

## EXPLORING EFL STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING IN WRITING ANALYTICAL EXPOSITION TEXT: AN SFG- BASED ANALYSIS

Indah Nopita

[indahnopitaaja@gmail.com](mailto:indahnopitaaja@gmail.com)

University of Singaperbangsa Karawang

### Abstract

This study was conducted to explore students' critical thinking skills in writing analytical exposition text. The aim of this study is to describe the element of critical thinking reflected in students writing analytical exposition text. The research design used content analysis case study. The data were obtained from five students' text in Class XI. The instruments used in this research were the students' writing artifacts which main instrument. The data were analyzed with transitivity system of systemic functional grammar and critical thinking indicators from Watson Glaser II (2010). The study found that: First, students' ability in writing the argument is still weak and irrelevant with the topic and thesis. Second, the students' texts are not in line with the language feature of analytical exposition text that is relational process. Based on the results is teacher can more concern to help students in producing a good text by using critical thinking.

**Keywords:** *Critical Thinking, Writing Analytical Exposition, Transitivity System*

### INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking is a crucial issue that it needs to be further reviewed (Appleby, 2006; Halpern, 2002). In Indonesian education context, critical thinking becomes one of the aspects of competence included in the Curriculum 2013. This latest Curriculum of Indonesian education attempts to balance soft skills and hard skills in the forms of attitudes, knowledge and skills (Transcripts Attachment of Education and Culture Minister Regulation No 21 of 2016 about Education Content Standards of Primary and Secondary Education in Chapter II about Level of Competency). These features will be created with a scientific approach that includes doing, observing, asking, reasoning, trying, and forming a network for all subjects. The scientific approach has been described as the process of critical thinking, as already defined by Scriven & Paul (2003, p.3) that critical thinking process includes conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating gathered from or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning or communication as a rubric to believe and action. Thus, the teacher that is English Foreign Language (EFL) teacher should pay attention to aid their students to achieve critical thinking skills during learning English (Alwasilah, 2001).

According to Brown (2001: 336) stated that "writing is a thinking process." because writing practice involves analyzing about a phenomenon, building the

arguments, and reinforcing the arguments, as can be found on writing analytical exposition text. Therefore, it can be drawn the critical thinking activity such as; conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information gathered from or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication as rubric to belief and action (Scrieven and Paul 2003, p.3). Based on those statement it shows that critical thinking activity can be drawn in writing analytical exposition texts.

A research study by Rohayati (2017) in Indonesian about critical thinking in writing found that Indonesian EFL students still need guidance in expressing effective and voicing arguments. They also lack of critical thinking knowledge. Pramono (2018) also found out that "the Indonesian EFL students' skill in writing analytical exposition text based on the content and meaning is still poor." Driven by Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as a tool for analyzing the students' text, the aim of this study is to investigate what problems are encountered by Indonesian EFL students in writing exposition text. Based on the previous studies, it can be seen that critical thinking and writing the analytical exposition text is interrelated.

Writing analytical exposition text requires expertise in sorting information carefully to produce strong arguments and evidence, and it requires a higher-level thinking and ability to synthesize information (Chaffee et al, 2002, p.4). However, research studies on critical thinking in students' writings of analytical exposition text through SFG-based analysis are still limited. It needs to be further discussed and explored to find the students' critical thinking in their writings of analytical exposition text based on the critical thinking elements of Watson Glaser Critical Thinking II (2010).

This present research tries to explore students' critical thinking in writing analytical exposition text uses Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) based Analysis. This research focuses on the investigation of ideational meaning and critical thinking indicators or element in analytical exposition text by using Watson Glaser critical thinking II (2010) theory includes Recognize Assumptions, Evaluate Arguments, and Draw Conclusions (RED). These will be some indicators to address the students' critical thinking.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Critical Thinking in Analytical Exposition Text**

Critical thinking skill becomes one of the aims in Curriculum 2013 in Indonesia. As stated in Transcripts Attachment of Education and Culture Minister Regulation No. 21 of 2016 about Education Content Standards of Primary and Secondary Education in Chapter II about Level of Competence that core competency are divided into three parts namely attitude (spiritual attitude, social attitude), knowledge and skills. The core competency of skills is students are able to demonstrate the skills of reasoning, processing, and serves as: "creative, productive, *critical*, independent, collaborative, communicative..." Thus, the skill of critical is listed in the graduation standard competencies.

