



Evaluating Students' Critical Thinking in Argumentative Speaking at Senior High School, West Sulawesi

Junaid Jufri¹, Andi Antopatak², Muhammad Tahir³

^{1,2,3}English Education Study Program, Postgraduate Program, State University of Makassar

Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-05-13 Revised: 2026-09-11 Accepted: 2026-09-15 Keywords: critical thinking; argumentative speaking; learning independence; self-confidence; students' perception; English speaking DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i2.10572 Corresponding Author: Junaid Jufri junaidjufri79@gmail.com English Education Study Program, Postgraduate Program, State University of Makassar	<i>This study evaluates students' critical thinking in argumentative speaking at UPTD SMAN 1 Malunda, West Sulawesi. Critical thinking is an essential competence in English language learning because students are expected not only to express opinions but also to support their claims with logical reasons, relevant evidence, clear organization, and awareness of opposing views. This research employed a mixed-method design with a case study orientation. The participants were three Grade XII students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through an argumentative speaking test, in-depth interviews, and questionnaires. The speaking test required students to present oral arguments on a given issue through recorded video performance. The performances were transcribed and assessed using a critical thinking rubric consisting of five indicators: purpose/thesis, organization and clarity, argument, examples and facts, and opposing views. Interview data were analyzed through coding to explore the impact of critical thinking on learning independence, self-confidence, learning style, and physiological factors. Questionnaire data were used to identify students' perceptions of argumentative speaking. The findings show that students demonstrated excellent critical thinking ability in argumentative speaking. Their scores were 90, 95, and 90, placing all participants in the excellent category. The students were able to state clear positions, organize ideas coherently, build logical arguments, provide examples, and recognize opposing views. Critical thinking also supported students' learning independence, confidence, structured learning strategies, and reflective preparation. However, physiological factors such as lack of sleep, dizziness, fatigue, and nervousness affected concentration and speaking performance. The study concludes that argumentative speaking is an effective activity for evaluating and developing students' critical thinking in English learning.</i>

1. Introduction

Critical thinking has become one of the most important skills in twenty-first-century education. In modern learning contexts, students are not only required to remember information but also to analyze issues, evaluate arguments, make decisions, and communicate ideas logically. Critical thinking enables students to examine information carefully, identify assumptions, compare different viewpoints, and draw conclusions based

on evidence. In English language learning, this skill is highly relevant because students need to use language not only for communication but also for reasoning, persuasion, and problem-solving.

Critical thinking can be understood as a disciplined process of thinking that involves interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. Ennis (1996) defines critical thinking as reasonable and reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do. This definition emphasizes that critical thinking is not merely spontaneous opinion but a careful process of judgment. Similarly, Facione (1990) explains that critical thinking involves purposeful and self-regulatory judgment that results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference. Therefore, critical thinking requires both cognitive ability and intellectual attitude.

In the context of education, critical thinking is important because it helps students become active learners. Students who think critically do not simply accept information from teachers, textbooks, or digital media. They question, compare, evaluate, and reconstruct knowledge. Dewey (1998) views reflective thinking as active and careful consideration of beliefs based on supporting evidence. This means that critical thinking encourages students to avoid accepting claims without examining the reasons behind them. In classroom learning, this ability is essential for developing independent, analytical, and responsible learners.

Critical thinking is also closely connected to language skills, particularly speaking. Speaking is not only the act of pronouncing words or forming sentences; it is also the process of organizing ideas, expressing opinions, responding to others, and persuading audiences. In argumentative speaking, critical thinking becomes even more central because students must present a claim, support it with reasons, provide evidence, consider opposing views, and deliver conclusions clearly. Without critical thinking, argumentative speaking may become a collection of unsupported opinions rather than a logical and persuasive discourse.

Argumentative speaking is a form of oral communication in which a speaker presents a viewpoint and attempts to convince an audience through reasons and evidence. Fogelin (2001) states that an argument involves giving reasons for or against a claim. Govier (2001) explains that an argument is a set of claims intended to show that another claim is rationally acceptable. These definitions indicate that argumentation is not the same as disagreement or emotional debate. In academic communication, argumentation is a structured process of reasoning.

In English language education, argumentative speaking has several benefits. It trains students to express their thoughts logically, use evidence, develop confidence, respond to different perspectives, and organize spoken discourse. It also provides opportunities for students to practice vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and persuasive language. More importantly, it encourages students to think before speaking. Students must understand the issue, decide their position, prepare supporting reasons, and anticipate possible objections. This process makes argumentative speaking a suitable medium for evaluating critical thinking.

