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Investigating Critical Thinking Skills in Debate Class through the Use of the Case Method

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ABSTRACT

Classroom debates serve as a pedagogical tool to enhance students' critical thinking skills. This study investigates classroom debate and case studies as tools to augment students' critical thinking abilities. There are still many students whose critical thinking is still lacking in daily life and in supporting their education. With this debate class, students can improve their critical thinking because they are faced with a case study that students must solve. It explores the significance of critical thinking in education and classroom debates' role in fostering critical thinking, oral communication, and independent learning. The research conducted for this study employed descriptive qualitative research methods to investigate the impact of classroom debates on students' critical thinking skills. Participants came from Tidar University students who had previously attended debate classes in the 3rd and 4th semesters. The sample we processed the data from was 31 participants. The findings indicate that the debate sessions have substantially improved students' thinking abilities, as demonstrated by their enhanced capacity to identify assumptions, evaluate pertinent and coherent evidence, and identify logical fallacies in arguments. Case method in debate class also helps students to support problem-solving skills that can improve their critical thinking ability. Furthermore, this article proposes incorporating case study activities within debates to enhance students' critical thinking skills further, ultimately benefiting them in their academic pursuits.

Keywords: *case method; critical thinking; debate class; oral communication*

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INTRODUCTION

In education, the primary objective of higher education is to cultivate critical thinking skills in students. According to Norris (1984), teaching critical thinking is just as crucial as providing a formal education. Some scholars argue that teaching critical thinking involves instructing students on effectively utilizing concepts, principles, and procedures to generate valuable outcomes and make informed judgments (Bailin et al., 1999). Furthermore, critical thinking plays a significant role in facilitating knowledge transfer and the application of problem-solving abilities to novel situations (Garcia and Pintrich, 1992). Critical thinking encompasses a range of component skills, such as the ability to analyze arguments, draw inferences through inductive or deductive reasoning, evaluate and judge information, and effectively solve problems or make decisions.

Consequently, classroom debates often enhance students' critical thinking capabilities, offering numerous benefits for their learning experience. Classroom debate is a highly effective tool educators utilize to impart knowledge on contentious topics in psychology and foster the growth of critical thinking skills among students. This pedagogical approach entails active and collaborative learning, which stimulates students' interest and critical thinking abilities, facilitates discussions, and enhances their oral communication skills.

According to Popil (2011), schools use active learning strategies to improve critical thinking and oral communication skills that involve students actively in the learning process. Meanwhile, Alen et al. (2015) also said active learning involves complex thinking processes and improves course content retention, assimilation, understanding, and application. It is expected that students can be active in the learning process and develop individual and team skills. Classroom debates are a common form of implementing this active learning strategy. Boumediene. et al. (2021) suggest that Debate is an activity that focuses on formal discussions that bring various opposing views and reasons. Usually, debates are common in various legislative assemblies, public forums, and schools. Some structures and guidelines summarize how debaters present their differences of opinion. Debates are held to discuss issues and make decisions, often using voting. Debates are also held in educational and recreational contexts. Debates in learning processes promote critical thinking, oral communication skills, self-directed learning, and teamwork. They allow students to develop knowledge, practice skills, explore multiple perspectives, and use evidence to support their stance. Yến, Trần, and Thi M.H. (2022) argue that Debate is one way to develop students' critical thinking skills. Through

Debate, students can become open-minded individuals, strengthen their critical thinking skills, and expand their knowledge so that debates also involve speakers who are active in discourse and try to understand and make decisions in difficult situations. Ultimately, students' critical thinking skills are tested in debates to see if they can easily explain their beliefs or have difficulty conveying their ideas. Having the option to speak up can help with active learning.

