Debating practice to support critical thinking skills: Debaters' perception

Kinanthi Tiasadi

Islamic University of Indonesia

Correspondence: kinanthitiasadi@gmail.com

Abstract

English debate is an attractive activity for students where they can practice English and communication skills, also could strengthen critical thinking through the activities. However, the activity is rarely implemented in Indonesian curriculum even though they've started implementing High Order Thinking Skill (HOTS) in their learning material. To fill this void, this study aims at exploring the debater's perception who had experience debate activity for years. Debate activity is mostly found in co-curriculum activity where it is not obligatory for students. In order to understand the component of HOTS, the researcher used the construct by Facione (1990) to characterize Critical Thinking (CT) skills that can be learned. The purpose of this study is to dig the debater's experiences during their time of joining debate Community and how they perceive CT skills through the activity. The study presented in a qualitative method. Two university students that have different experiences in debating who also from different university and debate community were chosen as the participant. The data were acquired with in-depth interview from each of the participants. The data were analysed using thematic analysis by Braun & Clarke (2006) where the researcher state themes from the data that is important and related to the question. The finding showed that both of them felt debate activity is contributing to sharpen their CT skills such as analysis, self-regulation, and evaluation. An interesting finding also found that one of the participants experience CT disposition as an extension of CT skills.

Keywords: critical thinking, debate activity, high order thinking skills

Introduction

Current discussion among the scholars, had claimed that debate is an attractive activity for students where they can practice English and communication skills (Alasmari & Ahmed, 2013; Arung & Jumardin, 2016). It also strengthen critical thinking through the activities (Zare & Othman, 2015). Lately, critical thinking skills have been counted as an essential skill that millennials should have. Despite

of these presented benefits, the use of debating activity is not yet implemented in massive school curriculum. Most of the teacher in international level would input a debate activity in their class. The students would also realized that debate activity is beneficial and fun for them.

There's research by Alasmari & Ahmed (2013) who produced a module of debate activity implemented in EFL classes. The two scholars found a proper method on teaching debate activity that can support English language and presentation skills that haven't been utilized by the teachers.

The previous study upon debate and critical thinking such as Zare & Othman (2015) and Oros (2007) are mostly experimental research in the class, where they create a situation to implement debate method in class and interviewed them afterwards. Meanwhile, the empirical studies on the implementation of debate activity as an extracurricular activity, is not yet elaborated especially in Indonesia context. This study will fill the void by displaying the investigation of what the participant perceive as the benefit where there are no forces and obligation to join such activity. The researcher intending to explore to what extend do the participants perceive benefits of debate to learn critical thinking?

Literature review

Debate activity use in language education

The term debate tends to be linked as classroom activity or active learning. This is emphasized by Shamsudin, Othman, Jahedi, & Aralas (2017) who proposed that debate is meant for a learner with a high order of thinking. It requires teachers to help the students practicing thought provoking activity, raising problem solving opinion, listening to others and deciding the solution. It is proven that in the process of debate students can learn many competencies (Facione, 2000). The competencies is not only limited to speaking, but also could expand to writing and critical thinking. Debate used argument, logic building strategy and delivery to drive in the audience into a conclusion from controversial cases (Alasmari & Ahmed, 2013). Debating requires higher order thinking on how they build the strategy to create a logical argument. In other words, Debate drills on how the participant could choose the rhetoric and logic of thought on delivering the argument in certain cases.

Debate includes the development of ideas and discussion with deep analysis (Rexford, 2011). The activity tends to ask the participant to give every possibilities of a case, however it also demands deep analysis to strengthen the possibility. Since debate were done in a group, the participant needs to discuss their argument and decide the right strategy (Colm, 1997). Debate has various styles, the one that usually used in a community is the parliamentary debate.