The relationship between critical thinking and argumentative speaking is natural and strong. Critical thinking provides the mental process needed to evaluate information and construct arguments, while argumentative speaking provides the communicative space where critical thinking can be expressed. A student who thinks critically can present a clear thesis, arrange ideas coherently, support claims with examples, and respond to opposing views. Conversely, a student with weak critical thinking may have difficulty presenting logical reasons, distinguishing facts from opinions, and defending a position.

At UPTD SMAN 1 Malunda, West Sulawesi, argumentative speaking is relevant to students' English learning because students need opportunities to practice expressing opinions in a structured and meaningful way. Preliminary observations and discussions with teachers indicated that many students had not fully applied critical thinking when presenting arguments on assigned topics. Some students could state opinions, but they still needed support in organizing arguments, using evidence, and responding to opposing views. This condition shows the importance of evaluating students' critical thinking ability in argumentative speaking.

The issue becomes more important because senior high school students are expected to develop higher-order thinking skills. They are no longer expected only to understand texts or answer factual questions. They should be able to analyze social issues, evaluate different perspectives, and communicate their views with responsibility. Argumentative speaking can help students develop these abilities because it combines language performance with reasoning. It also encourages students to become more confident in presenting their ideas in front of others.

Critical thinking in argumentative speaking can be assessed through specific indicators. In this study, the assessment focused on five key indicators: purpose or thesis, organization and clarity, argument, examples and facts, and opposing views. Purpose or thesis refers to the clarity of the speaker's position. Organization and clarity refer to how well the ideas are arranged and delivered. Argument refers to the logical strength of the reasons used to support the claim. Examples and facts refer to the use of evidence to strengthen the argument. Opposing views refer to the speaker's ability to acknowledge and respond to alternative perspectives.

These indicators are important because they represent the main components of academic argumentation. A strong argumentative speaker should not only say "I agree" or "I disagree." The speaker must explain the position clearly, arrange the argument logically, support it with examples, and demonstrate awareness of other possible views. This is where critical thinking appears in spoken language. The quality of argumentation reflects the quality of thinking.

In addition to measuring students' ability, it is also important to understand the impact of critical thinking on students' learning behavior. The thesis data examined the impact of critical thinking through four aspects: learning independence, self-confidence, learning style, and physiological factors. Learning independence refers to students' ability to prepare, search for information, and organize ideas independently. Self-confidence refers to students' belief in their ability to present arguments. Learning style refers to the ways students prefer to process information, such as using data, notes, visual aids, or listening strategies. Physiological factors refer to physical and emotional conditions that influence speaking performance, such as sleep, fatigue, dizziness, hunger, and nervousness.

Learning independence is important in argumentative speaking because students need to prepare arguments before presenting them. They need to search for information, understand the topic, select relevant evidence, and practice delivery. Students who depend only on teacher explanation may have limited arguments. In contrast, independent learners can explore sources, compare ideas, and build stronger reasoning. Therefore, critical thinking can strengthen learning independence because it encourages students to take responsibility for their preparation.

Self-confidence is another important factor. Many students have ideas but hesitate to express them because they are afraid of making mistakes or facing opposing arguments. Critical thinking can help students become more confident because it provides structure. When students understand their claim, reasons, evidence, and possible counterarguments,

they feel more prepared to speak. Confidence in argumentative speaking does not come only from fluency; it also comes from knowing that the argument is logical and defensible.

Learning style also influences how students build arguments. Some students prefer visual aids such as sketches, pictures, or diagrams. Others prefer notes, listening, or data-based preparation. When students understand their learning style, they can prepare arguments more effectively. For example, students who prefer visual learning may use mind maps to organize ideas, while students who prefer auditory learning may practice by speaking aloud. Critical thinking can be developed through different learning styles as long as students are guided to analyze, evaluate, and justify ideas.

Physiological factors are also important because speaking is not only a cognitive activity but also a physical and emotional performance. Students who lack sleep, feel dizzy, are hungry, or experience severe nervousness may struggle to concentrate and speak clearly. Even when students have good ideas, poor physical condition can affect delivery and confidence. Therefore, evaluating argumentative speaking should also consider how physical and emotional readiness influences performance.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to evaluate students' critical thinking in argumentative speaking at UPTD SMAN 1 Malunda, West Sulawesi. The study focuses on three objectives: to examine students' ability in critical thinking when presenting arguments on a given issue, to explore the impact of students' critical thinking in argumentative speaking, and to describe students' perceptions of argumentative speaking. The study is expected to contribute theoretically to the discussion of critical thinking and argumentative speaking and practically to English teachers, students, schools, and future researchers.

