

# Assessing undergraduate EFL students' critical thinking in writing argumentative essay

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## ABSTRACT

This study assesses Undergraduate EFL students' critical thinking particularly in writing argumentative essay. We know, a lot researchers have stated that writing argumentative essay requires writer's critical thinking skill (Afshar et al., 2017). By having critical thinking, a writer can persuade and influence readers more through their convincing arguments. However, it is found many Undergraduate EFL students who still write argumentative essay with some weak arguments (Komara & Sriyanto, 2018). Therefore, it is crucial to give them valuable feedback by assessing their critical thinking in writing argumentative essay, so they can know and improve their critical thinking level. To achieve such goal, the researchers involved 30 participants the researchers who were willing to be assessed their critical thinking in argumentative essay with NEIU Critical Thinking Rubric (2006). The finding showed that 28 students or 93.3% got low score meanwhile only 2 students or 6.7% who got high score in their argumentative essay critical thinking score. It can be concluded majority participants of this research did not write argumentative essay with high critical thinking criteria.

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## 1. Introduction

As many of us know, students in Indonesia learn English as the compulsory subject either in school or university level. This subject is crucial since long time ago in aims to equip students with English language skills such as reading, listening, speaking, and writing (Wahid & Marni, 2018); thus they can be very ready in facing global competition and get a lot of benefits by having English ability in future. Again, this is to show how significant English is to be mastered by students in Indonesia, so they need to prioritize and maximize their English skills.

Generally, students who learn English, they will focus their skill to the productive area which are Speaking and Writing (Javed et al., 2013). Speaking is giving a speech or to use the voice to say something. Th purpose is to communicate verbally with other people. Meanwhile, writing is an activity carried out to express and phrase ideas or thought through language media (Scientia, 2016). Writing is simply known by an activity of composing or creating an written works with various topics that can be interesting and useful for readers intended to inform readers of facts, opinions, views, events, or data (Graham, 2019). From two modes of communication above, writing is considered as the most essential skill to be learned by students (Klimova, 2012). By learning

writing, students are able to create or express their own idea or information for plenty purposes they need, for examples writing diaries, poetry, paragraph or essay, or even writing a book. Writing is an intellectual activity of finding the ideas and thinking about the way to express and arrange them into a statement and paragraph that is clear to be understood by the students (Nunan et al., 2003). This explains that learning writing generate plenty benefits especially for students. This shows how crucial writing is. Students must really be able to create and express what students think and what students to convey through writing.

However, to master English writing is not something easily taken for granted by students. It requires hard work and concentration. What it means by hard work and concentration is the students must think a lot to generate idea, to process the written structure and language features before they put in written works, and publish it (Finocchiaro & Mary, 1989). This is the part that we call as Critical Thinking. Critical thinking is an intellectual capital for students as the most important part of maturity in thinking critically (Fitriani, Asy'ari, Zubaidah, & Mahanal, 2018). Another expert argued critical thinking is considered as a set of cognitive skills as writing strategy that students concern to identify problems and assumptions, make correct conclusions, assess evidence of truth, and conclude conclusions. Therefore, improvement in critical thinking is a mandatory thing that must be applied in learning for students at every level of education, so this can make student able to measure the level of critical thinking they have.

Critical thinking is really needed in writing especially in the types of argumentative essay (Fahim & Hashtrودی, 2012). Argumentative an opinion, thought, or essay that can prove a fact or unifact based on a statement. When the writer wants to make an argumentative essay, the writer must be ready to prove the fact or unifact of what has been written by the writer, so that the reader knows what is true and not true by facts that are proven by the writer when making an argumentative essay. Basic of argumentative essay is to think critically and logically. The basic will make argumentative essays based on logical and real facts. In the university level students, it is common that students who learn writing, they focus their writing on the Argumentative Essay which relates to the use of Critical Thinking (Khoirunnisa, 2020). Good academic writing is in critical thinking such as encouraging students to be able to construct hypotheses and encouraging students to be able to solve the problem (Hakim et al., 2018). By having critical thinking, a writer can persuade and influence readers more through their convincing arguments. The reasons are students in this level must be able to argue.

