Students' Ability to Develop Critical Thinking Skills in English Essay Writing

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Abstrak

Berpikir kritis memiliki peran penting dalam menulis untuk menganalisis informasi, membangun argumen yang kuat, dan mengkomunikasikan ide dengan cara yang dapat dipahami dan menarik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kemampuan siswa dalam mengembangkan keterampilan berpikir kritis dalam menulis esai bahasa Inggris. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah penelitian deskriptif kualitatif dengan 50 siswa sebagai partisipan. Tes digunakan sebagai teknik pengumpulan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan siswa dalam mengembangkan keterampilan berpikir kritis dalam menulis masih rendah. Hanya 2% siswa yang mampu menunjukkan kesatuan ide yang jelas dalam esai mereka, yang mencerminkan kurangnya keterampilan berpikir kritis dalam mengartikulasikan ide pokok. Selain itu, hanya 8% siswa yang mampu menyajikan alasan yang jelas untuk mendukung ide pokok. 6% siswa menunjukkan kemampuan untuk mengembangkan kemampuan berpikir kritis pada komponen menulis esai, hal ini menunjukkan bahwa mayoritas siswa masih belum mampu berpikir kritis dalam pengorganisasian teks. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian ini dapat disarankan bahwa siswa harus membangun keterampilan berpikir kritis dalam menulis teks bahasa Inggris yang baik.
Kata Kunci: Keahlian, Kemampuan Berpikir, Menulis, Esai Teks

Abstract

Critical thinking has an important role in writing to analyze information, construct robust arguments, and communicate ideas understandably and compellingly. This study aims to know students' ability to develop critical thinking in essay writing. The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative research with 50 students as participants. The test was used as a technique of data collection. The result of the study indicated that students' ability to develop critical thinking in writing remains underdeveloped, only 2% of students were able to demonstrate a clear unity of ideas in their essays, reflecting a notable lack of critical thinking skills in articulating main concepts. Furthermore, 8% of students were able to present clear reasoning, underscoring the overall weakness in their critical thinking abilities. Additionally, only 6% of students showed proficiency in the organization component of their essays, indicating a substantial gap in their skills to structure and connect ideas effectively. These findings demonstrate that students' application of critical thinking abilities, particularly in essay writing, is still lacking. It is recommended the students should develop critical thinking to have good achievement in writing.
Keywords: Skills, Critical Thinking, Writing, Essay text

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most challenging tasks for students, it requires them to express ideas effectively, master grammar, vocabulary, and syntax, and organize thoughts logically (Mehta & Al-Mahrooqi, 2015). It has grammatical rules for productive a good writing. Therefore, students should develop critical thinking. Critical thinking, as argued by Edberg and Edberg (2018) enables students to structure essays, develop strong arguments, and provide supporting evidence, making writing more coherent and persuasive. Hillocks (2010)emphasized that critical thinking involves evaluating sources, synthesizing information, and presenting original insights, essential for academic writing. This skill helps create intellectually engaging and persuasive essays by organizing thoughts, addressing counterarguments, and providing compelling evidence (Dunn et al., 2008). Yamin et al., (2023) also highlighted critical thinking as fundamental for effective communication and problem-solving, enhancing students' ability to understand nuanced meanings and express ideas clearly and persuasively in language learning.

Critical thinking is a disciplined intellectual process involving conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information from various sources to guide beliefs and actions (Yeh et al., 2022). Zulyusri et al., (2023) emphasize the importance of critical thinking in writing English essays, as it allows students to analyze and evaluate arguments. Taghinezhad et al. (2020) described critical thinking as a key skill for developing insights and ensuring a comprehensive understanding, especially in Indonesia's private universities. Critical thinking is crucial for solving real-world issues, enhancing reasoning skills, and making decisions Barjesteh et al., (2020) Writing reflects the writer's thoughts and requires attention to style, grammar, and conveyed values. Effective communication, both oral and written, is foundational for students to achieve key learning objectives in college.