Compared to other debate, parliamentary debates were more proper and organized. Colm (1997) found that there are rules for each speakers, the time that they should've spent, even there are rules how to interrupt others. In Indonesia the government has encourage the debate activities by conducting annual competition for university students namely National University Debating Championship. The purpose of the championship one of which, is to enhance students' critical thinking so they can compete in both national and international level (Ministry of Education, 2017). The debate used British parliamentary system following what been used by the World University Debating Championship. According to Colm (1997) the debate started with motion launch for all teams. After that each teams would be given 15 minutes to prepare the argument or to do a casebuilding. In acasebuilding, the participant should clearly deliver their stance before they start their speech later on. After that, they will start debating imediately. Each member from the team would have 7 minutes of speech.

The previous studies upon the same issue present diverse findings. The result found in Oros (2007) shows that some students raise objection on the debate format, motion, time management and the class participation. Other studies like Shamsudin, Othman, Jahedi, & Aralas (2017) also Zare & Othman (2015) show that the participants were interested in the activity and feel that they were sharpening critical thinking skill. The major difference between those study were Oros used debate as the learning tool which means that students may been exposed by the activity most of the times. While another study show the debate implementation in ESL country which has not fully implemented in the curriculum therefore it is found in co-curricular activity. It makes the activity interesting because the participants were rarely exposed to the activity. Therefore, the knowledge that been perceived tend to be different due to the different style and comprehension.

Critical thinking in debating context

For the past decades, the discussion about critical thinking is still lead into the same topic. That it is a metacognitive skill and a broad concept. Critical thinking is defined as decision making ability upon beliefs and actions that should be chosen by a person (Ennis, 1985). It requires the knowledge of problem analysis that leads into legitimate conclusion (Camp & Schnader, 2010). It means that critical thinking is actually implemented in everyday situations, where people should consider many factors before creating a decision. The characteristic of critical thinking were interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation, along with sub-skills that included in each skill (Facione, 1990). Interpretation skill includes categorization, decoding significance, and

clarifying meaning as the subs-kills that refers to on how people are capable to distinct the meaning of the information. The analysis skill has three sub-skills that were examining ideas, identifying arguments, and analysing arguments leads on how people express belief, opinion and judgement. The evaluation skill includes assessing claims, assessing arguments that focus on how people could assess the credibility of the information. Furthermore, Facione (1990) also explains about inference skill includes querying evidence, conjecturing alternatives, and drawing conclusions focus to consider a relevant information. The explanation skill has stating results, justifying procedures, and presenting arguments is for stating one's reasoning. The last one is self-regulation skill that includes self-examination and self-correction to monitor one's performance from the cognitive activity. Lately, as the skill have considered essential, the discussion among researchers found how it could be taught and learned to the students. To continue his study on critical thinking skills, (Facione, Giancarlo, Facione, & Gainen, 1995)extend his study that apparently through continuous and simultaneous critical thinking skills, it will be critical thinking disposition. It includes inquisitiveness, open-mindedness, systematicity, analyticity, truth-seeking, CT self-confidence and maturity as the scale of the disposition. He explains inquisitiveness measures someone's curiosity or eager to know more. The open-mindedness shows how someone being tolerant upon their surroundings. The systematicity measures being organized, focused and diligent. The analyticity measures how people use reason and evidence to resolve problem. The truth-seeking measures how people eager to seek the best knowledge, courageous and objective. The CT self-confidence measures someone's trust in their own reasoning process. The maturity measures the judicious in someone's decision-making process. Facione (2000) continue his research into more empirical one, which was by assessing the correlation between critical thinking disposition and critical thinking skill. He found that the habituation of the skill would also raise the bad disposition such as intellectually dishonest, intolerant, inattentive, haphazard, mistrustful of reason, indifferent and simplistic. By considering the contribution of Facione to critical thinking issue, this research confirmly used Facione (1990) as the construct of this study.

Recently in Indonesia, the awareness upon critical thinking is increasing. Government had asked to highlight HOTS (High Order Thinking Skill) in the learning material. HOTS requires analysing and inferencing from a fact not just simply restating the facts (Zohar et al., 2017). In other words, HOTS is way beyond the memorizing skill which what the education mainly focus on. However, the researcher have witness that teacher tends to facilitate it in the summative assessment like final exam. Meanwhile, the activity to encourage HOTS is still minor. Debating facilitate students' experience on higher order thinking practice by seeing different perspective, also encourage them to think fast and wise (Mumtaz & Latif, 2017). The activity tends to drill the analysis and evaluation skill

in their activity, which proven that it accommodates the critical thinking skill. It supports how debate encourages students to evaluate a situation based on their own view.

