

**ELEMENTS OF CRITICAL THINKING IN MALAYSIAN
TEENAGERS' VERBAL ARGUMENTS**

JOANNE ROBERT

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Name of Candidate: JOANNE ROBERT

I.C/Passport No:

Registration/Matric No:

Name of Degree: MASTER OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Critical thinking is an important quality to possess for an individual as it harnesses good decision-making and problem solving skills. There have been many complaints that Malaysian students lack critical thinking skills but thus far, there is little literature to support this claim. This study was formulated as an attempt to bridge this gap. Focusing on Malaysian teenagers studying in a private school, this study attempts to identify and analyse the critical thinking elements seen in the teenager's verbal arguments. Specifically, it attempts to ascertain the number of valid arguments present in these arguments. Then it examines if there are similarities and differences in the way Malaysian teenagers present themselves in verbal arguments. The study is qualitative in nature as data is composed of the teenager's spoken words. The spoken words of the teenagers are then analysed using Sinnott-Armstrong's (2009) and Stapleton's (2001) framework. In addition, quantitative measurements are also included by attempting to present the findings in percentages. The main findings suggest that this group of Malaysian teenagers produced more invalid arguments than the number of valid arguments. The findings of this study would suggest that critical thinking is indeed lacking among teenagers during verbal arguments. The findings might be useful to educationists who are currently thinking of incorporating critical thinking and problem solving into the curriculum in schools.

ABSTRAK

Pemikiran kritikal adalah satu kualiti yang penting untuk individu memiliki kerana pemikiran kritikal boleh membantu seseorang itu dalam kemahiran membuat keputusan (*decision making*) dan menyelesaikan masalah (*problem-solving*) dengan bernas. Setakat ini ramai pihak yang menyuarakan kerisauan (*complaints*) mereka mengenai tahap kemahiran pemikiran kritikal yang masih rendah di kalangan pelajar-pelajar remaja Malaysia. Kajian terhadap pemikiran kritikal masih kurang dan tidak mencukupi untuk menyokong *claims* ini. Kajian ini telah dirangka sebagai satu percubaan untuk merapatkan jurang ini. Kajian ini memberi tumpuan dalam kalangan remaja Malaysia yang belajar di sebuah sekolah swasta, dan kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti dan menganalisis unsur-unsur pemikiran kritikal yang diaplikasikan dalam hujah-hujah lisan remaja. Secara khusus, kajian ini cuba untuk menentukan bilangan *valid arguments* yang diaplikasikan dalam hujah-hujah lisan. Kemudian ia turut meneliti jika terdapat persamaan dan perbezaan dalam cara remaja Malaysia mengemukakan *claims* dalam hujah-hujah lisan. Kajian ini adalah kualitatif kerana kerana data terdiri daripada hujah-hujah remaja. Hujah-hujah remaja ini kemudian dianalisis menggunakan rangka kerja Sinnott-Armstrong (2009) dan Stapleton (2001) penganalisan data-data pertuturan remaja. Di samping itu, ukuran kuantitatif juga digunakan untuk membentangkan hasil analisa dalam peratusan. Penemuan utama mencadangkan bahawa kumpulan remaja Malaysia menggunakan lebih banyak *valid arguments* berbanding *invalid arguments*. Hasil kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa tahap pemikiran kritikal di kalangan remaja dalam hujah-hujah lisan masih rendah. Penemuan ini mungkin berguna kepada para pendidik yang sedang memikirkan cara menggabungkan kemahiran pemikiran kritikal dan penyelesaian masalah dalam kurikulum di sekolah.

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TABLES OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE PAGE	i
ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ABSTRAK	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLES OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF TABLES	x
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Statement of Problem	3
1.2 Aims	5
1.3 Research Questions	6
1.4 Limitations of the study	6
1.5 Significance of the study	7
1.6 Definition of Key Terms	8
1.7 Summary	10
CHAPTER TWO : LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.0 Introduction	11
2.1 Critical Thinking	11
2.2 Thinking in relation to Education	13
2.3 Influence of Chinese society in the development of critical thinking	15
2.4 Piaget's Stage Model of Cognitive Development	17
2.5 Ennis' Taxonomy of Critical Thinking	19
2.6 Argument	22
2.7 Fallacies in Informal Reasoning	24
2.7.1 Ad Hominem Argument	25

2.7.2	Slippery Slope Argument	27
2.7.3	Hasty Generalization	28
2.7.4	Tu Quoque	30
2.7.5	Straw Man Argument	31
2.7.6	Circular Reasoning	31
2.8	Other Research Findings	32
2.9	Summary	35

CHAPTER THREE : METHODOLOGY

3.0	Introduction	36
3.1	Research Design	36
3.2	Research Samples	37
3.3	Research Instruments	39
3.3.1	Video Recording	39
3.3.2	Demographic Survey	39
3.4	Data Collection Procedure	40
3.4.1	Pilot Study	41
3.5	Details of the Discussion	43
3.6	Analytical Framework	43
3.7	Data Analyses Procedure	46
3.8	Summary	50

CHAPTER FOUR : DATA ANALYSIS

4.0	Introduction	51
4.1	Critical Thinking Elements	52
4.2	Valid Arguments	54
4.3	Evidence	58
4.4	Fallacies	61
4.4.1	Hasty Generalization	63
4.4.2	Circular Reasoning	65
4.4.3	Straw Man Argument	67

4.4.4	Ad Hominem Argument	68
4.4.5	Slippery Slope	70
4.4.6	Tu Quoque	71
4.5	Summary	72

CHAPTER FIVE : CONCLUSION

5.0	Introduction	73
5.1	Discussion	73
5.1.1	Discussion of Research Questions	75
5.2	Implications	78
5.3	Suggestion for Further Research	79
5.4	Summary	79

BIBLIOGRAPHY		80
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APPENDICES

Appendix A	Course Outline	87
Appendix B	PMR Exam Result	93
Appendix C	Demographic Survey	94
Appendix D	Consent Letter	96
Appendix E	Transcription Conventions	97
Appendix F	Transcript of Group 1	98
Appendix G	Transcript of Group 2	104
Appendix H	Transcript of Group 3	109
Appendix I	Transcript of Group 4	116
Appendix J	Analysis of Valid Arguments	121
Appendix K	Analysis of Fallacies	132

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 3.1	Framework adapted from Sinnott-Armstrong (2009) and Stapleton (2001)	44
Figure 3.2	Stapleton's Elements of Critical Thinking Structure (2001)	45
Figure 3.3	Sinnott-Armstrong and Fogelin's Reconstruction of Argument Model (2009)	46
Figure 4.1	Frequency of Critical Thinking Elements	52
Figure 4.2	Frequency count of Evidence	59
Figure 4.3	Frequency of Fallacy	61
Figure 4.4	Comparison of Fallacy between male and female participants	62

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
Table 3.1	Background of the participants	37
Table 3.2	Topics selected for group discussion	42
Table 3.3	Details of discussion	43
Table 4.1	Frequency count of Valid Arguments	54