Previous research also raised the same thing, where the focus on students' critical thinking increased in line with the debate class they participated in. In their research, Nurakih et al. (2020) agreed that debate classes were proven to be able to raise students' responsiveness in dealing with arguments and various points of view, which led to an increase in their critical thinking. In this case, the researcher agrees with the study's results and has the same focus and belief that debate classes can improve students' critical thinking patterns. In line with Naqia et al. (2023), who raised the debate class, improving critical thinking skills in his research and showing the same thing as what the researcher was researching regarding the increase after attending the debate class, there was an increase in how students think critically. Previous research from Subowo et al. (2022) proves that debate learning can increase student enthusiasm for solving a problem and positively impact the results of students' critical thinking. Therefore, the research gap between the previous study and this study discusses more specific investigations to answer and examine the impact of case studies in debate classes on improving students' critical thinking, which may not have been discussed extensively in previous studies. This research aims to investigate how case studies in the classroom can improve students' critical thinking skills. It is detailed as follows:

1. How can a debate class improve students' critical thinking?
2. How does a case study help students participate in a debate class and develop students' critical thinking?

METHOD

This research uses descriptive qualitative research methods. Qualitative research methods understand social phenomena based on the participant's side (Riadil, 2020). Qualitative research is also described as unfolding a model that occurs in natural settings, allowing researchers to develop a level of detail involvement in the actual experiences (John W. Creswell, 1994). Descriptive research involves collecting data that describes events and then organizing, tabulating, describing, and describing the data that has been collected (Barokah, 2014). The participants in question are English education students in semester five who took debate courses the previous semester. The instrument that researchers use is a questionnaire that

focuses on three-step instruments. The researcher used a range of scales of very poor, poor, medium, and good. The first instrument that the researcher used was a question about the range of students' critical thinking before and after attending the debate class. The second instrument students can define is how much the debate class affects the increase in student thinking with awareness through the skills that must be mastered in critical thinking. Based on Reyders G et al. (2020), in assessing critical thinking, students must be aware of mastering analysis, making conclusions, evaluating, explaining, and self-examining. The last instrument asks how case studies can affect how students understand and follow the course of the debate class to support the expansion of their critical thinking.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Scale of Student's Critical Thinking Skills

As students, they should be required to be able to use their critical thinking in their daily lives. Critical thinking is used to evaluate, analyze, and even logically apply information. However, there are still some students who need help to develop their critical thinking. Critical thinking is needed to question many overlapping questions that students do not know to solve and find the truth. With this, students can follow all the lessons that they take with the help of their critical thinking. The data below shows how the students participated before and after attending the debate class through the questionnaire can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Scale of students critical thinking skill

Question	*Very Poor*	*Poor*	*Medium*	*Good*
Your critical thinking rate before take debate course in semester 3 & 4	*10%*	*36.7%*	*50%*	*3.3%*
Your critical thinking rate after take debate course in semester 3 & 4	0%	*0%*	*73.3%*	*26.7%*

The data shows that most of them already had medium-level skills before attending the debate class. With a percentage of 50% of students already in the medium phase, it explains that they have been able to apply and understand the concept of using critical thinking skills. In this case, 36.7% of students are still in the poor phase, where they must develop their critical thinking skills. A debate classroom is arguably the most suitable for honing critical thinking skills by giving students a case to analyze, and then students will express what they think of the motion. Students have done English debates in two consecutive semesters, producing results that have developed their critical thinking. The data results show that there are no longer students who need to improve their critical thinking. Students are already at the medium level of 73%, whereas previously, students were still at the poor and very poor levels. The increase was also felt by students who were already at the Good level, where

26.7% of students were able to improve their critical thinking skills.

The data above explains an increase in critical thinking skills obtained by students in debate classes conducted in two semesters through case studies. It can also be said that this study shows an increase in students' critical thinking performance. In the previous survey of Tiasadi, K. (2020), research was conducted to find out how debaters in a community could feel how their activities helped improve their critical thinking. This shows the same results as the increase in a positive relationship between debate and critical thinking skills. Continuing research conducted by Rozi, N.F. et al. (2018) shows that his research findings have the correct results that the debate strategy can improve students' critical thinking skills in learning activities. This is further supported by research from Maulina & Siregar, N. (2023), which shows that students can improve their critical thinking skills after attending debate classes; this can be demonstrated by their ability in the analysis process, which proves an increase.

