obtained by students is then converted into a value range of 0-100. Then the other instrument used was the interview guide sheet. The indicators of critical thinking skills interview guidelines used are Interpretation, Analysis, Evaluation, and Inference (adaptation Andriyana, 2016). The data analysis technique used descriptive statistical analysis. Descriptive statistical analysis was carried out for critical thinking ability data which was analyzed by calculating the score per indicator on each item and then interpreting it in the categorization of critical thinking skills. While the results of the interviews were conducted by examining the results of students' answers to each question in the interview guide to clarify the critical thinking ability data.

Results and Discussions

Description of Critical Thinking Ability on Paragraph Analysis Results for each indicator are:

Formulating major problem

Test results of critical thinking skills on paragraph analysis obtained the percentage of indicators focusing on formulating major problem show that there were 4 students (22,22%) in the medium category and the high category there were 3 students (16,67%) and there were 2 students (11,11%) is in the very low category.

Table 1. Formulating major problems on Critical Thinking Ability

Score	Frequency	%	Criteria
0 - 50,9	2	11,11	Very low
51 - 60,9	9	50	Low
61 - 75,9	4	22,22	Medium
76- 89,9	3	16,67	Good
90 -100	0	0	Very good
Total	18	100%	

(Source: Adaptation from Sudjana, 2004)

Test results of critical thinking skills on paragraph analysis obtained the percentage of indicators focusing on formulating major problem show that there were 4 students (22,22%) in the medium category and the high category there were 3 students (16,67%) and there were 2 students (11,11%) is in the very low category.

To clarify the results of the ability test to formulate the main problem of the paragraph, information was obtained that all students could not mention all the main problems of the paragraphs presented. The main problems in the paragraph that are expected to be mentioned by students include generic structure, language features, and assessment. However, from the interviews, it was found that only 6 students were able to detect the main problem in the paragraph but had not been able to describe it comprehensively. Based on these facts, it can be assumed that students' ability to identify problems in paragraph texts is still very low.

Referring to the findings on this indicator, one of the solutions offered is to familiarize students with questions that can measure critical thinking skills, besides that it also needs a model or method that supports it so that students can explore their critical thinking skills. Like the solution offered bySuharno & Setyarini, (2021)The teachers used analogical reasoning in three steps, including retrieval, mapping, and reflecting, all of which were connected with the students' schemata, according to the findings. In terms of the students' thinking levels, this learning technique has effectively increased students' thinking skills from applying to producing levels, as evidenced by the students' conclusions. Therefore, it is assumed that the more trained students on critical thinking, the easier it is to work on questions that have critical thinking skills.

Revealing existing fact

On revealing existing fact, the results of the test of critical thinking skills on paragraph analysis obtained that there were 11 students (61,11%) in the medium category and the high category there were 3 students (11,11%) and there were 3 students (16,67%) is in a low category while the rest were in very low category (11,11%)

Table 2. Criteria for Categorizing Critical Thinking Ability

Score	Frequency	%	Criteria
0 - 50,9	2	11,11	Very low
51 - 60,9	11	61,11	Low
61 - 75,9	3	16,67	Medium
76- 89,9	2	11,11	Good
90 -100	0	0	Very good
Total	18	100%	

(Source: Adaptation from Sudjana, 2004)

The low test results on this second indicator are directly proportional to the findings in the interview. The results of the interviews show that students have not been able to present real facts related to the paragraphs presented. There are even some students who are not able to explain the types of paragraphs presented. In addition, students are also not able to show the types of language features in the paragraph. Another finding is the fact that students have not been able to show the generic structure errors contained in the tested paragraphs.

This is supported by research conducted by (Kusuma et al., 2018)which revealed that the students' ability to understand, analyze, explain, and draw conclusions is excellent, but there is a need to develop a critical learning process for students to evaluate at the fundamental level in terms of increasing critical thinking skills, particularly in the area of problem-solving.

Choosing a logical argument

In terms of testing students' critical thinking skills in choosing logical arguments, data shows that most students have very low abilities (61.67%). What is very contradictory is the finding that only 1 student was able to get a "high" score and no student even got a "very high" score.

Table 3. Criteria for Categorizing Critical Thinking Ability

Score	Frequency	%	Criteria
0 - 50,9	4	22,22	Very low
51 - 60,9	11	61,67	Low
61 - 75,9	3	16,67	Medium
76- 89,9	1	5,55	Good
90 -100	0	0	Very good
Total	18	100%	

(Source: Adaptation from Sudjana, 2004)

In line with the test results of the ability to understand descriptive paragraphs, the results of the interviews showed that students who were able to determine the major problems and facts from the paragraphs presented were not necessarily able to give logical reasons for their answers. The arguments they put forward are still very simple and only limited to memorizing what they get from books or articles.

Students have been able to answer questions correctly but not yet complete. Students can use two or more information, but the sequence of information often fails to explain. This is supported by the suggestion coming from Setiawan et al. (2020)which suggestthe designing of more interesting and exciting courses that allow students to not only improve their speaking abilities but also to explore and build their critical thinking skills by, for example, employing appropriate textual material, reasoning, and argument, would motivate them to speak more effectively.

Detecting bias

The findings on the previous indicator are not much different from the findings on the detecting bias indicator, the only difference being the number of students who scored "very low". In the detecting bias indicator, 3 students scored "very low" while in the previous indicator there were 4 students who scored "very low".

