

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the research study 1. background of this research, 2. research questions, 3. purposes of the research, 4. significance of the study, 5. limitations of the research, and 6. definitions of some key terms.

1.1 Background of the Research

The development of science has revolutionized the world, from backwardness to becoming all technological to date. Every progress certainly requires handling with synergy and cooperation and comprehensive towards various world problems that require a new way of thinking, namely critical thinking (Sihotang, 2019). Critical thinking is an intellectual process by conceptualizing, applying, synthesizing, and evaluating information obtained from observation, experience, reflection, thought, or communication as a basis for belief and action (Lismaya, 2019).

Furthermore, Vyncke (2012) states that critical thinking the process of conveying general ideas about what is contained remains a concept that raises a lot of uncertainty and disagreement about what it covers and how it is manifested. Moreover, Samanhudi and Linse (2019) also define critical thinking as the formulation of arguments, analysis, interpretation, and making sound judgments, and on the other hand, the mechanisms through which these processes operate. While there are many different views on the nature of critical thinking, there is consensus in the literature that critical thinking is demonstrated through students ability to "identify issues and assumptions, recognize important relationships, make correct inferences, evaluate evidence or authority, and draw conclusions.

Critical thinking is widely regarded as essential in influencing all four language learning skills but plays a special role in writing as one of the productive skills. Writing is a skill that many people dislike for several reasons. According to Rahmat (2019), the problems faced by writers are (a) linguistic difficulties (grammar, vocabulary, language usage) (b) physiological difficulties (no interaction between writer and reader), and (c) cognitive difficulties (punctuation, capitalization, and paragraph structuring). This is because some writers are considered weak. With this difficulty, writing is a very demanding and challenging task because it is a process where a writer has to create, plan, draft, revise, edit, and publish it as a product. Therefore, according to Inggriyani (2017) to get good writing results, a learner as a writer must develop his critical thinking skills.

In higher education, writing is a medium for critical thinking. Writing here is expected to be at the level of academic writing. Vyncke (2012) states that when critical thinking is applied to academic writing, the above abilities are expressed through the argumentation process, resulting in an argumentation, namely the essay, and the dissertation. Moreover, the use of English is a compulsory course in higher education as a preparation for EFL students to be able to understand lecture literature that is mostly written in English. In real situations, EFL students will encounter considerable difficulties in their endeavors to enhance their critical thinking skills, particularly in the realm of academic writing.

Several previous studies have dealt with the topic of critical thinking in academic writing. Chaffee (2002) found that six participants in his study indicated that, as international students, they faced four major challenges in writing critical essays for their assignments. The four problems include essential aspects of critical

thinking in writing, namely clarity of ideas conveyed, lack of critical analysis, lack of critical evaluation, and lack of rigor. Furthermore, research conducted by Egege and Kutieleh (2004) has reported interesting findings that most Southeast Asian students find it very difficult to express their critical thinking in their academic writing such as lack of argumentation, lack of clarity and criticality, and lack of descriptive even though they have excellent English language skills.

Moreover, Samanhudi & Linse (2019) also stated that their research found four important factors that cause problems in the manifestation of students' critical thinking in writing their essays, such as greater awareness of critical thinking, the need to better understand critical thinking, two other factors related to differences in academic requirements and inadequate English language skills. Additionally, the researcher found that there are previous studies that have also been conducted in Indonesia with the context of critical thinking skills using case-based methods, As research conducted by Thabran, Y., (2022) found that the problems faced by students while studying Critical Reading and Writing using the case-based method include presentation problems in groups, selected cases, and proposed solutions; and writing issues in response to cases. Those are some of the studies that discuss the challenges and strategies of critical thinking in academic writing.

