

## CLASSROOM DEBATE STRATEGY TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

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### ABSTRACT

*World's massive agenda of promoting 21st century skills is a concrete truth that cannot be denied by everyone, including Indonesian students from all across range, In contrast, based on communal justification and researcher's personal justification, the lack of Indonesian students' critical thinking skills does exist. It is proven by Indonesia's latest PISA score and researcher's preliminary research at private university in Sidoarjo. In an attempt of overcoming the lack, this research aims to investigate the new paradigm that was rarely initiated to be conducted (i.e. enacting two mutually exclusive realms to be one unity), namely classroom debate to enhance students' critical thinking skills in argumentative writing. This research employs descriptive qualitative research. The data were collected through observation and documentation from 19 undergraduate students who were currently mastering argumentative writing field of study at a private university in Sidoarjo. The obtained findings show that the assumption of the researcher in bringing up a new paradigm of classroom debate can enhance students' critical thinking skills through argumentative writing is conceptually and practically correct. The result of three meetings of implementation and its seven main steps of implementation indicate that 19 research subjects' critical thinking skills were progressively enhanced.*

**Keywords:** *Classroom Debate, Critical Thinking, Argumentative Writing*

### INTRODUCTION

World's massive agenda of promoting 21st century skills is a concrete truth that cannot be denied by everyone, including Indonesian students from all across range. World Economic Forum's recent publication in 2019 emphasizes that there are ten top skills in 2020 that are expected to be owned by those who want to own the game and to survive the industrial revolution 4.0. Those top skills are being ranked from the most needed until the least needed, namely (1) complex problem solving; (2) critical thinking; (3) creativity; (4) people management; (5) coordinating with others; (6) emotional intelligence; (7) judgment and decision making; (8) service orientation; (9) negotiation; and (10) cognitive flexibility. Furthermore, during its process of formulating the top ten skills, World Economic Forum deliberately shifts several position regarding to its necessity. For the concrete embodiment of the shifted rank, in 2015, those top ten skills are quite different to the 2020's version.

In 2015, World Economic Forum strongly emphasizes that the top ten skills that will be needed the most are (1) complex problem solving; (2) coordinating with others; (3) people management; (4) critical thinking; (5) negotiation; (6) quality control; (7) service orientation; (8) judgment and decision making; (9) active listening; and (10) creativity. There is a significant push on everyone's perspective in putting critical thinking as the number two out of those top ten rank; in other word, it becomes a tangible indication that 21st century skills are there and they are ready to harvest the generation. In a recent study concerning on critical thinking by Tsaniyah and Poedjiastoeti, in 2017, Indonesian children are mandated to master 21st century skills. Those skills are contained of (1) critical thinking skills; (2) creativity; (3) collaboration; and (4) communication. The urgent tendency for Indonesian children in owning a 21st century skill is growing up from the global movement that Indonesia participates, namely sustainable development goals of United Nation (i.e. SDGs). Point number four of SDGs emphasizes on quality education. Indonesia openly claims that the nation plays a tangible contribution in being the agent of change. Indonesia plays an essential role in positioning itself as a protocol. Thus, through its commitment, it is a legitimate burden for Indonesia's educational system in enhancing Indonesian students' ability in competing at a high level that requires complex skills, expertise, and creativity.

By the time 2020 comes, having a 21st century skills is a mandatory, especially one's capacity to think critically. Critical thinking is also known as a mode of thinking that related with substances and issues in which the thinkers increase their quality of thinking by skillfully handling all of the structures that attached within their minds. Thus, they can apply intellectual standards within themselves at the same time. Dealing on its elements and indicators, there are eight elements. The first element is question at issue. It has an indicator, namely students are able to make inquiries based on the phenomenon or data Information. The second element is information. It contains two main indicators, namely (1) describing something based on data or information; and (2) formulate things based on information provided. The third element is purpose. It has two indicators (1) formulate objectives; (2) describe the function / benefits / role something. The fourth element is concept with indicator in being able explaining the concept. The fifth element is named assumptions. It has an indicator in capability of making

assumptions. The sixth element is called points of view with indicator of creating a viewpoint on anything. The seventh indicator is interpretation and inference. It has an indicator on making the interpretation of a thing and making conclusions about something. Lastly, the eighth indicator is implication and consequences with indicator in explaining the implications and consequences of a case (Inch et al., 2006 as cited in Susanti, 2014). Critical thinking ability can be enhancing if someone is properly emphasizing their own way of thinking; metacognition. Thus, critical thinking is a rational and a reflective type of thinking in purpose to decide which one to believe and which one to do (Majidi, Janssen, & Graaff, 2021; Belecina & Ocampo Jr., 2018; Santika et al., 2018; Sune, 2018).