Table 4. Criteria for Categorizing Critical Thinking Ability

Score	Frequency	%	Criteria
0 - 50,9	3	16,67	Very low
51 - 60,9	11	61,67	Low
61 - 75,9	3	16,67	Medium
76- 89,9	1	5,55	Good
90 -100	0	0	Very good
Total	18	100%	

(Source: Adaptation from Sudjana, 2004)

The results of interviews with students related to the ability to detect bias in the paragraph also showed unsatisfactory results. Although there are students who can determine biased words or sentences, in reality, they are not able to determine strong reasons so that the words or sentences are biased. In addition, what is more, concerning is the fact that the results of the interviews show that there are still students who are not even able to detect the usual occurrences in the paragraphs being tested.

The low ability on detecting bias occurs because students do not study or analyze questions well and rarely do habits that encourage students to observe working on questions. It is in line with the research by (Rivadeneira Barreiro, 2018) which found that grammar, syntactic, and semantic errors, as well as the frequent usage of dictionaries, demonstrated pupils' lack of attention and critical thinking skills.

Drawing conclusions

Referring to table 5, the data shows that the ability of students to conclude is very concerning. The fact is that there are only 3 students who can achieve moderate and high scores, the rest are in the "low" and "very low" categories.

Table 5. Criteria for Categorizing Critical Thinking Ability

Score	Frequency	%	Criteria
0 - 50,9	5	17,65	Very low
51 - 60,9	11	61,67	Low
61 - 75,9	2	11,11	Medium
76- 89,9	1	5,55	Good
90 -100	0	0	Very good
Total	18	100%	

(Source: Adaptation from Sudjana, 2004)

The results of interviews related to the ability of students to draw conclusions and make more comprehensive conclusions also showed unsatisfactory results. The results of the interviews showed that students were only able to draw conclusions based on the results of their reading without any "connecting" process with ideas or other reading sources. Drawing conclusions are the ability to find new solutions, students must find solutions to the problems they face by testing ideas and expressing reasons. This is in line with the finding of (Marni Silvia; Suyono; Roekhan; Titik Harsiati, 2019) which reveals that students' critical thinking processes were geared toward analytic thinking, which entails studying numerous phenomena by disclosing data and explanations to make logical conclusions.

Referring to the opinion of Krulik & Rudnick (1989) that the lowest level of thinking is memorizing skills (recall thinking) which consist of automatic or reflexive skills, the level of thinking basic skills (basic thinking) includes understanding concepts such as addition, subtraction, and so on including its application in questions. A similar opinion was also expressed by Elder & Paul (2008), who argued that the ability to think is characterized by the ability to think beginning (beginning thinking), namely the thinker begins to modify some of his thinking abilities but has limited insight. They do not have a systematic plan to improve their thinking skills. Based on the data presented above, it can be assumed that students' prior knowledge is very low and this is a challenge for lecturers to provide a stimulus so that students can get out of the zone.

Still according to Elder & Paul (2008)which states that practicing thinking is thinking actively analyzing their thoughts in various fields, but they still have limited insight into deep levels of thinking. Advanced thinking is an active thinker who analyzes his mind, have important knowledge about problems at a deep level of thinking, but they have not been able to think at a higher level of thinking. Superior thinking (accomplished thinking) is a thinker who internalizes the basic ability to think deeply, critical thinking is done consciously and uses high intuition. They judge thoughts intuitively with clarity, accuracy, thoroughness, relevance, and logicalness. The opinion of Elder & Paul (2008) has not been shared by the students involved as subjects in this study. This is an indication for lecturers that their task is still very difficult in guiding their students to reach the stage of thinking as proposed by Elder & Paul (2008).

The low critical thinking ability of students in learning needs serious attention from all circles, especially educators. Many factors cause the low thinking ability of students in the learning process. One of them is teacher-centered learning (conventional) where the teacher's role is more dominant so that students tend to be passive. Activities in conventional learning usually begin with the teacher explaining the concept informatively, giving examples of questions, and ending with giving practice questions. As a result, students are more directed to the memorization process than understanding concepts so that students' thinking skills such as critical thinking skills become less developed (Ismaimuza, 2013). Students' critical thinking ability is influenced by several factors. It said that the factors are valuable for educational quality management in higher education, which should have focused on the instructor in establishing an instructional strategy based on context, alumni readiness to enter the ICT community, prerequisites, and student enthusiasm to study (Slameto, 2017).

Conclusions

In learning, educators have the main role of acting as a facilitator so that the student learning process can occur, by providing the learning tools needed so that students can be encouraged to achieve the learning objectives that have been set. Referring to the findings on this indicator, one of the solutions offered is to familiarize students with questions that can measure critical thinking skills, besides that it also needs a model or method that supports it so that students can explore their critical thinking skills. The low critical thinking ability of students in learning needs serious attention from all circles, especially educators.

It is highly recommended that continuous evaluation of students' critical thinking should be scheduled at the end of the semester or the beginning of each semester. This is intended to guarantee and as a basis for

compiling teaching materials in the upcoming semester. Furthermore, further research on the critical thinking assessment rubric on paragraph analysis is expected.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their heartfelt gratitude to Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare (UMPAR) and the English Education Department, Faculty of Teachers Training and Education (PBI FKIP) for giving opportunities and providing research facilities for this study to be conducted. Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare funded the study through the Fundamental Research Grant Aids (APBU 2020). The authors also express their sincere appreciation to Zulwahyuni Namrullah and Irma Yuliani Saputri (KUI UMPAR) for their excellence in drafting the research instrument and calculating the results of the students' test.

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