We know, a lot of researchers have stated that writing argumentative essay requires writer's critical thinking skill (Afshar, 2017; Movassagh, 2017; Arbabi, 2017; Hastiari, 2020; Khoirunnisa, 2020). In fact, there are several researchers who had done research related to assessing critical thinking in writing argumentative essay. The first research was searched by Sharadgah, Ahmad, and Sa'id (2019) on promoting and assessing EFL college students' critical thinking skills through argumentative essay writing in Saudi Arabia. In this research was conducted 98 English major male participants enrolled in an argumentative essay writing. The authors used mix method which was quantitative-qualitative method and the authors also investigated the correlation between Critical Thinking and essay-writing skills. The scoring rubric used by the authors is CTSs Scoring Rubric and the latest findings is their participants ability to use Critical Thinking skills were low.

A similar research was also conducted by Afshar, Movassagh and Arbabi (2017) on the interrelationship among critical thinking, writing an argumentative essay in an L2 and their subskills in Iran. This research investigated the relationship between Critical Thinking and the Argumentative Writing capability of Iranian EFL learners. 104 participants majoring in English language acquired the California critical thinking skills test and the writing section of the IELTS test which compulsory the students to develop a quantity of Argumentative Essay. In this research, the results of argumentative writing were scored by 2 experts decreed by the IELTS test rubrics. Consequently, so as to develop an Argumentative Essay is influential enough, one essential to draw 'sensible conclusions' and to transmit different main and supporting ideas sensibly and reasonable. For the evaluation of this research is that to write an Argumentative Essay, good writers make use of the subskills of Critical Thinking. The following passages were obtained from the essay of participants who scored high in argumentative essay and critical thinking. Therefore, to improve better argumentation, it may be helpful to teach such Critical Thinking skills as analysis and assessment, as the authors found to provide to success in argumentative essay writing.

In addition, this research was conducted by Beniche, Larouz and Anasse (2021) on Examining the Relationship between Critical Thinking Skills and Argumentative Writing Skills in Morocco. The authors in this study found out the level of critical thinking skills in argumentative writing in their participants. The participants were 60 students of Higher Engineering Schools. So, the participants were asked to write an argumentative essay and the topic is about social networking and creativity. This study used the correlation design to amount the degree of suggestion between two variables using the statistical procedure of correlation analysis. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine the significant relationship among Critical Thinking skills and Argumentative Writing. This study was also aimed to inspect the relationship among critical thinking and argumentative writing in Moroccan students. The study publicized that Critical Thinking of Moroccan students was high and they used high order thinking over the presented Critical Thinking test which includes: inference, recognition of assumption, deduction, interpretation, and evaluation of arguments. Students in this study with high order thinking skills present well in their Argumentative Writing. Furthermore, students' in this research show in Argumentative Writing was good as they mastered the skills of Argumentation and the use of logical perceptive to represent their point of view about the implied topic. This study accomplished by the result that there was a significant positive correlation between Critical Thinking and Argumentative Writing concerning Moroccan students.

Meanwhile, in the Indonesian perspective, there some researchers who showed research related to critical thinking in writing argumentative essay, such as Hastiari (2020) on Assessing Student's Critical Thinking Essay Writing. The capability to thinking critically is very essential for students to increase since it might support them in solving problem. Also, one way to educate Critical Thinking is within writing, specifically Writing Argumentative Essay. This research used quantitative descriptive method with 30 English students as participants with instrument in the form of Writing Tests and Interviews. For assessing the data in this research, the writer using rubric from The Criteria and Scoring Sheet for Critical Thinking Essay test by Marguerite Finken and Robert Ennis (1993). In this research, rubric of Critical Thinking has been accessible which is predictable to be a complementary assessment of the Critical Thinking skills of a combined essay test such as Writing Argumentative Essay.

So, this research tries to also know the critical thinking capacity of the students at university level particularly in writing argumentative essay. It is still found limited research about Indonesia Undergraduate EFL students argumentative essay, and it seems many of them who still wrote argumentative essay with some weak arguments (Komara & Sriyanto, 2018). The importance of this study is to assess the students' level of critical thinking in their argumentative essay such as the power of arguments of the author in to respond controversial topic. Expectantly, the result of this research can inspect and show the quality of critical thinking in argumentative essay.

