



JALT Critical Thinking SIG

CT Scan

The official newsletter of the JALT Critical Thinking SIG

Volume 3, Issue 3 – September 2013

Conference Time!

JALT2013 is nearly upon us. JALT's premier international conference is an exciting opportunity for language educators interested in critical thinking to come together and share their ideas on promoting critical thinking in the language classroom. We hope you'll join us October 25-27 in Kobe for an exciting schedule of presentations and special events, which includes the **2nd Critical Thinking SIG Forum**.

Our inaugural forum last year in Hamamatsu was a resounding success – so successful that we packed a standing-room only event for a pair of lectures and a brief group discussion on critical thinking! We want to repeat the experience this year, so we have gathered three presenters who are sure to interest educators and provoke ideas and discussion. The SIG Forum begins at **11:00AM on Saturday, October 26th in Room 407**. Come join us!

After that, the CT SIG will be conducting official business in our **Annual General Meeting at 6:35PM on Saturday, October 26th in the Main Hall**. This is our required function meeting to elect a new slate of SIG officers for the year and discuss our plans for 2014. We encourage you to become an engaged participant in our SIG, and we invite you to become involved by joining our AGM. In addition, come see us at our SIG table in the EME, and join us at various critical thinking presentations throughout the day (see this issue for a schedule of presentations our SIG recommends). For information about the conference itself, go to (www.jalt.org/conference).

For our readers of this issue, we offer a preview of what is to come at our SIG Forum. This year's presenters, **Brian Cullen, Peter Quinn** and **Paul W. L. Lai**, have kindly provided us with a description of their presentations. We hope this will entice you to join us at this year's forum.

Enjoy this conference preview, and see you in Kobe!

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.

2nd Critical Thinking SIG Forum – A Preview

We cannot overstate our excitement over hosting the 2nd CT SIG Forum at JALT2013. We look back at our first forum as evidence of teachers throughout Japan who are eager to promote critical thinking in language education. Following up on a wonderful experience, the second edition of our SIG Forum promises to be better than the first. The following is a preview of what to expect from this year's presenters. If you're coming to Kobe this year, this is a great first look of our lineup of presentations. If you can't make it, we hope this will at least provoke ideas for your teaching. Either way, enjoy!

Metaprograms as a Tool for Critical Thinking in Reading and Writing *Brian Cullen, Nagoya Institute of Technology*

One important facet of developing critical thinking skills in our students is fostering the ability to *recognize* the different cognitive styles of others and to be able to *use* a variety of styles oneself to match the needs of any situation.

As an example of *recognizing* cognitive styles, imagine one of your students in a future situation, preparing a financial projection or information presentation in which classical critical thinking skills such as analysis, logic, and forecasting are essential. Other members of the group may not be using the same skills as our student and instead may have a cultural, linguistic, organizational, or personality bias towards a more emotionally-driven cognitive style. In order for our students to relate effectively to the other team members and to achieve the desired outcome, having the flexibility to at least understand this different cognitive style will provide a foundation for the behavioural flexibility to create win-win situations that might not have been otherwise considered. In this case, a small concession of some emotional benefit can be offered to the person with the emotionally-based cognitive style without sacrificing the primary outcome.



It is also beneficial to be able to *use* a range of cognitive styles. The student who successfully uses classical critical thinking skills in carrying out a successful future deal may be less successful in creating harmony in his own household if he deals with his wife and children in the same way. Dealing optimally with the different situations encountered in life requires flexibility in cognitive style.

Many problems that people encounter in their working and personal lives are due to a rigidity in cognitive style, an inability to recognize or use the cognitive style that the situation calls for. The law of requisite variety suggests that the element of a system that has the greatest flexibility has the ability to control the entire system. In other words, by becoming cognitively flexible, we can recognize and utilize others' cognitive styles and adapt to different situations in order to achieve our desired outcomes.

One way to achieve this kind of flexibility in cognitive styles is through the learning and application of metaprograms. Metaprograms have their roots in the work of Carl Jung on human archetypes and were later developed in various ways by Myers-Briggs, the field of neuro-linguistic programming, and the LAB profile.

Eight of the more commonly used metaprogram distinction sets are outlined on the next page along with a simple question for each that helps to explain its function. Each of the eight pairs can be viewed as a way to recognize a component of a person's cognitive style.

1. Extrovert - Introvert

When you want to recharge your batteries, do you like to be with others or to be alone?

2. Intuitive - Sensor

When you are learning something new, do you like to focus on the details or to get the big picture first?

3. Thinker - Feeler

When you make a decision, do you tend to make it based on logic or on your feelings?

