CT Scan

JALT Critical Thinking SIG

Ideas in Action

So, how was your summer? The JALT Critical Thinking SIG was busy, for sure, with events throughout Japan to promote as best as we can awareness of the importance of critical thinking in the language classroom. This issue, we will be reporting on some of the ideas we have seen, as well as set the table for the main event, the JALT International Conference in Hamamatsu in October!

First, though, we are happy to present a pair of articles from our talented membership. Our first feature in this issue comes from **Elliot Patton**, who wrote about the exercise of critical thinking in content-based courses. Then **Ken Slater** will talk about the connection between critical thinking activities and assessment.

Then, we will share reports by critical thinking presenters at the Pan-SIG Conference in Hiroshima, the Nakasendo Conference in Tokyo and the Thinking Critically event in Toyohashi. We're not kidding when we say that "critical thinking," even in the context of language education, is a potentially large field of interest, and the variety of presentations at these events over the summer emphasizes the wide range of ideas interested members like you bring to the discussion!

Finally, we'll talk about the upcoming JALT International Conference and what you should expect in terms of our presence in Hamamatsu. We'll be preparing for our SIG Forum and our Annual General Meeting, as well as gearing up to support the various conferences presentations dedicated to critical thinking activities for the classroom. We invite you to join us in October!

Call for Papers
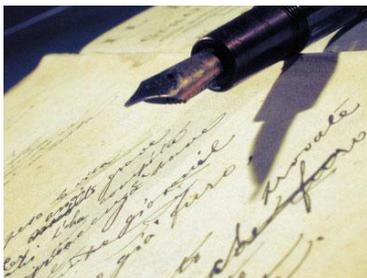
We are ALWAYS looking for new input from teachers interested in critical thinking! What does critical thinking mean to you? Do you encourage the use of critical thinking skills among learners? How do you practice it in the classroom? We invite your ideas about the theory and teaching practices regarding critical thinking. Whether it's a classroom idea, a reflection, a full research paper or even a letter responding to something you found in these pages, we hope to hear from you! Think about writing for *CT Scan* today.

- All submissions are welcome at ctscan.editor@gmail.com.
- The Critical Thinking SIG Executive Board reviews all incoming submissions for style and content.
- We recommend adhering to *JALT Journal* style guidelines for your submission. Please refer to (http://jalt-publications.org/downloads/jaltstyle.pdf) for guidance.

In hindsight, this was not the question to be asking. Rather students should have been discussing how the application of a stereotype might affect those whom it is describing or how they might feel if in that position. For anyone developing materials on this topic, focus on students being able to make personal connections to the content before going broader. Instead of beginning with "Why is this a stereotype?" ask your class to try to observe stereotypes in practice. Furthermore, be confident that the classroom atmosphere is safe and supportive. Without this, students are much more likely to open up and have the deeper, more critical discussions which we teachers are hoping to foster. My unit could have benefited from both of these improvements.

For more information about the presentation, please email jennie-r@kanda.kuis.ac.jp.

Voices of caution along the road of shifting literacy
Thomas Mach, Konan University

The presenter talked about the shift in our dominant knowledge medium from print to digital, and the cognitive realignment that such a change entails. He situated his talk by reviewing the concerns that the classical philosopher Socrates had as his culture shifted from orality to literacy. Those same concerns were applied to our current situation to see which of them still apply as we make the shift to digital. In particular, Socrates' warnings about outsourcing human memory and the dangers inherent in exposing minds to a hardly filtered flood of written words still seem relevant today. The presenter then turned to recent findings from cognitive neuroscience that suggest we humans are becoming more and more accustomed to states of partial attention and nearly continuous distraction. Experts from a number of fields, while admitting the many benefits of our newly dominant medium, are raising concerns about how the human brain may be changing to cope with the digital landscape. In particular, human capacities for contemplation and concentration appear to be susceptible to considerable weakening if parents and educators do not provide enough opportunities for them to take root.

Using Metaprograms to Develop Critical Thinking and Literacy Skills
Brian Cullen, Nagoya Institute of Technology
Avril Matsui-Hayes, Nanzan University

This poster presentation examined one way to assist students in developing and applying critical thinking skills and literacy to the comprehension of texts. The presentation explored how the development of reader awareness and writing for a specific audience can be facilitated by using the concept of metaprograms. Metaprograms are a means of understanding different reading/writing styles by examining personality types. Metaprograms have their origins in Carl Jung's concepts of psychological types and Myers-Briggs personality typing, and they

were later developed by the field of Neuro-Linguistic Programming into a comprehensive framework for identifying and utilizing over 50 personality characteristics. The presentation introduced eight metaprogram distinctions, indicated how they can be easily elicited, and showed how they can be used to

develop EFL writing tasks which promote critical thinking, literacy, and reader/writer awareness. To demonstrate how these metaprograms can be used effectively in the classroom to develop reader and writer awareness, the presenters introduced several activities including creating a sales letter targeting a particular person, deliberately writing in a different style to your natural preferences, and identifying the metaprograms of a writer online or in a newspaper.

Thinking Critically (JALT Toyohashi), July 8th, Aichi University

Teaching Debate as a Physical Sport
David Kluge, Nanzan University

 The presenter first introduced his 40 years of debate experience as a debater in junior high school, high school, and university, as a coach in a high school, and as a teacher in university. He also asked the audience (curiously made up of males only) what their relationship to debate was, and specifically whether they were presently teaching debate. The presenter then briefly went over an article that showed the benefits of debate, especially for critical thinking ("Lessons in debate improve critical thinking skills," Dewar, 2011, <http://www.parentingscience.com/debate-improves-critical-thinking-skills.html>). Then the work part of the workshop began. The workshop was in six parts:

1.   Introductory activity
2.   Warmup Activity
3.   Teaching the Moves
4.   Practicing the Moves
5.   A Short Debate
6.   Q&A/Reflection

The Introductory Activity was called Take Sides. An imaginary line dividing the classroom in half was established. A fashion choice question was posed, and one half of the classroom was designated Pro and the other half was designated Con. Participants moved to the side they agreed with, facing each other. The Pro side was asked to make three statements stating their position for the question. The Con side asked questions to the Pro side. Next, the Con side was asked to make three statements stating their position and the Pro side asked questions. Then the Pro side was asked to make three statements showing why the Con side's position was wrong/bad. The Con side did the same. Participants soon caught on that this was a physical representation of the Constructive speeches, Cross Examination, and Refutation.

The Warmup Activity was physical warmups, including stretching exercises and jumping jacks. The Teaching the Moves section used two metaphors, one of bricklayers building a wall, and one of the debate as a boxing match. Participants practiced hitting gloves together and how to guard, jab, punch, and finally the "Rocky victory pose."

In the Practicing the Moves section, the participants were divided into groups of 5 (two affirmatives, two negatives, and a judge) and went through the different speeches in a cross examination policy debate, but going through the motions: Construction Speech—Building the wall/case and attacking the status quo with