2. Method

This study employed a mixed-method design with a case study orientation. The design was selected because the research aimed to evaluate students' critical thinking ability in argumentative speaking, explore the impact of critical thinking, and describe students' perceptions of argumentative speaking. The quantitative component was used to measure students' argumentative speaking performance through scores, while the qualitative component was used to understand students' experiences, impacts, and perceptions in greater depth.

The research was conducted at UPTD SMAN 1 Malunda, located on Jalan Poros Majene–Mamuju Km. 85, Lamungan Batu Village, Malunda Subdistrict, Majene Regency, West Sulawesi Province. The school is one of the senior high schools in Majene Regency and has approximately 700 students. The research was conducted during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, from October 2025 to May 2026.

The research subjects were Grade XII students who had learned the relevant topic and were considered suitable for argumentative speaking activities. The total Grade XII population consisted of six classes with 203 students. The researcher used purposive sampling to select three students as research participants. The students were selected because they represented the target group for evaluating critical thinking in argumentative speaking and were able to participate in the test, interviews, and questionnaires.

The main variable in this study was argumentative speaking, specifically students' ability to present oral arguments on a given issue using critical thinking. Argumentative speaking was defined as a public speaking activity in which students express a claim or viewpoint and support it with logical reasons, evidence, examples, and consideration of opposing views. The study evaluated students' ability, analyzed the impact of critical thinking, and assessed students' perceptions of argumentative speaking.

Three instruments were used in this research: a speaking test, in-depth interviews, and questionnaires. The speaking test was used to evaluate students' critical thinking ability in argumentative speaking. Students were given an issue and asked to present their arguments orally through recorded video. The video was limited to approximately three minutes. The students' spoken arguments were then transcribed and evaluated using a critical thinking rubric.

The rubric consisted of five dimensions: purpose/thesis, organization and clarity, argument, examples and facts, and opposing views. Each dimension was scored to determine the quality of students' critical thinking in argumentative speaking. The total score was then categorized into levels of achievement, ranging from very poor to excellent. This rubric allowed the researcher to evaluate not only speaking performance but also the reasoning quality behind the oral argument.

The second instrument was an in-depth interview. The interview was used to explore the impact of critical thinking on students' argumentative speaking. The interview focused on four aspects: learning independence, self-confidence, learning style, and physiological factors. Students were asked how they prepared arguments, how they felt when speaking, what strategies helped them organize arguments, and what physical or emotional conditions affected their performance.

The third instrument was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was used to identify students' perceptions of argumentative speaking. It examined whether students perceived argumentative speaking positively or negatively in relation to learning independence, self-confidence, learning style, and physiological factors. The questionnaire data complemented the test and interview data by showing students' general responses toward the argumentative speaking experience.

The data collection procedures were carried out in several steps. First, the researcher requested permission to conduct research at the school and informed the students that their responses would be kept confidential and used only for research purposes. Second, the researcher administered the argumentative speaking test. Third, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews to explore the impact of critical thinking. Finally, the researcher distributed questionnaires to identify students' perceptions.

The data were analyzed using both descriptive and qualitative procedures. The speaking test data were analyzed descriptively by calculating students' scores and categorizing their critical thinking level. The interview data were transcribed, coded, and interpreted based on the four impact factors. The questionnaire data were analyzed to identify positive and negative perceptions. The integration of test, interview, and questionnaire data provided a more complete understanding of students' critical thinking in argumentative speaking.

3. Results

The findings of this study are presented in three main parts: students' critical thinking ability in argumentative speaking, the impact of students' critical thinking, and students' perceptions of argumentative speaking.

The first finding concerns students' ability in critical thinking when presenting argumentative speaking. The students' oral arguments were assessed using five indicators: purpose/thesis, organization and clarity, argument, examples and facts, and opposing views. The test results showed that all three students achieved excellent performance. Student AN obtained a total score of 18 out of 20, equivalent to 90. Student BA obtained a total score of 19 out of 20, equivalent to 95. Student FNA obtained a total score of 18 out of

20, equivalent to 90. Based on the classification table, all three students were in the excellent category, with a percentage of 100%.

These results indicate that the student representatives were able to present arguments with strong critical thinking. In the purpose/thesis indicator, students showed the ability to state their position clearly. They did not present vague opinions but expressed identifiable viewpoints related to the given issue. A clear thesis is important because it guides the direction of the argument and helps the audience understand the speaker's stance.