The study by Camp & Snader (2010) and Rear (2010) upon debate activity to enhance critical thinking presented similar findings. Camp & Snader (2010) highlight that there is significant improvement of students' critical thinking skill, from how the students could assess their own ability after the debating activity. While Rear (2010) shows that after the activity most of the students were satisfied with the activity and feel benefited. The participants felt that they could criticize the information and assess the problem and it's all aspect.However, on both studies it shows that some students still commenting on the debate format and the material.The participants complain that the activity took too long in a class and could be tiring. The researcher highlight that the quality of the motion also matters to the improvement of the critical thinking. Nevertheless, both studies provide positive result upon the issues.

Method

Participants

The researcher gathers the participants from individual who had joined a debate community. The Participants were two persons from different debate community and university in Yogyakarta. The researcher chooses the participant from the length of experience in debating communities, and the achievement that they have been earned. The length of the experience considered important as it would give broader information upon debating. There are Dona and Doni who had chosen as the participant. Although there are people who had similar experience, but the researcher chooses the ones who had proven by their achievement as the result of their experience and training.

Instruments

The instrument used by the researcher in the research is in-depth interview. The whole process of the interview would be recorded using voice recording. The researcher only use the interview as the main data, similar to (Bakar, Hamid, & Yusoff, 2018).

The interview was done in one time with the participant. The interview with Dona was done on Friday, May 10th 2019 around 6.30 pm by voice note. The interview with Doni was done on Sunday, May 12th around 1 pm at FE Y university. The researcher digs deeper on participant's experience in debating community and how they perceive critical thinking skills.

Table 1 Interview question

Subject	Conceptual definition	Component	Interview question
Debating in education	Debate used argument, logic building strategy and delivery to drive in the audience into a conclusion from controversial cases (Alasmari & Ahmed, 2013)	1. Argument 2. Logic building strategy 3. Delivery to drive in the audience	1. When and where do you learn debating? 2. What do you learn in debating community? 3. How do you feel about your experience in debate practice? 4. What part of debate practice that considered important to you? Why ? 5. To what extent does debating reflect yourself before and after you join debating?
Critical thinking	The characteristic of critical thinking were interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation, along with sub-skills that included in each skill (Facione, 1990)	1. Analysis 2. Evaluation 3. Inference 4. Explanation 5. Self-regulation	1. How do you describe yourself as a debater? 2. Or after joining debate practice so far? 3. How the debate practice characterize you as critical thinker? 4. How do you describe your critical thinking before and after joining debate? 5. How the debate practice reflected

in your judgement? Both positive and negative ways.

Data Analysis

This study used thematic analysis which is some sort of method in qualitative research that analyse and report the pattern (theme) within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). They stated that theme were something from the data that is important and related to research question. There are six phase of the thematic analysis which mentioned below:

6. Step 1 : Familiarizing myself with the data by reading lots of sources and the transcription of verbal data.
7. Step 2 : Generating initial codes by generate the interesting features of the data.
8. Step 3 : Searching for themes by comparing the codes one another.
9. Step 4 : Reviewing themes by comparing the themes and choose the most appropriate one.
10. Step 5 : Defining and naming themes
11. Step 6 : Producing the report

The trustworthiness of the method had been confirmed as it had been reviewed and published in a journal. The researcher have done expert judgement regarding the data to one of the lecturer and communicate the data with the participant to prove the credibility (Widodo, 2014).