## 2. Method

In this study, the researchers applied quantitative descriptive method. Quantitative descriptive method is a quantitative research in the form of a description with numbers or numerical (statistic). The point is that the research is related to the elaboration of statistic figures. Sugiyono (2015) argued quantitative descriptive method is aimed to describe, explain, or summarize various conditions, situations, phenomena, or various research variables according to events as they can be interviewed or observed. The researchers used this method to elaborate the scoring result of students' critical thinking assessment in writing argumentative essay.

For the participants, the researchers involved 30 undergraduate EFL students from University of Muhammadiyah Prof. DR. Hamka who had known and experienced making an argumentative essay. There were two main instruments for this research which were Argumentative Essay Test with topic "Online Learning" and Argumentative Essay Critical Thinking Rubric by NEIU which was adapted from Washington States University's *Critical Thinking Project* (See link of the instrument here: <https://bit.ly/3BqGIek>). The researchers also involved 2 evaluators to measure objectively the students' critical thinking in writing argumentative essay. After the students finished the argumentative writing, then the researchers collected, assessed, and analyzed their arguments systematically.

### 3. Findings and Discussion

In this segment, the researchers assessed the students' critical thinking when writing argumentative essays based on the rubric previously mentioned. The purpose is to get factual data of students' critical thinking level in their argumentative essays. From the data of 30 students' argumentative essay, it can be perceived simply 2 students or 6.7% who got good score and were categorized as high critical thinking. Meanwhile, there were known 28 students or 93.3% who got bad score and were categorized as low critical thinking. Many students failed in their main issue, failed to explain theoretical contexts, failed to correctly identify data for truth claims, and failed to identify implications or conclusions. The scores of argumentative essays were shown below.

Table 1. Students' Critical Thinking Score in Argumentative Essay Test

Respondent	Critical Thinking Score		Average ( $\bar{x}$ )
	Assessor 1	Assessor 2	
R.1	25	26	25
R.2	29	30	29
R.3	25	25	25
R.4	67	70	68.5
R.5	25	27	25
R.6	83	83	83
R.7	51	50	50
R.8	35	37	37
R.9	62	66	64
R.10	25	25	25
R.11	51	50	50
R.12	53	53	53
R.13	37	37	37
R.14	71	70	71
R.15	35	37	37
R.16	25	26	25
R.17	25	23	25
R.18	27	25	25
R.19	29	29	29
R.20	87	87	87
R.21	30	33	33
R.22	33	37	35
R.23	25	23	25
R.24	62	65	62
R.25	29	30	29
R.26	77	75	75
R.27	55	54	54
R.28	66	63	66
R.29	23	25	25
R.30	27	25	25

As example, the researchers have chosen the good and bad arguments which could represent the high and low critical thinking in the students' argumentative essay. Below were the data:

- Good Critical Arguments from Respondent No.6

Text	Stages
<p>⇒ “In my opinion, for both students and teachers, there are significant advantages to studying online during this pandemic.”</p> <p>This sentence showed about thesis statement of R.6 mentioned significant advantages to study online during this pandemic.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><u>Issue</u></p> <p>→</p> <p>In this part, the students has analyzed the thesis statement or preview from the essay.</p>
<p>⇒ “First, online education allows us to learn from a variety of mentors and teachers in a variety of fields, increasing our knowledge and expanding our perspectives. It reduces student anxiety since many students are able to communicate more effectively through online education than in regular classes. Anyone can learn from anywhere as long as they have access to the internet.”</p> <p>This sentence showed that R.6 has given the first critical opinion about online education can increase the knowledge and expand the perspectives. In this sentence R.6 also enough explained clearly about effectively of online education.</p> <p>⇒ “Second, Online learning is frequently more affordable. Furthermore, when compared to regular classes methods, online learning is less expensive. Students in typical university programs must pay for transportation, textbooks, institutional facilities such as gyms, libraries, and swimming pools, as well as other expenses that drive up the cost of university education. On the other hand, when doing online learning, students only need to pay quotas to still be able to access the internet. As a result, both the wealthy and the poor can benefit from virtual education.”</p> <p>This sentence showed that R.6 has given the second critical opinion about online learning is more affordable and R.6 provided an explanation of why online learning is frequently more affordable.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><u>Argument</u></p> <p>→</p> <p>In this part, the students has given the critical argument about the topic “Online Learning”.</p>
<p>⇒ “Circular Letter No. 3 of 2020 on Education Unit and Number 36962/MPK. A/HK/2020 issued by The Minister of Education, Nadiem Anwar Makarim which tells about The Implementation of Education in the Emergency Period of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) then learning activities are carried out online in order to prevent the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19).”</p> <p>This sentence showed data that was strong enough to proof the argument of R.6.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><u>Evidence</u></p> <p>→</p> <p>In this part, the student has correctly identified data and information that counts as data evidence.</p>
<p>⇒ “As conclusion, online learning makes it easier for students to take exams because they can take them anywhere and anytime, and they can view their scores directly. Students also do not need to attend class and interact with lecturers face to face. Based on all the above, online learning is one of the good technologies to continue to develop. That could be a step in the right direction for education in developing countries. Lastly, online learning allows students to strengthen their digital skills while also allowing them to access lessons without having to attend class. Online learning is one way to prepare students to comprehend lectures without having to meet with a teacher face to face.”</p> <p>In this text R.6 can suggested briefly to evaluated conclusions and implications of the issue.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><u>Conclusion</u></p> <p>→</p> <p>This text has a conclusion part and suitable with the argument.</p>