In the organization and clarity indicator, students also performed strongly. Their arguments were generally easy to follow because they arranged ideas in a logical sequence. Some students used a structure that moved from supporting points to contrasting views and then to conclusion. This organization helped make the argument clearer and more persuasive. Although some transitions could still be improved, the overall flow of ideas showed good control of argumentative structure.

In the argument indicator, students demonstrated the ability to provide logical reasons to support their claims. They connected their opinions with cause-and-effect explanations and relevant reasoning. For example, in discussing life without gadgets, students were able to explain both the benefits and limitations of modern technology. They showed that gadgets may reduce physical interaction but also provide convenience and efficiency. This balanced reasoning reflects critical thinking because students did not rely on one-sided opinions.

In the examples and facts indicator, students performed well, although this area was slightly weaker than the other indicators. Some students provided general examples but still needed more specific evidence, statistics, or concrete real-world cases to strengthen their claims. This suggests that students had the ability to reason but still needed more training in evidence-based argumentation. The use of examples and facts is important because arguments become more convincing when they are supported by specific evidence.

In the opposing views indicator, students showed strong ability to recognize alternative perspectives. They did not only defend their own positions but also acknowledged why different views might be reasonable. For instance, students recognized that a gadget-free life may support face-to-face interaction and reduce dependence on technology, while also explaining that modern tools are necessary for efficiency and access to information. This ability to consider opposing views is a high-level critical thinking skill.

The second finding concerns the impact of students' critical thinking. The interview data showed that critical thinking influenced students in four major areas: learning independence, self-confidence, learning style, and physiological factors.

In terms of learning independence, students reported that they prepared themselves before presenting arguments by understanding the topic, searching for information, practicing in front of a mirror, and recording themselves. Some students stated that they began preparing several days before presenting the argument. This preparation shows that argumentative speaking encouraged students to become more responsible for their learning. They did not wait for the teacher to provide all information but actively searched for sources and practiced independently.

Students also used digital resources such as YouTube, internet searches, and AI tools to expand their understanding of the topic. This indicates that critical thinking encouraged self-directed research. By searching for information, students gained more knowledge and were able to support their arguments more effectively. Learning independence helped students move from basic understanding to deeper preparation.

In terms of self-confidence, critical thinking helped students feel more prepared when presenting arguments. Students who had prepared their thesis, reasons, and examples felt more confident because they knew what they wanted to say. Critical thinking also changed the way students viewed challenges. Instead of seeing opposing arguments as threats, they began to see them as opportunities to improve reasoning. This shift is important because argumentative speaking often requires students to defend their ideas and respond to different perspectives.

However, self-confidence was not always stable. Some students still experienced nervousness and fear of making mistakes. This suggests that critical thinking can support confidence, but emotional factors still influence speaking performance. Students need repeated practice and supportive classroom environments to strengthen confidence in argumentative speaking.

In terms of learning style, students showed preference for arguments supported by data, notes, and visual aids. They believed that visual supports such as sketches, pictures, and diagrams helped them organize and explain ideas more clearly. Students also used active listening and note-taking to understand opposing arguments. These strategies helped them maintain logical flow and respond more effectively during argumentation.

The findings also show that students valued data-driven arguments. They preferred arguments that were supported by information rather than unsupported opinions. This indicates that students understood the importance of evidence in critical thinking. Through argumentative speaking, students learned that strong arguments require not only confidence but also preparation, logic, and factual support.

In terms of physiological factors, students reported that physical conditions affected their ability to concentrate and speak. Lack of sleep, dizziness, hunger, and fatigue were mentioned as factors that disturbed focus and academic consistency. All respondents agreed that poor physical condition, such as lack of sleep or dizziness, greatly disrupted concentration. They also agreed that eating and drinking adequately helped them focus better.

Nervousness was also a significant factor in argumentative speaking. Students could feel intense anxiety when presenting arguments, especially when facing an audience or opposing views. Some students needed self-regulation strategies such as deep breathing to maintain focus. This finding shows that argumentative speaking requires both cognitive and emotional readiness. Even students with strong arguments may struggle if they are physically tired or emotionally anxious.

The third finding concerns students' perceptions of argumentative speaking. The questionnaire results showed that students generally had positive perceptions of learning independence. They believed they could search for information independently and manage their preparation. This indicates that argumentative speaking supported students' cognitive autonomy.