Many experts have defined the critical thinking. Ennis (1996) stated that, critical thinking is reasonable and reflective thinking focused on deciding what to

believe or do. Scrieven and Paul (2003, p.3) further define about critical thinking that

“Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information gathered from or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication as rubric to belief and action.”

The other researcher also emphasized the importance of having critical thinking; Paul (1995) said “Critical thinking is an essential foundation for adoption to everyday personal, social, and professional demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and thereafter.” Supported by Nold (2017) said that “critical thinking skills help students to achieve academic success such as; be productive people, creative, and reflective in society.

Students’ critical thinking can be traced in their writing. Ong (2014) argued that writing is solitary activity because writing involves planning, transcribing, and revising, and the effective management of these process. Condon & Riley (2004) stated that “writing is a tool of thinking skills which support children and adults.” Writing is a social activity (Prior, 2006). It is because the final results of writing are formed by social and cultural construct. Thus, people can catch the meaning of the text in social and cultural context.

Writing analytical exposition text was included in Curriculum 2013, based on the (Attachment of Education and Culture Minister Regulation Republic of Indonesia No. 37 of 2018 about Amendment of Education and Culture Minister Regulation No 24 of 2016 about Core Competence and Basic Study Competence). An analytical exposition text is the text that contains an opinion of the writer about an issue or phenomenon. Derewianka (1990) explained that the main function of expository text is to take a position or some issues and justify it. Also the goal is to persuade the reader about the fact of information which the writer telling in the text. This text has grammatical structure namely thesis statement, arguments, and reiteration (Gerot, L., and P Wignell, 1994). *First*, thesis statement is about the writer’s point of view. In this part, the background of the topic is discussed. *Second*, argument is about several of opinions that can support the main idea in a text in which the writer can give the evidence and explanation to support the argument. *Third*, reiteration or conclusion is about strengthening the thesis or main idea. The writer can reiterate the point of view of a text.

### **Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and Critical Thinking**

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is an approach in studying language. Language is generally used for people communication in society to deliver messages. Genre is typically as ‘staged’ and ‘goal oriented social processes’ (Christie, 1998; Derewianka, 1996; Martin, 1989; Painter 2001). Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is also used in teaching and learning method, technique to build students in communicative competency and critical thinking (Baraceros, 2013), as a tool in literary analysis. Halliday and Mathiessen (2014)

argued that “Systemic Functional Linguistic is a theoretical approach that analyses the relationship between social context and linguistics aspects.” It is for analyzing language about how language is used in various contexts in verbal or non-verbal situation.

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) advocates three concepts of language structure that realize meaning; textual meaning, interpersonal meaning, and ideational meaning. *First*, “textual meaning uses language to organize as a piece of writing (Eggins, 2004)”. *Second*, interpersonal meaning uses language as a dialogue, it also concerns the use of language to set up and sustain interaction among speakers using the language and realized through the system of Mood and Modality. *The last* is, ideational meaning refers to meaning about how people represent experience. This also concerns how language is used to organize, understand and express our perceptions of the world and our consciousness (Eggins, 2004). The meaning of people experience that traced in their text is classified into two sub-categories; experiential meaning and logical meaning. The first is realized in Transitivity system while the latter is realized in Conjunction system. In analyzing text in ideational meaning, it represents the grammatical system of “transitivity” such; process type, participant type, circumstance type. Those can point the process to involve an action or material, mental, behavior, relational, and existence process. It is shows meaning inside from the text.

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is also used in criticizing or evaluating intellectual and emotional traits of people in society. Thereby, Baraceros (2013) reported the linked of SFG and critical thinking that in some pointed are (1) SFG as a Multi-Functionality of Clauses and Critical Thinking as Consistency of though it’s mean that SFG versus critical thinking that the success of critical thinking depends on the unity of coherence of the arguments, interconnectedness or words, clauses, or sentences is necessary for clear expression of people’s reasons or arguments. (2) SFG as language structure such as ideational, interpersonal and textual functions of language and critical thinking as evaluation based on morally and professionally determined views or ideas of a person and other people, it results that SFG deals with varied language features to express the multiple functions of language and true for critical thinking which requires the thinker to listen analyze, and evaluate diverse view on the basis of some criteria before giving a final judgement. (3) SFG as use of contextualized language exercise and critical thinking embedded in society, thus, language exercises stimulating social events open the mind of communicators to realities in life.and etc.