From the table above, R.6 had fairly critical arguments in his essay and R.6 gave strong enough evidence in the argumentative essay to prove the personal opinion and argument of R.6. It can be seen the issue from R.6 can mentioned significant advantages to study online during this pandemic “In my opinion, for both students and teachers, there are significant advantages to studying online during this pandemic.”. R.6 also gave some arguments from the thesis such as “First, online education allows us to learn from a variety of mentors and teachers...” and “Second, Online learning is frequently more affordable ...” and this argumentative essay increased critical thinking level because R.6 included data evidence that can strengthen the arguments put forward by R.6 such as “Circular Letter No. 3 of 2020 on Education Unit and Number 36962/MPK. A/HK/2020 issued by The Minister of Education, Nadiem Anwar Makarim...”. Also, R.6 gave the conclusion that can suggest briefly to evaluate conclusions and implications of the issue “As conclusion, online learning makes it easier for students to take exams because they can take them anywhere and anytime, and they can view their scores directly. Students also...”. Another sample of good critical arguments was shown by R.20 below.

• Good Critical Arguments from Respondent No.20

Text	Stages
<p>⇒ “It has been two years since the Pandemic started and do you ever feel that your current learning comprehension is a little bit down? Online learning for the students may be quite effective in reducing the spread of covid-19. Since, the students do not have to meet face to face or don’t make physical contact that allows the transmission of the covid-19 virus through interactions between students and other students, students with teachers, or teachers with other teachers in the school. Therefore, the government replaced face to face learning with online through learning platforms such as Google Classroom, E-learning, Google meet, Zoom Meeting, Edmodo, and so on. But behind that all, online learning makes students have decreased intelligence. It is because the student makes it easy that online learning. <b>So, I feel agree that online learning make the students’ intelligence decline.</b>”</p> <p>This sentence showed the issue thesis statement of R.20 agreed that online learning can make students’ intelligence decline.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Issue</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">→</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>In this part, the students has analyzed the thesis statement or preview from the essay.</b></p>
<p>⇒ “<b>However, still many people believe that online learning activities are better than face to face learning.</b> Indeed, online learning makes the students get to know more about technology. Still, if it goes to so long, it will be worse effect for the student in the future. They will be machine dependency. <b>Then, human resources will be reduced. Because, everything is done by technology.</b> Live according by future expert Ray Kurzweil has made a number of predictions some inspirational predictions are downright worrying. One is the idea that sounds like science fiction suggesting that artistic intelligence will someday became more powerful than human intelligence and improve itself at an exponential rate. Otherwise, known as an “Singularity”. That is why, this will be worse for the future. <b>Because, human resources replaced by machines.</b>”</p> <p>This sentence showed good critical opinion of R.20 that R.20 believed online education can make human resources replaced by machines. This sentence is good opinion because R.20 gives pure the opinion about online learning.</p> <p>⇒ “<b>In that, it is clear that online learning make the students intelligence declining with certain with certain notes: first, it is because the lack of adequate infrastructure for students.</b> There are still many students who don’t have internet access, PC, and Smartphone. Like director of prevention and control of mental health and drug problems at the Indonesian ministry of health, dr. Fidiensyah said “During the learning process in the PSBB (Large-scale Social restrictions) period, only about 68% accessed the network itself, meaning 32% didn’t get the facility.”</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Argument</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">→</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>In this part, the student has given the critical argument about the topic “Online Learning”</b></p>

