

THE DYNAMICS OF ARGUMENTATION AND CRITICAL THINKING IN ARABIC DEBATE AT MA'HAD AL-JAMI'AH

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the dynamics of argumentation and critical thinking in Arabic debate practice within the Ma'had Al-Jami'ah Central Debate Team. In contrast to previous studies which focused more on the technical aspects of debate or individual abilities separately, this research positions debate practice as an integrative space for the development of reasoning and language skills. Using a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach and content analysis based on Lasswell's theory, the research findings indicate that the quality of argumentation is determined not only by mastery of accurate material and data, but also by a systematic mindset developed through structured preparation and continuous practice. Critical thinking plays a key role in constructing logical arguments, anticipating weaknesses, and creating analogies that strengthen the debating position. The novelty of this study lies in the revelation that the dynamics of argumentation and critical thinking in Arabic debate are formed through the simultaneous interaction of three pillars: systematic preparation, data-based argument construction, and strengthening critical-reflective thinking patterns. The implication is that debate activities are not merely a linguistic competition, but also a strategic vehicle for the development of critical reasoning and scientific communication skills in students.

Keywords: Argumentation, Critical thinking, Arabic debate

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji dinamika argumentasi dan berpikir kritis dalam praktik debat Bahasa Arab pada Tim Debat Pusat Ma'had Al-Jami'ah. Berbeda dengan kajian sebelumnya yang lebih terfokus pada aspek teknis debat atau kemampuan individu secara terpisah, penelitian ini menempatkan praktik debat sebagai ruang integratif bagi pengembangan penalaran dan keterampilan berbahasa. Menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dengan pendekatan studi kasus serta analisis isi berdasarkan teori Lasswell, temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kualitas argumentasi tidak hanya ditentukan oleh penguasaan materi dan data yang akurat, tetapi juga oleh pola pikir sistematis yang dikembangkan melalui persiapan terstruktur dan latihan berkelanjutan. Berpikir kritis berperan sebagai elemen kunci dalam menyusun argumen yang logis, mengantisipasi celah kelemahan, serta menciptakan analogi yang memperkuat posisi debat. Novelty penelitian ini terletak pada pengungkapan bahwa dinamika argumentasi dan berpikir kritis dalam debat Bahasa Arab terbentuk melalui interaksi simultan antara tiga pilar: persiapan sistematis, konstruksi argumen berbasis data, dan penguatan pola pikir kritis-

reflektif. Implikasinya, kegiatan debat tidak semata-mata ajang kompetisi kebahasaan, melainkan wahana strategis bagi pengembangan nalar kritis dan komunikasi ilmiah mahasiswa.

Kata Kunci: argumentasi, berpikir kritis, debat Bahasa Arab

A. Introduction

Critical thinking is the cognitive ability to use reasoning consciously, purposefully, and timely to achieve specific goals. Meanwhile, intelligence is a person's ability to understand information, draw conclusions, and act based on their knowledge. Intelligence is also related to adaptability, namely utilizing experience to respond appropriately to various situations (Triwulandari & U.S, 2022).

Critical thinking is an important skill in education, particularly in language education and linguistics, as it helps students analyze information, evaluate arguments, and make informed decisions. Critical thinking is the ability to analyze and evaluate information, then make decisions based on logic and clear evidence (Aziz et al., 2024). This ability is very necessary to understand complex philosophical concepts and apply them in everyday life.

The role of students as learners is very important in learning various innovative and creative learning models so that critical thinking skills can continue to be honed continuously so that they develop to the level of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) which is very important to be applied in all subjects, especially in speaking classes, because it helps students think more deeply and convey ideas logically (Syafryadin et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, the role of lecturers or trainers in using technology can help develop students' critical thinking skills. Helping students realize their thinking process when solving problems (Choir, 2024), one of which is by asking students to explain the steps they think about during the problem-solving process.

This aligns with current learning, which demands that students develop critical, creative, communicative, and collaborative thinking skills. Active learning methods play a crucial role in equipping students with critical thinking skills. One example is group discussions, which provide opportunities for students to exchange ideas, collaborate on problem-solving, and develop communication skills (Maisarah et al., 2025). This process occurs when students connect new information with knowledge already stored in their memory to find the right solution. Therefore, critical thinking is essential to ensure the information obtained can be thoroughly tested and its accuracy assessed.