Students' perceptions of self-confidence were mixed. On one hand, they believed they were capable of handling academic material and developing arguments. On the other hand, they still experienced emotional discomfort, fear of mistakes, and performance anxiety. This means that students perceived argumentative speaking as useful but also challenging.

Regarding learning style, students had positive perceptions of argumentative speaking when it included visual and auditory scaffolding. They found arguments easier to understand and present when supported by pictures, graphs, examples, or oral explanation. This suggests that argumentative speaking should be taught with varied instructional supports.

Regarding physiological factors, students had a more negative perception because they recognized that poor physical condition could strongly disturb concentration and performance. Lack of sleep, fatigue, and nervousness were viewed as serious barriers to effective speaking. This finding highlights the importance of preparing students not only cognitively but also emotionally and physically before argumentative speaking activities.

Overall, the results show that students' critical thinking in argumentative speaking was excellent, but the process was influenced by preparation, confidence, learning strategies, and physical condition.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study show that the students demonstrated excellent critical thinking ability in argumentative speaking. All three participants obtained scores between 90 and 95 and were classified in the excellent category. This indicates that the student representatives were able to construct clear arguments, organize ideas, support claims with reasons, provide examples, and acknowledge opposing views. These results suggest that argumentative speaking can be an effective activity for evaluating students' critical thinking in English learning.

The students' strong performance in the purpose/thesis indicator shows that they were able to identify and express their positions clearly. A clear thesis is the foundation of argumentative speaking because it tells the audience what the speaker believes and what direction the argument will take. In critical thinking, clarity is an important standard because unclear claims are difficult to evaluate. The students' ability to state clear viewpoints indicates that they had understood the given issue and could formulate a defensible position.

The organization and clarity results also demonstrate students' ability to arrange ideas logically. Argumentative speaking requires more than isolated statements. Students must connect ideas so that the audience can follow the reasoning. The students' use of structured flow, such as presenting one side, recognizing another side, and giving a conclusion, shows that they were able to manage spoken discourse effectively. This finding supports the idea that critical thinking involves not only what students think but also how they organize and communicate their thinking.

The argument indicator reflects the logical quality of students' reasoning. The students were able to provide reasons that supported their claims. They explained relationships between ideas, such as the connection between technology use, physical interaction, convenience, and efficiency. This kind of reasoning indicates that students were able to move beyond simple opinion. They were not only saying whether they agreed or disagreed but were also explaining why their position was reasonable.

However, the examples and facts indicator showed that students still needed improvement in providing more specific evidence. Although they could provide general examples, the arguments would be stronger if they included more concrete data, real-life cases, or factual references. This is an important pedagogical point. Students may be able to think logically, but they also need explicit instruction in evidence-based speaking. Teachers should train students to collect, select, and use evidence effectively in oral argumentation.

The strong performance in opposing views is one of the most important findings. Recognizing opposing views is a key element of critical thinking because it shows openness, fairness, and balanced judgment. Students who can acknowledge alternative viewpoints demonstrate that they are not trapped in one-sided reasoning. In argumentative speaking, this ability strengthens persuasion because the speaker appears more rational and credible.

The students' ability to discuss both the attraction of a gadget-free life and the necessity of modern technology shows mature reasoning.

The study also found that critical thinking had a positive impact on learning independence. Students prepared themselves by understanding the topic, searching for information, practicing independently, and using digital resources. This shows that argumentative speaking encourages students to become active learners. They cannot depend only on memorization because they must build and defend arguments. As a result, they need to conduct independent preparation. This finding supports the view that critical thinking strengthens self-directed learning.

Learning independence is especially important in senior high school because students are preparing for higher education and social participation. When students learn to search for information and evaluate it, they develop academic autonomy. In this study, students' use of YouTube, internet resources, and AI tools indicates that they were able to use available technology to support argument preparation. However, teachers should guide students in evaluating the credibility of digital sources so that information use becomes more critical and responsible.

Critical thinking also influenced students' self-confidence. Students became more confident when they understood the issue and had prepared arguments. This suggests that confidence in speaking does not come only from linguistic fluency but also from cognitive readiness. Students who have clear reasons and evidence feel more capable of speaking. In argumentative speaking, confidence is closely related to preparation. When students know their position and can anticipate opposing arguments, they feel more secure.

At the same time, the findings show that confidence remains vulnerable to emotional pressure. Students may still feel nervous or afraid of making mistakes. This means that teachers should not assume that good reasoning automatically removes speaking anxiety. Students need repeated opportunities to practice argumentative speaking in a supportive environment. Teachers can use small-group discussion, peer feedback, rehearsal, and gradual presentation tasks to help students build confidence.