<p>He said at Graha BNPB Jakarta. Seeing the fact above, I think it means that not all students to follow the learning well. Such as students who come from underprivileged families and those in rural areas. If this continuous, then the learning will be reduced and the intelligence of students will decline. Consequently, have a bad impact on the generations of a nation's children. I don't want it will come."</p> <p>This sentence showed good critical opinion because R.20 clearly explained why R.20 think online learning make the students intelligence declining.</p> <p>⇒ "Another reason is, <b>online learning cannot fit every student's learning style</b>. In the learning process, each individual has a different learning style from one another. There are people who can focus on studying on their own. Also, those who learn by reading theory, learning by looking with their teacher. However, I think online learning cannot adapt its learning style to the personality of each student who participates in learning activities."</p> <p>This sentence also showed good critical opinion, because R.20 think online learning cannot adapted and R.20 clearly enough for explained about the opinion/argument.</p>	
<p>⇒ "Then, human resources will be reduced. Because, everything is done by technology. Live according by future <b>expert Ray Kurzweil has made a number of predictions some inspirational predictions are downright worrying</b>. One is the idea that sounds like science fiction suggesting that artificial intelligence will someday became more powerful than human intelligence and improve itself at an exponential rate."</p> <p>This sentence showed the expert who supports the opinion of R.20 argued that human resources will be reduced.</p> <p>⇒ "first, it is because the lack of adequate infrastructure for students. There are still many students who don't have internet access, PC, and Smartphone. Like director of prevention and control of mental health and drug problems at the Indonesian ministry of health, <b>dr. Fidiansyah said "During the learning process in the PSBB (Large-scale Social restrictions) period, only about 68% accessed the network itself, meaning 32% didn't get the facility."</b> He said at Graha BNPB Jakarta. Seeing the fact above, I think it means that not all students to follow the learning well. Such as students who come from underprivileged families and those in rural areas. If this continuous, then the learning will be reduced and the intelligence of students will decline. Consequently, have a bad impact on the generations of a nation's children. I don't want it will come."</p> <p>This sentence showed the expert who supports the opinion of R.20 argued that R.20 think that not all students to follow the online learning well.</p> <p>⇒ "However, I think online learning cannot adapt its learning style to the personality of each student who participates in learning activities. <b>In fact, UNICEF conducted a survey with more than 4000 responses from students in 34 prolines in Indonesia. The survey results stated that as many as 66% of the 60 million students from various levels of education in 34 prances admitted that they were not comfortable studying at home during the covid-19 pandemic. Of this number, 87% of students want to return to school immediately.</b> In this case, all students will follow a learning program that has been made the same and only supports one or two learning styles. If it occurs for a long time, it will follow a learning program that has been made the same and only supports one or two learning styles. If it occurs for a long time, it will cause bored on online</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><u>Evidence</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">→</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>In this part, the student has correctly identified data and information that counts as data evidence.</b></p>

<p>learning. Thus, making students lazy and resulting in a decrease in student intelligence.”</p> <p>This sentence showed the expert who supports the opinion of R.20 argued that online learning cannot adapted the learning style to the personality of each student who participates in learning activities.</p>	
<p>⇒ “In brief, the two evidence in the previous paragraph are the reason why I do agree that online learning can decrease student’s intelligence it is quite clear the reason why students can be less smart in online learning. This is due to limited infrastructure and online learning that is not in accordance with students learning styles. Well, these reasons are enough to prove that it is better for students to study is usual or in offline learning. I do hope people can realize that this online learning must be removed immediately and back to normal. Whatever it is, requested that students can learn face to face as soon as possible. Don’t let the learning activities carried out not run optimally just because of the wrong and ineffective learning teaching methods.”</p> <p>This text showed R.20 can suggested briefly to evaluated conclusions and implications of the issue.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Conclusion</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">→</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>This text identifies and thoroughly evaluates conclusions, implications, or the consequences of the issue.</b></p>