In contrast, most of Indonesian students still have a lack in one of its 21st century skills named critical thinking. The result of Indonesian students' PISA rank becomes a valid indicator that the percentage of Indonesian students who are able in mastering critical thinking is still quite low. OECD (2016) reveals that the result of Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) of Indonesia is still way too far from what is being expected. Indonesia's PISA score in 2016 shows that Indonesia is ranked at the 62th position out of 70 countries that are participated. The rank of Indonesia in PISA is being listed under the red line (i.e. red-lined score is classified as the lowest chart due to its average score in a range of below 450. It is in line with what Kertayasa predicted in 2014. According to Kertayasa (2014), "those lowest ranks of Indonesian students feel like a burden to feel because it is supported by the fact that the ability of Indonesian students is able to reach the first level and the second level of HOTS solely" (p.1).

In order to prove the status quo, researcher conducts a small research and a small observation at private university. The irony is that the small research that researcher was conducted turns out strengthening the bitter truth that Indonesia's PISA rank cannot be truer than ever. In 22nd of October 2019, a small research that was done by the researcher entitled *an Analysis on Critical Thinking Elements of LPTK Students* revealed the fact that the condition of LPTK students' mastery in critical thinking elements is quite unsatisfying and quite low. The small research that was done by the researcher of this thesis panders on scrutinizing the eight elements of critical thinking coined by Inch et al. theory (as cited in Susanti, 2014) as the basis of the parameter. The small research was done to 19 LPTK students

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that are currently mastering argumentative writing as the research subjects. Ironically, the result vividly reveals that the condition of LPTK students' mastery in critical thinking elements is quite unsatisfying. As the major number, most of the LPTK students are only able to reach the 1 or D score. In detail, the LPTK students with dynamic progression were seven students solely; consequently, the rest was being crippled in range of D score. Furthermore, based on the further analysis in FGD, the researcher finds out that the majority of the LPTK students have a tendency and a demand to be provided a strategy to overcome their lacks in thinking critically. Hence, the small research that was done by this undergraduate thesis' researcher becomes a red alert that bringing up new strategy or new paradigm is a must.

The major concern is the minimum score of the students of targeted private university becomes an undeniable indicator that there is a concentration to capitalize and to scrutinize about why the low score can be existed. As a result, this condition strengthens the researcher's intention in finding the proper treatment to enhance students' critical thinking. The researcher presents a new paradigm on tangibly contributing to overcome the gap of the recent condition. A study that was published at LLT Journal by Handayani in 2017 emphasizes that combining three horizons of framework is a promising thing to do although it is quite rare. In her study, she elaborates debate, argumentative writing, and critical thinking. The result comes in agreement the shifting paradigm of utilizing English debate is existed. The study vividly attacks the common stigma that narrowly generalizing the use of debate for speaking matters solely. The study shows that those three horizons work perfectly as unity. The result emphasizes that debate facilitate students' critical thinking in producing and in delivering their stances on argumentative writing. Moreover, research subjects of the research also receive a significant enhancement for their academic scoring. Hence, the new paradigm that the researcher tries to elaborate is being measured by the fact that those three horizons can be engaged into one as an advanced way to overcome the issue.

Based on the researcher's process of mastering related scientific literature and personal expertise in mastering English debate, this research proposes a treatment to overcome the lack of targeted private university students (i.e. students who previously were joined essay writing class until argumentative writing class

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solely) in mastering critical thinking. The treatment is in the form of classroom debate or debate term in general. Certain researchers and observers have found a way out to overcome the lack of the students' critical thinking ability by creating certain strategies that can be used to reform the habitual of using conventional method and strategy and one of it is classroom debate. The idea of classroom debate is fundamentally growing up from the concept of debating competition among schools. Classroom debate is well-manifested as the entire process of arguing ideas between two sides. In the school environment, debate is well known as an English competition among students in which the students are representing their schools to snatch the champion title or the first place. Classroom debate demands students to be able to defend their opinions, thus it requires a proficiency to speak English well (Najafi et al., 2016; Vasilescu, 2017).