Furthermore, it was discovered that the students used critical thinking to develop their paper writing and determine appropriate solutions to tackle the problems they encountered while developing their writing as Mertes (2021) reveals that student critical thinking skills and teachers' intellectual skills positively influence student writing ability in private universities in Indonesia. The results also show that student learning significantly mediates the association of student critical thinking skills, teachers' intellectual skills, and student writing ability of private universities in Indonesia. This study is meaningful for future researchers who want to investigate this area more in-depth. It also provides guidelines for regulating and developing authorities while formulating policies on students' writing ability in Indonesian universities.

Previous studies on analyzing students' ability to apply critical thinking in writing have highlighted several key findings. A study by Hardianti et al., (2023) emphasized the correlation between students' critical thinking skills and their ability to construct coherent and persuasive essays, and students who received targeted critical thinking training showed marked improvements in their ability to analyze topics, construct well-supported arguments, and critically engage with different perspectives in their writing. These studies implied the importance of critical thinking in enhancing students' writing abilities and highlighted the need for educational interventions to foster these skills.

The study of Thu and Hieu (2019) focused on applying critical thinking skills to enhance essay writing, similar to the present study, but did not delve as deeply into specific components like clarity of main ideas and organizational skills. Mogea (2020) examined students' critical thinking abilities in English teaching and learning more broadly, without the targeted focus on essay writing. Hendrawaty and Saraswati (2021) investigated the development of critical thinking in essay writing, aligning closely with the current study's aims, but lacked the use of the Illinois Critical Thinking Essay Test and the rigorous validity assessment provided by the Gregory Formula. While all these studies emphasize the importance of critical thinking in education, the present study's unique methodological approach and detailed component analysis offer fresh insights into specific deficiencies and instructional needs in student essay writing.

This study has a comprehensive assessment of students' critical thinking skills specifically in the context of essay writing, utilizing the Illinois Critical Thinking Essay Test as a unique evaluation tool. Unlike previous

research that often focuses broadly on general critical thinking abilities, this study delves into specific components such as the clarity of main ideas, reasoning, and organizational skills. Additionally, the application of the Gregory Formula for content validity provides a robust measure of the assessment's effectiveness, highlighting precise areas where students struggle. This targeted approach offers valuable insights for educators to develop more effective strategies for enhancing critical thinking in writing.

This study analyzes students at STKIP Muhammadiyah Aceh Barat Daya in developing critical thinking skills within the context of English essay writing. The core objective is to identify the specific information by effectively integrating critical thinking into their essays. By examining students' abilities, the study aims to provide a holistic understanding of the factors influencing the development of critical thinking abilities. This understanding, in turn, will be used to explore the connection between critical thinking and the clarity of English essay writing within the academic environment of STKIP Muhammadiyah Aceh Barat Daya.

METHOD

This study was conducted at STKIP Muhammadiyah Aceh Barat Daya to determine the students' ability to develop critical thinking in essay writing. This study is descriptive qualitative research. The research subjects are 50 students in the fourth semester.

This research procedure covered some steps such as pre-observation to know the problem among students in writing, collecting data, and analyzing data. The test was used as a data collection technique. The students are required to write an essay on the topic "Students-Centered in Learning. The test finished in 45 minutes. Students are instructed to structure their essays according to the following guidelines: introduction, similarities, differences, the most effective approach, and conclusion

The validity test in this study was conducted using the Gregory Formula, which is a method for determining content validity. This formula involves expert judgment to evaluate the relevance and clarity of test items. Experts review each item and rate them based on how well they measure the intended content. The ratings are then analyzed to calculate the Content Validity Ratio (CVR), providing a measurement of the test's validity. This process ensures that the assessment accurately reflects the critical thinking skills it aims to measure, enhancing the validity and effectiveness of the study's findings. The validity test using the Gregory Formula indicated a high level of content validity, with a Content Validity Ratio (CVR) of 0.85 demonstrating that the test items effectively measured the intended critical thinking skills.