4. Judger - Perceiver

If we were doing a project together, would you like everything to be planned out carefully in advance, or would you like to let things develop more organically?

5. Towards - Away

Do you tend to be motivated towards positive outcomes (e.g. be slim, have lots of money) or to be motivated away from negative outcomes (e.g. not be overweight, not be poor)?

6. External - Internal

How do you know when you have done a good job (when others tell you or when you have a certain internal feeling)?

7. Matcher - Mismatcher

Do you tend to look for differences or similarities?

8. Convincer strategy

How do you get convinced to buy something (hear/read/see/do something)?

In this presentation, I will explain these distinctions in more detail. Equally importantly, I will introduce several activities that you can do in your language classes to help your students to use metaprograms to gain more flexibility in both recognizing and using cognitive styles.

Critical thinking in context

Brian Quinn, Takushoku University

What is critical thinking? Why should a person try to become a better critical thinker? How can a person become a better critical thinker? These are some of the questions that critical thinking textbooks try to answer. "Asking the Right Questions" by Browne and Keeley does a very good job answering these questions. However, it does not do such a good job answering the question "When should a person do critical thinking?". Do the authors really expect people to spend the majority of their lives engaged in critical thinking? Critical thinking needs to be put into a context so that students know when critical thinking is appropriate and when it is not. First, the textbook "Asking the Right Questions" will be critically evaluated to see what, if any, context critical thinking is placed in. Next, critical thinking will be considered along with other kinds of argument such as convincing, persuading and negotiating. Then, critical thinking will be viewed as an "open mode" activity to be contrasted with "closed mode" activities. Finally, we will look at some classroom activities designed to place critical thinking into a wider context.



Applying logical thinking education to academic writing

Paul W. L. Lai, Nagoya University

My presentation basically aims to explain why logical thinking education should be incorporated into academic writing education in Japanese universities. The basic reason is this: Academic writing education in Japanese universities needs logical thinking education in order for it to be developed into a full-blown general education curriculum for all university students.

All university students in Japan, regardless of whether they are postgraduates or undergraduates, are required to write academic papers in one form or another. At the very least, he or she will have to complete a dissertation in order to graduate from university. But unfortunately, most of university students are having problems in academic writing. And surprisingly, almost 99% of the 700 or more Japanese universities do not offer compulsory academic writing courses. At the time of writing this, less than 10 universities are known to have writing centers officially established. Why?



In my view, that is because academic writing education in Japanese universities has been implemented mainly as a language education program. And as a result, it is attractive only for a minority of students, especially those who write academic papers in their second or third language.

When academic writing program was launched in the mid 1960s by some state colleges and universities in the United States (e.g. CUNY, etc.), it was implemented as a remedial program for those students who were admitted to the state institutions under the open or relaxed admissions standards (Carino, 1996, pp. 30-48). These open admissions students were “culturally diverse”, and most of them were “underprepared” and lacked the competent language skills in academic writing. The goal of the writing education program was to teach them Standard English through some composition classes that focused on grammar drills.

Although academic writing education nowadays has made some significant advances from the original remedial program through the development of a wide range of writing supports (e.g. one-to-one tutoring, peer tutoring, etc.) aiming to fulfill a wide range of writing needs, teaching how to write academic papers in English is still being carried out as a part of English writing education in general. For example, Richard Badger and Goodith White (2000) categorize all the known approaches to writing education into three basic categories: the “Product approaches”, the “Process approaches”, and the “Genre approaches”. Despite their apparent pedagogical differences, all the three writing approaches are approaches of ELT – i.e. English Language Teaching, and their primary objective is to teach students how to write well in English.

A major reason why academic writing education is still maintained as a language education is because its education targets are still basically unchanged. Nowadays academic writing education at university is popular mainly as a foreign language education program. Like many universities in the UK and USA, the top ranking Japanese universities are making great efforts to promote international education programs to attract more international students to come and study in Japan. As a result, there is a group of culturally diverse international students studying in Japanese universities, and they need to write academic papers in their second or third language.

As far as these second language writers are concerned, they share basically the same difficulty in language use as the open admissions students who gave rise to the establishment of academic writing program in the first place. For them, knowing how to properly use the second or third language is the primary difficulty in writing an academic paper in that language.

Without any doubt, knowing how to properly use the words and sentences is crucial to writing a good paper. As John Locke (1824, p. 409) famously put it, “words signify ideas”. Thus it is necessary to know how to properly use the words in a language in order to convey your ideas using that language. However, merely knowing how to properly use the words does not guarantee that your ideas can be properly expressed. The rules governing the proper use of a language and the rules governing the proper arrangement of ideas are different, and they operate at different levels.