Globally, classroom debate or debate in general is seen as one of the most helpful learning strategies to promote the one's critical thinking and is able to enhance one's critical thinking skills for over 2000 years. Furthermore, classroom debate helps learners employ critical thinking skills in which they are able in defining the problem, evaluating the reliability of the resources, identifying assumptions, challenging assumptions, recognizing contradictions, and prioritizing the relevance and importance of different points in the overall discussion. It then indicates that debate trains students to be well-mastered in terms of constructing arguments (Zoorwick & Wade, 2016; Doody & Condon 2012). Narrowly, in ASEAN scope, the study of Zare and Othman in 2015 concerns on finding students' perception in using classroom debate strategy to enhance one's critical thinking ability. The participants of the research were 16 undergraduate students majoring in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) at the Faculty of Educational Studies, University Putra Malaysia (UPM). The result comes into an agreement that classroom debate is an innovative, interesting, constructive, and helpful approach to teaching and learning. The result also shows that participating in classroom debate helps subjects overcoming the fear of talking before a crowd, boosting their confidence to talk, expressing their opinions, developing their speaking ability, and enhancing their critical thinking skills. Thirdly, in national scope, a recent study that was done by Iman (2017) and was published at the International Journal of Instruction entitled *Debate Instruction in EFL Classroom: Impacts on the Critical* Volume 10 (2) November 2021, page 274-288  
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*Thinking and Speaking Skill* indicates an agreement that the finding of the study showed that there was high contribution of classroom debate in engaging to whole aspects of critical thinking. Its approximated number is 0.821 or 82.1%. Widely, the contribution of each aspect of critical thinking towards critical thinking final achievement was classified as (1) context in practicing CT was 32.3%; (2) issue in practicing CT was 26.2%; (3) implication in practicing CT was 20.1%; and (4) assumption in practicing CT was 6.6%. Thus, the strong intention of the researcher in maximizing the use of classroom debate strategy to enhance students' critical thinking at argumentative class is increased.

The challenge to be concerned is denying the truth that debate which commonly uses as a learning strategy to enhance speaking skills being shifted as a learning strategy to enhance critical thinking skills in the written form. The biggest question is arrived; How does a classroom debate which theoretically being practiced orally can participate to one's success in producing a writing works that reflects its writer critical thinking ability? That question is undeniable patent that takes the researcher' concern. Practically, classroom debate majorly emphasizes on any related activities that are done orally, but, there is a top notch that is owned by debating activity in general. In debate, on its any forms, all debaters are legitimately required to construct a proper argument before delivering their substantives. Every debater receives a case-building time to deliberately discuss the argumentation that they are going to bring to the chamber. Emphasizing on its process of case building, realistically, the note that is produced by every debater is in the form of argumentative writing. Argumentative writing is defined as the embodiment of scientific paper that contains arguments, explanations, proofs, or reasons. Normally, in an argumentative writing work, there is an objective review that is being followed by concrete instances, analogies, and cause and effect relationships. Furthermore, Ibrahim, et al. (2015) explain that the argument on argumentative writing is displayed with good and right reasons. In argumentative writing work, there is a tangible attempt to influence, to invite, and to lead opinions to certain things or issues. Besides, argumentative writing can also contain arguments about affirmative (i.e. supporting ideas) and negative (i.e. conflicting ideas) on the issues or topics that are being discussed (Belmont and Sharkey, 2011; Abbas, 2018). Concerning on its natural patent, debating is mainly about presenting the best

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argument to top the score. Hence, focusing on its fundamental process of debaters in preparing their argument, choosing classroom debate strategy to enhance one's ability to think critically at argumentative writing is no longer a delusion.

Growing up from the previous studies that rarely interlink classroom debate with writing skill, the researcher attempts to fill the gap by systematically proving the assumption that classroom debate strategy can enhance students' critical thinking ability at argumentative class. The urgency is placed on the students' needs to be well-aligned to the current century's demand named critical thinking. Aside to that, the current status quo of the students of nationwide critical thinking is also quite far from satisfying. As the further step, this research challenges two main statements to critically analyze, namely (1) how is the implementation of classroom debate strategy to enhance students' critical thinking skills in argumentative writing? and (2) how is the result of classroom debate strategy to enhance students' critical thinking skills in argumentative writing? The researcher elaborates three horizons and three frameworks in order to yield a rare paradigm, namely using classroom debate to enhance students' critical thinking in argumentative writing.