Previous studies on Arabic debate generally have a tendency to focus solely on the technical aspects of debate, on the individual abilities of the debater, or on the normative concepts and theories of debate, so that they have not yet fully described the dynamics of argumentation and

the critical thinking process in debate practice (Azizah, 2025). Unlike those studies, this paper specifically examines the dynamics of argumentation and critical thinking in the Arabic language debates of the Ma'had Al-Jami'ah central debate team by examining the forms of argument construction, the reasoning processes of participants, and the patterns of debate interactions that occurred. Thus, this study has a clear distinguishing character because it positions debate practice as a space for the concrete development of critical thinking.

This study examines the dynamics of argumentation and critical thinking in the Arabic language debate activities of the Ma'had Al-Jami'ah central debate team as an important part of developing language skills. The study focuses on how debate participants construct, organize, and defend arguments logically, critically, and communicatively during the debate process. Analysis is conducted by comparing argumentation patterns between team members to identify similarities and differences. The results of this study are expected to provide a clear and in-depth picture of the role of critical thinking in strengthening the quality of argumentation in Arabic language debates.

The purpose of this paper is to understand the dynamics of argumentation and critical thinking in the Arabic debate of the Ma'had Al-Jami'ah central debate team through the main focus, namely the pattern of composition and delivery of arguments of debate participants,

factors that influence the development of critical thinking and argumentation skills, and the implications of debate activities for improving the quality of communication, reasoning, and critical thinking skills of debate team members.

This paper is supported by several key principles. First, empirically, Arabic debate practice has become an important part of developing students' language and reasoning skills, making it relevant to study it in the context of argumentation dynamics and critical thinking (Laely & Prabowo, 2025). Second, philosophically, debate activities represent a logical, reflective and rational thinking process that is in line with the goal of developing critical thinking skills (Bahruddin et al., 2020). Third, methodologically, this study can be justified through systematic, valid, and reliable research procedures in analyzing the dynamics of argumentation and critical thinking of the Arabic language debate team at the Ma'had Al-Jami'ah Center (Muttaqien & Faedurrohman, 2022)

B. Research Methods

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach on the Arabic language debate team at the Ma'had Al-Jami'ah central Arabic language debate team. The research focuses on the theme of Argumentation Dynamics and Critical Thinking in Arabic Language Debate, by examining the debate practice in depth. Data were analyzed using content analysis based on Harold Dwight Lasswell's theory to uncover argumentation

patterns, critical thinking processes, and the meaning of communication that emerged in Arabic language debate activities(Lasswell, 1948).

The data for this study were collected through documentation techniques, namely collecting various activity documents related to the Arabic debate practice of the Ma'had Al-Jami'ah central debate team. Furthermore, the data were analyzed using content analysis within a descriptive qualitative research framework with a case study approach to describe in depth the dynamics of argumentation and the critical thinking processes of the debate participants. The analysis stages included describing the data, grouping argumentation patterns and critical thinking responses, and interpreting the research findings. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation, namely by comparing various relevant documents and references and confirming with the instructor or Arabic debate expert(Moleong & Surjaman, 2014).

C. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Basic Concepts of Argumentation in Debate

Argumentation is a fundamental element in Arabic debate practice. In an academic context, argumentation is understood not only as the expression of an opinion, but also as the process of formulating ideas supported by logical reasoning, data, and analysis relevant to the topic being debated(Jannah & Arifa, 2022). Through structured argumentation, a debater can explain and emphasize

his team's position while building a rational and logical framework of thought to influence the assessment of participants and judges.

In debate practice, argumentation plays a primary role in defending a team's position and responding to the opposing team's arguments and views. Therefore, the quality of argumentation is crucial for a team's strength in Arabic debate practice. Strong arguments are based on a thorough understanding of the motion being debated, sound analytical skills, and accurate presentation of data and information(Muttaqien & Faedurrohman, 2022). This easy access to information helps debate participants obtain a wider range of data, facts, and references to strengthen their arguments. This allows the quality of argumentation in debates to be more logical, data-driven, and support critical thinking.

b. The Importance of Systematic Preparation

When presenting arguments in a debate, debaters should prepare systematically, precisely, and in detail. Systematic preparation refers to the process of gathering information, classifying ideas, and formulating arguments in a structured manner according to the theme or motion being discussed. A systematic approach helps debaters understand the problem more comprehensively and complexly and avoids delivering arguments that are ambiguous and unfocused(Nur et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the preparation process also involves reviewing

various sources of information, such as literature, news, and previous debate experiences. Through this process, debaters can gain inspiration and enrich the perspectives they will use to construct their arguments. Thus, thorough preparation not only strengthens the content of the argument but also enhances the debaters' ability to counter the opposing team's arguments.