Findings and discussion

After conducting thematic analysis following Braun & Clarke (2006), in formulating the coding and its features, the findings were identified as presented in the coding table below:

Table 2 Coding translation

Construct	Features	Coding	Coding Translation
Debating	Argument	AR/001/DA	AR: Argument
	Logic Building Strategies	LBS/001/DI	LBS: Logic Building Strategies DL: Delivery

	Delivery	DL/001/DI	001: Data number 1 DA: Dona DI: Doni
Critical Thinking	Interpretation	ITP/001/DA	ITP: Interpretation AL: Analysis
	Analysis	AL/001/DI	EV: Evaluation INF: Inference
	Evaluation	EV/001/DA	EX: Explanation SR: Self-Regulation
	Inference	INF/001/DI	001: Data number 1 DA: Dona DI: Doni
	Explanation	EX/001/DA	
	Self-Regulation	SR/001/DI	

As the researcher put the coding towards the data, not all codings appeared in the data. There are even emergent findings that are not in the construct. As suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within data. Thus, the themes indeed do not always represent the whole coding. The scholars highlight that thematic analysis is more flexible which offers the researcher not to be fully attached to the theory. After conducting thematizing analysis, the themes within the data were encrypted below:

Table 3 Themes

Construct	Themes	Sub –themes	Sample
Debating	Thought provoking activity&theory-led argument	Argument	D/AR/007/DA D/AR/018/DI
		Logic building strategies	D/LBS/002/DA D/LBS/019/DI
		Delivery	D/DL/014/DA D/DR/001/DI
Critical	Critical thinking	Analysis	CT/AL/001/DA

thinking	skills in debating		CT/AL/004/DI
		Self-regulation	CT/SR/006/DA CT/SR/003/DI
		Evaluation	CT/EV/019/DA CT/EV/006/DI
Emergent findings		Critical thinking disposition	EF/CTD/003/DA EF/CTD/002/DI

Thought provoking activities & theory-led arguments

The themes under debating construct are argument, logic building strategies, and delivery. Asmari & Ahmed (2013) and Oros (2017) both highlight that debate training focusing on how students could create an argumentation upon certain issues. The data found in this research share the same concept within two scholars above.

> Brainstorming is simply like self ee activity where are forced to think about argumentation and also rebuttal and ideas regarding the issues brought in the motion.
> D/AR/007/DA

> But I have this you can call it aaaa feelings not no, it's not feeling it some kind of you know aaa intuition on how you see a problem a certain problem certain peolple are aaa see a problem or motion then they took a theory about it they think what happen in the status quo to make their argument.
> D/AR/018/DI

The data above shows that both of the participants are experiencing building argument in debating practice. However, they conveyed different process. The first data from Dona, she was experiencing building argument by force which in line with Shamsudin, Othman, Jahedi, & Aralas (2017) who found that the teacher helps the student in a thought provoking activity. While Doni stated that he created the argument by making a theory from certain problem which in line with Alasmari and Ahmed (2013) who stated that it could be a conclusion from a controversial case. Therefore, argument building is essential in a debate training even though they convey the process in different way.

The shcolars pointed out that logical building strategy also existed in debate training. Alasmari & Ahmed (2013) mentioned that the training create

opportunities for student to express their opinion with logic. Oros (2017) found that the training is also to develop the skills of logical argumentation. The data found in this research shows how the participant explicitly learn to do logical building strategy.

> Because usually I just if someone asked me some question for example if I don't know I simply answer I don't know or like ee just ee made my own answer without any basis but since I joined debating whenever I wanted to speak up or whenever I want to answer something at least I have such potention in my brain to at least find out the best answer or find out the best reason
> D/LBS/010/DA

> I'm a kind of debater who are think that it is good if it is affecting people I used my intuition to decide aaa to not aaa which which part of this motion which part of this problem that we should talk about affecting people more affecting people more in this motion.
> D/LBS/019/DI

From the data above, it shows that Dona realized she often answered without any basis and after she joined debate she could find the best reason. It indicates that the answer without basis could mean as illogical or irrelevant answer. While Doni felt that he needs to think what kind of information that should be delivered that can affect people. It shows how he needs some kind of strategy on how the information could be taken by the audience. Both participant implies how logic building strategy works in different way Dona with the reasoning, and Doni on filtering what he wants to say. This activity are meant for high order thinking which supports the previous studies by Shamsudin, Othman, Jahedi, & Aralas (2017). It also accommodates critical thinking skill such as analysis and explanation which includes reasoning in it.