## **MATERIALS AND METHOD**

### **A. Materials**

The materials in this research were aligned with the instruments. They were direct observation, observation field notes, video recording, and documents analysis. Furthermore, every instrument was designed to answer research questions by collecting and analyzing the data. For the implementation, the researcher used direct observation, observation field notes, and video recording as the instruments. For the result, the researcher used Inch et al. theory (as cited in Susanti, 2014) as the parameter of utilizing documents analysis. It is consisted of (1) question at issue; (2) information; (3) purpose; (4) concept; (5) assumption; (6) point of view; (7) interpretation and inference; and (8) implication and consequence. Then, documents analysis with Inch et al theory covered preliminary research, classroom debate ballot for consideration, final examination analysis, and final examination scoring transcript.

## B. Method

This research employed qualitative research with descriptive qualitative as the research design. It was aimed to describe the implementation of classroom debate strategy to enhance students' critical thinking skills through argumentative writing and to find out the result of classroom debate strategy to enhance students' critical thinking skills through argumentative writing. Then, the method was done to 19 subjects with pre-requisite criteria. Those three criteria were (1) university students with educational basis (i.e. LPTK students); (2) students who are currently mastering argumentative writing; (3) students with dynamic progression. Deciding those three criteria was aligned to the status quo of World's needs in 21st century skills and Indonesia's contribution in being the agent of change become a valid indicator in deciding why LPTK students were the proper research subjects. Thus, employing qualitative as the research method and its particular subjects was an adequate move of finding the result of the research with an attempt of naturalist paradigm and widely explored (Cresswell, 2014; O'Leary, 2014).

## RESULTS

To answer the research questions, results are presented in two themes, namely the implementation of classroom debate strategy to enhance students' critical thinking skills in argumentative writing and the result of classroom debate strategy to enhance students' critical thinking skills in argumentative writing.

### ***The Implementation of Classroom Debate Strategy to Enhance Students' Critical Thinking Skills in Argumentative Writing***

In conducting the implementation of classroom debate strategy to enhance students' critical thinking skills through argumentative writing, there were seven main steps that were held. Based on the researcher's framework of seven steps of implementation, the researcher described the first meeting of the implementation of classroom debate strategy to enhance students' critical thinking skills through argumentative writing in detail based on those seven steps. They were contained of (1) informing the rules of classroom debate; (2) displaying the matchups (i.e. debaters organization and roles within the classroom debate); (3) publishing the



motion for each matchup; (4) setting up the case building time or discussion time; (5) starting the classroom debate that is being organized based on debater's role; (6) adjudicating through debating ballot; and (7) conducting a communal evaluation. Thus, all of those seven main steps became to stepping-stone to conduct the implementation.

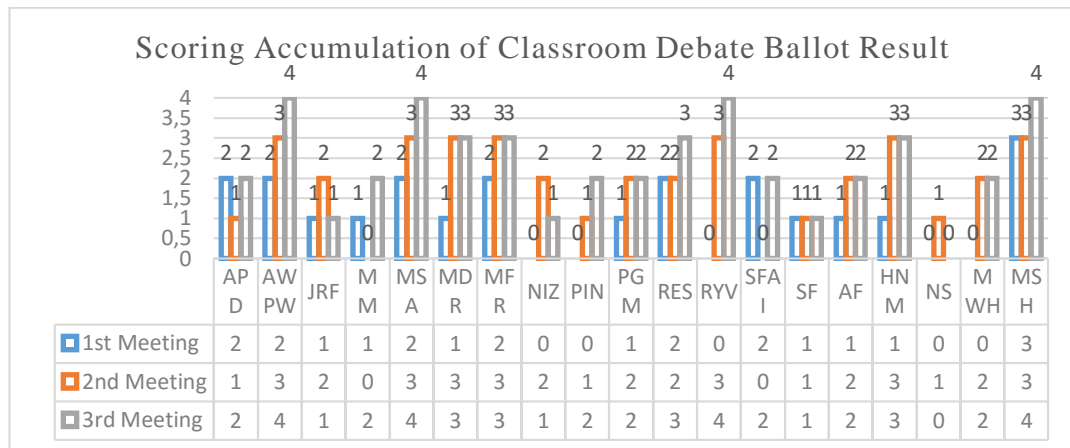
Those seven steps of the implementation were conducted three times (i.e. three meetings). The date was (1) 26th of November 2019 for the first meeting; (2) 3rd of December 2019 for the second meeting; and (3) 10th of December 2019 for the third meeting. The decision of conducting three meetings of implementation was mainly derived from Creswell's framework in 2014. In qualitative research, especially an observation with active observer, the use of proper timing of conducting an observation with researcher as an active observer is a must. Three batches of conducting an observation with researcher as an active observer is a must was considered as one of the most proper timings. This belief grew up from the possible arrival of research subjects' boredom. In the worst-scenario of this research, the research subjects could be possibly think that the researcher might shift the role of the teacher, thus, it could be possibly generating a tendency within the students to not completely concerned with the implementation. Moreover, choosing three meetings of the implementation was also made by the researcher's concern on research subjects' possible hectic date. In this case, the researcher tries to pick a day that was not too close from final-term examination, but it was also not too far. Hence, the researcher purposively explained all of those meetings by these following discussions.