The findings on learning style indicate that students benefit from visual aids, data, notes, and active listening. This suggests that argumentative speaking should not be taught as spontaneous speaking only. Students need planning tools to organize their thoughts. Visual supports such as mind maps, charts, pictures, and outlines can help students build logical flow. Notes can help them remember important points. Data can help them strengthen claims. These supports are not signs of weakness; they are tools for better critical thinking.

The preference for data-driven arguments is particularly important. It shows that students understood the difference between opinion and argument. An opinion may express personal belief, but an argument requires support. By valuing data and evidence, students showed awareness of academic reasoning. Teachers should develop this awareness by asking students to justify claims, compare evidence, and explain why certain examples are relevant.

Physiological factors emerged as a meaningful challenge. Lack of sleep, dizziness, hunger, fatigue, and nervousness affected students' concentration and speaking performance. This finding reminds educators that critical thinking and speaking performance are influenced by physical and emotional states. A student may have good ideas but fail to express them well when physically tired or extremely nervous. Therefore, effective argumentative speaking instruction should include preparation for mental and physical readiness.

Nervousness is especially relevant in speaking activities. Argumentative speaking can create pressure because students must present ideas, face evaluation, and respond to possible disagreement. Some anxiety may motivate preparation, but excessive anxiety can disturb performance. Teachers should teach simple self-regulation strategies such as breathing techniques, rehearsal, positive self-talk, and peer support. These strategies can help students manage physiological stress during speaking tasks.

Students' perceptions of argumentative speaking were generally positive, especially in relation to learning independence and learning style. They viewed the activity as useful for developing preparation, understanding, and structured thinking. However, their perceptions of self-confidence and physiological factors were more complex. They believed they could handle academic arguments, but they also recognized emotional and physical barriers. This mixed perception is important because it shows that argumentative speaking is both beneficial and challenging.

The results have important implications for English teachers. First, teachers should use argumentative speaking not only to assess speaking fluency but also to evaluate critical thinking. Second, teachers should provide rubrics that include thesis, organization, arguments, evidence, and opposing views so that students understand what makes an argument strong. Third, teachers should teach students how to gather evidence and respond to counterarguments. Fourth, teachers should support students' confidence and emotional readiness.

The study also has implications for schools. Schools should encourage learning activities that develop higher-order thinking skills. Argumentative speaking can be integrated into English lessons, debate clubs, project-based learning, and classroom discussions. By practicing argumentation, students can develop communication skills, confidence, independence, and critical awareness. These skills are useful not only for English learning but also for academic and social life.

Overall, the findings confirm that critical thinking and argumentative speaking are strongly connected. Argumentative speaking provides a practical context where students can demonstrate critical thinking through oral performance. Critical thinking improves the quality of argumentative speaking by helping students build logical, evidence-based, and balanced arguments. Therefore, argumentative speaking should be considered an important strategy for developing critical thinking in English language education.

5. Conclusion

This study evaluated students' critical thinking in argumentative speaking at UPTD SMAN 1 Malunda, West Sulawesi. The findings showed that the three student participants achieved excellent performance in argumentative speaking, with scores of 90, 95, and 90. All students were classified in the excellent category. Their performance indicated strong ability in stating a clear thesis, organizing ideas, constructing arguments, providing examples, and recognizing opposing views.

The study also found that critical thinking had several positive impacts on students. It strengthened learning independence because students prepared arguments by understanding topics, searching for information, using digital resources, and practicing independently. It improved self-confidence because students felt more prepared when they had logical reasons and evidence. It also influenced learning style because students preferred data-supported arguments, visual aids, notes, and active listening. However, physiological factors such as lack of sleep, dizziness, hunger, fatigue, and nervousness affected concentration and speaking performance.

Students' perceptions of argumentative speaking were generally positive. They viewed it as useful for developing learning independence, confidence, and structured thinking. However, they also recognized challenges, especially emotional pressure and physical conditions that disturbed performance. These findings show that argumentative speaking is a valuable but demanding activity.

In conclusion, argumentative speaking is an effective medium for evaluating and developing students' critical thinking in English learning. It encourages students to move beyond simple opinion and develop logical, evidence-based, and balanced arguments. English teachers are encouraged to integrate argumentative speaking activities into classroom instruction and to provide guidance in thesis formulation, evidence use, organization, counterargument response, and anxiety management. Future research may involve more participants, compare different grade levels, and examine the development of critical thinking through repeated argumentative speaking practice.

6. References

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