Furthermore, preparation in constructing an argument involves weighing the value of the argument itself. Comprehensively listening to and analyzing information is one way to strengthen an argument. This way, arguments serve not only as a basis for thinking but also as a tool for identifying weaknesses in the opponent's argument (Maisarah et al., 2025).

c. Argument Construction Method

In compiling debate arguments, there are several stages that need to be considered so that the arguments presented are informative, logical, and relevant to the topic being discussed. The first step is to identify the main issue that will be the focus of the debate. After that, debaters gather data and information that can support their team's position. The information obtained must undergo a careful review process to produce accurate and accountable data (Rosyid & Aini, 2026). Maximizing digital resources helps debate participants quickly find data, facts, and references. This information can then be processed into reasons, evidence, and examples to support arguments, making them more structured, logical, and convincing (Wenxiu, 2015).

Next, the argument is structured into clear and structured main points. Arguments don't always have to be lengthy and descriptive; they can be formulated into strong, easy-to-understand core ideas. Effective arguments typically consist of a main statement, a logical explanation, and supporting data or relevant examples (Nuraisyatul Khalilah et al., 2024). With a structured method, debaters can convey their ideas more systematically and convincingly.

In practice, this argumentation truly demonstrates a debater's style and values. When presenting a principled argument, the opponent will observe how the data is compiled and organized (Rosyid & Aini, 2026). When the opponent sees gaps in the data or information, it becomes a weakness for the debater. Therefore, when presenting an argument, a debater must prepare additional arguments to strengthen the argument rather than attack those gaps.

It's important to note that argumentative preparation doesn't always have to be descriptive, but rather based on strong points to produce a compelling and compelling argument for the topic being discussed. The information gathered must be carefully reviewed to produce precise and accurate data.

e. Risk of Argument Weakness

In debate practice, the strength of an argument is measured not only by the ability to present it, but also by the accuracy of the data and the consistency of the logic used. When an argument is presented without valid

data or has flaws in its reasoning, this can create an opening for the opposing team to rebut.

Weaknesses in argumentation often arise due to lack of preparation, limited information, or inaccuracy in reading and explaining the data used as the basis for the argument (Abdullah & Fitriyana, 2021). Therefore, debaters need to verify the sources of information they use and prepare relevant and accurate additional arguments to anticipate possible rebuttals from the opposing team. This step is crucial for maintaining consistency and defending one's position in the debate.

f. Implications in Arabic Language Debate

In the context of Arabic debate, argumentation plays a crucial role, as it requires not only critical thinking skills but also excellent language skills. A debater must be able to convey ideas clearly, systematically, and in accordance with correct Arabic language rules. This requires a balance between mastery of the debate material and linguistic ability (Huda et al., 2025). However, it's undeniable that some errors are made during delivery, but they can still be understood and conveyed. This doesn't pose a significant problem.

Furthermore, Arabic debate emphasizes the ability to present arguments scientifically and rationally. Therefore, each team needs to thoroughly prepare data, information, and strategies for presenting their arguments. If a team lacks sufficient information, their position will be more easily exposed and refuted by the

opposing team's arguments. Therefore, systematic argumentation based on accurate data and information is crucial for improving a team's performance in Arabic debate.

g. The Importance of Critical Thinking in Debate

Critical thinking is a fundamental skill a debater must possess in a debate. This ability plays a supporting role in developing and delivering logical and systematic arguments. In debate practice, a debater is not only required to express an opinion but also to analyze issues, connect data with arguments, and evaluate the opposing party's views (Sugilar et al., 2023). Therefore, critical thinking is an essential foundation for constructing rational and convincing arguments. Developing critical thinking skills doesn't happen overnight; it requires continuous practice through various activities such as reading literature, analyzing news, and discussing current issues relevant to the debate topic.