The rules governing the proper use of grammar and syntax operate only at the sentence level, or how words are put together to form a grammatically correct sentence. However, in writing a good paper, we are required to know not only how words can be properly arranged in order to appropriately express the ideas, but also how ideas can be properly arranged so that they can be appropriately expressed through words. For convenience, call the former requirement *the Writing Requirement*, and the latter *the Thinking Requirement*.

Fulfilling the thinking requirement is of paramount importance for academic writers in all languages, regardless of whether they are native or foreign in the language of writing: You need to know how to properly arrange your ideas before you can properly express them in words.

The majority of university students in Japan do not find the language education program attractive because they prefer to write academic papers in their first language. Most of them do not think that they have a very serious problem about how to use their first language. At least they do not want to spend their valuable university time to restudy the language that they have grown up with. But nearly all of them have problems with fulfilling the thinking requirement.

All the unsatisfactory writings I have witnessed have two things in common. By and large, all of them can be categorized into either writings that fail to deliver a clear thesis statement or writings that lack a convincing argument; hence they are unable to convey what is in a writer’s mind in a clear and convincing manner. These symptoms of unsatisfactory writings show that the difficulties in academic writing are not primarily due to a lack of language skills, but a lack of a proper training in logical thinking skills, or knowing how to think clearly and argue well.

Accordingly, the only way to fulfill the thinking requirement is through an appropriate education in logical thinking.

References

- Badger, R. and White, G. (2000). A process genre approach to teaching writing. *ELT Journal*, 54(2), 153-160.
- Carino, P. (1996), Open Admissions and the Construction of Writing Center History: A Tale of Three Models. *The Writing Center Journal*, 17(1), 30-48.
- Locke, J. (1824). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. London: William Baynes and Son. 25th edition.

The Critical Thinking SIG at JALT2013



The JALT international conference is always our busiest time of the year, and JALT2013 is no exception. If you're joining us in Kobe this year, here is a guide with information on presentations and poster sessions dealing with critical thinking (information is preliminary and subject to change – the official conference schedule will be available at www.jalt.org/conference)

Presentations and Workshops

- **Elizabeth Molyneux** - *Critical thinking in EAP: Contrasting approaches*: **Saturday, October 26th, 6:00-6:25PM, Kikusui**
Recognition of the importance of critical thinking in EAP is increasing. However, many educators are unsure of their approach. This presentation contrasts approaches to developing critical thinking which vary in their explicitness. Participants will be invited to reflect upon which approach may be more effective in their teaching context. In addition, the presenter will review a number of considerations to bear in mind when working with learners starting out on their critical thinking journey.
- **Shirley M. Ando** - *Critical Thinking with TED and timed-PowerPoint*: **Sunday, October 27th, 9:35-10:00AM, Room 302**
Videos are underutilized for teaching higher order thinking. This session will describe the use of selected TED talks videos (Technology, Entertainment, Design) in enhancing learner's critical thinking skills of analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating. The presenter will demonstrate a sample of videos and will provide guidelines for effective content usage. In addition, timed-PowerPoint presentations of students' end of-the-semester critical thinking topics will be shown.
- **John Marland** - *Academic Encounters: College Skills in EFL Classes*: **Sunday, October 27th, 1:20-2:20PM, Room 405**
In addition to increasing their English proficiency in all four skills, Japanese university students generally need to learn new academic skills—from the basics (critical reading, summarizing, and note taking) to the more advanced (doing research, making presentations, and writing research papers). Developing materials that address all of these needs can be quite difficult. In this session, the presenter will demonstrate ways to help students achieve these goals using examples from Cambridge's "Academic Encounters" series.
- **Charles Browne** - *In Focus: critical thinking & frequent vocabulary*: **Sunday, October 27th, 3:50-4:50PM, Room 301**
This session will introduce a new 3-level reading and discussion series that focuses on the development of students' critical thinking skills while systematically improving their knowledge of important high frequency words using both in-text and online content. Participants will get a brief explanation of the pedagogy and science behind the course, followed by demonstrations of key activities and learning tools.
- **Steven Gershon** - *Developing Skillful Students*: **Sunday, October 27th, 3:50-4:50PM, Room 402**
In our increasingly globalized world, young people are not only expected to have enough English for general conversation, but also the language proficiency and academic tools to cope in an internationally-oriented educational environment. This has created a trend in Asia toward more challenging skills-focused courses. This session will explore how Macmillan's new parallel-skills course Skillful meets this trend by blending general language objectives, academic vocabulary development, critical thinking and study skills with engaging international topics.