The validity test in this study was conducted meticulously to ensure the accuracy of the findings. The presence of the researcher throughout the study ensured consistent monitoring and supervision of the research process who assisted in the research and played a crucial role by providing valuable insights and support, enhancing the depth and breadth of the study. The duration of the study was carefully planned to allow sufficient time for thorough data collection and analysis. The time for the validity test was six days. The validity of the research findings was verified using established methods, including the Gregory Formula for content validity. This involved expert evaluations and supervision collaboration to assess the relevance and clarity of the test items, ensuring that they accurately measured the intended critical thinking skills. Regular checks and cross-references with the informants and collaborators further strengthened the credibility of the results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Finding

This study aimed to determine students' critical thinking abilities in essay writing by analyzing 50 answer sheets. Students were asked to write an essay expressing their opinions on comparing and contrasting the similarities between teacher-centered and student-centered learning approaches, the differences between teacher-centered and student-centered learning approaches, and the most effective approach. The structure of the essay included an introduction, a discussion of similarities and differences, the most effective approach, and a conclusion. Four elements were used as indicators for assessing the students' essays: Focus, supporting

reasons, reasoning, and organization. The *Illinois Critical Thinking Essay Scoring Rubric*, which ranges from 1 to 6, served as the basis for evaluating the critical thinking skills of fourth-semester students in essay writing.

Focus/ Main Idea

The results of this analysis focused on the main ideas and highlighted the degree of clarity in the students' essays. Specifically, the study measures how frequently students score in the range of 4-6 for clarity, which is presented in Table 1 below. This table provides insight into how well students are performing in writing clear and focused essays. It helps identify the proportion of students who can successfully convey their main ideas clearly and understandably, thereby offering a measure of their writing effectiveness.

Table 1. Students' ability to critically engage with the key idea or focus component

Critical Thinking Components	Score	Number of Students	%
	6	0	0
Focus/	5	1	2%
Main idea	4	3	6%
	1-3	46	92%

Table 1 shows that only 1 out of 50 students, or 2%, showed critical thinking skills with clearly visible unity of ideas in their essay writing. This low percentage indicates that most students struggle to effectively apply critical thinking skills when developing and organizing the main ideas in their essays. However, the data showed that this skill is not well-developed among most students assessed, pointing to a significant area for improvement in their writing abilities.

The analysis of students' writing essays found that many students faced a challenge applying the principles of critical thinking, particularly when constructing and organizing their main viewpoints in writing. This weakness is an inability to identify, develop, and connect central ideas within their essays. The lack of clarity and unity in their writing indicates that students need more guidance and practice in critical thinking and essay composition. Figure 1 below displays a sample of a student worksheet that scored a 5 on the focus or central idea component, providing an example of a higher level of clarity and organization in essay writing. This sample highlights the contrast between students who have mastered this skill and those who have not.

Teacher-Centered Learning Approaches & Students Centered Learning Approaches

Learning is a process in when students get a certain of information. learning usually occur in the Classroom. There are three Necessary in discuss about teacher centered learning approaches and students centered learning approaches such as similarities, differences and the most effective approaches.

The first compare and contrast on the teacher centered learning approaches and students centered learning approaches is similarities. similarity of the teacher centered learning approaches and students centered learning approaches is exactly the same to aim for develop to students. so that to make it a Students the more………

The second compare and contrast on the teacher centered learning approaches and Students Centered learning approaches is differences. differences between teacher center learning approaches and Students centered learning approaches is the teach something style have contradiction. If teacher centered learning approaches the teacher more passive which is the teacher more extracurricular lecture. So that making the quick feel the boring in the class. ………..

The third compare and contrast on the teacher centered learning approaches ………

In conclusion the good method or most effective approaches is student interested learning approaches. so that will Making student faster develop…….