### **Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking (WGCT) II**

The Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Skill is a theory of critical thinking which combines the attitude, knowledge, and skill shaped from critical thinking. The Watson- Glaser Critical Thinking Skill has some activity for the reader and researcher to assess the students and thinking about. According to (Glaser, 1937; Watson & Glaser, 1994) believed that;

“critical thinking includes; attitudes of inquiry that involve an ability to recognize the existence of problems and an acceptance of the

general need for evidence in support of what is asserted to be true, knowledge of the nature of valid inferences, abstractions, and generalizations in which the weight or accuracy of different kinds of evidence are logically determined, and skills in employing and applying the above attitudes and knowledge.”

It develops the structures of the critical thinking step and change the name from Watson-Glaser Critical Appraisal become Watson-Glaser Critical (WGCT) II. According to the Watson- Glaser Critical Thinking (WGCT) II book guide (2010) the newest name and content to assess critical thinking is a model of WGCT II namely RED Model or (Recognize Assumptions, Evaluate Arguments, and Draw Conclusions.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study used qualitative approach in the form of content analysis case study. The content analysis case study was chosen since the study analyzes the students’ writing artefacts of analytical exposition text based on ideational meaning process. The texts were analyzed through Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and the critical thinking elements from Watson Glaser Critical Thinking II (2010). This research was conducted at a Senior High School located in Karawang, West Java. The students who were recruited voluntarily to join this study were five female students in class XI IPS 1, based on the recommendation from English teacher, who said that this class has the most active students in English learning.

The students were asked to write the text according to the topic, grammatical structure, and language feature of analytical exposition text. The data collection was from students' writing artifacts. Researcher used purposive sampling that is the researcher takes the data source according to the research needs. The data were collected through several steps. First, researcher collected the students’ writing artifacts of analytical exposition text, as many five texts. Then, students’ texts were analyzed by using the SFG-Based Analysis. Focusing in ideational meaning, that intends to find meaning or language experience’ that contained in students’ analytical exposition text. The process types analyzed in the artifacts are *Material process*, *Mental process*, *Behavioral process*, *Verbal process*, *Existential process*, and *Relational process*. The last is each clause from the text as many 141 clauses were identified with critical thinking indicators by Watson Glaser Critical Thinking (WGCT) II (2010) or called RED Model. It is to explore the elements of critical thinking of students perform in writing analytical exposition text.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the research study question 'what elements of critical thinking do students perform in writing analytical exposition text?.' The analyzed using the Systemic Function Grammar (SFG) transitivity system and the RED Model as indicators of critical thinking. The following are the results of each analysis process presented:

### The Transitivity Analysis of Five Students' Text

The results of Transitivity analysis present the experiences or ideational meanings. In this case is student's experience which shown in the student's analytical exposition text. The finding is the students' text is not in line with the language feature of analytical exposition text that is small occurrence relational processes. The frequency of occurrence of relational process appears 38 times from 141 clauses was analyzed. It means the total occurrence of relational process in five students' text is low, or students did not use the relational process maximally in writing analytical exposition text. Garot and Wignel, (1994: 197) argued that the language feature of analytical exposition text is emotive words, simple present tense, and relational process, internal conjunction, and casual conjunction. It means that in writing analytical exposition text is used the relational process for connecting the main idea and content. The following table 1.1 is the results of transitivity analysis of five students' text.