Scale of measuring the influence of debate class on improving critical thinking

Debate is a process that involves discussion between opposing teams to defend and attack a given proposition, so this process involves critical thinking (Roy, B. & Macchiette, B., 2005). Walker and Warhust (2000), cited in the journal Scott, S. (2008), stated that classroom debates have effectively improved critical thinking by allowing students to connect as they learn subject knowledge. Therefore, according to Yang, C. & Rusli, E. (2012), debate is one of the tools that improves students' critical thinking skills.

The questionnaire data below was obtained from semester five students, whereas in the previous semester, in semesters three and four, they received Debate and critical thinking courses. The table represents the influence of debate classes on critical thinking.

Table 2 Scale of Measuring the Influence of Debate Class on Improving Critical Thinking

Question	*Scale*			
	Very poor	*Poor*	*Medium*	*Good*
Able to identify and evaluate appropriate assumptions, implications and outcomes.	*0%*	*6.7%*	*80%*	*13.3%*
Raises important questions and issues, expressing them precisely and concisely.	*0%*	*0%*	*80%*	*20%*
Can recognize and assess assumptions, implications, and appropriate consequences	*0%*	*3.3%*	*73.3%*	*23.3%*

The results of the questionnaire filled out by 30 participants from semester five students showed that the debate class

influenced their critical thinking. As can be seen in the table, in the first question, as many as four participants (13.3%) out of thirty participants had an excellent ability to identify and evaluate appropriate assumptions, implications, and outcomes after receiving debate class, as many as twenty-two participants (80%) out of thirty participants had a medium ability to identify and evaluate appropriate assumptions, implications and outcomes, and others: two participants (6.7%) had poor ability to identify and evaluate reasonable assumptions, implications and outcomes. In the second question, as stated in the table, it can be seen that six participants (20%) out of thirty participants were able to raise important questions and problems and express them well and concisely. Twenty-four participants (80%) had a moderate ability to raise important questions and issues, expressing them precisely and concisely. In the third question, as stated in the table, there were seven participants (23.3%) out of thirty who could recognize and assess appropriate assumptions, implications, and consequences well. There were twenty-two participants (73.3%) out of thirty participants who were able to recognize and assess assumptions, implications, and consequences that correspond to a moderate level, and one participant (3.3%) who claimed to be able to recognize and assess assumptions, implications, and consequences that correspond to a poor level.

From the description above, it can be seen that the average fifth-semester student has a tendency to increase their critical thinking abilities after taking debate classes in the fourth and third semesters. This is in line with the questionnaire that the participants filled out. With a medium to good scale, a few of them felt that their abilities had only increased slightly. The answers from the participants through this questionnaire confirm the results of previous research. According to Goodwin (2003), in a journal citation by Fuad, j. et al. (2015) revealed that Debate requires the use of logic and common sense, not just the free expression of opinions, to trigger the brain's development to think more critically (Yen, T.T & Hang, M.T, 2022).

The Implementation Case Study in Debates Critical Thinking

Table.3. Case Study Critical Thinking Skill

Question	*Very Poor*	*Poor*	*Medium*	*Good*
How well the case study activities help you practice to identify assumptions made in arguments?	*0%*	*10%*	*70%*	*20%*
How well the case study activities help you practice evaluating the quality and credibility of evidence?	*0%*	*3.3%*	*70%*	*26,7%*
How well the case study activities help you practice checking for logical fallacies in arguments?	*0%*	*6.7%*	*73.3%*	*20%*

How well the case study activities help you practice considering different interpretations and perspectives?	*0%*	*6.7%*	*73.3%*	*20%*
How well the case study activities help you practice developing reasoned conclusions and judgments?	*0%*	*6.7%*	*70%*	*23.3%*

The results of a questionnaire distributed via Google form filled out by fifth-semester students, the implementation of case study activities in debate for critical thinking has proven to be beneficial. Freely (2009) provides an explanation of critical thinking as the essential skill required for making informed decisions in various aspects of life. The ability to make reasoned decisions relies heavily on critical thinking, which involves the analysis and evaluation of arguments. Additionally, critical thinking enhances the utilization of information and the ability to advocate effectively. The majority of respondents reported that these activities helped them in various ways, such as identifying assumptions made in arguments, evaluating the quality and credibility of evidence, examining logical fallacies in arguments, considering different interpretations and perspectives, and developing reasoned conclusions and judgments. This perspective aligns with Johnson's (2002) definition of critical thinking as a clear and organized mental process involved in problem-solving, decision-making, persuading, analyzing assumptions, and scientific inquiry. It encompasses the capacity to reason in a structured manner and engage in a systematic process that enables students to formulate and assess their own beliefs and claims. The results, presented in percentages, indicate that approximately 70% of respondents found the case study activity helpful in evaluating the quality and credibility of evidence, while about 73.3% of respondents found it helpful in examining logical fallacies in arguments. These percentages suggest that the impact of effective debates on students' critical thinking skills, ability to express opinions, and provide appropriate and clear evidence is at a medium level.