From the table above, R.20 had good critical thinking shown by her arguments, and R.20 provided strong enough explanation toward issue and evidence in the argumentative essay to prove the personal opinion and argument of R.20. It can be seen the issue from R.20 showed the issue of thesis statement of R.20 which agreed that online learning could make students’ intelligence decline “... *It is because the student makes it easy that online learning. So, I feel agree that online learning make the students’ intelligence decline.*”. In the arguments of R.20, it showed good critical opinion of R.20 that she believed online education can make human resources be replaced by machines. This sentence was good opinion because R.20 gave pure opinion about online learning “*In that, it is clear that online learning make the students intelligence declining with certain with certain notes: first, it is because the lack of adequate infrastructure for students...*”. R.20 is believed to have good critical thinking because R.20 provided arguments with very strong data evidence “*Live according by future expert Ray Kurzweil has made a number of predictions some inspirational predictions are downright worrying. One is the idea...*” This evidence showed the expert who supported the opinion of R.20 “*...In fact, UNICEF conducted a survey with more than 4000 responses from students in 34 prolines in Indonesia. The survey results stated that as many as 66% of the 60 million students...*” In this data evidence, it showed that the expert who supported the opinion of R.20 argued that online learning cannot adapted the learning style to the personality of each student who participated in learning activities.

In short, two respondents above had succeeded in their argumentative essay. In this case, they had proofed logical and reasonable opinion clearly in their argumentative essay. After we knew sample of 2 good argumentative essay, below were 2 examples of bad arguments or respondents with low critical thinking in argumentative essay.

- Good Critical Arguments from Respondent No.1

Text	Stages
<p>⇒ “The situation may get hard during a pandemic, the governments and every aspect of the people have been trying to keep every situation on track even in the pandemic. Online learning is one of the keys to keep students learning during the pandemic. Online learning also allows everyone to access from anywhere and wherever they want. It gives more flexibility to study. it allows parents to have full control of their children while learning.”</p> <p>The text is not showed the thesis statement or preview from the essay. R.1 just gives opinion not thesis statement.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Issue</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">→</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>In this part, the students has analyzed the thesis statement or preview from the essay.</b></p>



<p>⇒ “However, it never ensures that students have a good situation while studying online, not a few of them having verbal abuse by their parents. This is so awful. For example, the murder case committed by a mother (LH) against her biological daughter who is still in grade 1 SD in Tangerang (26/08/2020). LH has abused her own biological child who is only six years old due to feelings of irritation because the child is unable to do online learning. In fact, violence against children during the pandemic has increased by around 15%. Violence can be physical or verbal. The main factor causing violence against children is not far from economic problems and the maturity of the parents’ personality. Explained DR. HM. Soeroyo Machfudz, Sp.A (K), MPH, lecturer at the Faculty of Medicine at the Islamic University of Indonesia (FK UII) in a seminar entitled “Violence in Children during the Covid-19 Pandemic.”</p> <p>This sentence showed opinion of R.1 but the opinion is out of context of the issue online learning. Because, R.1 directly discussed about verbal abuse not about the learning.</p>	<p><b>Argument</b></p> <p>→</p> <p>In this part, the student has given the critical argument about the topic “Online Learning”</p>
<p>⇒ “In addition, violence against children while learning from home. Is online learning really helpful and useful for every student? the answer is no. Not all students in Indonesia have the access to stay online.</p> <p>This sentence was still out of context from the issue about online learning. R.1 still wrote about violence against children.</p>	<p><b>Evidence</b></p> <p>→</p> <p>In this part, the student has correctly identify data and information that counts as data evidence.</p>
<p>⇒ “For example, the murder case committed by a mother (LH) against her biological daughter who is still in grade 1 SD in Tangerang (26/08/2020). LH has abused her own biological child who is only six years old due to feelings of irritation because the child is unable to do online learning. In fact, violence against children during the pandemic has increased by around 15%.”</p> <p>This sentence showed the data for evidence the argument, but the data was still out of topic because R.1 mentioned data about the murder case which is not about online learning context.</p>	<p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <p>→</p> <p>This text has a conclusion part and suitable with the argument.</p>
<p>⇒ “The main factor causing violence against children is not far from economic problems and the maturity of the parents’ personality. Explained DR. HM. Soeroyo Machfudz, Sp.A (K), MPH, lecturer at the Faculty of Medicine at the Islamic University of Indonesia (FK UII) in a seminar entitled “Violence in Children during the Covid-19 Pandemic.”</p> <p>This data mentioned about factor causing violence against children which is still out of topic from online learning issue.</p>	
<p>⇒ “In conclusion, online learning is helpful for those who have privilege to have access and have a good situation in study, supportive environments, etc. But, remember that not all children have the same situation. Moreover, Indonesia has many areas that still lack internet access and access to facilities that are on par with other children. Therefore, face-to-face learning must continue to be carried out with a protocol that helps students to keep going to school.”</p> <p>This text was quite in context but still not connected with R.1’s opinion above which discusses about verbal abuse and violence against children.</p>	