Figure 1. The example of students writing on Main Idea/Focus components made by students on a score of 5

Supporting Reasons

The supporting reasons are a crucial component of an essay, substantiating the ideas presented within the text with clarity, specificity, accuracy, and a critical approach. Table 2 presents the frequency at which students

scored 4-6 on this component, highlighting their proficiency in providing supporting reasons. This data indicates how well students articulate their ideas with clarity and specificity. A higher frequency of scores in this range would suggest that a significant number of students can support their arguments effectively. In contrast, lower frequencies would indicate a need for further development in this area. Understanding these results helps educators identify specific areas where students may require additional instruction and practice to enhance their critical thinking and writing skills.

Table 2. Students' ability to critically Supporting Reason Component

Critical Thinking Components	Score	Number of Students	%
Supporting Reason	6	0	0
	5	0	0
	4	5	10%
	1-3	45	90%

Table 2 shows that only 10% of the 50 students presented their ideas, accurately, and critically in their essays. This result indicated that the student's ability to provide supporting arguments for their ideas is still significantly lacking. This result means that only some students could meet the expected standards of essay writing, which included presenting ideas well-supported using logical reasoning and evidence. The fact that a significant majority of the students are struggling in this area indicates a gap in their educational development. Specifically, the component of supporting reasons appears to be particularly weak. This component is essential as it provides concrete examples, evidence, and logical justifications to support the main ideas in an essay.

In conclusion, the findings from Table 2 highlight a significant deficiency in the students' critical thinking abilities, particularly regarding their capacity to support their ideas effectively. A sample of a student's answer sheet with a score of 4 on the supporting reason component is shown in Figure 2 below.

Teacher-Centered Learning Approaches & Students Centered Learning Approaches

A teacher is a person who teacher us the lessons we receive every time we go to school and teacher are also the people. Who do the most for us as their Students because, they have given us good lessons and think we can become people.

The difference between teacher and students is that teacher is someone who teaches us by giving knowledge to his students and his students understand. His students receive the knowledge, given by the teacher as learning material. But the teacher and now it is no longer teacher who provide material to students………

Basically, teacher and students also look for learning starts there are no more students who don't know anything when the teacher teaches and explain……….

Figure 2. Example of student answer sheet results regarding supporting reasons with a score of 4 on the Supporting Reasons component

Reasoning/Conclusion

Reasoning and conclusion are critical components in essay writing, where a well-supported conclusion is drawn from clear and logical reasons. In this study, the reasoning and conclusion sections of the students' essays were analyzed to assess their ability to conclude their arguments with clarity and logical coherence. The analysis focused on how well students could draw a conclusion directly supported by the reasons and evidence provided throughout their essays. The clarity and strength of their conclusions were measured to determine their proficiency in critical thinking and ability to close their arguments effectively.

Table 3 below shows the frequency of students scoring between 4 and 6 on the reasoning and conclusion components. This data highlights how many students achieved high clarity and logical reasoning in their conclusions. A higher frequency of scores in this range would indicate that more students are proficient in concluding their essays with well-supported and clear arguments. A lower frequency would suggest that many students struggle with this aspect of essay writing.

Table 3. Students' abilities in the reasoning component

Critical Thinking Components	Score	Number of Students	%
Conclusion	6	0	0
	5	0	0
	4	4	8%
	1-3	46	92%

From Table 3, only 8% of the 50 students could present clear reasoning statements supporting the ideas in their essays. This result indicates that the student's critical thinking skills are still poor, particularly in the reasoning component. Reasoning in essay writing involves analyzing information, evaluating evidence, and constructing well-reasoned arguments that logically support the main ideas. The low percentage of students who demonstrated proficiency in this area suggests a considerable gap in their ability to engage in critical thinking processes effectively. The results from Table 3 show that most students struggle with these essential components of critical thinking, particularly when articulating their reasoning clearly and logically. This problem can hinder their ability to write persuasive and well-supported essays.

Furthermore, the results from Table 3 indicate the students' critical thinking skills in essay writing, revealing that these skills are still very low. This results in the need for enhanced instruction and practice in developing critical thinking abilities, specifically focusing on reasoning and argumentation in writing. To illustrate the current level of student performance, a sample of a student's response sheet that scored four on the reasoning component is shown in Figure 3 below. This sample provides a concrete example of the strengths and weaknesses of the student's reasoning abilities, highlighting areas for potential improvement.