The utilization of case study activity during debates has proven to be advantageous in enabling students to enhance their ability to identify assumptions made in arguments. According to Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008) case studies can be useful when researchers want to understand how interventions are implemented in different contexts, and how context shapes the phenomenon of interest. The survey results, approximately 70% of the participants acknowledged that the case study activity was highly beneficial in honing their skills in identifying assumptions made in arguments, while 20% rated it as good, and 10% rated it as poor. These findings indicate that the majority of students found the case study activity to be an effective tool in improving their

proficiency in identifying assumptions made in arguments.

The implementation of the debate case study activity to foster critical thinking skills has proven to be advantageous in enabling students to assess the quality and credibility of evidence. According to the statistical findings, 70% of the participants expressed that the case study activity was highly beneficial in this aspect, whereas 26.7% regarded it as good, and a mere 3.3% considered it as poor. These results indicate that the majority of students found the case study activity to be effective in honing their ability to evaluate evidence.

The outcomes demonstrate that incorporating case study activities into debates has yielded positive outcomes in terms of helping students identify logical fallacies in arguments, enhancing their analytical and critical thinking abilities, and fostering an understanding of diverse perspectives. In a similar, Doody and Condon (2012) provided a definition of debate as a form of discourse that necessitates the construction of a well-organized argument. It involves encouraging students to contemplate the current situation and engage in conversations with their peers to express their perspectives. A total of 73.3% of the respondents perceived the case study activity as highly helpful in this regard, while 20% rated it as good, and only 6.7% rated it as poor. This can significantly enhance students' capacity to comprehend and critically evaluate arguments.

The research findings indicate that the implementation of case study activities in debates is effective in helping students practice considering different interpretations and perspectives. A total of 73.3% of respondents rated the case study activities as very helpful in this regard, while 20% rated it as good, and 6.7% rated it as poor.

The latest research results from the case study show that the implementation of case study activities in debates has been effective in helping students practice developing reasoned conclusions and assessments. It imposes a structured approach to a topic and encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning based on Snider and Schnurer (2006). 70% of respondents feel that the case study activities are very helpful in this regard, while 23.3% rate the activities as good, and only 6.7% rate them as poor.

According to the research case study, the inclusion of case studies in debates has proven to be advantageous in improving students' critical thinking abilities. The survey findings revealed that skilled debates had a significant impact on students' capacity to express their opinions, provide pertinent and lucid evidence, and enhance their critical thinking skills. The outcomes of the study demonstrate that the integration of case study activities in debates for critical thinking has positively

impacted students in multiple aspects, such as assessing the reliability and validity of evidence, scrutinizing logical fallacies in arguments, and formulating logical and well-reasoned conclusions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it is proven that the integration of case study activities in debate classes has had a positive impact on students' critical thinking abilities. Questionnaire responses and case study results demonstrate students' increased ability to identify assumptions, evaluate evidence, recognize logical errors, consider different perspectives, and develop reasonable conclusions. These findings are in line with the aim of the initial research, which aimed to investigate the influence of debate classes and case study activities on students' critical thinking skills. The methodology used in this research, including the distribution of questionnaires, has provided valuable insight into the effectiveness of educational approaches in improving students' critical thinking abilities. The results of this study underlined the importance of combining active learning strategies, such as debate with case study activities, to foster students' critical thinking skills and contribute to their overall academic development. Therefore, the utilization of case study activities in debate classes serves as a valuable tool in improving students' critical thinking skills and should be considered an important component of the educational curriculum.

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