From the table above, R.1 has not given good critical arguments in his argumentative essay. Because the issue from R.1 was not shown by the thesis statement. R.1 just gave an opinion not thesis statement “...Online learning also allows everyone to access from anywhere and wherever they want. It gives more flexibility to study...” Also, R.1 presented opinion which out of context of online learning, and R.1 directly discussed about verbal abuse not about the online learning “...However, it never ensures that students have a good situation while studying online, not a few of

them having verbal abuse by their parents. This is so awful...” and “In addition, violence against children while learning from home. Is online learning...” In this sentence, R.1 did not mentioned about the online learning, and R.1 even explained about verbal abuse by their parents and violence against children, this was definitely out of topic. For the evidence, R.1 indeed the data as evidence, but the data mentioned about factor causing violence against children was still out of topic from online learning issue, such as “...Explained DR. HM. Soeroyo Machfudz, Sp.A (K), MPH, lecturer at the Faculty of Medicine at the Islamic University of Indonesia (FK UII) in a seminar entitled “Violence in Children during the Covid-19 Pandemic.”. Last, the conclusion was quite in context but it still did not connect with R.1’s opinion above which discussed about verbal abuse and violence against children “In conclusion, online learning is helpful for those who have privilege to have access and have a good situation in study, supportive environments, etc. But, remember...”. Another sample of good critical arguments was shown by R.10 below.

• Good Critical Arguments from Respondent No.10

Text	Stages
<p>⇒ “The covid-19 pandemic certainly made it difficult for many people in education sector.”</p> <p>This sentence was in the first paragraph and the paragraph just only this sentence and this is clearly not showed the thesis statement.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><u>Issue</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">→</p> <p>In this part, the students has analyzed the thesis statement or preview from the essay.</p>
<p>⇒ “In this regard, online learning has actually been carried out in several educational institutions within a certain scope. As in collage and beyond, online learning is a solution to overcome the problem of limited time for student and lectures. But keep in mind those who are directly involved in this learning activity are people who already understand their learning responsibilities consciously and are mature.”</p> <p>This sentence R.10 stated the opinion about online learning but not based on the thesis statement and the opinion of R.10 did not match the issue of online learning because R.10 directly discusses about the institution, not about the learning.</p> <p>⇒ “This is different from, what happened at the primary and secondary education levels. Children and their relationship with their teachers are in really mood of communications interactions that allow teachers and students to exchange feelings directly. Then a meeting in the face to face learning process is very necessary. Children really mood guidance and direction, both from teaches at school or parent at home, to explore themselves in learning.”</p> <p>This sentence was still doesn’t match the issue of online learning, because R.10 still discussed about the institution of the primary and secondary levels which is still not in the context of online learning.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><u>Argument</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">→</p> <p>In this part, the student has given the critical argument about the topic “Online Learning”</p>
<p>In this argumentative essay from R.10 absolutely no evidence as supporting data/argument.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><u>Evidence</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">→</p> <p>In this part, the student has correctly identify data and information that counts as data evidence.</p>
<p>⇒ “So, the effectiveness of online learning is a terms of the people involved in it. More adults involved and they are aware of their responsibility for learnings, more effective online learning can be. This is because online learning requires independent initiative from the people who play 2 role in it, to make the best use of the time dual opportunities that exist.”</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><u>Conclusion</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">→</p> <p>This text has a conclusion part and suitable with the argument.</p>