Alasmari & Ahmed (2013) mentioned that the delivery skill is needed in order to convince the audience and the judge. Meanwhile, Oros (2017) mentioned that how dynamic the delivery of a team is included in the debate evaluation. In the data, it is found that the participant were learning the component and how they convince others is also put into consideration.

> Because in debate if you are not confident or you are afraid with your opponent you will not be able to produce a better and convincing speech.
> D/DL/014/DA

> What is the most beneficial thing is that in debate we learn to how to speech we learn how to aaa to have a critical thinking we have we learn to thinking beyond people our age
> D/DL/014/DI

From the data Dona highlighted that confidence is important in producing a convincing speech. This indicates that the speech is one of the feature of a debate that also essential that need to be convincing. Meanwhile, Doni reflects that in a debate training he also earn the benefit to deliver a speech. It means that in a debate training besides train the logic and the argument also consider the speech or the delivery one of point to be train. Therefore both statements shared similar findings to Alasmari & Ahmed (2013) in terms of the needs of a delivery to drive in the audience in a debate.

Critical thinking skills as perceived trough debating activities

Facione (1990) defined the core of critical thinking skills were analysis, interpretation, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. In this research the finding shows that not all of the criteria were found. The data that found in his research were analysis, self-regulation, and evaluation. He defined analysis as one's ability to asses, identify and analyze opinion and judgement. The data shows that both participant experience as such in debate training.

> The selection is really really really long and makes us need to think harder and analyze and we are also required to have good knowledge in a lot of issues which I didn't really good at long time and in the past
> CT/AL/001/DA

> Brainstorming is simply like self ee activity where are force to think about argumentation and also rebuttal and ideas regarding the issues brought in the motion.
> D/AR/008/DA

> Actually there a lot of things but if I have to choose one thing that eee the most significant change in my life is that right now I tried to understand what happen first then after understand what's happen on both side
> CT/AL/005/DI

> I realized that when I when I'm debating when I ee casebuilding when I understanding the problem of the motion it already increasing my critical thinking
> EF/CTD/008/DI

Dona and Doni both experienced analysis skill in their practice. Dona experience the way she could identify and assessing certain issue in brainstorming activity. Meanwhile, Doni experience it in casebuilding activity. Both activity resemble each other as they could do an analysis in it, however, in terms of acquiring and achieving the analysis skill, each participant share different perspective. Brainstorming tends to be an individual activity that might include the coach's intervention. She experienced on what Facione defined as

identify and assessing skill in analysis. Meanwhile, Doni perceive it as he discuss the issue with his teammates in casebuilding. Doni's experience already expanded into creating judgement because in case building activity, the debater should decide their stance which also includes assess and identify in Facione's (1990). It proven what Colm(1997) stated on what supposed to be done in case building activity. Moreover, they both show that they experience it in debate training which mean that debate can accommodate such skill.

Facione (1990) defined evaluation skill as where students could assess the credibility of the information. It include how students' react to certain opinion and the assessing process of a judgement. In the data, it is found that the participant experience similar thing with the scholar's explanation.

> The way I judge something now is more like true a more of analy.. no not analysis, analytical way.
> CT/EV/027/DA

> Like because I I'm aaa in debate we learn to see from other perspective right not only from our perspective not only from certain actor's perspective we have to see from aaa all all the actors that aaa there in certe certain motions right.
> CT/EV/011/DI

From the data, it is found that Dona tend to do a deeper analysis towards the issue or the information that she got. It means that she would not taken something for granted and measure whether it is true or false. Meanwhile, Doni felt that he needed to consider other perspective or other sources when facing certain issue. It means that he also would not taking the information for granted. Both participant in line with Facione (1990) in terms of the evaluation skill that they experience in debate training.

Facione (1990) explained self-regulation as how students could monitor their effort and element used in a judgement consciously. It highlights on how the students are consciously aware of the assessment on an information. In the data are not stated clearly upon self-regulation, however these statements are similar to represents these skills.