**Table 1.1**

Process Type	Process of Material	Process of Mental				Process of Relational						Process of Behavioural	Process of Existential	Verbal Process	Causative Process	
		Affective	Perspective	Cognitive	Inclination	Attributive			Identifying							
						Intensive	Possessive	circumstantial	intensive	Possessive	Circumstantial					
Text 1	21		1	1		5	2		1							
Text 2	11	2		1		7							1			1
Text 3	15		3	3	1	3	1		1						4	
Text 4	15		1	3		8	3						1			
Text 5	22		3	1		3	4						2	1		
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>		<b>20</b>			<b>38</b>							<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	
Total Process												152				

### The Critical Thinking Indicators' (RED Model) Analysis in Students' Writing Analytical Exposition Text

The result of critical thinking analysis of students' text through RED Model by Watson Glaser (2010) that is students lack in writing argument and still irrelevance argument with topic and thesis of the text. It is based on the frequency occurrence in analysis argument section of five students text appears the higher occurrence in the descriptions of critical indicators of evaluative argument such as in the section, *Identifying each argument is weak* and *the identifying irrelevance*. This indicates the student lack of making the strong argument by giving the inaccurate evidence and student also lack of developing the relevant argument in the text. The frequency occurrence of critical thinking indicators in section, i.e.

*analyzing of arguments to evaluate, analyze information objectively and accurately* as many 3 times. It is also indicates that sstudents did not use their critical thinking maximally in writing analytical exposition text. In addition, the critical thinking indicators show that students are limited in making strong and relevance of argument in the text.

**Table 1.2**

Critical Thinking Skill	Sub-Critical Thinking	Description	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4	Text 5	
Evaluative Objective Argument	Analyzing Argument	Analyzing of arguments to evaluate, analyze information objectively and accurately					3	
		Questioning the quality of supporting evidence						
		Being objectively to sort through the validity in drawing more accurate conclusions						
		Identifying each argument is strong or weak			7	7	7	
		Identifying relevance and irrelevance	11	10	2	3	3	
		Looking for similarities and differences						
		Identifying conclusions						
	Deduction	Giving information through a list of decision-making						
		Whether the certain conclusions should follow the information in the given report						
		Defining the problem						
		Selecting criteria to create a solution						
		Formulating the possible alternatives						
		Deciding what to do tentatively				2		
		Reviewing						
		Monitoring the implementation						
	<b>Total</b>			<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>Percentage</b>			<b>7.80</b>	<b>7.09</b>	<b>6.38</b>	<b>8.51</b>	<b>9.22</b>

The finding of this study has shown that the students' experience can influence the content of the text and how they are pouring their ideas into text. It can be seen when the students' experience can influence the content of the text

which implies the meaning of the text. The thing suit with the statement by (Glaser, 1937; Watson & Glaser, 1994) believed that:

“critical thinking includes; attitudes of inquiry that involve an ability to recognize the existence of problems and an acceptance of the general need for evidence in support of what is asserted to be true, knowledge of the nature of valid inferences, abstractions, and generalizations in which the weight or accuracy of different kinds of evidence are logically determined, and skills in employing and applying the above attitudes and knowledge.”

It means that critical thinking skill is needed to use in writing that is in ability of students' in developing the idea of the text. However, the finding of element of critical thinking in students' text shows the students are still limited in making strong and relevance argument in the text. Therefore, teachers need more concern about how they can help the students in producing the text well and in understanding a text by using the critical thinking skill.

## **CONCLUSION**

This qualitative content analysis case study examined the students' critical thinking in writing analytical exposition text. The finding is that students have followed the generic structure of writing analytical exposition text appropriately enough. i.e in writing the thesis, students have organized the assumptions of the problem by *giving comment with the correct information* or making the thesis with interrogative sentence. It indicates that the students writing process is suitable with the critical thinking indicator namely recognize assumptions. However, the study also looked the relationship between the experience and the ability of students' critical thinking in writing analytical exposition text, through transitivity analysis and RED Model critical thinking analysis. It shows that students need stimulation of critical thinking for writing the argument and giving the strong evidence in analytical exposition text.

Based on these finding, this study supports the previous research concerning students' writing analytical exposition and critical thinking ability by Rohayati (2017) that EFL Students still need guidance in expressing effectively and voicing arguments. They also lack of critical thinking knowledge. Pramono (2018) also found out that the Indonesian EFL students' skill in writing analytical exposition text based on the content and meaning is still poor.

This research is also having limitation in answering the research question. The studies only focus in ideational meaning. The other researcher can further review about textual and interpersonal meaning to find in depth about the cohesive and coherent of the text, and to know how the text creates the social relationship between writer and reader. Therefore, this researcher limited to students' text as a source of data still not suitable with the students' achievement level in the class.