Teacher-Centered Learning Approaches & Students Centered Learning Approaches

In education, two primary approaches to learning dominate discussions: Teacher Centered Learning Approaches and Students Centered Learning Approaches. Both methodologies aim to facilitate learning but do so through different means. While teacher centered learning place the instructor at the forefront, dictating the pace and content delivery. Students centered learning prioritizes the learning autonomy and active engagement in the learning process.

Teacher centered learning approaches and students centered learning approaches share a common goal of fostering learning and comprehension. In both approaches, educators aim to impart knowledge and facilitate understanding of the subject matter. Additionally, both methods utilize instructional strategies, such as lectures about with varying degrees of emphasis.

The primary distinction between teacher centered and students centered are: teacher centered learning instructors dominate the learning environment, determining the curriculum, pace and delivery, methods, conversely. Students centered learning prioritizes learner autonomy and active participation, allowing them to explore topics and collaborate with peers.

Figure 3. The sample of the student essay answer sheet results with a score of 4 on the reasoning component

Organization

Organization in writing demonstrates the writer's ability to present concepts clearly and logically, ensuring the reader can easily understand the writer's intended meaning and substance. In this study, the organization of students' essays was analyzed to assess their proficiency in structuring their writing effectively. The analysis focused on how well students could organize their ideas, ensuring clarity and coherence throughout the essay. The frequency findings for students who achieved a score in the range of 4-6 for organization are shown in Table 4 below. These findings provide insight into the student's ability to arrange their thoughts logically and present them in a clear and accessible manner. A higher frequency of scores in this range would indicate that more students are skilled in organizing their essays effectively. In comparison, a lower frequency would suggest that many students need improvement in this critical area of writing.

Table 4. Students' ability in critical thinking skills in the organizational component

Critical Thinking Components	Score	Number of Students	%
Organization	6	0	0
	5	0	0
	4	3	6%
	1-3	47	94%

Table 4 shows that only 6% of the 50 students demonstrated clarity in the relationship between ideas explicitly in their essays. This finding indicates that the students' critical thinking skills, specifically in the organization component, are still significantly lacking. In detail, out of 50 students, only 6% could clearly and explicitly connect their ideas within their essays. This small percentage means that most students struggle to organize their thoughts coherently and logically. The ability to explicitly show the relationship between ideas is a crucial aspect of critical thinking, as it involves not only the presentation of ideas but also the logical flow and structure of those ideas. The low percentage of students achieving this standard highlights a significant area of concern regarding their critical thinking abilities. Specifically, it points to a deficiency in their organizational skills which are essential for constructing well-reasoned and logically consistent arguments in their writing. A sample of the results of a student's answer sheet with a score of 4 can be seen in Figure 4 below.

Teacher-Centered Learning Approaches & Students Centered Learning Approaches

As a teacher in this global era, we need more creativity to build a fun teaching method to helps students enjoy in learning. We can apply some approaches to make a strong bound between teacher and students. There are two types of approach method that we can use in teaching progress that are: Teacher centered learning approaches and Students center learning approaches…….

The similarity between Teacher centered learning approach with students centered learning approach is teacher need to list or make some plans about what students will learn. Those type helps students improve their understanding about lesson that has connection whit topic that teacher already provided for them. Those ways can make students not lost on what they need to know from learning the materials that already on plan. Teaches can use an approach that suits on what their students need although there are some similarities between those method, we still can see the difference when we apply in the class.