The explanation upon self-regulation might resembles the evalation skill which could troubled the researcher in analyzing the data. However, the researcher focus on the essence of the information in each responses. The response could mentioned other skill but not necessarily represent the skill. Therefore, the researcher take the essence of the information to formulates the themes.

> So my rationality always told me to if you wanna know about this issue you better search more or you better know look for more information
> CT/SR/033/DA

> I think that the most important thing is first you have to really understand about the motion about the knowledge that you are going to debate about
> CT/SR/003/DI

From the data, it shows that Dona have realized that she need to seek a better information that she wanted to deliver or measure. In the other hand, Doni said that he needed to really understand the issue before going into debate. It means that he also needed to analyse and find the sources to fully understand it. Both participants showed that they are in their full consciousness of seeking the better element for their performance. However, in terms of monitoring their effort, they showing different process. Dona felt that she needs to do a lot of research to have better information and understanding. Meanwhile for Doni, he doesn't do a lot of research but once he do he fully understand it. The data in line with Facione (1990) that explained on someone's effort in self-regulation.

Emergent findings: Critical thinking disposition

The researcher found emergence finding in the data. It means that the data are not suitable with the construct that have been formulated by the researcher. The one that found is related to the training process in debate, as follows:

> I found myself questioned and a bit confused kind a like ee kind a like give up or like should I continue this or what because this is so tiring and exhausting
> EF/CTD/004/DA

> But lot of my friends say that you need to at least finish the selection first to see whether you accepted or not then you can decide your own the said like that and it give me some strenght to continue the very long process of the selection
> EF/CTD005/DA

Both statement in line with Oros, 2007 where the students raise objection upon the training and felt tired on it. It shows how the participant felt about the debate selection that she had.

The other data is identified as Critical Thinking Disposition. Facione (1995) define Critical thinking disposition defined as the extension of the critical thinking skills habituation. He stated that the scale of critical thinking disposition were inquisitiveness, open-mindedness, systematicity, analyticity, truth-seeking, CT self-confidence and maturity. It is found on the data that a few part were identified as critical thinking disposition. The parts that found were open-

midedness and truth-seeking. He explained that Open-mindedness highlight on how someone could tolerate their surrounding. The data found as bellow:

> And also in the end of the day I found myself be more tolerant to people with different religion, different culture and different perspective with me
> EF/CTD/029/DA

> In the end I can tolerate a lot of more people I even have a bestfriend came from chatolic and cristhian
> EF/CTD/031/DA

> In some topic actually I'm affirmative but in the debate I should be an opposition which means that I still have to talk as an opposition and think as an opposition and it is aaa help me and maybe other debaters also to open our mind to see aaa something from another perspective
> EF/CTD/002/DI

> So I think that is of affecting me in choosing which side I'm on I think it affecting me makes me harder to choose which side I'm in.
> EF/CTD/013/DI

Facione (1995) define that Truth-seeking is related to somene's eagerness to seek the best knowledge, courageous and objective. The data found is as follows:

> I tend to be more rational when perceiving or accepting the news or any information that I got. So rational here means that I'm not directly bias or directly, directly support one side or directly hating one side or directly supporting another person just because I heard that information
> EF/CTD/032/DA

Conclusion and suggestion

The research investigate on how the debater in a debating community could perceive critical thinking skills from their training. It is found that from six core of critical thinking skills, debate could accommodate three of them which is analysis, evaluation and self-regulation. The participants shows different process of perceiving the skills as the benefits of debate to shape their critical thinking, one participant by the coach intervention and one participant by his own consciousness. As the extent of debate to critical thinking, the debates have positive relation towards the skills. This research is limited to investigate debating community in Yogyakarta which might shows different result in compared to other regions. As an implication, this research could give an option for teacher who would like to implement the debate training in class by

considering that there are ways on how the skills could be perceived by students. Emergent findings were found that through extensive practice, could elevate into critical thinking disposition. Thus, the researcher suggests for further research to dig more about critical thinking disposition as it is the extension of critical thinking skill.

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