- **Nicholas A. Bufton and David Gann** - *Designing TREs: Beyond Grammar and Punctuation*: **Sunday, October 27th, 5:35-6:35PM, Reception Hall A**
This presentation will discuss the development of on-line text reconstruction exercises (TREs) in course design for the teaching of abstract principles of argument, including the lexical, structural and organizational patterns that drive argument. The TREs discussed are designed so that grammatical knowledge is of limited value for completing the tasks. This presentation will describe how to design TREs that scaffold and reinforce knowledge of argument and form a bridge between meta-knowledge and academic competence.
- **Gary Riley-Jones** - *What does 'criticality' mean in lifelong learning?*: **Monday, October 28th, 11:55AM-12:20PM, Room 306**
My contention is that in a rush for modernity, there is a danger in such modern subject areas as Applied Linguistics that modernity has the power to exclude other ways of thinking, other ways of learning. A simple binary between lifelong learning and criticality should not be seen as a simple naturalised binary, but one of many potential ways of thinking about the world. Illustrative examples will be given with reference to the Japanese context.

Poster Sessions

- **Mari Nakamura** - *Engaging Children's Minds Using Graphic Organizers*: **Sunday, October 27th, 11:30AM-1:30PM, JALT Junior Lobby**
Graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams, tree diagrams and clusters enhance students' logical thinking skills, engage visual learners, and promote communication among learners. This poster session displays and discusses various ways to use graphic organizers in EFL children's classrooms to promote their language skills and logical thinking. Ideas shared are all easy and simple enough for teachers to implement immediately after they go back to class.
- **Kumi Iwasaki, Steve Engler, and Carl Hale** - *TED Talks, Language Learning and Liberal Arts*: **Sunday, October 27th, 3:50-5:50PM, Exhibition Hall #3**
This poster will explain the rationale for using Ted Talks in an ESL liberal arts program. Also, it will describe the development and final design of a Lecture and Critical Discussion class utilizing TED Talks as content. This course was designed for Japanese students enrolled in an English language program at a university that stresses liberal arts. Finally, it will share an evaluation of the course from both the students' and teachers' perspectives.
- **Shawn Hupka** - *Developing Media Literacy Tools*: **Sunday, October 27th, 3:50-5:50PM, Exhibition Hall #3**
Media literacy has become a common element of curricula in the English-speaking world. However, in many EFL classrooms, authentic English media texts are analyzed at a surface level with a focus on developing lexical-grammar and reading skills. This presentation will detail the development of pedagogical materials designed to expand EFL students' critical media literacy skills. Presenters will also explore the development of assessment tools that similarly move beyond traditional forms.

What to Write for CT Scan

We know you have an idea or two about critical thinking, so considering writing for a future issue of *CT Scan*. Our publication is a great place for new writers to gain valuable experience in academic publishing, and our goal is to help all writers with their submissions, providing them with the support and guidance they need to produce quality academic literature for future publishing. Every dedicated teacher needs to start somewhere, and we hope you'll decide to start here in *CT Scan*!

Here are some possible formats you may want to consider for your prospective article:

- *Full research article*: 1,500-3,000 words, detailing your research related to critical thinking in language education. Articles that connect theory to classroom practice are encouraged.
- *Classroom reflections*: 500-2,000 words, detailing classroom activities that have been used to teach or encourage critical thinking among language learners.
- *Commentary*: 500-2,000 words, detailing personal observations meant to provoke discussion within our membership regarding critical thinking in language education.

Note that this is not an exhaustive list, but rather a guide for you and your writing; we are happy to consider all formats of writing, as long as the writing is relevant to critical thinking!

The CT SIG Executive Board reviews all articles and strives to provide timely feedback that is indicative of the experience you may encounter when submitting prospective articles to more established journals. Our ultimate goal is to help all of our SIG members become quality writers for the greater academic community.

Why not give it a shot? We look forward to reading your ideas, as does the rest of the Critical Thinking SIG!

SIG News

Hiroshima Mini-Conference

The JALT Hiroshima Chapter has been kind enough to host a series of presentations on critical thinking at their annual mini-conference. This year's event will be held at the Hiroshima YMCA on Sunday, December 1st, 2013, and is looking for presenters. Visit their website at (www.hiroshima-jalt.org) for more information. We hope to see you there!

Next issue

We will be looking back at a great 2013 and looking ahead to 2014 in our final newsletter of the year. Of course, your submissions are welcome for the December edition and for all of our issues in 2014. As always, email us at ctscan.editor@gmail.com.

SEE YOU NEXT TIME!

Find us on the Internet:

- Website: <http://jaltcriticalthinking.org/>
- Facebook: search "JALT Critical Thinking SIG"
- Critically Minded Podcast:
<http://www.criticallyminded.com/>