Besides all the similarities, there are also some differences between those method. The first is in teacher centered learning they already gave their students materials include explanation from teacher without providing a chance for their students to participate in the class………

Figure 4. Example of sample results of student answer sheets with a score of 4 on the organizational component

Discussion

Critical thinking skills are crucial for student in writing essay text. It enhances the clarity and coherence of written work. By applying critical thinking, writers can organize their ideas logically, ensuring that each point builds on the previous one and contributes to a well-structured argument. This clarity helps readers understand the writer's message and follow their line of reasoning. James (2020) firmly stated that writers who think critically are able to move beyond surface-level observations and explore the underlying implications and nuances of their topics. This leads to more insightful and compelling writing, as critical thinkers are able to present unique perspectives and contribute meaningfully to academic and professional discussions. However, most English Education Study Program students at the observed university lack critical thinking when they develop an essay text.

The research findings indicate that students exhibit a significant deficiency in applying critical thinking skills when writing essays. This data is drawn from the small percentage of students who effectively demonstrated critical thinking as assessed by the Illinois Critical Thinking Essay Test rubric. The results suggest that most students struggle with integrating critical thinking into their written work.

This study utilizes the Illinois Critical Thinking Essay Test, which evaluates critical thinking skills based on specific components of an essay. These components include focus, supporting reasons, reasoning, and organization. The following discussion will describe the research findings for each of these components, highlighting the areas where students excel and where they need improvement. This detailed analysis aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of current teaching methods and suggest ways to better equip students with the necessary critical thinking skills for their academic and professional futures.

Focus/ Main Idea on Students Essays

The first component of the essay evaluated was the focus or main idea, testing students' ability to clearly state their subject, topic, or issue at the beginning of the essay and maintain this clarity throughout. In essay writing, the focus component requires students to clearly explain the subject in the introductory paragraph, guiding the reader on what to expect. Students must consistently discuss the issue throughout the essay, ensuring each paragraph aligns with the main focus, maintaining a coherent narrative, and strengthening the overall argument. By the end, students should effectively restate their conclusions, tying all points back to the main focus. The fact that only one student scored 5 in this component highlights a general struggle among students to maintain clarity and consistency throughout their essays.

The study revealed that most students' essays were vague, lacking specific examples and detailed explanations, failing to clearly define how both teacher-centered and student-centered approaches aim to develop students or the specific similarities between their methods and outcomes. This aligns with previous research by (Suteja & Setiawan, 2022) which found that students with underdeveloped critical thinking skills often produce unclear and insufficiently supported writings. The present study's essays lacked clarity and detail, leaving readers uncertain about the true similarities and effectiveness of the approaches. The absence of concrete examples and thorough explanations further undermines the quality of the essays, a problem also identified by Mataniari et al., (2020), who found that students without explicit critical thinking instruction were less able to construct well-supported arguments.

Components of Supporting Reason in Students' Essays

The second component evaluated in the students' essays for applying critical thinking skills is supporting reasons. This requires students to focus their essays on detailed reasons that back up the topic introduced in the opening paragraph, including comprehensive explanations, adequate examples, and necessary justifications. The analysis reveals a significant weakness in students' use of supporting reasons, which are essential for constructing coherent, persuasive, and well-rounded essays. Without adequate support, main ideas remain underdeveloped and unconvincing, leading to a lack of clarity and depth in the writing (Indah et al., 2022).

Several previous studies have highlighted these issues. Faridi et al., (2020) found that students often struggle with critical thinking skills, impacting the writing ability to provide strong supporting reasons. His research showed that essays from students with poor critical thinking skills often lacked concrete examples and detailed explanations, making their arguments less persuasive. Srinawati et al., (2020) demonstrated a strong correlation between critical thinking abilities and writing proficiency among EFL learners, noting that students with higher critical thinking skills better organized their essays and supported their main ideas with relevant reasons. Kazemian et al., (2021) further emphasized the impact of critical thinking instruction on students' writing, revealing that students who received explicit training showed marked improvements in constructing well-supported arguments.

The analysis of students' essays shows a clear need for improved critical thinking instruction. The findings are consistent with previous research, which collectively underscore the importance of developing critical thinking skills to enhance writing proficiency. By incorporating targeted critical thinking exercises and explicit instruction into the curriculum, educators can help students learn to support their main ideas with detailed, concrete reasons, leading to clearer, more persuasive essays.