This was not showed clearly conclusions which out of the issue about the learning.	
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From the table above, R.10 has not given good critical arguments in her argumentative essay because the issue from R.10 was in the first paragraph, and the paragraph was too short. This clearly did not show the thesis statement *“The covid-19 pandemic certainly made it difficult for many people in education sector.”*. The argument of R.10 was not based on the thesis statement, and the opinion of R.10 did not match the issue of online learning because R.10 directly discussed about the institution not about the learning, such as *“In this regard, online learning has actually been carried out in several educational institutions within a certain scope. As...”* and *“This is different from, what happened at the primary and secondary education levels. Children and their relationship...”*. In this argumentative essay, R.10 absolutely did not provide with evidence as supporting data or arguments, so in the absence of data, it made this argumentative essay become not good, and conclusion of R.10 did not show clearly conclusions which was out of the issue about the learning *“So, the effectiveness of online learning is a terms of the people involved in it. More adults involved...”*. From those two examples, respondents have failed in their argumentative essay, in this case, they cannot prove to think logically and critically as well as they cannot make reasonable opinions clearly in their argumentative essay.

Based on the findings explored above, the researchers can know that 28 students or majority students had low level of critical thinking. They could not to express their opinions or arguments in argumentative essay which is accordance with the rules of the NEIU Critical Thinking Rubric. The researchers considered the students’ uncritically and the failure of students to think critically is from several aspects. First, arguing is not easy and quite difficult. In arguing something, it requires clear reasons and opinions. When we want to be able to argue, we have to practice often, for example, by developing arguments through debate. Komara and Sriyanto (2018) mentioned constructive controversy method as potential method to gain students’ critical thinking as the tools before writing argumentative essay. It is reasonable since constructive controversy is method to manage the controversial issue or topic discussed within a group to practice making arguments and learn about the issue or problem. Johnson and Johnson (1979) argued that the way to developing students thinking critically is by setting a debate-like situation.

Second, argumentative essay requires data and evidence to support an arguments or opinion. So, it requires a lot of reading or literacy skills in order to get a wide variety of knowledge and resources. Wahid & Marni (2018) supported that learning argumentative is considered needed to use learning strategies. The strategy is for instance content area literacy which is the strategy for a mixture of the use of reading, writing, and thinking critically. It is beneficial because content area literacy can relief students to find ideas, conceptions, refine the power of analysis, finds gaps and also for reinforce arguments for data and evidence. Meanwhile, Vacca (2008) added that reading literacy is a strategy for learning argumentative in higher education such as university level. The outstanding of reading literacy strategy is established and oriented to problem solving skills and can provide an understanding of framework of different perspectives.

At last, argumentative must be able to influence the readers. It is true since the arguments proposed by writer can be like “powerful suggestion” to the readers from the arguments and opinions conveyed by the writer to the readers. It is not easy for writers to be able to influence readers, so writers must really be able to think critically and know how to influence their readers. Qin & Liu (2021) stated that the arguments must indeed be able to influence the readers, but it should be arguments that contain elements of factual claim, legit data, valid counter argument, reasonable counter argument data, rebuttal claim, and also rebuttal data. Dean (2014) added that argument is what connects thesis, evidence, and situation. Disparate to basically attempting to influence someone to believe or to do something, evidence established argumentation contains assembly a claim maintained by reasons or evidence from several sources that attaches to the claim in a belief way.

#### 4. Conclusion

To sum up, there was only 2 students or 6.7% who can be declared having high critical thinking level compared to 28 or 93.3% students who did not. The results of 30 students' argumentative essay that had been scored or assessed through critical thinking rubric proved and clarified the findings. The researchers believe that having good arguments reflects the level of students' critical thinking in argumentative essays. However, it seems that majority students were very difficult to make a good and strong arguments. The researchers believe there were some factors that make it difficult for students to express their critical opinions into argumentative essays such as, arguing is not easy and quite difficult because in arguing requires clear reasons and opinions. Next is argumentative writing requires data and evidence to support an argument or their opinions. Last is argumentative writing must be able to influence the readers.

So, based on these results and factors, the researchers provide suggestions for students to be more active in learning and be eagers in writing argumentative essays with precise and good critical thinking skills, especially for students at the university level. Therefore, students should practice more for making argumentative essays a lot in order to increase their ability to think critically. For teachers or lecturers, it seems that they must provide students with variative teaching method or media in explaining about argumentative essays material. So that, students can be better at making argumentative essays with critical thinking skills. For other researchers, this finding can be a valuable data to give another solution for increasing students' critical thinking skills.

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