## **REFERENCES**

Alwasilah, C.A . (2001). *Language culture and education*. Bandung: Andira

- Anderson, M., & Anderson, K. (1997). *Text type in english* (2<sup>nd</sup>). Sydney: Macmillan Education
- Appleby, D. (2006). Defining, teaching, and assessing critical thinking in introductory psychology. In D. S. Dunn & S. L. Chew (eds.), *Best practices for teaching introductory psychology* (pp.57–69). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum
- Baraceros, E. L. (2013). Systemic functional grammar fostering critical thinking in teaching and learning language. *International Conference ICT for Language Learning*" (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Semantic Scholar.
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Addison Wesley Longman
- Chaffe, J. (2002). *thinking critically sixth edition*. USA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Christie, F. (1998). Learning the literacies of primary and secondary schooling, in F. Christie & R. Misson (eds.), *Literacy and schooling* (pp. 47–73). London: Routledge.
- Condon, W., & Riley, D. K. (2004). Assessing and teaching what we value: The relationship between college-level writing and critical thinking abilities. *Elsevier*, 56-75.
- Derewianka, B. (1990). *Exploring how texts work. Primary english teaching association*.
- Derewianka, B. (1996). Language in later childhood. In C. Reynolds (ed.), *Teaching about language: Learning about language* (pp. 62–85). Melbourne: AATE/NPDP.
- Eggs, S. (2004). *An introduction to systemic functional linguistics*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group
- Ennis, R.H. (1996). *Critical thinking*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Gerot, L and Peter Wignell. (1994). *Making sense of functional grammar*. Sydney: Antipodean Educational Enterprise
- Glaser, E. M. (1937). An experiment in the development of critical thinking. Contributions to Education, No. 843. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Halliday, M., & Matthiessen, C. M. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Halpern, D. F. (2002). Teaching for critical thinking: A four-part model to enhance thinking skills. In S. F. Davis & W. Buskist (Eds.), *The teaching of psychology: essays in honor of Wilbert J. McKeachie and Charles L. Brewer* (pp. 91–105). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates
- Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2008). *Genre relations: mapping culture*. London: Enquinox.
- Martin, J. R. (1989). *Factual writing: exploring and challenging social reality*. Geelong, Victoria: Deakin University Press.
- Nold, H. (2017). Using critical thinking teaching methods to increase student success: An action research project. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 17-32.

- Ong, J. (2014). *How do planning time and task conditions affect metacognitive processes of L2 writers?*. Elsevier, 17-30.
- Painter, C. (2001). Understanding genre and register: Implications and language teaching. In A. Burns & C. Coffin (Eds.), *Analysing English in a global context: A reader* (pp. 167–180). London, New York: Routledge.
- Paul, R. W. (1995). *Critical thinking: How to prepare students for a rapidly changing world*. Santa Rossa: Foundation for Critical Thinking.
- Permendikbud. (2018). *Salinan Lampiran Peraturan Menteri dan Pendidikan Kebudayaan; Undang-Undang No. 37 Tahun 2018 tentang Perubahan Peraturan Menteri dan Pendidikan dan kebudayaan No. 24 Tahun 2016 tentang Kompetensi Inti dan Kompetensi Dasar*.
- Permendikbud. (2016). *Salinan Lampiran Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan; Undang-Undang No 21 Tahun 2016 tentang Standard Isi Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah*.
- Pramono, S. A. (2018). A systemic functional linguistics: Based analysis of students' problems in writing exposition text . *Conapline*.
- Prior, P. (2006). A sociocultural theory of writing. In C. A., MacArthur, S. Graham, & J Fitzgerald (eds.), *Handbook of writing research* (pp. 54–66). New York: The Guilford Press
- Rohayati, D. (2017). Students' critical thinking in writing an english exposition text. *Advance in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research (ASSEHR)*, 82, 228-232.
- Scriven, M., & Paul, R (2003). *Defining critical thinking*. Available online at [www.criticalthinking.org/University/Univclass/Defining.html](http://www.criticalthinking.org/University/Univclass/Defining.html) (Accessed January, 2020)
- Watson, G., & Glaser, E. M. (2010). *Watson-glaser critical thinking appraisal technical manual and user's guide*. US: pearson.
- Watson, G., & Glaser, E. M. (1994). *Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal, Form S manual*. San Antonio, TX: The Psychological Corporation.