From all of those meetings of implementation, the communal justification was made. There was an enhancement of research subjects' critical thinking skills in which it was grew up from the first meeting until the last meeting. Firstly, during the first meeting, the researcher claimed that the first meeting was the rawest phase of the implementation. There were numerous inadequate moves of creating an argument. It was vividly captured through shyness, unnecessary jokes, and non-scientific argument. Mostly, the research subjects were unable to leave a highlight on how they have to argument to begin with. The researcher considered that the condition of the first meeting was a normal move because of the tendency of adaption. Serious note was made and it was the fact that there must be an

enhancement in the second meeting and the third meeting. Luckily, in the second meeting, there was a highly rocketing manifestation of research subjects' enhancement in thinking critically. All students proudly showed their excitements in debating. Most of them were unable in providing scientific argument, including adding credible references. Most of the research subjects also had a very proper manner in debating. There was a concrete manifestation of enhancement during the second meeting. Thirdly, similar to the second meeting, the academic nuance of debating was still envisioned. The third meeting of the implementation was still conducted in a very well-made condition, but, unluckily, it was not as outstanding as the second meeting. There were some students in one team (i.e. affirmative team) that were being misunderstood in defining the motion. On the other hand, most of students were still presenting advanced arguments. Hence, the researcher concluded this section of discussing into one communal agreement that the implementation of classroom debate strategy to enhance students' critical thinking skills through argumentative writing was conducted properly. The enhancement in every meeting became a valid indicator that both researcher and research subject were able to build an academic nuance under the proper utilization of classroom debate.

### ***The Result of Classroom Debate Strategy to Enhance Students' Critical Thinking Skills through Argumentative Writing***

The researcher attempted to examine the result of classroom debate strategy to enhance students' critical thinking skills in argumentative writing through two principles of analysis and it was employed through document's analysis. For the first principle of analysis, this research examined the consideration proof that was captured through classroom debate ballot and its case building papers. For the second principle of analysis, this research examined the document analysis in the form of subjects' final examination result and its analysis. Hence, it was mainly purposed to strengthen the validity and the legitimate value of capturing result.



*Figure 1. The Scoring Accumulation of Research Subjects' Performance during the Implementation (i.e. Consideration for the Validator or Lecturer of Argumentative Writing)*

The first principle to be discussed was the principle of analyzing the research subjects' result during the implementation of classroom debate strategy. Based on the result, the researcher polarized or categorized the result of the implementation of classroom debate strategy to enhance students' critical thinking skills through argumentative writing into two main categories. The first category was research subjects with dynamic enhancement and the second category was research subjects with static enhancement. The communal result for the first category (i.e. research subjects with dynamic enhancement) came in agreement that there were twelve research subjects with dynamic enhancement. The decision of labelling those twelve research subjects as the research subjects with dynamic enhancement mainly came from the fact that all of those research subjects always had an enhancement within their classroom debate strategy implementation. The quality of their arguments was enhanced throughout times and it was proven through the case building paper. Their case building papers became a concrete proof of how enhanced the quality of their arguments in which it also reflected their critical thinking skills. Furthermore, for the second category (i.e. research subjects with static enhancement), the researcher's result of analysis came in agreement that there were seven research subjects with static enhancement in the implementation of classroom debate strategy to enhance students' critical thinking skills through argumentative writing. Moreover, the decision of labelling those seven research subjects as the research subjects with static enhancement mainly came from the fact

that all of those research subjects unfortunately had an unstable enhancement within their classroom debate strategy implementation. Some of them were having plain progress and the rest of them was jumpy from enhanced into decreased. Thus, the first principle mainly concerned on providing the validator of this research a wider understanding in making the final justification.

