

ABSTRACT

Sylvia Nurfaiza. 2026: Students' Argumentation Construction in Speaking Activities (A Case Study in a Critical Thinking in ELT Course, Sixth-Semester Students at an Islamic Higher Education Institution).

Argumentation is an important part of speaking activities because students are required not only to express their opinions but also to provide reasons, evidence, and responses to different viewpoints. However, how students construct and demonstrate arguments during speaking activities in the Critical Thinking in ELT course still needs to be examined more closely. Therefore, this study aims to identify the Toulmin argumentation components demonstrated by students and to describe how students construct arguments during speaking activities in this course.

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design involving students of the Critical Thinking in ELT course at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. Data were collected through classroom observations of two learning videos (one offline and one online session) and semi-structured interviews with six selected students. The observation data were analyzed deductively using Toulmin's Argumentation Model (2003), covering claim, data (grounds), warrant, backing, qualifier, and rebuttal, while the interview data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis.

The findings showed that students demonstrated all six components of Toulmin's Argumentation Model, although the frequency of the components varied. Claim and data (grounds) appeared most frequently, while qualifiers also appeared relatively often as students expressed their arguments with a degree of uncertainty. In contrast, warrants, backing, and rebuttals appeared less frequently, suggesting that students still experienced difficulty explaining the logical relationship between their claims and supporting reasons, as well as responding to alternative viewpoints. More argumentation components were also produced during the offline discussion than during the online session, which appeared to be related to differences in classroom interaction between the two settings. Meanwhile, the interview findings showed that students constructed their arguments through several stages, including understanding the topic, organizing ideas, selecting relevant reasons or evidence, stating their main opinions, and responding to other viewpoints. Students also reported experiencing difficulties in finding relevant reasons and expressing their ideas clearly in English, which they addressed through strategies such as reviewing course materials and discussing ideas with classmates. Furthermore, students perceived that the course had a positive impact on the way they constructed and evaluated arguments during classroom discussions.

In conclusion, students were able to construct basic argumentative structures during speaking activities, but the use of more complex components, particularly warrants, backing, and rebuttals, was still limited. This indicates that speaking activities in the Critical Thinking in ELT course have supported the development of students' basic argumentation construction. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to provide more opportunities for students to practice explaining the relationship between claims and evidence and responding to alternative viewpoints. Future researchers may also examine argumentation in other speaking contexts or with different groups of EFL learners.

Keywords: *argumentation, speaking activities, critical thinking, Toulmin's Argumentation Model, case study*