Critical thinking is essential and serves as a supporting component of a well-formulated argument. Critical thinking requires debaters to correlate their thinking with the information and data they convey. The information gathered must be accurate. In mass communication, the communicator is not just one person, but usually a structured institution or organization, such as a media company, such as a newspaper, radio station, television station, or website (Azizah, 2025). This means that messages delivered to the wider public are not created by individuals, but rather by teams or

institutions working systematically to convey information to many people simultaneously. Therefore, this requires a gradual process with much practice. The context of the practice varies widely, including watching the news or reading information and news directly.

h. The relationship between critical thinking and mindset

Critical thinking skills are closely related to an individual's mindset. A structured mindset will help a debater understand a problem more comprehensively and view it from multiple perspectives. In the context of a debate, a good mindset allows a debater to identify various possible arguments, both as an attack and as a defensive strategy (Hasanah, 2025). Thus, developing a systematic mindset is a crucial factor in supporting critical thinking skills. Through focused thinking, debaters can organize ideas more logically, making it easier to construct coherent arguments relevant to the topic being debated.

Critical thinking requires a multitude of processes and preparation. The key to this readiness is developing a mindset. A mindset plays a crucial role, as developing a well-formed and correct way of thinking will result in a coherent and compelling argument. A mindset is how individuals read and broaden their perspective on the topic presented. The tutor's role is also crucial in supporting Arabic debates. In Arabic debates, the material or content of the arguments does not emerge spontaneously but is structured and developed through a

learning process, guidance from a trainer, and structured practice. Debate participants prepare their arguments by studying various sources, compiling data, and formulating logical opinions before presenting them in the debate forum (Bahrudin et al., 2020). How individuals understand the perspectives that may be put forward in arguments either as a form of attack or defense.

i. The impact of critical thinking on argument development

Critical thinking significantly influences the argumentation process in a debate. A debater with critical thinking skills will more easily analyze the themes and motions being debated and identify important aspects that can serve as the basis for an argument. This ability allows the debater to process data and information more thoroughly, resulting in a strong and structured argument (Vernanda et al., 2025). Furthermore, critical thinking also encourages the debater to consider different perspectives before constructing an argument. Thus, the resulting argument is not only informative but also has a clear basis for reasoning and is supported by relevant data (Lasswell, 2007).

A significant impact of critical thinking is the ability to view themes and motions from a specific perspective. Once you have mastered the skills needed to construct a sound argument, critical thinking plays a significant role in creating and synthesizing data and information to produce a strong argument. Critical thinking encourages debaters to

develop sharp analytical and analytical skills.

j. Application of critical thinking in training and competitions

In debate training and competitions, critical thinking is a crucial skill to develop. Debaters are expected to understand the flow of discussion on the topic or motion being debated and interpret the issue analytically. One way to apply critical thinking in debate is the ability to create analogies or illustrations that can help explain a concept more simply without diminishing the meaning of the argument (Nuraisyatul Khalilah et al., 2024). Furthermore, debaters also need to process data and information obtained from various sources before using it as the basis for arguments. Discussion is a pattern that is inseparable from the critical thinking process. Discussion strategies train students' speaking skills through the exchange of ideas to solve problems. Effective discussions improve speaking skills because participants must explain their opinions and answer questions. This activity also trains critical thinking, as students need to formulate arguments, analyze others' opinions, and provide logical answers (Huda et al., 2025).

When practicing for competitions or in actual debate, debaters are expected to master the flow of the theme or motion being debated. Critical thinking will lead to the creation of analogies as a form of simplification of the theme or motion. Analogies are created when debaters are able to control and are trained to think critically (Triwulandari & U.S,

2022). Because the data and information gathered as arguments are not simply presented directly, they require further processing. Therefore, the role of critical thinking as a form of perspective is crucial in this phase.

D. Conclusion

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that argumentation in Arabic debates is not simply the expression of opinions, but rather the construction of logical, data-based ideas that are systematically structured, observing linguistic rules. The strength of an argument is determined by the accuracy of identifying issues, organizing information, and structuring thoughts. Critical thinking is the main foundation of the entire debate process, from analyzing motions to developing rebuttals. This ability enables debaters to view issues multidimensionally, identify weaknesses, and produce coherent arguments.

The dynamics that emerged demonstrated that the quality of debate depends not only on language skills but also on systematic preparation, such as continuous practice, source validation, and the development of analytical thinking skills. Thus, debate serves as a means of developing higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). Overall, the practice of Arabic debate within a structured coaching system holds significant potential as a learning

method that integrates critical thinking and scientific communication, and contributes to the development of students' reasoning and intellectual character.

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