The significance of this study cannot be ignored, especially in the context of EFL students at Universitas Jambi. Critical thinking skills are an important foundation in higher education, particularly in academic writing. In the curriculum, every English Education student will face various writing assignments, including essays, articles, papers, and theses. Therefore, academic writing skills are not only about conveying thoughts in written form but also expressing ideas and emotions

in the form of words and sentences. As state by Richards & Renandya (2002) writing is not only generating and organizing ideas by using vocabulary, grammar, sentences, and paragraphs with proper organization, but also transforming these thoughts into readable text. Thus, the quality of their academic writing largely depends on how effectively they apply critical thinking skills during the writing process.

Some of the studies above have inspired researcher to raise the same issue. However, after conducting some searches, the researcher found only a few studies conducted in Indonesia related to critical thinking in academic writing at the undergraduate level, especially in Jambi. Samanhudi and Linse (2019) concluded that there are some difficulties in developing critical thinking skills in academic writing for Indonesian students. Therefore, the researcher is interested in investigating "Factors and Strategies to Develop Critical Thinking in Academic Writing: The Case of EFL Students at One University in Jambi".

1.2 Research Questions

The problems of the study can be formulated into two aspects as follows:

1. What factors influence EFL students to develop critical thinking skills in academic writing?
2. How do EFL students overcome their challenges in developing critical thinking in academic writing?

1.3 Purposes of the Research

Based on the problems above, this research aims to achieve the following objectives:

- 1 To explore the factors influencing EFL students ability to develop critical

thinking in academic writing.

- 2 To investigate the strategies applied by EFL students to develop critical thinking skills in academic writing.

1.4 Limitations of the Research

Critical thinking is an intellectual process that actively, systematically, and synthesizes information, ideas, and arguments to develop a good understanding. The ability to think critically requires a lot of language learning skills, including four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) that must be mastered is undoubtedly a burden in itself, especially for EFL students. So this research is limited to language learning skills, focusing only on critical thinking in academic writing.

1.5 Significance of Research

Practically

1. For Lecturers

The results of this research will provide in-depth insight for lecturers about the factors that influence critical thinking skills in academic writing for English as a foreign language (EFL) students. This can help in the development of more effective teaching methods that can improve students' critical thinking skills and use the findings of this research to integrate effective strategies in teaching.

2. For Students

The findings of this research will be very beneficial for students in many ways. First, researchers will provide them with a better understanding of the factors that influence critical thinking skills in writing. Thus, they

understand effective strategies to develop their critical thinking skills. Finally, they can implement these critical thinking strategies in their academic writing better.

3. For Other Researcher

The results of this research are expected to contribute to academic knowledge about critical thinking skills within an academic context, serving as a foundation for future studies. The researcher also hopes that other researchers will evaluate, refine, reconstruct, or modify these studies and conduct similar research in various contexts and with different objectives.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

1. Critical Thinking

Critical thinking refers to an individual's ability to critically evaluate, analyze, and synthesize information and arguments to achieve deep understanding and make rational decisions. It involves the ability to process critical thinking in terms of academic writing skills.

2. Academic Writing

Academic writing is the process of writing documents, essays, reports, research papers, and other types of written works produced in an academic or higher education setting. The main focus of academic writing is the development of critical thinking skills to produce writing that conforms to established academic standards. This is especially true for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students who are in or have completed Writing courses. In this context, students are expected to create academic papers

that not only meet academic criteria but also display deep critical thinking in every aspect of their writing.

3. Factors of critical thinking in academic writing

Factors refer to the various elements or variables that can influence an outcome or process. In the context of the study, these factors include various things that can affect EFL students' critical thinking skills in academic writing. This could include internal factors such as motivation or confidence levels, external factors such as teaching methods, learning environment, or the type of assignments given by the instructor.

4. Strategies of critical thinking in academic writing

Strategies refer to the methods used by EFL students to develop their critical thinking skills in academic writing. These strategies can include various approaches, techniques, or steps that they apply in the writing process.

5. EFL students

EFL students refer to individuals who are learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). They are typically located in regions where English is not widely spoken as a societal language and are learning English for various purposes, such as academic, professional, or personal growth.