Reasoning Components in Students' Essays

The reasoning component in student essays, evaluated using the Illinois Critical Thinking Essay Test, requires students to provide informative explanations and alternative perspectives on the discussed topic. This component assesses their ability to present logical arguments and consider various viewpoints, encouraging critical thinking by prompting exploration of different angles and providing well-supported reasoning.

However, the analysis of student essays revealed persistent difficulties in developing effective reasoning components. Many students struggle to present clear, well-structured arguments supported by logical reasoning and relevant evidence, leading to vague and superficial essays. Riwayatiningsih et al., (2021) found that students with underdeveloped critical thinking skills often fail to construct coherent arguments, resulting in poorly organized essays with unclear main ideas and a lack of supporting evidence. Similarly, Sarwanto et al., 2022) emphasized that students who struggle with critical thinking often cannot effectively incorporate evidence into their writing, leading to general statements and a lack of concrete examples. This aligns with the present analysis, where students frequently mentioned similarities and differences between learning approaches without providing specific examples or detailed explanations to support their claims.

In a sense, the analysis of student essays reveals significant challenges in developing the reasoning components necessary for effective essay writing. Integrating explicit instruction in critical thinking into the curriculum to address these challenges is crucial. By doing so, students can develop the skills needed to construct clear, well-supported arguments, enhancing the overall quality of their writing.

Organization Components in Student Essays

The last component evaluated in students' essays when applying critical thinking skills is organization. This requires arranging paragraphs in a structured, systematic, and interconnected manner, ensuring coherence and cohesion throughout the essay. However, the analysis reveals significant deficiencies in students' ability to apply critical thinking to organizational components. The inability to effectively organize essays points to deeper issues with students' critical thinking skills, especially in planning, structuring, and connecting ideas.

Common issues found in the analyzed essays include a lack of logical structure and coherence, resulting in disjointed and confusing essays. This aligns with Suryanti et al., (2021), who found that EFL learners with low critical thinking skills often produce poorly organized essays. Additionally, transitional devices were inadequate, indicating a gap in understanding the relationships between ideas. Furthermore, inconsistency in argument development was identified, with many students failing to maintain a consistent line of reasoning, leading to contradictions and confusion.

The analysis of students' essays reveals a significant deficiency in their ability to apply critical thinking to the organizational components of their writing. The importance of critical thinking in developing coherent, logical, and well-structured essays. In conclusion, most students in the observed university are still poor at developing critical thinking in writing essays, especially in organization text components.

The limitations of this study primarily revolve around its sample size and scope, with only 50 students participating, the findings were not generalizable to a larger population. Additionally, the study focuses specifically on students at STKIP Muhammadiyah Aceh Barat Daya, which limited the applicability of the results to different educational contexts or institutions. The reliance on the Illinois Critical Thinking Essay Test as the sole assessment tool also be a limitation, as it might not capture all dimensions of critical thinking or writing skills. These constraints suggest that further research with larger, more diverse samples and multiple assessment tools is necessary to validate and expand upon these findings.

Despite these limitations, the study has significant implications for the development of knowledge in the field of education, particularly in enhancing critical thinking skills through essay writing. It highlights specific areas where students struggle, providing valuable insights for educators on how to better structure their teaching methods to foster these skills. The findings suggested a need for more targeted instructional strategies that emphasize clarity of main ideas, logical reasoning, and effective organization in writing. By addressing these

gaps, educators can better prepare students for the complexities of academic writing and critical analysis, ultimately contributing to a more robust and critical-thinking-oriented educational environment.

CONCLUSION

The present study reveals a concerning deficiency in students' critical thinking abilities as applied to writing. Many students struggled to clearly articulate their central arguments, construct persuasive reasoning, and organize their essays logically and coherently. The assessment results further highlight this issue, demonstrating that only a few students achieved proficiency in critical thinking. This substantial gap in critical thinking skills necessitates the development and implementation of targeted interventions to equip students with the necessary tools to excel in crafting well-structured, persuasive, and insightful written arguments.

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