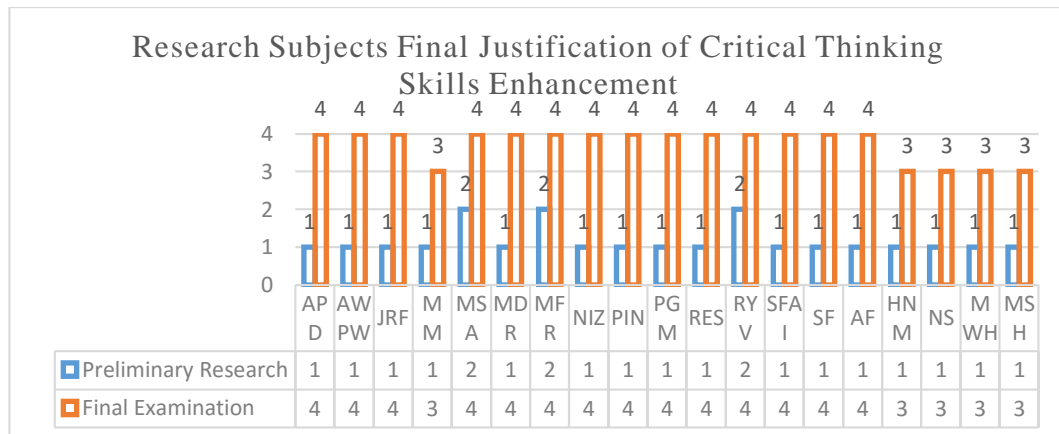


Figure 2. The Final Justification of Research Subjects' Critical Thinking Skills Enhancement (i.e. Validator for the Lecturer of Argumentative Writing)

The second principle to be discussed was the principle of analyzing the research subjects' result during the implementation of classroom debate strategy. It was also referred to the final justification of the enhancement. It was mainly purposed to decide whether the classroom debate strategy did work or not. Moreover, the second principle was capturing the decision-making process of the researcher based on the legal authority (i.e. the lecturer of argumentative writing). In analyzing the second principle, the researcher accumulated and absorbed the insight through two main sources to analyze. Those two main sources were accumulated from the third party (i.e. document analysis). Those two main sources were research subjects' preliminary research result and research subjects' final examination result). Furthermore, those two main resources were in line because both of it were having the same aim, namely creating an argumentative writing work.

## DISCUSSION

From the implementation and the result, it indicates that the final result of classroom debate strategy to enhance students' critical thinking skills through

argumentative writing came in an agreement that classroom debate strategy was progressively enhancing students' critical thinking skills. The finding is consistent to the previous study that was done by Handayani's study in 2017 that portrayed debate, critical thinking, and argumentative writing as one aligned entity. The result also revealed that debate facilitate students' critical thinking in producing and in delivering their stances on argumentative writing. Further, it also affirms what was found by Iman (2017). Classroom debate proactively contributed the whole aspects of critical thinking to the student. Thus, as a communal statement, the assumption of believing that classroom debate strategy can enhance students' critical thinking skills through argumentative writing was conceptually and practically correct.

## **CONCLUSION**

To conclude, in terms of the implementation, there are seven main steps to do. Due to the performance of the implementation, the performance of every research subject is progressively enhanced from the first meeting to the third meeting. Furthermore, dealing with its findings, the findings come in agreement that the assumption of classroom debate strategy to enhance students' critical thinking skills in argumentative writing is conceptually and practically correct. In proving the assumption, the researcher employs two principles of analysis, namely analysis for consideration (i.e. classroom debate ballot result) and analysis for final justification (i.e. subjects' scoring transcript and analysis). 19 research subjects' critical thinking skills that engaged to this research were enhanced. The detail of the enhancement was (1) enhancement from 2 or C to 4 or A had three subjects; (2) enhancement from 1 or D to 4 or A had eleven subjects; and (3) enhancement from 1 or D to 3 or B had five subjects. Further, the finding of this research also implicates for teaching and for further research. For teaching, classroom debate can be considered as one of the learning strategies to implement in the learning process. For further research, due to the limitation that this research had, the researcher implicates further evaluation of the elements of critical thinking that can be measured with classroom debate strategy.

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